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# **Compilation of NCERTs**

**Ancient, Medieval & Modern History**

For UPSC Civil Services Prelims and Main

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**1**

**ANCIENT  
HISTORY**



# 1

# Indian Tradition of History Writing

One of the most interesting aspect of the study of history is knowing the history of history writing itself. It gives you an idea how history itself can be moulded by interpretation. How same data and the same evidence get completely different meaning in the hands of different scholars. In this chapter, we are going to learn precisely this aspect of ancient Indian history. We shall study when and how the writing of ancient Indian history began and how it progressed, traversing different paths over a long period of time. Many foreign scholars opined that Indians had no sense of history writing and whatever was written in the name of history is nothing more than a story without any sense. This appears to be a very harsh judgement. To say that Indians had no consciousness about their own history and no sense of writing history is simply incorrect.

The knowledge of history was given a very high place in ancient India. It was accorded sanctity equal to a Veda. Atharvaveda, Brahmanas and Upanishads include Itihas-Purana as one of the branches of knowledge. Kautilya in his Arthashastra (fourth century B.C.) advises the king to devote a part of his time everyday for hearing the narrations of history. According to the Puranas, following are the subject matters of history: sarga (evolution of universe), pratisarga (involution of universe), manvantantar (recurring of time), vamsa (genealogical list of kings and sages), and vamsanucharita (life stories of some selected characters).

The Puranic literature is very vast and we have 18 main Puranas, 18 subsidiary Puranas and a large number of other books. It is interesting to note that in all the Puranas royal genealogies are dealt with the reign of Parikshit, the grandson of Arjun, as a benchmark. All the earlier dynasties and kings have been mentioned in past tense. While the latter kings and dynasties have been narrated in future tense. This may be because of the fact that the coronation of Parikshit marks the beginning of Kali Age. Many scholars think that this also points to the fact that perhaps the Puranas were completed during the reign of Parikshit. In the context of the Puranas it may be remembered that in ancient India, Itihas was looked upon as a means to illuminate the present and future in the light of the past. The purpose of history was to understand 'and inculcate a sense of duty and sacrifice by individuals to their families, by the families to their clans, by the clans to their villages and by the villages to Janapada and Rashtra and ultimately to the whole humanity. History was not meant to be an exhaustive compendium of the names of the kings and dynasties and their achievements etc.

It was treated as a powerful vehicle of awakening of cultural and social consciousness. It was perhaps, for this reason that the narration of Puranas were a part of the annual ritual in every village and town during the rainy season and at the time of festivals. The Puranas may not satisfy the modern definition of historiography or those who wrote it may not have been aware of the "historian's crafts", but they were fully aware of the purpose of their work and the purpose of history itself. Many historians like F.E. Pargitar and H.C. Raychaudhury have attempted to write history. On the basis of genealogies of various dynasties given in Puranas. The Greek ambassador Megasthenese (in the court of Chandragupta Maurya c. 324-300 B.C.) testifies the existence of a list of 153 kings whose reigns had covered a period of about 6053 years up till then. Kalhana's Rajatarangini is another work of history which is indeed a solitary example of its kind. It enjoys great respect among the historians for its approach and historical content.

## Early Foreigners

When we look at the writings on history of ancient India beyond the Indian frontiers, we find that earliest attempts were those of Greek writers. Most notable are Herodotus, Nearchus, Megasthenese, Plutarch, Arrian, Strabo, Pliny the Elder, and Ptolemy. However, except for Megasthenese all others have touched Indian history in the true sense very marginally. They were concerned mostly with the northwestern part of India and primarily the areas which were either part of the Persian and Greek Satrapies or Alexander's

campaign. Megasthenese wrote extensively in a book called 'Indica' which is no longer available to us. We know about Megasthenese's writings through various extracts of the writings of Diodorus, Strabo and Arrian. It is very clear that Megasthenese had little understanding of Indian society and social systems.,

For example, he mentions that Indian society comprises of seven castes (jatis). The discrepancies in Megasthenese's works seem to be because of his lack of knowledge of any Indian language and being not part of Indian society and psyche. It is surprising that intensive trade relation with India during the first few centuries of the Christian era left such few traces in the Indian literature-tradition of the period.

Next important phase of historical geography begins with Al-Beruni, who was born in central Asia in A.D. 973 and died in Ghazni (present-day Afghanistan) in A.D. 1048. He was one of the greatest scholars of his time and contemporary of Mahmud of Ghazni.

When Mahmud conquered part of central Asia, he took Al-Beruni with him. Though Al-Beruni deplored his loss of freedom, he appreciated the favourable circumstances for his work unlike Megasthenese, Al-Beruni studied Sanskrit language and tried to gain a precise knowledge of Indian sources. The list of works consulted by him is long and impressive. His observations range from philosophy, religion, culture, society to science, literature, art and medicine. Al-Beruni's work can be termed as fairly objective and wherever he has faltered is not because of any other reason but his lack of proper understanding.

Al-Beruni can be credited to be comparatively free from religious or racial biases, we so often encounter in the writing of his successor Muslim and European writers. However, sometime Al-Beruni does show his annoyance when he says sarcastically, " ... the Hindus believe that there is no country but theirs, no nation like theirs, no kings like theirs, no religion like theirs, no science like theirs" comparatively free from religious or racial biases, we so often encounter in the writing of his successor Muslim and European writers. However, sometime Al-Beruni does show his annoyance when he says sarcastically, " ... the Hindus believe that there is no country but theirs, no nation like theirs, no kings like theirs, no religion like theirs, no science like theirs".

## Christian Missionaries and Enlightenment

The next phase of historiography belongs to the European interest mainly the Christian Missionaries. A large number of works were produced on India but none of them compared to the works of Al-Beruni. While Al-Beruni also possess a well defined religious and hermeneutics awareness, he was essentially a scholar and not driven to preach his faith. Most of the missionary writings can hardly be said to be fair.

They were more interested in learning and writing about Indian history in order to depict its flaws and prepare the ground for evangelical activity. Their contributions during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are also affected by the religious, intellectual and political movements in Europe.

However, it must be pointed out that all this led not only to the accumulation of large amount of contributions about Indian history but also Indian history became the victim of political and religious problems of Europe. With the coming of Enlightenment another phase of European history geography on India begins. Many scholars like John Holwell, Nathaniel Halhed, and Alexander Dow – all associated in various capacities with the British East India Company – wrote about Indian history and culture proving the pre-eminence of Indian civilization in the ancient world.

On the basis of Puranic sources, they also described the immense antiquity of human race. Holwell wrote that Hindu texts contained a higher revelation than the Christian one and they pre-dated the flood described in the Old Testament and that, "the 'mythology, as well as cosmogony of the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans, were borrowed from the doctrines of the Brahmins".

Halhed also critically examined the various aspects of Indian history, religion, mythology etc. He discussed the vast periods of time of human history assigned to four Yugas and concluded that hum~ reason can no more reconcile to itself the idea of Patriarchal longevity of few thousand years for the entire span of human race. Based on the huge amount of literature produced in Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe, many scholars and intellectuals who had never travelled to India wrote about it. The great intellectual and statesman, Voltaire viewed India as the homeland of religion in its oldest and purest form; and also as the cradle of worldly civilizations.

The French naturalist and traveller Pierre de Sonnerate also believed that all knowledge came from India which he considered as the cradle of civilizations. In 1807 the well known metaphysician Schelling wrote,

“what is Europe really but a sterile trunk which owes everything to oriental grafts?” The great philosopher Emmanuel Kant also acknowledged greatness of ancient Indian culture and civilization. He wrote, “Their religion has a great purity (and) one can find traces of pure concept of divinity which cannot easily be found elsewhere”. He also declared that Indian religious thoughts were free of dogmatism and intolerance.

## Imperialist Historiography

We have earlier mentioned about the missionary activities in India and their interest, in writing Indian history. Besides the colonial interests the establishment of Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784 also contributed towards the Writing of Indian History in its own way. However, it must be mentioned at this stage itself that much of these writings reflect the contemporary debate on religious faith and nationality and also their interests in enlarging the European colonies for economic exploitation.

Some of the leading intellectuals of the nineteenth century trading of this path are William Jones, Max Muller, Monier Williams, J.S. Mill, Karl Marx and F.W. Hegel. The most prominent among the twentieth century historians belonging to this school of thought was Vincent Arthur Smith (1843-1920) who prepared the first systematic history of ancient India published in 1904.

A large section of the European scholars became worried when the greatness of India's past started becoming popular and the Indian philosophy, logic and writings on such things as origin of universe, humanity and its age etc. started gaining acceptance. For well over a millennium much of the Europe had accepted the Old Testament as the final testament documenting the history of human race.

Thomas Maurice, for example, was bitterly upset and wrote in 1812 about, “the daring assumptions of certain sceptical French philosophers with respect to the Age of the world argument principally founded on the high assumptions of the Brahmins (which) have a direct tendency to overturn the Mosaic system, and, with it, Christianity”. These people were also very worried about the Bible story of Creation. Bishop Usher had calculated that the whole universe was created at 9.00 a.m. on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 4004 B.C. and the Great Flood took place in 2349 B.C. These dates and creation stories were being threatened to be wrong in the face of Indian mythologies which talked in terms of four Yugas and several hundred million years. This threatened the very foundation of the faith. However, the faithful were relieved by “the fortunate arrival of... the various dissertations, on the subject, of Sir William Jones”. On his own part, Sir William Jones concern was second to none. He wrote in 1788, “some intelligent and virtuous persons are inclined to doubt the authenticity of the accounts delivered by Moses”. Jones too was very clear that, “either the first eleven chapters of Genesis ... are true or the whole fabric of our national religion is false, a conclusion which none of us, I trust, would wish to be drawn”.

In view of the growing concern of the faithful, Boden Professorships of Sanskrit at Oxford University was endowed by Colonel Boden, specifically to promote the Sanskrit learning among the English, so as “to enable his countrymen to proceed in the conversion of the natives of India to the Christian religion”. Prizes were offered to the literary works undermining Indian tradition and religion. The first occupant of the Boden Chair was Horace Hayman Wilson. Writing about a series of lectures he gave, Wilson himself noted that, “these lectures were written to help candidates for a prize of £ 200 given by John Muir. ... for the best refutation of the Hindu religious systems”.

Friedrich Max Muller is considered as one of the most respected Indologists of the nineteenth century. He was a German but spent most of his life in England. On the request and financial support of the British East India Company he undertook massive jobs of translation and interpretation of the Indian religious texts in English. Though he achieved an unparalleled feat of getting translated a huge mass of Sanskrit texts into English, thereby, bringing it to the knowledge of the English speaking world, his approach and intention were never free from prejudice. They were necessitated by his religious belief and political requirements. Both these coloured the entire approach for the writing and interpretation of Indian history.

## Max Muller

In 1857 Max Muller wrote to the Duke of Argyll, “I look upon the creation given in the Genesis as simply historical”. Therefore, in terms of time span all he had was 6000 years *i.e.* upto 4000 B.C. within which entire history of universe had to be fitted. It was under this guiding principle William Jones, Max Muller, Vincent Smith and others wrote Indian history. Eager to settle the matter first, William Jones undertook the

responsibility of unravelling Indian chronology for the benefit and appeasement of his disconcerted colleagues, “ I propose to lay before you a concise history of Indian chronology extracted from Sanskrit books, attached to no system, and as much disposed to reject Mosoick history, if it be proved erroneous, as to believe it, if it be confirmed by sound reason from indubitable evidence”. Despite such assurances, Jone’s own predispositions on this matter was revealed in several earlier writings.



# 2

# The Geographical background of Indian History

## Introduction

**INDIAN** subcontinent is a well defined land with natural borders. At present there are six countries in this area: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, India, Bhutan and Bangladesh. In ancient times this whole mass of land was known as Bharatavarsha or Hindustan; the latter is derived from the name of the river Sindhu, pronounced by the westerners as Hindu or Indu. India gets its derivation from this. In our constitution it is called India, that is Bharata. This land is 'bordered in the north by the Himalayas, the western and northwestern side by Pamir plateau and Sulaiman Kirthar ranges, on the eastern side by the Bay of Bengal and western side by the Arabian Sea. Southern borders are bounded by Indian Ocean. Physically the subcontinent can be studied in three parts : (i) The Himalayas, (ii) The Indo-Gangetic-Brahmaputra plain (iii) The Deccan plateau.

## The Himalayas

The Himalayas are stretched from Afghanistan in the west upto Myanmar in the east. The Tibetan plateau forms the northern part of it. It is more than 2,400 Kms long and about 250 to 320 kms wide. There are about 114 peaks which are more than 20,000 feet high. Some of the highest peaks are: Gauri Shankar or Everest (the highest mountain in the world), Kanchanjanga, Dhaulagiri, Nanga Parvat and Nanda Devi. The Hindukush mountains, right from the Pamirs, form the natural western boundary of the Indian subcontinent. The mountains of Safed Koh, Sulaiman and Kirthar separate Iran from the Indian subcontinent. But the large stretches of land to the west of this line in modern Afghanistan and Baluchistan, like those to the south and east of the Hindukush, were for long both culturally and politically parts of India. On the eastern side are the Patkoi hills, Naga hills, the Manipur Plateau including the Khasi, Garo and Jaintia hills. The Lushai and Chin hills are to the south of Manipur.

The Himalayas form a formidable barrier against the foreign invasions from the north. But it is not altogether secluded from the rest of the world. There are some important passes through which interaction with western, central and northern Asia has been maintained since time immemorial. It is said that 'since early Siwalik times there has been a more or less constant intercourse between East Africa, Arabia, Central Asia and India maintained by the migrations of herds of mammals'. It is also stated that (India) 'received large accessions by migration of the larger quadrupeds from Egypt, Arabia, Central Asia, and even from the distant North America by way of land bridges across Alaska, Siberia and Mongolia'. Human migration is also possible on these routes.

In historical times the use of the Khyber and Bolan passes in the west is well known. Among these, the use of the former was very frequent and is known as the gateway to India. Besides guarding the northern frontier of India from human invasions the Himalayas protect us from the cold Siberian winds. The great Indus, Ganga and Brahmaputra plains with most fertile land, natural resources and perennial rivers is a gift of the Himalayas, for which Indians gratefully worship it as God.

## Indo-Gangetic-Brahmaputra Plain

To the south of the Himalayas lies the great plain of India which is more than 3200 kms long and about 240 kms to 320 kms broad. It is formed by the solid waste of the Himalayas brought by hundreds of descending streams. The alluvium thus formed made the plains most fertile. There are three great river systems, originating from the Himalayas, which supply perennial water to this great plain. These are the Indus, the Ganga and the Brahmaputra. But a big tract of land to the west of Yamuna and east of Indus in this plain is devoid of any water

system at present. This tract includes the states of Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan. Now it has been proved that in ancient times the river Saraswati and its tributaries used to flow in this area. The Sindhu or Indus rises from the Kailasa Manasarovar area in the Tibetan plateau, runs west and northwest for about 1300 Kms, between the Karakoram range. Then joined by the Oilgit river, it turns south and reaches the plains where the five rivers join it to form Panchananda *desh* or Punjab. These five tributaries of the Sindhu from east to west are: the Sutlej (*Satudri*), the Beas (*Vipasa*), the Ravi (*Parushm*), the Chenab (*Asikni*) and the Jhelum (*Vitesta*). The first mentioned 28 river, Sutlej or Satudri was once a tributary of the lost river Saraswati, but changed its course. The Ganga, rising from the Himalayas, reaches the plain at Hardwar and passes through the states of Uttaranchal, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Bengal, then joins the Bay of Bengal. On the west of it flows the river Yamuna also rising from the Himalayas. Some Vindhyan rivers like the Chambal, the Betwa and the Ken join the Yamuna before its confluence with the Ganga at Allahabad. Another great Vindhyan river, the Son, joins the Ganga near Patna in Bihar. From the Himalayas side, rivers like the Gomati, the Sarayu, the Gandak and the Kosi join the Ganga in the states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. There are several mouths through which the Ganga falls into the Bay Of Bengal. The main stream is called Bhagirathi or Hooghly on which are situated the towns of Murshidabad, Hooghly and Kolkata. The eastern most mouth of the Ganga is called the Padma. The great Brahmaputra, originating from the eastern part of the lake Manasarovar in the Kailasa flows eastward through the plateau of Tibet under the name of Tsangpo. Then it turns south and enters in India where it assumes the name Dihang. Later, the rivers Dihang and Lohit join and are called Brahmaputra or Lohitya. Passing through Assam and Bengal it joins the eastern most mouth of the Ganga *i.e.*, Padma. But before falling into the Bay of Bengal another mighty river, the Meghna, joins it. The delta thus formed is one of the most fertile part of Bengal and is known as Sundarban delta.

## The Deccan Plateau and Central India

Peninsular India can be studied under two distinct sections. The mountain ranges of the Vindhyas and Satpura run parallel to each other from east to west. In between these two, flows the river Narmada going towards the Arabian sea. The only other river flowing towards west is Tapti, lying a little south of the Satpura. All other rivers of the Peninsula run from west to east falling into the Bay of Bengal indicating that the plateau is tilted towards east. The northern portion of the plateau, separated by the Vindhya Satpura ranges is known as the Central Indian plateau, while the southern portion is called the Deccan plateau.

### Central Indian Plateau

The Central Indian plateau stretches from Gujarat in the west to Chhota Nagpur in the east. The great Indian desert, called Thar, lies to the north of the Aravalli range. To the south of it is the Vindhyas, which rises abruptly from the Narmada side, *i.e.*, south, and has a slopy formation in the north. The Malwa plateau and the tablelands of Bundelkhand and Baghelkhand are parts of this. As a result, all the rivers on this side flow towards north or north-east to join the Yamuna and the Ganga. The eastern stretches of the Vindhyas, known as the Kaimur ranges, extend almost up to the south of Banaras and run parallel with the Ganga up to the Rajmahal hills. Between the Ganga and the Rajmahal is a narrow defile or a passage from Chunar in the west (*i.e.* Mirzapur, U.P.) to Teliagarhi in the east. This is the only high road, which connects Western and Eastern India. Its strategic importance from the military point of view was fully understood which is evident by the presence of hill forts of Rohtas and Chunar in the east and Kalijar and Gwalior in the west. It is said that the passes of Shahabad and Teliagarhi, situated at a distance of only about five kilometers from each other, served as the gateway to Bengal. On the Western side of the plateau and the Thar desert is situated the rich lowland of Gujarat having several low hills and watered by a number of rivers like Mahi, Sabarmati, and lower courses of Narmada and Tapti. The Kathiawar peninsula and the Rann of Kutch are marshy and dry during the hot season.

### The Deccan Plateau

**The Deccan Plateau** As we have noted earlier, the surface of the Deccan plateau slopes down from west to east. On the western side lies a range of high cliffs running south to north leaving a narrow strip of plain between it and the sea. It is called the Western Ghats, which rises up to 3,000 feet. The plateau is higher in the south being about 2000 feet in the Mysore region and about half of that in the Hyderabad. The Eastern Ghats, consisting of groups of low hills, is marked by several gaps through which many peninsular rivers

join the Bay of Bengal. The hills going southwards gradually receding from the sea turn westward to join the Western Ghats at the Nilgiri. The plain between Eastern Ghats and the sea is wider than that of Western Ghats. Except the Narmada and the Tapti, which run towards west and join the Arabian sea, all the rivers of the Peninsular India run from west to east. Most of them rise from the Western Ghat and traversing the whole breadth of the plateau, fall in the Bay. The Mahanadi forms a broad plain known as the Chattisgarh plain in the northeast. It passes through Orissa before joining the sea. The valley of Godavari with its tributaries, has a large flat land in the north but it narrows in the east before meeting the sea. Further south, the Krishna, with its tributaries like the Tungabhadra, divide the Deccan plateau into two sections. Further south, the Kaveri and its tributaries form another important river system. One thing should be mentioned here that these rivers are different from those of the north India. Devoid of a perennial water source like the Himalayas, these southern rivers are mostly dry during the hot season, hence less valuable for irrigation and navigation purposes.

## The Coastal Regions

The fertile coastal plains are important because they also provide opportunities for maritime activities and trade. The western coastal plain stretches from the Gulf of Cambay in the north to Kerala ' in south. The northern part is called the Konkan while the southern one is called the Malabar Coast. The rainfall in this region is very high. There are no big rivers but smaller rivers provide easy communication and irrigation. There are some good harbours in the Konkan region and also in the Malabar. On the other hand the eastern coast has a few natural harbours but during the historical period maritime activities lead to more vigorous and fruitful contacts with the south-east Asian countries. The southern tip of the peninsula is known as Cape Comorin or Kanyakumari. To its south-east is the island of Sri Lanka, which though not an integral part, has been closely associated with India. An almost continuous chain of islands and shoals connect India with this island which has been given the name of Adam's Bridge: The mango shaped island was known in ancient times by the name of Tambaparni, a corrupt word from Sanskrit Tambraparni, i.e., having a look or shape of tambula or betel leaf. It was also known as Simhaladvipa.

## Climate

The Indian subcontinent is situated mostly in the tropical zone. Guarded by the lofty Himalayas from the cold arctic winds from Siberia, it has a fairly warm climate throughout the year. It has regular six ritus of two months each and three seasons of four months. Roughly March through June is the hot season when temperature goes up to 48° C or more in some regions. Then follows the rainy season for four months from July to October. The south-west monsoon brings rain in varying degrees throughout the country.

## The Geography of India as described in Ancient Indian Literature

The vast subcontinent of India was known in the past as Bharatavarsha, the land of the Bharatas, bounded on the north by the Himalayas and by the ocean in the south. It formed the southern part of Jambu-dvipa. The name 'India' was first applied by the Achaemenid Persians to the region watered by the Sindhu. The Sapta Sindhu, referring to the region of the seven rivers of the Saraswati (or five streams of the Saraswati together with the Ganges and the Jamuna), was the term used for India in the *Zend Avesta*, the sacred book of Paras is. The Greeks, calling the river Sindhu 'Indos', subsequently borrowed the term from the Persians. In the *Mehre Yasht* and *Yasna* of the Persians we actually find the word Hindu in place of HaftaHendu, indicating the extension of the name to the land beyond the territory of the Indus. Herodotus, the famous Greek historians, used the term 'Indos' to the kshatrapy of the Persian Empire, but gradually it was extended to the whole country both by Greek and Roman writers.

Since the introduction of Buddhism into China in the first century A.D. the Chinese used the term Tien-Chu or Chuantu for India. But after Hiuen Tsang the term Yin-Tu came to be in vogue there. Hindu in Persian, Indos in Greek, Hoddu in Hebrew, Indus in Latin and Tien-chu in Chinese are all corrupt forms of Sindhu. Thus descendants of Bharata came to be known as Indians or Hindus. "Hindu", says I-tsing, "is the name used only by the northern tribes, and the people of India themselves do not know it".

The first definite mention of Bharata as a region is to be found in Panini who lived about sixth century B.C. It is only one out of 22 janapadas specified from Kamboja to Magadha, all in Northern India. Buddhist literature subsequently speaks of seven Bharata regions (Sapta-Bharatas) corresponding to the ancient Sapta-

Sindhu. Arya-desa and Brahmarshtra were other names of India mentioned by I-tsing. Aryavarta was also another ancient name given at the time of Patanjali (150 B.C.) to the northern part of India lying between the Himalayas and the Pariyatraka or the western part of the Vindhya. On the west it was bounded by the Adarsavali or Aravalli and on the east by the Kalakavana or the Rajmahal Hills. The *Puranas* define the term Bharatavarsha as “the country that lies north of the ocean (*i.e.* the Indian Ocean) and south of the snowy mountains (Himalayas), marked by the seven main chains of mountains, *viz.* Mahendra, Malaya, Sahya, Suktimat, RL.1 (sha (mountains of Gondwana), Vindhya, and Pariyatra (western Vindhya up to the Aravallis); where dwell the descendants of the Bharatas, with the Kiratas living to its east, the Yavanas (Ionians or Greeks) to its west, and its own population consisting of the Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, and Sudras (*i.e.* the Hindus)”. But the name Bharatavarsha is not a mere geographical expression like the term India. It has historical significance, indicating the country of the Bharatas of *RigVeda*. It engaged their deepest sentiments of love and service as expressed in their literature. One of the commonest prayers for a Hindu requires him to recall and worship the image of his mother country as the land of seven sacred rivers, the Ganga, Yamuna, Godavari, Saraswati, Narmada, Sindhu, and Kaveri, which between them cover its entire area. Another prayer calls its image as the land of seven sacred cities, Ayodhya, Mathura, Maya (modern Hardwar), Kasi, Kanchi (Conjeeveram), Avantika (Ujjain), Dvaravati (Dwarka), representing important regions of India.

The spirit of these prayers is further sustained by the peculiar Hindu institution of pilgrimage. It expects a Hindu to visit in his life the holy places associated with his faith. Each of the principal Hindu faiths like Vaishnava, Saiva, or Sakta and other sects have their own list of holy places, and these are spread throughout the length and breadth of India and not confined to a single province. The different sects are at one in enjoining upon their respective votaries, a pilgrimage to the different and distant parts of India and thereby fostering in them a live sense of what constitutes their common mother country.

In the same spirit, Sankara established his four Mathas (religious schools) at the four extreme points of the country *viz.* Jyotirmatha in the north (near Badri Kedar on the Himalayas), Saradamatha at Dwarka in the west, Goverdhana matha at Puri in the east, and Sringeri matha in Mysore. Sectarianism is thus an aid to nationalism in Hindu culture. In some of the sacred texts like the Bhagavata Purana, or Manusmriti are found passages of patriotic fervour describing Bharatavarsha as the land fashioned by the Gods themselves (devanirmita sthanam) who even wish to be born in it as heaven on earth, for the spiritual stimulus of its environment, and above these as the culminating utterance – “Mother and Mother-Country are greater than Heaven!” (Janani janmabhumscha svargadapi gariyas).

All these prayers and passages show that a Hindu has elevated patriotism into a religion. In the words of a distinguished British critic, “the Hindu regards India not only as a political unit, naturally the subject of one sovereignty – whoever holds that sovereignty, whether British, Mohamedan, or Hindu – but as the outward embodiment, as the temple – nay, even as the Goddess mother – of his spiritual culture ... He made India the symbol of his culture; he filled it with this soul.

In his consciousness, it was his greater self”. But besides religion, the political experiences of the ancient Hindus also aided them in their conception of the mother country. The unity of a country is easily grasped when it is controlled by a single political authority. The ancient Hindus were familiar with the ideal and institution of paramount sovereignty from very early times. It is indicated by such significant Vedic words as Ekarat, Samrat, 34 *Rajad hi raja*, or *Sarvabhauma*, and such Vedic ceremonies as the *Rajasuya*, *Vajapeya*, or *Ashvamedha*, which were prescribed for performance by a king who by his *digvijaya* or conquest made himself the king of kings. Some of the Vedic works and later texts like the *Mahabharata* or the *Puranas* even contain lists of such great kings or emperors. Apart from these prehistoric emperors, there have been several such emperors in historical times, such as Chandragupta Maurya, Ashoka, Samudragupta, Harsha, Mihira Bhoja, and in later times, Akbar and Aurangzeb. Some even performed the horse-sacrifice in declaration of their paramount sovereignty, such as Pushyamitra, Samudragupta, Kumaragupta I, Adityasena and Pulkeshin I. Thus the institution of paramount sovereignty has had a long history in India.

## Influences of Geography on Indian History

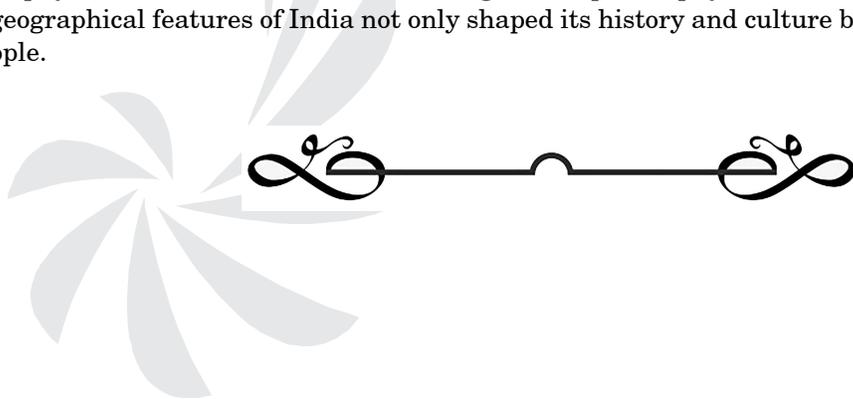
In many respects geographical features influence man’s activities and his interactions with nature and other groups of men. The natural barriers of hills, mountains and rivers, etc., give him an idea of a geographical unite and belonging. He develops his living habits and mode of thinking as per his surroundings. We have seen that Indian subcontinent is a vast country with well defined natural barriers in the form of Himalayas in the

north and coastal boundaries on the three remaining sides. This gives the inhabitants a feeling of oneness. They regard this as their motherland. Its vastness can be measured when compared to Europe and finding it almost equal except for the former Soviet Union. Europe has several nations with their own history, tradition, language, etc.

On the contrary, although there always had been many states in India but their social and cultural setup had been broadly the same throughout. Sanskrit was the most respected language besides the local languages. States were administered and governed on the basis of law-books called *Dharmasastras*. Places of worship and pilgrimage are distributed throughout the country. These cultural bonds gave the Indians a sense of unity and nationality. At the same time there are distinct regional variations. There are several regions which have a distinct sense of regional spirit and cultural traits. Larger kingdoms and empires rose from these units and weakened, in due course, giving way to another unit to come up. Some historians have defined it as forces of centralisation and decentralisation acting and reacting with each other. In other words, forces of integration and disintegration were always at work. But it will be more appropriate to say that the Indian system of polity recognised the *chakravarti* concept of conquest, where every king should aspire for ruling the whole country. Thus empires fell and new ones arose from it, but the tradition continued.

Even the early conquerors from the north-west like Indo-Greeks, Saka-Pallavas, Kushanas, etc., established kingdoms and empires but never failed to show their eagerness to adopt Indian ideas of polity and willingness to assimilate themselves in the main stream of Indian society. Even in earlier periods these regions maintained their individuality despite their political ups and downs. 'The old kingdoms of Kosala, Magadha, Gauda, Vanga, Avanti, Lat and Saurashtra in the north, and Kalinga, Andhra, Maharashtra, Kamataka, Chera, Chola and Pandya in the south, among others, seem to possess eternal lives. Empires rose and fell, they vied with each other very frequently, but these states under different names and under various ruling dynasties, continued their individual existence almost throughout the course of history. India has a long coast line on its three sides.

The people living here were experts in maritime activities. They had trade relations with other countries on both sides. No dynasty other than the Cholas in the south has even attempted to conquer lands beyond the sea. But it was not a lasting attempt. On the contrary we find that Indians had spread in many parts of the known world, but in the South East Asia they developed a lasting cultural influence in countries like Vietnam, Indonesia, Cambodia, etc. These were individual efforts by traders and princes and not by any State. A distinct contrast from the European colonist must be noted here. Indians never attempted genocide or cruel suppression; they established large kingdoms and became part of that land. They gave their religion and philosophy to them but assimilated their religion and philosophy as well. Thus it can be said in conclusion that the geographical features of India not only shaped its history and culture but also the mind and thoughts of the people.



# 3

## Pre-Historic Period

### Introduction

The prehistoric period in the early development of human beings is commonly known as the Old Stone Age or the Palaeolithic Age. This long stretch of time is divided into the Lower, Middle and Upper stone age.

The distant past when there was no paper or language or the written word, and hence no books or written documents, is called prehistory, or, as we often say, prehistoric times. How people lived in those times was difficult to surmise until scholars began to discover the places where prehistoric people lived. Excavation at these places brought to light old tools, pottery, habitats, bones of ancient human beings and animals, and drawings on cave walls. By piecing together the information deduced from these objects and the cave drawings, scholars have constructed fairly accurate knowledge about what happened and how people lived in prehistoric times. When the basic needs of food, water, clothing and shelter were fulfilled people felt the need to express themselves. Painting and drawing were the oldest art forms practiced by human beings to express themselves, using the cave walls as their canvas.

Archaeologists have found traces of huts or houses at some sites. For instance, in Burzahom (in present-day Kashmir) people built pit-houses, which were dug into the ground, with steps leading into them. These may have provided shelter in cold weather. Archaeologists have also found cooking hearths both inside and outside the huts, which suggests that, depending on the weather, people could cook food either indoors or outdoors

### Palaeolithic age

Archaeologists have given lengthy names for the time that we are studying. They call the earliest period the Paleolithic. This comes from two Greek words, 'palaeo', meaning old, and 'lithos', meaning stone. The name points to the importance of finds of stone tools. The Paleolithic period extends from 2 million years ago to about 12,000 years ago. This long span of time covers 99% of human history.

The Palaeolithic Age in India is divided into three phases, based on tool technology. These phases are:

- Lower Palaeolithic (Handaxe and cleaver industries)
- Middle Palaeolithic (Tools made on flakes)
- Upper Palaeolithic (Tools made on flakes and blades)

### Lower Palaeolithic

Lower Palaeolithic culture was quite widespread phenomenon between 6,00,000 and 60,000 B.C.

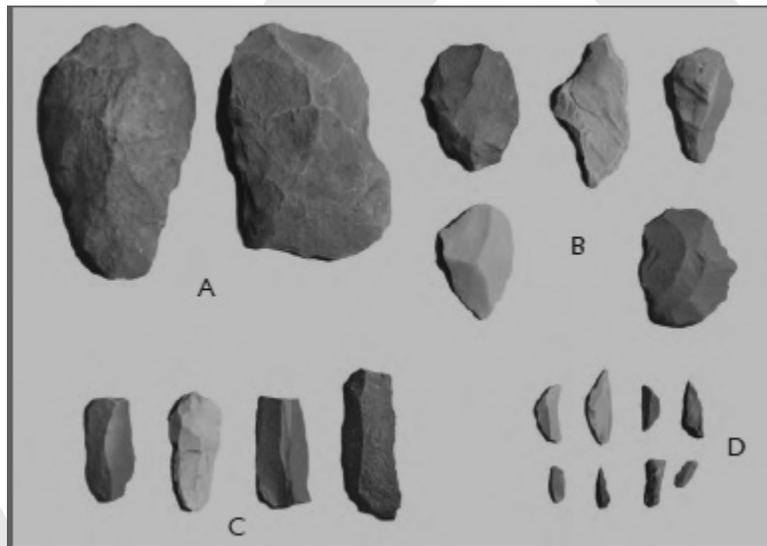
The main tool types in this phase were hand axes and cleavers, along with chopper-chopping tools. They were made both on cores as well as flakes. Lower Palaeolithic sites are of several "types: habitation sites (either under rock-shelters or in the open; factory sites associated with sources of raw materials; sites that combine elements of both these functions; and open air sites in any of these categories subsequently. The raw materials used for making these stone tools 'are of various kinds of stone, like quartzite, chert and sometimes even quartz and basalt, etc. These have been found covered with sand, silt, etc., 'as seen in river sections and terraces. The Lower Palaeolithic tools have been found over a large area, virtually from all over India, except the plains of the Indus, Saraswati, Brahmaputra and Ganga where raw material in the form of stone is not available.

## Middle Palaeolithic Culture

- The middle Palaeolithic tool technology is characterised basically by the flake tool industry. The tools are made on flakes obtained by striking them out from pebbles or cobbles. The tool types include small and medium-sized handaxes, cleavers and various kinds of scrapers, borers, and knives.
- The tools show regional variations both in terms of available raw materials as well as shapes and sizes. There are large borers or awls, worked with steep retouch on thick flakes.
- Middle Palaeolithic tools have mostly been found in Central India, Deccan, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Orissa. Wherever the Middle Palaeolithic industries have developed from those of the Lower Palaeolithic, there is an unbroken continuity of occupation of the site. Some of the most important sites of Middle Palaeolithic period are Bhimbetka, Nevasa, Pushkar, Rohiri hills of upper Sind, and Samnapur on Narmada.
- Stone tools found during this period are generally tiny, and are called microliths. Microliths were probably stuck on to handles of bone or wood to make tools such as saws and sickles. At the same time, older varieties of tools continued to be in use.

## Mesolithic (middle stone)

The period when we find environmental changes, beginning about 12,000 years ago till about 10,000 years ago is called the Mesolithic (middle stone).



### Stone tools

A : These are examples of the earliest stone tools.

B : These were made several thousand years later.

C : These were made later still.

D : These were made about 10,000 years ago.

Some of these stone tools were used to cut meat and bone, scrape bark (from trees) and hides (animal skins), chop fruit and roots. Some may have been attached to handles of bone or wood, to make spears and arrows for hunting. Other tools were used to chop wood, which was used as firewood. Wood was also used to make huts and tools.

- Around 12,000 years ago, there were major changes in the climate of the world, with a shift to relatively warm conditions. In many areas, this led to the development of grasslands. Those who hunted these animals now followed them, learning about their food habits and their breeding seasons. It is likely that this helped people to start thinking about herding and rearing these animals themselves.
- Fishing also became important.

- This was also a time when several grain bearing grasses, including wheat, barley and rice grew naturally in different parts of the subcontinent. Men, women and children probably collected these grains as food, and learnt where they grew, and when they ripened. This may have led them to think about growing plants on their own.

Stone tools have been found from many sites as well. Many of these are different from the earlier Palaeolithic tools and that is why they are called Neolithic. These include tools that were polished to give a fine cutting edge, and mortars and pestles used for grinding grain and other plant produce. Mortars and pestles are used for grinding grain even today, several thousand years later. At the same time, tools of the Palaeolithic types continued to be made and used, and remember, some tools were also made of bone.

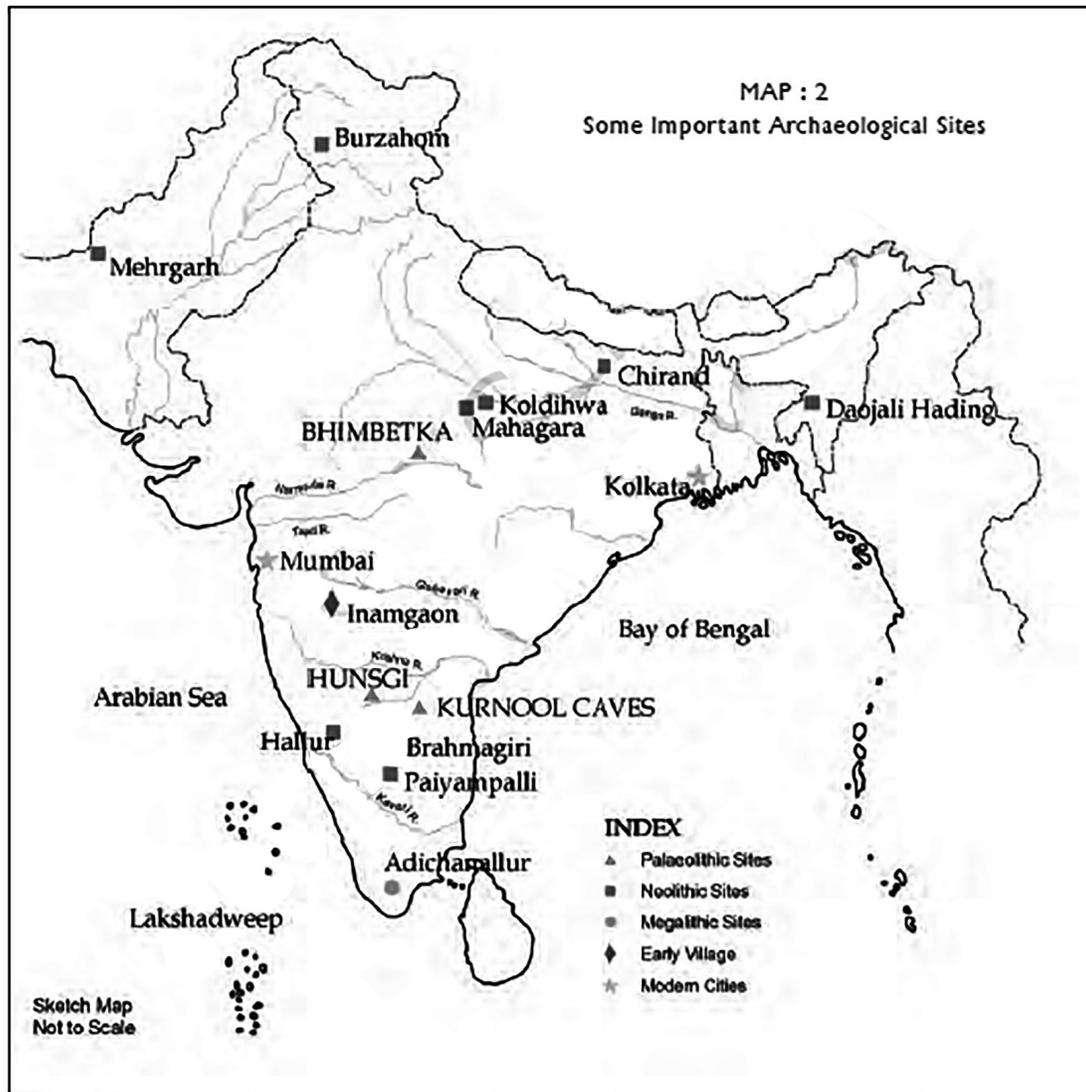


Fig. 1

## Neolithic age

- The next stage, from about 10,000 years ago, is known as the *Neolithic*.
- Stone tools have been found from many sites as well. Many of these are different from the earlier Palaeolithic tools and that is why they are called Neolithic. These include tools that were polished to give a fine cutting edge, and mortars and pestles used for grinding grain and other plant produce. Mortars and pestles are used for grinding grain even today, several thousand years later.
- At the same time, tools of the Palaeolithic types continued to be made and used, and remember, some tools were also made of bone.

- The farming and herding began in Neolithic period. Men, women and children probably observed several things: the places where edible plants were found, how seeds broke off stalks, fell on the ground, and new plants sprouted from them. Perhaps they began looking after plants — protecting them from birds and animals so that they could grow and the seeds could ripen. In this way people became farmers.
- Animals multiply naturally. Besides, if they are looked after carefully, they provide milk, which is an important source of food, and meat, whenever required. In other words, animals that are reared can be used as a ‘store’ of food.

## Finding out about the first farmers and Herders

- You will notice a number of blue squares. Each marks a site from where archaeologists have found evidence of early farmers and herders. These are found all over the subcontinent. Some of the most important ones are in the north-west, in present-day Kashmir, and in east and south India.
- To find out whether these sites were settlements of farmers and herders, scientists study evidence of plants and animal bones. One of the most exciting finds includes remains of burnt grain.(These may have been burnt accidentally or on purpose). Scientists can identify these grains, and so we know that a number of crops were grown in different parts of the subcontinent. They can also identify the bones of different animals.

In the Indian context, the Neolithic agriculture based regions can roughly be divided into four groups:

- (a) the Indus system and its western borderland;
- (b) Ganga valley
- (c) Western India and the northern Deccan and
- (d) the southern Deccan.

| Grain and Bones                                     | Sites                                       |
|---|---|
| Wheat, barley, sheep, goat, cattle                  | Mehrgarh (in present day-Pakistan)          |
| Rice, fragmentary animal bones                      | Koldihwa (in present-day Uttar Pradesh)     |
| Rice, cattle (hoof marks on clay surface)           | Mahagara (in present-day Uttar Pradesh)     |
| Wheat and lentil                                    | Gufkral (in present-day Kashmir)            |
| Wheat and lentil, dog, cattle, sheep, goat, buffalo | Burzahom (in present-day Kashmir)           |
| Wheat, green gram, barley, buffalo, ox              | Chirand (in present-day Bihar)              |
| Millet, cattle, sheep, goat, pig                    | Hallur (in present-day Andhra Pradesh)      |
| Black gram, millet, cattle, sheep, pig              | Paiyampalli (in present-day Andhra Pradesh) |

These are just some of the sites from which grain and bones have been found.

Many kinds of earthen pots have also been found. These were sometimes decorated, and were used for storing things. People began using pots for cooking food, especially grains like rice, wheat and lentils that now became an important part of the diet.



A pot from an old city. Pots like these were used about 4700 years ago.

## Lifestyle of stone age people:

- Archaeology does not tell us directly about customs and practices. Scholars have studied the lives of present-day farmers who practice simple agriculture. They have also studied the lives of herders. Many of

these farmers and herders live in groups called tribes. Scholars find that they follow certain customs and practices that may have existed earlier as well. Usually two to three generations live together in small settlements or villages. Most families are related to one another and groups of such families form a tribe.

- Members of a tribe follow occupations such as hunting, gathering, farming, herding and fishing. Usually, women do most of the agricultural work, including preparing the ground, sowing seeds, looking after the growing plants and harvesting grain. Children often look after plants, driving away animals and birds that might eat them.
- Women also thresh, husk, and grind grain. Men usually lead large herds of animals in search of pasture. Children often look after small flocks. The cleaning of animals and milking, is done by both men and women. Both women and men make pots, baskets, tools and huts. They also take part in singing, dancing and decorating their huts.
- **Village:** One of the distinctive features of a village is that most people who live there are engaged in food production.
- Besides, they began weaving cloth, using different kinds of materials, for example cotton, that could now be grown. Not quite. In many areas, men and women still continued to hunt and gather food, and elsewhere people adopted farming and herding slowly, over several thousand years. Besides, in some cases people tried to combine these activities, doing different things during different seasons.
- Some men are regarded as leaders. They may be old and experienced, or young, brave warriors, or priests. Old women are respected for their wisdom and experience.
- Tribes have rich and unique cultural traditions, including their own language, music, stories and paintings. They also have their own gods and goddesses.
- What makes tribes different from many other societies you will be studying about is that land, forests, grasslands and water are regarded as the wealth of the entire tribe, and everybody shares and uses these together. There are no sharp differences between the rich and the poor.

## Important pre-Historic sites In India

### (a) Mehrgarh:

- Mehrgarh is the site located in a fertile plain near the Bolan Pass, which is one of the most important routes into Iran.
- Mehrgarh was probably one of the places where women and men learnt to grow barley and wheat, and rear sheep and goats for the first time in this area. It is one of the earliest villages that we know about.
- Other finds at Mehrgarh include remains of square or rectangular houses. Each house had four or more compartments, some of which may have been used for storage.
- When people die, their relatives and friends generally pay respect to them. People look after them, perhaps in the belief that there is some form of life after death. Burial is one such arrangement. Several burial sites have been found at Mehrgarh. In one instance, the dead person was buried with goats, which were probably meant to serve as food in the next world.

#### House structure in Mehrgarh



### (b) Daojali Hading :

- Daojali Hading is a site on the hills near the Brahmaputra Valley, close to routes leading into China and Myanmar.

- Here stone tools, including mortars and pestles, have been found. These indicate that people were probably growing grain and preparing food from it. Other finds include jadeite, a stone that may have been brought from China. Also common are
- finds of tools made of fossil wood (ancient wood that has hardened into stone), and pottery.

### (c) Hunsgi

- A number of early Paleolithic sites were found here. At some sites, a large number of tools, used for all sorts of activities, were found.
- These were probably habitation-cum factory sites. In some of the other, smaller sites, there is evidence to suggest that tools were made. Some of the sites were close to springs. Most tools were made from limestone.
- Archaeologists who excavated the site found evidence of many kinds of animal bones from the earliest levels. These included bones of wild animals such as the deer and pig. In later levels, they found more bones of sheep and goat, and in still later levels, cattle bones are most common, suggesting that this was the animal that was generally kept by the people.



# 4

## Chalcolithic Period in India

THE end of the Neolithic period saw very different kind of developments in different areas. While in the Indus and Saraswati valleys there emerged, though slowly, a full-fledged civilization, in central India and Deccan a very different kind of culture developed which, though using metal, never reached the level of urbanisation. This was known as Chalcolithic culture. Some of these cultures were contemporary with the Harappan culture and other were decidedly later than Harappan. These cultures shared certain common features. They are all characterised by painted ceramic, usually black-on-red, a specialised blade and flake industry of the silicious material like chalcedony and chert, and copper and bronze tools, though on a restricted scale. Their economy was based on subsistence agriculture, stock-raising and hunting and fishing.

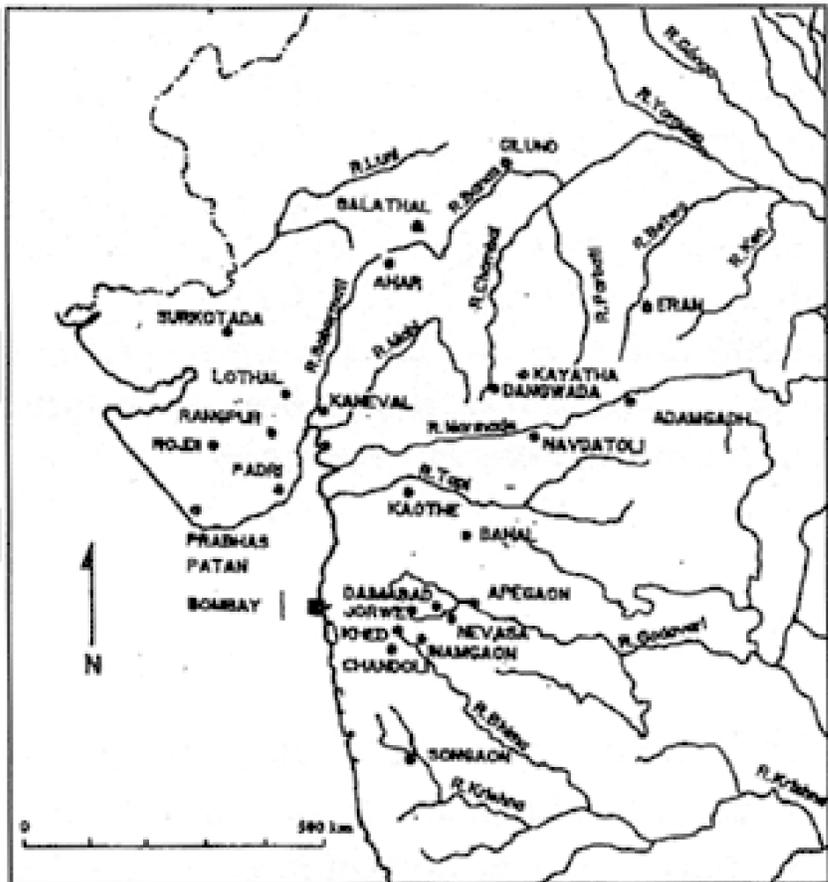
### Important chalcolithic site

Some important Chalcolithic cultures are:

|                 |                   |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| Ahar culture    | c. 2800-1500 B.C. |
| Kayatha culture | c. 2450-1700 B.C. |
| Malwa culture   | c. 1900-1400 B.C. |
| Savalda culture | c. 2300-2000 B.C. |
| Jorwe culture   | c. 1500-900 B.C.  |
| Prabhas culture | c. 2000-1400 B.C. |
| Rangpur culture | c. 1700-1400 B.C. |

The most distinguishing feature of these Chalcolithic cultures is their distinct painted pottery. The Kayatha culture is characterized by a sturdy red-slipped ware painted with designs in chocolate colour, a red painted buff ware and a com bed ware bearing incised patterns. The Ahar people made a distinctive black-and-red ware decorated with white designs.

The Malwa ware is rather coarse in fabric, but has a thick buff surface over which designs are made either in red or black. The Prabhas and Rangpur wares are both derived from the Harappan, but have a glossy surface due to which they are also called Lustrous Red Ware. Jorwe ware too is painted black-on-red but has a matt surface treated with a wash. Some of the most well-known pottery forms are dishes-on-stand, spouted vases, stemmed cups, pedestalled bowls, big storage jars, and spouted basins and bowls. Most of these Chalcolithic cultures flourished in semi-arid regions of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra. The settlements of Kayatha culture are only a few in number, mostly located on the Chambal and its tributaries.



They are relatively small in size and the biggest may be not over two hectares. In contrast to small Kayatha culture settlements those of Ahar Culture are big. At least three of them namely Ahar, Balathal and Gilund are of several hectares. Stone, mud bricks, and mud were used for the construction of houses and other structures. Excavations reveal that Bala thal was a well fortified settlement.

The people of Malwa culture settled mostly on the Narmada and its tributaries. Navdatoli, Eran and Nagada are the three best known settlements of Malwa culture. Navdatoli measures almost 10 hectares and is one of the largest Chalcolithic settlements in the country. It has been seen that at some of these sites were fortified and Nagada had even a bastion of mud-bricks. Eran similarly had a fortification with a moat. Unfortunately not more than half a dozen settlements of Prabhas culture are known. The Rangpur culture sites are located mostly on Ghelo and Kalubhar rivers in Gujarat. The Jorwe settlements are comparatively larger in number. More than 200 settlements are known from Maharashtra. Prakash, Daimabad and Inamgaon are some of the best known settlements of this culture. The largest of these is Daimabad which measured almost 20 hectares. The Chalcolithic people built rectangular and circular houses of mud wattle-and-daub. The circular houses were mostly in clusters. These houses and huts had roofs of straw supported on bamboo and wooden rafters. Floors were made of rammed clay and huts were used for storage also. People raised cattle as well as cultivated both khari and rabi crops in rotation. Wheat and barley were grown in the area of Malwa. Rice is reported to have been found from Inamgaon and Ahar. These people also cultivated jowar and bajra and so also kulth, ragi, green peas, lentil and green and black grams. Almost all these Chalcolithic cultures flourished in the black cotton soil zone. This clearly represents an ecological adaptation dictated by available technology, knowledge and means. An analogy with present-day agricultural methods in these regions leads to the supposition that we are dealing here with a system of dry farming, dependent on moisture retentive soils.

## Trade and Commerce

There is evidence to show that the Chalcolithic communities traded and contemporary communities. Large settlements like Ahar, Gilund, Nagada, Navdatoli, Eran, Prabhas, Rangpur, Prakash, Daimabad and Inamgaon would have served as major centres of trade and exchange. It appears that Ahar people, settled close to the copper source, supplied copper tools and objects to other contemporary communities in Malwa and Gujarat. It has been suggested that most of the copper axes found in Malwa, Jorwe and Prabhas cultures bear some identification marks, which are almost identical, suggesting that they may be the trademarks of the smiths who made them.

Conch shell for bangles were traded from the Saurashtra coast to various other parts of the Chalcolithic regions. Similarly, gold and ivory may have come from Tekkalkotta (Karnataka) to Jorwe people who in turn traded these to their contemporaries. The semiprecious stones may have been traded to various parts from Rajpipla (Gujarat). It is interesting to note that the Jorwe people traded even the pottery to distant places, as Inamgaon pottery has been found at several sites located away from it. This reminds us of Northern Black Polished Ware being exported with the trade from the plain Gangetic to far off regions, in the early historical period. Wheeled bullock carts, drawings of which have been found on pots, were used for long distance trade, besides the river transport.

## Religious Beliefs

Religion was an aspect which interlinked all the Chalcolithic cultures. The worship of mother goddess and the bull was in vogue. The bull cult seems to have been predominant in Malwa during the Ahar period. A large number of these both naturalistic as well as stylised lingas have been found from most of the sites. The naturalistic ones may have served as votive offerings, but the small stylised ones may have been hung around the neck as the lingayats do today. The Mother Goddess is depicted on a huge storage jar of Malwa culture in an applique design. She is flanked by a woman on the right and a crocodile on the left, by the side of which is represented the shrine. Likewise the fiddle-shaped figurines probably resembling sivatasa, the symbol of Lakshmi, the Goddess of wealth in historical period represent a mother Goddess.

In a painted design on a pot, a deity is shown with dishevelled hair, recalling the Rudra of later period. A painting on a jar found from Daimabad; shows a deity surrounded by animals and birds such as tigers and peacocks. Some scholars compare it with the 'Siva Pashupati' depicted on a seal from Mohanjodaro. Two figurines from Inamgaon, belonging to late Jorwe culture, have been identified as proto-Ganesh, who is

worshipped for success before embarking on an undertaking. Several headless figurines found at Inamgaon have been compared with Goddess Visira of the Mahabharata. Fireworship seems to have been a very widespread phenomenon among the Chalcolithic people. Fire-altars have been found from a large number of Chalcolithic sites during the course of excavations.

The occurrence of pots and other funerary objects found along with the burials of the Malwa and Jorwe people indicate that people had a belief in life after death. The Chalcolithic cultures flourished during the third millennium and second millennium B.C. A large number of settlements like Kayatha, Prabhas, Ahar, Balathal, Prakash and Nevasa were deserted, to be reoccupied after four to six centuries later. It has been postulated that these cultures declined due to decline in rainfall which made it hard for the agricultural communities to sustain.

## Technology

The Chalcolithic farmers had made considerable progress in ceramic as well as metal technology. The painted pottery was well made and well fired in kiln. It was fired at a temperature between 500-700° C. In metal tools we find axes, chisels, bangles, beads, hooks, etc. which were mostly made of copper. The copper was obtained, perhaps, from the Khetri mines of Rajasthan. Gold ornaments were extremely rare and have been found only in the Jorwe culture. An ear ornament has been found from

Prabhas also. The find of crucibles and pairs of tongs of copper at Inamgaon shows the working of goldsmiths. Chalcedony drills were used for perforating beads of semiprecious stones. Lime was prepared out of Kankar and used for various purposes like painting houses and lining the storage bins, etc.

## Copper Hoard Culture

Since the first reported discovery of a copper harpoon from Bithur in Kanpur district in 1822, nearly one thousand copper objects have been found from almost 90 localities in various parts of India. As these copper objects have mostly been found in hoards, they are known as Copper Hoards. The largest hoard from Gungeria (Madhya Pradesh) comprises 424 pieces of copper objects and 102 thin sheets of silver. The main types of objects are various kinds of celts, harpoons, antennae swords, rings and anthropomorphs. We find that harpoons, antennae swords and anthropomorphs are basically confined to Uttar Pradesh while various kinds of celts, rings and other objects are found from such diverse geographical areas as Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal and Maharashtra. Scientific analysis of these copper objects show that they were made in open or closed moulds. These are generally made of pure copper, although very insignificant quantities of alloys have been noticed in some. The source of metal for these copper hoards appears to be the Khetri copper mines as well as hilly regions of Almora District in Uttaranchal. The Copper Hoards include weapons and tools as well as objects of worship. The harpoons and antennae swords are likely to have been used as weapons, while various kinds of celts and axes may have been used as tools. Bar celts appear to have been used for mining ores. The anthropomorphs, weighing quite a few kilos and measuring upto 45 cm. in length and 43 cm. in width, were possibly objects of worship. Even today all over northern India tiny anthropomorphs of the size of 4-10 cm. are worshipped as Shani devata.

## OCP Culture

Almost contemporary to the later half of the Mature Harappan civilization, there flourished a culture in the upper Gangetic plains which is identified by the use of pottery with bright red slip and painted in black. This pottery has been found all over upper Gangetic plains. During the course of excavation in the region it has been found that the sites yielding this pottery have suffered from extensive floods. Many scholars think that the entire upper Gangetic plains was for some length of time submerged under water. The OCP people used copper tools and cultivated rice, barley, gram and khaseri. The OCP shares many shapes with the Harappan ware.

During the course of excavations, Copper Hoard objects were found in association with OCP deposit at Saipai, in District Etah. Also, from almost all the places in Ganga-Yamuna doab from where Copper Hoards have been found,

The OCP has also been found. Due to this, some scholars think that the Copper Hoards are associated with OCP people, in doab. But their cultural association in Bihar, Bengal and Orissa is not clear. As mentioned

in previous section on Chalcolithic cultures, some of the copper hoard types, mainly celts, have been found associated with Chalcolithic people also. Besides, there are some other sites of the upper Ganga valley like Bahadarabad, Nasirpur (Hardwar) Rajpur-Parsu (Meerut) Bisauli (Badaun) and Baheria (Shahjahanpur) from where copper hoards were found earlier also yielded OCP sherds in subsequent explorations.

### Timeline 1: Major Periods in Early Indian Archaeology

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 2 million BP (Before Present) | Lower Palaeolithic                                |
| 80,000                        | Middle Palaeolithic                               |
| 35,000                        | Upper Palaeolithic                                |
| 12,000                        | Mesolithic  |
| 10,000                        | Neolithic (early agriculturists and pastoralists) |
| 6,000                         | Chalcolithic (first use of copper)                |
| 2600 BCE                      | Harappan civilisation                             |

### Some question asked by UPSC previous year exam

1. Regarding the Indus Valley Civilization, consider the following statements: (2011)
1. It was predominantly a secular civilization and the religious element, though present, did not dominate the scene,
  2. During this period, cotton was used for manufacturing textiles in India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only                      (b) 2 only                      (c) Both 1 and 2                      (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Solution** (c)



# 5

## Emergence of Civilization

### Harappa Civilization

- The Indus valley civilisation is also called the Harappan culture. Archaeologists use the term “culture” for a group of objects, distinctive in style, that are usually found together within a specific geographical area and period of time. Nearly a hundred and fifty years ago, when railway lines were being laid down for the first time in the Punjab, engineers stumbled upon the site of Harappa in present-day Pakistan.
- The civilisation is dated between c. 2600 and 1900 BCE.
- There were earlier and later cultures, often called Early Harappan and Late Harappan, in the same area. The Harappan civilisation is sometimes called the Mature Harappan culture to distinguish it from these cultures.

#### Timeline 2: Major Developments in Harappan Archaeology

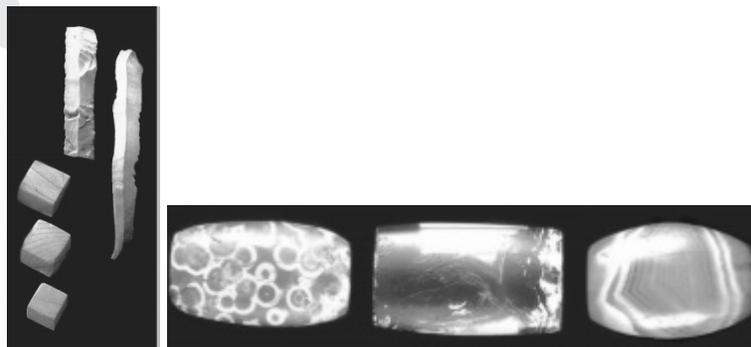
##### Nineteenth century

|      |   |
|------|---|
| 1875 | Report of Alexander Cunningham on Harappan seal |
|------|---|

##### Twentieth century

|      |  |
|------|--|
| 1921 | M.S. Vats begins excavations at Harappa  |
| 1925 | Excavations begin at Mohenjodaro   |
| 1946 | R.E.M. Wheeler excavates at Harappa  |
| 1955 | S.R. Rao begins excavations at Lothal  |
| 1960 | B.B. Lal and B.K. Thapar begin excavations at Kalibangan                               |
| 1974 | M.R. Mughal begins explorations in Bahawalpur  |
| 1980 | A team of German and Italian archaeologists begins surface explorations at Mohenjodaro |

- In the case of the Harappan culture, these distinctive objects include seals, beads, weights, stone blades and even baked bricks. These objects were found from areas as far apart as Afghanistan, Jammu, Baluchistan (Pakistan) and Gujarat. Named after Harappa, the first site where this unique culture was discovered.



Beads, weights, blades



**A Harappan seal**

## **Beginnings**

There were several archaeological cultures in the region prior to the Mature Harappan. These cultures were associated with distinctive pottery, evidence of agriculture and pastoralism, and some crafts. Settlements were generally small, and there were virtually no large buildings. It appears that there was a break between the Early Harappan and the Harappan civilisation, evident from large-scale burning at some sites, as well as the abandonment of certain settlements.

## **Town structure**

- The story of Harappa Very often, old buildings have a story to tell to them, it seemed like a mound that was a rich source of ready made, high quality bricks. So they carried off thousands of bricks from the walls of the old buildings of the city to build railway lines. Many buildings were completely destroyed. Then, about eighty years ago, archaeologists found the site, and realized that this was one of the oldest cities in the subcontinent.
- As this was the first city to be discovered, all other sites from where similar buildings (and other things) were found were described as Harappan. These cities developed about 4700 years ago.
- Many of these cities were divided into two or more parts. Usually, the part to the west was smaller but higher. Archaeologists describe this as the citadel. While most Harappan settlements have a small high western part and a larger lower eastern section, there are variations. At sites such as Dholavira and Lothal (Gujarat), the entire settlement was fortified, and sections within the town were also separated by walls. The Citadel within Lothal was not walled off, but was built at a height.
- Generally, the part to the east was larger but lower. This is called the lower town.
- These cities were found in the Punjab and Sind in Pakistan, and in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana and the Punjab in India.
- Archaeologists have found a set of unique objects in almost all these cities: red pottery painted with designs in black, stone weights, seals, special beads, copper tools, and paralleled sided long stone blades.
- Very often walls of baked brick were built around each part. The bricks were so well made that they have lasted for thousands of years. The bricks were laid in an interlocking pattern and that made the walls strong.
- In some cities, special buildings were constructed on the citadel. For example, in Mohenjodaro, a very special tank, which archaeologists call the Great Bath, was built in this area. This was lined with bricks, coated with plaster, and made water-tight with a layer of natural tar.

## **Life in the city**

- A Harappan city was a very busy place. There were people who planned the Construction of special buildings in the city.
- These were probably the rulers. It is likely that the rulers sent people to distant lands to get metal, precious stones, and other things that they wanted. They may have kept the most valuable objects, such as ornaments of gold and silver, or beautiful beads, for themselves. And there were scribes, people who knew how to write, who helped prepare the seals, and perhaps wrote on other materials that have not survived. Besides, there were men and women, crafts persons, making all kinds of things either in their

own homes, or in special workshops. People were travelling to distant lands or returning with raw materials and, perhaps, stories. Many terracotta toys have been found and children must have played with these.

## Laying out drains

- One of the most distinctive features of Harappan cities was the carefully planned drainage system. If you look at the plan of the Lower Town you will notice that roads and streets were laid out along an approximate “grid” pattern, intersecting at right angles. It seems that streets with drains were laid out first and then houses built along them. If domestic waste water had to flow into the street drains, every house needed to have at least one wall along a street.
- Drainage systems were not unique to the larger cities, but were found in smaller settlements as well. At Lothal for example, while houses were built of mud bricks, drains were made of burnt bricks.
- Harappan civilization is certainly the most complete ancient system as yet discovered. Every house was connected to the street drains. The main channels were made of bricks set in mortar and were covered with loose bricks that could be removed for cleaning. In some cases, limestone was used for the covers. House drains first emptied into a sump or cesspit into which solid matter settled while waste water flowed out into the street drains. Very long drainage channels were provided at intervals with sumps for cleaning. It is a wonder of archaeology that little heaps of material, mostly sand, have frequently been found lying alongside drainage channels, which shows that the debris was not always carted away when the drain was cleared.
- There were steps leading down to it from two sides, while there were rooms on all sides. Water was probably brought in from a well, and drained out after use. Perhaps important people took a dip in this tank on special occasions. Other cities, such as Kalibangan and Lothal had fire altars, where sacrifices may have been performed. And some cities like Mohenjodaro, Harappa, and Lothal had elaborate store houses.

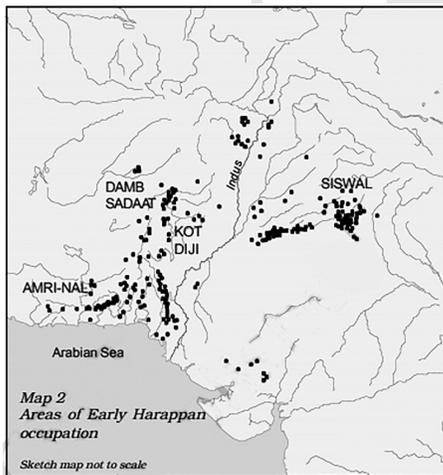


Fig. 2

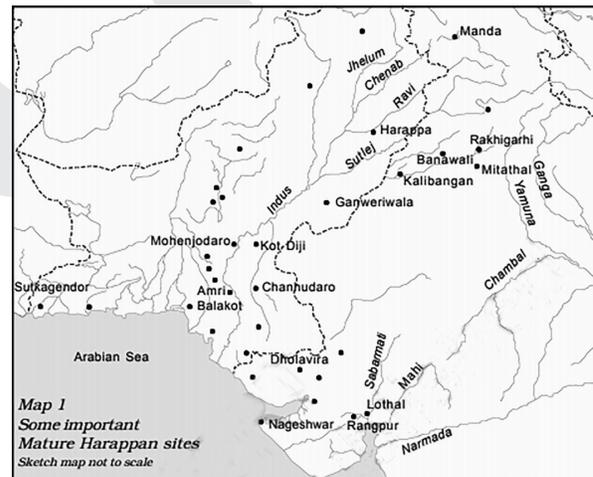


Fig. 3

- If you look at Maps 2 and 3 you will notice that the Mature Harappan culture developed in some of the areas occupied by the Early Harappan cultures. These cultures also shared certain common elements including subsistence strategies.
- The Harappans ate a wide range of plant and animal products, including fish. Archaeologists have been able to reconstruct dietary practices from finds of charred grains and seeds. These are studied by archaeobotanists, who are specialists in ancient plant remains.
- Animal bones found at Harappan sites include those of cattle, sheep, goat, buffalo and pig. Studies done by archaeo-zoologists or zoo archaeologists indicate that these animals were domesticated. Bones of wild species such as boar, deer and gharial are also found. We do not know whether the Harappans hunted these animals themselves or obtained meat from other hunting communities. Bones of fish and fowl are also found.

## Agricultural technologies

- While the prevalence of agriculture is indicated by finds of grain, it is more difficult to reconstruct actual agricultural practices. Were seeds broadcast (scattered) on ploughed lands? Representations on seals and terracotta sculpture indicate that the bull was known, and archaeologists extrapolate from this that oxen were used for ploughing. Moreover, terracotta models of the plough have been found at sites in Cholistan and at Banawali (Haryana).
- Archaeologists have also found evidence of a ploughed field at Kalibangan (Rajasthan), associated with Early Harappan levels.
- Most Harappan sites are located in semi-arid lands, where irrigation was probably required for agriculture. Traces of canals have been found at the Harappan site of Shortughai in Afghanistan, but not in Punjab or Sind. It is possible that ancient canals silted up long ago. It is also likely that water drawn from wells was used for irrigation. Besides, water reservoirs found in Dholavira (Gujarat) may have been used to store water for agriculture.
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- Moreover, terracotta models of the plough have been found at sites in Cholistan and at Banawali (Haryana). Archaeologists have also found evidence of a ploughed field at Kalibangan (Rajasthan), associated with Early Harappan levels. An extensive survey in Kutch has revealed a number of Harappan settlements and explorations in Punjab and Haryana have added to the list of Harappan sites. While Kalibangan, Lothal, Rakhi Garhi and most recently Dholavira have been discovered, explored and excavated as part of these efforts.



### Reservoir at Dholavira

- The field had two sets of furrows at right angles to each other, suggesting that two different crops were grown together.

### Tools used in Harappan civilization

Archaeologists have also tried to identify the tools used for harvesting. Did the Harappans use stone blades set in wooden handles or did they use metal tools?



## Saddle querns

Saddle querns are found in considerable numbers and they seem to have been the only means in use for grinding cereals. As a rule, they were roughly made of hard, gritty, igneous rock or sandstone and mostly show signs of hard usage. As their bases are usually convex, they must have been set in the earth or in mud to prevent their rocking. Two main types have been found: those on which another smaller stone was pushed or rolled to and fro, and others with which a second stone was used as a pounder, eventually making a large cavity in the nether stone. Querns of the former type were probably used solely for grain; the second type possibly only for pounding herbs and spices for making curries. In fact, stones of this latter type are dubbed “curry stones” by our workmen and our cook asked for the loan of one from the museum for use in the kitchen.

## Social differences

### Burials

- At burials in Harappan sites the dead were generally laid in pits. Sometimes, there were differences in the way the burial pit was made in some instances, the hollowed-out spaces were lined with bricks.
- Some graves contain pottery and ornaments, perhaps indicating a belief that these could be used in the afterlife. Jewellery has been found in burials of both – men and women.



**A copper mirror**

- In fact, in the excavations at the cemetery in Harappa in the mid-1980s, an ornament consisting of three shell rings, a jasper (a kind of semi-precious stone) bead and hundreds of micro beads was found near the skull of a male. In some instances the dead were buried with copper mirrors. But on the whole, it appears that the Harappans did not believe in burying precious things with the dead.

## Looking for luxuries

- Another strategy to identify social differences is to study artefacts, which archaeologists broadly classify as utilitarian and luxuries. The first category includes objects of daily use made fairly easily out of ordinary materials such as stone or clay. These include querns, pottery, needles, flesh-rubbers (body scrubbers), etc., and are usually found distributed throughout settlements. Archaeologists assume objects were luxuries if they are rare or made from costly, non-local materials or with complicated technologies. Thus, little

pots of faience (a material made of ground sand or silica mixed with colour and a gum and then fired) were probably considered precious because they were difficult to make

A faience pot

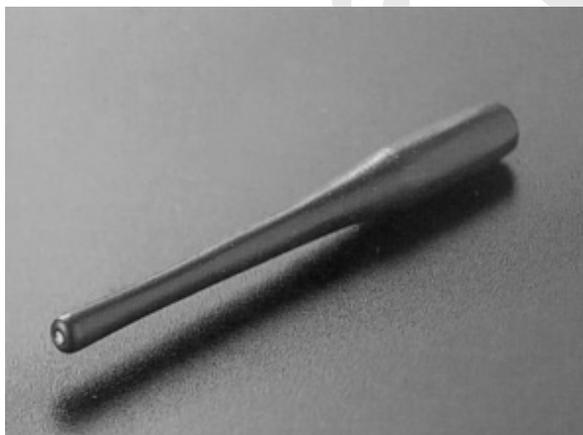


- Rare objects made of valuable materials are generally concentrated in large settlements like Mohenjodaro and Harappa and are rarely found in the smaller settlements. For example, miniature pots of faience, perhaps used as perfume bottles, are found mostly in Mohenjodaro and Harappa, and there are none from small settlements like Kalibangan. Gold too was rare, and as at present, probably precious all the gold jewellery found at Harappan sites was recovered from hoards.

### Artefacts of Harappan civilization

- Chanhudaro is a tiny settlement (less than 7 hectares) as compared to Mohenjodaro (125 hectares) in area, almost exclusively devoted to craft production, including bead-making, shell-cutting, metal-working, seal-making and weight-making.
- The variety of materials used to make beads is remarkable: stones like carnelian (of a beautiful red colour), jasper, crystal, quartz and steatite; metals like copper, bronze and gold; and shell, faience and terracotta or burnt clay. Some beads were made of two or more stones, cemented together, some of stone with gold caps. The shapes were numerous discshaped, cylindrical, spherical, barrel-shaped, segmented. Some were decorated by incising or painting, and some had designs etched onto them.

### A tools and beads



- Techniques for making beads differed according to the material. Steatite, a very soft stone, was easily worked. Some beads were moulded out of a paste made with steatite powder. This permitted making a variety of shapes, unlike the geometrical forms made out of harder stones. How the steatite micro bead was made remains a puzzle for archaeologists studying ancient technology.
- The red colour of carnelian was obtained by firing the yellowish raw material and beads at various stages of production. Nodules were chipped into rough shapes, and then finely flaked into the final form. Grinding, polishing and drilling completed the process. Specialised drills have been found at Chanhudaro, Lothal and more recently at Dholavira.
- **Pottery:** Some of these can be seen in the National Museum, Delhi or in the site museum at Lothal. You will notice in map 3 that Nageshwar and Balakot both settlements are near the coast. These were

specialised centres for making shell objects including bangles, ladles and inlay which were taken to other settlements. Similarly, it is likely that finished products (such as beads) from Chanhudaro and Lothal were taken to the large urban centres such as Mohenjodaro and Harappa.

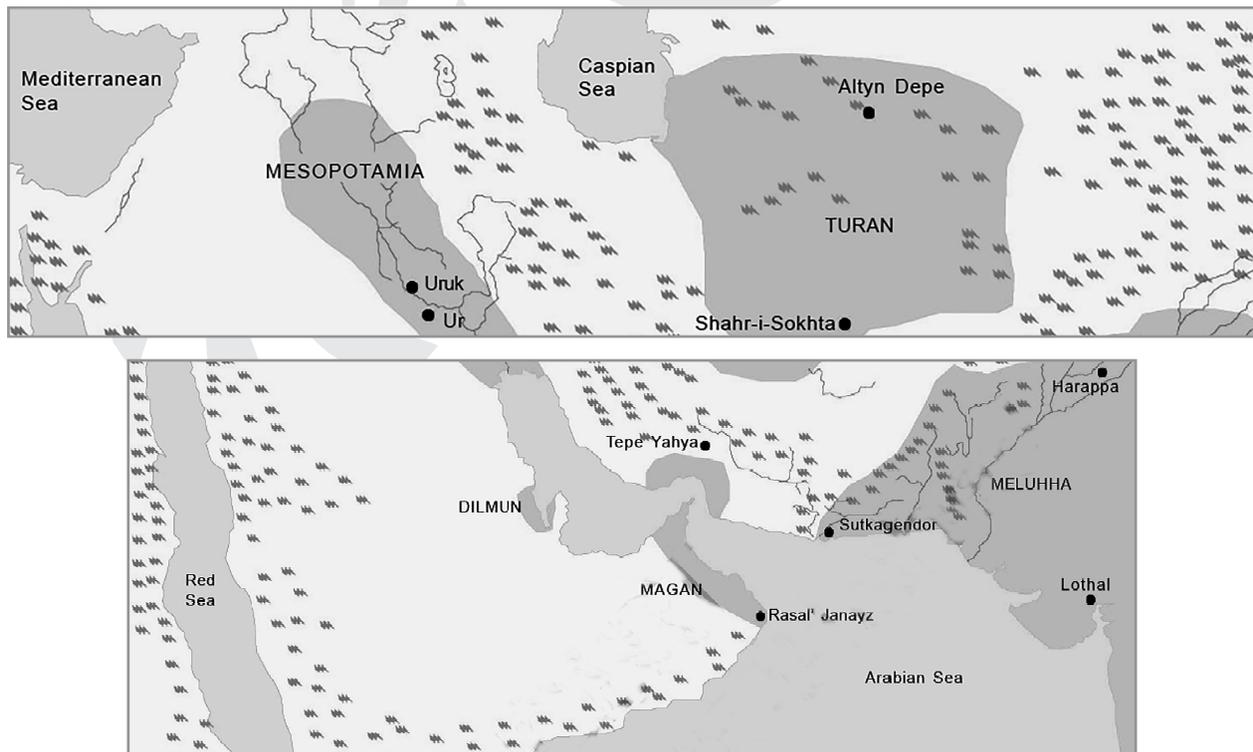
## Strategies for Procuring Materials

- A variety of materials was used for craft production. While some such as clay were locally available, many such as stone, timber and metal had to be procured from outside the alluvial plain. Terracotta toy models of bullock carts suggest that this was one important means of transporting goods and people across land routes. Riverine routes along the Indus and its tributaries, as well as coastal routes were also probably used.
- Another strategy for procuring raw materials may have been to send expeditions to areas such as the Khetri region of Rajasthan (for copper) and south India (for gold). These expeditions established communication with local communities. Occasional finds of Harappan artefacts such as steatite micro beads in these areas are indications of such contact. There is evidence in the Khetri area for what archaeologists call the Ganeshwar-Jodhpura culture, with its distinctive non-Harappan pottery and an unusual wealth of copper objects. It is possible that the inhabitants of this region supplied copper to the Harappans.

## Script

- The language of Harappans is at present still unknown and must remain so until the Harappan script is read. Though several attempts have been made but none has been convincing and acceptable to all. Some scholars connect it to Dravidian languages and others to Indo-Aryan and Sanskrit. There are nearly 400 specimens of Harappan signs on seals and other materials such as copper tablets, axes, and pottery. Most of the inscriptions on seals are small, a group of few letters.
- A few bear only one single sign. The Harappa script has 400 to 500 signs and its is generally agreed that it is not an alphabetic form of writing. Some scholars opine that Harappan inscriptions present 3 logo syllabic writing system, where a sequence of two or more signs would represent either a complete word, a syllable or a sound and sometimes even a sentence of several words and grammatical indicators. The script was written from right to left. When the inscription was of more than one line it could be first line from right to left and second from left to right.

### BRICKS, BEADS AND BONE



## Materials from the subcontinent and beyond

Raw materials are substances that are either found naturally (such as wood, or ores of metals) or produced by farmers or herders. These are then processed to produce finished goods.

For example: cotton, produced by farmers, is a raw material that may be processed to make cloth. While some of the raw materials that the Harappans used were available locally, many items such as copper, tin, gold, silver and precious stones had to be brought from distant places.

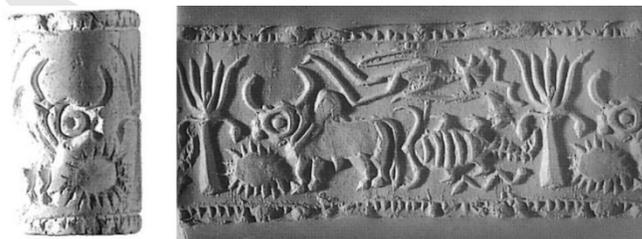
- The Harappans procured materials for craft production in various ways. For instance, they established settlements such as Nageshwar and Balakot in areas where shell was available. Other such sites were Shortughai, in far-off Afghanistan, near the best source of lapis lazuli, a blue stone that was apparently very highly valued, and Lothal which was near sources of carnelian (from Bharuch in Gujarat), steatite (from south Rajasthan and north Gujarat) and metal (from Rajasthan). Another strategy for procuring raw materials may have been to send expeditions to areas such as the Khetri region of Rajasthan (for copper) and south India (for gold). These expeditions established communication with local communities. Occasional finds of Harappan artefacts such as steatite micro beads in these areas are indications of such contact. There is evidence in the Khetri area for what archaeologists call the Ganeshwar-Jodhpura culture, with its distinctive non-Harappan pottery and an unusual wealth of copper objects. It is possible that the inhabitants of this region supplied copper to the Harappans.

## Contact with distant lands

Recent archaeological finds suggest that copper was also probably brought from Oman, on the southeastern tip of the Arabian peninsula. Chemical analyses have shown that both the Omani copper and Harappan artefacts have traces of nickel, suggesting a common origin. There are other traces of contact as well. A distinctive type of vessel, a large Harappan jar coated with a thick layer of black clay has been found at Omani sites. Such thick coatings prevent the percolation of liquids.

We do not know what was carried in these vessels, but it is possible that the Harappans exchanged the contents of these vessels for Omani copper. Mesopotamian texts datable to the third millennium BCE refer to copper coming from a region called Magan, perhaps a name for Oman, and interestingly enough copper found at Mesopotamian sites also contains traces of nickel.

- Other archaeological finds suggestive of long distance contacts include Harappan seals, weights, dice and beads. In this context, it is worth noting that Mesopotamian texts mention contact with regions named Dilmun (probably the island of Bahrain), Magan and Meluhha, possibly the Harappan region. They mention the products from Meluhha: carnelian, lapis lazuli, copper, gold, and varieties of wood.
- A Mesopotamian myth says of Meluhha: “May your bird be the haja-bird, may its call be heard in the royal palace.” Some archaeologists think the haja-bird was the peacock. It is likely that communication with Oman, Bahrain or Mesopotamia was by sea. Mesopotamian texts refer to Meluhha as a land of seafarers. Besides, we find depictions of ships and boats on seals.
- This is a **cylinder seal**, typical of Mesopotamia, but the **humped bull motif** on it appears to be derived from the Indus region.



## How to identify centre of craft production in Harappan civilization

- In order to identify centres of craft production, archaeologists usually look for the following: raw material such as stone nodules, whole shells, copper ore; tools; unfinished objects; rejects and waste material. In

fact, waste is one of the best indicators of craft work. For instance, if shell or stone is cut to make objects, then pieces of these materials will be discarded as waste at the place of production.



## Seals, Script, Weights

Harappan seals usually have a line of writing, probably containing the name and title of the owner. Scholars have also suggested that the motif (generally an animal) conveyed a meaning to those who could not read. Most inscriptions are short, the longest containing about 26 signs. Although the script remains undeciphered to date, it was evidently not alphabetical (where each sign stands for a vowel or a consonant) as it has just too many signs somewhere between 375 and 400. It is apparent that the script was written from right to left as some seals show a wider spacing on the right and cramping on the left, as if the engraver began working from the right and then ran out of space.



*A sealing from Ropar*

### (i) An enigmatic script

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## **(ii) Weights**

- Exchanges were regulated by a precise system of weights, usually made of a stone called chert and generally cubical with no markings.
- The lower denominations of weights were binary (1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, etc. up to 12,800), while the higher denominations followed the decimal system. The smaller weights were probably used for weighing jewelry and beads. Metal scale-pans have also been found.

## **Ancient Authority**

- There are indications of complex decisions being taken and implemented in Harappan society. Take for instance, the extraordinary uniformity of Harappan artefacts as evident in pottery seals, weights and bricks. Notably, bricks, though obviously not produced in any single centre, were of a uniform ratio throughout the region, from Jammu to Gujarat. We have also seen that settlements were strategically set up in specific locations for various reasons. Besides, labour was mobilised for making bricks and for the construction of massive walls and platforms.

## **(i) Palaces and kings**

- These activities were organised by kings. The ritual practices of the Harappan civilization are not well understood yet nor are there any means of knowing whether those who performed them also held political power. Some archaeologists are of the opinion that Harappan society had no rulers, and that everybody enjoyed equal status. Others feel there was no single ruler but several, that Mohenjodaro had a separate ruler, Harappa another, and so forth.
- Yet others argue that there was a single state, given the similarity in artefacts, the evidence for planned settlements, the standardized ratio of brick size, and the establishment of settlements near sources of raw material. As of now, the last theory seems the most plausible, as it is unlikely that entire communities could have collectively made and implemented such complex decisions.

## **(ii) Harappan towns**

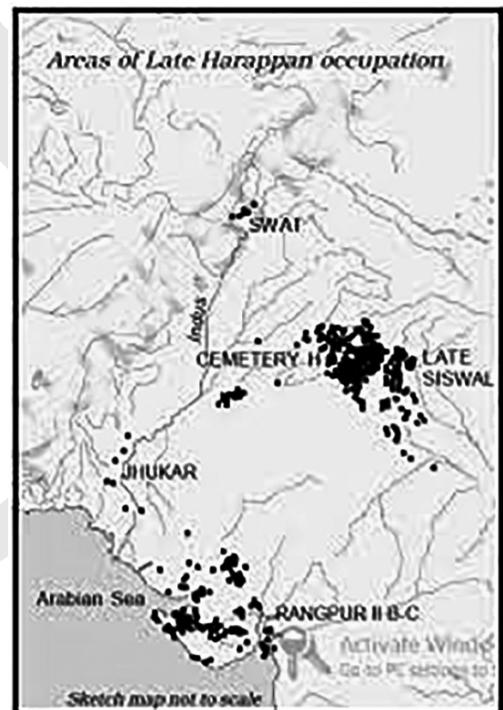
- The city of Dholavira was located on Khadir Beyt (also spelled as Bet) in the Rann of Kutch, where there was fresh water and fertile soil. Unlike some of the other Harappan cities, which were divided into two parts, Dholavira was divided into three parts, and each part was surrounded with massive stone walls, with entrances through gateways.
- There was also a large open area in the settlement, where public ceremonies could be held. Other finds include large letters of the Harappan script that were carved out of white stone and perhaps inlaid in wood. This is a unique find as generally
- Harappan writing has been found on small objects such as seals.
- The city of Lothal stood beside a tributary of the Sabarmati, in Gujarat, close to the Gulf of Khambhat. It was situated near areas where raw materials such as semi-precious stones were easily available. This was an important centre for making objects out of stone, shell and metal. There was also a store house in the city. Many seals and sealings (the impression of seals on clay) were found in this storehouse.



A dockyard at Lothal. This huge tank may have been a dockyard, where boats and ships came in from the sea and through the river channel. Goods were probably loaded and unloaded here.

## The End of the Civilisation

- There is evidence that by c. 1800 BCE most of the Mature Harappan sites in regions such as Cholistan had been abandoned. Simultaneously, there was an expansion of population into new settlements in Gujarat, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.
- In the few Harappan sites that continued to be occupied after 1900 BCE there appears to have been a transformation of material culture, marked by the disappearance of the distinctive artefacts of the civilisation weights, seals, special beads. Writing, long distance trade, and craft specialisation also disappeared.
- In general, far fewer materials were used to make far fewer things. House construction techniques deteriorated and large public structures were no longer produced. Overall, artefacts and settlements indicate a rural way of life in what are called “Late Harappan” or “successor cultures”. Several explanations have been put forward. These range from climatic change, deforestation, excessive floods, the shifting and/or drying up of rivers, to overuse of the landscape. Some of these “causes” may hold for certain settlements, but they do not explain the collapse of the entire civilisation.
- It appears that a strong unifying element, perhaps the Harappan state, came to an end. This is evidenced by the disappearance of seals, the script, distinctive beads and pottery, the shift from a standardised weight system to the use of local weights; and the decline and abandonment of cities. The subcontinent would have to wait for over a millennium for new cities to develop in a completely different region.



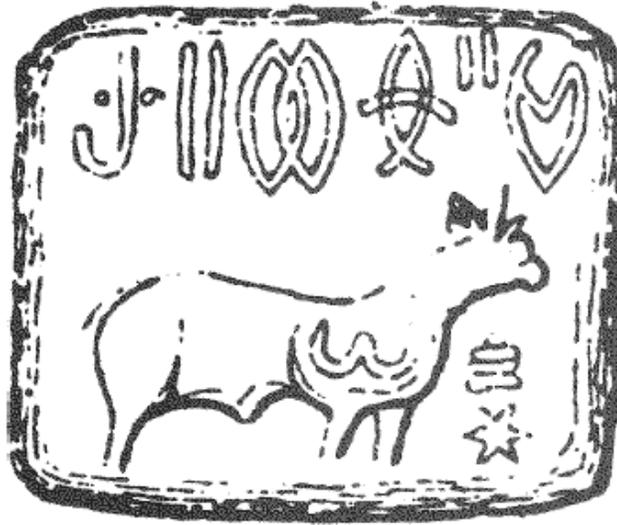
## Discovering the Harappan Civilisation

When Harappan cities fell into ruin, people gradually forgot all about them. When men and women began living in the area millennia later, they did not know what to make of the strange artefacts that occasionally surfaced, washed by floods or exposed by soil erosion, or turned up while ploughing a field, or digging for treasure.

### Cunningham’s confusion

- When Cunningham, the first Director-General of the ASI, began archaeological excavations in the midnineteenth century, archaeologists preferred to use the written word (texts and inscriptions) as a guide to investigations.

- In fact, Cunningham's main interest was in the archaeology of the Early Historic (c. sixth century BCE-fourth century CE) and later periods. He used the accounts left by Chinese Buddhist pilgrims who had visited the subcontinent between the fourth and seventh centuries CE to locate early settlements. Cunningham also collected, documented and translated inscriptions found during his surveys. When he excavated sites he tended to recover artefacts that he thought had cultural value.



**Cunningham's sketch of the first known seal from Harappa**

- A site like Harappa, which was not part of the itinerary of the Chinese pilgrims and was not known as an Early Historic city, did not fit very neatly within his framework of investigation. So, although Harappan artefacts were found fairly often during the nineteenth century and some of these reached Cunningham, he did not realise how old these were.

### **A new old civilisation**

- Subsequently, seals were discovered at Harappa by archaeologists such as Daya Ram Sahni in the early decades of the twentieth century, in layers that were definitely much older than Early Historic levels. It was then that their significance began to be realised. Another archaeologist, Rakhal Das Banerji found similar seals at Mohenjodaro, leading to the conjecture that these sites were part of a single archaeological culture. Based on these finds, in 1924, John Marshall, Director-General of the ASI, announced the discovery of a new civilisation in the Indus valley to the world.
- As S.N. Roy noted in *The Story of Indian Archaeology*, "Marshall left India three thousand years older than he had found her." This was because similar, till-then-unidentified seals were found at excavations at Mesopotamian sites. It was then that the world knew not only of a new civilisation, but also of one contemporaneous with Mesopotamia.
- In fact, John Marshall's stint as Director-General of the ASI marked a major change in Indian archaeology. He was the first professional archaeologist to work in India, and brought his experience of working in Greece and Crete to the field. More importantly, though like Cunningham he too was interested in spectacular finds, he was equally keen to look for patterns of everyday life.
- Marshall tended to excavate along regular horizontal units, measured uniformly throughout the mound, ignoring the stratigraphy of the site.

### **Contribution of Wheeler**

- Early archaeologists were often driven by a sense of adventure. It was R.E.M. Wheeler, after he took over as Director-General of the ASI in 1944.
- Wheeler recognised that it was necessary to follow the stratigraphy of the mound rather than dig mechanically along uniform horizontal lines. Moreover, as an ex-army brigadier, he brought with him a military precision to the practice of archaeology.

- The frontiers of the Harappan civilisation have little or no connection with present-day national boundaries. However, with the partition of the subcontinent and the creation of Pakistan, the major sites are now in Pakistani territory. This has spurred Indian archaeologists to try and locate sites in India. An extensive survey in Kutch has revealed a number of Harappan settlements and explorations in Punjab and Haryana have added to the list of Harappan sites. While Kalibangan, Lothal, Rakhi Garhi and most recently Dholavira have been discovered, explored and excavated as part of these efforts, fresh explorations continue.
- Since the 1980s, there has also been growing international interest in Harappan archaeology. Specialists from the subcontinent and abroad have been jointly working at both Harappa and Mohenjodaro. They are using modern scientific techniques including surface exploration to recover traces of clay, stone, metal and plant and animal remains as well as to minutely analyse every scrap of available evidence. These explorations promise to yield interesting results in the future.

### Classifying Recovering artefacts

- Recovering artefacts is just the beginning of the archaeological enterprise. Archaeologists then classify their finds. One simple principle of classification is in terms of material, such as stone, clay, metal, bone, ivory, etc. The second, and more complicated, is in terms of function: archaeologists have to decide whether, for instance, an artefact is a tool or an ornament, or both, or something meant for ritual use.
- Sometimes, archaeologists have to take recourse to indirect evidence. For instance, though there are traces of cotton at some Harappan sites, to find out about clothing we have to depend on indirect evidence including depictions in sculpture.
- Archaeologists have to develop frames of reference. Because first Harappan seal that was found could not be understood till archaeologists had a context in which to place it – both in terms of the cultural sequence in which it was found, and in terms of a comparison with finds in Mesopotamia.



# 6

## Vedic Civilization

### Introduction

While geography provides a distinct physical personality to the Indian sub-continent, and more so to the Indian mind, the country was never closed to the world. A recent survey has indicated that 4,653 communities live in India in a predominantly Hindu society with a sizeable Muslim population. They include people professing all the major faiths of the world, entertaining different notions about the migration of the soul, speaking several languages and dialects. Each group has its own distinct folklore, industry and handicrafts.

Jawaharlal Nehru once said, **'India is a cultural unity amongst diversity, a bundle of contradictions held together by strong but invisible threads'**.

In fact, for the past several millennia, Indians have developed common traits, thoughts and feelings. These have given successive generations of Indians a mindset, a value system, and a way of life, which has been retained with remarkable continuity.

It is not very clear when the Indian mind started delving into fine arts, poetry, philosophy and science. The myths and legends, cults and rituals, as well as agricultural practices and handicrafts indicate that civilisational attainments in India commenced 5000 years ago or during a still earlier age.

The Indus Valley civilisation provides the beginnings of Indian historical experience. The archaeological excavations at various sites connected with that civilisation, such as at Mohenjodaro, Harappa and Dholavira, have amply proved that there existed a well developed city life, irrigation system, and agricultural operations in India during this period.

It may be recalled that the intellectual development of India during the Vedic Age and the subsequent development of Vedic culture did not mark a complete break from the Harappan culture.

### Vedic phase

After Indus valley civilization Aryans entered in our country. The time period of Vedic society is divided into two phases.

- (1) Early Vedic period or Rig Vedic period (1500 B.C.-1000 B.C.)
- (2) Later Vedic period (1000 B.C.-600 B.C.)

The Vedic period (1500 BCE and before) witnessed the intermingling of the Aryans with the earlier inhabitants which made a decisive influence not only on religion and spirituality but also on patterns of agriculture, industry, trade and overall productivity. The Vedas and the Upanishads and our great epics came to guide and determine the way of living and thinking of the elite as well as the common people. Besides, there were notable advances in music and medicine, mathematics and astronomy.

The most outstanding works of the Vedic period are the four Vedas – Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda and Atharva Veda. The Vedas comprise of a whole body of literature that arose in the course of centuries and was transmitted from generation to generation through oral communication.

**The Vedic view of the individual and his relation to society is determined by four objectives of life:**

- (a) dharma (ethical living)
- (b) artha (political economy)
- (c) kama (desire and enjoyment)
- (d) moksha (spiritual freedom)

## Religion in vedic society

There were several different groups in society at this time — priests and warriors, farmers, herders, traders, crafts persons, labourers, fishing folk, and forest people. Some priests and warriors were rich, as were some farmers and traders. Others, including many herders, crafts persons, labourers, fishing folk and hunters and gatherers, were poor.

During the Vedic period the priests divided people into four groups. The society was organised into four varnas known as **varnadharma, namely, Brahmin (the learned classes); Kshatriya (the warrior classes), Vaishya (the business classes), and Shudra (the service classes)**. Early Hindu philosophy prescribed the four stages of life, that is brahmachari (the student), grihastha (the householder), vanaprastha (the recluse), and sannyasin (the free man). It was believed that the law of karma governed the cycle of life from birth to death to re-birth and so on.

The priests also said that these groups were decided on the basis of birth. For example, if one's father and mother were brahmins one would automatically become a brahmin, and so on. Later, they classified some people as untouchable. These included some crafts persons, hunters and gatherers, as well as people who helped perform burials and cremations. The priests said that contact with these groups was polluting.

**Ashrama:** Brahmin, kshatriya and vaishya men were expected to lead simple lives and study the Vedas during the early years of their life (brahmacharya). Then they had to marry and live as householders (grihastha). Then they had to live in the forest and meditate (vanaprastha). Finally, they had to give up everything and become samnyasins. The system of ashramas allowed men to spend some part of their lives in meditation. Generally, women were not allowed to study the Vedas, and they had to follow the ashramas chosen by their husbands.

**The Vedas:** A collection of hymns, prayers, charms, litanies and sacrificial formulae. There are four Vedas, namely:

- (i) RigVeda – a collection of hymns
- (ii) Samveda – a collection of songs mostly taken from Rig Veda
- (iii) Yajurveda – a collection of sacrificial formulae
- (iv) Atharvaveda – a collection of spells and charms

The Vedas formed the earliest segment of Vedic literature and amongst the Vedas, RigVeda is the oldest.

## The Brahmanas

These are prose texts which contain details about the meaning of Vedic hymns, their applications, stories of their origins, etc. In a way these contain details about rituals and philosophies.

## Aranyakas and Upanishads

These are partly included in the Brahmanas or attached there to, and partly exist as separate works. They embody philosophical meditations of the hermits and ascetics on soul, god, world etc. The Brahmanas, the Aranyakas and the Upanishads are attached to one or the other of the four Vedas. Authorship of the Vedic Literature Although the hymns are attributed to rishis, pious Hindus have always laid stress upon their divine origin. Thus, the Vedas are called *apaurusheya* (not created by man) and *nitya* (existing in all eternity) while the rishis are known as inspired seers who received the mantras from the Supreme deity.

## Age of RigVeda

The date of Rig Veda and Vedic literature has formed the subject of keen and protracted controversy. Max Muller, who first dealt with the question, began with the age of Buddha and arbitrarily assigned 200 years to the development of each of the three stages of Vedic literature and thus came to the conclusion that RigVeda must have been composed around 1200-1000 B.C. When questioned and criticised by his contemporaries like W.D. Whitney for his totally arbitrary, unscientific and unacademic method, Max Muller confessed that he was merely speculating and stated: "whether the Vedic hymns were composed 1000, 1500 or 2000 or 3000 B.C., no power on earth will ever determine". It may, in passing be stated that Max Muller as a true Christian believed in the genesis stories of the Bible and that the world was created in 4004 B.C. Similarly, on the analogy of the language of Avesta, some scholars opined that the date of RigVeda

may be 1000 B.C. But the fact that some of the Vedic gods namely Indra, Varuna, Mitra and the two Nasatyas are mentioned in Boghaz-Koi (Asia Minor) inscription of 1400 B.C. prove that Rig Veda must have come into existence much before that date.

**RigVedic Geography:** From the names of rivers, mountains and regions mentioned in RigVeda we have a clear idea of the geographical area in which RigVedic people, who called themselves Aryans, lived. The Nadisukta hymn of the RigVeda mentions 21 rivers which include the Ganga in the east and the

Kubha (Kabul) in the west. All rivers like the Yamuna, Saraswati, Sutlej, Ravi, Jhelum and Indus located between the Ganga and Kabul rivers are mentioned not arbitrarily but serially beginning from the east *i.e.* Ganga to the west *i.e.* Kubha. In the north, the RigVeda mentions the Himalayas and Mujavant mountains. It also mentions ocean (samudra) in connection with rivers Sindhu and Saraswati falling into ocean. The ocean is also mentioned in the context of foreign trade. The RigVedic geography, therefore, covers present-day western Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Gujarat, whole of Pakistan and south Afghanistan.

### **Rigvedic status**

The territory known to Vedic people was divided into a number of states-republics and monarchical. The battle of ten kings, gives names of ten kings who participated in a war against Sudas who was Bharata king of Tritsus family. The ten kings were of the states of Purus, Yadus, Turvasas, Anus and Druhyus along with five others viz Alinas, Pakhtas, Bhalanas, Sibis and Vishanins. The battle was fought on the bank of Parushani (Ravi) and Sudas emerged victorious.

Rig Veda mentions people and kings like Ajas, Sigrus, Yakshus etc. The Bharatas, who gave their name to the whole country as 'Bharatvarshd, are the most important people of the Rig Veda. They were settled in the region between the Saraswati and Yamuna. Similarly the RigVeda gives the location of other people like the Purus in the region of Kurukshetra; the Tritsus east of Ravi; the Alinas, the Pakhtas, the Bhalanas and the Sibis west of Indus upto Kabul river and so on.

The struggle for supremacy among different kings and republics chiefs was a part of the evolutionary process towards the formation of a larger political entity.

### **Polity and Administration :**

The political structure of RigVedic India may be traced in the following ascending order:

- (i) The Family (kula)
- (ii) The Village (grama)
- (iii) The Clan (vis)
- (iv) The People Uana)
- (v) The Country (rashtra)

Kula (family) was the smallest unit. It included all the people living under the same roof (griha). An aggregate of several families made up the grama lilce today, and its headman was called gramini. The next larger formation was called the vis, under the head called vispati. Larger than vis was jana.

Regarding jana we get mention of panchajanah and of people called Yadus, (Yadva-janaha) and Bharatas (Bharata-janaha).

The hereditary n10narchy was the normal form of Government but an elected king also fmds mention. We also hear of chiefs, democratically elected by the assembly of people Uana). The kingdoms (rashtra) were generally small states ruled by kings (rajana) but the word samrat does indicate that some of them must have had bigger kingdoms and enjoyed position of greater authority and dignity, markedly different from others.

The king administered justice with the assistance of purohita and other officials. For his services the king was paid bali (voluntary gift or tribute). The bali came to the king from his own people and also from defeated people. Theft, burglary, robbery, and cattle lifting were the principal crimes which were strongly dealt with by the administration.

Among the important royal officials, were the purohita (chief priest and minister), senani (army chief) and gramini (head of village). We hear also of dutas (envoys) and spies (spas).

There must have been many others, who are not mentioned in the literature. Great prominence is given in the RigVeda to two popular assemblies called sabha and samiti which seem to have formed an essential feature of the government. We possess no definite information about the composition of the either, or the distinction between the two. Most probably the samiti, which mainly dealt with policy decisions and political business, included common people while the sabha, less political in character, was a more select body of the Elders or Nobles.

It was through these two assemblies that the will of the people on important matters of the rashtra was expressed.

### **Society:**

The unit of society was family, primarily monogamous and patriarchal. Child marriage was not in vogue. There are a few references to the freedom of choice in marriage. A widow could marry the younger brother of her deceased husband. The wife was husband's partner in all religious and social ceremonies. The father's property was inherited by son. The daughter could inherit it only if she was the only child of her parents. **Right to property** was known in moveable things like cattle, horse, gold and ornament and so also in immoveable property like land and house.

### **Education:**

The home of the teacher was the school where he taught the particular sacred texts. The texts were in the first instance learnt by pupils repeating the words taught by their teacher. A great importance was attached to enunciation and pronunciation. Intense training was given to students in oral tradition. It was this training and learning which saved a huge mass of Vedic literature.

### **Food and Drinks:**

Milk and its products – curd, butter and ghee formed an important part of the diet. There is also mention grain cooked with milk' (kshira-pakamodanam). Bread (chapatti) of wheat and barley was eaten mixed with ghee. Not only were fish, birds, wild animals like boar, antelopes, and buffalo (gawl, etc. eaten but on ceremonial occasions the meat of animals which were sacrificed, such as sheep, goat and buffalo etc. was also eaten. The cow was already deemed aghnya "not to be killed". The Vedas prescribe a penalty of death or expulsion from the kingdom to those who kill or injure cows. Alcoholic drinks, sura and soma were also consumed, though their consumption has been condemned because of its intoxicating effect, which sometimes gave rise to broils in the Sabha.

On the whole, the gods are benevolent, some of them also had malevolent traits, like Rudra and Maruta. Splendour, strength, knowledge, possession tenth are common attributes of the deities.

Prayers and offering to these Gods were made for material gains, also for enlightenment and knowledge. For example, the most popular and famous Gayatri Mantra is recited daily by the pious Hindus even today.

Besides the ritualistic aspect of religion, there is profound philosophy. The multiplicity of gods is openly questioned and the ultimate unity of universe is asserted as the creation of one God to whom different designations applied. The creation is deemed as the outcome of the sacrifice made by the Vratpurusha or of evolution from nonbeing manifested in the form of water. It is said that Hiranyagarbha arose from the great waters, pervading the universe, and thus created the waves out of eternally pre-existing matter. This hymn devoted to Visvakarman tells us that the waters contained the primordial germ – the floating world egg from which arises Visvakarman, the first born in the universe – the creator and maker of the world. It is now confirmed by science that life first developed in water. One of the RigVedic hymns pointedly says, "There is one reality (ekam sat) whom the sages speak of in many ways, calling it Agni, Yama or Matarisvan".

## **Language and literature**

We have many books that were composed in north India, especially in the areas drained by the Ganga and the Yamuna, during this period. These books are often called later Vedic, because they were composed after the Rigveda. These include the Samaveda, Yajurveda and Atharvaveda, as well as other books. These were composed by priests, and described how rituals were to be performed. They also contained rules about society.

The Vedas are the world's oldest literature. They are referred to as shruti (hearing) which is eternal, self-evident and divinely revealed. The sages had seen and perceived the Vedic mantras while in a stage of meditation and contemplation.

The beginnings of Indian literature are found in Vedic hymns in Sanskrit. Early literary forms also include Tamil verses from the south, Prakrit and Pali tales from the mainland and tribal lore from the hills and uplands. Literature in early days was primarily religious.

The entire Vedic literature is shruti. On the other hand, we have several human creations in literature which are known as smriti (recollection). The Ramayana, the Mahabharata including the Bhagavad Gita, the Upanishads and Dharmashastras represent the finest examples of the smriti tradition. Many scholars view the Upanishads also as a part of shruti.

Sanskrit became the medium of expression of poets, authors, and storytellers. Treatises on philosophy, economics, politics, astronomy, mathematics, science, town-planning, architecture, music, drama and dance were written in Sanskrit.

### **Economic Life:**

- The economic life of the RigVedic people centered around agriculture, cattle rearing and trade and commerce. Oxen were used for ploughing and drawing carts and horses for drawing the chariots. Other domestic animals were cows, sheep, goats, asses, dogs, buffalos etc. The Rig Veda attached great importance to agriculture. The plough was drawn by the oxen at times in teams of six, eight or even twelve. The grains were harvested with sickles. The manure was also used. From various references in the Rig Veda it appears that irrigation was also practised; excess of rains and drought is mentioned as damaging the crops. The grains are collectively called Yava and dhanya. The later Vedic texts mention ten cultivated kinds of grains.
- Among the other occupations, pottery-making, weaving, carpentry, metal working, leather-working etc. are most noteworthy. During the RigVedic period only copper was used for which the general term – 'ayas' has been used. In a later period when iron came into use, copper and iron came to be known as lohit ayas and syam ayas respectively.
- The trade and traders (vanik) were known in the RigVedic era. Barter was in vogue. It has been found that ten cows were quoted as the price for an image of Indra. The conception of money can be traced in the mention of a gift of 100 nishkas. Money-lending was also known. There is a mention of an eighth or a sixteenth part of one being paid either as an interest or part of the principle. The sea is mentioned in the context of trade and ocean wealth, like pearls and shells.

### **Religion and Philosophy:**

- During the RigVedic time the gods worshipped are generally the personified powers of nature. The Vedic gods can be classified into three categories, namely terrestrial (prithivisthana), aerial or intermediate (antarikshasthana), and celestial (dyusthana). Prithivi, Agni, Soma, Brihaspati and rivers belong to the first category; Indra, Apam-apat, Rudra, Vayu-Vata, Prujanya, and Apah (water) to the second and Dyaus, Varuna, Mitra, Surya, Savitri, Pushan, Vishnu, the Adityas, Ushas and the Asvins to the third. Indra and Varuna (the supreme cosmic and moral ruler) stand out, in that order, pre-eminent above the rest. Agni and Soma were also popular deities.
- Agni was revered as the messenger between the earth and the heaven. Further, Agni is the only God who is regarded as present among all the categories of Gods. The Gods are described as born, yet they are immortal. In appearance they are humans, though sometimes they are conceived as animals, e.g. Dyaus as bull and Sun as a swift horse. The food of men such as milk, grain, flesh, etc.
- The Rig Veda refers to hundreds of cities, towns and forts, which are broad (prithvi) and wide (urui), full of kine (goma), of 100 pillars (satabhujl) built of stone (asmamaYI), and to autumnal (saradi) forts as refuge against inundations. Indra is known as Purandara "Lord of cities". The RigVeda also mentions of business and mercantile people to whom it calls vanik and panis respectively and refers to the Vedic people such as Turvasa and Yadu, as hailing from the sea. Most of the animals known to the Indus people are also known to the RigVeda, such as sheep, dog, buffalo, bull, etc. The animals hunted by the RigVedic people were antelopes, boars, buffalos (gaur), lions, and elephants most of which are also familiar to the

Indus people. Horse was an important animal in the vedic period. Horse bones and terracotta figurines have been found at some Harappan sites.

- On the whole, the gods are benevolent, some of them also had malevolent traits, like Rudra and Maruta. Splendour, strength, knowledge, possession and truth are common attributes of the deities. Prayers and offering to these Gods were made for material gains, also for enlightenment and knowledge. For example, the most popular and famous Gayatri Mantra is recited daily by the pious Hindus even today. Besides the ritualistic aspect of religion, there is profound philosophy.
- The multiplicity of gods is openly questioned and the ultimate unity of universe is asserted as the creation of one God to whom different designations applied. The creation is deemed as the outcome of the sacrifice made by the Vratpurusha or of evolution from nonbeing manifested in the form of water. It is said that Hiranyagarbha arose from the great waters, pervading the universe, and thus created the waves out of eternally pre-existing matter.
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## Harappan Civilization and the RigVeda

- Since the discovery of the Harappan civilization many scholars have tried to identify this with the long literary and cultural tradition of India on the one hand and the Aryans on the other. In the very first decade of its discovery some historians and archaeologists thought Harappan civilization represents the Vedic civilization, but the paucity of evidence became the main argument of the opponents of the theory. The researches carried out over a period of last 50 years have added a new evidence and have altered the picture
- considerably. A criticalThe geographical distribution of the Harappan sites can be seen in the light of RigVedic geography also. The RigVedic geography extended from Afghanistan in the north to Gujarat in the south, Ganga in the east to Kubha (Kabul) Pakistan in the west. Among all the rivers in the RigVeda the Saraswati is considered to be the most important and sacred and the areas around the Saraswati and its tributaries were the core culture areas.
- As we have seen earlier, the main area of Harappan civilization is theSaraswati valley where more than 80% of the Harappan settlements are located. Thus the RigVedic and the Harappan geography are the same. The Rig Veda refers to hundreds of cities, towns and forts, which are broad (prithvi) and wide (urui), full of kine (goma), of 100 pillars (satabhuj) built of stone (asmam), and to autumnal (saradi) forts as refuge against inundations. Indra is known as Purandara “Lord of cities”. The RigVeda also mentions of business and mercantile people to whom it calls vanik and panis respectively and refers to the Vedic people such as Turvasa and Yadu, as hailing from the sea.

## Drawbacks of Vedic society

The Vedic social order is predicated on social inequality. Over the centuries it further degenerated. Two features of the Vedic social order, which have harmed Indian society and polity immensely over the centuries, are the creation of a class of ‘untouchables’ outside the varna system and the denial of education to various segments of society including women.

The denial of education to various social groups, including women, in the name of the varna system led to the spread of ignorance and illiteracy among the people. This also contributed to India’s extreme backwardness and poverty. The lack of education and access to scriptures and books adversely affected the untouchables, the Dalits, people deemed to be ‘backward’, and the women and also generated a tremendous sense of insecurity among them. All this is contrary to the lofty ideals of peace and brotherhood that characterize the hymns of the Rig Veda.



# 7

## Later Vedic Phase

- We have seen earlier how different branches of Vedic literature had grown out of one another. The four Vedas were followed by the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas and the Upanishads. The Brahmanas, the earliest of the Aryan's prose literature, explain in detail various Vedic sacrificial ceremonies and their origins. Aranyakas are the concluding portions of the Brahmanas and are called so because the philosophical and mystical character of their contents required that they should be studied in the solitude of the aranya or forest.
- The Aranyakas form a tradition that culminates in the Upanishads, the last phase of the Vedic literature. The **RigVeda** broadly deals with ritualistic (Karmakanda) and philosophical aspects. The ritualistic aspect is elaborated in the Brahmanas and the philosophic aspect is elaborated in the Upanishads. Upanishads do not believe in the sacrificial acquiring ceremonies but in knowledge by which deliverance is obtained from mundane existence through the absorption of the individual soul (Atman) in the world soul. (Brahma).
- The two oldest and most important of the Upanishads are the Chhandogya and Brihadaranyaka. Other important Upanishads include Kathak, Isa, Mundaka, Prasna, etc.

### Geography States :

- We have already seen that the main settlement of the **RigVedic** people was the region of Indus and Saraswati Valleys. During the period represented by the later Samhitas and Brahmanas the settlements covered virtually the whole of northern India. The centre of civilization now shifted from Saraswati to Ganga which now occupies the proud place of the most revered and sacred river of India.
- The earlier known jana like Bharatas, Purus, Tritsus, and Turvasas of the RigVedic period slowly were merging with other janas and disappearing from the scene. In a way gradual consolidation and expansion of some of the states started taking place. Relatively minor janas of RigVedic times like Purus became more powerful and began to play more dominant role.
- We no longer hear of the Anus, Druhyus, Turvasas, the Krivis, etc. Besides these, in the eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar areas also such states as Kasi, Kosala, Videha, Magadha and Anga developed. However, the areas of south India are not clearly mentioned. The political life became more vivid and the struggle for supremacy among different states was of frequent occurrence. The ideal of universal empire loomed large.
- The expansion of people towards the east is indicated in a legend of Satapatha Brahmana – how Videgh Madhav migrated from Saraswati region, the land of Vedic Culture, crossed Sadanira (modern Gandak river), the eastern boundary of Kosala and came to the land of Videha (modern Tirhut). The texts testify the growth of three kingdoms, namely, Kosala, Kasi and Videha.
- Kuru-Panchala appears to be the same geographical region as modern western and central Uttar Pradesh. In the Upanishads the Kuru-Panchala region is mentioned as the seat of culture and prosperity. The Panchala king Pravahana Jaivali is mentioned as daily attending the Panchala parishad. The texts testify the three kingdoms of Kosala, Kasi and Videha as seats of Vedic culture. Magadha and Anga are also mentioned as distant lands in the Atharvaveda. The RigVedic Kikatas have been identified with Magadha. Matsya janapada also gets mentioned. In south, Vidarbha (Maharashtra) is mentioned. Madra was located in the Punjab region, further west is associated with Bahlikas, Kesins, Kekayas and Kamboja. Polity and Administration : Side by side with the growth of larger states, we find that detailed political and administrative structure was also emerging. Kingship was consolidating itself as the normal form of government with the states growing both in number and size. The kingship was being given the status of divine origin. There was also emerging the concept of a king of kings. Expressions like adhiraj,

rajadhiraja, samrat and ekkrat are used in most of the texts. The Atharvaveda defines ekkrat to be the paramount sovereign. There also developed special ceremonies for the anointment of kings, such as the Vajpeya, Rajsuya and Ashvamedha. Though the monarchy established itself on firm foundations, it was not absolute but limited in several ways.

- Within the framework of kingship, there were operating certain democratic elements. These were:
  - (i) The people's right in choosing their king;
  - (ii) the conditions imposed on king's rights and duties;
  - (iii) The king's dependence on the council of his ministers; and the assemblies of people, sabha and samiti, as check upon king's absolutism. Under no circumstances was the king considered the sole owner of the kingdom with absolute power over the objects and subjects. The king was supposed to be only a trustee and the kingdom as a trust. The condition of his holding it was, "the promotion of the people's well being and progress". Besides, the ministers and officials, sabha and samiti played important role in the administration. The sabha functioned as a parliament for disposal of public business by debate and discussion. The Chief of the sabha was called sabhapati, the keepers as sabhapala and the members as sabheya, sabhasad or sabhasina.

There were rules which governed the debate in sabha and Vajsaneyi Samhita mentions that erring members were 'rebuked'. Sabha also seems to have functioned as a court of justice. It is said that, "one who attends the sabha sits as a law court to dispense dharma justice". The samiti was different than sabha in the function and composition. The sabha was a smaller select body and also functioned as the lower court, while the samiti was the larger General Assembly of the people. Accordingly, the latter is referred to as expressing the voice of vis (people), which is explained by the fact that in one instance it is the samiti which chooses the king and in another it withdraws that choice for the king's misdeeds and tyranny. However, the increase in complexity in the society and political structure is duly reflected in the enlarged entourage of the state. We hear of new officials such as suta (charioteer), sangrahitri (treasurer), bhagadugha (collector of (taxes), gramini (head of village), sthapati (chief judge), takshan (carpenter), kshatri (chamberlain) and several others whose exact function cannot be ascertained. Everything indicates that the administrative machinery was highly organised and became an efficient instrument for ruling over a large kingdom. The liberal spirit of the age is reflected in the following advice which, according to the Yajurveda, was tendered by the priest to the king at the coronation ceremony: "As a ruler, from this day onwards, judge the strong and weak impartially and fairly. Strive unceasingly to do good to the people and above all protect the country from all calamities". We find that legal institutions were also coming into sharper focus. The king administered justice and wielded the rod of punishment. Among the crimes enumerated are theft, robbery, adultery, incest, abduction, killing of man. Killing of cow, slaying of brahmana, drinking intoxicating liquor, treachery, etc. were punishable by death. Petty offences were left to "village judges". For evidence, the eye-witness was more important than informer. The punishments for crime were rather severe. The law was also very clear on the question of inheritance of property, ownership of land, etc. The father's property was to be inherited by sons alone. The daughters could inherit it only if she was the only child or there were no male issues.

### **Social System :**

The gradual political evolution was by no means the most important factor in the history of later Vedic period. Changes of far greater significance were gradually taking place in the society and religion.

In the RigVedic period society comprised four varnas depending on one's profession and within a family, members could follow the professions of different varnas. In later Vedic period, varnas came to be birth-based rather than profession-based. The proliferation of professions gave rise to jatis. But the jati system was not yet as rigid as it became during the period of the sutras. It was somewhere in the middle of flexible RigVedic society and rigid society of the Sutra period. Emergence of jati was very unusual but perhaps not impossible in that age. The RigVeda describes Vishvamitra as a rishi but Aitareya Brahmana mentions him as kshatriya. In the same Brahmana we find that rigidity in terms of jati is coming up. The position of fourth varna, *i.e.* sudra was made miserable by depriving them of the rights of performing sacrifices, learning the sacred texts and of even holding landed property. The most glaring evil of the jati system, namely, the concept of untouchability had not yet reared its ugly head. There are instances of individuals such as Kavasha, Vatsa and Satyakama Jabala who were born in non-brahman jatis but came to be known as great brahmins. On the whole, jati had

not yet become a rigid system, and none of the three factors which characterised it later viz. prohibition of inter-dining, intermarriage and determination of varna by descent, were yet established on a rigid basis.

### **Economic life:**

The growth of economic prosperity is indicated in many prayers contained in the Atharvaveda for the success of farmers, shepherds, merchants and so on. There are prayers for ploughing, sowing, rains, increase in cattle, wealth and exorcism against beasts, wild animals and robbers and the likes. The plough was known as sira and the furrow sita. Cow dung was used as manure. There is mention of six, eight and even twenty-four oxen yoked to a plough. Many kinds of grains were grown such as rice, barley, beans and sesame. Their seasons are also mentioned: barley sown in winter, ripened in summer; rice sown in the rains, reaped in autumn. The Satapatha Brahmana enumerates various operations of agriculture such as ploughing, sowing, reaping and threshing.

Agriculture suffered from the usual pests – the moles that destroyed the seed and other creatures that harmed the tender shoots. The Atharvaveda mentions that drought and excess rains threatened agriculture. Cattle wealth was considered to be of great significance and a fairly long hymn in the Atharvaveda shows reverence to cow and the death penalty prescribed for cow-killing.

Rich merchants have been often referred to. Money lending was in vogue. Specific weight and measure-units were also known. Niska and satamana were the units of currency. There is no evidence of the use of coins with specific weight, size and device during the time under discussion. Haggling in the market was known from RigVedic times itself. Sea-borne trade was well known and Aitareya Brahmana speaks of the “inexhaustible sea” and “the sea as encircling the earth”. Bali, which was earlier only a voluntary gift to chief, had now become a regular tax and was collected to maintain the political and administrative structure.

During the period of Rig Veda we find the mention of only ayas which has been taken as copper/bronze. With the introduction of a new metal *i.e.*, iron in this age we get the tenns syam ayas (iron) and lohita ayas (copper). Besides these, gold, lead and tin are also referred to. While the iron was used for making weapons and other objects like nail-parers, hammers, clamps, ploughshares etc. The copper was used for making vessels. Silver (rajat) and Gold were used for making ornaments, dishes etc.

### **Education:**

This period witnessed the growth of a vast and varied literature. The Upanishads, being the highest level of intellectual attainments, which was no doubt the outcome of intellectual pursuits of the time.

Education began with the Upanayana ceremony which was considered as second birth of the child and that is why after this ceremony he came to be known as dvija. The aim of learning was faith, retention of knowledge acquired, progeny, wealth, longevity and immortality. They, thus, comprehended success in both worldly as well as spiritual life. The duties of pupils were well defined. During this period under discussion there were three stages of studies. In the first stage, pupils studied at the homes of their teachers where they lived as family members and participated in the household works also. Beside these, there were small schools of learning run by an individual teacher who would choose his own pupils. There were other means of education. The educated men even as a householder carried on their quest of knowledge by mutual discussions and regularly visiting the distinguished--sages and learned scholars at different centres or while they were moving from one place to another. There were also parishads in different janapadas patronised by kings. Besides these residential schools, academies for advanced study and circles of philosophical discussions, a great impetus to learning came from the assemblies of learned men, gathered together by kings. A typical example of these was the conference of the learned organised by king Janak of Videha, which is mentioned in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. The participants in this conference were Yajnavalkya, Uddalaka Aruni, Sakalya, Gargi and a number of other scholars. The details of this conference and various topics discussed there are given in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. Learning was sought from those who were knowledgeable. We learn that Yajnavalkya, after completing his education with Uddalaka Aruni, went to Janaka (a king and kshatriya) to study philosophy and other subjects.

However, in the Janaka's conference Yajnavalkya defeated all the participants in discussions and was declared as the most learned and wise. Significantly, an active part was taken in intellectual pursuit by women. Gargi and Maitreyi are the great examples. The RigVeda refers to a number of women who composed hymns. An

important feature of the time is the part taken by kshatriyas in the intellectual pursuit. Janaka, the king of Videha, Pravahana J aivali, the king of Panchala, Asvapati Kaikeya the king of Kasi – all kshatriyas, were well known scholars to whom even the learned brahmins came to for further instructions. The texts mention the subjects of study at the time. The Chhandogya Upanishad mentions such subjects as the study of Vedas, Mathematics, Mineralogy, Logic, Ethics, Military Science, Astronomy, Science dealing with poisons, Fine Arts and Crafts, Music, and Medical Sciences.

The Mundaka Upanishad classifies all these subjects of study under Aparavidya. It reserves the term Paravidya for the highest knowledge, the knowledge of atman, which involves knowledge of life, death, God etc.

### **Religion and Philosophy:**

The Brahmanas record the growth of ritualism and ceremonial religion and the consequent growth of priesthood. From simple sacrifices occupying just one day or a couple of days, there were now many, lasting from twelve days to a year or even more. While the Rig Veda knows of only seven priests and two chief priests, now a large-scale ceremonies required seventeen priests. There were domestic rites and sacraments which embraced the entire life span of a man – from his birth to death, or rather beyond it, as ceremonies were also performed for the departed souls.

These rites and ceremonies were not the only means of attaining success in life in this world, or the bliss in heaven. Soon the idea of penance and meditation took the precedence. Men took to ascetic practices under the belief that they would not only gain heaven but also develop “mystic, extraordinary and superhuman faculties”. On one hand elaborate rites, ceremonies and ascetic practices weretaking the place of simple religious worship of the RigVedic period, on the other, the intellectual pursuit of the people continued with the conviction that salvation was attainable only through true knowledge. Thus, was laid down the doctrine: “he who knows God, attains God, nay, he is God”. As explained earlier, the distinction between rituals and knowledge was recognised by the Vedas. But it is only towards the later phase of the Vedic period where it was elaborated upon. The general body of early philosophical treatises is known by the name of Upanishad. The number of Upanishads is about 200. The oldest among these are the Brihadaranyaka and Chhandogya which contain bold speculations about the eternal problems of human thought concerning God, man and the universe etc. The Upanishads are justly regarded as the most important contribution of India towards the world’s stock of spiritual thought. The great philosopher Schopenhauer, after reading the Latin translation of the Persian translation of Upanishads wrote:”From every sentence deep, original and sublime thoughts arise, and the whole is pervaded by a high and holy and earnest spirit. Indian air surrounds us, and original thoughts of kindredspirits”. Even Max Muller held that, “the earliest of these philosophical treatises will always maintain a place in the literature of the world, among the most astounding productions of the human mind in any age and in any country”.

### **Science and Technology**

Vedas, Brahmanas and Upanishads give enough idea about sciences during this period. Mathematics has been called by the general name ganita which includes Arithmetic (anka ganita), Geometry (rekha ganita), Algebra (bijaganita), Astronomy and Astrology jyotisa).

Vedic people knew the methods of making squares equal in area to triangles, circles and calculate the sums and differences of squares. The Zero was known in RigVedic times itself and due to this, large numbers could also be recorded. Also the positional value of each number with its absolute value was known. Cubes, cuberoots, squareroots and underroots were also known and used. In the Vedic period, astronomy was well developed. They knew the movement of heavenly bodies and calculated about their positions at different times. It helped them in preparing accurate calendars and predicting the time of solar and lunar eclipses. They also knew that the earth moved on its own axis and around the sun. The Moon moved around the earth. They also tried to calculate the time period taken for revolution and distances among heavenly bodies from the sun. The results of these calculations are almost the same as the ones done by modern methods.



# 8

## The Philosophy of India

### Philosophy in Vedic Phase

- Indian philosophy, with a distinctive character of its own, originated in the speculations of Vedic sages and reached its fruition in the Advaita Vedanta of Sankara.
- Among the remaining six systems of philosophy there is some similarity and affinity between Nyaya and Vaisesika, Samkhya and Yoga, and Mimamsa and Vedanta. The Mimamsa recognises the Vedas as the final authority in determining the duties of man, and the Vedantists in gaining true knowledge about Man and the Universe. One is concerned with the Kar, makanda and the other with the Jnanakanda of the Vedas, that is, the Samhitas and the Brahmanas, and the Upanishads respectively.
- In the Vedic age, the forces of Nature were personified as gods, as living on the earth, in the sky and in the heaven. Men offered oblations to the gods and asked for cattle, crops, wealth, prosperity, health, longevity, progeny, victory, peace and happiness here, and heaven after death. Some Vedic seers however believed that there was an **Ultimate Being** which manifested Itself as the various gods.
- The Bhagavad-Gita embodies the teachings of Lord Krishna. It is highly valued all over India and the world, and has been translated into a number of languages. It says one should remain balanced both in happiness and sorrow, in profit and loss and in victory and defeat. It tells that Atman is indestructible, neither weapons can pierce it nor fire can burn it.
- According to the doctrine of karma one's present birth and condition is determined by the karma of his previous birth. Belief in karma does not necessarily involve fatalism. Most thinkers have said that though our present condition is due to karma in previous birth, but by our foresightedness and righteous deeds in the present life we can change these conditions.
- The continuous quest by the sages gave birth to great philosophical systems, which looked upon man and the universe with an unbiased, free and rational mindset. The important systems are Charvaka, Jaina, Buddha, Vaisesika, Nyaya, Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa and Vedanta.
- The first three systems are nastika do not believe in the authority of the Vedas and the God, while all others are astika, *i.e.* believe in the Vedas and the God. The Charvaka system (also called Lokayata) believes only in materialism. The physical body composed of material elements is the only essence of man.
- Death only is the end of man; and enjoyment of pleasures are the only objects in life. There is no life beyond death, no heaven or hell, no Law of karma, and no rebirth. The Charvaka system does not believe in soul, god, or any other life beyond the present one.
- Death is always that of body and not of Atman which takes another body as its abode. The god incarnates himself with a view to punish the wicked and protect the good people. One can attain moksha in three ways – by acquiring highest knowledge (Janan), by devotion to God (bhakti) and by action, *i.e.* selfless performance of one's duties (karma) without caring for reward.
- Among the remaining six systems of philosophy there is some similarity and affinity between Nyaya and Vaisesika, Samkhya and Yoga, and Mimamsa and Vedanta. The Mimamsa recognises the Vedas as the final authority in determining the duties of man, and the Vedantists in gaining true knowledge about Man and the Universe. One is concerned with the Kar, makanda and the other with the Jnanakanda of the Vedas, that is, the Samhitas and the Brahmanas, and the Upanishads respectively.

## Vaisesika

The Vaisesika system is a realistic, analytic, and objective philosophy of the world. It tries to distinguish between the various kinds of ultimate things and to classify all the objects under five elements – Earth, Water, Air, Fire, and Ether – existing in the form of Atom, Time, Space, Minds and Self.

- The creation of the world begins when the atoms of these five elements start to combine, and when they disintegrate, the world comes to an end. Vaisesika, thus postulates a dualism of the matter and soul, and declares that salvation depends on fully recognising the atomic nature of the universe, and its difference with the soul.

## Nyaya

- The Nyaya system accepts all the categories recognised by the Vaisesika system and adds one Abhava (negation). It also accepts all the substances admitted by the Vaisesika system, and considers God to be the creator of the world.
- He is a soul (atman) free from the 'Law of karma' and rebirth. The 'Law of karma' operates independently of Him. In the state of pralaya (cosmic dissolution) and Apavarga (moksha) or freedom from the life of samsara (birth and death) there is no consciousness in the soul. Nyaya makes a detailed study of the sources of knowledge (pramana). According to Nyaya school there are four pramanas, namely perception (pratyaksha), inference (anumana), comparison (upamana) and verbal testimony *i.e.* "words" (sabda).

## Samkhya

- The Samkhya is the oldest of all six systems of philosophy. It teaches the existence of twenty-five basic principles (tattva). Of these twenty-five tattvas, first is Prakriti *i.e.* "matter". The Samkhya system believes that the evolution of universe is not due to God but due to the inherent nature of the Prakriti. It is from Prakriti that all things like air, water, ether (akasa), intelligence (buddhi), self-consciousness, sight, touch, hearing, speech, etc. develop. One of the most important tattva in all this is Purusa, the "soul". As in Jainism the Samkhya believes that there are infinite number of souls and Purusa is not dependent on Prakriti nor Prakriti is dependent on Purusa. Yet Purusa is involved in some way in the Prakriti *i.e.* the matter and salvation lies in recognising their differences.
- A very important feature of Samkhya is the doctrine of three qualities (guna).
- These are virtue (Sattva), passion (Rajas) and dullness (Tamas). It is said that in the beginning these three gunas are present in all beings in equilibrium, but as they evolve, one or other of these three gunas come to dominate. The Sattvaguna represents the truth, wisdom, beauty and goodness; the Rajas signifies fierceness, activeness, violence, energy and; while the Tamas is darkness, foolishness, gloomy, unhappy etc. However, the distinction between the Purusa (soul) and Prakriti (matter) was modified in Tantricism which developed in later days. In Tantricism Purusa came to signify "man" and Prakriti "woman".

## Yoga

Yoga is probably the best known Hindu philosophical system in the world. In this system the self-control and self-mortification is supreme. Anyone who has mastered the various aspects of this doctrine is known as yogi. According to yoga the god is not the creator but an exalted soul which has existed all through without ever having merged with the matter. The salvation in this system is by practicing the following eight things:

- (i) Yama (self-control): yama means the practice of five moral rules which are truth, non-violence, chastity, not stealing and no greed.
- (ii) Niyama (observance): complete and regular observance of five more moral rules which are purity, contentment, austerity, study of Vedas and devotion to God.
- (iii) Asanas (postures): sitting in certain prescribed postures which are an essential part of yoga. These are known as yogasanas. The most famous is Padmasana in which gods and sages are commonly depicted.
- (iv) Pranayama (control of breath): the control of breath at will is another step in this doctrine. This is considered to be of great physical and spiritual value.

- (v) Pratyahara (restrain): in which the sense organs are trained in such a way that they do not take notice of their own perceptions and feelings.
- (vi) Dharana (steadying the mind): concentrating on a single object such as tip of the nose or a sacred symbol.
- (vii) Dhyana (meditation): by concentration the mind can be filled only by that object on which concentration is being made and completely emptied of all other things.
- (viii) Samadhi (deep meditation): in which it is only the soul which remains and the whole personality is temporarily dissolved.

A person who has mastered yoga can live a very long life, hold his breath for a long period without suffering injury, can control the rhythm of his own heartbeat and can withstand extremes of heat and cold. In yoga, it is through Samadhi the soul gets released from the life cycle and joins the exalted soul *i.e.* the God.

## Mimamsa

The Mimamsa system is a philosophy of interpretation, application and use of the texts of the Samhita and Brahmana portions of Vedas. The Mimamsa system recognises the Vedas as the final authority in determining the duties of man, and the Vedantists in gaining the true knowledge about man and universe. It recognises two paths of salvation. One is concerned with the karmakanda (ritualism) and other with the jnanakanda (pursuit of knowledge) of the Vedas *i.e.* the Samhitas, Brahmanas, and the Upanishads respectively.

## Vedanta

- The ancient Indian thoughts on philosophy reached its peak in the philosophy of Vedanta. Sankara's commentaries on Upanishads, Brahmasutra and Bhaguada-Gita are important for understanding the Vedanta Philosophy. Sankara held that all works teach the Ultimate Reality. Brahma is One.
- The vedanta philosophy expanded by Sankara is known as Advaita Vedanta. The Brahma has an infinite number of powers (sakti) and the creative power (Maya) is one of them. The power is not separate from the powerful and hence there is no duality. The world as a whole and in all its parts has purpose.
- For the purpose of carrying out the work of creation, preservation and destruction, God (Isvara) assumes three distinct names and forms, namely, Brahma, Visnu and Rudra (also known as Siva or Mahesha).
- The doctrine clearly recognises that the highest level of truth is that the whole world and all that exists is Maya- an illusion, a dream, a mirage and a figment of imagination. Ultimately, the whole Universe is unreal, *i.e.* Maya.
- The only reality is Brahma (the Universal Soul) with which the individual soul is identical. The salvation of the individual soul is possible only by merging it with Brahma.
- The post-Sankara period saw the elaboration of the doctrines of all the above mentioned schools of thoughts, and the evolution of each system in its own way in the light of criticism by others. There was a great development of dialectics in each school which led to highly technical and systematic works being written by thinkers. One of the great sages who differed with Sankara was Ramanuja, who wrote his own commentaries on the Upanishads, Brahmasutras and Bhagavad-Gita.



# 9

## The Buddha and Mahavira

Siddhartha, also known as Gautama, the founder of Buddhism, was born about 2500 years ago. This was a time of rapid change in the lives of people. As you saw in Chapter 6, some kings in the mahajanapadas were growing more powerful. New cities were developing, and life was changing in the villages as well. Many thinkers were trying to understand these changes in society. They also wanted to try and find out the true meaning of life. The Buddha belonged to a small gana known as the Sakya gana, and was a kshatriya. When he was a young man, he left the comforts of his home in search of knowledge. He wandered for several years, meeting and holding discussions with other thinkers. He finally decided to find his own path to realisation, and meditated for days on end under a peepal tree at Bodh Gaya in Bihar, where he attained enlightenment. After that, he was known as the Buddha or the Wise One. He then went to Sarnath, near Varanasi, where he taught for the first time. He spent the rest of his life travelling on foot, going from place to place, teaching people, till he passed away at Kusinara.

The Buddha taught that life is full of suffering and unhappiness. This is caused because we have cravings and desires (which often cannot be fulfilled). Sometimes, even if we get what we want, we are not satisfied, and want even more (or want other things). The Buddha described this as thirst or tanha. He taught that this constant craving could be removed by following moderation in everything, so that everybody could understand his message.

### The Sangha

Both the Mahavira and the Buddha felt that only those who left their homes could gain true knowledge. They arranged for them to stay together in the sangha, an association of those who left their homes. The rules made for the Buddhist sangha were written down in a book called the Vinaya Pitaka. From this we know that there were separate branches for men and women. All men could join the sangha. However, children had to take the permission of their parents and slaves that of their masters. Those who worked for the king had to take his permission and debtors that of creditors. Women had to take their husbands' permission.

Men and women who joined the sangha led simple lives. They meditated for most of the time, and went to cities and villages to beg for food during fixed hours. That is why they were known as bhikkhus (the Prakrit word for beggar) and bhikkhunis. They taught others, and helped one another. They also held meetings to settle any quarrels that took place within the sangha. Those who joined the sangha included brahmins, kshatriyas, merchants, labourers, barbers, courtesans and slaves. Many of them wrote down the teachings of the Buddha. Some of them also composed beautiful poems, describing their life in the sangha.

### Upanishads

Around the time that the Buddha was preaching and perhaps a little earlier, other thinkers also tried to find answers to difficult questions. Some of them wanted to know about life after death, others wanted to know why sacrifices should be performed. Many of these thinkers felt that there was something permanent in the universe that would last even after death. They described this as the atman or the individual soul and the brahman or the universal soul. They believed that ultimately, both the atman and the brahman were one. Many of their ideas were recorded in the Upanishads. These were part of the later Vedic texts. Upanishad literally means 'approaching and sitting near' and the texts contain conversations between teachers and students. Often, ideas were presented through simple dialogues.

## Monasteries

To begin with, both Jaina and Buddhist monks went from place to place throughout the year, teaching people. The only time they stayed in one place was during the rainy season, when it was very difficult to travel. Then, their supporters built temporary shelters for them in gardens, or they lived in natural caves in hilly areas.

### How Buddhist texts were prepared and preserved

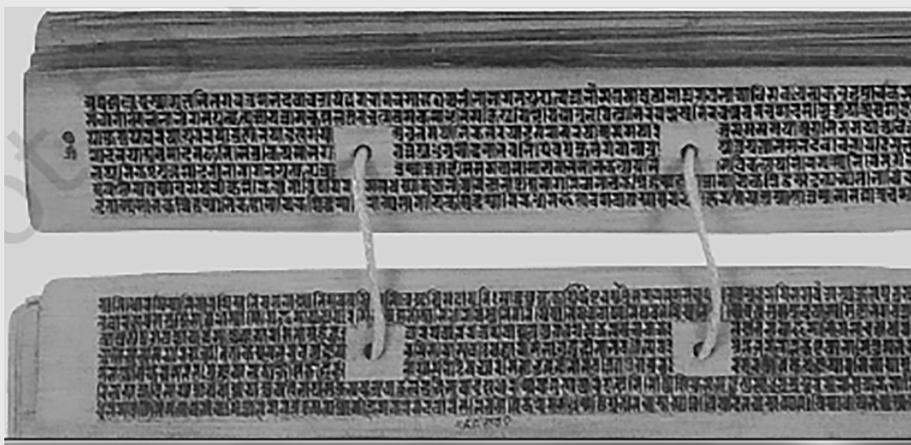
The Buddha (and other teachers) taught orally - through discussion and debate. Men and women (perhaps children as well) attended these discourses and discussed what they heard. None of the Buddha's speeches were written down during his lifetime. After his death (c. fifth-fourth century BCE) his teachings were compiled by his disciples at a council of 'elders' or senior monks at Vesali (Pali for Vaishali in present-day Bihar). These compilations were known as Tipitaka - literally, three baskets to hold different types of texts. They were first transmitted orally and then written and classified according to length as well as subject matter.

The Vinaya Pitaka included rules and regulations for those who joined the sangha or monastic order; the Buddha's teachings were included in the Surra Pitaka; and the Abhidhamma Pitaka dealt with philosophical matters. Each pitaka comprised a number of individual texts. Later, commentaries were written on these texts by Buddhist scholars.

As Buddhism travelled to new regions such as Sri Lanka, other texts such as the Dipavamsa (literally, the chronicle of the island) and Mahavamsa (the great chronicle) were written, containing regional histories of Buddhism. Many of these works contained biographies of the Buddha. Some of the oldest texts are in Pali, while later compositions are in Sanskrit.

When Buddhism spread to East Asia, pilgrims such as Fa Xian and Xuan Zang travelled all the way from China to India in search of texts. These they took back to their own country, where they were translated by scholars. Indian Buddhist teachers also travelled to faraway places, earning texts to disseminate the teachings of the Buddha.

Buddhist texts were preserved in manuscripts for several centuries in monasteries in different parts of Asia. Modern translations have been prepared from Pali, Sanskrit, Chinese and Tibetan texts.



*A Buddhist manuscript in Sanskrit, c. twelfth century*

As time went on, many supporters of the monks and nuns, and they themselves, felt the need for more permanent shelters and so monasteries were built. These were known as viharas. The earliest viharas were made of wood, and then of brick. Some were even in caves that were dug out in hills, especially in western India.

**Just as the waters of rivers lose their names and separateness when they flow into the mighty ocean,** so are varna and ranks and family forgotten when the followers of the Buddha join the order of monks. The earliest viharas were made of A Buddhist text tells us: wood, and then of brick. Some were even in caves that were dug out in hills, especially in western India.

The systems of ashramas Around the time when Jainism and Buddhism were becoming popular, brahmins developed the system of ashramas. Here, the word ashrama does not mean a place where people live and meditate. It is used instead for a stage of life.

One of the most influential teachers of the time was the Buddha. Over the centuries, his message spread across the subcontinent and beyond – through Central Asia to China, Korea and Japan, and through Sri Lanka, across the seas to Myanmar, Thailand and Indonesia. These have been reconstructed by carefully editing, translating and analysing the Buddhist texts mentioned earlier. Historians have also tried to reconstruct details of his life from hagiographies. Many of these were written down at least a century after the time of the Buddha, in an attempt to preserve memories of the great teacher. According to these traditions, Siddhartha, as the Buddha was named at birth, was the son of a chief of the Sakya clan. He had a sheltered upbringing within the palace, insulated from the harsh realities of life. One day he persuaded his charioteer to take him into the city. His first journey into the world outside was traumatic. He was deeply anguished when he saw an old man, a sick man and a corpse.

He realised in that moment that the decay and destruction of the human body was inevitable. He also saw a homeless mendicant, who, it seemed to him, had come to terms with old age, disease and death, and found peace. Siddhartha decided that he too would adopt the same path. Soon after, he left the palace and set out in search of his own truth.

Siddhartha explored several paths including bodily mortification which led him to a situation of near death. Abandoning these extreme methods, he meditated for several days and finally attained enlightenment. After this he came to be known as the Buddha or the Enlightened One. For the rest of his life, he taught *dhamma* or the path of righteous living.

## The teaching of BUDDHA

The Buddha's teachings have been reconstructed from stories, found mainly in the Sutta Pitaka.

Although some stories describe his miraculous powers, others suggest that the Buddha tried to convince people through reason and persuasion rather than through displays of supernatural power.

For instance, when a grief-stricken woman whose child had died came to the Buddha, he gently convinced her about the inevitability of death rather than bring her son back to life. These stories were narrated in the language spoken by ordinary people so that these could be easily understood.

According to Buddhist philosophy, the world is transient (*anicca*) and constantly changing; it is also soulless (*anatta*) as there is nothing permanent or eternal in it. Within this transient world, sorrow (*dukkha*) is intrinsic to human existence. It is by following the path of moderation between severe penance and self-indulgence that human beings can rise above these worldly troubles. In the earliest forms of Buddhism, whether or not god existed was irrelevant.

The Buddha regarded the social world as the creation of humans rather than of divine origin.

Therefore, he advised kings and *gahapatis* (master of house hold) to be humane and ethical. Individual effort was expected to transform social relations. The Buddha emphasised individual agency and righteous action as the means to escape from the cycle of rebirth and attain self-realisation and *Nirvana*, literally the extinguishing of the ego and desire – and thus end the cycle of suffering for those who renounced the world. According to Buddhist tradition, his last words to his followers were: “Be lamps unto yourselves as all of you must work out your own liberation.”

### Buddhism in practice

This is an excerpt from the Sutta Pitaka, and contains the advice given by the Buddha to a wealthy householder named Sigala:

In five ways should a master look after his servants and employees ... by assigning them work according to their strength, by supplying them with food and wages, by tending them in sickness; by sharing delicacies with them and by granting leave at times ...

In five ways should the clansmen look after the needs of samanās (those who have renounced the world) and Brahmanas by affection in act and speech and mind, by keeping open house to them and supplying their worldly needs.

There are similar instructions to Sigala about how to behave with his parents, teacher and wife.

The fundamental principle of Buddha's teachings are represented by the Four Noble Truths (Arya-Satyas) viz :

- (i) that the world is full of sorrow (Dukkha),
- (ii) that there are causes of sorrow (Dukkha Samuddaya),
- (iii) that this sorrow can be stopped (dukkha nirodha), and
- (iv) path leading to cessation of sorrow (Dukkha nirodhagamini-pratipada). According to Buddha, root of all human misery was 'desire' and its annihilation was the surest way of ending unhappiness. He held that death was no escape from it, as it lead to rebirth and further suffering.

One could get out of this chain of suffering and achieve the final salvation (Nirvana) by following the eight fold path. (Ashtangikamarga).

These eight fold paths are:

- |                                  |                        |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| (i) right speech,                | (v) right mindfulness, |
| (ii) right action,               | (vi) right meditation, |
| (iii) right means of livelihood, | (vii) right resolution |
| (iv) right exertion,             | (viii) right view.     |

## The followers of Buddha

Soon there grew a body of disciples of the Buddha and he founded a sangha, an organisation of monks who too became teachers of dhamma. These monks lived simply, possessing only the essential requisites for survival, such as a bowl to receive food once a day from the laity. As they lived on alms, they were known as bhikkhus. Initially, only men were allowed into the sangha, but later women also came to be admitted. According to Buddhist texts, this was made possible through the mediation of Ananda, one of the Buddha's dearest disciples, who persuaded him to allow women into the sangha. The Buddha's foster mother, Mahapajapati Gotami was the first woman to be ordained as a bhikkhuni. Many women who entered the sangha became teachers of dhamma and went on to become theris, or respected women who had attained liberation.

The Buddha's followers came from many social groups. They included kings, wealthy men and gahapatis, and also humbler folk: workers, slaves and craftspeople. Once within the sangha, all were regarded as equal, having shed their earlier social identities on becoming bhikkhus and bhikkhunis. The internal functioning of the sangha was based on the traditions of ganas and sanghas, where consensus was arrived at through discussions. If that failed, decisions were taken by a vote on the subject. Buddhism grew rapidly both during the lifetime of the Buddha and after his death, as it appealed to many people dissatisfied with existing religious practices and confused by the rapid social changes taking place around them. The importance attached to conduct and values rather than claims of superiority based on birth, the emphasis placed on metta (fellow feeling) and karuna (compassion), especially for those who were younger and weaker than oneself, were ideas that drew men and women to Buddhist teachings.

## STUPAS

We have seen that Buddhist ideas and practices emerged out of a process of dialogue with other traditions – including those of the Brahmanas, Jainas and several others, not all of whose ideas and practices were preserved in texts. Some of these interactions can be seen in the ways in which sacred places came to be identified.

From earliest times, people tended to regard certain places as sacred. These included sites with special trees or unique rocks, or sites of aweinspiring natural beauty. These sites, with small shrines attached to them, were sometimes described as chaityas.

Buddhist literature mentions several chaityas. It also describes places associated with the Buddha's life – where he was born (Lumbini), where he attained enlightenment (Bodh Gaya), where he gave his first sermon (Sarnath) and where he attained nibbana (Kusinagara). Gradually, each of these places came to be regarded as sacred. We know that about 200 years after the time of the

Buddha, Asoka erected a pillar at Lumbini to mark the fact that he had visited the place.

## Why were stupas built

There were other places too that were regarded as sacred. This was because relics of the Buddha such as his bodily remains or objects used by him were buried there. These were mounds known as stupas. The tradition of erecting stupas may have been pre-Buddhist, but they came to be associated with Buddhism. Since they contained relics regarded as sacred, the entire stupa came to be venerated as an emblem of both the Buddha and Buddhism. According to a Buddhist text known as the Ashokavadana, Asoka distributed portions of the Buddha's relics to every important town and ordered the construction of stupas over them. By the second century BCE a number of stupas, including those at Bharhut, Sanchi and Sarnath, had been built.

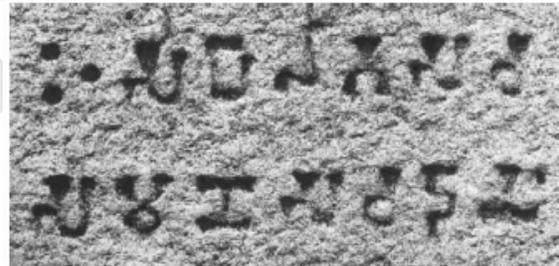
## How were stupas built

Inscriptions found on the railings and pillars of stupas record donations made for building and decorating them. Some donations were made by kings such as the Satavahanas; others were made by guilds, such as that of the ivory workers who financed part of one of the gateways at Sanchi. Hundreds of donations were made by women and men who mention their names, sometimes adding the name of the place from where they came, as well as their occupations and names of their relatives. Bhikkhus and bhikkhunis also contributed towards building these monuments.

## The structure of the stupa

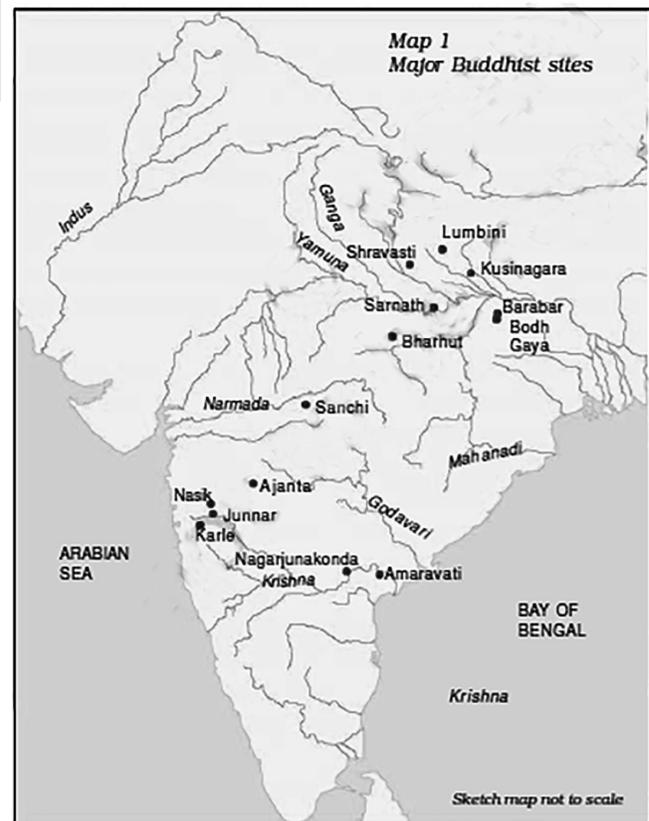
The stupa (a Sanskrit word meaning a heap) originated as a simple semi-circular mound of earth, later called Anda. Gradually, it evolved into a more complex structure, balancing round and square shapes. Above the anda was the harmika, a balcony like structure that represented the abode of the gods.

Arising from the harmika was a mast called the yashti, often surmounted by a chhatra or umbrella. Around the mound was a railing, separating the sacred space from the secular world. The early stupas at Sanchi and Bharhut were plain except for the stone railings, which resembled a bamboo or wooden fence, and the gateways, which were richly carved and installed at the four cardinal points. Worshippers entered through the eastern gateway and walked around the mound in a clockwise direction keeping the mound on the right, imitating the sun's course through the sky. Later, the mound of the stupas came to be elaborately carved with niches and sculptures as at Amaravati, and Shahji-ki-Dheri in Peshawar (Pakistan).



*A votive inscription from Sanchi*

**Hundreds of similar inscriptions have also been found at Bharhut and Amaravati.**



## NEW RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

### The development of Mahayana

**Buddhism** By the first century CE, there is evidence of changes in Buddhist ideas and practices. Early Buddhist teachings had given great importance to self-effort in achieving nibbana. Besides, the Buddha was regarded as a human being who attained enlightenment and nibbana through his own efforts. However, gradually the idea of a saviour emerged. It was believed that he was the one who could ensure salvation.

Simultaneously, the concept of the Bodhisatta also developed. Bodhisattas were perceived as deeply compassionate beings who accumulated merit through their efforts but used this not to attain nibbana and thereby abandon the world, but to help others. The worship of images of the Buddha and Bodhisattas became an important part of this tradition. This new way of thinking was called Mahayana—literally, the “great vehicle”. Those who adopted these beliefs described the older tradition as Hinayana or the “lesser vehicle”.

### Panini

One of the most famous was Panini, who prepared a grammar for Sanskrit. He arranged the vowels and the consonants in a special order, and then used these to create formulae like those found in Algebra. He used these to write down the rules of the language in short formulae (around 3000 of them).

### Jainism

The most famous thinker of the Jainas, Vardhamana Mahavira, also spread his message around this time, *i.e.* 2500 years ago. According to some Jain traditions, Mahavira was married to Yasoda and lived a life of a householder. He had a daughter also. After the death of his parents, Vardhamana left his home, and became an ascetic at the age of thirty.

During the next twelve years he practised most rigorous asceticism. He was a kshatriya prince of the Lichchavis, At the age of thirty, he left home and went to live in a forest. For twelve years he led a hard and lonely life, at the end of which he attained enlightenment.

He attained kaivalya *i.e.* the supreme knowledge and final deliverance from the bonds of pleasure and pain. Henceforth, he came to be known as Mahavira and Jina or the conqueror. His followers came to be known as Jainas. Originally they were designated as Nirgranthas, *i.e.* free from fetters. Mahavira spent the remaining thirty years of his life in preaching. He passed away at Pawapuri, in 468 B.C. at the age of seventy two.

Vardhaman Mahavira accepted four doctrines of Parsva. namely

- (i) **noninjury** to living beings,
- (ii) speaking the truth,
- (iii) non possession of property, and
- (iv) not stealing.

He taught a simple doctrine: men and women who wished to know the truth must leave their homes. They must follow very strictly the rules of ahimsa, which means not hurting or killing living beings. “All beings,” said Mahavira “long to live. To all things life is dear.” Ordinary people could understand the teachings of

### Hinayana or Theravada?

Supporters of Mahayana regarded other Buddhists as followers of Hinayana. However, followers of the older tradition described themselves as *theravadins*, that is, those who followed the path of old, respected teachers, the *theras*.



Mahavira and his followers, because they used Prakrit. There were several forms of Prakrit, used in different parts of the country, and named after the regions in which they were used.

Jainism has great antiquity. The names of two Tirthankaras namely, Rishabhanath and Aristhanemia find mention in RigVeda: Vayu Purana and Bhagwat Purana mention Rishabha as the incarnation of Narayana.

A few scholars believe that the nude torso found at Harappa belongs to some Tirthanakara. The Jain tradition traces Jainism to a remote antiquity represented by a succession of twenty-four Tirthankaras. The first Tirthankara was Rishabhath. We do not know much about him except that the traditions say that he was a king and renounced the kingdom in favour of his son, Bharata, and became an ascetic.

The twenty-third Tirthankara, Parsva, who was the son of Ikshvaku king Asvasena of Kasi and was born to the daughter of Naravanman, king of Kausasthala. He renounced the world at the age of thirty and attained perfect knowledge after nearly three months of intense meditation and spent the remaining life as a religious teacher, till his death at the age of hundred. He is said to have flourished 250 years before Mahavira, the twentyfourth Tirthankara. He, thus, lived in the eighth century B.C. Vardhamana Mahavira is the last Tirthankara. He was born in the village Kundagrama near Vaisali about 540 B.C. His father Siddhartha was the head of famous kshatriya Jnatrika clan and his mother Trisala was the sister of Chetaka, an eminent Lichchhavi noble of Vaisali. Chetaka's daughter was married to Bimbisara, the king of Magadha.

For example, the Prakrit spoken in Magadha was known as Magadhi. Followers of Mahavira, who were known as Jainas, had to lead very simple lives, begging for food. They had to be absolutely honest, and were especially asked not to steal. Also, they had to observe celibacy. And men had to give up everything, including their clothes.

It was very difficult for most men and women to follow these strict rules. Nevertheless, thousands left their homes to learn and teach this new way of life. Many more remained behind and supported those who became monks and nuns, providing them with food. Jainism was supported mainly by traders. Farmers, who had to kill insects to protect their crops, found it more difficult to follow the rules. Over hundreds of years, Jainism spread to different parts of north India, and to Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. The teachings of Mahavira and his followers were transmitted orally for several centuries. They were written down in the form in which they are presently available at a place called Valabhi, in Gujarat, about 1500 years ago

## The message of Mahavira

The basic philosophy of the Jainas was already in existence in north India before the birth of Vardhamana, who came to be known as Mahavira, in the sixth century BCE. According to Jaina tradition, Mahavira was preceded by 23 other teachers or tirthankaras – literally, those who guide men and women across the river of existence.

### The world beyond the palace

Just as the Buddha's teachings were compiled by his followers, the teachings of Mahavira were also recorded by his disciples. These were often in the form of stories, which could appeal to ordinary people. Here is one example, from a Prakrit text known as the *Uttaradhyayana Sutta*, describing how a queen naked Kamalavati tried to persuade her husband to renounce the world:

If the whole world and all its treasures were yours, you would not be satisfied, nor would all this be able to save you. When you die, O king and leave all things behind, *dhamma* alone, and nothing else, will save you. As a bird dislikes the cage, so do I dislike (the world). I shall live as a nun without offspring, without desire, without the love of gain, and without hatred ...

Those who have enjoyed pleasures and renounced them move about like the wind, and go wherever they please, unchecked like birds in their flight ...

Leave your large kingdom ... abandon what pleases the senses, be without attachment and property, then practise severe penance, being firm of energy ...

The most important idea in Jainism is that the entire world is animated: even stones, rocks and water have life. Non-injury to living beings, especially to humans, animals, plants and insects, is central to Jaina philosophy. In fact the principle of ahimsa, emphasised within Jainism, has left its mark on Indian thinking as a whole. According to Jaina teachings, the cycle of birth and rebirth is shaped through karma. Asceticism and penance are required to free oneself from the cycle of karma. This can be achieved only by renouncing the world;

therefore, monastic existence is a necessary condition of salvation. Jaina monks and nuns took **five vows: to abstain from killing, stealing and lying; to observe celibacy; and to abstain from possessing property.**

## Nirvana

Though the Jains did not deny the existence of God, they simply ignored him. The world for Jains is not created, maintained or destroyed by a God but functions through a universal or eternal law. The universe is eternal. It's existence is divided into cycles of progress (utsarpini) and declines (avasarpim). The universe functions through the interaction of living souls (Uiva) and everything in the universe has a soul. The purification of the soul is the purpose of living, for it is only the pure soul after being released from the body that resides in bliss. The souls are found not only in the living beings like animals and plants but also in stones, rocks, water etc. The soul which has finally set itself free rises at once to the top of the universe, above the highest heaven, where it remains in an inactive omniscient bliss through eternity. This for the Jains is Nirvana.

According to Jainism salvation is possible only by abandoning, all possessions, a long course of fasting, self-mortification, study and meditation. Hence, the monastic life is essential for salvation.

## The spread of Jainism

Gradually, Jainism spread to many parts of India. Like the Buddhists, Jaina scholars produced a wealth of literature in a variety of languages – Prakrit, Sanskrit and Tamil. For centuries, manuscripts of these texts were carefully preserved in libraries attached to temples. Some of the earliest stone sculptures associated with religious traditions were produced by devotees of the Jaina *tirthankaras*, and have been recovered from several sites throughout the subcontinent.



Chandragupta Maurya is said to have patronised Jainism. According to the Jaina tradition, Chandragupta not only accepted Jaina religion, but had actually abdicated the throne and died as a Jaina Bhikshu in southern India.

It is said that about two hundred years after the death of Mahavira a terrible famine broke out in Magadha. At that time Chandragupta Maurya was the king, and the Thera Bhadrabahu was the chief of the Jaina community. These two, with their followers, went to Karanataka, leaving Sthulabhadra in charge of the Jains that remained in Magadha.

Bhadrabahu convoked a council at Patliputra, in which the Jaina canon was arranged. Later in the fifth century A.D. it was further rearranged.

When the Jainas returned from south India, they held that complete nudity be an essential part of the teachings of Mahavira, while the monks in Magadha began to put on white clothes. Thus arose the two sects, the Svetambaras (those who put on white robes) and the Digambaras (those who were stark naked). It must be remembered that it is the munis who follow the strict code like wearing white clothes (Svetambaras) or not keeping even a small peice of cloth on themselves or remaining completely nude (Digambaras). The followers of both the sects live alike *i.e.* wearing clothes etc.



# 10

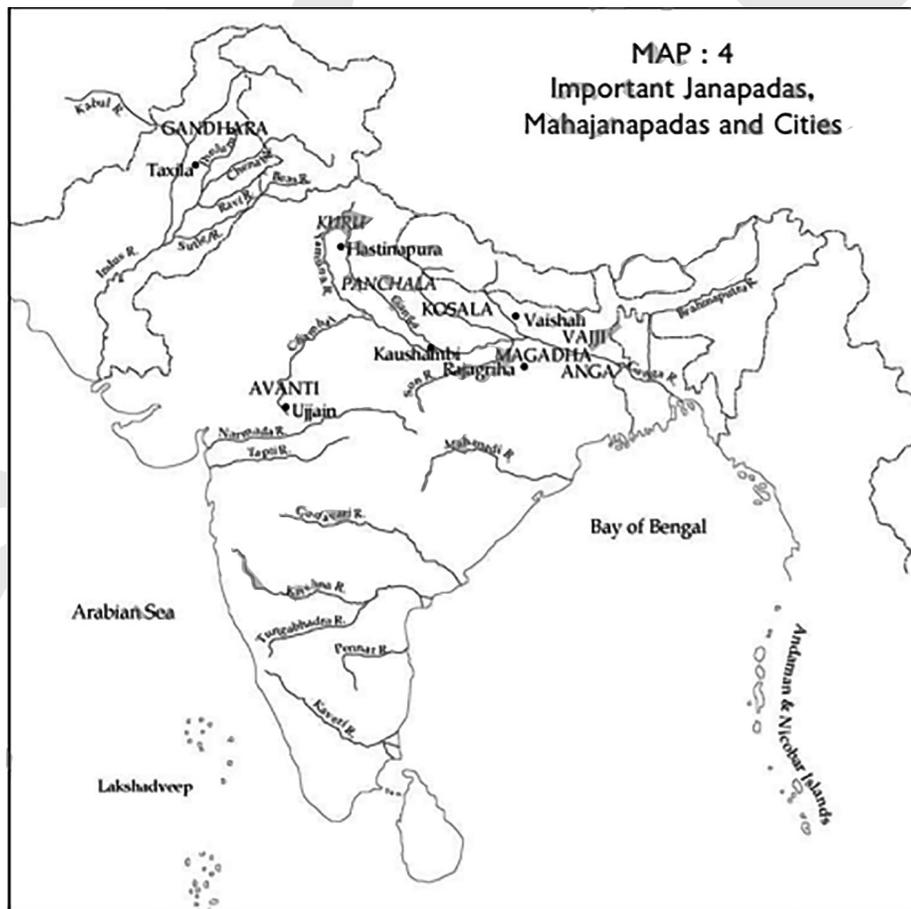
## Emergence of Janpad *Mahajanpad King and Kingdom*

### Introduction

Many people did not accept the system of varna laid down by the brahmins. Some kings thought they were superior to the priests. Others felt that birth could not be a basis for deciding which varna people belonged to. Besides, some people felt that there should be no differences amongst people based on occupation. Others felt that everybody should be able to perform rituals. And others condemned the practice of untouchability. Also, there were many areas in the subcontinent, such as the north-east, where social and economic differences were not very sharp, and where the influence of the priests was limited.

### Janpadas

The raja who performed these big sacrifices were now recognised as being rajas of janapadas rather than janas.



Archaeologists have excavated a number of settlements in these janapadas, such as Purana Qila in Delhi, Hastinapur near Meerut, and Atranjikhhera, near Etah (the last two are in Uttar Pradesh). They found that people lived in huts, and kept cattle as well as other animals. They also grew a variety of crops — rice, wheat, barley, pulses, sugarcane, sesame and mustard.

They made earthen pots. Some of these were grey in colour, others were red. One special type of pottery found at these sites is known as Painted Grey Ware. As is obvious from the name, these grey pots had painted designs, usually simple lines and geometric patterns.

## Mahajanapadas

About 2500 years ago, some janapadas became more important than others, and were known as mahajanapadas. Some of these are shown on Map 4. Most mahajanapadas had a capital city, many of these were fortified. This means that huge walls of wood, brick or stone were built around them.

Forts were probably built because people were afraid of attacks from other kings and needed protection. It is also likely that some rulers wanted to show how rich and powerful they were by building really large, tall and impressive walls around their cities. Also in this way, the land and the people living inside the fortified area could be controlled more easily by the king. Building such huge walls required a great deal of planning. Thousands, if not lakhs of bricks or stone had to be prepared. This in turn meant enormous labour, provided, possibly, by thousands of men, women and children. And resources had to be found for all of this.

The new rajas now began maintaining armies. Soldiers were paid regular salaries and maintained by the king throughout the year. Some payments were probably made using punch marked coins.

## The sixteen Important Mahajanapadas

The sixth century BCE is often regarded as a major turning point in early Indian history. It is an era associated with early states, cities, the growing use of iron, the development of coinage, etc. It also witnessed the growth of diverse systems of thought, including Buddhism and Jainism. Early Buddhist and Jaina texts mention, amongst other things, sixteen states known as mahajanapadas. Although the lists vary, some names such as Vajji, Magadha, Koshala, Kuru, Panchala, Gandhara and Avanti occur frequently. Clearly, these were amongst the most important mahajanapadas.

While most mahajanapadas were ruled by kings, some, known as ganas or sanghas, where power was shared by a number of men, often collectively called rajas. Both Mahavira and the Buddha belonged to such ganas.

In some instances, as in the case of the Vajji sangha, the rajas probably controlled resources such as land collectively. Although their histories are often difficult to reconstruct due to the lack of sources, some of these states lasted for nearly a thousand years.

- (i) Anga (including the modern districts of Monghyr and Bhagalpur in Bihar) with its capital of Champa,
- (ii) Magadha (covering the districts of Patna, Gaya and parts of Shahabad) with its earlier capital at Rajgriha or Girivraj,
- (iii) Vajji (a confederacy of eight republican clans, situated to the north of the river Ganga in Bihar) with its capital, VaisaJi,
- (iv) Malla (also a republican confederacy covering the modern districts of Deoria, Basti, Gorakhpur and Siddharthnagar in eastern Uttar Pradesh) with two capitals at Kusinara and Pawa, (v) Kasi with its capital at Varanasi, (vi) Kosala (covering the present districts of Faizabad, Gonda, Bahraich etc.), with its capital at Sravasti,
- (v) Vatsa (covering the modern districts Allahabad, Mirzapur etc.), with its capital at Kausambi
- (vi) Chedi, (covering the modern Bundelkhand area with its capital at Shuktimati),
- (vii) Kuru (covering the modern Haryana and Delhi area to the west of river Yamuna) with its capital at Indraprastha (modern Delhi),
- (viii) Panchala (covering the area of western Uttar Pradesh up to the east of river Yamuna up to the Kosala Janapada) with its capital at Ahichhatra,
- (ix) Surasena, (covering Brij Mandal with its capital at Mathura),
- (x) Matsya (covering the area of Alwar, Bharatpur and Jaipur in Rajasthan)
- (xi) Avanti (modern Malawa) with its capital at Ujjayini and Mahishmati,
- (xii) Ashmaka (between the rivers Narmada and Godavari) with its capital at Potana,

(xiii) Gandhara (area covering the western part of Pakistan and eastern Afghanistan) with its capitals at Taxila and Pushkalavati, and

(xiv) Kamboja (identified with modern district of Hazara districts of Pakistan).

Obviously this list of sixteen Mahajanapadas covers India only from Bihar in the east to Afghanistan in the west, and Hindukush in the north to river Godavari in the south. It leaves out vast areas of Bengal and eastern India and practically the whole of south India. But these very Buddhist texts show familiarity with whole of India. Mahagovinda Sutta of Digha Nikaya describe the shape of India as rectangular in the north and triangular in the south, just like a bullock cart.

The Buddhist Nikayas mention the five fold division of India into Uttarapatha (north-western), Madhyadesha (central), Prachi (eastern), Dakshinapath (south), and Apranta (western), which conforms that the geographical unity of India had been visualised much before the sixth century B.C. If we study the lists of Janapadas preserved in the Jain texts Bhagvatisutra, and Sutrasangraha, great Grammarian Panini's Ashtadhyayi (sixth century B.C.), Baudhayandharmasutra (seventh century B.C.), and the Janapada list available in the Mahabharata, the whole of India from Himalayas in the north to Kanyakumari in the south, from Gandhara in the west to Bengal and Assam in the east are covered by these Janapadas. Kautilya (fourth century B.C.) clearly visualises the goal of political unity of the whole land under a Chakravarti ruler, and clearly defines the Chakravarti kshetra from the Himalayas in the north to the ocean in the south. The distribution of punch-marked coins, which were in circulation from sixth century B.C. to second century B.C. shows that by the fourth century B.C. there was only one currency for the whole of India. It shows political and economic unification for the entire territory.

The Buddhist literature shows that some Janapadas followed the monarchical system. Each Janapada has its own independent dynasty of rulers. Megasthenese, the Greek ambassador in the court of Chandragupta Maurya (fourth century B.C.) has left on record that he saw a royal genealogy of 151 generations covering a time period of about 6051 (or 6015) years. During this time, Magadha experimented in the republican system thrice. This extract from Megasthenese's Indica is in conformity with the post-Mahabharata war royal genealogy preserved in the

Puranas Along with the list of Mahajanapadas we also find the names of many famous cities during the time of Buddha. Some of these were Champa, Rajagriha, Sravasthi, Saket, Kausambi and Kasi. These were mostly the capital cities of Mahajanapadas.

There were also non-monarchical states which can be called republics or ganasanghas. Buddhist texts reveal that during the time of the Buddha there were many such republican states. Some of the important ones were:

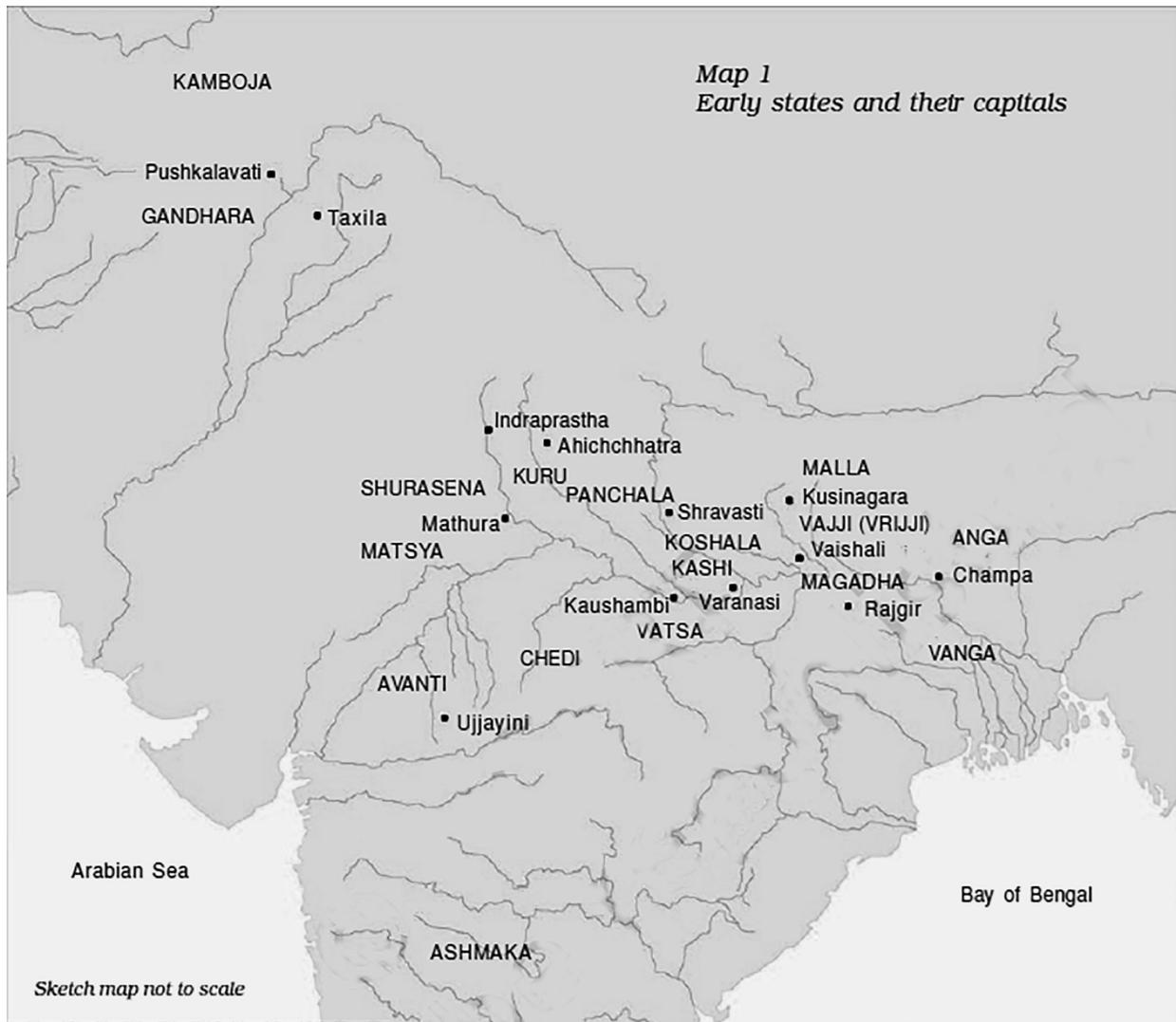
- (i) Mallas of Kusinara
- (ii) Mallas of Pava
- (iii) Sakyas of Kapilavastu
- (iv) Koliyas of Ramagrama
- (v) Moriyas of Pipphalivana
- (vi) Bulis of Alakappa
- (vii) Kalamas of Kesaputta
- (viii) Bhaggas of Sumsumaragiri
- (ix) Lichchhavis of Vaisali

The Buddhist texts also speak of nine ganas of the Mallas and nine of Kasi. These helped the Vajjis against the aggression of Magadha. The Mallas of Kusinagara and Pava were the kshatriyas of the Ikshvaku dynasty. According to Divyavadana, perhaps at

## Vajji

While Magadha became a powerful kingdom, Vajji, with its capital at Vaishali (Bihar), was under a different form of government, known as gana (**Is used for a group that has many members**) or sangha (**organisation or association**). In a gana or a sangha there were not one, but many rulers. Sometimes, even when thousands of men ruled together, each one was known as a raja. These rajas performed rituals together. They also met in assemblies, and decided what had to be done and how, through discussion and debate. For example, if they were attacked by an enemy, they met to discuss what should be done to meet the threat. However, women,

dasas and kammakaras could not participate in these assemblies.



Map 2

**This is an account of the Vajjis from the Digha Nikaya, a famous Buddhist book, which contains some of the speeches of the Buddha. These were written down about 2300 years ago.**

Ajatasattu wanted to attack the Vajjis. He sent his minister named Vassakara to the Buddha to get his advice on the matter. The Buddha asked whether the Vajjis met frequently, in full assemblies. When he heard that they did, he replied that the Vajjis would continue to prosper as long as:

- They held full and frequent public assemblies.
- They met and acted together.
- They followed established rules.
- They respected, supported and listened to elders.
- Vajji women were not held by force or captured.
- Chaityas (local shrines) were maintained in both towns and villages.
- Wise saints who followed different beliefs were respected and allowed to enter and leave the country freely.

The Vajjis were the most important republican state during the period of Buddha. They were settled on the northern side of the Ganga, while Magadha was on the south. Vajji was a confederation of eight ganas among which the Lichchhavis were most prominent. These were called astakulika (eight families). Vajjis, Lichchhavis, Videhas and Jnatrika were important families. Mahavira, the twenty-fourth Jaina Tirthankara was born in the last mentioned family. During the time of Buddha, the Lichchhavis, under the leadership of

Chetaka, were the most prominent gana in the Vajji sangha. They are also called kshatriyas. The Vajjis were defeated and assimilated in the Magadha empire by Ajatasattu.

Rajas of powerful kingdoms tried to conquer the sanghas. Nevertheless, these lasted for a very long time, till about 1500 years ago, when the last of the ganas or sanghas were conquered by the Gupta rulers.

## Taxes

As the rulers of the mahajanapadas were (a) building huge forts (b) maintaining big armies, they needed more resources. And they needed officials to collect these. So, instead of depending on occasional gifts brought by people, as in the case of the raja of the janapadas, they started collecting regular taxes.

- Taxes on crops were the most important. This was because most people were farmers. Usually, the tax was fixed at 1/6th of what was produced. This was known as bhaga or a share.
- There were taxes on crafts persons as well. These could have been in the form of labour. For example, a weaver or a smith may have had to work for a day every month for the king.
- Herders were also expected to pay taxes in the form of animals and animal produce.
- There were also taxes on goods that were bought and sold, through trade.
- And hunters and gatherers also had to provide forest produce to the raja.

## Changes in agriculture

There were two major changes in agriculture around this time. One was the growing use of iron plough shares. This meant that heavy, clayey soil could be turned over better than with a wooden plough share, so that more grain could be produced. Second, people began transplanting paddy.

This meant that instead of scattering seed on the ground, from which plants would sprout, saplings were grown and then planted in the fields. This led to increased production, as many more plants survived. However, it was back breaking work. Generally, slave men and women, (dasas and dasis) and landless agricultural labourers (kammakaras) had to do this work.

## Magadha

- The four important royal dynasties that stand out prominently in the sixth century B.C. are the Haryankas of Magadha, the Ikshvakus of Kosala, the Pauravas of Vatsa and the Pradyotas of Avanti. Haryanka is the name of a new dynasty founded in Magadha by Bimbisara after overthrowing the Brihadrathas. The Pradyotas are so called after the founder Pradyota.
- Magadha became the most important mahajanapada in about two hundred years. Many rivers such as the Ganga and Son flowed through Magadha. This was important for (a) transport, (b) water supplies (c) making the land fertile. Parts of Magadha were forested. Elephants, which lived in the forest, could be captured and trained for the army. Forests also provided wood for building houses, carts and chariots. Besides, there were iron ore mines in the region that could be tapped to make strong tools and weapons.
- Magadha had two very powerful rulers, Bimbisara and Ajatasattu, who used all possible means to conquer other janapadas. Mahapadma Nanda was another important ruler. He extended his control up to the north-west part of the subcontinent. Rajagriha (present-day Rajgir) in Bihar was the capital of Magadha for several years.
- Later the capital was shifted to Pataliputra (present-day Patna). More than 2300 years ago, a ruler named Alexander, who lived in Macedonia in Europe, wanted to become a world conqueror. Of course, he didn't conquer the world, but did conquer parts of Egypt and West Asia, and came to the Indian subcontinent, reaching up to the banks of the Beas. When he wanted to march further eastwards, his soldiers refused. They were scared, as they had heard that the rulers of India had vast armies of foot soldiers, chariots and elephants.
- There were matrimonial alliances between the kings of many of these states, but that did not prevent the outbreak of hostility among them. Each of the four important royal dynasties, mentioned above, tried to establish its supremacy, and aggrandise itself at the cost of minor States. We hear, for example, that Pradyota, king of Avanti, fought with Udayana, king of Kausambi, although the latter was his son-in-law,

and at another time he threatened Rajagriha, the capital of Magadha. Prasenajit, king of Kosala, was already the master of Kasi, and his son afterwards conquered the Sakya state of Kapilavastu. Again, Bimbisara, king of Magadha, annexed Anga, and his son Ajatasatru conquered the Lichchhavis of Vaisali. All these kings – Pradyota, Udayana, Bimbisara and Prasenajit – flourished in the second half of the sixth century B.C.

- At the beginning of the fifth century B.C., the Pauravas and the Pradyotas seem to have retired from the contest for supremacy, which was thus left to be fought out between the Haryankas of Magadha, and the Ikshvakus of Kosala. A protracted struggle ensued between Prasenajit and Ajatasatru, and although the results were indecisive for a long time, victory ultimately went to the Magadha kingdom. Henceforth, Magadha stands out as the supreme power in northern India, which finally culminated into one of the greatest empires that had ever been seen.
- Ajatasatru, became the founder of Magadhan supremacy. He died about – 475 B.C. and was succeeded by Udayi, to whom tradition ascribes the foundation of Pataliputra, the new capital of the Magadha kingdom. As described in epic literature, Rajagriha, now represented by the ruins at Rajgir in the Patna district, served as the capital of the Magadha kingdom.
- While Ajatasatru was fighting against the Lichchhavis, he built, as a defensive measure, a fortress at Pataligrama, a village at the junction of the Ganga and the Son. In course of time, the strategic importance of the place must have attracted the attention of the statesmen of Magadha, and Udayi evidently thought it a more suitable capital for his kingdom, which had extended its boundaries in all directions by then.
- At the beginning of the fifth century B.C., the Pauravas and the Pradyotas seem to have retired from the contest for supremacy, which was thus left to be fought out between the Haryankas of Magadha, and the Ikshvakus of Kosala. A fierce and protracted struggle ensued between Prasenajit and Ajatasatru, and although the results were indecisive for a long time, victory ultimately went to the Magadha kingdom. Henceforth, Magadha stands out as the supreme power in northern India, which finally culminated into one of the greatest empires that had ever been seen. Ajatasatru, became the founder of Magadhan supremacy. He died about – 475 B.C. and was succeeded by Udayi, to whom tradition ascribes the foundation of Pataliputra, the new capital of the Magadha kingdom.

## Sisunaga

According to the Buddhist tradition Udayi and his three successors were all unworthy to rule. So the people got disgusted and elected Sisunaga as the king, the minister of the last king. The Puranas, however, take Sisunaga to be the founder of the royal line to which Bimbisara belonged, and hence calls it the Sisunaga Dynasty.

## Nanda Dynasty

**Kalasoka**, the son and the successor of Sisunaga, was succeeded by a barber (according to some accounts) named Mahapadma Nanda, who founded a new dynasty known as the Nandas.

Mahapadma seems to have been a great military genius. He defeated and destroyed the far-famed kshatriya families, such as the Pauravas, the Ikshvakus, and the Pradyotas, who were ruling in

Kausambi, Kosala and Avanti, and established an empire which included the greater part of northern India. Thus, the task begun by Bimbisara and Ajatasatru made triumphant progress.

## Foreign invasions

The western borderland of India comprising the Punjab, Sindh and Afghanistan did not have any strong political power during this period. Of the sixteen Mahajanapadas mentioned in the literature, only two, Kamboja and Gandhara, may be placed in this outlying region. It appears to have been divided into a large number of independent principalities which were frequently at war with one another, and thus an easy prey to foreign invaders. The powerful Achaemenian kings of Persia naturally cast their eyes towards this region, and perhaps Cyrus (558-530 B.C.) subjugated a number of principalities living to the south of the Hindukush mountains. It was in the reign of Darius (522-486 B.C.) that we have positive evidence of the extension of Achaemenian rule in the northwestern part of India. Two inscriptions of this monarch mention “Hi(n)du” as a part of his dominion. The exact connotation of this term is not known, but it certainly comprised some territory

to the east of the Sindhu, which Darius must have conquered about 518 B.C. Herodotus, the Greek historian, tells us that in 517 B.C. Darius sent a naval expedition to explore the valley of the Sindhu river.

## Alexandar campaign

In the fourth century B.C. the Greeks and Persian fought with each other for the supremacy over western Asia. The defeat of Achaemenian king **Darius III** in the hands of Alexander became a turning point. Alexander dismantled the Persian empire, conquered most of the western Asia including Iraq and Iran. He then turned his attention to India. After the conquest of the Persian empire Alexander marched to India through the Khyber pass in 326 B.C. It is interesting to know that the history of Alexander's campaign of India is reconstructed on the basis of accounts available in Greek and Roman sources. Surprisingly, no Indian source mentions anything about Alexander or his campaign. It is also surprising that while Greek sources give a very detailed account of Alexander's campaign to India, they are completely silent about Kautilya. However, the identification of Sandrocottas or Androcottas of Greek sources with that of Chandragupta Maurya and fixing 326 B.C. as the date of Chandragupta's accession to the throne has become the sheet anchor of the chronological framework of Indian history.

Once Alexander reached the Indian soil, the king of Takshasila (Taxila, near Rawalpindi in Punjab) offered to help Alexander. Only a couple of Indian princes followed the ignoble example of Taxila. Most of the numerous kings and republican Chiefs in Afghanistan, Punjab and Sindh offered brave resistance, though in vain. Despite the fact that petty chieftains were no match for the seasoned troops of Alexander and knew that they had no chance of success, they refused to submit without a fight. The Greek writers have paid glowing tributes to the bravery and patriotism of a large number of them.

After defeating Assakenoi and others Alexander joined his other division of army. A bridge was constructed on the Indus river at Ohind about 24 km. above Attock. After crossing the Indus Alexander proceeded towards Taxila. When he was about 7 km. from Taxila, Ambhi came forward to greet Alexander and recognised him as his sovereign.

However, the most powerful among the north-western Indian was the ruler of a kingdom between the Jhelum and the Chenab whom the Greeks call Porus, probably a corruption of Paurava. When he was summoned by Alexander's envoys he proudly replied that he would undoubtedly do so, but at his own frontiers and with arms. Alexander made elaborate preparations to fight him. It must be remembered that Porus was a ruler of a small state, perhaps not bigger than a modern district in the Punjab. Porus fought bravely and with nine wounds on his body, was led a captive before Alexander. The latter asked him how he would like to be treated. "Like a King" came the proud and prompt reply. Alexander secured the alliance of this brave king by restoring his kingdom and adding to it the territories of "15 republican states with their 5000 cities and villages without number". In course of his advance to the next river,

After crossing the Hindukush, Alexander divided his army into two parts. One part was kept under his own command and the other under the two of his best Generals. Alexander himself undertook the task of conquering the north-western part of India. The Greeks had to face a strong resistance from Hasti, a tribal chief whose capital was Pushkalavati. He stood the Greek siege for full 30 days till he fell fighting. These local people fought the invader to the last man. When the king of Assakenoi fell fighting, his army was led by the queen. They "resolved to defend their country to the last extremity". So great was the enthusiasm for the defence of the country that even women took part in fighting. Even the mercenaries "preferred a glorious death to a life with dishonour". After a brave resistance of several days, Massaga, the capital city, was captured by Alexander.

## Emergence of new nation of kingship

### Chiefs and Kings in the South

The new kingdoms that emerged in the Deccan and further south, including the chiefdoms of the Cholas, Cheras and Pandyas in Tamilakam (the name of the ancient Tamil country, which included parts of present-day Andhra Pradesh and Kerala, in addition to Tamil Nadu), proved to be stable and prosperous.

We know about these states from a variety of sources. For instance, the early Tamil Sangam texts contain poems describing chiefs and the ways in which they acquired and distributed resources.

Many chiefs and kings, including the Satavahanas who ruled over parts of western and central India (c. Second century BCE-second century CE) and the Shakas, a people of Central Asian origin who established kingdoms in the northwestern and western parts of the subcontinent, derived revenues from long-distance trade. Their social origins were often obscure, but, as we will see in the case of the Satavahanas, once they acquired power they attempted to claim social status in a variety of ways.

### **Divine kings**

- One means of claiming high status was to identify with a variety of deities. This strategy is best exemplified by the Kushanas (c. first century BCE-first century CE), who ruled over a vast kingdom extending from Central Asia to northwest India. Their history has been reconstructed from inscriptions and textual traditions. The notions of kingship they wished to project are perhaps best evidenced in their coins and sculpture.
- Colossal statues of Kushana rulers have been found installed in a shrine at Mat near Mathura (Uttar Pradesh). Similar statues have been found in a shrine in Afghanistan as well. Some historians feel this indicates that the Kushanas considered themselves godlike. Many Kushana rulers also adopted the title devaputra, or “son of god”, possibly inspired by Chinese rulers who called themselves sons of heaven. By the fourth century there is evidence of larger states, including the Gupta Empire. Many of these depended on samantas, men who maintained themselves through local resources including control over land. They offered homage and provided military support to rulers. Powerful samantas could become kings: conversely, weak rulers might find themselves being reduced to positions of subordination.

## **A Changing Countryside**

### **Popular perceptions of kings**

Ordinary people rarely left accounts of their thoughts and experiences. Nevertheless, historians have tried to solve this problem by examining stories contained in anthologies such as the Jatakas and the Panchatantra. Many of these stories probably originated as popular oral tales that were later committed to writing. The Jatakas were written in Pali around the middle of the first millennium CE. One story known as the Gandatindu Jataka describes the plight of the subjects of a wicked king; these included elderly women and men, cultivators, herders, village boys and even animals.

When the king went in disguise to find out what his subjects thought about him, each one of them cursed him for their miseries, complaining that they were attacked by robbers at night and by tax collectors during the day. To escape from this situation, people abandoned their village and went to live in the forest.

As this story indicates, the relationship between a king and his subjects, especially the rural population, could often be strained – kings frequently tried to fill their coffers by demanding high taxes, and peasants particularly found such demands oppressive. Escaping into the forest remained an option, as reflected in the Jataka story.

Meanwhile, other strategies aimed at increasing production to meet growing demand for taxes also came to be adopted.

### **Strategies for increasing production**

One such strategy was the shift to plough agriculture, which spread in fertile alluvial river valleys such as those of the Ganga and the Kaveri from c. sixth century BCE. The iron-tipped ploughshare was used to turn the alluvial soil in areas which had high rainfall. Moreover, in some parts of the Ganga valley, production of paddy was dramatically increased by the introduction of transplantation, although this meant back-breaking work for the producer. While the iron ploughshare led to a growth in agricultural productivity, its use was restricted to certain parts of the subcontinent cultivators in areas which were semi-arid, such as parts of Punjab and Rajasthan did not adopt it till the twentieth century, and those living in hilly tracts in the northeastern and central parts of the subcontinent practised hoe agriculture, which was much better suited to the terrain.

Another strategy adopted to increase agricultural production was the use of irrigation, through wells and tanks, and less commonly, canals. Communities as well as individuals organised the construction of irrigation

works. The latter, usually powerful men including kings, often recorded such activities in inscriptions.

## Differences in rural society

While these technologies often led to an increase in production, the benefits were very uneven. What is evident is that there was a growing differentiation amongst people engaged in agriculture – stories, especially within the Buddhist tradition, refer to landless agricultural labourers, small peasants, as well as large landholders.

### *Gahapasti*

The term *gahapati* was often used in Pali texts to designate the second and third categories. The large landholders, as well as the village headman (whose position was often hereditary), emerged as powerful figures, and often exercised control over other cultivators. Early Tamil literature (the Sangam texts) also mentions different categories of people living in the villages – large landowners or *vellalar*, ploughmen or *uzhavar* and slaves or *adimai*. It is likely that these differences were based on differential access to land, labour and some of the new technologies. In such a situation, questions of control over land must have become crucial, as these were often discussed in legal texts.

## Land grants and new rural elites

From the early centuries of the Common Era, we find grants of land being made, many of which were recorded in inscriptions. Some of these inscriptions were on stone, but most were on copper plates (fig :1)



Fig. 1

The records that have survived are generally about grants to religious institutions or to Brahmanas. Most inscriptions were in Sanskrit. In some cases, and especially from the seventh century onwards, part of the inscription was in Sanskrit, while the rest was in a local language such as Tamil or Telugu.

Land grants provide some insight into the relationship between cultivators and the state.

However, there were people who were often beyond the reach of officials or samantas: pastoralists, fisherfolk and hunter-gatherers, mobile or semisedentary artisans and shifting cultivators. Generally, such groups did not keep detailed records of their lives and transactions.

**An agrahara** was land granted to a Brahmana, who was usually exempted from paying land revenue and other dues to the king, and was often given the right to collect these dues from the local people.

### Prabhavati Gupta

Prabhavati Gupta was the daughter of one of the most important rulers in early Indian history, Chandragupta II (c. 375-415 CE). She was married into another important ruling family, that of the Vakatakas, who were powerful in the Deccan (see Map 3). According to Sanskrit legal texts, women were not supposed to have independent access to resources such as land. However, the inscription indicates that Prabhavati had access to land, which she then granted. This may have been because she was a queen (one of the few known from early Indian history), and her situation was therefore exceptional. It is also possible that the provisions of legal texts were not uniformly implemented.

The inscription also gives us an idea about rural populations these included Brahmanas and peasants, as well as others who were expected to provide a range of produce to the king or his representatives. And according

to the inscription, they would have to obey the new lord of the village, and perhaps pay him all these dues.

Land grants such as this one have been found in several parts of the country. There were regional variations in the sizes of land donated ranging from small plots to vast stretches of uncultivated land and the rights given to donees (the recipients of the grant). The impact of land grants is a subject of heated debate among historians. Some feel that land grants were part of a strategy adopted by ruling lineages to extend agriculture to new areas.

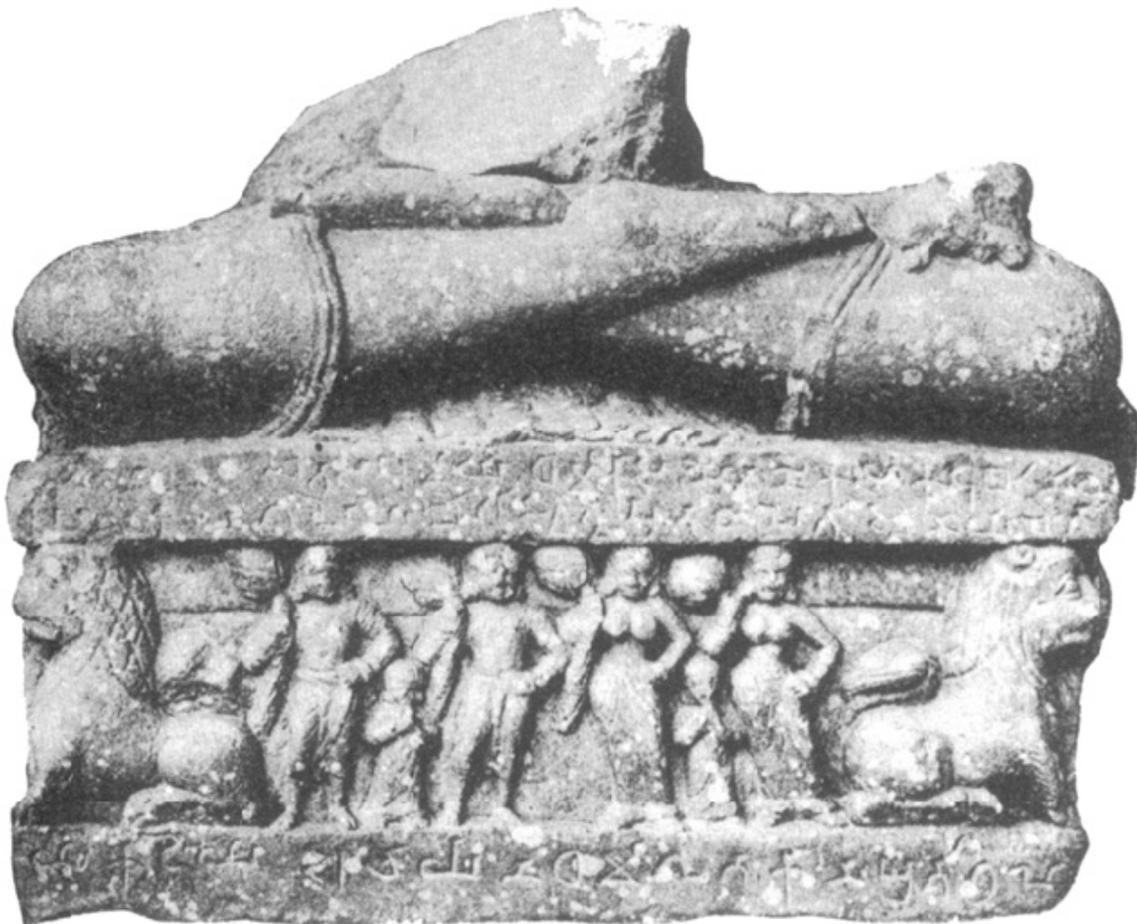
## Town and trades

### New cities

Now we will read about urban centres that emerged in several parts of the subcontinent from c. sixth century BCE. As we have seen, many of these were capitals of mahajanapadas. Virtually all major towns were located along routes of communication. Some such as Pataliputra were on riverine routes. Others, such as Ujjayini, were along land routes, and yet others, such as Puhar, were near the coast, from where sea routes began. Many cities like Mathura were bustling centres of commercial, cultural and political activity.

### Elites and craftspersons

We have seen in previous topic that kings and ruling elites lived in fortified cities. Although it is difficult to conduct extensive excavations at most sites because people live in these areas even today (unlike the Harappan cities), a wide range of artefacts have been recovered from them. These include fine pottery bowls and dishes, with a glossy finish, known as Northern Black Polished Ware, probably used by rich people, and ornaments, tools, weapons, vessels, figurines, made of a wide range of materials – gold, silver, copper, bronze, ivory, glass, shell and terracotta.



This is part of an image from Mathura. On the pedestal is a Prakrit inscription, mentioning that a woman named Nagapiya, the wife of a goldsmith (sovanika) named Dharmaka, installed this image in a shrine.



- By the second century BCE, we find short votive inscriptions in a number of cities. These mention the name of the donor, and sometimes specify his/her occupation as well. They tell us about people who lived in towns: washing folk, weavers, scribes, carpenters, potters, goldsmiths, blacksmiths, officials, religious teachers, merchants and kings.
- Sometimes, guilds or shrenis, organisations of craft producers and merchants, are mentioned as well. These guilds probably procured raw materials, regulated production, and marketed the finished product. It is likely that craftsmen used a range of iron tools to meet the growing demands of urban elites.

### Trade in the subcontinent and beyond in sixth century

- From the sixth century BCE, land and river routes criss-crossed the subcontinent and extended in various directions – overland into Central Asia and beyond, and overseas, from ports that dotted the coastline – extending across the Arabian Sea to East and North Africa and West Asia, and through the Bay of Bengal to Southeast Asia and China. Rulers often attempted to control these routes, possibly by offering protection for a price. Those who traversed these routes included peddlers who probably travelled on foot and merchants who travelled with caravans of bullock carts and pack-animals.
- Also, there were seafarers, whose ventures were risky but highly profitable. Successful merchants, designated as masattuvan in Tamil and setthis and sathavahas in Prakrit, could become enormously rich. A wide range of goods were carried from one place to another – salt, grain, cloth, metal ores and finished products, stone, timber, medicinal plants, to name a few. Spices, especially pepper, were in high demand in the Roman Empire, as were textiles and medicinal plants, and these were all transported across the Arabian Sea to the Mediterranean.

## The History of coins

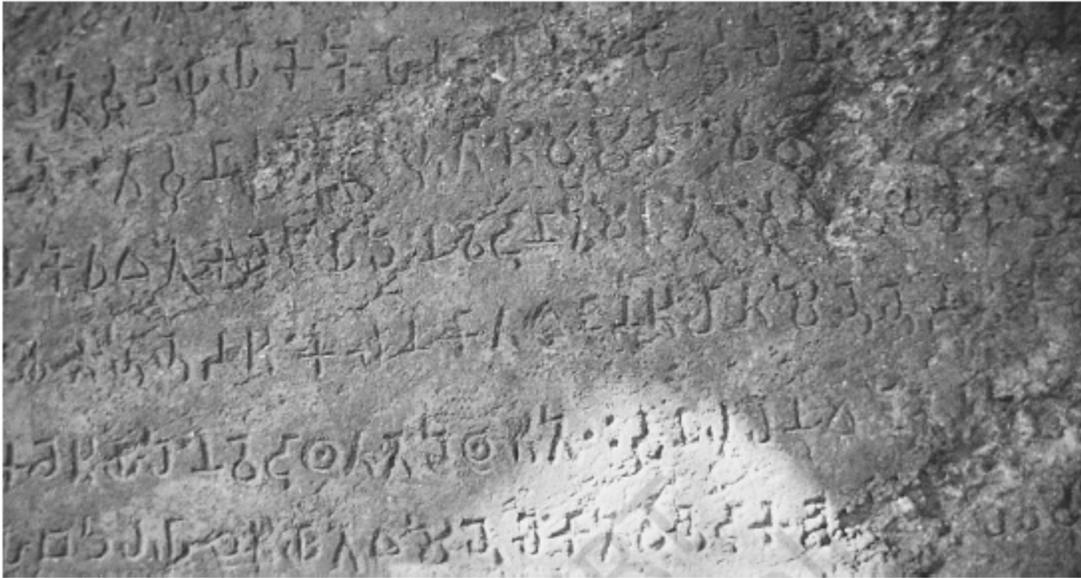
- To some extent, exchanges were facilitated by the introduction of coinage. Punch marked coins made of silver and copper (c. sixth century BCE onwards) were amongst the earliest to be minted and used. These have been recovered from excavations at a number of sites throughout the subcontinent. Numismatists have studied these and other coins to reconstruct possible commercial networks. Attempts made to identify the symbols on punchmarked coins with specific ruling dynasties, including the Mauryas, suggest that these were issued by kings. It is also likely that merchants, bankers and townspeople issued some of these coins.
- The first coins to bear the names and images of rulers were issued by the Indo-Greeks, who established control over the north-western part of the subcontinent c. second century BCE.
- The first gold coins were issued c. first century CE by the Kushanas. These were virtually identical in weight with those issued by contemporary Roman emperors and the Parthian rulers of Iran, and have been found from several sites in north India and Central Asia. The widespread use of gold coins indicates the enormous value of the transactions that were taking place. Besides, hoards of Roman coins have been found from archaeological sites in south India. It is obvious that networks of trade were not confined within political boundaries: south India was not part of the Roman Empire, but there were close connections through trade.
- Coins were also issued by tribal republics such as that of the Yaudheyas of Punjab and Haryana (c. first century CE). Archaeologists have unearthed several thousand copper coins issued by the Yaudheyas, pointing to the latter's interest and participation in economic exchanges. Some of the most spectacular gold coins were issued by the Gupta rulers. The earliest issues are remarkable for their purity. These coins facilitated long-distance transactions from which kings also benefited. From c. sixth century CE onwards, finds of gold coins taper off. Does this indicate that there was some kind of an economic crisis? Historians are divided on this issue. Some suggest that with the collapse of the Western Roman Empire long-distance trade declined, and this affected the prosperity of the states, communities and regions that had benefited from it. Others argue that new towns and networks of trade started emerging around this time.
- They also point out that though finds of coins of that time are fewer, coins continue to be mentioned in inscriptions and texts.



A gupta coins



A Yaudheya coin



## Deciphering Brahmi

Most scripts used to write modern Indian languages are derived from Brahmi, the script used in most Asokan inscriptions. From the late eighteenth century, European scholars aided by Indian pandits worked backwards from contemporary Bengali and Devanagari (the script used to write Hindi) manuscripts, comparing their letters with older specimens.

Scholars who studied early inscriptions sometimes assumed these were in Sanskrit, although the earliest inscriptions were, in fact, in Prakrit. It was only after decades of painstaking investigations by several epigraphists that James Prinsep was able to decipher Asokan Brahmi in 1838.

### *Asokan Brahmi with Devanagari equivalents*

The story of the decipherment of Kharosthi, the script used in inscriptions in the northwest, is different. Here, finds of coins of Indo-Greek kings who ruled over the area (c. second-first centuries BCE) have facilitated matters. These coins contain the names of kings written in Greek and Kharosthi scripts. European scholars who could read the former compared the letters. For instance, the symbol for “a” could be found in both scripts for writing names such as Apollodotus. With Prinsep identifying the language of the Kharosthi inscriptions as Prakrit, it became possible to read longer inscriptions as well.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| † | क |
| d | च |
| c | ट |
| f | ड |
| ४ | म |
| । | र |

## Historical evidence from inscriptions

- To find out how epigraphists and historians work, let us look at two Asokan inscriptions closely.
- Note that the name of the ruler, Asoka, is not mentioned in the inscription (Source 10). What is used instead are titles adopted by the ruler –devanampiya, often translated as “beloved of the gods” and piyadassi, or “pleasant to behold”. The name Asoka is mentioned in some other inscriptions, which also contain these titles. After examining all these inscriptions, and finding that they match in terms of content, style, language and palaeography, epigraphists have concluded that they were issued by the same ruler.
- You may also have noticed that Asoka claims that earlier rulers had no arrangements to receive reports.
- If you consider the political history of the subcontinent prior to Asoka, do you think this statement is true? Historians have to constantly assess statements made in inscriptions to judge whether they are true, plausible or exaggerations.
- Did you notice that there are words within brackets? Epigraphists sometimes add these to make the meaning of sentences clear. This has to be done carefully, to ensure that the intended meaning of the author is not changed.

- By now it is probably evident that there are limits to what epigraphy can reveal. Sometimes, there are technical limitations: letters are very faintly engraved, and thus reconstructions are uncertain.
- Also, inscriptions may be damaged or letters missing. Besides, it is not always easy to be sure about the exact meaning of the words used in inscriptions, some of which may be specific to a particular place or time. If you go through an epigraphical journal (some are listed in Timeline 2), you will realise that scholars are constantly debating and discussing alternative ways of reading inscriptions. Although several thousand inscriptions have been discovered, not all have been deciphered, published and translated. Besides, many more inscriptions must have existed, which have not survived the ravages of time. So what is available at present is probably only a fraction of what was inscribed. There is another, perhaps more fundamental, problem: not everything that we may consider politically or economically significant was necessarily recorded in inscriptions.
- For instance, routine agricultural practices and the joys and sorrows of daily existence find no mention in inscriptions, which focus, more often than not, on grand, unique events.
- Besides, the content of inscriptions almost invariably projects the perspective of the person(s) who commissioned them. As such, they need to be juxtaposed with other perspectives so as to arrive at a better understanding of the past.



| TIMELINE 1<br>MAJOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS |  |
|---|--|
| c. 600-500 BCE  | Paddy transplantation; urbanisation in the Ganga valley; mahajanapadas; punch-marked coins             |
| c. 500-400 BCE  | Rulers of Magadha consolidate power  |
| c. 327-325 BCE  | Invasion of Alexander of Macedon   |
| c. 321 BCE  | Accession of Chandragupta Maurya   |
| c. 272/268-231 BCE                                      | Reign of Asoka   |
| c. 185 BCE  | End of the Mauryan empire  |
| c. 200-100 BCE  | Indo-Greek rule in the northwest; Cholas, Cheras and Pandyas in south India; Satavahanas in the Deccan |
| c. 100 BCE-200 CE                                       | Shaka (peoples from Central Asia) rulers in the northwest; Roman trade; gold coinage                   |
| c. 78 CE?   | Accession of Kanishka  |
| c. 100-200 CE   | Earliest inscriptional evidence of land grants by Satavahana and Shaka rulers                          |
| c. 320 CE   | Beginning of Gupta rule  |
| c. 335-375 CE   | Samudragupta   |
| c. 375-415 CE   | Chandragupta II; Vakatakas in the Deccan   |
| c. 500-600 CE   | Rise of the Chalukyas in Karnataka and of the Pallavas in Tamil Nadu                                   |
| c. 606-647 CE   | Harshavardhana king of Kanauj; Chinese pilgrim Xuan Zang comes in search of Buddhist texts             |
| c. 712  | Arabs conquer Sind   |

*(Note: It is difficult to date economic developments precisely. Also, there are enormous subcontinental variations which have not been indicated in the timeline. Only the earliest dates for specific developments have been given. The date of Kanishka's accession is not certain and this has been marked with a '?')*

**TIMELINE 2**  
**MAJOR ADVANCES IN EPIGRAPHY**

**Eighteenth century**

1784 Founding of the Asiatic Society (Bengal)

**Nineteenth century**

1810s Colin Mackenzie collects over 8,000 inscriptions in Sanskrit and Dravidian languages

1838 Decipherment of Asokan Brahmi by James Prinsep

1877 Alexander Cunningham publishes a set of Asokan inscriptions

1886 First issue of *Epigraphia Carnatica*, a journal of south Indian inscriptions

1888 First issue of *Epigraphia Indica*

**Twentieth century**

1965-66 D.C. Sircar publishes *Indian Epigraphy* and *Indian Epigraphical Glossary*



# 11

# The Gupta Empire and After Guptas

Histories of the Gupta rulers have been reconstructed from literature, coins and inscriptions, including prashastis, composed in praise of kings in particular, and patrons in general, by poets. While historians often attempt to draw factual information from such compositions, those who composed and read them often treasured them as works of poetry rather than as accounts that were literally true. The Prayaga Prashasti (also known as the Allahabad Pillar Inscription) composed in Sanskrit by Harishena, the court poet of Samudragupta, arguably the most powerful of the Gupta rulers (c. fourth century CE), is a case in point.

## Emergence of the Guptas

- As you have seen in the earlier, north India intermittently came under the rule of several foreign people, such as the Yavanas (the name given to the Greeks, Romans and west Asians) Kushanas, Sakas, Parthians, etc. These people began to settle in north-west India from the first century B.C. onwards.
- Most of these people came to India due to the turbulent condition in central Asia. They adapted themselves with Indian culture, and at the same time, introduced some new elements in it. Between the first century B.C. and third century A.D. the Satavahanas in the Deccan, the Kushanas in the north and the Sakas in the west emerged as the three big political powers, and worked as a stabilising factor in these regions.
- The empires of the Satavahanas and Kushanas came to an end in the middle of the third century A.D. and a new dynasty emerged in north India, known as the Guptas. Like the Mauryas a few centuries earlier, the Guptas made a permanent impact on Indian history by building up a large empire and by firmly establishing several trends of Indian culture which had begun in the earlier periods. The Gupta kings are known not only for their political might and strength but also for great achievements in the field of science, art, culture and literature.



- The Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta mentions maharaja Srigupta and maharaja Ghatotkacha as his ancestors. I-tsing, who travelled India from A.D. 671 to 695 refers to Srigupta as the builder of a temple at Gaya for the Chinese pilgrims, 500 years before his time. This king Srigupta has been identified with the first Gupta king of that name mentioned in the Allahabad pillar inscription.
- In A.D. 320 C “chandragupta I succeeded his father ‘Ghatotkacha. It is said that he laid ‘the’ foundation of the great Gupta empire. Chandragupta I married a Lichchhavi princess Kumaradevi. The Lichchhavis (to whom Gautama Buddha belongs) were an old and established Ganarajya and quite powerful, still being respected in north India. This marriage alliance of Chandragupta I was important for his political career as is proved by the coins of Chandragupta I and Kumaradevi type. These coins portray the figures of Chandragupta and Kumaradevi and mention the name of the Lichchhavis.

## Samudragupta

- Samudragupta, son of Chandragupta I and Kumaradevi, in the Allahabad inscription proudly called himself Lichchhavis-dauhitra ‘son of the daughter of Lichchhavis’. Chandragupta I introduced a new era, the Gupta era, starting with his coronation in A.D. 320.
- He was the first Gupta king to adopt the Samudragupta title maharajadhiraja and issued gold coins. Samudragupta succeeded his father about A.D. 340. The Allahabad pillar inscription gives a detailed account of the career and personality of Samudragupta. The inscription was composed by one of his officials, Harishena, and engraved on the Ashoka’s pillar at Allahabad.
- The military achievements of Samudragupta contain a long list of kings and rulers defeated and subdued by him. In the aryavarta he uprooted nine kings and princes and annexed their kingdom. His next most important campaign was in southern India. Altogether twelve kings and princes of the south (dakshinapatha) are listed in the inscription. In the case of the kings of this area, he followed the policy of first capturing the kings, then releasing them from captivity and then reinstalling them as kings in their territory. By showing royal mercy he won their allegiance. For his south Indian campaign, Samudragupta proceeded through the eastern and southern parts of Madhyadesha ‘to Orissa and then advanced along the eastern coast and reached Kanchi and beyond and returned to his capital by way of Maharashtra and Khandesh. After these conquests he performed Ashvamedhayajna. On this occasion he issued gold coins depicting the sacrificial horse and bearing the legend conveying that he performed the Ashvamedha sacrifice.
- The Allahabad pillar inscription also lists fourteen kingdoms bordering his kingdom. These rulers paid tribute, followed his orders and showed their obedience by attending his court. These were located in eastern Rajasthan, northern Madhya Pradesh, Assam and Nepal. Further, some forest kings (atavikarajas) are mentioned whom Samudragupta had made his paricharaka (helpers).
- Samudragupta was a versatile genius. He was not only proficient in war, but also in the sastras. He is called kaviraja ‘king of poets’. The Allahabad pillar inscription calls him a great musician. This is also confirmed by his lyricist type of coins which shows him playing veena (lute). He patronised learned men in his court and appointed them as his ministers. Samudragupta died in about A.D. 380 and was succeeded by his son Chandragupta II.

This map is based on the information provided in the prashasti. Harishena describes four different kinds of rulers, and tells us about Samudragupta’s policies towards them.

- (1) The rulers of Aryavarta, the area shaded in green on the map. Here there were nine rulers who were uprooted, and their kingdoms were made a part of Samudragupta’s empire.
- (2) The rulers of Dakshinapatha. Here there were twelve rulers, some of whose capitals are marked with red dots on the map. They surrendered to Samudragupta after being defeated and he then allowed them to rule again.
- (3) The inner circle of neighbouring states, including Assam, coastal Bengal, Nepal, and a number of gana sanghas in the northwest, marked in purple on the map. They brought tribute, followed his orders, and attended his court.
- (4) The rulers of the outlying areas, marked in blue on the map, perhaps the descendants of the Kushanas and Shakas, and the ruler of Sri Lanka, who submitted to him and offered daughters in marriage.



The king who played the veena. Some other qualities of Samudragupta are shown on coins such as this one, where he is shown playing the veena.

## Chandragupta II

- The Gupta empire reached its highest glory, both in terms of territorial expansion and cultural excellence under Chandragupta II, son of Samudragupta and Dattadevi. Like his father, Chandragupta II was chosen by his father as his successor.
- Chandragupta II inherited a strong and consolidated empire from his father, which he further extended. He established matrimonial alliance with Vakatakas and married his daughter Prabhavatigupta to Rudrasena II of the Vakataka dynasty. Chandragupta II probably concluded this alliance with the Vakatakas before attacking the Sakas so as to be sure of having a friendly power to back him up in Deccan.
- Other than his conquests, Chandragupta II's reign is remembered for his patronage of literature and arts and for the high standard of artistic and cultural life. Kalidas the great Sanskrit poet was a member of his court. Fa-Hien, the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim visited India between A.D. 405 and A.D. 411 collecting Buddhist manuscripts and text and studying at Indian monasteries.

## Kumaragupta I

- Chandragupta II died about A.D. 413 and was succeeded by his son Kumaragupta I, who enjoyed a reign of more than forty years. Like his grandfather, Samudragupta, he issued Ashvamedha type of coins. He may have performed an Ashvamedha sacrifice, though we do not know of any of his military achievements. At the end of Kumaragupta's reign, the Gupta empire was challenged by the Pushyamitras, a community living on the banks of the Narmada. Skandagupta, son of Kumaragupta I and future king fought and subdued them and restored peace.

## Skandagupta

- Kumaragupta I died in A.D. 455 and was succeeded by his son Skandagupta. His succession to the throne was not peaceful and perhaps there was a struggle between him and his brother Purugupta. Skandagupta's reign seems to have been full of wars.
- His greatest enemies were the Hunas, a ferocious barbarian horde which lived in central Asia and were at this very time threatening also the mighty Roman empire in the west. One branch of them, known as white Hunas, occupied the Oxus valley and advanced against both Persia and India. They crossed the Hindukush, occupied Gandhara and defied the Gupta empire.

- Skandagupta inflicted such a terrible defeat upon the Hunas that for half a century they dared not disturb the Gupta empire, though they wrought havoc on Persia during this period. Another important event of Skandagupta's reign is the restoration and repair of the dam on Sudarsana lake which had been built during Chandragupta Maurya's reign. We have seen above that this lake was previously repaired during the reign of Saka kshatrpa Rudradaman I.

## Decline of the Guptas

- The Gupta dynasty, no doubt continued to be in existence for more than 100 years after the death of Skandagupta in A.D. 467. He was succeeded by his brother Purugupta. Nothing is known about his achievements and perhaps there were none to his credit. Thereafter, the only Gupta ruler who continued to rule fairly a large part of the empire was Budhagupta, whose inscriptions have been found from Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.

## Harsha

- After the death of Rajyavardhana, his younger brother, Harshavardhana also known as Siladitya, ascended the Pushyabhuti throne in A.D. 606 at the age of sixteen, and ruled for forty-one years. After Grahavarman's death, the Councilors of Maukhari state offered the throne to Harsha. The period of Harsha, in comparison with most other early Indian kings, is remarkably well documented.
- The poet Banabhatta has written a detailed account of the events leading upto his rise to power, in the Harshacharita (life of Harsha).
- At the same time the Chinese pilgrim HiuenTsang also wrote in great detail about Harsha and India of Harsha's time. After ascending to the throne Harsha first rescued his widowed sister, from the Vindhyan forest, where she was going to throw herself into the fire with all her attendants. Harsha was not successful in his first expedition against Gauda, but in his second expedition towards the close of his reign, after the death of Sasanka, he conquered Magadha and Sasanka's empire.

## The history after Harsha

After the death of Harsha in A.D. 647, Kanauj lost its status as the capital city briefly. But in the beginning of the eighth century A.D. Kanauj came back as the centre of power with a very powerful king, Yashovarman. He ruled over a vast empire which included almost the whole of northern India. His victory over Bengal formed the subject of the famous kavya Gaudavaho by Vakpatiraja, a court poet. Yashovarman was a famous king who sent an embassy to China in A.D. 731. Famous dramatist Bhavabhuti, the author of Malati-Madhava, Uttara Rama-charita and Mahavira-charita adorned his court. Yashovarman ruled till about A.D. 740. Nothing is known about the successor of Yashovarman, though it is known that four kings ruled Kanauj between A.D. 740-810. Kanauj from the sixth century A.D.

## Gurjara Pratiharas

The early history of Gurjara Pratiharas is shrouded in mystery. Some historians believe that they came to India from the central Asian region after the Gupta period and settled in Rajasthan. Gradually they gained political importance. However, the bardic tradition of Rajasthan claims that the Gurjara Pratiharas were born out of a yajna done at Mount Abu. Others born out of this yajna were Chalukyas, Parmaras and Chahmanas. It is for this reason that these four dynasties are also known as agnikulas (fire-clans). It is further said that these four dynasties of Rajputs were created for the protection of the country from external aggressions. This has been taken by some scholars to suggest that they were foreigners who were given status in Indian society. The Pratiharas claim that they were called Pratihara (literary means door keeper) because their ancestor Lakshmana served as a door keeper to his brother Rama. The geographical name of Gujarat is derived from Gurjara.

The early history of the family is preserved in the Gwalior inscription of Bhoja, the seventh and the most famous king of the dynasty. Nagabhata I was the real founder of the fame of family. He defeated the muslim forces from the Arabs. After him, Vatsaraja (A.D. 775-800) followed an aggressive imperial policy which brought him into conflicts with Pala kings of Bengal. Vatsaraja defeated Pala king Dharmapala but unfortunately the fruits of his victory were snatched away from him by the Rashtrakuta king Dhruva, who defeated Vatsaraja.

Dharamapala took advantage of the reverses of Vatsaraja and installed his own nominee Chakrayudha on the throne of Kanauj.

**Nagabhata II** (A.D.815), son of Vatsaraja made an alliance with several other states particularly with Andhra, Vidharbha and Kalinga. He made extensive preparation and fought against his rivals. He first defeated Chakrayudha and captured Kanauj. Then, he defeated Dharamapala and fought with Rashtrakuta king, Govinda III.

Nagabhata II was succeeded by his son Ramabhadra during whose brief reign of three years, the Pratihara suffered most owing to the aggressive policy of the Pala king, Devapala. Bhoja I, succeeded his father Ramabhadra, about A.D. 836. Within a few years of his accession, Bhoja I succeeded in restoring the falling fortunes of his dynasty. The death of Devapala followed by the Rashtrakuta's invasion of Bengal must have provided a golden opportunity to the Pratihara king. Fortune also favoured Bhoja I in another direction. The Rashtrakuta king, Krishna II was involved in a life and death struggle with the Eastern Chalukyas. Bhoja I defeated Krishna II and captured the region of Malwa and Gujarat. After asserting triumph over the two great rivals, Bhoja I had no difficulty in establishing his sovereignty over the Punjab, Avadh and other territories of north India and consolidated his empire.

## Bhoja

The name of Bhoja is famous in many legends. He was a devotee of Vishnu, and adopted the title of Adivaraha, which has been inscribed in some of his coins. He is also known by other names as 'Mihir', 'Prabhasa' etc. An assessment of Bhoja as a conqueror and administrator is given by the Arab historians Sulaiman around A.D. 851. He wrote that Bhoja maintained numerous forces and no other Indian king had such fine cavalry. He has got riches and his camels and horses are numerous. Exchanges are carried on in his states with silver and gold. There is no other country in India more safe from robbers.

Bhoja I was succeeded by his son Mahendrapala I about A.D. 885. Mahendrapala I not only kept the vast empire intact but even probably extended his boundaries. The Pratihara empire now stretched almost from the Himalayas in the north to the Vindhyas in the south and from Bengal in the east to Gujarat in the west. He was also known as 'Mahendrayudha', and 'Nirbhayanarendra'. He was a liberal patron of learned men. His guru Rajashekhara, occupies a distinguished place in the Indian literature. His works include Karpuramanjari, Bala-Ramayana, Bala Bharata, Kavyamimansa, Bhuvana Kosha and Haravilasa.

The Pratiharas dominated north India for over two hundred years from the eighth century to the tenth century A.D. Al-Masudi, a native of Baghdad, who visited India in A.D. 915-916 'testified to the great powers and prestige of the Pratihara rulers and the vastness of their empire. He says that empire of Al-Juzr (Gurjara) had 1,800,000 villages, the cities and rural areas were about 2000 km.

Between A.D. 915 and A.D. 918, the Rashtrakuta king, Indra II again attacked Kanauj leaving it totally devastated. This weakened the Pratihara empire. Another Rashtrakuta ruler, Krishna III, invaded north India in about A.D. 963 and defeated the Pratihara rulers. This was followed by the decline of Pratihara empire.

The Pratiharas were patrons of learning and literature. The Sanskrit poet Rajashekhara lived at the court of Mahendrapala I. The Pratihara kings were followers of Hinduism. They embellished Kanauj with many fine buildings and temples.

The Pratiharas were well known for their hostility to the Arab rulers of Sindh. Despite this, it seems that the movement of scholars and trade between India and west Asia remained uninterrupted.

## Palas

The history of Bengal from the death of Harsha up to the ascendancy of the Palas remains in obscurity. At this time West Bengal was known as Gauda and East Bengal as Vanga. Bengal was subject to internal disorder, which has been termed as matsyanyaya (the rule of strong devouring the weak). This led to a revolution in which Gopala was elected king by the people to end this matsyanyaya. The details of Gopala's early career are not known. However, he introduced peace in the kingdom and laid the foundation for the great future for his family known as the Pala dynasty.

Gopala was succeeded by his son, Dharmapala about A.D. 780. He was an energetic personality, and found himself in a position to undertake the expansion of his empire. He defeated Indrayudha, the king of Kanauj and installed Chakrayudha to the throne of Kanauj.

Dharmapala held a grand darbar at Kanauj which was attended by several kings. But he could not consolidate his position. Rashtrakutaking, Dhruva could not tolerate the imperial pretensions of Dharmapala, and routed him in a battle. Meanwhile the Pratihara power revived under Nagabhata II. Dhruva defeated Dharmapala near Monghyr.

Dharmapala was succeeded by his son Devapala who is rightly reckoned as the most mighty Pala king. Epigraphic records credit him with extensive conquests. He conquered Pragjotishpur (Assam) and Utkala (Orissa).

The Palas ruled over Bihar, Bengal and parts of Orissa and Assam with many vicissitudes of fortune for over four centuries. Their power is attested by the Arab merchant Sulaiman. He calls the Pala kingdom Ruhma (or Dharma), short for Dharmapala, and says that the Pala rulers were at war with their neighbours - the Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas, but his troops were more numerous than his adversaries. He tells us that 'it was customary for the Pala king to be accompanied by a force of 50,000 elephants'. Besides the inscriptions and the Arab travellers, detailed information about the Palas is also provided to us by the Tibetan chronicles. According to Tibetan historians, Pala rulers were great patrons of Buddhist learning and religion. Dharmapala founded the famous Buddhist monastery at Vikramashila, which became second only to Nalanda in fame. Its splendid temples and monasteries bear eloquent testimony to his liberality as well as to that of other donors.



# 12

## The Mauryas

The growth of Magadha culminated in the emergence of the Mauryan Empire. Chandragupta Maurya, who founded the empire (c. 321 BCE), extended control as far northwest as Afghanistan and Baluchistan, and his grandson Asoka, arguably the most famous ruler of early India, conquered Kalinga (present-day coastal Orissa).

### About the Mauryas

THE Mauryan empire was the first and one of the greatest empires that were established on Indian soil. The vast Mauryan empire stretching from the valley of the Oxus to the delta of Kaveri was given a well-knit, common administration. Chandragupta Maurya was the first ruler who unified entire India under one political unit.

### Chandragupta Maurya (324-300 B.C.)

- Not much is known about the early life and ancestry of Chandragupta. The Buddhist sources like Mahavamsa and Dipavamsa describe Chandragupta Maurya as a scion of the Kshatriya clan of the Moriyas branch of Sakyas who lived in Pippalivana, in eastern Uttar Pradesh. The Mudrarakshasa, a play written by Vishakhadatta, uses the terms like Vrishala and Kulahina, for Chandragupta which mean a person of humble origin. Justin, a Greek writer, also says that Chandragupta was “born in humble life”. According to Buddhist sources Chandragupta’s father was killed in a battle and he was brought up by his maternal uncle.
- Chanakya, finding the signs of royalty in the child Chandragupta, took him as his pupil, and educated him at Taxila which was then a great centre of learning. Chandragupta’s early life and education at Taxila is indirectly proved by the fact that the Greek sources tell us that he had seen Alexander in course of the latter’s campaign of Punjab. The details of Chandragupta’s conquests and empire building process are not available to us. From the Greek and Jain sources it seems that Chandragupta took advantage of the disturbances caused by the invasion of Alexander and his sudden death in 323 B.C. in Babylon.
- Historians have used a variety of sources to reconstruct the history of the Mauryan Empire.

These include archaeological finds, especially sculpture. Also valuable are contemporary works, such as the account of Megasthenes (a Greek ambassador to the court of Chandragupta Maurya), which survives in fragments. Another source that is often used is the Arthashastra, parts of which were probably composed by Kautilya or Chanakya, traditionally believed to be the minister of Chandragupta.

- Besides, the Mauryas are mentioned in later Buddhist, Jaina and Puranic literature, as well as in Sanskrit literary works. While these are useful, the inscriptions of Asoka (c. 272/268-231 BCE) on rocks and pillars are often regarded as amongst the most valuable sources. Asoka was the first ruler who inscribed his messages to his subjects and officials on stone surfaces natural rocks as well as polished pillars.
- He used the inscriptions to proclaim what he understood to be dharma. This included respect towards elders, generosity towards Brahmanas and those who renounced worldly life, treating slaves and servants kindly, and respect for religions and traditions other than one’s own.
- Communication along both land and riverine routes was vital for the existence of the empire.

Journeys from the centre to the provinces could have taken weeks if not months. This meant arranging for provisions as well as protection for those who were on the move. It is obvious that the army was an important means for ensuring the latter.

- Megasthenes mentions a committee with six subcommittees for coordinating military activity. Of these, one looked after the navy, the second managed transport and provisions, the third was responsible for foot-soldiers, the fourth for horses, the fifth for chariots and the sixth for elephants. The activities of the second subcommittee were rather varied: arranging for bullock carts to carry equipment, procuring food for soldiers and fodder for animals, and recruiting servants and artisans to look after the soldiers.
- Asoka also tried to hold his empire together by propagating dhamma, the principles of which, as we have seen, were simple and virtually universally applicable. This, according to him, would ensure the well-being of people in this world and the next.

**Special officers, known as the dhamma mahamatta, were appointed to spread the message of dhamma.**

### **Bindusara (300-273 B.C.)**

Chandragupta Maurya was succeeded by his son Bindusara. We know little about this king. The Jain scholar Hemachandra and Tibetan historian Taranath say that Chanakya outlived Chandragupta and continued as a minister of Bindusara. From Divyavadana we came to know that Bindusara appointed his eldest son Sumana (also named Susima) as his viceroy at Taxila and Ashoka at Ujjain. It also tells us that a revolt broke out at Taxila and when it could not be suppressed by Susima, Ashoka was sent to restore peace. Some scholars give the credit of south Indian conquest to Bindusara, but most scholars believe that this was done by his father Chandragupta Maurya. Bindusara continued the policy of friendly relations with Hellenic world. Pliny mentions that Ptolemy Philadelphus of Egypt sent Dionysius as his ambassador to his court.

### **Ashoka (273-232 B.C.)**

After the death of Bindusara in 273 B.C. Ashoka succeeded to the throne. On the early life of Ashoka we have only traditional accounts. According to the Buddhist sources his mother was Janapada Kalyani or Subhadra. As a prince he served as a viceroy, first at Ujjain and then at Taxila. According to the Buddhist tradition, Ashoka was very cruel in his early life and captured the throne after killing his 99 brothers. But this does not appear to be correct. Not only because of the exaggerated figure of 99, but also because Ashoka himself speaks affectionately about his brothers, sisters and relatives in his edicts.

Ashoka is the first king in the Indian history who has left his records engraved on stones. The history of Ashoka and his reign can be reconstructed with the help of these inscriptions and some other literary sources. The inscriptions on rocks are called Rock Edicts, and those on Pillars, Pillar Edicts. The Ashokan inscriptions are found in India, Nepal, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Altogether, they appear at 47 places. However, the name of Ashoka occurs only in copies of Minor Rock Edict I found at three places in Karnataka and one in Madhya Pradesh. All other inscriptions refer to him as devanampiya (beloved of the gods) and piyadasi. These inscriptions are generally located on ancient highways.

The inscriptions of Ashoka were written in four different scripts. In Afghanistan area they were written in Greek and Aramaic languages and scripts, and in Pakistan area, in Prakrit language and Kharosthi script.

Inscriptions from all other areas are in Prakrit language, written in Brahmi script.

### **Kalinga War and Its Impact**

The earliest event of Ashoka's reign recorded in his inscriptions is his conquest of Kalinga (modern Orissa and probably some adjoining areas) in the eighth year of his reign. This turned out to be the first and also the last battle fought by him. The Rock Edict XIII describes vividly the horrors and miseries of this war and its impact on Ashoka. According to this edict, one lakh people were killed in this war, several lakhs perished and a lakh and a half were taken prisoners. These numbers may be exaggerated but one fact comes out clearly that this war had a devastating effect on the people of Kalinga. The horrors of war completely changed the personality of Ashoka. He felt great remorse for the atrocities the war brought in its wake.

He thus abandoned the policy of aggression and tried to conquer the hearts of the people. The 'drums declaring wars were replaced by the drums announcing ethical and moral principles with dhammaghosa. He took steps for the welfare of people and animals. He sent ambassadors of peace to the Greek kingdoms in west Asia and several other countries.

## Ashoka's Dhamma

There is no doubt that Ashoka's personal religion was Buddhism. In his Bhabru edict he says he had full faith in Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. Though Ashoka accepted Buddhism as his main faith, it would be wrong to think that he forced Buddhist ideals on his subjects. He showed respect to all sects and faiths and believed in unity among ethical and moral values of all sects. In Rock Edict VII he says, "All sects desire both self control and purity of mind". In Rock Edict XII he pronounces his policy of equal respect to all religious sects more clearly. He says, that he "honours all sects and both ascetics and laymen, with gifts and various forms of recognition".

After the Kalinga war, the greatest ideal and objective before Ashoka was the propagation of Dhamma. The Dhamma, as explained in Ashoka's edicts is not a religion or a religious system but a 'Moral Law', a 'Common Code of Conduct' or an 'Ethical Order'. In Pillar Edict II Ashoka himself puts the question: "What is Dhamma?" Then he enumerates the two basic attributes or constituents of Dhamma : less evil and many good deeds.

Ashoka, in Rock Edict XII and many other edicts prescribes the following codes to be followed:

- (i) Obedience to mother and father, elders, teachers and other respectable persons.
- (ii) Respect towards teachers.
- (iii) Proper treatment towards ascetics, relations, slaves, servants and dependents, the poor and miserable, friends, acquaintances and companions.
- (iv) Liberality towards ascetics, friends, comrades, relatives and the aged.
- (v) Abstention from killing of living beings.
- (vi) Non-injury to all living creatures.
- (vii) Spending little and accumulating little wealth.
- (viii) Mildness in case of all living creatures.
- (ix) Truthfulness.
- (x) Attachment to morality.
- (xi) Purity of heart.

Thus, Ashoka tried to instill moral law (Dhamma) as the governing principle and forced in every sphere of life. Dhamma of Ashoka, thus, is a code for moral and virtuous life. He never discussed god or soul or religion as such. He asked people to have control over their passion, to cultivate purity of life and character in inner most thoughts, to be tolerant to other religions, to abstain from killing or injuring animals and to have regard for them, to be charitable to all, to be respectful to parents, teachers, relatives, friends, and ascetics, to treat slaves and servant kindly and above all to tell the truth.

Ashoka not only preached but also practiced these principles. He gave up hunting and killing of animals. He established hospitals for humans and animals and made liberal donations todaughter Sanghamitra to propagate Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

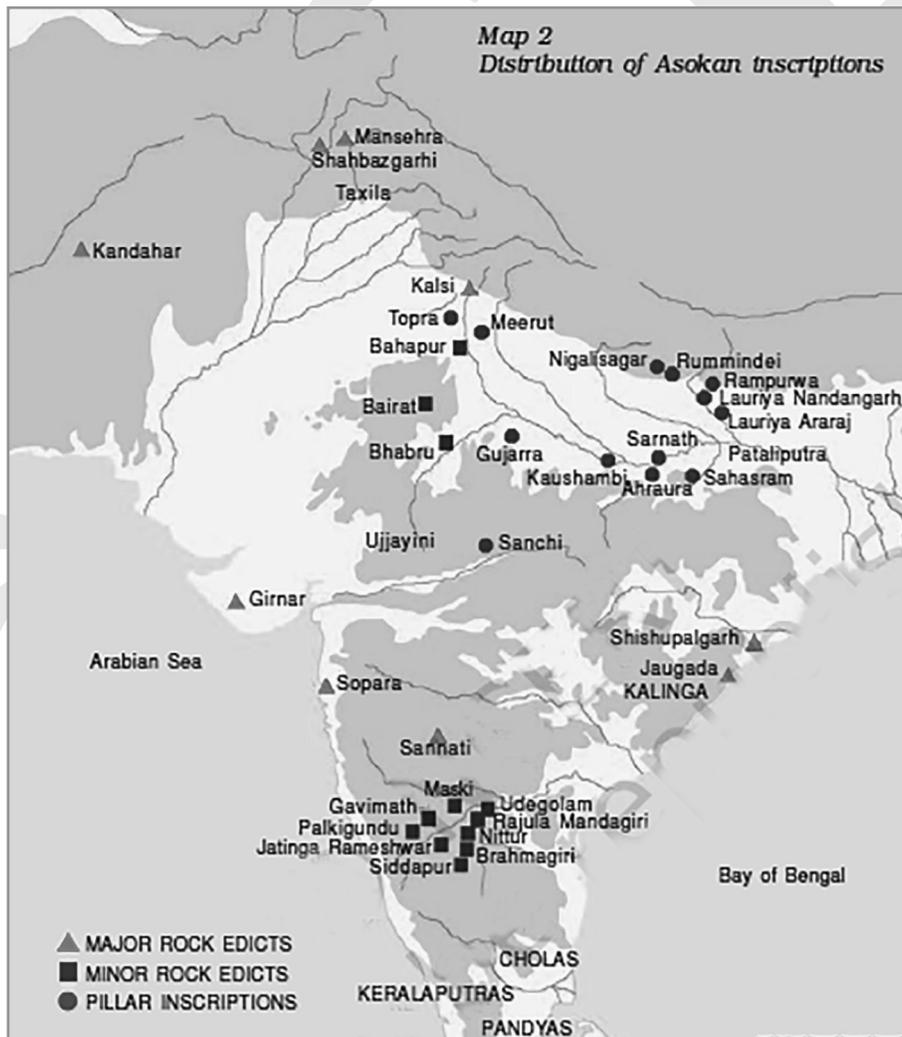
After the Kalinga war Ashoka adopted Buddhism, one of whose cardinal doctrines was non-violence and non-injury to living beings. Ashoka took for the propagation of Buddhism. He conducted Dharmayatras and instructed his officials to do the same.

He appointed special class of officials called Dharmamahamatras whose sole responsibility was to propagate Dhamma among the people. Ashoka sent missions to foreign countries also to propagate dhamma. His missionaries went to western Asia, Egypt and Eastern Europe. Of the foreign kings, whose kingdoms thus received the message of Buddhism; five are mentioned in the inscriptions of Ashoka, namely, Antiochus Theos, of Syria and western Asia, Ptolemy Philadelphus of Egypt, Antigonus Gonatas of Macedonia, Megas of Cyrene and Alexander of Epirus. The king even sent his son Mahendra and daughter Sanghamitra to propagate Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Ashoka's Place in History Ashoka was one of the greatest kings in the history of the world. His reign constitutes one of the "rare and lighting epochs in the annals of nations". The most remarkable thing about Ashoka is that his faith in Buddhism never made him to neglect his duties as a king and impose it on his subjects. His greatness lay in his realisation of the values of life. His conception of duties and responsibilities of a king, the zeal with which he succeeded in giving effect to them are shining examples of his greatness. Probably no ruler has ever expressed the relation between a king and his subjects in such a

simple and noble language. He declared, “All men are my children and just as I desire for my children that they may enjoy every kind of prosperity and happiness, in both this world and the next, so also I desire the same for all men”. Ashoka is the only king in the history of human kind who apologised to his conquered subject for having waged war against them and caused them misery and sufferings. The Rock Edict XIII is a moving document which could have been written only by a human being as noble and as great as Ashoka.

## Decline of the Mauryan Empire

Ashoka ruled for over forty years and met with his death in 232 B.C. the decline set in and soon after the empire broke up. Seven kings followed Ashoka in succession in a period of about 50 years. It is impossible to construct a continuous history of the empire after Ashoka. Perhaps, after the death of Ashoka, the empire was divided into an eastern and an western part. The western part was governed by Kunala, Samprati and others and the eastern part with southern India, with its capital at Pataliputra, by six later Mauryan kings from Dasarath to Brihadratha. The revolt of the Andhras in the south and victorious raids of Greek king in the west gave a blow to the power and prestige of the Mauryan empire. Apparently due to concern for the empire and total disillusionment on kings unworthiness, Pushyamitra, the commander-in-chief killed the king Brihadratha while he was reviewing the army. Too little is known of the actual circumstances leading to such an act. However, what is very clear is that the king was killed in full view of the public, and that too in the presence of his army, this shows that he neither enjoyed the loyalty of his own army nor the sympathy of the people. This is the only recorded and undisputed incident in the history of India till the twelfth century A.D. where the king was murdered and replaced. Though Pushyamitra, ascended the throne, curiously enough, he retained the title of the Senapati. He did not adopt any title declaring himself as the king.



Map 3

## Administering the empire

- There were five major political centres in the empire – the capital Pataliputra and the provincial centres of Taxila, Ujjayini, Tosali and Suvarnagiri, all mentioned in Asokan inscriptions. If we examine the content of these inscriptions, we find virtually the same message engraved everywhere from the present-day North West Frontier Provinces of Pakistan, to Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Uttarakhand in India.
- Could this vast empire have had a uniform administrative system? Historians have increasingly come to realise that this is unlikely. The regions included within the empire were just too diverse. Imagine the contrast between the hilly terrain of Afghanistan and the coast of Orissa.
- It is likely that administrative control was strongest in areas around the capital and the provincial centres. These centres were carefully chosen, both Taxila and Ujjayini being situated on important long-distance trade routes, while Suvarnagiri (literally, the golden mountain) was possibly important for tapping the gold mines of Karnataka.

## Importance of the Mauryan empire

- When historians began reconstructing early Indian history in the nineteenth century, the emergence of the Mauryan Empire was regarded as a major landmark. India was then under colonial rule, and was part of the British empire. Nineteenth and early twentieth century Indian historians found the possibility that there was an empire in early India both challenging and exciting. Also, some of the archaeological finds associated with the Mauryas, including stone sculpture, were considered to be examples of the spectacular art typical of empires. Many of these historians found the message on Asokan inscriptions very different from that of most other rulers, suggesting that Asoka was more powerful and industrious, as also more humble than later rulers who adopted grandiose titles.

## Language and scripts

Brahmanas began composing Sanskrit texts known as the Dharmasutras. These laid down norms for rulers (as well as for other social categories), who were ideally expected to be Kshatriyas). Rulers were advised to collect taxes and tribute from cultivators, traders and artisans. Were resources also procured from pastoralists and forest peoples? We do not really know.

What we do know is that raids on neighbouring states were recognised as a legitimate means of acquiring wealth. Gradually, some states acquired standing armies and maintained regular bureaucracies. Others continued to depend on militia, recruited, more often than not, from the peasantry.

Most of Ashokan inscriptions were in the Prakrit language. Most Prakrit inscriptions were written in the Brahmi script. However some in northwest written in the Brahmi script.

- It lasted for about 150 years, which is not a very long time in the vast span of the history of the subcontinent. Besides, if you look at Map 3, you will notice that the empire did not encompass the entire subcontinent. And even within the frontiers of the empire, control was not uniform. By the second century BCE, new chiefdoms and kingdoms emerged in several parts of the subcontinent.



# 13 Kingship and Social Life in Eastern India and South India

## Introduction

- several changes in economic and political life between c. 600 BCE and 600 CE. Some of these changes influenced societies as well. For instance, the extension of agriculture into forested areas transformed the lives of forest dwellers; craft specialists often emerged as distinct social groups; the unequal distribution of wealth sharpened social differences.
- Historians often use textual traditions to understand these processes. Some texts lay down norms of social behaviour; others describe and occasionally comment on a wide range of social situations and practices. We can also catch a glimpse of some social actors from inscriptions. As we will see, each text (and inscription) was written from the perspective of specific social categories. So we need to keep in mind *who* composed *what* and for *whom*. We also need to consider the language used, and the ways in which the text circulated.
- In focusing on the *Mahabharata*, a colossal epic running in its present form into over 100,000 verses with depictions of a wide range of social categories and situations, we draw on one of the richest texts of the subcontinent. It was composed over a period of about 1,000 years (c. 500 BCE onwards), and some of the stories it contains may have been in circulation even earlier. The central story is about two sets of warring cousins. The text also contains sections laying down norms of behaviour for various social groups. Occasionally (though not always), the principal characters seem to follow these norms.



A terracotta sculpture depicting a scene from the *Mahabharata* (West Bengal), c. seventeenth century

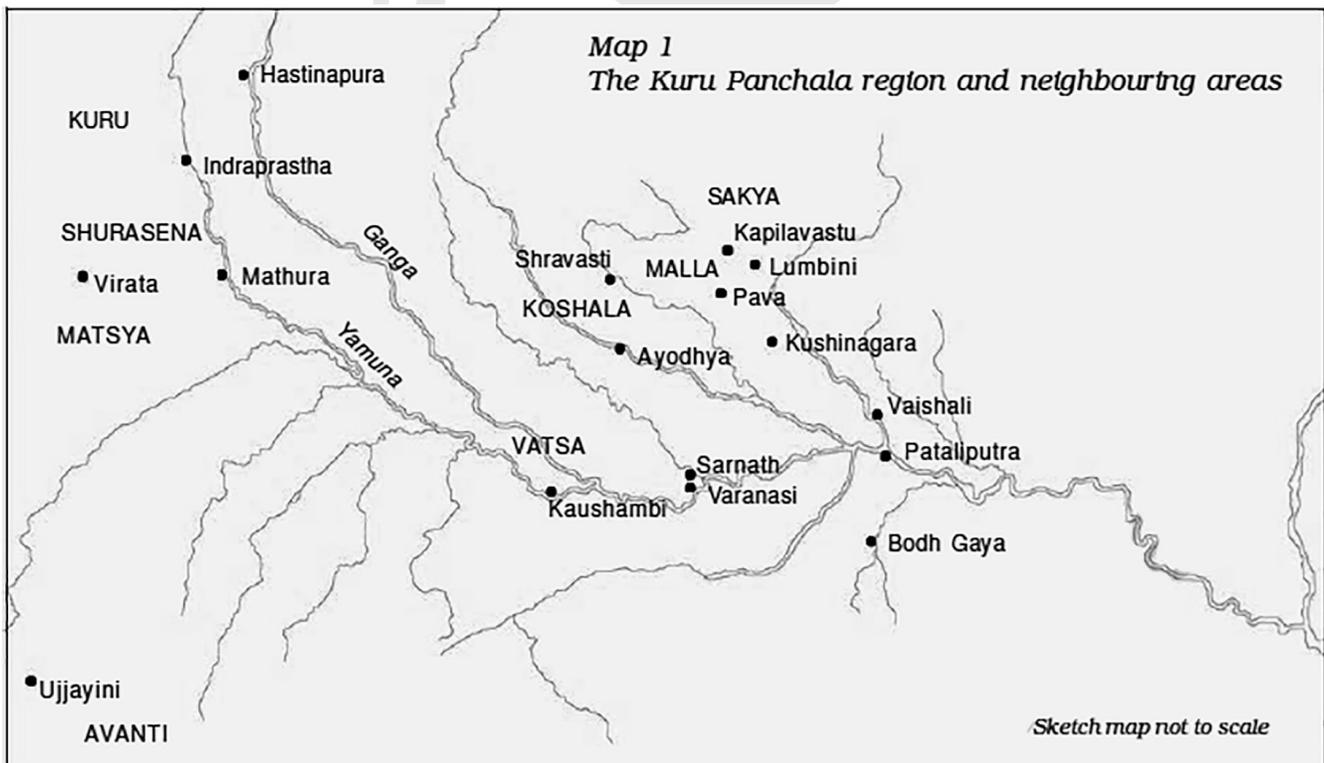
## The critical Edition of the Mahabharata

- One of the most ambitious projects of scholarship began in 1919, under the leadership of a noted Indian Sanskritist, V.S. Sukthankar. Initially, it meant collecting Sanskrit manuscripts of the text, written in a variety of scripts, from different parts of the country.
- The team worked out a method of comparing verses from each manuscript. Ultimately, they selected the verses that appeared common to most versions and published these in several volumes, running into over 13,000 pages. The project took 47 years to complete. Two things became apparent: there were several common elements in the Sanskrit versions of the story, evident in manuscripts found all over the subcontinent, from Kashmir and Nepal in the north to Kerala and Tamil Nadu in the south.
- Also evident were enormous regional variations in the ways in which the text had been transmitted over the centuries. These variations were documented in footnotes and appendices to the main text. Taken together, more than half the 13,000 pages are devoted to these variations.

## Kingship and marriage

Many rules and varied practices

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- Also evident were enormous regional variations in the ways in which the text had been transmitted over the centuries. These variations were documented in footnotes and appendices to the main text. Taken together, more than half the 13,000 pages are devoted to these variations.
- For early societies, historians can retrieve information about elite families fairly easily; it is, however, far more difficult to reconstruct the familial relationships of ordinary people. Historians also investigate and analyse *attitudes* towards family and kinship. These are important, because they provide an insight into people's thinking; it is likely that some of these ideas would have shaped their actions, just as actions may have led to changes in attitudes.



Sanskrit text use term kula to designate families and jnati for the larger network of Kinfolk. The term vamshais used for lineage.

## The ideal of patriliney

- Most ruling dynasties (c. sixth century BCE onwards) claimed to follow this system, although there were variations in practice: sometimes there were no sons, in some situations brothers succeeded one another, sometimes other kinsmen claimed the throne, and, in very exceptional circumstances, women such as Prabhavati Gupta exercised power. The concern with patriliney was not unique to ruling families. It is evident in mantras in ritual texts such as the Rigveda. It is possible that these attitudes were shared by wealthy men and those who claimed high status, including Brahmanas.

## Rules of marriage

- While sons were important for the continuity of the patrilineage, daughters were viewed rather differently within this framework. They had no claims to the resources of the household. At the same time, marrying them into families outside the kin was considered desirable. This system, called exogamy (literally, marrying outside), meant that the lives of young girls and women belonging to families that claimed high status were often carefully regulated to ensure that they were married at the “right” time and to the “right” person. This gave rise to the belief that kanyadana or the gift of a daughter in marriage was an important religious duty of the father.
- With the emergence of new towns social life became more complex. People from near and far met to buy and sell their products and share ideas in the urban milieu. This may have led to a questioning of earlier beliefs and practices. Faced with this challenge, the Brahmanas responded by laying down codes of social behaviour in great detail. These were meant to be followed by Brahmanas in particular and the rest of society in general. From c. 500 BCE, these norms were compiled in Sanskrit texts known as the Dharmasutras and Dharmashastras. The most important of such works, the Manusmriti, was compiled between c. 200 BCE and 200 CE.
- What is interesting is that the Dharmasutras and Dharmashastras recognised as many as eight forms of marriage. Of these, the first four were considered as “good” while the remaining were condemned. It is possible that these were practised by those who did not accept Brahmanical norms.

## The gotra of women

- One Brahmanical practice, evident from c. 1000 BCE onwards, was to classify people (especially Brahmanas) in terms of gotras. Each gotra was named after a Vedic seer, and all those who belonged to the same gotra were regarded as his descendants. Two rules about gotra were particularly important: women were expected to give up their father’s gotra and adopt that of their husband on marriage and members of the same gotra could not marry.
- One way to find out whether this was commonly followed is to consider the names of men and women, which were sometimes derived from gotra names.
- We have seen that Satavahana rulers were identified through metonymics (names derived from that of the mother). Although this may suggest that mothers were important, we need to be cautious before we arrive at any conclusion. In the case of the Satavahanas we know that succession to the throne was generally patrilineal.

### Eight forms of marriage

Here are the first, fourth, fifth and sixth forms of marriage from the *Manusmriti*:

First: The gift of a daughter, after dressing her in costly clothes and honouring her with presents of jewels, to a man learned in the Veda whom the father himself invites.

Fourth: The gift of a daughter by the father after he has addressed the couple with the text, “May both of you perform your duties together”, and has shown honour to the bridegroom.

Fifth: When the bridegroom receives a maiden, after having given as much wealth as he can afford to the kinsmen and to the bride herself, according to his own will.

Sixth: The voluntary union of a maiden and her lover ... which springs from desire ...

## Jatis and social mobility

These complexities are reflected in another term used in texts to refer to social categories – jati. In Brahmanical theory, jati, like varna, was based on birth. However, while the number of varnas was fixed at four, there was no restriction on the number of jatis. In fact, whenever Brahmanical authorities encountered new groups – for instance, people living in forests such as the nishadas – or wanted to assign a name to occupational categories such as the goldsmith or suvarnakara, which did not easily fit into the fourfold varna system, they classified them as a jati. Jatis which shared a common occupation or profession were sometimes organised into shrenis or guilds.

We seldom come across documents that record the histories of these groups. But there are exceptions. One interesting stone inscription (c. fifth century CE), found in Mandasor (Madhya Pradesh), records the history of a guild of silk weavers who originally lived in Lata (Gujarat), from where they migrated to Mandasor, then known as Dashapura.

- It states that they undertook the difficult journey along with their children and kinfolk, as they had heard about the greatness of the local king, and wanted to settle in his kingdom.
- Although membership was based on a shared craft specialisation, some members adopted other occupations. It also indicates that the members shared more than a common profession – they collectively decided to invest their wealth, earned through their craft, to construct a splendid temple in honour of the sun god.

### Types of marriages

*Endogamy* refers to marriage within a unit – this could be a kin group, caste, or a group living in the same locality.

*Exogamy* refers to marriage outside the unit.

*Polygyny* is the practice of a man having several wives.

*Polyandry* is the practice of a woman having several husbands.

## Beyond the four varnas: Integration

Given the diversity of the subcontinent, there were, and always have been, populations whose social practices were not influenced by Brahmanical ideas. When they figure in Sanskrit texts, they are often described as odd, uncivilised, or even animal-like. In some instances, these included forest-dwellers – for whom hunting and gathering remained an important means of subsistence. Categories such as the *nishada*, to which Ekalavya is supposed to have belonged, are examples of this.

- In Deccan and south India, after the Satavahana rule had ended in the first half of the third century A.D., the Vakatakas rose to power in the second half of the third century A.D. Not much is known about the founder of this dynasty, **Vindhyasakti**.
- His son and successor **Pravarasena** was the real founder of the Vakataka empire in western and central India. He is the only Vakataka ruler to whom the title samrat was accorded. He performed Vajapeya and four Ashvamedhayajnas. The Vakataka empire was divided by the successors of Pravarasena into two parts. The main branch and the other known as Vatsagulma branch.
- The importance of the Vakatakas as a political power in western and central Deccan was realised by Chandragupta II, who married his daughter Prabhavati Gupta into the Vakataka family. The Vakatakas and the Guptas remained friendly for a long-time.
- After the Vakatakas, three major kingdoms, namely the Chalukyas of Badami, Pallavas of Kanchipuram and Pandyas of Madurai dominated the Deccan and south India for about 300 years. The Vakatakas in the Deccan were followed by the Chalukyas of Badami. The Chalukyas began with a base at Vatapi or Badami and Aihole, from where they moved northwards and annexed the areas around Nasik and the upper Godavari region. Pulakesin II was the greatest king of Chalukya dynasty, who ruled from A.D. 610 to 642. He was the contemporary of Harshavardhana of Kanauj.
- The detailed account of his victories as well as early history of the Chalukyas is recorded in the Aihole inscription composed by Ravikirti. Vishnuvardhan, son of Pulakesin II, founded the eastern branch of the Chalukyas with its capital first at Pishtapuri and later at Vengi.

### The case of the merchants

Sanskrit texts and inscriptions used the term *vanik* to designate merchants. While trade was defined as an occupation for Vaishyas in the Shastras, a more complex situation is evident in plays such as the *Mrichchhakatika* written by Shudraka (c. fourth century CE). Here, the hero Charudatta was described as both a Brahmana and a *sarthavaha* or merchant. And a fifth-century inscription describes two brothers who made a donation for the construction of a temple as *kshatriya-vaniks*.

- This branch remained independent of the main or western branch and exercised uninterrupted sway over the kingdom up to the twelfth century. The Rashtrakutas succeeded the Chalukyas of Badami and maintained the vast empire in the Deccan. The first known ruler of the dynasty was Dantidurga I who conquered Badami in A.D. 752, defeating the Chalukyas.

## Satavahanas of Deccan

Before the emergence of the Satavahanas in Maharashtra and Cholas, Cheras and Pandyas in southern India the region was settled by megalithic people. While northern India was reeling under turmoil after the fall of Mauryas a very powerful kingdom was established by the Satavahanas, also known as Andhras, in Deccan covering parts of Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. The Andhras are an ancient people and are mentioned in the Aitareya Brahmana also.

## South India dynasty

The Andhras were powerful people who possessed a large number of villages and thirty towns, an army of one lakh infantry, two thousand cavalry and one thousand elephants. During the Mauryan age they were part of the Mauryan empire but it appears that immediately after the fall of the dynasty, the Andhras declared themselves free. The founder of this dynasty is known as Simuka and he ruled from referred to as the lord of Dakshinapatha. His name also occurs on one of the gateways of Sanchi stupa. It is well known that substantial donations were made by the Satavahanas for the renovation and decoration of Sanchi stupas and monasteries.

- The next important king was Gautamiputra Satakarni. In between, three kings ruled, of whom Satakarni II ruled for about 56 years. He wrested Malwa from the Sungas. After Satakarni II, the expansion of Satavahana empire received a set back and Nahapana seems to have conquered part of Satavahana territory. A large number of coins of Nahapana has been found in Nasik area.



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## The Age of Sung and Satvahana Dynasty

### Introduction

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### Satavahana dynasty

- The name satvahana rulers of several generations recovered from inscriptions. The Satavahanas became powerful again during the reign of Gautamiputra Satakarni. In between, three kings ruled, of whom Satakarni II ruled for about 56 years. He wrested Malwa from the Sungas. The Satavahanas became powerful again during the reign of Gautamiputra Satakarni.

After Satakarni II, the expansion of Satavahana empire received a set back and Nahapana seems to have conquered part of Satavahana territory. His achievements are recorded in glowing terms in the Nasik inscription of Queen-mother, Gautami Balasri. This inscription was engraved after his death and in the nineteenth year of the reign of his son and successor Pulmavi II. In this inscription he has been described as one who destroyed the Sakas, Yavanas and Pahlavas. He overthrew Nahapana and restruct large number of his silver coins. A large number of coins of Nahapana has been found in Nasik area.



- He also recovered northern Maharasthra, Konkan, Vidarbha, Saurashtra and Malwa from the Sakas.
- Satakarni dedicated a cave in Nasik in the eighteenth year of his reign and granted some land to ascetics in the twenty fourth year. Gautamiputra Satakarni is the first king bearing matronym and this practice was followed by nearly all his successors.
- Rules about gotra were different in Satvahana dynasty. These names are available for powerful ruling lineages such as the Satavahanas who ruled over parts of western India and the Deccan (c. second century BCE-second century CE). Several of their inscriptions have been recovered, which allow historians to trace family ties, including marriages.

## The list of famous king of satavahana dynasty

raja Gotami-puta Siri-Satakani  
raja Vasithi-puta (sami-) Siri-Pulumayi  
raja Gotami-puta sami-Siri-Yana-Satakani  
raja Madhari-puta svami-Sakasena  
raja Vasathi-puta Chatarapana-Satakani  
raja Hariti-puta Vinhukada  
Chutukulanamda-Satakamni  
raja Gotami-puta Siri-Vijaya- Satakani

- Some of the Satavahana rulers were polygynous (that is, had more than one wife). An examination of the names of women who married Satavahana rulers indicates that many of them had names derived from gotras such as Gotama and Vasistha, their father's gotras. They evidently retained these names instead of adopting names derived from their husband's gotra name as they were required to do according to the Brahmanical rules. What is also apparent is that some of these women belonged to the same gotra. As is obvious, this ran counter to the ideal of exogamy recommended in the Brahmanical texts. In fact, it exemplified an alternative practice, that of endogamy or marriage within the kin group, which was prevalent amongst several communities in south India. Such marriages amongst kinfolk (such as cousins) ensured a close-knit community.



- It is likely that there were variations in other parts of the subcontinent as well, but as yet it has not been possible to reconstruct specific details.

It is also interesting that the best-known ruler of the Satavahana dynasty, Gotami-puta Siri-Satakani, claimed to be both a unique Brahmana (eka bamhana) and a destroyer of the pride of Kshatriyas.

### Non-khastriya kings

- According to the Shastras, only Kshatriyas could be kings. However, several important ruling lineages probably had different origins. The social background of the Mauryas, who ruled over a large empire, has been hotly debated. While later Buddhist texts suggested they were Kshatriyas, Brahmanical texts described them as being of "low" origin.
- The Shungas and Kanvas, the immediate successors of the Mauryas, were Brahmanas. In fact, political power was effectively open to anyone who could muster support and resources, and rarely depended on birth as a Kshatriya.
- Other rulers, such as the Shakas who came from Central Asia, were regarded as mlechchhas, barbarians or outsiders by the Brahmanas. However, one of the earliest inscriptions in Sanskrit describes how Rudradaman, the best-known Shaka ruler (c. second century CE), rebuilt Sudarshana lake. This suggests that powerful mlechchhas were familiar with Sanskrit traditions.
- The Satavahanas claimed to be Brahmanas, whereas according to the Brahmanas, kings ought to have been Kshatriyas.

- They claimed to uphold the fourfold varna order, but entered into marriage alliances with people who were supposed to be excluded from the system. And, as we have seen, they practised endogamy instead of the exogamous system recommended in the Brahmanical texts.

## The Epoch of Foreign Invaders

One of the most important events of the reign of Pushyamitra Sunga was the invasion of Yavanas from the west. Patanjali, a contemporary of Pushyamitra, mentions this invasion.

Kalidasa also mentions about Vasumitra's conflict with Yavanas, in his *Malavikagnimitram*. It may be mentioned that the word Yavana originally meant Ionian Greeks, but later it came to denote, all people of Greek nationality. The Yavanas were the first ones to establish foreign supremacy on Indian soil; they were succeeded by several central Asian tribes who invaded India and established their political authority. Some of them are being discussed here.

## The Indo-Greeks

The advent of the Yavanas, also known as Indo-Greeks, in India was the result of incidents on the western border of India. After Alexander a large part of his empire came under the rule of his Generals. The two main areas were Bactria and the adjoining areas of Iran known as Parthia. About 250 B.C. Diodotus, the governor of Bactria revolted against the Greeks and proclaimed his independence. Some important Indo-Greek kings were Euthydemus, Demetrius, Eucratides and Menander.

Among all the Indo-Greek rulers, Menander (165-145 B.C.), was the most illustrious. He ruled for almost twenty years. His capital was Sakala (modern Sialkot) in Pakistan. Greek writers tell us that he was a great ruler and his territory extended from Afghanistan to Uttar Pradesh in east and Gujarat in the west.

## The Parthians

- The Parthians also known as Pahlavas were Iranian people. Their history is obscure. But a few facts may be gleaned from coins and inscriptions. The earliest king of this dynasty was Vonones, who captured power in Arachosia and Seistan and adopted the title of "great king of kings". Vonones was succeeded by Spalirises. Gondophernes was the greatest of the Parthian rulers. He ruled from A.D. 195. It appears that for a very brief period he was master of the Saka-Pahalva area both in eastern Iran and north-western India. Soon after Gondophernes, the Pahlava rule in India ended and the Kushanas moved in. Excavations at Begram in Afghanistan have brought to light a large number of coins of Gondophernes but none of his successors.

## The Sakas

- The Indo-Greek rule in north-western India was destroyed by the Sakas who are also known as the Scythians. The Sakas or Scythians were nomadic tribes who belonged to central Asia.
- In about 165 B.C. they were turned out of their original home by the Yueh-chi, later came to be known as Kushanas, who in turn were also pushed out of their land and came to India. The inroads made by the central Asian tribes was the result of the prevailing situations in central Asia and adjoining northwestern China. After the construction of the great wall of China in the third century B.C. the tribes like Hiung-nu, Wu-sun and Yueh-chi had no option but to move towards south and west.
- The first migrants were Yueh-chi, who displaced Sakas, who in turn, invaded Bactria and Parthia and then entered India through the Bolan Pass. The Sakas were divided in five branches and established themselves in various parts of north-western and northern India. One branch settled in Afghanistan. The second branch settled in Punjab with Taxila as its capital. The third branch settled in Mathura. The fourth in Maharashtra and Saurashtra and the fifth in central India with Ujjain as its capital. The Sakas ruled in different areas from the first century B.C. to about fourth century A.D. Although the Sakas ruled in different parts of the country, only those who ruled in central and western India rose to prominence. The most prominent ruler of western India was Nahapana whose reference is found in various inscriptions found in Maharashtra and in the records of the Satavahanas. Of the central Indian branch, the most illustrious ruler was Rudradaman who ruled from about A.D. 130-150. From the Junagarh rock

inscription of Rudradaman, it appears that his rule extended ‘over a vast territory including the areas of Gujarat, Sindh, Saurashtra, north Konkan, Malwa and parts of Rajasthan. He undertook the repairs of the Sudarsan lake dam that had been built by the provincial governor Chandragupta Maurya, in Kathiawad when it was damaged by heavy rains. Ujjayini, the capital of Rudradaman became a centre of culture and education. Many scholars think that Saka Era was founded by Sakas. The dynasty came to an end with the defeat of the last king in the hands of Chandragupta II of the Gupta dynasty, in about A.D. 390.

## The Kushanas

- The Chinese historians tell us that the Yueh-chi were a nomadic tribe settled on north-western border of China. In the year 165 B.C., they came in conflict with a neighbouring tribe known as Hiung-nu. The Yueh-chi were defeated and forced to move out of their land.
- They could not move towards the east, since the China Wall had become a barrier. They had no alternative but to move west and south. While moving westwards the Yueh-chi came in conflict with another tribe called Wu-sun whom they defeated easily. At about this time the Yueh-chi were divided into two groups – Little Yueh-chi which migrated to Tibet and great Yueh-chi which finally came to India. After Wu-sun the next people, the Yueh-chi, met were the Sakas who occupied the territory of Bactria. The Saka’s were forced to leave their land and they came to India and the Yueh-chi settled down in the land of the Sakas. It is here that they gave up their nomadic life and adopted an agricultural and a settled way of life. Further, perhaps its in this area great Yueh-chi were divided into five branches.
- According to Chinese sources, the first great Yueh-chi king was Kujula Kadphises, also known as Kadphises I who united all the five groups and established his authority over Afghanistan. He called himself ‘great king’. He is also called sachadharmathida (steadfast in true faith), which is taken to suggest that he was a Buddhist. Kadphises I was succeeded by his son Kadphises or Kadphises II who extended Kushana territory upto Punjab, or perhaps even in the Ganga Taxila as its capital. The third branch settled in Mathura. The fourth in Maharashtra and Saurashtra and the fifth in central India with Ujjain as its capital. The Sakas ruled in different areas from the first century B.C. to about fourth century A.D.
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- He issued gold and copper coins and is referred to as great king and a devotee of Siva. On some of his coins Siva holding a trident and bull are shown.
- Kadphises II was succeeded by Kanishka, the most well known and greatest of all the Kushana kings. Kanishka seems to have come to throne in A.D. 78 and some historians think that Kanishka founded the Saka era. At its peak, Kanishka's empire extended from Khotan in the northwest to Benaras in the east and Kashmir in north to Saurashtra and Malwa in the south. The capital of this vast empire of Kanishka was ' Purushapur *i.e.* modern Peshawar. Coins of Kanishka had been found from almost all over the above mentioned area.
- Kanishka was a follower of Buddhism. The fourth Buddhist council was held during Kanishka's reign. Kanishka's court was adorned by the presence of such scholars as Parsva, Vasumitra, Ashvaghosha, Charaka, and Nagarjuna. ' During his reign Taxila and Mathura emerged as great centres of art and culture.
- Kaniskha ruled from A.D. 78-101. After him came Vasishka, Huvishka, Vasudeva and others. The last name is purely Indian and suggests the complete Indianisation of Kushana. Though his name is after the Vaishnava deity, he was a Saiva. The decline of Kushana power set in after Vasishka, though the Kushanas continued to rule up to the fourth century A.D. over small principalities, independently under some sovereign rulers.



# 15

## The Ancient History of South India

### Introduction

- The first detailed description of south Indian states is found in Sangam literature belonging to the first four centuries of the Christian era. It may be mentioned that Tamil is the oldest among the spoken and literary languages of south India and the earliest literature of this language is known as Sangam literature.
- This literature represents the collection of odes, lyrics and idylls which were composed by poets and scholars for the presentation in three successive literary assemblies called “Sangam”, established by the Pandyan kings. The Sangam literature preserves folk memory about the society and life in south India between the third Century B.C. and third Century A.D.
- It is clear that there has been a lot of cultural interactions between the southern and northern India. With the regular settled life, development of strong sedentary communities and a strong economy, three states, namely, Cholas, Cheras and Pandya emerged. The Sangam literature believes that the dynasties of Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas belong to immemorial antiquity.
- The Pallavas and Chalukyas were the most important ruling dynasties in south India during this period. The kingdom of the Pallavas spread from the region around their capital, Kanchipuram, to the Kaveri delta, while that of the Chalukyas was centred around the Raichur Doab, between the rivers Krishna and Tungabhadra. Aihole, the capital of the Chalukyas, was an important trading centre. It developed as a religious centre, with a number of temples.
- The Pallavas and Chalukyas frequently raided one another’s lands, especially attacking the capital cities, which were prosperous towns.

The best-known Chalukya ruler was Pulakeshin II. We know about him from a prashasti, composed by his court poet Ravikirti. This tells us about his ancestors, who are traced back through four generations from father to son. Pulakeshin evidently got the kingdom from his uncle.

### Cholas

The Cholas occupied the delta of the Kaveri river and the adjoining region. The region of Kanchi was also part of their kingdom. It was also called Cholamandalam in early medieval times. It was situated towards the north-east of Pandya kingdom. Earlier its capital was Uraiyur in Tiruchirapalli but subsequently it was shifted to Puhar which came to be known as Kaveripattanam. In the middle of the second century B.C. it seems that a Chola king known as Elara conquered Sri Lanka and ruled over it for about 50 years. The most distinguished of the early Chola kings was Karikala. His two great achievements seem to be the crushing defeat he inflicted upon the joint forces of Chera and Pandya kings and successful invasion of Sri Lanka.

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It appears that Karikala defeated, in a great battle at Venni, near Tanjore, a confederacy of about a dozen rulers headed by Chera and Pandya kings and established his supremacy over the whole of Tamil land. Karikala maintained a powerful navy and conquered Sri Lanka. He is credited to have built big irrigation channels by means of building a 160 km long embankment along the river Kaveri. He fortified the town, the famous sea part of Puhar, at the mouth of the Kaveri.



## Types of land

**Chola inscriptions mention several categories of land:**

**vellanvagai:** land of non-Brahmana peasant proprietors

**brahmadeya:** land gifted to Brahmanas

**shalabhoga:** land for the maintenance of a school.

**devadana:** tirunamattukkani land gifted to temples.

**pallichchhandam:** land donated to Jaina institutions.

A large number of Brahmana settlements emerged in the Kaveri valley as in other parts of south India. Each brahmadeya was looked after by an assembly or sabha of prominent Brahmana landholders. These assemblies worked very efficiently. Their decisions were recorded in detail in inscriptions, often on the stone walls of temples. Associations of traders known as nagarams also occasionally performed administrative functions in towns.

## Inscriptions and texts

Who could be a member of a sabha?

The Uttaramerur inscription lays down:

- (1) All those who wish to become members of the sabha should be owners of land from which land revenue is collected.
- (2) They should have their own homes.
- (3) They should be between 35 and 70 years of age.
- (4) They should have knowledge of the Vedas.
- (5) They should be well-versed in administrative matters and honest.
- (6) If anyone has been a member of any committee in the last three years, he cannot become a member of another committee.
- (7) Anyone who has not submitted his accounts, and those of his relatives, cannot contest the elections.

While inscriptions tell us about kings and powerful men, here is an excerpt from the Periyapuram, a twelfth-century Tamil work, which informs us about the lives of ordinary men and women.

## Pandyas

The Pandya kingdom occupied roughly the region of the modern districts of

Tirunelveli, Ramnad and Madurai in Tamil Nadu. The capital of the kingdom was Madurai. The Sangam literature gives some disjointed information and names of a few kings. Nedunjelidan is mentioned as a great Pandya king.

The Chera, Chola and five other minor states combined against him and advanced against him at Madurai. But he defeated the combined forces. This great victory was remembered for long and has even been mentioned in a tenth century A.D. inscription. He is also said to have performed several Vedic sacrifices.

He may be taken to have ruled around A. D. 210. Under the Pandyas, the capital Madurai and port city Korkai were great centres of trade and commerce. The Pandyan kingdom was very wealthy and prosperous. The traders profited from trade with the Roman empire. Pandya kings even sent embassies to the Roman emperor Augustus and Trojan.

## Cheras

**The Cheras**, also known as Keralaputras, were situated to the west and north of the Pandya kingdom. The area of the kingdom included the narrow strip of land between the sea and the mountains of Konkan range.

Like the Pandyas and the Cholas, the Chera rulers also occupy high position in the history of south India. The Chera ruler Nedunjeral Adan conquered the

Kadambas with their capital at Vanavasi (near Goa). He also fought a battle with the father of the Chola king Karikala. In this battle both the kings were killed.

He is said to have defeated the Yavanas also. Probably, the reference is to the Greeks and Romans who came in large number as traders and set up large colonies in south India. According to the Chera tradition, the greatest king of the Chera dynasty was Sengutturan. He is said to have subjugated the Chola and the Pandya kings.

It is interesting to note that some kings of all the three kingdoms claim that their rulers lead victorious expeditions to the north, as far as Himalayas. The Chera king Nedunjeral

Adan is called Imayavaramban *i.e.* “he who had the Himalaya mountains as the boundary of his kingdom”. But clearly all this was exaggeration. At the end of the third century A.D. the Chera power declined and we hear about them again in the eighth century A.D.

## Language and Literature

- In the field of language and literature this period is characterised by the development of manifold literary activities both in north and south India. It saw the development of Dravidian languages and literature in the South. In the north there was progress in the Sanskrit language and literature, and various forms of Prakrit with a distinctive literature of its own.

## Sangam Literature

- Tamil is the oldest among spoken literary languages of south India. The earliest known phase of this literature is associated with the three Sangams *i.e.*, academies or societies of learned men, all of which flourished in the Pandya kingdom. Each Sangam consisted of a number of distinguished poets and erudite scholars who selected the best ones from amongst the works submitted to them and set their seal of approval.
- It is believed that the Sangam literature produced by these assemblies, was compiled between A.D. 300 and 600. On the whole corpus of literature, Ettuttogai (the eight anthologies) collection is considered to be the earliest one belonging to c. third century B.C. to third century A.D., and a good deal of literature was compiled later on. Tirukkural or Kural, of Tiruvalluvar is the best of the minor didactic poems, and its teachings have been described as an eternal inspiration and guide to the Tamilians.
- **Silappadikaram and Manimekhalali** are the two Tamil epics which occupy a high place in Tamil literature and are important sources for the construction of the early history of south India.

According to Ravikirti, he led expeditions along both the west and the east coasts. Besides, he checked the advance of Harsha. There is an interesting play of words in the poem. Harsha means happiness. The poet says that after this defeat, Harsha was no longer Harsha! Pulakeshin also attacked the Pallava king, who took shelter behind the walls of Kanchipuram. But the Chalukya victory was short-lived. Ultimately, both the Pallavas and the Chalukyas gave way to new rulers belonging to the Rashtrakuta and Chola dynasties,

One such instance was that of the Rashtrakutas in the Deccan. Initially they were subordinate to the Chalukyas of Karnataka. In the mid-eighth century, Dantidurga, a Rashtrakuta chief, overthrew his Chalukya overlord and performed a ritual called hiranya-garbha (literally, the golden womb).

When this ritual was performed with the help of Brahmanas, it was thought to lead to the “rebirth” of the sacrificer as a Kshatriya, even if he was not one by birth. In other cases, men from enterprising families used their military skills to carve out kingdoms. For instance, the Kadamba Mayurasharma and the Gurjara-Pratihara Harichandra were Brahmanas who gave up their traditional professions and took to arms, successfully establishing kingdoms in Karnataka and Rajasthan respectively.

## Administration in the Kingdoms

Many of these new kings adopted high-sounding titles such as maharaja-adhiraja (great king, overlord of kings), tribhuvana-chakravartin (lord of the three worlds) and so on. However, in spite of such claims, they often shared power with their samantas as well as with associations of peasants, traders and Brahmanas.

In each of these states, resources were obtained from the producers – that is, peasants, cattle-keepers, artisans – who were often persuaded or compelled to surrender part of what they produced. Sometimes these were claimed as “rent” due to a lord who asserted that he owned the land. Revenue was also collected from traders.

## Four hundred taxes!

The inscriptions of the Cholas who ruled in Tamil Nadu refer to more than 400 terms for different kinds of taxes.

The most frequently mentioned tax is vetti, taken not in cash but in the form of forced labour, and kadamai, or land revenue. There were also taxes on thatching the house, the use of a ladder to climb palm trees, a cess on succession to family property, etc.

## Assemblies in the southern kingdoms

- The inscriptions of the Pallavas mention a number of local assemblies. These included the sabha, which was an assembly of brahmin land owners. This assembly functioned through subcommittees, which looked after irrigation, agricultural operations, making roads, local temples, etc.
- It is likely that these assemblies were controlled by rich and powerful landowners and merchants. Many of these local assemblies continued to function for centuries.

## The “achievements” of Nagabhata

Many rulers described their achievements in prashastis.

One prashasti, written in Sanskrit and found in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, describes the exploits of Nagabhata, a Pratihara king, as follows:

The kings of Andhra, Saindhava (Sind), Vidarbha (part of Maharashtra) and Kalinga (part of Orissa) fell before him even as he was a prince ...

He won a victory over Chakrayudha (the ruler of Kanauj) ...

He defeated the king of Vanga (part of Bengal), Anarta (part of Gujarat), Malava (part of Madhya Pradesh), Kirata (forest peoples), Turushka (Turks), Vatsa, Matsya (both kingdoms in north India) ...



# 16

## Society and Culture in Post Harsha period

The last stage of Prakrit is represented by the Apabhramsa, which was considered important on account of the fact that the modern languages like Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi and Bangla have evolved from it.

### Language and Literature

SANSKRIT remained the main language, and literature of various kinds continued to be written in it. Pali and Prakrit were used for writing the Buddhist and Jain religious literature. Vakapati's Gaudavaho, a biography of Yashovarman of Kanauj, was the last major work in the older tradition of Prakrit. The last stage of Prakrit languages is represented by the Apabhramsha, which was considered important on account of the fact that the modern languages like Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi and Bangla have all evolved from it. During this period, literature shows considerable development. The literature produced during this period exercised a profound influence on the traditions of the succeeding centuries in their respective fields. A number of kavyas with two fold or even more significance constitutes a special feature of this period. The Ramacharita of Sandhyakara Nandi written during the reign of the Pala king, Mahipal, presents both the story of Rama and the life of king Ramapala of Bengal.

The Raghavaphandavija of Dhananjaya Shrutokriti describes the stories of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata at the same time. The marriage of Siva and Parvati; and Krishna and Rukmini are described in the Parvati-Rukminiya of Vidyamadhava, the court poet of the Chalukya king Somadeva. Hemachandra is also credited with having composed a work entitled Saptasandhana (having seven alternative interpretations). The tendency of working out the intricate patterns of double, triple or even more meanings reflect ample leisure combined with wealth and excessive love of embellishment. The climax of this style may be found in the Shatarthakavya of Somaprabhacharya in which every verse was meant for being interpreted in a hundred ways.

A large number of Jaina narratives dealing with the lives of Jain teachers were composed. The most famous are Adinathacharita by Vardhamana, Shantinathacharita by Devachandra, Prithvichandracharita by Shantisuri, Parshvanathacharita by Devabhadra, Kuarapalacharita and Neminathacharita by Hemachandra etc. The Sukumalachariu by Shrihara and the Neminathacharita by

Haribhadra are wholly written in Apabhramsa. Many historical texts in the kavya form were written during this period.

The most remarkable of them is the Rajatarangini by Kalhana. The text is unique as it is the only known attempt at writing history in modern sense. The Rajendra Karnapura of Shambu is an eulogy of king Harsha of Kashmir. The Prithviraja Vijay of Jayanka, Dvayashraya Mahakavya by Hemachandra, Kirtikaumndi by Someshvara and Vikramankadevacharita of Bilhana, Navasahasankacharita of Padmagupta and Kirti Kaumudi of Somadeva belong to the same genre.

A large number of treatises were written on poetics. The most important among such works are Kavyamimamsa by Rajashekhara, Dasharupa by Dhananjaya, Saraswati Kanthabharana by Bhoja, Kavyanushasana of Hemachandra and Kavikanthabharana by Kshemendra etc.

In the field of prose literature, Brihatkathamajari by Kshemendra, Kathasaritasagara by Somadeva, Kathakoshaprakarana by Jineshvara Suri are famous. In these works prose tended to be less contrived and artificial. The themes were familiar stories from traditional sources. These stories are popular even to this day. Drama of this period have a tenderness and subdued dramatic quality with a minimum of comic effects. They managed to retain elements of earlier plays.

The famous dramas are Lalitavigraharaja nataka by Somadeva, the Harikeli nataka by Visaladeva, Prasannaraghava by Jayadeva, Karnasundari by Bilhana, Abhidhana Chintamani, Deshinamamala, Anekarthasamgraha and Nighantushesha written by Hemachandra.

In the fields of astronomy and mathematics, the famous mathematician Bhaskaracharya flourished in the twelfth century A.D.

His Siddhanta-Shiromani comprises four parts-Lilavati, Vijaganita, Grahaganita and Gola. The last one deals with astronomy. A very significant principle of Siddhanta Shiromani is that of perpetual motion, which was transmitted by Islam about A.D. 1200 to Europe. This in course of time led to the development of the concept of power technology. King Bhoja of Paramara dynasty had written the Rajmariganka on astronomy. In the field of medicine, in the eighth century, Charaka, Sushruta and Ashtangahridaya were rendered into Tibetan and Arabic. Dridhabala of Panchananda in Kashmir revised the text of Charaka-Samhita.

Madhava wrote several works on medicine. His best known work is the Nidana or Riguimshchana on Pathology translated into Arabic under the guidance Harunal Rashid. His other works are Chikitsa Kutamudgara and Yogavyakhya. Vagabhata II's son Tisata wrote Chikitsakalika or Yoga-mala and Tisata's son Chandratha wrote Yogaratnasamuchchaya. Brinda of Bengal wrote his Siddhayoga between A.D. 975-1000. Besides all these works of kavya, prose, dramas and historical works there are several commentaries on the religious texts. Krityakalpataru of Lakshmidhara, and Chaturvarga Chintamani of Hemadri were compiled during this period. Vijnaneshvara wrote Mitakasara and a commentary on the Yajnavalkyasmriti. Jimutavahana wrote Dayabhaga (Law of inheritance), Vyavaharamatrika and Kalaviveka. Manuvritti by Govindaraja, Smrityarthasara by Shridhara, the commentary on the Yajnavalkyasmriti by Apararka, Smritichandrika by Devanna Bhatta are other outstanding creations of this period.

## Society

From the seventh century A.D. onwards, two trends were continuing in society. One was the continuity of the assimilation of foreign elements and second was the segregation of jati system. The four varnas still constituted an umbrella beneath which jatis kept emerging and finding their own inter jati relationship which, though broadly in keeping with the theoretical structure, were nevertheless modified by local requirements and expediency. The law of the period accepted birth, profession, and residence as the deciding factor in the determination of jati. As a result there were four original varnas with several jati and these were further subdivided into numerous subsections.

For instance, the brahmins came to be identified by their gotra, ancestor, the branch of Vedic learning, original home and village. Inscriptions of the period also mention this fact. The kshatriyas also multiplied as a result of the assimilation of foreigners and other local people. The transformation of a specific profession into jati and the increasing phenomenon of hypergamous unions between different jati led to the rise of mixed jati. Jatis were also formed on 'the basis of religious sects such as Lingayats, Virasaivas, Svetambaras and Digambaras etc. The lowest were the antyajatis, of whom Chandalas are the most important representatives. The enumerations of the sub-divisions of these antyajatis differ from one law giver to another and from period to period.

The traditional professions related to four varnas were not scrupulously adhered to during this period. This tendency to deviate from the customary profession was not new, it was noticeable even in the earlier age. The brahmins, for example did not invariably confine their activity to studying, teaching, worshipping and the performance of priestly functions. Atri speaks of kshatriya brahman, who lives by fighting, the vaisya brahman, who lives by engaging himself in agriculture and trade, the 'sudra brahman who sells lac, salt, milk, ghee, honey etc. Likewise, kshatriyas, vaisyas and sudras deviated from their traditional professions and formed several mixed castes. Another important class that emerged as a jati during this period was that of kayasthas, the scribes of the administration, responsible for writing documents and maintaining records. Though we start getting the reference to kayasthas from the Mauryan period itself, it appears that by the seventh century they came to be regarded as distinct jati.

The smriti authorities of this period followed the older marriage rules. The literature also reflects the new ideas and practices regarding remarriages. The words like punarbhva and didhishu meaning a remarried woman is frequently mentioned in the literature. The marriages were often arranged by parents or other guardians of the parties and sometimes girls chose their husbands. As regard the position of women, the Commentaries on smriti and digests of this period follow more or less the rules laid down in early smritis. The women's right to

inherit property was accepted by the authorities. The widow was entitled to succeed to the whole estate of her issueless, deceased husband.

## Economic Life

During the post Harsha period the literary and inscriptional evidences show the advanced state of agriculture, trade and economy. Medhatithi included a group of seventeen articles (including rice and barley) in the category of grain (dhanya). Abhidhanaratnamala mentions a large variety of cereals and other food grains with their synonyms. From Abhidhanaratnamala we get the scientific knowledge of agriculture. It mentions that soils were classified variously as fertile, barren, fallow, desert, excellent as well as those green with grass or abounding in needs, those which were black or yellow, and those which owed their fertility to rivers or rains. It further mentions that different kinds of fields were selected for different classes of crops. Machines for crushing sugarcane are mentioned, in a description of the winter season in Upamitibhavaprapanchakatha. Irrigation by the *arahata* (Persian wheel) and by leather buckets are mentioned in the inscriptions. This shows that the so called Persian wheel was very much present in India prior to the arrival of Muslim rulers. Medhatithi mentioned that the agriculturist were expected to know among other things, what seed was to be sown thickly and what sparsely, what soil was fit for a particular kind of seed and what soil was not so fit, and what harvest was expected from a special variety of seed. The early Arab writers refer to the fertility of the soil and the rich cultivation, both of grains and fruits, in India.

In the field of industry the oldest one is that of textile. The progress of Gupta period continued during this period. The records of this period mention a great variety and qualities of textiles such as woolen and hempen yarns, garments made of silk, deer's hair, and sheep and goat's wool. The professions of weavers, dyers and the tailor are mentioned in contemporary literature. The working in the metals was pursued with much success as in the contemporary literature we find copper, brass, iron, lead, tin, silver and gold. Some centres of metal industry were famous, such as Saurashtra was famous for its bell industry while Vanga was known for its tin industry etc. Lists of jewels are preserved in various texts, which mention no less than 33 kinds of gems and analyse the good qualities of diamond, emerald, ruby, pearls, sapphire etc.

## Religion and Philosophy

The fundamental features of religious ideas and practices which characterised the previous period continued during this period. But the relative importance of the different religious sects undergoes a great change because of the reciprocal influence of different religious sects upon one another. Both Buddhism and Jainism developed theistic tendencies on the analogy of Saivism and Vaishnavism.

During this period, Buddhism witnessed not only decadence of pure Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism, but also the appearance of a new phase of the religious philosophy. Buddha's teachings, free from rituals, gradually gave way in the early centuries of the Christian era, to a popular form of the religion with a new ethical and devotional outlook in which Buddha had begun to be worshipped as a god. This worship now became more elaborate with devotional songs, accompanied by rites and ceremonies.

The influence of Tantric ideas on Buddhism is evident in Vajrayana Buddhism (the vehicle of thunderbolt).

*The Taras or Saviouresses*, spouses of the male Bodhisattvas received a veneration similar to that of sakti. The association of Buddhism with magical cults was a confusing development, since much of its original ethical teaching was now further submerged in ritual. The support of the Pala kings sustained it in eastern India, and the royal patronage kept it going in Orissa, Kashmir, and parts of north-western India. In south India, Kanchi was a great centre of Buddhism. The Chola kings also gave donations to Buddhists. It is said that Buddhism began to decline because it did not get the royal patronage and the coming of Islam was the final blow to it. The attacks on monasteries and killing of monks resulted in an exodus of Buddhists from eastern India.

The Jainism gained popularity among the trading classes in north and west India and the extensive royal patronage in south India. In the Ocean, it was honoured by the Gangas, Chalukyas and by Rastrakuta rulers. During this period many Jain basadis (temples) and mahastambhas (pillar) were set up in different parts. The colossal image at Sravanabelgola was set up during this time. The Jain doctrines of the four gifts (learning, food, medicine and shelter) helped to make Jainism popular among the people.

Tantricism is another sect which became popular during this time. Tantricism had originated in the sixth century but became stronger from the eighth century onwards.

It was strongest in north eastern India and had close ties with Tibet, some of its rituals came from the Tibetan practices. It is said that Tantricism is the simplification of the Vedic cults and was open to all castes as well as to women. Tantric practice centred on prayers, mystical formulae, magical diagrams and symbols and the worship of a particular deity. The mother image was accorded great veneration, since life was created in the mother's womb. In this way it is also connected with SakaSakti cult. In Tantricism guru had the highest place because those desirous of becoming members of a sect had to be initiated by a guru. It is said that Tantric interest in magic led to some discoveries of a semi-scientific nature owing to experiments with chemicals and metals in particular.

Hinduism, in the forms of Saivism and Vaishnavism now became popular.

The two characteristics of religious life in the preceding period viz, toleration and worship of images, not only continued in full force but are even on the increase because of Popular demand for a more personal religion deity. For this purpose, a multitude of new ' forms were introduced which necessitated the building of shrines and temples to house them.

**In Vaishnavism**, the incarnation of Vishnu became more popular and interest in the Puranas and epic literature, particularly, through the versions in regional languages, provided the tradition in which they incorporate the legends of the incarnations. The most popular incarnation was Krishna. Krishna and Radha were worshipped as part of a cult and their love was interpreted as the longing and attachment of the human soul for the universal soul.

In the south, Alvars represented the emotional side of Tamilian Vaishnavism and the Acharyas, who were their successors, represented the intellectual and philosophical sides of Vaishnavism and made it popular. Saivism attained a dominant position in the society. The main principles remained the same, though there were local variations and consequent doctrinal differences. Their prominence by Basava, the Prime Minister of the Kalachuri king Bijjala. Lingayats are followers of Saivism.

They laid stress on love and self surrender, truth and morality and cleanliness. They allowed widow remarriage. The bhakti movement led by Nayanars (Saiva saint) and Alvars (Vaishnav saint) spread all over the country. These saints went from place to place carrying their message of love and devotion. They disregarded the inequalities of caste.

The path of bhakti advocated by these saints was open to all, irrespective of caste. This bhakti movement renewed emphasis on the Vedas and Vedic worship on the one hand and powerful literary and intellectual movement on the other hand is a form of Saivism, popularly known as Kashmir Saivism which is a kind of monism on non-dualism. It became 'popular in the ninth and tenth century A.D. In the south, the saiva saints, the Nayanars made it more popular. Another popular movement which spread in south India was of Lingayats or Virasaivas, whose philosophy was influenced both, by Sankara and Ramanuja. This sect was raised into One of the greatest intellectuals and,' philosophers of this period was Sankara, also known as Adi Sankaracharya.

### **According to the Sringeri matha tradition**

Sankara took birth in Kerala around A.D. 788. His father, Shivaguru a Yajurvedin, brahman, died when Sankara was only three years old., At the age of eight, he took to 'the life of an ascetic. Sankara studied at Kasi and after finishing his, studies he turned to digvijaya. Sankara kept moving all over the 'country for preaching his philosophy and debating with the learned scholars.

The philosophy of Sankara is known as Advaita;' meaning 'non-dual'. He believed that absolute reality, called Brahma is non-dual.

Sankara wrote several works. These are Brahmasutra-bhashya, commentaries on the Upanishads, commentaries on Bhagavad-Gita etc. Thus, Sankara upheld the Vedas as the fountainhead of true, knowledge. The greatest achievement of Sankara is that he organised the ten branches of Advaita school of Saivism, known as Dashanamis. For the purpose of unity and integrity, and better interaction, he established four mathas in four corners of the country.

These are Jyotirmatha at Badrinath in the north, Sharadapitha at Dvaravati (Dwaraka) in the west, Govardhanamatha at Puri in the east and Shrin geriinatha in the south and sent his four disciples to each one of these. Each matha is said to have a gotra, presiding deities, both male and female and a special formula as the symbol of philosophical quintessence of pure monotheism. The ten orders in which Sankara organised

the ascetics are known as – ‘Giri (hills), Puri (city), Bharati (learning), Vana (wood), Aranya (forest), Parvata (mountain), Sagara (ocean), Tirtha (temple), Ashrama (hermitage) and Saraswati (true knowledge). Sankara died at the age of 32.

He was an Acharya par excellence who took the Hindu faith to a new glory.

Another philosopher and intellectual was Ramanuja. He was a Tamil brahman born at Tirupati around A.D. 1017. Ramanuja disagreed with Sankara that knowledge was the primary means of salvation. He tried to assimilate Bhakti to the tradition of the Vedas. He argued that the grace of God was more important than knowledge about him in order to attain salvation.

Thus, Ramanuja tried to build a bridge between the bhakti and the knowledge of Vedas.

## Education

The system of education which had developed gradually in the earlier centuries continued during this period.

The later smiritis introduced a new sacrament called vidyarambha (commencement of education) and aksharasvikriti or aksharabhyasa training in the alphabet. During this time we find various types of educational institutions. The foremost art temples, which developed as social, educational and cultural entities besides being a source of religious inspiration for the people. Inscriptions give us some idea of their diverse functions such as banks, treasuries, court, parks, fairs, exhibition sheds, promoters of handicrafts, dance, music and diverse cultural activity, centres of learning and hospitals and in turn provided employment to large number of populations. Education was imparted in the temple like earlier periods. Students were either taught by the temple priests as in the smaller village temples or else attended the college attached to the larger tempks.

Courses in the colleges were organised in a systematic manner demanding regular attendance and instructions. Professional education continued to be maintained through the training given to apprentices in guilds and among the groups of artisans. At a more popular level, oral instruction, much simpler than the Sanskrit learning of the colleges was imparted by the saints and elders. The various centres of education provided a great impetus to discussions on religion and philosophy. The numerous mathas and other centres of education in various parts of India enabled ideas to flow freely and quickly from one part of the country to another. Higher education was not considered complete till the person had visited the various centres of learning in different parts of the country and held discussions with the scholars there. The manner in which ideas could be transmitted throughout the country was important in upholding and strengthening the cultural unity of India.

Education was also available in the Jain and Buddhist monasteries at Vikramsila, Oddantapura, Valabhi and Nalanda, which were great centres of higher learning. The inscriptions and literary works of the period prove that there existed, organised educational institutions which were founded and maintained by the people from the king down to humble individuals.

Education was imparted free with clothes, food and lodging. Inscriptions of the period mention the dana of various kind including land for the purpose of vidya (learning). This tradition of donation for the purpose of education is still continuing in Indian society. The ancient Indian education system was thought to be unique by foreign travellers because every village had a school and every individual participated in its maintenance. As a result, India had the highest literacy rate in comparison to other countries of the world till the time up to the nineteenth century. This is accepted even by British and other European historians and educationists.

## Art and Architecture

As regards the art and architecture, it was undoubtedly a fruitful age as would be apparent from the numerous temples that are standing for the 1200 years. These temples are among the most exquisite edifices of that era, representing most of the styles of architecture.

The famous temples of Orissa, specially those of Bhubaneshwar are superb specimens of the Nagar style or north Indian style. Each temple consist of vimana (towered shrine) and the jagmohana (audience chamber) besides the nata mandapa (dance chamber) and bhoga mandapa (offering hall). The best example of this type is the great lingaraja temple of Bhubaneshwar and Sun temple of Konark.

Another place, where several excellent nagar style temples still stand, is Khajuraho in Bundelkhand.

Another place, where several excellent nagar style temples still stand, is Khajuraho in Bundelkhand.

These temples built by the Chandelas, are on raised plinth and known for their carving and erotic sculptures.

Kandarya Mahadeva temple is one of the finest example.

In Kashmir, the Sun temple called the Martanda temple built by Lalitaditya Muktapida around the eighth century A.D, is the best example of Kashmir style of architecture. The Jains were also great builders and their temples generally have the octagonal dome and are decorated with subjects drawn from Jain mythology.

The best specimens of their architecture, are the famous temples of Dilwara (Mt. Abu) and Satrunjaya (Palitana). These temples are most remarkable for their elegant carvings and rich design. The Jain sculpture of Gommatesvara, (57 feet) the son of the first Jina Rishabhanatha, at Sravanabelagola (Hasan, Distt. Mysore) is one of the largest free standing images in the world. This granite statue on Indragiri hill represents the immovable serenity of the one practicing the Kayotsarga austerly, undisturbed by the serpents about his feet, the ant hills rising to his thighs, or the undergrowth that has already reached his shoulders.



**Bodhisattva from Nalanda,  
Pala Period**

In the Deccan, the temples of vatapi (Badami) and Pattadakal (Bijapur district) are stylistically different. These temples stand on an elaborately decorated base or plinth. Some good examples are the Hoysalesvara temple at Halebid, which though incomplete, is unsurpassed by any Indian temple in both its structural and its decorative features. Besides free standing temples in the south, temples are also hewn out of solid rock. The Kailash temple at Ellora, dedicated to Siva excavated during the reign of Krishna I of the Rashtrakuta dynasty, is regarded as the architectural marvel in the world.

In the south, Pallavas gave an immense impetus to art, and the temple at Dalavanur (Arcot district) Pallavaram, vallam (Chinglepet district) as well as the Rathas and shore temples at Mamallapuram, Kailasanatha at Kanchi stand today as noble monuments of their artistic genius.

The Cholas carried on the, architectural traditions of the Pallavas and built several temples in the south. The Dravidian temples were marked by the square vimana, mandapa, gopuram, halls with profusely decorated columns, conventional lions (yalis) for ornamentation, the use of the bracket and of compound columns etc. In the later structures the central towers are dwarfed by exquisitely carved gopurams rising to a great height. The best example of this type reaching to culmination is the Meenakshi temple of Madurai. Most of the Hindu temples are either devoted to Siva or Vishnu.

Apart from architecture and sculpture, the art of painting was also practiced. The older tradition of mural painting continued to be used to decorate the walls of temples and palaces. Miniature paintings also began during this time which become popular later in the Mughal Period. The Jain monks of western India and the Buddhist in Nepal and eastern India, Saiva and Vaishnav in the south, began the illustration of their manuscripts. They painted small pictures on the palm-leaf showing the scenes described in the text. At first the pictures were simple but slowly they began to put in more and more details and colours, until each picture became a fine painting in itself.



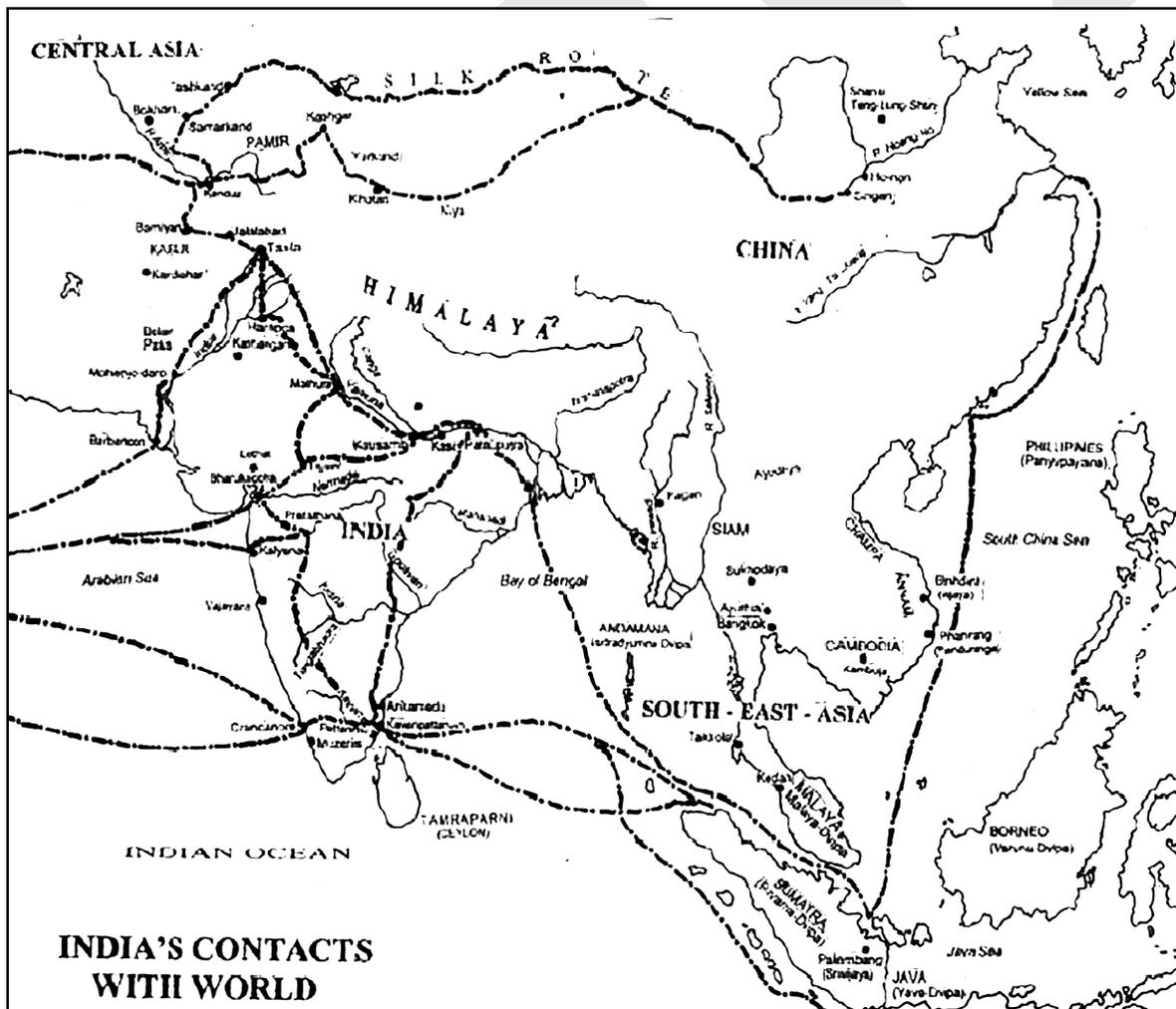
# 17

## Cultural Interaction with South East Asia

### Introduction

However, the most remarkable aspect of this contact has been the spread of Indian culture and civilization in various parts of the world, specially central Asia, South East Asia, China, Japan, Korea etc. What is most remarkable of this spread is that it was a spread not by means of conquests or threat to life of an individual or society, but by means of voluntary acceptance of cultural and spiritual values of India. No, other culture and civilization had achieved its spread by means of nonviolence and cultural influence.

### Central Asia and China



Map of India and South East Asia

From the second century B.C. onwards, India maintained commercial contact with China, central Asia, west Asia and the Roman empire. The Indian land, routes were connected with the silk route that began from China and covered almost the whole of Asia up to the Caspian sea. The silk route served, as a great channel

for the transmission, of cultures of the then known world. The impact of Indian culture was felt strongly in central Asia and China via the silk route. Cultural exchanges that took place between India and the countries of central Asia are visible from the discoveries of ancient stupas, temples; monasteries, images and paintings found in all these countries. A large number of Sanskrit and Buddhist texts were translated in to different languages. Besides, Chinese travellers, notably Fa-Hien and Hiuen-Tsang, who visited India respectively in fifth and seventh centuries A.D., have thrown a flood of light on the history and culture of the region. Turfan, Khotan, Kuchi, Aqsu, Kashgar, Qara Shahr (Agnidesa) were the great centres of Buddhism and Indian culture. The early Kushanas accepted Buddhism and worked to spread it amongst the nomadic hordes of central Asia. Buddhism moulded and softened the violent- ways of life of the central Asian people and continued as a dominant religious force for more than thousand years. We also know that some of the Kushana kings had adopted Hinduism. The early contacts between China and India were established through three trade routes – central Asia, Yunan and Burma, and by sea via South East Asia. The contacts on a regular basis between India and China, began around the second century B.C., With the reign of the Kushanas especially of Kanishka, Buddhism from India made a great influence over China. Having crossed the inhospitable tracts and central Asian territories, the Buddhist missionaries entered China from the first century B.C. onwards. Here they found a land different from central Asia. The Chinese were a highly cultured people. They listened to the thrilling message of the Buddha with avidity. The Buddhist philosophy appealed to their intellectuals because China already had a developed philosophical school in Confucianism. Buddhism served as a great unifying factor and became an integral part of the Chinese life imbibing Confucianism within it.

Among Indian scholars, who went to China, the most notable is Kumarajiva, who stayed for 12 years (A.D. 401-412) and work for the spread of Buddhism. Having accepted the new religion, Buddhist scholars from China were anxious to learn more and more about it. Braving the hazards of a long and perilous journey, they came to visit the land of Buddha. They stayed in India and collected Buddhist relics and manuscripts related to Buddhism and learnt about it staying at the various educational centres.

Among the Chinese monks who visited India, Fa-Hien seems to be the first. He visited during the reign of Chandragupta II. In A.D. 420, a batch of monks under the leadership of Fa-yong came to India. In the seventh century A.D. Hiuen-Tsang and I-tsing visited India. During the reign of Harsha, China and India also exchanged embassies. Indian scholars also visited China between the fourth and sixth centuries. The most noteworthy among them were Buddhayasa, Gunabhadra, Jinagupta, Jinanabhara, Paramartha, Bodhidharma and Dharmagupta. They made a great impact upon the Chinese people. This two way traffic of scholars and monks was responsible for cultural contacts and exchange of ideas. From China, Buddhism spread to Korea, Japan, Mongolia and other neighbouring countries, where it was welcomed with great enthusiasm and played a powerful role in the cultural history of these countries.

## Sri Lanka

From the days of the *Ramayana*, India had links with Sri Lanka, which was popularly known as Lanka in *Ramayana*. The story of Sita's abduction and then taken to Lanka is well known to every Indian child, though many scholars feel that the *Ramayana's* Lanka may be a different one. In ancient times Sri Lanka was also known as Tamraparni. During the Mauryan period, Ashoka sent his son Mahendra and his daughter Sanghamitra to spread Buddhism in Sri Lanka. The famous Bodhi tree of Sri Lanka planted by these royal missionaries bore rich fruit later on. Most of the people in Sri Lanka embraced Buddhism. During the reign of Samudragupta, king Meghavarma of Sri Lanka sent an embassy to the king with a request that he may be allowed to build a monastery at Bodh Gaya for the Buddhist pilgrims from Sri Lanka. Buddhism played an important role in shaping Sri Lankan culture. The *Dipavansa* and *Mahavamsa* are well known Sri Lankan Buddhist sources. Sri Lankan literature, painting, dance, folklores, art and architecture etc., have been greatly influenced by India. Pallava king Narasimhavarman helped Sri Lankan king Manavarma to secure his throne. It also became the part of Chola empire during the reign of Rajaraja (c. A.D. 985-1014).

## Myanmar

Myanmar (earlier known as Burma) was also influenced by the Indian culture. Hiuen-Tsang mentions about several Hinduised kingdoms of this region. It not only adopted Indian religion but also its culture, language etc. They developed their own Pali language and translated both Buddhist and Hindu scriptures in their version of Pali. A large number of Buddhist and Brahmanical temples of great size and artistry were erected in Myanmar.

## South East Asia

The region of South East Asia has always been rich in spices, minerals and metals. Hence, in ancient times, Indians called it *Suvarnabhumi* or *Suvarnavipa* – the land of gold. Indians travelled to South East Asia in search of trade and adventure from quite early time as several stories of *Jatakas*, *Brihatakatha*, *Kathasaritasagar* and even foreign sources like *Peri plus of the Erythrean Sea* refer to the voyages of Indian merchants to these countries. With Chola empire of south India. Rajendra these travellers the message of Indian Chola conquered part of the Sailendra religions and culture also spread there empire – mainly the region of modern Around the third and fourth centuries Indonesia. The Cholas could not keep A.D. there developed powerful it under their control for long and kingdoms and empires under kings soon the Sailendras succeeded in with Indian names and most probably regaining their territories of Indian descen. Here also most of the Bali is the only country where dynasties and kings traced their origin Hindu culture flourished and survived, to India.

Today, while the entire Archipelago has The famous kingdoms of Champa accepted Islam, Bali alone remains (Annam) and Kambuja (Cambodia) faithful to Hindu culture and religion. were ruled by the kings of Indian We have so far discussed the brief origins. The rulers of Champa were history of kingdoms of *Suvarnavipa*, great warriors and successfully Perhaps no other region in the world maintained their independence against has felt the impact of India's culture their neighbours for more than a and religion as has the South East Asia. thousand years till the Mongols overran The most important source of study of Champa. the remains of this cultural intercourse In Kambuja, Kaudinya dynasty and impact, are the Sanskrit of Indian origin ruled from the first inscriptions, written in Indian script, century A.D. The kings of Kambuja pure or slightly modified. They have built an empire which at its height 'been found all over the region in Burma, included almost whole of modern ' Siam, Malay Peninsula, Annam, Vietnam and Malaya. We can Cambodia, Sumatra, Java, Borneo and reconstruct the history of Kambuja Bali. A study of these inscriptions and from numerous Sanskrit inscriptions other literature shows that the and from literary works. Also we get a language, literature, religious, political glimpse of its former splendor from the and social institutions were greatly magnificent temples, which are still to influenced by India. The ideals of marriage, details of the ceremony and the family relations generally resemble those of India.

The most popular form of \_ amusement was the shadow play called *Wayung* (like puppet shows of India). The themes of *Wayung* are usually derived from the two Indian epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, which are still very popular in the countries of South East Asia, despite the fact that most of the countries have now adopted Islam. The literature and inscriptions written in Sanskrit and Pali shows that the language was highly cultivated and was used both in the court and the society. They borrowed the philosophical ideas, Vedic religion and Puranic and epic myths and legends along with all the prominent Brahmanical and Buddhist divinities and ideas associated with them. Indian months and astronomical systems were also adopted.

The most important thing is that they introduced the geographical names associated with India. We find names like Dvaravati, Champa, Amaravati, Gandhara, Videha, Ayuthia (Ayodhya), Kamboja, Kalinga and river names like Gomati, Ganga, 'Jamuna, Chandrabhaga etc. They still call their hospitals, schools, libraries and several other public places by their original Sanskrit names.

## Art and Architecture

We get a glimpse of the former splendour of art and architecture of South East Asia from its magnificent temples, stupas and sculptures. Large number of images of gods and goddesses belonging to Buddhism and Brahmanism show the characteristic features of Indian iconography and artistic excellence. Of the several most important specimen of architecture are the Angkorvat temple, Borobudur stupa, Buddhist and Brahmanical temples in Java and Mayanmar.

These masterpieces of architectural art portray in stone the sublimity and depths of India's cultural impact on South East Asia. Angkorvat temple near the city of Angkor Thorn was dedicated to Vishnu. This temple was built between A.D. 1112 to 1180. The walled enclosure of the temple is 987x 1005 m. with a moat surrounding it. The most has a length of 4 km. The magnificent temple itself is 66 x70 m. The central shikhara rises about 70 m. above the ground level.

The stories of the *Ramayana* and, the *Mahabharata* are narrated in relief on the walls of the main temple and several galleries and causeways which run for several hundred metres. The Brahmanical temples in Java may

not have been as grand as the stupa of Borobudur but the temples in the valley of Prambonan are noteworthy. Its complex consists of eight main temples, three in each row and two between them, enclosed by a wall. Then there are three rows of minor temples around the wall on each side making a total of 156 temples.

Of the three main temples in the western row the central one is the biggest and the most renowned, and contains an image of **Siva**. One to the north has an image of Vishnu and that to the south an image of Brahma. The temples' have a series of 42 panels of relief-sculptures depicting the story of the *Ramayana* from the beginning up to the expedition Lanka. **In** Myanmar the finest temple, is Anand at Pagan. It is built in the centre of a courtyard which is about 175 m. square. The main temple is made of brick. The *garbha-griha* has an image of Buddha which is about 9.5 m. high. The temple is decorated with the sculptured panels depicting various stories of Buddha's life.



**2**

# **MEDIEVAL HISTORY**



# 1

# Major Dynasty in Early Medieval India

## Introduction

The word medieval means 'the middle age'. It is used in history to refer to that period which lies between the ancient and the modern periods, and is quite literally the middle period. How do we know when the ancient period ends and the medieval period begins? We have taken the eighth century A.D. as the beginning and the eighteenth century A.D. as the end of the medieval period? Why? Because as you will see when you read this book, there were many changes taking place in Indian society in about the eighth century A.D. and during this time these changes influenced many aspects of Indian society. They influenced the political and economic aspect, social laws, religion, language, art—in short, almost everything.. We may say that this change took place around the eighth century.

Medieval Indian history is, in many ways, different from ancient Indian history because we are more familiar with so much that happened in the medieval period. The languages which we now speak in India developed at this time. Some of the food we eat and the clothes we wear became popular during this period.

## Kingdoms of the South (800-1200)

South-East Asia- For many centuries Indian merchants had been trading with various parts of South-East Asia, and this trade had also spread to southern China. Indian goods were sent by ship to southern China and cargo was brought back not only from China but also from South-East Asia. The Indian ships had to pass through the Straits of Molucca which were then held by the kingdom of Shrivijaya (which included the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra).

The merchants of Shrivijaya naturally felt that if they could take over this trade they would get the profits. So they began to create difficulties for the Indian ships. The Indian merchants appealed to the Chola king and Rajendra sent out a huge navy. The forces of Shrivijaya were defeated and agreed to let Indian ships travel safely through the Straits. Rajendra came to the help of the merchants probably because many of them were from the Chola kingdom and the profits they made helped to increase the revenue of the Chola kingdom.

The two best remembered of the Chola kings are Rajaraja I and his son Rajendra Rajaraja I (985-1016) was a brilliant general and campaigned in many directions. The successors of **Rajendra I** spent much time and effort and money on fighting wars with the other kingdoms of the peninsula.

## RAJARAJA

Rajaraja was aware of the importance of controlling the sea. He realized that if he could assert his strength along the coasts of south India, then the Cholas would be even stronger. So, he took out a naval expedition and attacked both Ceylon and the Maldive Islands. However, he had more than one reason for this attack.

## Important factor in rising of Chola Empire

The coasts of Kerala, Ceylon and the Maldive Islands had become extremely rich through the money that came to them from trade. India sent many things to western Asia such as textiles, spices and precious stones. The people who came from western Asia to trade in these goods were the Arab merchants. Many of them settled in the towns along the west coast of India. Here they lived peacefully, married the local women and carried on their trade. Since they lived in harmony with Indians and brought wealth to India through their trade, they were respected and treated well.

## RAJENDRA

Rajaraja's son, Rajendra was even more ambitious. He had a long reign, ruling until 1044. He continued his father's policy and fought many campaigns in the peninsula. But of all his campaigns two were very bold and daring. One was when his armies marched up the east coast of India, through Orissa, and up to the Ganga river. Here they threatened the Pala king ruling in Bengal before returning to the south. Rajendra's northern campaign was in many ways similar to Samudragupta's southern campaign which had taken place 700 years earlier.

The second was Rajendra's daring naval campaign which took place in South-East Asia. For many centuries Indian merchants had been trading with various parts of South-East Asia, and this trade had also spread to southern China. Indian goods were sent by ship to southern China and cargo was brought back not only from China but also from South-East Asia. The Indian ships had to pass through the Straits of Molucca which were then held by the kingdom of Shrivijaya (which included the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra). The merchants of Shrivijaya naturally felt that if they could take over this trade they would get the profits. So they began to create difficulties for the Indian ships. The Indian merchants appealed to the Chola king and Rajendra sent out a huge navy. The forces of Shrivijaya were defeated and agreed to let Indian ships travel safely through the Straits. Rajendra came to the help of the merchants probably because many of them were from the Chola kingdom and the profits they made helped to increase the revenue of the Chola kingdom.

The successors of Rajendra I spent much time and effort and money on fighting wars with the other kingdoms of the peninsula. Some of these wars were not successful. Gradually the Chola kingdom became weaker and the others became stronger. By the end of the thirteenth century, the Chola kingdom was no more.

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In the early medieval period, the society grew out of the earlier systems which we discussed in the book on ancient India. By the later medieval period these changes had become established, that is they were no longer regarded as new. Now there were some new ideas and some further changes, but these came from outside India and were brought by the new dynasties which were ruling in some parts of the subcontinent. These rulers were mainly Turks, Afghans and Mughals, who had settled in India.

## Chola Government

The Chola king was the most powerful person in the kingdom. In spite of this he was expected to take the advice of either his Council of Ministers or of his *purohita*. He also had special officers in charge of various branches of administration. The kingdom was divided into provinces known as *mandalams*. Each *mandalam* was divided into a number of *valanadus*. Each *valanadu* had a certain number of villages. The capital of the Chola kingdom was at Tanjore to begin with, later it was moved to Kanchipuram (near modern Madras). For some time the capital was also located at Gangai-konda-cholapuram, 'the city of the conquerors of the Ganga', a new city built near Tanjore.

In many of the villages the administration was carried out, not by the government officials but by the villagers themselves. These villagers had a village assembly or council known as the *ur* or *sabha*. There are long inscriptions on the walls of some of the village temples giving details of how the *ur* or *sabha* were organized. Villagers who owned land or belonged to the upper castes were chosen by lot to the council. The life and the work of the village were discussed in these councils. This was a source of popular strength because it united the people in the village.

## An Imperial Capital Vijaynagara (Fourteenth to sixteenth century)

### Introduction

- Vijayanagara or "city of victory" was the name of both a city and an empire. The empire was founded in the fourteenth century. In its heyday it stretched from the river Krishna in the north to the extreme south of the peninsula. In 1565 the city was sacked and subsequently deserted.
- Although it fell into ruin in the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries, it lived on in the memories of people living in the Krishna-Tungabhadra doab. They remembered it as Hampi, a name derived from that of the

local mother goddess, Pampadevi. These oral traditions combined with archaeological finds, monuments and inscriptions and other records helped scholars to rediscover the Vijayanagara Empire.

- According to tradition and epigraphic evidence two brothers, Harihara and Bukka, founded the Vijayanagara Empire in 1336. This empire included within its fluctuating frontiers peoples who spoke different languages and followed different religious traditions. On their northern frontier, the Vijayanagara kings competed with contemporary rulers – including the Sultans of the Deccan and the Gajapati rulers of Orissa – for control of the fertile river valleys and the resources generated by lucrative overseas trade.
- At the same time, interaction between these states led to sharing of ideas, especially in the field of architecture. The rulers of Vijayanagara borrowed concepts and building techniques which they then developed further.
- The rulers of Vijayanagara, who called themselves rayas, built on these traditions and carried them, as we will see, literally to new heights.

## Kings and traders

- As warfare during these times depended upon effective cavalry, the import of horses from Arabia and Central Asia was very important for rival kingdoms. This trade was initially controlled by Arab traders. Local communities of merchants known as kudirai chettis or horse merchants also participated in these exchanges. From 1498 other actors appeared on the scene.
- These were the Portuguese, who arrived on the west coast of the subcontinent and attempted to establish trading and military stations. Their superior military technology, especially the use of muskets, enabled them to become important players in the tangled politics of the period.
- In fact, Vijayanagara was also noted for its markets dealing in spices, textiles and precious stones. Trade was often regarded as a status symbol for such cities, which boasted of a wealthy population that demanded high-value exotic goods, especially precious stones and jewellery.

## Krishnadeva Raya (1509-29)

- Within the polity, claimants to power included members of the ruling lineage as well as military commanders. The first dynasty, known as the Sangama dynasty, exercised control till 1485. They were supplanted by the Saluvas, military commanders, who remained in power till 1503 when they were replaced by the Tuluvas.
- Krishnadeva Raya belonged to the Tuluva dynasty. Krishnadeva Raya's rule was characterised by expansion and consolidation. This was the time when the land between the Tungabhadra and Krishna rivers (the Raichur doab) was acquired (1512), the rulers of Orissa were subdued (1514) and severe defeats were inflicted on the Sultan of Bijapur (1520).
- Although the kingdom remained in a constant state of military preparedness, it flourished under conditions of unparalleled peace and prosperity. Krishnadeva Raya is credited with building some fine temples and adding impressive gopurams to many important south Indian temples. He also founded a suburban township near Vijayanagara called Nagalapuram after his mother. Some of the most detailed descriptions of Vijayanagara come from his time or just after.
- Strain began to show within the imperial structure following Krishnadeva Raya's death in 1529. His successors were troubled by rebellious nayakas or military chiefs. By 1542 control at the centre had shifted to another ruling lineage, that of the Aravidu, which remained in power till the end of the seventeenth century.
- During this period, as indeed earlier, the military ambitions of the rulers of Vijayanagara as well as those of the Deccan Sultanates resulted in shifting alignments. Eventually this led to an alliance of the Sultanates against Vijayanagara.
- In 1565 Rama Raya, the chief minister of Vijayanagara, led the army into battle at Rakshasi-Tangadi (also known as Talikota), where his forces were routed by the combined armies of Bijapur, Ahmadnagar and Golconda. The victorious armies sacked the city of Vijayanagara. The city was totally abandoned within a few years.

- The empire shifted to the east where the Aravidu dynasty ruled from Penukonda and later from Chandragiri (near Tirupati). Although the armies of the Sultans were responsible for the destruction of the city of Vijayanagara, relations between the Sultans and the rayas were not always or inevitably hostile, in spite of religious differences. Krishnadeva Raya, for example, supported some claimants to power in the Sultanates and took pride in the title “establisher of the Yavana kingdom”. Similarly, the Sultan of Bijapur intervened to resolve succession disputes in Vijayanagara following the death of Krishnadeva Raya. In fact the Vijayanagara kings were keen to ensure the stability of the Sultanates and vice versa. It was the adventurous policy of Rama Raya who tried to play off one Sultan against another that led the Sultans to combine together and decisively defeat him.

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From 1498 other actors appeared on the scene. These were the Portuguese, who arrived on the west coast of the subcontinent and attempted to establish trading and military stations. Their superior military technology, especially the use of muskets, enabled them to become important players in the tangled politics of the period. In fact, Vijayanagara was also noted for its markets dealing in spices, textiles and precious stones. Trade was often regarded as a status symbol for such cities, which boasted of a wealthy population that demanded high-value exotic goods, especially precious stones and jewellery.

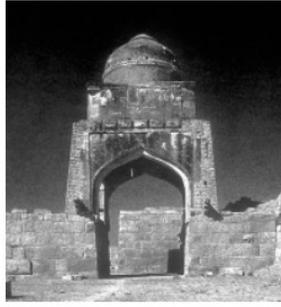
## Water resources

The most striking feature about the location of Vijayanagara is the natural basin formed by the river Tungabhadra which flows in a north-easterly direction. The surrounding landscape is characterised by stunning granite hills that seem to form a girdle around the city. A number of streams flow down to the river from these rocky outcrops. In almost all cases embankments were built along these streams to create reservoirs of varying sizes.

As this is one of the most arid zones of the peninsula, elaborate arrangements had to be made to store rainwater and conduct it to the city. The most important such tank was built in the early years of the fifteenth century and is now called Kamalapuram tank. Water from this tank not only irrigated fields nearby but was also conducted through a channel to the “royal centre”. One of the most prominent waterworks to be seen among the ruins is the Hiriyā canal. This canal drew water from a dam across the Tungabhadra and irrigated the cultivated valley that separated the “sacred centre” from the “urban core”. This was apparently built by kings of the Sangama dynasty.

## Fortifications and road

- enter the city there is a great distance, in which are fields in which they sow rice and have many gardens and much water, in which water comes from two lakes.” These statements have been corroborated by present-day archaeologists, who have also found evidence of an agricultural tract between the sacred centre and the urban core. This tract was serviced by an elaborate canal system drawing water from the Tungabhadra.
- The rulers of Vijayanagara adopted a more expensive and elaborate strategy of protecting the agricultural belt itself. A second line of fortification went round the inner core of the urban complex, and a third line surrounded the royal centre, within which each set of major buildings was surrounded by its own high walls.
- The fort was entered through well-guarded gates, which linked the city to the major roads. Gateways were distinctive architectural features that often defined the structures to which they regulated access. The arch on the gateway leading into the fortified settlement as well as the dome over the gate (Fig. 1) are regarded as typical features of the architecture introduced by the Turkish Sultans. Art historians refer to this style as Indo-Islamic, as it grew continually through interaction with local building practices in different regions.



### A gateway in the fortification wall

- Archaeologists have studied roads within the city and those leading out from it. These have been identified by tracing paths through gateways, as well as by finds of pavements. Roads generally wound around through the valleys, avoiding rocky terrain. Some of the most important roads extended from temple gateways, and were lined by bazaars.

## The urban core

- Moving along the roads leading into the urban core, there is relatively little archaeological evidence of the houses of ordinary people. Archaeologists have found fine Chinese porcelain in some areas, including in the north-eastern corner of the urban core and suggest that these areas may have been occupied by rich traders. This was also the Muslim residential quarter.
- Tombs and mosques located here have distinctive functions, yet their architecture resembles that of the mandapas found in the temples of Hampi.
- This is how the sixteenth-century Portuguese traveller Barbosa described the houses of ordinary people, which have not survived: “The other houses of the people are thatched, but nonetheless well built and arranged according to occupations, in long streets with many open places.” Field surveys indicate that the entire area was dotted with numerous shrines and small temples, pointing to the prevalence of a variety of cults, perhaps supported by different communities. The surveys also indicate that wells, rainwater tanks as well as temple tanks may have served as sources of water to the ordinary town dwellers.

## The Three Kingdoms of the Deccan

Krishnadeva Raya died in 1530 and with his death the power of Vijayanagara began to decline. The three kingdoms of the northern Deccan— Bijapur, Golconda and Ahmadnagar— were waiting for a chance to attack Vijayanagara. The chance came in 1565 when they briefly united and defeated Vijayanagara at the battle of Talikota. The glory of Vijayanagara was now at an end. But the three Deccan kingdoms did not enjoy their victory for long either. Events taking place in northern India were to influence the history of the peninsula as well. We have seen that by the later half of the sixteenth century, the Delhi Sultanate had totally declined and a new power had been established—the Mughal dynasty. The Mughals realized that they would have to control the Deccan if they wished to be an all-India power. Therefore it was the extension of Mughal power into the Deccan which was ultimately to destroy the Deccan kingdoms.

## India and Europe

### Portuguese

At the end of the fifteenth century there came another people—a completely different people—who arrived on the west coast of India in large ships. These were the Portuguese. The first Portuguese ship to reach the west coast of India was that of Vasco da Gama in 1498. The Portuguese came to India to trade. Their first concern was to attack the Arab traders and take away the spice trade from them. This they succeeded in doing even by resorting to piracy. In order to maintain the spice trade they had to have settlements in western Asia, India and later in South East Asia as well. Having come to Asia they began to trade apart from spices in various other goods as well, such as textiles. The Portuguese never wanted to make India their home.

The Mughals were not the only people who were to influence the course of Indian history The Portuguese

came for trade and since they made large profits in this trade it encouraged more and more of them to come. It was a long journey from Portugal and took many months, because they had to sail around the southern tip of Africa, the Cape of Good Hope. But still they came. Soon they obtained small areas of land where they built their factories. Sometimes they paid for the land and sometimes they took it by force. Portuguese merchants lived near the factories and the ports and these were called 'settlements'. And wherever there were Portuguese settlements there were missionaries—those who came to convert Indians to Christianity. One of the early settlements was Goa, which the Portuguese captured in 1510.

The Portuguese traders were not the first Europeans to visit India. As we have seen, individual European merchants looking for trade had already travelled through various parts in India. Marco Polo who came from Venice visited the south. Nikitin came from Russia and travelled in the Deccan. But these merchants had come alone. When the Portuguese made their settlements they came in groups and were supported by the Portuguese kingdom. They brought soldiers with them and conquered the areas where they founded their settlements. In the sixteenth century other European countries sent their ships with traders and tried to establish settlements for trading purposes. Ships came from England, France, Denmark, Holland and Spain. The whole of Europe was interested in having trading relationship not only with India but with many parts of Asia. Trade was the main but not the only motive. They were also curious about discovering the rest of the world and about new cultures and peoples. In order to understand why there was this desire to trade and this curiosity about the world it is necessary to take a longer look at the European scene.

The Coining of the Mughals and the Europeans sails and finally invented moveable sails which could be adjusted according to the direction of the wind. This meant that the winds blowing across the ocean could be used in any direction and could also be used to increase the speed of the ship, It was the Portuguese again who fitted good quality guns on their ships and thus improved their fighting capacity. This was part of the reason why they could fight successful battle against the local people on the coasts. They would bombard the port and then escape back into the sea. When they had weakened the forces on the coast they would land their soldiers and fight, The scholars and scientists were successful in their experiments and inventions because they did not merely use knowledge from books but they studied the actual machines and instruments and they worked together with the artisans who made and used these machines and instruments.

Portugal and Spain began the hunt for new routes to Asia, trade with other parts of the world and conquest overseas. But other countries in Europe also joined in, such as, Holland, Belgium, France, England and Denmark. But these countries came in later and their importance increased when that of Portugal and Spain declined in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

They had one other interest. They wanted to convert as many Indians as possible to the Roman Catholic form of Christianity. They were intolerant of the existing religions of India and did not hesitate to force people to become Christian. They even introduced the 'Inquisition' in India. Christianity was not new to India. The first Christians here were the Syrian Christians who had accepted Christianity long before even the Portuguese had been converted to Christianity in Europe. The Syrian Christians had lived peacefully in India for many centuries. But the Portuguese were not satisfied with this and did all that they could to make more converts.

## Kingdoms of the North(A.D. 800-1200)

### The Rajputs

The Rajputs have a long and interesting history. Where they came from and who they were, remains something of a mystery. Historians think that some of them belonged to certain Central Asian tribes which settled in India after the Huns had invaded northern India. They were divided into clans. The Rajputs always insisted that they were of the *kshatrya* caste. Their kings ordered family histories to be written which connected them with either the sun-family (*surya-vamshi*) or the moon-family (*chandra-vamsha*) of ancient Indian kings. But there were four clans which claimed that they had not descended from either of these two families, but from the fire-family (*agni-kula*). These four clans were the most important in the history of this period. They were the Pratiharas (or Pariharas), Chauhans (or Chahamanas), Solankis (or Chaulukyas) and Pawars(or Paramaras).

These four *agni-kula* clans established their power in western India and parts of central India and Rajasthan. The Pariharas ruled in the region of Kanauj. The Chauhans were strong in central Rajasthan. Solanki power rose in the region of Kathiawar and the surrounding areas. The Pawars established themselves in

the region of Malwa with their capital at Dhar near Indore. Most of these dynasties began as small rulers under the Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas, and they later rebelled against their overlords and declared their independence.

Other minor rulers also became powerful and gradually built small kingdoms in various parts of northern India, such as those of Nepal, Kamarupa (in Assam), Kashmir, and Utkala (in Orissa). Many of the hill states of the Punjab came into being at this time, including Champaka (Chamba), Durgara (Jammu) and Kuluta (Kulu). But these kingdoms were either in the hills or else were far away from the Rajput kingdoms and did not therefore take part in the history of the Rajputs. The kingdoms which did take part were those of Central India and Rajasthan such as those of the Chandellas in Bundelkhand, or the Guhilas in Mewar to the south of the Chauhans. To the north-east of the Chauhans were the Tomaras and they ruled in Haryana and the region around Delhi. They also began as small rulers under the Pratiharas, but they broke away when the Pratiharas became weak. The Tomaras built the city of Dhilluka (Delhi) in A.D. 736. Later the Chauhans defeated the Tomaras and annexed their kingdom. It was a prince of the Chauhan dynasty, Prithviraj III, who is the hero of the famous ballad *Prithviraj-raso* composed later by the Hindi poet Chandbardai.

These kingdoms were always fighting each other largely to show off their strength. All these battles made them weak when they were threatened by invasions from the north-west, they could not defend themselves properly. The first of these invaders was **Mahmud of Ghazni**.

## The Reformation and Counter Reformation

The decline of Portugal and Spain and the rise of other European countries in this age of exploration and trade was partly due to changes in the religious background of Europe. Throughout the period of the Dark Ages right up until the Renaissance, the dominant religion in Europe had been Christianity. Until this time Christianity had been divided into two main groups—the Roman Catholics and the Greek Orthodox. The Greek Orthodox had their centre at Constantinople and claimed that their version was the older and more orthodox version of Christianity. The Roman Catholics had their centre at Rome. This version of Christianity was later in date and was the accepted form all over northern and Western Europe. The head of the Church was called the Pope (meaning ‘father’) and throughout the medieval period the office of the Pope was powerful in both religious and political matters. No one could challenge the authority of the Pope. This was the situation when the new ideas of the Renaissance began to influence people’s thinking.

The thinkers of the Renaissance stressed many ideas which the Catholic Church at that time did not approve of. For example, they held that knowledge does not consist only of what is written in books or what the religious leaders of the community may think; it can also come from the observations and thinking of ordinary human beings. They also said that man’s concern should not be only for God, but also for his fellow-human beings. Added to this came all the new discoveries and new knowledge which gave the Renaissance thinkers a confidence in their own ways of thinking and acting. Gradually the authority of the Church and the Pope began to be challenged. People began to object to the Church interfering in secular matters, in matters which had nothing to do with religion, such as politics. The Church had been allowed to collect a variety of taxes from the people and this was resented. The Church collected money and had been granted land and therefore the members of the Church lived in great luxury. This was also against the principles of Christ’s teaching. The feeling against the Roman Catholic Church grew stronger and stronger and finally a number of Christians broke away from the Catholic Church. Some Christian theologians such as Martin Luther, Erasmus and John Calvin denounced the Church. This break with the Catholic Church in the early sixteenth century led to the forming of a new group of Christians—the Protestants, that is, those who were protesting against the Catholic Church. This fresh division of Christianity led to considerable bloodshed because many long wars were fought between the Catholics and the Protestants.

But the merchants of the North European cities approved of the Protestant movement and gave it their support because the Protestants challenged the authority of the Church and encouraged a spirit of enquiry and because they stressed the importance of the individual human being, they were not opposed to the new ideas of the Renaissance. Some of the northern European countries such as England, Holland and the Scandinavian countries broke away from the Catholic Church and accepted Protestantism as their religion. France was divided between the two. It was in these countries that the merchants continued to use the knowledge of the scientists and the new thinking progressed.

The Reformation having taken place in northern Europe, there was a Counter-Reformation (that is a movement against the Reformation) in the Catholic countries of southern Europe. The Catholics of Spain were leading this movement. Attempts were made to reform Catholicism. For example, the Society of Jesus or Jesuits as they are called was founded. Among the more famous of these was Francis Xavier who spent many years working in India and eventually died here.

In contrast to this in the northern countries the picture was different. The property of the Catholic Church was often taken away and the revenue came to the royal treasury. The merchants were encouraged in trading activities because this brought in more money. Where need be they were given the support of the government. Thus as we shall see later, the contact between Europe and Asia began through trade but gradually even the governments became involved. Finally the European nations had colonies in Asia and Africa.



# 2

## Sufi and Bhakti Movement

### Introduction

The *sufis* were not the only popular religious teachers of the time. There were also the *bhakti* saints. They had a longer history in India. The *alvars* and the *nayannars* of the Tamil devotional cult had started the tradition of preaching the idea of *bhakti* through hymns and stories. This movement had been popular with the merchants and artisans in the towns and the peasants in the villages. The *bhakti* movement continued the same teaching. Most of the saints were from the non-brahman castes. The *bhakti* teachers also taught that the relationship between man and God was based on love, and worshipping God with devotion was better than merely performing any number of religious ceremonies. They stressed the need for tolerance among men and religions.

### Phase of Bhakti and Sufi Beliefs between Eight and Eighteenth century

The mid-first millennium CE the landscape of the subcontinent was dotted with a variety of religious structures –stupas, monasteries, temples. If these typified certain religious beliefs and practices, others have been reconstructed from textual traditions, including the Puranas, many of which received their present shape around the same time, and yet others remain only faintly visible in textual and visual records. New textual sources available from this period include compositions attributed to poet-saints, most of whom expressed themselves orally in regional languages used by ordinary people.

These compositions, which were often set to music, were compiled by disciples or devotees, generally after the death of the poet-saint. What is more, these traditions were fluid – generations of devotees tended to elaborate on the original message, and occasionally modified or even abandoned some of the ideas that appeared problematic or irrelevant in different political, social or cultural contexts. Using these sources thus poses a challenge to historians. Historians also draw on hagiographies or biographies of saints written by their followers (or members of their religious sect). These may not be literally accurate, but allow a glimpse into the ways in which devotees perceived the lives of these path breaking women and men.

As we will see, these sources provide us with insights into a scenario characterised by dynamism and diversity.

### Pattern of religious beliefs and practices

Perhaps the most striking feature of this phase is the increasing visibility of a wide range of gods and goddesses in sculpture as well as in texts. At one level, this indicates the continued and even extended worship of the major deities – Vishnu, Shiva and the goddess – each of whom was visualised in a variety of forms.

Historians who have tried to understand these developments suggest that there were at least two processes at work. One was a process of disseminating Brahmanical ideas. This is exemplified by the composition, compilation and preservation of Puranic texts in simple Sanskrit verse, explicitly meant to be accessible to women and Shudras, who were generally excluded from Vedic learning. At the same time, there was a second process at work – that of the Brahmanas accepting and reworking the beliefs and practices of these and other social categories.

In fact, many beliefs and practices were shaped through a continuous dialogue between what sociologists have described as “great” Sanskritic Puranic traditions and “little” traditions throughout the land.

One of the most striking examples of this process is evident at Puri, Orissa, where the principal deity was identified, by the twelfth century, as Jagannatha (literally, the lord of the world), a form of Vishnu. In this

instance, a local deity, whose image was and continues to be made of wood by local tribal specialists, was recognised as a form of Vishnu.

At the same time, Vishnu was visualised in a way that was very different from that in other parts of the country. Such instances of integration are evident amongst goddess cults as well. Worship of the goddess, often simply in the form of a stone smeared with ochre, was evidently widespread. These local deities were often incorporated within the Puranic framework by providing them with an identity as a wife of the principal male deities – sometimes they were equated with Lakshmi, the wife of Vishnu, in other instances, with Parvati, the wife of Shiva.

## Difference and conflict in Religious Faith

Often associated with the goddess were forms of worship that were classified as Tantric. Tantric practices were widespread in several parts of the subcontinent – they were open to women and men, and practitioners often ignored differences of caste and class within the ritual context. Many of these ideas influenced Shaivism as well as Buddhism, especially in the eastern, northern and southern parts of the subcontinent. All of these somewhat divergent and even disparate beliefs and practices would come to be classified as Hindu over the course of the next millennium. The divergence is perhaps most stark if we compare Vedic and Puranic traditions. The principal deities of the Vedic pantheon, Agni, Indra and Soma, become marginal figures, rarely visible in textual or visual representations. And while we can catch a glimpse of Vishnu, Shiva and the goddess in Vedic mantras, these have little in common with the elaborate Puranic mythologies. However, in spite of these obvious discrepancies, the Vedas continued to be revered as authoritative.

The traditions of devotion or bhakti need to be located within this context. Devotional worship had a long history of almost a thousand years before the period we are considering. During this time, expressions of devotion ranged from the routine worship of deities within temples to ecstatic adoration where devotees attained a trance-like state. The singing and chanting of devotional compositions was often a part of such modes of worship. This was particularly true of the Vaishnava and Shaiva sects.

## Poems in early traditions of Bhakti

In the course of the evolution of these forms of worship, in many instances, poet-saints emerged as leaders around whom there developed a community of devotees. Further, while Brahmanas remained important intermediaries between gods and devotees in several forms of bhakti, these traditions also accommodated and acknowledged women and the “lower castes”, categories considered ineligible for liberation within the orthodox Brahmanical framework. What also characterised traditions of bhakti was a remarkable diversity. At a different level, historians of religion often classify bhakti traditions into two broad categories:

**Saguna (with attributes) and nirguna (without attributes).** The former included traditions that focused on the worship of specific deities such as Shiva, Vishnu and his avatars (incarnations) and forms of the goddess or Devi, all often conceptualised in anthropomorphic forms. Nirguna bhakti on the other hand was worship of an abstract form of god.

## The Alvars and Nayanars (A new kind of bhakti in south India)

Some of the earliest bhakti movements (c. sixth century) were led by the Alvars (literally, those who are “immersed” in devotion to Vishnu) and Nayanars (literally, leaders who were devotees of Shiva). They travelled from place to place singing hymns in Tamil in praise of their gods.

During their travels the Alvars and Nayanars identified certain shrines as abodes of their chosen deities. Very often large temples were later built at these sacred places. These developed as centres of pilgrimage. Singing compositions of these poet-saints became part of temple rituals in these shrines, as did worship of the saints’ images.

Some historians suggest that the Alvars and Nayanars initiated a movement of protest against the caste system and the dominance of Brahmanas or at least attempted to reform the system. To some extent this is corroborated by the fact that bhaktas hailed from diverse social backgrounds ranging from Brahmanas to artisans and cultivators and even from castes considered “untouchable” like the Pulaiyar and the Panars.

They were sharply critical of the Buddhists and Jainas and preached ardent love of Shiva or Vishnu as the path to salvation. They drew upon the ideals of love and heroism as found in the Sangam literature (the

earliest example of Tamil literature, composed during the early centuries of the Common Era) and blended them with the values of bhakti.

The importance of the traditions of the Alvars and Nayanars was sometimes indicated by the claim that their compositions were as important as the Vedas. For instance, one of the major anthologies of compositions by the Alvars, the Nalayira Divyaprabandham, was frequently described as the Tamil Veda, thus claiming that the text was as significant as the four Vedas in Sanskrit that were cherished by the Brahmanas.

Perhaps one of the most striking features of these traditions was the presence of women. For instance, the compositions of Andal, a woman Alvar, were widely sung (and continue to be sung to date). Andal saw herself as the beloved of Vishnu; her verses express her love for the deity. Another woman, Karaikkal Ammaiyar, a devotee of Shiva, adopted the path of extreme asceticism in order to attain her goal. Her compositions were preserved within the Nayanar tradition. These women renounced their social obligations, but did not join an alternative order or become nuns. Their very existence and their compositions posed a challenge to patriarchal norms.

There were 63 Nayanars, who belonged to different caste backgrounds such as potters, “untouchable” workers, peasants, hunters, soldiers, Brahmanas and chiefs. The best known among them were Appar, Sambandar, Sundarar and Manikkavasagar. There are two sets of compilations of their songs – Tevaram and Tiruvacakam.

By the tenth century the compositions of the 12 Alvars were compiled in an anthology known as the Nalayira Divyaprabandham (“Four thousand Sacred Compositions”). The poem of Appar, Sambandar and Sundarar from the Tevaram, a collection that was compiled and classified in the tenth century on the basis of the music and songs.

In the Tamil region that there were several important chiefdoms in the early first millennium CE. From the second half of the first millennium there is evidence for states, including those of the Pallavas and Pandyas (c. sixth to ninth centuries CE).

Between the tenth and twelfth centuries the Chola and Pandya kings built elaborate temples around many of the shrines visited by the saint-poets, strengthening the links between the bhakti tradition and temple worship.

This was also the time when their poems were compiled. While Buddhism and Jainism had been prevalent in this region for several centuries, drawing support from merchant and artisan communities, these religious traditions received occasional royal patronage.

## The Virashaiva Tradition in Karnataka

The twelfth century witnessed the emergence of a new movement in Karnataka, led by a Brahmana named Basavanna (1106-68) who was a minister in the court of a Kalachuri ruler. His followers were known as Virashaivas (heroes of Shiva) or Lingayats (wearers of the linga).

Lingayats continue to be an important community in the region to date. They worship Shiva in his manifestation as a linga, and men usually wear a small linga in a silver case on a loop strung over the left shoulder.

Those who are revered include the jangama or wandering monks. Lingayats believe that on death the devotee will be united with Shiva and will not return to this world. Therefore they do not practice funerary rites such as cremation, prescribed in the Dharmashastras. Instead, they ceremonially bury their dead. The Lingayats challenged the idea of caste and the “pollution” attributed to certain groups by Brahmanas.

They also questioned the theory of rebirth. These won them followers amongst those who were marginalised within the Brahmanical social order. The Lingayats also encouraged certain practices disapproved in the Dharmashastras, such as post-puberty marriage and the remarriage of widows. Our understanding of the Virashaiva tradition is derived from vachanas (literally, sayings) composed in Kannada by women and men who joined the movement.

## Philosophers

### Shankara

**Shankara**, one of the most influential philosophers of India, was born in Kerala in the eighth century. He was an advocate of Advaita or the doctrine of the oneness of the individual soul and the Supreme God which is the

Ultimate Reality. He taught that

Brahman, the only or ultimate Reality, was formless and without any attributes. He considered the world around us to be an illusion or maya, and preached renunciation of the world and adoption of the path of knowledge to understand the true nature of Brahman and attain salvation.

### **Ramanuja**

**Ramanuja**, Born in Tamil Nadu in the eleventh century, was deeply influenced by the Alvars. According to him the best means of attaining salvation was through intense devotion to Vishnu. Vishnu in His grace helps the devotee to attain the bliss of union with Him. He propounded the doctrine of Vishisht advaita or qualified oneness in that the soul even when united with the Supreme God remained distinct.

### **Basavanna's Virashaivism**

We noted earlier the connection between the Tamil bhakti movement and temple worship. This in turn led to a reaction that is best represented in the Virashaiva movement initiated by Basavanna and his companions like Allama Prabhu and Akkamahadevi. This movement began in Karnataka in the mid-twelfth century. The Virashaivas argued strongly for the equality of all human beings and against Brahmanical ideas about caste and the treatment of women. They were also against all forms of ritual and idol worship.

### **Emergence of Islam**

During 612-32, the Prophet Muhammad preached the worship of a single God, Allah, and the membership of a single community of believers (umma). This was the origin of Islam. Muhammad was an Arab by language and culture and a merchant by profession. Sixth-century Arab culture was largely confined to the Arabian peninsula and areas of southern Syria and Mesopotamia.

The Arabs were divided into tribes\* (qabila), each led by a chief who was chosen partly on the basis of his family connections but more for his personal courage, wisdom and generosity (murawwa). Each tribe had its own god or goddess, who was worshipped as an idol (sanam) in a shrine (masjid). Many Arab tribes were nomadic (Bedouins), moving from dry to green areas (oases) of the desert in search of food (mainly dates) and fodder for their camels. Some settled in cities and practiced trade or agriculture. Muhammad's own tribe, Quraysh, lived in Mecca and controlled the main shrine there, a cube-like structure called Kaba, in which idols were placed.

Even tribes outside Mecca considered the Kaba holy and installed their own idols at this shrine, making annual pilgrimages (hajj) to the shrine. Mecca was located on the crossroads of a trade route between Yemen and Syria which further enhanced the city's importance. The Meccan shrine was a sanctuary (haram) where violence was forbidden and protection given to all visitors. Pilgrimage and commerce gave the nomadic and settled tribes opportunities to communicate with one another and share their beliefs and customs.

Around 612, Muhammad declared himself to be the messenger (rasul) of God who had been commanded to preach that Allah alone should be worshipped. The worship involved simple rituals, such as daily prayers (salat), and moral principles, such as distributing alms and abstaining from theft. Muhammad was to found a community of believers (umma) bound by a common set of religious beliefs. The community would bear witness (shahada) to the existence of the religion before God as well as before members of other religious communities. Muhammad's message particularly appealed to those Meccans who felt deprived of the gains from trade and religion and were looking for a new community identity. Those who accepted the doctrine were called Muslims. They were promised salvation on the Day of Judgement (qiyama) and a share of the resources of the community while on earth. The Muslims soon faced considerable opposition from affluent Meccans who took offence to the rejection of their deities and found the new religion a threat to the status and prosperity of Mecca.

In 622, Muhammad was forced to migrate with his followers to Medina. Muhammad's journey from Mecca (hijra) was a turning point in the history of Islam, with the year of his arrival in Medina marking the beginning of the Muslim calendar.

## The Growth of Sufism Tradition

In the early centuries of Islam a group of religious minded people called sufis turned to asceticism and mysticism in protest against the growing materialism of the Caliphate as a religious and political institution. They were critical of the dogmatic definitions and scholastic methods of interpreting the Qur'an and sunna (traditions of the Prophet) adopted by theologians. Instead, they laid emphasis on seeking salvation through intense devotion and love for God by following His commands, and by following the example of the Prophet Muhammad whom they regarded as a perfect human being.

The sufis thus sought an interpretation of the Qur'an on the basis of their personal experience. 6.1 Khanqahs and silsilas By the eleventh century Sufism evolved into a well developed movement with a body of literature on Quranic studies and sufi practices. Institutionally, the sufis began to organise communities around the hospice or khanqah (Persian) controlled by a teaching master known as shaikh (in Arabic), pir or murshid (in Persian). He enrolled disciples (murids) and appointed a successor (khalifa). He established rules for spiritual conduct and interaction between inmates as well as between laypersons and the master.

Sufi silsilas began to crystallise in different parts of the Islamic world around the twelfth century. The word silsila literally means a chain, signifying a continuous link between master and disciple, stretching as an unbroken spiritual genealogy to the Prophet Muhammad. It was through this channel that spiritual power and blessings were transmitted to devotees.

Special rituals of initiation were developed in which initiates took an oath of allegiance, wore a patched garment, and shaved their hair. When the shaikh died, his tomb-shrine (dargah, a Persian term meaning court) became the centre of devotion for his followers. This encouraged the practice of pilgrimage or ziyarat to his grave, particularly on his death anniversary or urs (or marriage, signifying the union of his soul with God). This was because people believed that in death saints were united with God, and were thus closer to Him than when living. People sought their blessings to attain material and spiritual benefits. Thus evolved the cult of the shaikh revered as wali.

6.2 Outside the khanqah Some mystics initiated movements based on a radical interpretation of sufi ideals. Many scorned the khanqah and took to mendicancy and observed celibacy. They ignored rituals and observed extreme forms of asceticism. They were known by different names – Qalandars, Madaris, Malangs, Haidaris, etc. Because of their deliberate defiance of the shari'a they were often referred to as be-shari'a, in contrast to the ba-shari'a sufis who complied with it.

## Life of Chistis in the Sub Continent

Of the groups of sufis who migrated to India in the late twelfth century, the Chishtis were the most influential. This was because they adapted successfully to the local environment and adopted several features of Indian devotional traditions.

The khanqah was the centre of social life. We know about Shaikh Nizamuddin's hospice (c. fourteenth century) on the banks of the river Yamuna in Ghiyaspur, on the outskirts of what was then the city of Delhi. It comprised several small rooms and a big hall (jama'at khana) where the inmates and visitors lived and prayed. The inmates included family members of the Shaikh, his attendants and disciples. The Shaikh lived in a small room on the roof of the hall where he met visitors in the morning and evening. A veranda surrounded the courtyard, and a boundary wall ran around the complex. On one occasion, fearing a Mongol invasion, people from the neighbouring areas flocked into the khanqah to seek refuge.

### MAJOR TEACHERS OF THE CHISHTI SILSILA

| SUFI TEACHERS                     | YEAR OF DEATH | LOCATION OF DARGAH |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Shaikh Muinuddin Sijzi            | 1235          | Ajmer (Rajasthan)  |
| Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki   | 1235          | Delhi              |
| Shaikh Fariduddin Ganj-i Shakar   | 1265          | Ajodhan (Pakistan) |
| Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya          | 1325          | Delhi              |
| Shaikh Nasiruddin Chiragh-i Dehli | 1356          | Delhi              |

There was an open kitchen (langar), run on futuh (unasked-for charity). From morning till late night people from all walks of life – soldiers, slaves, singers, merchants, poets, travellers, rich and poor, Hindu jogis (yogi) and qalandars – came seeking discipleship, amulets for healing, and the intercession of the Shaikh in various matters. Other visitors included poets such as Amir Hasan Sijzi and Amir Khusrau and the court historian Ziyauddin Barani, all of whom wrote about the Shaikh.

Practices that were adopted, including bowing before the Shaikh, offering water to visitors, shaving the heads of initiates, and yogic exercises, represented attempts to assimilate local traditions. Shaikh Nizamuddin appointed several spiritual successors and deputed them to set up hospices in various parts of the subcontinent. As a result the teachings, practices and organisation of the Chishtis as well as the fame of the Shaikh spread rapidly. This in turn drew pilgrims to his shrine, and also to the shrines of his spiritual ancestors.

## Chishti devotionalism: ziyarat and qawwali

Pilgrimage, called ziyarat, to tombs of sufi saints is prevalent all over the Muslim world. This practice is an occasion for seeking the sufi's spiritual grace (barakat). For more than seven centuries people of various creeds, classes and social backgrounds have expressed their devotion at the dargahs of the five great Chishti saints (see chart on p.154). Amongst these, the most revered shrine is that of Khwaja Muinuddin, popularly known as "Gharib Nawaz" (comforter of the poor). The earliest textual references to Khwaja Muinuddin's dargah date to the fourteenth century. It was evidently popular because of the austerity and piety of its Shaikh, the greatness of his spiritual successors, and the patronage of royal visitors.

**Muhammad bin Tughlaq (ruled, 1324-51)** was the first Sultan to visit the shrine, but the earliest construction to house the tomb was funded in the late fifteenth century by Sultan Ghiyasuddin Khalji of Malwa. Since the shrine was located on the trade route linking Delhi and Gujarat, it attracted a lot of travellers. By the sixteenth century the shrine had become very popular; in fact it was the spirited singing of pilgrims bound for Ajmer that inspired Akbar to visit the tomb. He went there fourteen times, sometimes two or three times a year, to seek blessings for new conquests, fulfilment of vows, and the birth of sons. He maintained this tradition until 1580. Each of these visits was celebrated by generous gifts, which were recorded in imperial documents. For example, in 1568 he offered a huge cauldron (degh) to facilitate cooking for pilgrims. He also had a mosque constructed within the compound of the dargah.

## Languages and communication

It was not just in sama' that the Chishtis adopted local languages. In Delhi, those associated with the Chishti silsila conversed in Hindavi, the language of the people. Other sufis such as Baba Farid composed verses in the local language, which were incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib. Yet others composed long poems or masnavis to express ideas of divine love using human love as an allegory. For example, the prem-akhyan (love story) Padmavat composed by Malik Muhammad Jayasi revolved around the romance of Padmini and Ratanen, the king of Chittor. Their trials were symbolic of the soul's journey to the divine. Such poetic compositions were often recited in hospices, usually during sama'. A different genre of sufi poetry was composed in and around the town of Bijapur, Karnataka.

These were short poems in Dakhani (a variant of Urdu) attributed to Chishti sufis who lived in this region during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These poems were probably sung by women while performing household chores like grinding grain and spinning. Other compositions were in the form of lurinama or lullabies and shadinama or wedding songs. It is likely that the sufis of this region were inspired by the pre-existing bhakti tradition of the Kannada vachanas of the Lingayats and the Marathi abhangs of the sants of Pandharpur. It is through this medium that Islam gradually gained a place in the villages of the Deccan.

## Growth of Sufi tradition in the state

A major feature of the Chishti tradition was austerity, including maintaining a distance from worldly power. However, this was by no means a situation of absolute isolation from political power. The sufis accepted unsolicited grants and donations from the political elites. The Sultans in turn set up charitable trusts (auqaf) as endowments for hospices and granted tax-free land (inam). The Chishtis accepted donations in cash and kind. Rather than accumulate donations, they preferred to use these fully on immediate requirements such as food, clothes, living quarters and ritual necessities (such as sama').

All this enhanced the moral authority of the shaikhs, which in turn attracted people from all walks of life. Further, their piety and scholarship, and people's belief in their miraculous powers made sufis popular among the masses, whose support kings wished to secure. Kings did not simply need to demonstrate their association with sufis; they also required legitimation from them.

When the Turks set up the Delhi Sultanate, they resisted the insistence of the ulama on imposing shari'a as state law because they anticipated opposition from their subjects, the majority of whom were non-Muslims. The Sultans then sought out the sufis – who derived their authority directly from God – and did not depend on jurists to interpret the shari'a. Besides, it was believed that the auliya could intercede with God in order to improve the material and spiritual conditions of ordinary human beings. This explains why kings often wanted their tombs to be in the vicinity of sufi shrines and hospices. However, there were instances of conflict between the Sultans and the sufis. To assert their authority, both expected that certain rituals be performed such as prostration and kissing of the feet. Occasionally the sufi shaikh was addressed with high-sounding titles. For example, the disciples of Nizamuddin Auliya addressed him as sultan-ul-mashaikh (literally, Sultan amongst shaikhs).

### **Major bhakti saints and the regions associated with them.**

The new religious Developments in North India (period after the thirteenth century)

The period after the thirteenth century saw a new wave of the bhakti movement in north India. This was an age when Islam, Brahmanical Hinduism, Sufism, various strands of bhakti, and the Nathpanths, Siddhas and Yogis influenced one another. Such people, especially craftspersons, peasants, traders and labourers, thronged to listen to these new saints and spread their ideas.

Some of them like Kabir and Baba Guru Nanak rejected all orthodox religions. Others like Tulsidas and Surdas accepted existing beliefs and practices but wanted to make these accessible to all.

Tulsidas conceived of God in the form of Rama. Tulsidas's composition, the Ramcharitmanas, written in Awadhi (a language used in eastern Uttar Pradesh), is important both as an expression of his devotion and as a literary work. Surdas was an ardent devotee of Krishna. His compositions, compiled in the Sursagara, Surasaravali and Sahitya Lahari, express his devotion. Also contemporary was Shankaradeva of Assam (late fifteenth century) who emphasised devotion to Vishnu, and composed poems and plays in Assamese. He began the practice of setting up namghars or houses of recitation and prayer, a practice that continues to date.

This tradition also included saints like Dadu Dayal, Ravidas and Mirabai. Mirabai was a Rajput princess married into the royal family of Mewar in the sixteenth century. Mirabai became a disciple of Ravidas, a saint from a caste considered "untouchable". She was devoted to Krishna and composed innumerable bhajans expressing her intense devotion. Her songs also openly challenged the norms of the "upper" castes and became popular with the masses in Rajasthan and Gujarat. A unique feature of most of the saints is that their works were composed in regional languages and could be sung.

They became immensely popular and were handed down orally from generation to generation. Usually the poorest, most deprived communities and women transmitted these songs, often adding their own experiences. Thus the songs as we have them today are as much a creation of the saints as of generations of people who sang them. They have become a part of our living popular culture.

## **Kabir**

Kabir, who probably lived in the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries, was one of the most influential and most outstanding examples of a poet-saint who emerged within this context. He was brought up in a family of Muslim julahas or weavers settled in or near the city of Benares (Varanasi). We have little reliable information about his life. We get to know of his ideas from a vast collection of verses called sakhis and pads said to have been composed by him and sung by wandering bhajan singers. Some of these were later collected and preserved in the Guru Granth Sahib, Panch Vani and Bijak.

The Kabir Bijak is preserved by the Kabirpanth (the path or sect of Kabir) in Varanasi and elsewhere in Uttar Pradesh; the Kabir Granthavali is associated with the Dadupanth in Rajasthan, and many of his compositions are found in the Adi Granth Sahib).

All these manuscript compilations were made long after the death of Kabir. By the nineteenth century, anthologies of verses attributed to him circulated in print in regions as far apart as Bengal, Gujarat and

Maharashtra. Kabir's poems have survived in several languages and dialects; and some are composed in the special language of nirguna poets, the sant bhasha. Others, known as ulatbansi (upside-down sayings), are written in a form in which everyday meanings are inverted.

These hint at the difficulties of capturing the nature of the Ultimate Reality in words: expressions such as "the lotus which blooms without flower" or the "fire raging in the ocean" convey a sense of Kabir's mystical experiences. Also striking is the range of traditions Kabir drew on to describe the Ultimate Reality. These include Islam: he described the Ultimate Reality as Allah, Khuda, Hazrat and Pir. He also used terms drawn from Vedantic traditions, alakh (the unseen), nirakar (formless), Brahman, Atman, etc. Other terms with mystical connotations such as shabda (sound) or shunya (emptiness) were drawn from yogic traditions.

Diverse and sometimes conflicting ideas are expressed in these poems. Some poems draw on Islamic ideas and use monotheism and iconoclasm to attack Hindu polytheism and idol worship; others use the sufi concept of zikr and ishq (love) to express the Hindu practice of nam-simaran (remembrance of God's name). We may never be able to tell with certainty, although scholars have tried to analyse the language, style and content to establish which verses could be Kabir's. What this rich corpus of verses also signifies is that Kabir was and is to the present a source of inspiration for those who questioned entrenched religious and social institutions, ideas and practices in their search for the Divine. Just as Kabir's ideas probably crystallised through dialogue and debate (explicit or implicit) with the traditions of sufis and yogis in the region of Awadh (part of present-day Uttar Pradesh), his legacy was claimed by several groups, who remembered him and continue to do so. This is most evident in later debates about whether he was a Hindu or a Muslim by birth, debates that are reflected in hagiographies. Many of these were composed from the seventeenth century onwards, about 200 years after Kabir's lifetime. Hagiographies within the Vaishnava tradition attempted to suggest that he was born a Hindu, Kabirdas (Kabir itself is an Arabic word meaning "great"), but was raised by a poor Muslim family belonging to the community of weavers or julahas, who were relatively recent converts to Islam. They also suggested that he was initiated into bhakti by a guru, perhaps Ramananda. Fig. 6.16 Roadside musicians, a seventeenth century Mughal painting It is likely that the compositions of the saints were sung by such musicians.

However, the verses attributed to Kabir use the words guru and satguru, but do not mention the name of any specific preceptor. Historians have pointed out that it is very difficult to establish that Ramananda and Kabir were contemporaries, without assigning improbably long lives to either or both. So, while traditions linking the two cannot be accepted at face value, they show how important the legacy of Kabir was for later generations

## Baba Guru Nanak

We know more about Guru Nanak (1469-1539) than about Kabir. Born at Talwandi (Nankana Sahib in Pakistan), he travelled widely before establishing a centre at Kartarpur (Dera Baba Nanak on the river Ravi). A regular worship that consisted of the singing of his own hymns was established there for his followers. Irrespective of their former creed, caste or gender, his followers ate together in the common kitchen (langar).

Baba Guru Nanak organised his followers into a community. He set up rules for congregational worship (sangat) involving collective recitation.

The sacred space thus created by Guru Nanak was known as dharmsal. It is now known as Gurdwara. Before his death in 1539, Guru Nanak appointed one of his followers as his successor. His name was Lehna but he came to be known as Guru Angad, signifying that he was a part of Guru Nanak himself.

Guru Angad compiled the compositions of Guru Nanak, to which he added his own in a new script known as Gurmukhi. The three successors of Guru Angad also wrote under the name of "Nanak" and all of their compositions were compiled by Guru Arjan in 1604. To this compilation were added the writings of other figures like Shaikh Farid, Sant Kabir, Bhagat Namdev and Guru Tegh Bahadur. In 1706 this compilation was authenticated by his son and successor, Guru Gobind Singh. It is now known as Guru Granth Sahib, the holy scripture of the Sikhs. The number of Guru Nanak's followers increased through the sixteenth century under his successors.

The fifth preceptor, Guru Arjan, compiled Baba Guru Nanak's hymns along with those of his four successors and other religious poets like Baba Farid, Ravidas (also known as Raidas) and Kabir in the Adi Granth Sahib.

They belonged to a number of castes but traders, agriculturists, artisans and craftsmen predominated. This may have something to do with Guru Nanak's insistence that his followers must be householders and should

adopt productive and useful occupations. They were also expected to contribute to the general funds of the community of followers. By the beginning of the seventeenth century the town of Ramdasapur (Amritsar) had developed around the central Gurdwara called Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple). It was virtually self-governing and modern historians refer to the early seventeenth century Sikh community as ‘a state within the state’. The Mughal emperor Jahangir looked upon them as a potential threat and he ordered the execution of Guru Arjan in 1606. The Sikh movement began to get politicized in the seventeenth century, a development which culminated in the institution of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699. The community of the Sikhs, called the Khalsa Panth, became a political entity.

The changing historical situation during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries influenced the development of the Sikh movement. The ideas of Guru Nanak had a huge impact on this development from the very beginning. He emphasized the importance of the worship of one God. He insisted that caste, creed or gender was irrelevant for attaining liberation. His idea of liberation was not that of a state of inert bliss but rather the pursuit of active life with a strong sense of social commitment.

He himself used the terms *nam*, *dan* and *isnan* for the essence of his teaching, which actually meant right worship, welfare of others and purity of conduct. His teachings are now remembered as *nam-japna*, *kirt-karna* and *vand-chhakna*, which also underline the importance of right belief and worship, honest living, and helping others. Thus, Guru Nanak’s idea of equality had social and political implications. This might partly explain the difference between the history of the followers of Guru Nanak and the history of the followers of the other religious figures of the medieval centuries, like Kabir, Ravidas and Dadu whose ideas were very similar to those of Guru Nanak.

## **Martin Luther and the Reformation:**

The sixteenth century was a time of religious ferment in Europe as well. One of the most important leaders of the changes that took place within Christianity was Martin Luther (1483-1546). Luther felt that several practices in the Roman Catholic Church went against the teachings of the Bible. He encouraged the use of the language of ordinary people rather than Latin, and translated the Bible into German. Luther was strongly opposed to the practice of “indulgences” or making donations to the Church so as to gain forgiveness from sins. His writings were widely disseminated with the growing use of the printing press. Many Protestant Christian sects trace their origins to the teachings of Luther.

## **Mirabai**

Mirabai (c. fifteenth-sixteenth centuries) is perhaps the best-known woman poet within the *bhakti* tradition. Biographies have been reconstructed primarily from the *bhajans* attributed to her, which were transmitted orally for centuries. According to these, she was a Rajput princess from Merta in Marwar who was married against her wishes to a prince of the Sisodia clan of Mewar, Rajasthan. She defied her husband and did not submit to the traditional role of wife and mother, instead recognising Krishna, the avatar of Vishnu, as her lover. Her in-laws tried to poison her, but she escaped from the palace to live as a wandering saint composing songs that are characterised by intense expressions of emotion.

According to some traditions, her preceptor was Raidas, a leather worker. This would indicate her defiance of the norms of caste society. After rejecting the comforts of her husband’s palace, she is supposed to have donned the white robes of a widow or the saffron robe of the renouncer. Although Mirabai did not attract a sect or group of followers, she has been recognised as a source of inspiration for centuries. Her songs continue to be sung by women and men, especially those who are poor and considered “low caste” in Gujarat and Rajasthan.

The *bhakti* movement was not only a religious movement. It also influenced social ideas. The earlier *bhakti* teachers such as those of the Tamil devotional cult and saints such as Chaitanya were largely concerned with religion. But Kabir and Nanak in particular also had ideas on how society should be organized. They both objected to the division of society into castes. They disapproved of the low status given to women. They encouraged women to join their menfolk in various activities. When the followers of Kabir and Nanak gathered together, women were included in the gathering. Some of the finest hymns were composed by a woman—Mirabai. She was a princess, from Rajasthan who gave up her life of luxury and became a devotee of Krishna.

## Language and Literature

The *bhakti* teachers throughout India always taught in the language of the region so that the ordinary people could understand them. The languages which the people spoke were something like our present Indian languages. In fact our languages have developed from these early forms. The two forms of Hindi, Braj and Avadhi, were used. Punjabi was beginning to emerge in the north; Gujarati in western India and Bengali in eastern India, Marathi in the north-west Decan, Kannada in the region around Mysore, Telugu in Andhra and of course Tamil had been spoken for many centuries in the region south of Andhra. Oriya (spoken in Orissa), Assamese and Sindhi had their origin about this time as also did Malayalam in Kerala. Some of these languages grew out of *apabhramshas* and *Prakrits*.

Since the court language in most parts of the country was now Persian, many of the regional languages were influenced by Persian and Persian words came into their vocabularies. Out of the mixture of Persian and Hindi there grew a new language— Urdu The word Urdu literally means ‘camp’ and Urdu was the language used by the soldiers with different mother tongues in talking to one another The grammar was the same as that of Hindi, but the words were taken from Persian, Turkish and Hindi. The Urdu that was spoken in the Deccan was however more strongly influenced by Telugu and Marathi. Gradually Urdu was to become the most commonly spoken language in the towns. Along the west coast, Arabic was used by the traders from western Asia and Arabic influenced the local languages as well.

Sanskrit continued to be used by a limited number of people. It was used in the religious rituals of the *shaiivites* and *vaishnavites*, it was also used on ceremonial occasions in the courts of certain Hindu rulers, such as the kings of Vijayanagara. It remained a language of higher learning. Much of the popular literature in Sanskrit such as the *Puranas*, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* was now available in the regional languages. The writings of Kamban in Tamil and Pothana in Telugu made their works available to people who did not know Sanskrit.

| TIMELINE  |  |
|---|--|
| SOME MAJOR RELIGIOUS TEACHERS IN THE SUBCONTINENT |  |
| c. 500-800 CE                                     | Appar. Sambandar. Sundaramurti in Tamil Nadu   |
| c. 800-900  | Nammalvar, Manikkavachakar. Andal, Tondaradippodi in Tamil Nadu  |
| c. 1000-1100                                      | Al Hujwiri. Data Ganj Bakhsh in the Punjab: Ramanujacharya in Tamil Nadu   |
| c. 1100-1200                                      | Basavanna in Karnataka   |
| c. 1200-1300                                      | Jnanadeva. Muktabai in Maharashtra: Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti in Rajasthan: Bahauddin Zakariyya and Fariduddin Ganj-i Shakar in the Punjab: Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki in Delhi   |
| c. 1300-1400                                      | Lal Ded in Kashmir: Lal Shahbaz Qalandar in Sind:<br>Nizamuddin Auliya in Delhi: Ramananda in Uttar Pradesh: Chokhamela in Maharashtra:<br>Sharafuddin Yahya Maneri in Bihar   |
| c. 1400-1500                                      | Kabir, Raidas, Surdas in Uttar Pradesh: Baba Guru Nanak in the Punjab: Vallabhacharya in Gujarat: Abdullah Shattari in Gwalior: Muhammad Shah Alam in Gujarat: Mir Sayyid Muhammad Gesu Daraz in Gulbarga, Shankaradeva in Assam: Tukaram in Maharashtra |
| c. 1500-1600                                      | Sri Chaitanya in Bengal: Mirabai in Rajasthan: Shaikh Abdul Quddus Gangohi. Malik Muhammad Jaisi, Tulsidas in Uttar Pradesh  |
| c. 1600-1700                                      | Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi in Haryana: Miyan Mir in the Punjab  |

*Note: These time frames indicate the approximate period during which these teachers lived.*



# 3

# The Delhi Sultanate in Medieval

## The Delhi Sultanate

### RAJPUT DYNASTIES

|                    |                              |
|--------------------|------------------------------|
| Tomaras            | early twelfth century - 1165 |
| Ananga Pala        | 1130 - 1145                  |
| Chauhans           | 1165 - 1192                  |
| Prithviraj Chauhan | 1175 - 1192                  |

### EARLY TURKISH RULERS 1206-1290

|                      |             |
|----------------------|-------------|
| Qutbuddin Aybak      | 1206 - 1210 |
| Shamsuddin Iltutmish | 1210 - 1236 |
| Raziyya              | 1236 - 1240 |
| Ghiyasuddin Balban   | 1266 - 1287 |



Iltutmish's tomb



Alai Darwaza

### KHALJI DYNASTY 1290 - 1320

|                   |             |
|-------------------|-------------|
| Jalaluddin Khalji | 1290 - 1296 |
| Alauddin Khalji   | 1296 - 1316 |

### TUGHLUQ DYNASTY 1320 - 1414

|                     |             |
|---------------------|-------------|
| Ghiyasuddin Tughluq | 1320 - 1324 |
| Muhammad Tughluq    | 1324 - 1351 |
| Firuz Shah Tughluq  | 1351 - 1388 |

### SAYYID DYNASTY 1414 - 1451

|            |             |
|------------|-------------|
| Khizr Khan | 1414 - 1421 |
|------------|-------------|

### LODI DYNASTY 1451 - 1526

|             |             |
|-------------|-------------|
| Bahlul Lodi | 1451 - 1489 |
|-------------|-------------|



## Introduction

The post-Gupta age in northern India was mainly an age of small kingdoms. Time and again ruler, such as Harsha, tried to establish an empire. But the attempts were seldom successful. The desire to build an empire did not however disappear. There were three large kingdoms in the period from about A.D. 750 to 1000 which continually fought each other and tried to gain control over northern India. None of them succeeded for any length of time.

## The Struggle for Kanauj

Many of the campaigns in northern India were fought over the city of Kanauj. This had been the capital of Harasha and remained an important city. It was well-situated in the northern plain because whoever captured Kanauj could control the Ganga valley. Three major kingdoms were involved in this struggle and they occupied Kanauj in turn. Modern historians have referred to this as the tripartite (i.e. three party) struggle for Kanauj. The three kingdoms were those of the Rashtrakutas, the Pratiharas and the Palas.

**The Rashtrakutas** were ruling in the northern Deccan in the region around Nasik. Their capital was at Malkhed, a beautiful and prosperous city. As we have seen they had been fighting in the peninsula with the Pallavas and the Chalukyas. But they had an ambitious king, Amoghavarsha, who wanted Rashtrakuta power to be as strong in northern India as it was in the Deccan. So, he attempted to control the north by capturing Kanauj.

**The Pratiharas** ruled in Avanti and parts of southern Rajasthan. They had once been a family of local officials but were now an independent dynasty of kings. They first became powerful after defeating what the sources of time describe as the *mlechchhas*. The term *mlechchha* means a person who is a barbarian or outcaste, and it was used to describe most foreigners. We do not know exactly who the *mlechchhas* were in this case, but probably the reference is to the Arabs. The Arabs had by now conquered and occupied Sind. The Pratiharas after their success with the Arabs, took their armies eastwards and by the end of the eighth century had captured Kanauj.

**But the Pala kings** ruling in Bengal were also interested in capturing Kanauj. The Palas ruled for about four hundred years and their kingdom consisted of almost the whole of Bengal and much of Bihar. The first Pala king was Gopala. He was elected king by the nobles because the previous ruler had died without an heir. Gopala is remembered for having established the Pala dynasty.

**Gopala's son, Dharmapala**, was to make the dynasty even more powerful. In the early part of his reign he was defeated by the Rashtrakuta king. However, Dharmapala reorganized his army and attacked Kanauj. The Palas organized their power partly by building a strong army and partly by making alliances with the neighbouring kingdoms. For example, a treaty of friendship was concluded between the Pala king and the king of Tibet. In addition, the Palas like the Cholas of south India took an interest in the Indian trade with South-East Asia. They encouraged their merchants to take part in this trade.

But the Palas did not hold Kanauj for very long. The Pratiharas recovered their strength during the reign of king Bhoja. He ruled from about A.D. 836 to 882 and was the most renowned king of northern India at that time. He was a mighty warrior and recaptured Kanauj for the Pratiharas. However, when Bhoja tried to attack the Rashtrakutas, he was defeated by the famous Rashtrakuta king, Dhruva. An Arab merchant Sulaiman wrote an account of India in about 851. In it he refers to the king of 'Juzr' as a powerful king ruling over a rich kingdom. Historians believe that 'Juzr' was probably the Arabic name for Gujarat and the king described by Sulaiman was probably Bhoja. Bhoja is also remembered for his interest in literature and for his patronage of *vaishnavism*. Some of his coins have a picture of the *varaha* (boar) incarnation of Vishnu and he also took the title of *adivara*. There is a legend that he abdicated after a long reign, but this may not be true.

In 916, the Rashtrakutas reorganized their power and again attacked Kanauj. But by now all three of the kingdoms interested in Kanauj—the Rashtrakutas, the Palas and the Pratiharas—were exhausted by their continuous wars against each other.

They were busy fighting among themselves that they did not realize how weak they had all become. Within a hundred years all three of these kingdoms had declined. The later Chalukyas were ruling in the area where the Rashtrakutas had ruled. The Pala kingdom was threatened by Chola armies and was later ruled by the Sena dynasty. The Pratihara kingdom was breaking up into a number of states some of which were associated with the rise of the Rajputs.

## The Rajputs and Traditions of Heroism

In the nineteenth century, the region that constitutes most of present-day Rajasthan, was called Rajputana by the British. While this may suggest that this was an area that was inhabited only or mainly by Rajputs, this is only partly true. There were (and are) several groups who identify themselves as Rajputs in many areas of northern and central India. And of course, there are several peoples other than Rajputs who live in Rajasthan.

However, the Rajputs are often recognised as contributing to the distinctive culture of Rajasthan.

Delhi first became the capital of a kingdom under the Tomara Rajputs, who were defeated in the middle of the twelfth century by the Chauhans (also referred to as Chahamanas) of Ajmer. It was under the Tomaras and Chauhans that Delhi became an important commercial centre. Many rich Jaina merchants lived in the city and constructed several temples. Coins minted here, called dehlival, had a wide circulation.

The Lodi dynasty was the last dynasty to rule from Delhi before the Mughals conquered northern India. The Sultanate had become small and weak, since many of its provinces had broken away and set themselves up as independent kingdoms.

The Lodi kings tried to make the nobles feel the power of the Sultan. But the nobles did not like this. They had got used to their own independent power. So they decided that they would get rid of the Lodi kings. They plotted with the ruler of Kabul, Babar, and asked him for help. Babar was a descendent of Timur. Babar had carried out raids as far as the Indian frontier and knew that India was a rich and fertile land. So when the nobles asked for help, he agreed and brought his army into the Punjab.

The transformation of Delhi into a capital that controlled vast areas of the subcontinent started with the foundation of the Delhi Sultanate in the beginning of the thirteenth century. The Delhi Sultans built many cities in the area that we now know as Delhi.

The Rajputs have a long and interesting history. Where they came from and who they were, remains something of a mystery. Historians think that some of them belonged to certain Central Asian tribes which settled in India after the Huns had invaded northern India. They were divided into clans. The Rajputs always insisted that they were of the *kshatrya* caste. Their kings ordered family histories to be written which connected them with either the sun-family (*surya-vamshi*) or the moon-family (*chandra-vamsha*) of ancient Indian kings. But there were four clans which claimed that they had not descended from either of these two families, but from the fire-family (*agni-kula*). These four clans were the most important in the history of this period. They were the Pratiharas (or Pariharas), Chauhans (or Chahamanas), Solankis (or Chaulukyas) and Pawars (or Paramaras).

These four *agni-kula* clans established their power in western India and parts of central India and Rajasthan. The Pariharas ruled in the region of Kanauj. The Chauhans were strong in central Rajasthan. Solanki power rose in the region of Kathiawar and the surrounding areas. The Pawars established themselves in the region of Malwa with their capital at Dhar near Indore. Most of these dynasties began as small rulers under the Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas, and they later rebelled against their overlords and declared their independence.

Other minor rulers also became powerful and gradually built small kingdoms in various parts of northern India, such as those of Nepal, Kamarupa (in Assam), Kashmir, and Utkala (in Orissa). Many of the hill states of the Punjab came into being at this time, including Champaka (Chamba), Durgara (Jammu) and Kuluta (Kulu). But these kingdoms were either in the hills or else were far away from the Rajput kingdoms and did not therefore take part in the history of the Rajputs. The kingdoms which did take part were those of Central India and Rajasthan—such as those of the Chandellas in Bundelkhand, or the Guhilas in Mewar to the south of the Chauhans. To the north-east of the Chauhans were the Tomaras and they ruled in Haryana and the region around Delhi.

## Mahmud of Ghazni

Ghazni was a small kingdom in Afghanistan which was founded by a Turkish nobleman of the tenth century. One of his successors Mahmud wanted to make Ghazni into a big and powerful kingdom, so he decided to conquer a part of Central Asia. But in order to do this he needed a large, well-equipped army. This in turn meant that he required money in order to pay the soldiers and buy the equipment. He had heard that the country neighbouring Afghanistan—India—was extremely rich.

The first raid began in A.D. 1000. In a short period of twenty five years Mahmud made seventeen raids. In between he fought battles in Central Asia and in Afghanistan. These raids terrified the inhabitants of northern India, particularly as he was after gold and money, and he destroyed anyone who tried to stop him. Later he annexed the Punjab and made it a part of his kingdom. Between A.D. 1010 and 1025, Mahmud attacked only the temple towns in northern India. He had heard that there was much gold and jewellery kept in the big temples in India, so he destroyed the temples and took away the gold and jewellery. One of these attacks which is

frequently mentioned was the destruction of the temple in Somnath in western India. Destroying temples had another advantage. He

They also began as small rulers under the Pratiharas, but they broke away when the Pratiharas became weak. The Tomaras built the city of Dhilhka (Delhi) in A.D 736. Later the Chauhans defeated the Tomaras and annexed their kingdom. It was a prince of the Chauhan dynasty, Prithviraj III, who is the hero of the famous ballad *Prithviraja-raso* composed later by the Hindi poet Chandbardai.

These kingdoms were always fighting each other largely to show off their strength. All these battles made them weak. When they were threatened by invasions from the north-west, they could not defend themselves properly. The first of these invaders was Mahmud of Ghazni could claim, as he did, that he had obtained religious merit by destroying images.

In 1030 Mahmud died and the people of northern India felt relieved. Yet, although Mahmud was so destructive in India, in his own country he was responsible for building a beautiful mosque and a large library. He was the patron of the famous Persian poet, Firdausi, who wrote the epic poem *Shah Namah*. Mahmud also sent the Central Asian scholar Alberuni to India. Alberuni lived here for many years and finally wrote an excellent book on India, describing the country and the condition of the people

## Muhammad Ghorī

The raids of Mahmud of Ghazni were largely to obtain booty. But later towards the end of the twelfth century came the invasion of Muhammed Ghorī. He was also the ruler of a small kingdom in Afghanistan. But he was interested in conquering northern India and adding it to his kingdom, and not merely in getting gold and jewellery. Punjab had already been a part of the Ghazni kingdom. This was useful to Muhammad Ghorī in planning his campaign in India.

Muhammad's campaigns were well-organized and when he had conquered territory, he left a general behind to govern it in his absence. Muhammad had often to face trouble in Afghanistan, so he was always going from Afghanistan to India and back. His most important campaign in India was against the Chauhan ruler, Prithviraj III. Muhammad defeated him in the second battle of Tarain in 1192. This opened the Delhi area to Muhammad and he began to establish his power. But in 1206 he was murdered. His territory in northern India was left in control of his general Qutb-ud-din Aibak.

This was the beginning of the Turkish rule at Delhi. The question is often asked as to how in a short period of fourteen years, the Turks had succeeded in conquering many of the important cities and trade routes of northern India. The answer lies not only in the political activities of the north Indian kingdoms but in the manner in which their economy and society was organized.

## Economic Organization

One of the biggest changes which took place in the medieval period was that the system of collecting revenue was no longer the same as it had been in the ancient period. Now the king did not have direct control over the revenue. This change affected other aspects of life as well.

We noticed in the Gupta period that some of the officers were not paid their salaries in cash but in grants of revenue. That is, the revenue from a certain village or a piece of land was assigned or granted to an officer. The revenue was equal to the amount of money he would normally receive as salary. The officer did not at first have any rights of ownership over the land. He could only claim the revenue from the land. By the time we come to the medieval period many such officers had begun to claim that they owned the land as well. The systems of paying salaries by grants of revenue of land increased in the medieval period. Persons who received such grants, that is, the grantees of feudatories came to be called by various titles (some of which such as *rai* and *thakur* continued until recent times). The grantees were of various kinds. Some were officers, others were local chief who had been defeated in battle but were allowed to keep their land in the form of a grant. Another big group of grantees were *brahmins* and learned men who were often actually given the land as well as the right to collect the revenue from the land. Such grants were called *agrahara* or *brah-madeya* grants. The *brahmins* who received grants had no further obligations to the king. They and their families could live comfortably off the revenue of the land. This was much the same situation as that of the *brah-madeya* grants in south India. But the other grantees did have further obligations to the king. The grantee collected the revenue from the peasant. He kept the major part of it for himself, but a small part of it he had to send to the king. He was also

ordered to maintain troops for the king, which the king could demand whenever he wanted.

As the number of grantees increased, more and more land went into the hands of the grantees. Therefore the total amount of revenue which came to the king decreased. Sometimes a district containing a large number of villages would be granted to a high official, for example a minister. Since it was not possible for him to collect the revenue himself from all the villages, he would in turn grant the villages to persons subordinate to (him who would collect the revenue from the peasants. Thus a number of intermediaries (or persons coming in between) came into existence between the peasant and the king.

This change in the system of revenue collection resulted in many other changes. The officers were now less dependent on the king. Those who had large grants of land often behaved like independent rulers. The peasants who cultivated the land began to pay more attention to the feudatories since they were the ones who had direct control over the peasants. In the earlier period the officers had collected the revenue in the name of the king. Now the revenue was being collected in the name of the officer. So the king became someone who lived far away and had little to do with the peasants. Previously, all the revenue had gone to the king, so if he wanted to build a large strong army, he could spend an extra amount from the revenue on the army. But now the revenue was divided up between the feudatories and the king so the king could not spend extra amount on the army. This was one reason why the kingdoms of the north could not defend themselves properly against the Turkish attacks.

The relationship between the king and the feudatories became a difficult one. The king was supposed to have control over the feudatories, but they could be troublesome if they wished. A feudatory could weaken the position of the king if he was slow in sending the king's share of the revenue or if he cheated in supplying troops to the king when they were needed. The more the king depended on the feudatory, the weaker he became. Sometimes the king could take away the grant made to the feudatory. But this rarely happened, because the feudatory was usually powerful. Thus the king had to be very careful in dealing with him.

The feudatories were very jealous of each other. Although they were all working for the same king, they were often rivals. This rivalry led to many wars. They were quick to take offence if anything unpleasant was said or done. Every dispute was settled through a fight, either a challenge from one feudatory to another or else a battle. Fighting was also a means of showing off. It therefore often became a useless way of spending revenue. When a feudatory felt that he had become powerful enough, he would declare his independence from the reigning king and set up his own kingdom. Often the king was too weak and could do little to stop the feudatory. Thus the Rashtrakutas who began as feudatories of the Chalukyas, declared their independence and finally overthrew the Chalukyas. They were in turn overthrown by their feudatories, the later Chalukyas. Similarly the Chandellas declared their independence from the Pratiharas. In the same way the Cholas in the south had begun as feudatories. When a feudatory wished to declare his independence, he used high-sounding titles such as *maharaj-adhiraja* (the king of kings). Of course these titles were not precise but they sounded impressive. The people who suffered most in this system were the peasants. They not only paid the revenue to the lord, but they had to do all kinds of free labour for him as well. Often the feudal lord made the peasants pay extra taxes too, such as taxes on using water for irrigation, roads, and mills. The peasant could not appeal to the king because the king's power over the feudatory was limited. In these conditions it made little difference to him whether the king was Rajput or a Turk. The peasant just went on working harder and harder but remained generally poor.

## Society

In spite of the fact that the king's position, politically and economically, had become weaker now as compared to the earlier period, kings lived in great pomp and show. Much of their income was spent in building beautiful palaces and temples, in wearing costly clothes and jewellery and on the life of the court. The fashions set by the king were copied by the feudatories. Attending the court of the king were not only the feudatories but also the wealthy *brahmins*. Many of them were rich and powerful since they too were grantees and owned land. They got more revenue from the land since they kept all of it for themselves and did not have to pay taxes to the king. Land-owning *brahmins* lived in great comfort as they did not even cultivate the land themselves. It was cultivated by the *shudra* peasants for them. In return for the land they conducted the religious ceremonies and rituals for the king. Some also wrote biographies of the king and histories of the kingdom or poems in praise of the king. A number of *brahmins* were also employed as officers.

People living in the towns were still mainly artisans and traders. Trade with the Mediterranean world and western Asia was well developed largely due to the Arab traders living on the west coast of India. Indian goods were also being sent to towns in East Africa.

India exported saffron, silk, cotton and woollen cloth, precious stones scented wood and spices. The most important item which was brought into India were horses. These came from Central Asia and from Arabia and Indian merchants paid huge prices for good horses. Wine and dates were also imported in large amounts from western Asia. In all the groups in society, the *shudras* had the most difficult life. They were the poorest because most of them were either cultivators or peasants. All over the world at this time, the peasants were badly treated. The serfs in Europe, and the peasants in China also suffered. They were the ones who produced the food and therefore everyone was dependent on them. But in spite of this they had very few rights and could not appeal to anyone or protest against the hardships which they had to bear. In India, they were also looked down upon because of their low caste. Sometimes when they were very badly treated they tried to run away to a different part of the country. But even this was seldom.

## Education and Learning

The *ivahmim* were responsible not only for performing the religious ceremonies but also for teaching. The schools were held in the temples where the higher caste children were taught. Most of them learnt Sanskrit and mathematics and read the religious books. At Nalanda (in Bihar), there was a famous Buddhist monastery and university. In the Gupta period there had been a keen interest, in all aspects of learning, especially in science. But all this had now changed. The interest in science was declining. Indian scholars were not interested in making new discoveries. They were content to go

on repeating what they already knew. Even the knowledge that they had, was often used for the wrong purposes. For example the discoveries of Aryabhata in astronomy were not used in order to make further discoveries about the earth and the sun and the universe. Instead they were mixed up with ignorant and superstitious ideas about astrology. Indian medical knowledge had been world famous, but now new knowledge in this subject was stopped because it was said that anyone who touched a dead body would lose caste. This was all most unfortunate because in other parts of the world, especially in the Arab countries and in China there was a great advance in knowledge during this period. India was therefore getting left behind.

**Sanskrit** was still the language of learning and of literature. Perhaps the most popular work in Sanskrit was the *Katha-saritasagara*, a collection of stories. Biographies of kings were also written, such as Bilhana's *Vikramanka-deva-charita*. Kalhana's remarkable history of Kashmir called the *Rajata-rangam* was written in the twelfth century. The worship of Krishna had increased in northern India and the story of the love of Radha and Krishna was very popular. Many poems were written on this theme and Jayadeva's *Gita Govinda* was one of these.

In addition to Sanskrit, other languages were developing. These were to become the languages with which we are familiar today as regional languages. They arose out of the *apabhramsha* languages spoken by the common people. *Apabhramsha* literally means something which is broken or crooked, and referred to the languages of the people as against classical Sanskrit which was the language of the educated higher castes. The early forms of Marathi and Gujarati were being spoken in western India and Bengali in eastern India.

## The rise of Delhi Sultanate During 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century

### The Slave Sultans (A.D. 1206-1290)

The earliest rulers of the Delhi Sultanate were the Mamluks. They are also known as the Slave Kings because many of them were either slaves or were the sons of slaves who had become Sultans. The first of these kings was Qutb-ud-din Aibak, the general of Muhammad Ghori. On the death of Ghori, Qutb-ud-din decided to stay in India and establish a kingdom. The ruler of Ghazni tried to annex the territory held by Qutb-ud-din but failed. When Iltutmish succeeded Qutb-ud-din as Sultan, it was clear that northern India would be a separate kingdom. It was then that the new kingdom which is now called the Delhi Sultanate was established. The Sultans of Delhi gradually extended their control up to Bengal in the east and Sind in the west.

But it was not an easy job to rule over the Sultanate, The Sultan faced two big problems.

1. One concerned his own followers and the other the local rulers of northern India. There were many Turkish nobles and slaves from Central Asia who had settled in India. The Sultan parcelled out his territory among these nobles and in return they provided him with soldiers and assisted him in the administration of the Sultanate. As was the case in earlier times in northern India, only the revenue of the land was granted and

not the land itself. In this way the Sultan thought he could keep control over the nobles. But the nobles were not always satisfied with their grants and the Sultan found it difficult to keep them contented. There was also the problem of the local Indian rulers who had been conquered. Some had their land taken from them, and others were allowed to keep it. In the case of the latter they paid a sum of money as tribute and agreed to help the Sultan with military support when required. Among these rulers were the Rajput chiefs who had been defeated. They gathered soldiers around them and kept harassing the armies of the Sultanate. However not all the Rajputs were hostile. Some established a friendly relationship with the Sultanate.

Further north there was new trouble. The rulers of Afghanistan were quiet, but the Mongol people of Central Asia, led by Chenghiz Khan, made fresh conquests. The area along the Indus river came under Mongol domination. Every now and then they would cross the river and attack the Punjab. For some years they actually conquered the Punjab and threatened the Sultanate.

### **Raziya Sultan**

In 1236 Sultan Iltutmish's daughter, Raziya, became Sultan. The chronicler of the age, Minhaj-i Siraj, recognised that she was more able and qualified than all her brothers. But he was not comfortable at having a queen as ruler. Nor were the nobles happy at her attempts to rule independently. She was removed from the throne in 1240.

Minhaj-i Siraj thought that the queen's rule went against the ideal social order created by God, in which women were supposed to be subordinate to men. He therefore asked: "In the register of God's creation, since her account did not fall under the column of men, how did she gain from all of her excellent qualities?"

On her inscriptions and coins Raziya mentioned that she was the daughter of Sultan Iltutmish. This was in contrast to the queen Rudramadevi (1262-1289), of the Kakatiya dynasty of Warangal, part of modern Andhra Pradesh. Rudramadevi changed her name on her inscriptions and pretended she was a man. Another queen, Didda, ruled in Kashmir (980-1003). Her title is interesting: it comes from "didi" or "elder sister", an obviously affectionate term given to a loved ruler by her subjects.

### **Balban**

These were some of the problems which the Sultan Iltutmish had to face. When he died, his daughter Raziya had also to face these problems. Being a woman ruler, made it even more difficult for her. But she ruled for only a short while. After a number of less important Sultans came Balban, a strong and iron-willed Sultan.

Balban was more successful in solving these problems than Iltutmish had been. He defended the Sultanate from the attacks of the Mongols on the north. He fought against the local rulers who troubled him both within the Sultanate and on its borders. His biggest problem was that the nobles had become very powerful and were threatening the position of the Sultan.

Slowly but firmly, Balban broke their power and finally the position of the Sultan became all-important. He even managed to win the loyalty of the nobles. He succeeded partly because of the changes which he made in the organization of the army and the administration. He insisted that the Sultan must have full control over the army and the administration. He was thus able to curb any revolt among the nobles.

Balban believed that the power of the Sultan was absolute and that no one could challenge it. He had heard about the great emperors of Iran, the Achaemenids and the Sassanians and he modelled himself on them. He encouraged people to do the *sijdah* in his presence, that is, they had to kneel and touch the ground with their forehead in salutation to him. The orthodox Muslims were horrified at this, because according to Islam all men are equal, and therefore no one should do the *sijdah* before anyone else except God.

### **The Khalji Sultans (1290-1320)**

The Slave Sultans were succeeded by a new dynasty of kings in 1290 called the Khaljis. Among them was the ambitious young man, Ala-ud-din, who became Sultan in 1296. Ala-ud-din had even bigger dreams than Balban. He wanted to become a second Alexander and conquer the world. He began by trying to establish an all-India empire. For this he needed to do three things: to win the loyalty of the nobles and to curb their power, to conquer the Deccan and Rajasthan, and to force the Mongols to withdraw. (Even though the Mongols had by now been converted to Islam, they threatened the power of the Sultanate). But in order to do all this he also

needed a large army. He gave presents of gold to the citizens when he became Sultan. Yet at the same time he made it clear that he was a strong and powerful ruler and that he would deal severely with anyone who showed signs of disloyalty.

A vast sum of money was required in order to maintain a large army. So Ala-ud-din had to think of ways of getting more revenue. He raised the land taxes on the wealthier people of the Doab (the fertile-area between the Ganga and Yamuna rivers). In addition to this he kept a strict watch on the revenue which the nobles got from their land and did not allow them to keep anything which was not their due. The prices of goods were also controlled so that no one could make large profits and everyone could afford to pay the price demanded. Another important thing which he did was to order a new assessment of the cultivated land and the revenue. First the land under cultivation in his kingdom was measured. Then the revenue from the land was assessed on the basis of this measurement. By ordering this new assessment he was also able to record the amount of revenue collected by various persons, and to keep a control on it.

The Mongols at this time had troubles of their own, so for a short while they ceased to be a danger to the Sultanate. Ala-ud-din could therefore give his full attention to the rulers of western India. He campaigned against the kingdoms of Gujarat and Malwa. He tried to establish his control over Rajasthan by capturing the famous forts of Ranthambhor and Chittor.

Ala-ud-din also sent a large army southwards under Malik Kafur. The intention was not only to conquer the peninsula but also to try and obtain money and wealth. Malik Kafur plundered in all directions and gathered together a large amount of gold from the various kingdoms of the south, including the Yadavas at Devagiri, the Kakatiyas at Warangal and the Hoya-salas at Dvarasamudra. These rulers were allowed to keep their throne provided they paid a tribute. Malik Kafur even attacked the city of Madurai. No north Indian army had managed to come so far south before. Thus for a very brief period Ala-ud-din ruled over an empire almost as large that of Ashoka. However his control over the northern Deccan remained indirect.

The last of the Khaliji rulers was killed and another family—the Tughluqs—began to rule from Delhi.

### **The Tughluq Sultans (A.D. 1320-1399)**

The Tughluqs also wished to rule an all-India empire. To begin with they succeeded but soon the reverse began to happen. For a time they not only kept hold over the Deccan, but began to rule over it directly. This situation changed when the Sultanate gradually became weak. The governors of some of the more distant provinces and the southern areas, noticed the weakness of the Sultan and rebelled and finally set themselves up as rulers of independent kingdoms.

### **Muhammad-bin-Tughluq**

One of the more important Tughluq rulers was Muhammad-bin-Tughluq (1325-51). A wide variety of sources provide information on the reign of Muhammad. The North African Arab traveller, Ibn Battutah, was in India during this time and has left a detailed description of the condition of the country under Muhammad. Muhammad was a man of ideals and tried, as far as possible, to rule on the principles of reason. He had as advisers a mathematician and a logician. Many of his ideas were very sensible and rational but they did not work out well because he did not do the right things to make them work.

Muhammad wanted to conquer territory not only in India but also in Central Asia. This meant, as usual, a large army and therefore large amounts of money to pay for the army. So in order to get more money, he increased the taxes which the peasants had to pay in the Doab area. What made it worse was that just then there was a famine in the Doab.

Muhammad also transferred the capital from Delhi to Devagiri (which he renamed Daulatabad). Daulatabad (near modern Aurangabad) would have been a better place for controlling the Deccan. The moving of the capital was however not a success, It was too far from northern India and the Sultan could not keep a watch on the northern frontiers. So Muhammad returned to Delhi and Delhi became the capital once more. The southern kingdoms saw this as a sign of weakness on the part of the Sultanate. Soon after this two independent kingdoms arose in the Deccan—the Bahmani and the Vijayanagara kingdoms—and the Sultanate now had no say in the matters of the Deccan.

Another experiment which Muhammad tried also ended in failure. This was again a part of his attempt to obtain more money. The Sultan decided to issue 'token' coins in brass and copper which could be exchanged

for silver coins from the treasury.

Unfortunately for Muhammad his policies tended to go wrong and he gradually lost the support not only of the people but also many of the nobles and the *ulema*. The *ulema* were the scholars of Islamic learning who were generally orthodox in their outlook. If he had had more cooperation from the nobles and the *ulema* and the people, he would have been better advised and some of his policies might have succeeded.

### Firoz Shah

After Muhammad, his cousin Firoz Shah came to the throne (1351-88), Firoz realized that one of the reasons for the failure of Muhammad was that he did not have the support of the nobles and the *ulema*. So Firoz made his peace with them and kept them content by giving them grants of revenue. He was lenient in his dealings with the nobles. He allowed the orthodox *ulema* to influence state policy in certain matters. He was less tolerant not only of the non-Muslim but also of those Muslims who were not orthodox. Thus Firoz improved his relationship with the powerful groups at the court but at the same time the power of the Sultan decreased. Meanwhile the governors of certain provinces, in what is now Bihar and Bengal, had rebelled against the Sultanate.

### Administration and Consolidation under the Khaljis and Tughluqs

The consolidation of a kingdom as vast as the Delhi Sultanate needed reliable governors and administrators. Rather than appointing aristocrats and landed chieftains as governors, the early Delhi Sultans, especially Iltutmish, favoured their special slaves purchased for military service, called *bandagan* in Persian. They were carefully trained to man some of the most important political offices in the kingdom. Since they were totally dependent upon their master, the Sultan could trust and rely upon them.

The Khaljis and Tughluqs continued to use *bandagan* and also raised people of humble birth, who were often their clients, to high political positions. They were appointed as generals and governors. However, this also introduced an element of political instability. Slaves and clients were clients loyal to their masters and patrons, but not to their heirs. New Sultans had their own servants. As a result the accession of a new monarch often saw conflict between the old and the new nobility. The patronage of these humble people by the Delhi Sultans also shocked many elites and the authors of Persian *tawarikh* criticised the **Delhi Sultans for appointing the “low and base-born”** to high offices.

### The Lodi Dynasty (A.D. 1451-1526)

The Lodi kings tried to consolidate the Sultanate. Attempts were made to curb the power of rebellious governors. A long struggle was carried out with the kingdom of Jaunpur and it was finally subdued. Sikandar Lodi (1489-1517) controlled the Ganga valley as far as western Bengal. He moved the capital from Delhi to a new town which later became famous as the city of Agra. He felt that he would be able to control the kingdom better from Agra. Sikandar also tried to strengthen the loyalty of the people by various measures of public welfare. Economic conditions were sought to be improved by maintaining a price control and trying to encourage low prices.

Since the Lodi kings were Afghans, much of their support depended on the loyalty of the Afghan nobles. These nobles were not very happy about the powerful status of the Sultan. Some of them showed their discontent through rebellion. The last of the Lodi Sultans, Ibrahim, was opposed by the leading Afghan nobles. Finally they plotted with Babar, the king of Kabul and succeeded in overthrowing Ibrahim in 1526.

Like the earlier Sultans, the Khalji and Tughluq monarchs appointed military commanders as governors of territories of varying sizes. These lands were called *iqta* and their holder was called *iqtdar* or *muqti*. The duty of the *muqtis* was to lead military campaigns and maintain law and order in their *iqtas*. In exchange for their military services, the *muqtis* collected the revenues of their assignments as salary. They also paid their soldiers from these revenues. Control over *muqtis* was most effective if their office was not inheritable and if they were assigned *iqtas* for a short period of time before being shifted. These harsh conditions of service were rigorously imposed during the reigns of Alauddin Khalji and Muhammad Tughluq. Accountants were appointed by the state to check the amount of revenue collected by the *muqtis*. Care was taken that the *muqti* collected only the taxes prescribed by the state and that he kept the required number of soldiers. As the Delhi Sultans brought the hinterland of the cities under their control, they forced the landed chieftains — the *samanta* aristocrats — and rich landlords to accept their authority. Under Alauddin Khalji the state brought

the assessment and collection of land revenue under its own control. The rights of the local chieftains to levy taxes were cancelled and they were also forced to pay taxes. The Sultan's administrators measured the land and kept careful accounts. Some of the old chieftains and landlords served the Sultanate as revenue collectors and assessors.

**There were three types of taxes –**

- (1) **on cultivation called kharaj and amounting to about 50 per cent of the peasant's produce,**
- (2) **on cattle and**
- (3) **on houses.**

It is important to remember that large parts of the subcontinent remained outside the control of the Delhi Sultans. It was difficult to control distant provinces like Bengal from Delhi and soon after annexing southern India, the entire region became independent. Even in the Gangetic plain there were forested areas that Sultanate forces could not penetrate. Local chieftains established their rule in these regions. Sometimes rulers like Alauddin Khalji and Muhammad Tughluq could force their control in these areas but only for a short duration.

## **Chieftains and their fortifications**

**Ibn Battuta, a fourteenth-century traveller from Morocco**, Africa, explained that chieftains sometimes “fortified themselves in mountains, in rocky, uneven and rugged places as well as in bamboo groves. In India the bamboo is not hollow; it is big. Its several parts are so intertwined that even fire cannot affect them, and they are on the whole very strong. The chieftains live in these forests which serve them as ramparts, inside which are their cattle and their crops. There is also water for them within, that is, rain water which collects there. Hence they cannot be subdued except by powerful armies, who entering these forests, cut down the bamboos with specially prepared instruments.”

The **Mongols under Genghis Khan invaded** Transoxiana in north-east Iran in 1219 and the Delhi Sultanate faced their onslaught soon after. Mongol attacks on the Delhi Sultanate increased during the reign of Alauddin Khalji and in the early years of Muhammad Tughluq's rule. This forced the two rulers to mobilise a large standing army in Delhi which posed a huge administrative challenge. Let us see how the two Sultans dealt with this.

## **The Nobles**

We have often referred to the nobles being powerful. Sometimes they influenced state policy, sometimes as governors they revolted and became independent rulers or else usurped the throne of Delhi. Most of these nobles came of Turkish or Afghan families which had settled in India. Some of them were men who came to India in search of fortune and worked for the Sultan. Most of the officers who worked in the provinces, for instance the provincial governors and the military commanders, came from such families. After the time of Ala-ud-din Khahji, Indian Muslims and Hindus were also appointed as officers.

system of granting the revenue from a piece of land or a village to an officer instead of paying him a salary. The grant was not hereditary and could be transferred from one officer to another. But as was the case in the earlier period, when the central authority became weak the grant began to be regarded as hereditary. The grant of revenue from a territory came to be called the *iqta* system. From the revenue which the officer collected, he kept a certain amount as his salary and another sum to maintain soldiers for the Sultan. The officer was expected to keep a detailed account of his income and expenditure. The officer was also responsible for maintaining law and order in the territory from which he collected the revenue. Sometimes the system was different. The amount which the officers sent to the Sultan was fixed and had to be paid annually. In spite of this the nobles always had enough money for themselves and lived in great luxury. Some of them were however often in debt to the Hindu bankers.

| <b>Alauddin Khalji</b>  | <b>Muhammad Tughluq</b>   |
|---|---|
| Delhi was <b>attacked</b> twice, in 1299/1300 and 1302-03. As a defensive measure, Alauddin Khalji raised a large standing army.  | The Sultanate was <b>attacked</b> in the early years of Muhammad Tughluq's reign. The Mongol army was defeated. Muhammad Tughluq was confident about the strength of his army and his resources to plan an attack on Transoxiana. He therefore raised a large standing army.  |
| Alauddin constructed a new garrison town named Siri for his soldiers. See Map 1.  | Rather than <b>constructing</b> a new garrison town, the oldest of the four cities of Delhi (Delhi-i Kuhna) was emptied of its residents and the soldiers garrisoned there. The residents of the old city were sent to the new capital of Daulatabad in the south.  |
| The soldiers had to be <b>fed</b> . This was done through the produce collected as tax from lands between the Ganga and Yamuna. Tax was fixed at 50 per cent of the peasant's yield.  | Produce from the same area was collected as tax to <b>feed</b> the army. But to meet the need of the large number of soldiers the Sultan levied additional taxes. This coincided with famine in the area.   |
| The soldiers had to be <b>paid</b> . Alauddin chose to pay his soldiers salaries in cash rather than <i>iqtas</i> . The soldiers would buy their supplies from merchants in Delhi and it was thus feared that merchants would raise their prices. To stop this, Alauddin controlled the prices of goods in Delhi. Prices were carefully surveyed by officers, and merchants who did not sell at the prescribed rates were punished. | Muhammad Tughluq also <b>paid</b> his soldiers cash salaries. But instead of controlling prices, he used a "token" currency, somewhat like present-day paper currency, but made out of cheap metals, not gold and silver. People in the fourteenth century did not trust these coins. They were very smart: they saved their gold and silver coins and paid all their taxes to the state with this token currency. Cheap currency could also be counterfeited easily. |
| Alauddin's <b>administrative measures</b> were quite successful. Anti-chroniclers praised his reign for its cheap prices and efficient supplies of goods in the market. He successfully withstood the threat of Mongol invasions.   | Muhammad Tughluq's <b>administrative measures</b> were a failure. His campaign into Kashmir was a disaster. He then gave up his plans to invade Transoxiana and disbanded his large army. Meanwhile, his administrative measures created complications. The shifting of people to Daulatabad was resented. The raising of taxes and famine in the Ganga-Yamuna belt led to widespread rebellion. And finally, the "token" currency had to be recalled.                |

### The Battle of Panipat (20 April 1526)

A conflict with Ibrahim Lodi, the ruler of Delhi, was inevitable, and Babur prepared for it by marching towards Delhi. Ibrahim Lodi met Babur at Panipat with a force estimated at 100,000 men and 1000 elephants. Since the Indian armies generally contained large hordes of servants, the fighting men on

Ibrahim Lodi's side must have been far less than this figure. Babur had crossed the Indus with a force of 12,000, but this had **been** swelled by his army in India, and the large number of Hindustani nobles and soldiers who joined Babur in the Punjab. Even then, Babur's army was numerically inferior. Babur strengthened his position by resting one wing of his army in the city of Panipat which had a large number of houses, and protected the other by means of a ditch filled with branches of trees. In front, he lashed together a large number of carts, to act as a defending wall. Between two carts, breastworks were erected on which soldiers could rest their guns and fire. Babur calls this device an Ottoman (Rumi) device, for it had been used by the Ottomans in their famous battle against Shah Ismail of Iran. Babur had also secured the services of two Ottoman master-gunners, Ustad Ali and Mustafa. The use of gunpowder had been gradually developing in India. Babur says that he used it for the first time in his attack on the fortress of Bhira. Apparently, gunpowder was known in India but its use became common in north India from the time of Babur's advent.

Ibrahim Lodi had no idea of the strongly defended position of Babur. He had apparently expected Babur to

fight a mobile mode of warfare which was usual with the Central Asians, making rapid advance or retreating as the need arose. After skirmishing for seven or eight days, Ibrahim Lodi's forces came out for the fateful battle. Seeing the strength of Babur's position, they hesitated. While Ibrahim was still reorganising his forces, the two extreme wings of Babur's army wheeled round and attacked Ibrahim's forces from the side and rear. Babur's gunners used their guns with good effect from the front. But Babur gives a large part **of the credit** of his victory to his bowmen. Curiously, he makes little reference to Ibrahim's elephants. Apparently, Ibrahim had little time to use them.

Despite these early setbacks, Ibrahim Lodi's army fought valiantly. The battle raged for two or three hours. Ibrahim Lodi fought to the last, with a group of 5000-6000 people around him. It is estimated that besides him, more than 15,000 of his men were killed in the battle.

The battle of Panipat is regarded as one of the decisive battles of Indian history. It broke the back of Lodi power, and brought under Babur's control the entire area up to Delhi and Agra. The treasures stored up by Ibrahim Lodi in Agra relieved Babur from his financial difficulties. The rich territory up to Jaunpur also lay open to Babur. However, Babur had to wage two hard-fought battles, one against Rana Sanga of Mewar and the other against the eastern Afghans, before he could consolidate his hold on this area. Viewed from this angle, the battle of Panipat was not as decisive in the political field as has been made out! Its real importance lies in the fact that it opened a new phase in the struggle for domination in north India.

### The Administration of the Sultanate

The administration of the Sultanate was concerned mainly with the work of collecting and recording the revenue from the land, and of course maintaining law and order. Some of the land was reserved and came directly under the control of the Sultan. The revenue from this land was used for the Sultan's personal expenses. The amount of revenue from such lands was fixed at one-third of the produce and this was the share of the state. The revenue was collected by local officials working in the village and the district. These officials worked in the same way as they had done before the coming of the Turks and the Afghans. The pattern of administration did not change in the villages. There were a number of officials doing this work, such as the *muqaddam* who was the hereditary headman of the village, the *patwari* who kept the local records and the *mushrif* who supervised the accounts and attended to the revenue when it was collected. The records were written in the *bahi* and *khata* of the *patwari*. Many of the names of these village officers are used to this day.

At the court too there were officers who kept records of the revenue. The most important of these officers were the *wazir* and the *bakshi* (pay-master) of the army. The *wazir* and his officers checked the revenue when it came in, and kept a record of the grants.

There were other officers at the court who looked after various aspects of administration. Some were in charge of matters relating to the army and the equipment for the army. Some were concerned with the relationship between the Sultanate and the other states. The chief *qazi* was the chief judge and also gave advice in religious matters. The *wazir* supervised the work of all these officers. The Sultan depended a great deal on the efficiency of the *wazir* and on his advice. But the final decisions were always taken by the Sultan.

The New Kingdoms As the power of the Sultanate gradually declined a number of new kingdoms arose in various parts of the subcontinent. Most of them began as provinces of the Sultanate which gradually became independent.

In western India there were the kingdoms of Gujarat and Malwa. Ahmed Shah who founded the city of Ahmedabad was also responsible for strengthening the power of Gujarat. Malwa became important during the reign of Hushang Shah, who built the beautiful fortress city of Mandu. Gujarat and Malwa were constantly at war with each other and this tended to reduce their power. The same was true of the two Rajput kingdoms of Mewar and Marwar. They were also continually fighting, although the two royal families had been united in marriage. This was another case of Rajput rulers fighting with each other and not with the Sultanate alone. Rana Kumbha of Mewar is remembered to this day. He was a man of many interests, being a poet and musician as well as a ruler. A number of other kingdoms in Rajasthan were also founded around this time such as Bikaner.

The kingdom of Kashmir came into prominence. The most popular of the kings of Kashmir was Zain-ul-Abidin, also known as 'Budshah' who ruled in the fifteenth century. He encouraged scholarship in both Persian and Sanskrit as did Firoz Tughlaq of the Sultanate. To this day, people say that 'Budshah' was a good ruler because he was concerned about the welfare of his subjects.

In eastern India the two important kingdoms were those of Jaunpur and Bengal. Both of these were founded by governors of the Delhi Sultan who had later rebelled against the Sultanate. Jaunpur was ruled by the Sharqi kings, whose ambition it was to capture Delhi. They never actually did so. Jaunpur was later to become an important centre of Hindi literature and learning. Bengal was ruled by kings of different races. They were mainly Turks and Afghans, with short periods when a local chief and later an Abyssinian captured the throne. All these kings were patrons of local culture and encouraged the use of the Bengali language.

In the Deccan and further south there arose two kingdoms, one of which came to be known as the Bahmani kingdom and the other was the kingdom of Vijayanagara. They both arose when the control of the Sultanate over the Deccan became weak during the reign of Muhammad-bin-Tughluq. Again, both these kingdoms were founded by officers of the Sultanate who had rebelled against the Sultan.

**The Bahmani kingdom** was founded, by a man called Hasan Gangu, who worked as an officer under Muhammad-bin-Tughluq. Hasan led a rebellion against the Sultan and proclaimed the independence of the Bahmani kingdom in 1347. He took the title of Bahman Shah and became the first ruler of the dynasty. The Bahmani kingdom included the whole of the northern Deccan up to the river Krishna.

South of this lay the kingdom of Vijayanagara. This was founded by two brothers Harihara and Bukka. They also noticed the declining strength of the Sultanate. They conquered the territory of the Hoysalas (modern Mysore State) and declared themselves the rulers of the independent kingdom of Vijayanagara in 1336. They made Hastinavati (modern Hampi) their capital. Had the Bahmani and Vijayanagara kingdoms been friendly towards each other, they could have become very powerful." But unfortunately they were always at war. There were many reasons for this. One was that both kingdoms claimed the Raichur Doab as part of their territory. This was the rich and fertile land between the Krishna and Tungabhadra rivers which also lay in between the two kingdoms. Another reason was that Golconda in the Bahmani kingdom had diamond mines and the kings of Vijayanagara were eager therefore to conquer Golconda. Yet another reason was that the rulers of both kingdoms were very ambitious and wished to control the peninsula.

The wars were not limited to only two big kingdoms. The smaller kingdoms of the peninsula also had to take sides and fight. There were kingdoms all along the east coast, such as those of Orissa, Andhra and Madurai. These kingdoms suffered because they were being constantly attacked by either the Bahmanis or the rulers of Vijayanagara. Vijayanagara conquered Madurai in 1370. It was also active on the west coast. Revatidvipa (modern Goa) was also annexed and this was an important trade centre. Meanwhile the Bahmani kingdom was busy fighting against its northern neighbours, the kingdoms of Gujarat and Malwa.

All these kingdoms of the subcontinent became powerful because their income came from two sources. One was land revenue and in the more fertile areas such as Jaunpur, this was a rich source of income. The other source was trade. Gujarat and Bengal obtained large profits from overseas trade with western Asia, East Africa, South-East Asia and China. The Bahmani and Vijayanagara kingdoms also took part in this trade. Rajasthan and Malwa flourished on the trade within the sub-continent. Since goods were being transported to various parts of the sub-continent, traders often travelled through these regions. These kingdoms were not as powerful politically as the Delhi Sultanate had been, but it was in many of these areas that the earlier culture now developed and became mature. Literature in the regional languages, architecture, paintings and new religious ideas, all developed in these kingdoms.



# 4

## Formation of Mughal Empire

### Introduction

The Mughals were descendants of two great lineages of rulers. From their mother's side they were descendants of Genghis Khan (died 1227), the Mongol ruler who ruled over parts of China and Central Asia. From their father's side they were the successors of Timur (died 1404), the ruler of Iran, Iraq and modern-day Turkey. However, the Mughals did not like to be called Mughal or Mongol. This was because Genghis Khan's memory was associated with the massacre of innumerable people. It was also linked with the Uzbeks, their Mongol competitors. On the other hand, the Mughals were proud of their Timurid ancestry, not least of all because their great ancestor had captured Delhi in 1398.

### Babur

In 1494, at the young age of 14, Babur succeeded to Farghana, a small state in Trans-Oxiana. Oblivious of the Uzbek danger, the Timurid princes were busy fighting one another. Babur, too, made a bid to conquer Samarqand from his uncle. He won the city twice but lost it in no time on both the occasions. The second time the Uzbek chief, Shaibani Khan, was called in to help out Babur. Shaibani defeated Babur and conquered Samarqand. Soon, he overran the rest of the Timurid kingdoms in the area. This forced Babur to move towards Kabul which he conquered in 1504.

For the next 14 years, Babur kept biding his time for the reconquest of his homeland from the Uzbeks. He tried to enlist the help of his uncle, the ruler of Herat, in the enterprise but to no avail. Ultimately, Herat, too, was overrun by Shaibani Khan.

This led to a direct conflict between the Uzbeks and the Safavids since the latter also laid claim to Herat and the surrounding area which is called Khorasan by contemporary writers. In a famous battle in 1510, Shah Ismail, the Shah of Iran, defeated and killed Shaibani Khan. Babur now made another attempt to recover Samarqand, this time with the help of the Iranian forces. He was duly installed at Samarqand, but chafed under the control of the Iranian generals who wanted to treat Babur as the governor of an Iranian province rather than as an independent prince meanwhile, the Uzbeks recovered rapidly from their defeat. Once again Babur was ousted from Samarqand and had to return to Kabul. Finally, Shah Ismail himself was defeated in a famous battle by the Ottoman sultan, thus leaving the Uzbeks masters of Trans-Oxiana.

### Conquest of India

Babur says that from the time he obtained Kabul (1504) to his victory at Panipat, "I had never ceased to think of the conquest of Hindustan." But he had never found a suitable opportunity for undertaking it, "hindered as I was sometimes by the apprehensions of my *begs*, sometimes by the disagreement between my brothers and myself". Like countless earlier invaders from Central Asia, Babur was drawn to India by the lure of its fabulous wealth. India was the land of gold and riches. Babur's ancestor, Timur, had not only carried away a vast treasure and many skillful artisans, who helped him to consolidate his Asian empire and beautify his capital, but also annexed some areas in the Punjab. These areas remained in the possession of Timur's successors for several generations. When Babur conquered Afghanistan, he felt that he had a legitimate right to these areas.

Another reason why Babur coveted the Punjab parganas was the meagre income of Kabul. The historian Abul Fazl remarks : "He (Babur) ruled over Badakhshan, Qandhar and Kabul which did not yield sufficient income for the requirements of the army; in fact, in some of the border territories the expense on controlling

the armies and administration was greater than the income". With these meagre resources Babur could not provide well for his *begs* and kinsmen. He was also apprehensive of an Uzbek attack on Kabul, and considered India to be a good place of refuge, and a suitable base for operations against the Uzbeks.

The political situation in north-west India was suitable for Babur's entry into India. Sikandar Lodi had died in 1517, and Ibrahim Lodi had succeeded him. Ibrahim's efforts to create a large centralized empire had alarmed the Afghan chief as well as the Rajputs. Amongst the most powerful of the Afghan chiefs was Daulat Khan Lodi, the governor of the Punjab, who was almost an independent ruler. Daulat Khan attempted to conciliate Ibrahim Lodi by sending his son to his court to pay homage. At the same time, he wanted to strengthen his position by annexing the frontier tracts of Bhira, etc.

## Mughal Military Campaigns

Babur, the first Mughal emperor (1526-1530), succeeded to the throne of Ferghana in 1494 when he was only 12 years old. He was forced to leave his ancestral throne due to the invasion of another Mongol group, the Uzbeks.

After years of wandering he seized Kabul in 1504. In 1526 he defeated the Sultan of Delhi, Ibrahim Lodi, at Panipat and captured Delhi and Agra.

Ruling as large a territory as the Indian subcontinent with such a diversity of people and cultures was an extremely difficult task for any ruler to accomplish in the Middle Ages. Quite in contrast to their predecessors, the Mughals created an empire and accomplished what had hitherto seemed possible for

only short periods of time. From the latter half of the sixteenth century they expanded their kingdom from Agra and Delhi, until in the seventeenth century they controlled nearly all of the subcontinent. They imposed structures of administration and ideas of governance that outlasted their rule, leaving a political legacy that succeeding rulers of the subcontinent could not ignore. Today the Prime Minister of India addresses the nation on Independence Day from the ramparts of the Red Fort in Delhi, the residence of the Mughal emperors.



## List of Mughal Empire (Major Campaigns and Events)

|   |   |
|---|---|
|  | <p><b>BABUR 1526-1530</b></p> <p>1526 - defeated Ibrahim Lodi and his Afghan supporters at Panipat.</p> <p>1527 - defeated Rana Sanga, Rajput rulers and allies at Khanua.</p> <p>1528 - defeated the Rajputs at Chanderi;</p> <p>Established control over Agra and Delhi before his death.</p> |
|---|---|



### **HUMAYUN 1530-1540, 1555-1556**

- (1) Humayun divided his Inheritance according to the will of his father. His brothers were each given a province. The ambitions of his brother Mirza Kamran weakened Humayun's cause against Afghan competitors. Sher Khan defeated Humayun at Chausa (1539) and Kanauj (1540). forcing him to flee to Iran.
- (2) In Iran Humayun received help from the Safavid He recaptured Delhi in 1555 but died the next year an accident in this building.



### **AKBAR 1556-1605**

Akbar was 13 years old when he became emperor. His reign can be divided into three periods.

- (1) 1556-1570 - Akbar became independent of the regent Balram Khan and other members of his domestic staff. Military campaigns were launched against the Suris and other Afghans, against the neighbouring kingdoms of Malwa and Gondwana, and to suppress the revolt of his half-brother Mirza Hakim and the Uzbegs. In 1568 the Sisodiya capital of Chittor was seized and in 1569 Ranthambhor.
- (2) 1570-1585 - military campaigns in Gujarat were followed by campaigns in the east in Bihar. Bengal and Orissa. These campaigns were complicated by the 1579-1580 revolt in support of Mirza Hakim.
- (3) 1585-1605 - expansion of Akbar's empire. Campaigns were launched in the north-west. Qandahar was seized from the Safaris. Kashmir was annexed, as also Kabul, after the death of Mirza Hakim. Campaigns in the Deccan started and Berar, Khandesh and parts of Ahmadnagar were annexed. In the last years of his reign Akbar was distracted by the rebellion of Prince Salim, the future , Emperor Jahangir.



### **Jahangir 1605-1627**

Military campaigns started by Akbar continued.

The Sisodiya ruler of Mewar. Amar Singh, accepted Mughal sendee. Less successful campaigns against the Sikhs, the Ahoms and Ahmadnagar followed.

Prince Khurram. the future Emperor Shah Jahan, rebelled in the last years of his reign. The efforts of Nur Jahan, Jahangir's wife, to marginalise him were unsuccessful.



### **Shah Jahan 1627-1658**

Mughal campaigns continued in the Deccan under Shah Jahan. The Afghan noble Khan Jahan Lodi rebelled and was defeated. Campaigns were launched against Ahmadnagar; the Bundelas were defeated and Orchha seized. In the north-west, the campaign to seize Balkh from the Uzbegs was unsuccessful and Qandahar was lost to the Safavids. In 1632 Ahmadnagar was finally annexed and the Bijapur forces sued for peace. In 1657-1658, there was conflict over succession amongst Shah Jahan's sons.

Aurangzeb was victorious and his three brothers. including Dara Shukoh. were killed. Shah Jahan was imprisoned for the rest of his life in Agra.



### Aurangzeb 1658-1707

- (1) In the north-east, the Ahoms were defeated in 1663. but rebelled again In the 1680s. Campaigns in the north-west against the Yusufzai and the Sikhs were temporarily successful. Mughal Intervention in the succession and internal politics of the Rathor Rajputs of Marwar led to their rebellion. Campaigns against the Maratha chieftain Shivaji were initially successful. But Aurangzeb insulted Shivaji who escaped from Agra, declared himself an independent king and resumed his campaigns against the Mughals. Prince Akbar rebelled against Aurangzeb and received support from the Marathas and the Deccan Sultanate. He finally fled to Safavid Iran.
- (2) After Akbar's rebellion Aurangzeb sent armies against the Deccan Sultanates. Bijapur was annexed in 1685 and Golconda in 1687. From 1698 Aurangzeb personally managed campaigns in the Deccan against the Marathas who started guerrilla warfare. Aurangzeb also had to face the rebellion in north India of the Sikhs. Jats and Satnamis, in the north-east of the Ahoms and in the Deccan of the Marathas. His death was followed by a succession conflict amongst his sons.

### Babur

In 1526, a battle was fought on the famous plain of Panipat when Babur defeated the Lodi army. Part of the reason why he was successful was that he had brought artillery from Central Asia and this was new to the Indian army Babur had a smaller but better trained cavalry. He arranged his soldiers in such a way that they could be easily moved from one part of the battle to another. And of course he was a good general. He knew how to use his soldiers to the best advantage. Having defeated the Lodis, Babur did not merely take his share of wealth and return to Kabul as the nobles had thought he would. Babur decided to stay on in India. So he occupied Delhi and Agra. Now the Afghan nobles and Rana Sanga turned against him. They tried to stop him from annexing more territory, but he defeated them all. However, he did not live for very long after this. He died in 1530.

Babur was not merely a brilliant general who knew how to organize his army and fight. He was a poet and a writer with an excellent style in Turkish. He kept a diary in which he recorded his thoughts and referred to various events. He was particularly moved by natural beauty—mountains, trees, flowers and animals This was why he was always keen to make gardens in all the places where he lived. He enjoyed playing polo and the game became increasingly popular amongst the Indian nobles.

### Significance of Babur's Advent into India

Babur's advent into India was significant from many points of view. For the first time since the downfall of the Kushan empire, Kabul and Qandhar became integral parts of an empire comprising north India. Since these areas had always acted as staging places for an invasion of India, by dominating them Babur and his successors were able to give to India security from external invasions for almost 200 years. Economically also, the control of Kabul and Qandhar strengthened India's foreign trade since these two towns were the starting points for caravans meant for China and the Mediterranean seaports. Thus India could take a greater share in the great trans-Asian trade.

In north India, Babur smashed the power of the Lodis and of the Rajput Confederacy led by Rana Sanga. Thereby, he destroyed the balance of power obtaining in the area. This was a long step towards the establishment of an all-India empire. However, a number of conditions had still to be fulfilled before this could be achieved. Babur showed what a skilled combination of artillery and cavalry could achieve. His victories led to rapid popularization of gunpowder and artillery in India, thereby reducing the importance of forts.

Babur introduced a new mode of warfare in India. Although gunpowder was known in India before, by his new military methods as well as by his personal conduct, Babur re-established the prestige of the Crown which had been eroded since the death of Firuz Tughlaq. Although Sikandar Lodi and Ibrahim Lodi had tried to re-establish the prestige of the Crown, Afghan ideas of tribal independence and equality had resulted in only a partial success. Babur had the prestige of being a descendant of two of the most famous warriors of Asia,

Changez and Timur. None of his nobles could, therefore, claim a status of equality with him or aspire to his throne. The challenge to his position, if any, could come only from a Timurid prince.

Babur endeared himself to his *begs* by his personal qualities. He was always prepared to share the hardships with his soldiers. Once, at the height of winter, Babur was returning to Kabul, The snow was so deep that horses would sink into it and parties of soldiers had to trample the snow so that the horses could pass. Without hesitation, Babur joined in the back-breaking task. "At every step, the snow came up to the waist or the chest", he says. "After a few steps, the man in front would be exhausted, and another would take his place. When 10, 15 or 20 persons had trampled the snow thoroughly, then alone a horse could pass over it." Following Babur's example, his *begs* also joined in the task.

Babur was fond of wine and good company and was a good and merry companion. At the same time, he was a stern disciplinarian and a hard taskmaster. He took good care of his *begs*, and was prepared to excuse many of their faults as long as they were not disloyal. He was prepared to adopt the same attitude towards his Afghan and Indian nobles. However, he did have a streak of cruelty, probably inherited from his ancestors, for he made towers of skulls from the heads of his opponents on a number of occasions. These, and other instances of personal cruelty, have to be seen in the context of the harsh times in which Babur lived.

Though an orthodox Sunni, Babur was not bigoted or led by the religious divines. At a time when there was a bitter sectarian feud between the Shias and the Sunnis in Iran and Turan, his court was free from theological and sectarian conflicts. Though he declared the battle against Sanga a *jihad* and assumed the title of *ghazi* after the victory, the reasons were clearly political. Though it was a period of war, only a few instances can be found of destruction of temples.

Babur was deeply learned in Persian and Arabic, and is regarded as one of the two most famous writers in the Turkish language which was his mother tongue. As a prose writer he had no equal, and his famous memoirs, the *Tuzuk -i-Baburi* is considered one of the classics of world literature. His other works include a *masnavi* and the Turkish translation of a well-known Sufi work. He was in touch with the famous poets and artists of the time and described their works in his memoirs. He was a keen naturalist, and has described the flora and fauna of India in considerable detail.

Thus, Babur introduced a new concept of the state which was to be based on the strength and prestige of the Crown, absence of religious and sectarian bigotry, and the careful fostering of culture and the fine arts. He thus provided a precedent and a direction for his successors.

The battle of Khanwa (1527) was fiercely contested. According to Babur, Sanga's forces exceeded 200,000 including 10,000 Afghan cavalymen, and an equal force fielded by Hasan Khan Mewati. As usual, these figures may be greatly exaggerated, though Babur's forces were undoubtedly inferior in number. Sanga made ferocious attacks on Babur's right and almost breached it. However, the Mughal artillery took a heavy toll of life, and slowly, Sanga's *Forces* were pushed back. At this juncture, Babur ordered his soldiers in the centre, who had been sheltering behind their tripods, to launch an attack. The artillery also advanced behind the chained wagons. Sanga's forces were thus hemmed in, **and** were defeated after a great slaughter. Rana Sanga escaped and wanted to **renew** the conflict with Babur. But he was poisoned by his own nobles who considered such- a course to be dangerous and suicidal.

Thus died one of the most valiant warriors produced by Rajasthan. With Sanga's death, the dream of a united Rajasthan extending up to Agra received a serious setback.

The battle of Khanwa secured Babur's position in the Delhi-Agra region. Babur strengthened his position further by conquering the chain of forts—(Jwalior, Dholpur, etc., east of Agra. He also annexed large parts of Alwar from Hasan Khan Mewati. He then led a campaign against Medini Rai of Chanderi in Malwa. Chanderi was captured after the Rajput defenders had died fighting to the last man and their women performed *jauhar*. Babur had to cut short his plan of further campaigns in the area on hearing of the growing activities of the Afghans in eastern Uttar Pradesh.

## The Afghans

Although the Afghans had been defeated, they had not been reconciled to the Mughal rule. Eastern Uttar Pradesh was still under the domination of the Afghan chiefs who had tendered their allegiance to Babur but were prepared to throw it off at any time. The Afghan sardars were being backed by Nusrat Shah, the ruler of Bengal, who had married a daughter of Ibrahim Lodi. A number of times, the Afghans had ousted the Mughal

officials in eastern Uttar Pradesh and reached up to Kanauj. But their greatest weakness was the lack of a popular leader. After some time, Mahmud Lodi, a brother of Ibrahim Lodi, who had fought against Babur at Khanwa, reached Bihar at the invitation of the Afghan leaders. The Afghans bailed him as their ruler, and mustered strength under him.

This was a threat which Babur could not ignore. Hence, at the beginning of 1529, he left Agra for the east. Crossing the **Ganga** near Banaras, he faced the combined forces of the Afghans and Nusrat **Shah of Bengal at the** crossing of the river **Ghagra**. Although **Babur** crossed the river, and compelled the Bengal and the Afghan armies to retreat, he could not win a decisive victory. Ill, and anxious about the situation in Central Asia, Babur decided to patch up an agreement with the Afghans. He put forward a vague claim for suzerainty over Bihar, but left most of it in the hands of the Afghan chiefs. He then returned to Agra. Shortly afterwards, while on his way to Kabul, Babur died near Lahore.

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## Humayun

Humayun succeeded Babur in December 1530 at the young age of 23. He had to grapple with a number of problems left behind by Babur. Although Babur had conquered territory in India and founded a dynasty which came to be called that of the Mughals—he did not live long enough to make it secure against his enemies. His son Humayun was therefore faced with trouble from the very beginning. Since the Mughals were new to India they had difficulty in trying to maintain their position. The newly founded kingdom was attacked by the Afghan nobles who still wanted the Mughals to leave India. Bahadur Shah the ruler of Gujarat also threatened Delhi. Humayun had little time to try and organize the administration and the revenue from the land which his father had conquered. Humayun succeeded in conquering the provinces of Gujarat and Malwa but could not establish his power in western India.

The administration had not yet been consolidated, and the finances were precarious. The Afghans had not been subdued, and were nursing the hope of expelling the Mughals from India. Finally, there was the Timurid legacy of partitioning the empire among all the brothers. Babur had counselled Humayun to deal kindly with his brothers, but had not favoured the partitioning of the infant Mughal empire, which would have been disastrous.

When Humayun ascended the throne at Agra, the empire included Kabul and Qandhar, while there was loose control over Badakhshan beyond the Hindukush mountains. Kabul and Qandhar were under the charge of Humayun's younger brother, Kamran. It was only natural that they should remain in his charge. However, Kamran was not satisfied with these poverty-stricken areas. He marched on Lahore and Multan, and occupied them. Humayun, who was busy elsewhere, and did not want to start a civil war, had little option but to agree. Kamran accepted the suzerainty of Humayun, and promised to help him whenever necessary. Kamran's action created the apprehension that the other brothers of Humayun might also follow the same path whenever an opportunity arose. However, the granting of the Punjab and Multan to Kamran had the advantage that Humayun was free to devote his attention to the eastern parts without having to bother about his western frontier.

This was Sher Shah. Sher Shah not only threatened but attacked the Mughal king. Two battles were fought between him and Humayun and in both Humayun was defeated. His brother who was ruling in the Punjab and Kabul did not help him either. The Mughals retreated from northern India. The kingdom which Babur had acquired was now lost. The unhappy Humayun wandered from place to place in Rajasthan and Sind. It was at Amarkot that a son was born to him, a son who was later to rule in India as the great emperor Akbar. Humayun finally had to leave Sind and go to Persia.

In 1532, at a place called Daunh, he defeated the Afghan forces which had conquered Bihar and overrun Jaunpur in eastern Uttar Pradesh. After this success, Humayun besieged Chunar. This powerful fort commanded the land and the river route between Agra and the east, and was known as the gateway of eastern India. It had recently come in the possession of an Afghan sardar, Sher Khan, who had become the most powerful of the Afghan sardars.

After the siege of Chunar had gone on for four months, Sher Khan persuaded Humayun to allow him to retain possession of the fort, in return, he promised to be loyal to the Mughals and sent one of his sons to Humayun as a hostage. Humayun accepted the offer because he was anxious to return to Agra. The rapid increase in the power of Bahadur Shah of Gujarat, and his activities in the areas bordering Agra, had alarmed him. He was not prepared to continue the siege of Chunar under the command of a noble since that would have meant dividing his forces.

**Bahadur Shah**, who was of almost the same age as Humayun, was an able and ambitious ruler. Ascending the throne in 1526, he had overrun and conquered Malwa. He then turned to Rajasthan and besieged Chittor

and soon reduced the Rajput defenders to sore straits. According to some later legends, Rani Karnavati, the widow of Rana Sanga, sent a *rakhi* to Humayun seeking his help and Humayun gallantly responded. While this story cannot be fully accepted, it is true that from Agra Humayun moved to Gwalior to watch the situation. Due to the fear of Mughal intervention, Bahadur Shah patched up a treaty with the Rana, leaving the fort in his hands after extracting a large indemnity in cash and kind.

During the next year and a half, Humayun spent his time in building a new city near Delhi, which he named Dinpanah. He organised many grand feasts and festivities during the period. Humayun has been blamed for wasting valuable time in these activities, while Sher Khan was steadily augmenting his power in the east. It has also been said that Humayun's inactivity was due to his habit of taking opium. Neither of these charges has much substance. Babur continued to use opium after he gave up wine. Humayun ate opium occasionally in place of or in addition to wine, as did many of his nobles. But neither Babur nor Humayun was an opium addict. The building of Dinpanah was meant to impress friends and foes alike. It could also serve as a second capital in case Agra was threatened by Bahadur Shah who, in the meantime, had conquered Ajmer and overrun eastern Rajasthan.

Bahadur Shah offered a still greater challenge to Humayun. Not content with harbouring the relations of Ibrahim Lodi at his court, he openly welcomed some close relations of Humayun who had escaped from prison, having been confined there after an unsuccessful rebellion. Finally, Bahadur Shah again invested Chittor. Simultaneously, he supplied "arms and men to Tatar Khan, a cousin of Ibrahim Lodi, to invade Agra with a force of 40,000 while diversions were to be made in the north and the east.

Humayun easily defeated the challenge posed by Tatar Khan. The Afghan forces melted away at the approach of the Mughals. Tatar Khan's small force was defeated, and he himself was killed. Determined to end the threat from Bahadur Shah's side once for all, Humayun now invaded Malwa. He marched forward slowly and cautiously, and occupied a position midway between Chittor and Mandu. He thus cut off Bahadur Shah from Malwa.

## Sher Shah and Sur Empire

Sher Shah's real name was Farid. But he was given the name 'Sher' after he had killed a tiger. He was the son of a nobleman who had a small estate near Jaunpur. Sher Shah's ambition led him to acquire more and more land and build a strong army. Then he proclaimed himself an independent king. After defeating Humayun, Sher Shah declared himself the ruler of India. This was his moment of triumph. But Sher Shah's ambition was not simply to be the ruler of India but to be an efficient ruler.

## Administration

He was influenced by the policies of Ala-ud-din, particularly those relating to military organization and revenue administration. On becoming Sultan he first reorganized his army into a strong and efficient military force. He improved the administration by insisting that all the officers must be paid their salaries regularly so that they would not be dissatisfied. If anyone had any complaints he could go and see Sher Shah directly and speak to him. This made him popular amongst his subjects. He went out on tour frequently so that he could personally inspect the work of his officers. Having administered his father's jagir for a number of years, and then as the virtual ruler of Bihar, Sher Shah knew the working of the land revenue system at all levels. In connection with the collection of taxes he was careful that the tax demanded from the cultivators should not be too high. In order to fix a just tax he had a new assessment made of all the land in his kingdom. The assessment was done on the basis of measurement as in the reign of Ala-ud-din.

With the help of a capable team of administrators, he toned up the entire system. The produce of land was no longer to be based on guess work, or by dividing the crops in the fields or on the threshing floor. Sher Shah insisted on measurement of the sown land. Schedule of rates (called *ray*) was drawn up, laying down the state's share of the different types of crops. This could then be converted into cash on the basis of the prevailing market rates in different areas. The share of the state was one-third of the produce. The lands were divided into good, bad and middling. Their average produce was computed, and one-third of it became the share of the state. The peasants were given the option of paying in cash or kind, though the state preferred cash.

Thus, after sowing the crops, the peasant knew how much he had to pay to the state. The area sown, the type of crops cultivated, and the amount each peasant had to pay was written down on a paper called *patta* and each

peasant was informed of it. No one was allowed to charge from the peasants anything extra. Even the rates which the members of the measuring party were to get for their work were laid down.

## Transport System

Sher Shah also took pride in the many roads which were built at his orders. These were lined with shady trees and there were wells and rest houses (*sarais*) for the tired travellers. The main highway from northern India to Bengal which had first been built by the Mauryas was now rebuilt.

The present-day Grand Trunk Road from Peshawar to Calcutta closely follows the line of the earlier road. Delhi was connected by road with Burhanpur and Jaunpur. The building of these roads was useful because not only did travelling become easier for people, but his own officers could go quickly from one place to another. The roads were also used by merchants to transport their goods. Another thing which is associated with Sher Shah was the issuing of the coin called the *rupia*, which is the same name as that used for our modern rupee.

It is possible that Sher Shah might have become a great Sultan. Unfortunately he ruled barely for five years and this was hardly enough time for him to put his ideas fully into practice. He was killed in 1545 during the siege of Kalinjar when a gun burst in his face. The sudden death of Sher Shah was in a sense a blessing for Humayun. Without a strong ruler at Delhi, the kingdoms of the north began to drift apart. Humayun saw this as his opportunity to try and regain the throne at Delhi. Humayun had conquered Qandahar and re-established his control over Kabul with the help of the Safavid King of Persia (Iran). He could now use Kabul as his base for campaigns into India. In 1555, Humayun conquered the Punjab and captured Delhi and Agra, and thereby re-established Mughal power in India. But he enjoyed his success for hardly a year. He was coming down the stairs one day after the evening prayer when he slipped and fell. He died as a result of the fall. He was succeeded by his son Akbar during whose reign India could once again boast of a proud civilization.

## Religion

Sher Shah was not a bigot in the religious sphere, as is evident from his social and economic policy. Neither Islam nor he depended on the *ulama*, though they respected them a great deal. Religious slogans were sometimes used to justify political actions. The treacherous murder of Puran Mai and his associates after he had vacated the fort of Raisen in Malwa on the basis of a binding oath is one such example. The theologians ruled that no faith need be kept with an infidel and that Puran Mai had oppressed Muslim men and women. Sher Shah did not, however, initiate any new liberal policies. *Jizyah* continued to be collected from the Hindus, while his nobility was drawn almost exclusively from the Afghans.

## Age of Akbar

Akbar was only thirteen in 1556 when his father died and he was proclaimed the king. This was a big responsibility for a young boy. Akbar was far more interested in pigeon-flying and in going out hunting with cheetahs. He did not like studying, but he had an excellent memory and he enjoyed having books read to him. Because he was so young, his guardian Bairam Khan became the regent, that is, he looked after the matters of government, administration and war until Akbar was old enough to do so himself.

Humayun did not have time to strengthen Mughal power in northern India. This job was left to Akbar. The first conflict came with Hemu. He was a general of one of the Afghan princes and had made himself strong in the kingdom of Sher Shah. So another battle was fought at Pampat between Bairam Khan and Hemu. Hemu was defeated and Akbar reoccupied Delhi and Agra which the Mughals had lost.

Now once again Mughal power was being re-established in northern India. When Akbar came of age, he decided to end the regency of Bairam Khan and took over the government. Having established himself at Delhi and Agra, he decided to extend Mughal power to other parts of the country. He proceeded to conquer various important towns and forts such as Gwalior, Ajmer and Jaunpur. He also annexed the kingdom of Malwa. This brought him into the neighbourhood of the Rajput kingdoms.

Some of the most important and loyal officers and advisers were Rajputs, such as Raja Man Singh. But he also had to fight against those Rajput princes who opposed him, such as Rana Pratap. The two powerful forts of Rajasthan—Ranthambor and Chittor—were captured by the Mughals. Akbar thought of India as one and wished to control the whole country. So he sent his armies in various directions to conquer and to annex. He

conquered Gujarat. This was important because the revenue from the overseas trade of Gujarat now came to the Mughal empire. Since the merchants of Gujarat traded with both the Arabs and the Europeans, the income which came into Gujarat was large. Later, Bengal was also annexed. This area was again valuable because of the revenue from the rich and fertile land and from overseas trade. Bengal was visited by traders from South-East Asia and China. The merchants of Bengal exchanged textiles for spices

By 1595, Akbar's armies had conquered Kashmir, Sind, Orissa, central India, and Qandahar (in Afghanistan). The northern part of India was under Mughal control. There was close contact now between India and the regions to the north and west of it—Central Asia and Persia. By maintaining a friendly relationship with these areas Akbar safeguarded his northern frontier. At the same time it led to an increase in trade between India and Central Asia and Persia. In India only Assam and the peninsula remained independent. Akbar was not very keen on trying to conquer the Deccan but he realized that only if he controlled the Deccan could he control the peninsula as well. So a campaign was begun against the kingdom of Ahmadnagar. It lasted for eight years as the Deccan kingdoms did their best to try and resist the power of the Mughals. Finally the Mughals annexed Khandesh, Berar and parts of the kingdom of Ahmadnagar. The Mughal empire now extended as far as the Godavari river in the Deccan. Akbar was the emperor of the larger part of India.

### Administration

Mughal administration was a mixture of the existing Indian system and Akbar was keen to have friendly relations with the Rajputs. One of the ways in which he did this was to enter into marriage alliance between his family and various Rajput royal families. He himself married a number of Rajput princesses. His policy of friendship and alliance with the Rajputs made his own position stronger. He also gave them high offices in his administration.

When Humayun was fleeing from Bikaner, he was gallantly offered shelter and help by the Rana of Amarkot. It was at Amarkot, in 1542, that Akbar, the greatest of the Mughal rulers, was born. When Humayun fled to Iran, young Akbar was captured by his uncle, Kamran. He treated the child well; Akbar was re-united with his parents after the capture of Qandhar. When Humayun died, Akbar was at Kalanaur in the Punjab, commanding operations against the Afghan rebels there. He was crowned at Kalanaur in 1556 at the young age of thirteen years and four months.

Akbar succeeded to a difficult position. The Afghans were still strong beyond Agra, and were regrouping their forces under the leadership of Hemu for a final showdown. Kabul had been attacked and besieged. Sikandar Sur, the defeated Afghan ruler, was loitering in the Siwalik Hills. However, Bairam Khan, the tutor of the prince and a loyal and favourite officer of Humayun, rose to the occasion. He became the *wakil* of the kingdom, with the title of *khan-i-khanan*, and rallied the Mughal forces. The threat from the side of Hemu was considered the most serious. The area from Chunar to the border of Bengal was under the domination of Adil Shah, a nephew of Sher Shah. Hemu, who had started life as a superintendent of the markets under Sher Shah, had rapidly risen under Adil Shah. He had not lost a single one of the twenty-two battles in which he had fought. Adil Shah had appointed him the *wazir* with the title of Vikramajit, and entrusted him with the task of expelling the Mughals. Hemu captured Agra, and with an army of 50,000 cavalry, 500 elephants and a strong park of artillery marched upon Delhi.

In a well-contested battle, Hemu defeated the Mughals near Delhi and occupied the city. However, **Bairam Khan** took energetic steps to meet the situation. His bold stand put new heart into his army, and it marched on Delhi before Hemu could have time to consolidate his position. The battle between the Mughals and the Afghan forces led by Hemu, took place once again at Panipat (5 November 1556). Although Hemu's artillery had been captured earlier by a Mughal detachment, the tide of battle was in favour of Hemu when an arrow hit him in the eye and he fainted. The leaderless Afghan army was defeated; Hemu was captured and executed. Thus, Akbar had virtually to reconquer his empire.

### Early Phase—Contest with the Nobility (1556-67)

Bairam Khan remained at the helm of affairs of the empire for almost four years. During the period, he kept the nobility fully under control. The danger to Kabul was averted, and the territories of the empire were extended from Kabul up to Jaunpur in the east and Ajmer in the west. Gwalior was captured, and vigorous efforts were made to conquer Ranthambhor and Malwa.

Meanwhile, Akbar was approaching the age of maturity. Bairam Khan had offended many powerful persons while he held supreme power. They complained that Bairam Khan was a Shia, and that he was appointing his own supporters and Shias to high offices while neglecting the old nobles. These charges were not very serious in themselves. But Bairam Khan had become arrogant, and failed to realise that Akbar was growing up. There was friction on small points which made Akbar realise that he could not leave the affairs of the state in someone else's hands for any length of time.

During Bairam Khan's rebellion, groups and individuals in the nobility had become politically active. This included Akbar's foster-mother, Maham Anaga, and her relations. Though Maham Anaga soon withdrew from politics, her son, Adham Khan, was an impetuous young man. He assumed independent airs when sent to command an expedition against Malwa. Removed from the command, he laid claim to the post of the wazir, and when this was not conceded, he stabbed the acting *wazir* in his office. Akbar was enraged and had him thrown down from the parapet of the fort so that he died (1561). However, it was many years before Akbar was to establish his authority fully. The Uzbeks formed a powerful group in the nobility. They held important positions in eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Malwa. Although they had served the empire well by subduing the powerful Afghan groups in those areas, they had become arrogant and were defying the young ruler. Between 1561 and 1567 they broke out in rebellion several times, forcing Akbar to take the field against them. Each time Akbar was induced to pardon them. When they again rebelled in **1565**, Akbar **was so** exasperated that he vowed to make Jaunpur his capital till he had rooted them out. Meanwhile, a rebellion by the Mirzas, who were Timurids and were related to Akbar by marriage, threw the areas west of modern Uttar Pradesh into confusion. Encouraged by these rebellions, Akbar's half-brother, Mirza Hakim, who had seized control of Kabul, advanced into the Punjab, and besieged Lahore. The Uzbek rebels formally proclaimed him their ruler. This was the most serious crisis Akbar had to face since Hemu's capture of Delhi. However, Akbar's grit and a certain amount of luck enabled him to triumph. From Jaunpur he marched to Lahore, forcing Mirza Hakim to retire. Meanwhile, the rebellion of the Mirzas was crushed, the Mirzas fleeing to Malwa and thence to Gujarat. Akbar marched back from Lahore to Jaunpur. Crossing the river Yamuna near Allahabad at the height of the rainy season, he surprised the rebels led by the Uzbek nobles and completely routed them (1567). The Uzbek leaders were killed in the battle, thus bringing their protracted rebellion to an end. All the rebellious nobles, including those among them who had been dreaming of independence, were cowed down. Akbar was now free to concentrate on the expansion of the empire.

## Early Expansion of the Empire (1556-76)

**During Bairam Khan's regency**, the territories of the Mughal empire had been expanded. Apart from Ajmer, the most important conquests during this period had been of Malwa and Garh-Katanga. Malwa was being ruled, at that time, by a young prince,

Baz Bahadur. His accomplishments included a mastery of music and poetry. Stories about the romance of Baz Bahadur and Rupmati, who was famous for her beauty as well as for music and poetry are well known. During his time, Mandu had become a celebrated centre for music. The army, however, had been neglected by Baz Bahadur. The expedition against Malwa was led by Adham Khan, son of Akbar's foster-mother, Maham Anaga. Baz Bahadur was badly defeated (1561) and the Mughals took valuable spoils, including Rupmati. However, she preferred to commit suicide to being dragged to Adham Khan's harem. Due to the senseless cruelties of Adham Khan and his successor, there was a reaction against the Mughals which enabled Baz Bahadur to recover Malwa.

After dealing with Bairam Khan's rebellion, Akbar sent another expedition to Malwa. Baz Bahadur had to flee, and for some time he took shelter with the Rana of Mewar. After wandering about from one area to another, he finally repaired to Akbar's court and was enrolled as a Mughal *mansabdar*.<sup>1</sup> The extensive country of Malwa thus came under Mughal rule.

At about the same time, Mughal arms overran the kingdom of Garh-Katanga. The kingdom of Garh-Katanga included the Narmada valley and the northern portions of present Madhya Pradesh. It had been welded together by one Aman Das who flourished in the second half of the fifteenth century. Aman Das had helped Bahadur Shah of Gujarat in the conquest of Raisen and had received from him the title of Sangram Shah.

## Administration

During the decade following his conquest of Gujarat, Akbar found time to look at the administrative problems of the empire. The system of administration elaborated by Sher Shah had fallen into confusion after the death of Islam Shah Akbar, therefore, had to start afresh.

**One of the most important problems facing Akbar was the system of land revenue administration.** Sher Shah had instituted a system by which the cultivated area was measured and a central schedule (*ray*) was drawn up, fixing the dues of the peasant crop-wise on the basis of the productivity of land. This schedule was converted every year into a central schedule of prices. Akbar adopted Sher Shah's system. But it was soon found that the fixing of a central schedule of prices often led to considerable delays, and resulted in great hardships to the peasantry. Since the prices fixed were generally those prevailing at the Imperial Court, and thus were higher than in the country-side, the peasants had to part with a larger share of their produce.

**Akbar**, therefore, reverted to a system of annual assessment. The *qanungos*, who were hereditary holders of land as well as local officials conversant with local conditions, were ordered to report on the actual produce, state of cultivation, local prices, etc. But in every area, the *qanungos* were dishonest and often concealed the real produce. Annual assessments also resulted in great difficulty for the peasants and for the state. After returning from Gujarat (1573), Akbar paid personal attention to the land revenue system. Officials called *karoris* were appointed all over north India. They were responsible for the collection of a crore of *dams* (Rs. 250,000), and also checked the facts and figures supplied by the *qanungos*. On the basis of the information provided by them regarding the actual produce, local prices, productivity, etc., in 1580, Akbar instituted a new system called the *dahsala*. Under this system, the average produce of different crops as well as the average prices prevailing over the last ten (*dafti*) years were calculated. One-third of the average produce was the state share. The state demand was, however, stated in cash. This was done by converting the state share into money on the basis of a schedule of average prices over the past ten years.

Later, a further improvement was made. Not only were local prices taken into account, *parganas* having the same type of productivity were grouped into separate assessment circles. Thus, the peasant was required to pay on the basis of local produce as well as local prices.

There were a number of advantages of this system. As soon as the area sown by the peasant had been measured by means of the bamboos linked with iron rings, the peasant as well as the state knew what the dues were. The peasant was given remission in the land revenue, if crops failed on account of drought, floods, etc. The system of measurement and the assessment based upon it is called the *zabti* system. Akbar introduced this system in the area from Lahore to Allahabad, and in Malwa and Gujarat. The *dahsala* system was a further development of the *zabti* system.

A number of other systems of assessment were also followed under Akbar. The most common and, perhaps, the oldest was called *bjtat or ghalla-bakhshi*. In this system, the produce was divided between the peasants and the state in fixed proportion. The crop was divided after it had been thrashed, or when it had been cut and tied in stacks, or while it was standing in the field. This system was considered a very fair one, but it needed an army of honest officials to be present at the time of the ripening or the reaping of the crops.

The peasants were allowed to choose between *zabti* and *batai* under certain conditions. Thus, such a choice was given when the crops had been ruined. Under *batai*, the peasants were given the choice of paying in cash or in kind, though the state preferred cash. In case of crops such as cotton, indigo, oil-seeds, sugar-cane, etc., the state demand was invariably in cash. Hence, these were called cash-crops.

**A third system** which was widely used in Akbar's time was *nasaq*. We are a bit uncertain about this system. It seems that it meant a rough calculation of the amount payable by the peasant on the basis of what he had been paying in the past. Hence, some modern historians think that it was merely a system of computing the peasant's dues, not a different system of assessment. Others think that it meant rough appraisal both on the basis of the inspection of the crops and past experience, and thereby fixing the amount to be paid by the village as a whole. It is also called *kankut*.

Other local methods of assessment also continued in some areas.

In fixing the land revenue, continuity of cultivation was taken into account. Land which remained under cultivation almost every year was called *polaj*. When it remained uncultivated it was called *parati* (fallow). *Parati* land paid at the full (*polaj*) rate when it was cultivated. Land which had been fallow for two to three

years was called *chachar*, and if longer than that, *banjar*. These were assessed at concessional rates, the revenue demand gradually rising till the full or *polaj* rate was paid in the fifth or the eighth year. In this way, the state helped in bringing virgin and uncultivated wasteland under cultivation. Land was classified further into good, middling and bad. One-third of the average produce was the state demand, but it varied according to the productivity of the land, the method of assessment, etc.

Akbar was deeply interested in the improvement and extension of cultivation. He asked the *amil* to act like a father to the peasants. He was to advance money by way of loans (*laccavi*) to the peasants for seeds, implements, animals, etc., in times of need, and to recover them in easy installments. He was to try and induce the peasants to plough as much land as possible and to sow superior quality crops. The zamindars of the area were also enjoined to cooperate in the task. The zamindars had a hereditary right to take a share of the produce. The peasants, too, had a hereditary right to cultivate their land and could not be ejected as long as they paid the land revenue.

The *dahsala* was not a ten-year settlement. Nor was it a permanent one, the state retaining the right to modify it. However, with some changes, Akbar's settlement remained the basis of the land revenue system of the Mughal empire till the end of the seventeenth century. The *zabti* system is associated with Raja Todar Mai, and is sometimes called Todar Mai's *bandobast*. Todar Mai was a brilliant revenue officer who first served under Sher Shah. But he was only one of a team of brilliant revenue officials who came to the forefront under Akbar.

Akbar could not have been able to expand his empire and maintain his hold over it without a strong army. For this purpose, it was necessary for him to organise the nobility as well as his army. Akbar realised both these objectives by means of the **mansabdari system**. Under this system, every officer was assigned a rank (*mansab*). The lowest rank was 10, and the highest was 5000 for the nobles; towards the end of the reign it was raised to 7000. Princes of the blood received higher *mattsabs*. The ranks were divided into two: *zat* and *sawar*.

The word *zat* means personal. It fixed the personal status of a person, and also the salary due to him. The *sawar* rank indicated the number of cavalymen (*sawars*) a person was required to maintain. A person who was required to maintain as many *sawars* as his *zat* rank was placed in the first category of that rank; if he maintained half or more, then in the second category and if he maintained less than half, then in the third category. Thus, there were three categories in every rank (*mansab*). To reward those who maintained a large quota of *sawars* for the state, an additional allowance at the rate of Rs. 2 for every *sawar* was added to the *zat* salary. No one could have a higher quota of *sawars* than his *zat* rank. Although modifications in the system were made from time to time, this remained the basic structure as long as the empire held together.

Out of his personal pay, the *mansabdar* was expected to maintain a corps of elephants, camels, mules and carts. These were necessary for the transport of the army. The Mughal *mansabdars* were paid very handsomely; in fact, their salaries were probably the highest in the world at the time. A *mansabdar* holding the rank of 100 *zat* received a monthly salary of Rs. 500. One holding the rank of 1000 *zat* received Rs. 4,400, while one holding the rank of 5000 *zat* received Rs. 30,000 a month. There was no income tax in those days. The purchasing power of the rupee in those days has been calculated to be sixty times of what it was in 1966. Even though the nobles had to spend roughly half of their personal salary in the upkeep of the animals for transport and in the administration of their jagirs they could lead lives of ostentation and luxury.

Great care was taken to ensure that the *sawars* recruited by the nobles were experienced and well-mounted. For this purpose, a descriptive roll (*chehra*) of the soldier was maintained, and his horse was branded with the imperial marks. This was called the *dagh* system. Every noble had to bring his contingent for periodic inspection before persons appointed by the emperor for the purpose. The horses were carefully inspected and only good quality horses of Arabic and Iraqi breed were employed. For every ten cavalymen, the *mansabdar* had to maintain twenty horses. This was so, because horses had to be rested while on march, and replacements were necessary in times of war. A *sawar* with only one horse was considered to be only half a *sawar*. The Mughal cavalry force remained an efficient one as long as the 10-20 rule was adhered to. Provision was made that the contingents of the nobles should be mixed ones, that is, drawn from all the groups — Mughal, Pathan, Hindustani and Rajput. Thus, Akbar tried to weaken the forces of tribalism and parochialism. The Mughal and Rajput nobles were allowed to have contingents exclusively of Mughals or Rajputs, but in course of time, mixed contingents became the general rule.

Apart from cavalymen, bowmen, musketeers (*baiuluklu*), sappers and mmeis were also recruited in the contingents. The salaries varied; the average salary of a *sawar* was Rs. 20 per month. Iranis and Turams

received more. An infantryman received about Rs 3 per month. The salary due to the soldiers was added to the personal salary of the Akbar did not like the jagir system but could not do away with it, as it was too deeply entrenched. As a jagir did not confer any hereditary rights on the holder, or disturb any of the existing rights in the area, it only meant that the land revenue due to the state was to be paid to the jagirdar.

Akbar kept a large body of cavalymen as his bodyguards. He kept a big stable of horses. He also maintained a body of gentleman troopers. These were persons of noble lineage who did not have the means of raising a contingent or were persons who had impressed the emperor. They were allowed to keep eight to ten horses, and received a high salary of about Rs. 800 a month. They were answerable only to the emperor, and had a separate muster-master. These people could be compared to the knights of medieval Europe. Akbar was very fond of horses and elephants. He also maintained a strong park of artillery. Akbar was especially interested in guns. He devised detachable guns which could be carried on an elephant or a camel. There were also heavy siege guns for breaching forts; some of these were so heavy that a 100 or 200 oxen and several elephants were needed to pull them. A strong park of artillery accompanied the emperor whenever he moved out of the capital.

We do not know whether Akbar ever had any plans of building a navy. The lack of a strong navy remained a key weakness of the Mughal empire. If Akbar had the time, he might have paid attention to it. He did build an efficient flotilla of war boats which he used in his eastern campaigns. Some of the boats were over 30 metres long and displaced over 350 tons.

## Government Organisation

Hardly any changes were made by Akbar in the organisation of local government. The *pargana* and the *iarkar* continued as before. The chief officers of the *sarkar* were the *faujdar* and the *amalguzar*, the former being in charge of law and order, and the latter responsible for the assessment and collection of the land revenue. The territories of the empire were divided into **jagir, khahsa and warn**. Income from khahsa villages went directly to the royal exchequer. The inam lands were those which were allotted to learned and religious men. Jagirs were allotted to nobles and members of the royal family including the queens. The *amalguzar* was required to exercise a general supervision over all types of holdings so that the imperial rules and regulations for the assessment and collection of land revenue were followed uniformly. Only autonomous rajas were left free to continue their traditional land revenue system in their territories. Even there, Akbar encouraged them to follow the imperial system.

Akbar paid great attention to the organisation of the central and provincial governments. His system of central government was based on the structure of government which had evolved under the Delhi Sultanat, but the functions of the various departments were carefully reorganised. The Central Asian and Timurid tradition was of having an all-powerful *wazir* under whom various heads of departments functioned. He was the principal link between the ruler and the administration. In course of time, a separate department, the military department, had come into being. The judiciary had always been separate. Thus, in practice, the concept of an all-powerful *wazir* had been given up. However, in his capacity as *yvakil*, Baidar Khan had exercised the power of an all-powerful *wazir*.

Akbar reorganised the central machinery of administration on the basis of the division of power between various departments, and of checks and balances. While the post of *wakil* was not abolished, it was stripped of all power and became largely decorative. The post was given to important nobles from time to time, but they played little part in administration. The head of the revenue department continued to be the *wazir*. He was not generally a person who held a high position in the nobility. Many nobles held *mansabs* which were higher than his. Thus, he was no longer the principal adviser to the ruler, but an expert in revenue affairs. To emphasise this point, Akbar generally used the title of *diwan* or *diwan-i-ala* in preference to the word *wazir*. Sometimes, several persons were asked to discharge the duties of *diwan* jointly. The *diwan* was responsible for all income and expenditure, and held control over khalisa, jagir and inam lands.

The head of the military department was called the *mir bakhshi*. It was the *mir bakhshi* and not the *diwan* who was considered the head of the nobility. Therefore, only the leading grandees were appointed to this post. Recommendations for appointment to *mansabs* or for promotions, etc., were made to the emperor through the *mir bakhshi*. Once the emperor had accepted a recommendation, it was sent to the *diwan* for confirmation and for assigning a jagir to the appointee. The same procedure was followed in case of promotions.

The *mir bakhshi* was also the head of the intelligence and information agencies of the empire. Intelligence officers (*bands*) and news reporters (*waqta-navis*) were posted to all parts of the empire. Their reports were

presented to the emperor at the court through the *mir bakhshi*. It will thus be seen that the *diwan* and the *bakhsh* were almost on a par with, and supported and checked, each other.

**The third important** officer was the *mir soman*. He was in charge of the imperial household, including the supply of all the provisions and articles for the use of the inmates of the harem or the female apartments. Many of these articles were manufactured under supervision in royal workshops called *karkhanas*. Only nobles who enjoyed the complete confidence of the emperor were appointed to this office. The maintenance of etiquette at the court, the control of the royal bodyguard, etc., were all under the overall supervision of this officer.

**The fourth important** department was the judicial department headed by the chief *qazi*. This post was sometimes combined with that of the chief *sadr* who was responsible for all charitable and religious endowments. Thus it was a post which carried considerable power and patronage. It fell into bad odour due to the corruption and venality of Akbar's chief *qazi*, Abdun Nabi.

After instituting a careful scrutiny of the grants held by various persons, Akbar separated the inam lands from the jagir and khalisa lands, and divided the empire into six circles for purposes of grant of inam lands and their administration. **Two features of the inam grants are noteworthy.**

**First**, Akbar made it a deliberate part of his policy to grant inam lands to all persons, irrespective of their religious faith and beliefs. *Sanads* of grant to various Hindu *maths* made by Akbar are still preserved.

**Second**, Akbar made it a rule that half of the inam land should consist of cultivable wasteland. Thus, the inam-holders were encouraged to extend cultivation.

### **The Income of the State**

The Mughal government collected revenue from two sources—the land and trade. Most of the revenue was spent in paying the salary of the officers. The higher officials received very large salaries which enabled them to live in great luxury.

Although Akbar wanted that salaries be paid in cash, in fact most of them had to be paid by grants of land revenue called *jagirs*. The officers collected from the *jagir* the revenue which was the equivalent of his salary. Because these officers were paid their salary in grants of revenue, it was necessary to find out how much revenue each village ought to provide. This would make it simpler for the emperor to make the grant. Since the produce of the land varies from region to region and changes over periods of time, it is always useful for a government to make an assessment from time to time. Akbar wanted detailed information on the produce and revenue of his empire. This had to be done in order also to check the amount of revenue which was being sent to the government. The state took one-third of the produce and preferred if the revenue was paid in money. Raja Todar Mai was asked to make an estimate of the land revenue. When this had been done, a careful record was kept. Akbar insisted on this record being always up-to-date, This assessment was also helpful to the peasants. Now they would know how much of their produce they could keep and how much they had to give to the state.

The revenue from trade was not so large as the revenue from the land. But in areas where trade prospered, such as Gujarat and Bengal, it helped to make the *suba* richer. Trading caravans of camels and bullock wagons carried goods within India. Some of the traders crossed the frontiers and took their goods into Central Asia, Persia, or even Russia Trade overseas increased in Mughal times. The Indian coastline boasted of many ports. Indian traders exported textiles, indigo, saltpetre and spices.

It was in connection with this overseas trade that a number of Europeans visited the court of Akbar. The Portuguese had already established their trading settlements and were trading with merchants on the west coast of India. English merchants at this time were very envious of the profits which the Portuguese made. So they sent people to Akbar's court to get permission to trade in the same places where the Portuguese were trading. But Akbar was not too keen to give permission to so many European traders.

### **Literature and the Fine Arts**

Akbar never learnt to read or write, but he was familiar with the best books and he spent many hours in educating himself. This he did by having the books read to him and by discussing

ideas with a variety of philosophers, scholars and writers. He was also very fond of poetry and could quote from many poems. He was not, however, very interested in the natural sciences. This was unfortunate because if he had shown an interest in the Renaissance or the new technology of the Portuguese, the progress of science in India would have been more rapid.

Among his close friends with whom he had long discussions were two brothers—Abul Fazl and Faizi. Abul Fazl wrote a book, *Akbarnama* (the life of Akbar) of which a section is the famous *Ain-i-Akbari*. This section deals with the laws and the revenue system of the empire, and also describes the condition of the country. Faizi was a poet and wrote in Persian. The official language of the Mughal empire was Persian, therefore most of the educated people especially those who were working in the government knew Persian. Akbar and his friends encouraged the translation into Persian of important works in Sanskrit. The entire text of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* was translated at this time and Abul Fazl wrote the preface to the Persian text. There were many scholars who wrote biographies of the various Sultans and kings in Sanskrit and received large donations from these rulers. It was also at this time that many poets began writing in Hindi. Among

## Capital and Court

**Capital cities** The heart of the Mughal Empire was its capital city, where the court assembled. The capital cities of the Mughals frequently shifted during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Babur took over the Lodi capital of Agra, though during the four years of his reign the court was frequently on the move. During the 1560s Akbar had the fort of Agra constructed with red sandstone quarried from the adjoining regions. In the 1570s he decided to build a new capital, Fatehpur Sikri.

One of the reasons prompting this may have been that Sikri was located on the direct road to Ajmer, where the dargah of Shaikh Muinuddin Chishti had become an important pilgrimage centre. The Mughal emperors entered into a close relationship with sufis of the Chishti silsila. Akbar commissioned the construction of a white marble tomb for Shaikh Salim Chishti next to the majestic Friday mosque at Sikri. The enormous arched gateway (Buland Darwaza) was meant to remind visitors of the Mughal victory in Gujarat. In 1585 the capital was transferred to Lahore to bring the north-west under greater control and Akbar closely watched the frontier for thirteen years. Shah Jahan pursued sound fiscal policies and accumulated enough money to indulge his passion for building. Building activity in monarchical cultures, as you have seen in the case of earlier rulers, was the most visible and tangible sign of dynastic power, wealth and prestige. In the case of Muslim rulers it was also considered an act of piety. In 1648 the court, army and household moved from Agra to the newly completed imperial capital, Shahjahanabad bazaars (Chandni Chowk) and spacious homes for the nobility. Shah Jahan's new city was appropriate to a more formal vision of a grand monarchy. Chronicles lay down with great precision the rules defining status amongst the Mughal elites. In court, status was determined by spatial proximity to the king. The place accorded to a courtier by the ruler was a sign of his importance in the eyes of the emperor. Once the emperor sat on the throne, no one was permitted to move from his position or to leave without permission. Social control in court society was exercised through carefully defining in full detail the forms of address, courtesies and speech which were acceptable in court. The slightest infringement of etiquette was noticed and punished on the spot. The forms of salutation to the ruler indicated the person's status in the hierarchy: deeper prostration represented higher status. The highest form of submission was *sijda* or complete prostration. Under Shah Jahan these rituals were replaced with *chahar taslim* and *zaminbos* (kissing the ground). The protocols governing diplomatic envoys at the Mughal court were equally explicit.

An ambassador presented to the Mughal emperor was expected to offer an acceptable form of greeting – either by bowing deeply or kissing the ground, or else to follow the Persian custom of clasping one's hands in front of the chest. Thomas Roe, the English envoy of James I, simply bowed before Jahangir according to European custom, and further shocked the court by demanding a chair. The emperor began his day at sunrise with personal religious devotions or prayers, and then appeared on a small balcony, the *jharoka*, facing the east. Below, a crowd of people (soldiers, merchants, craftspersons, peasants, women with sick children) waited for a view, *darshan*, of the emperor. *Jharoka darshan* was introduced by Akbar with the objective of broadening the acceptance of the imperial authority as part of popular faith.

**The Ottomans: pilgrimage and trade.** The relationship between the Mughals and the Ottomans was marked by the concern to ensure free movement for merchants and pilgrims in the territories under Ottoman control. This was especially true for the Hijaz, that part of Ottoman Arabia where the important pilgrim centres of Mecca and Medina were located. The Mughal emperor usually combined religion and commerce by exporting valuable merchandise to Aden and Mokha, both Red Sea ports, and distributing the proceeds of the sales in charity to the keepers of shrines and religious men there. However, when Aurangzeb discovered cases of misappropriation of funds sent to Arabia, he favoured their distribution in India which, he thought, “was as much a house of God as Mecca”.

## The Mughal court

The physical arrangement of the court, focused on the sovereign, mirrored his status as the heart of society. Its centrepiece was therefore the throne, the takht, which gave physical form to the function of the sovereign as axis mundi. The canopy, a symbol of kingship in India for a millennium, was believed to separate the radiance of the sun from that of the sovereign.

Jesuits at the Mughal court Europe received knowledge of India through the accounts of Jesuit missionaries, travellers, merchants and diplomats. The Jesuit accounts are the earliest impressions of the Mughal court ever recorded by European writers. Following the discovery of a direct sea route to India at the end of the fifteenth century, Portuguese merchants established a network of trading stations in coastal cities. The Portuguese king was also interested in the propagation of Christianity with the help of the missionaries of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits). The Christian missions to India during the sixteenth century were part of this process of trade and empire building. Akbar was curious about Christianity and dispatched an embassy to Goa to invite Jesuit priests. The first Jesuit mission reached the Mughal court at Fatehpur Sikri in 1580 and stayed for about two years. The Jesuits spoke to Akbar about Christianity and debated its virtues with the ulama. Two more missions were sent to the Mughal court at Lahore, in 1591 and 1595. The Jesuit accounts are based on personal observation and shed light on the character and mind of the emperor. At public assemblies the Jesuits were assigned places in close proximity to Akbar's throne. They accompanied him on his campaigns, tutored his children, and were often companions of his leisure hours. The Jesuit accounts corroborate the information given in Persian chronicles about state officials and the general conditions of life in Mughal times.

### Questioning Formal Religion

The high respect shown by Akbar towards the members of the Jesuit mission impressed them deeply. They interpreted the emperor's open interest in the doctrines of Christianity as a sign of his acceptance of their faith. This can be understood in the light of the prevailing climate of religious intolerance in Western Europe. Monserrate remarked that "the king cared little that in allowing everyone to follow his religion he was in reality violating all". Akbar's quest for religious knowledge led to interfaith debates in the ibadat khana at Fatehpur Sikri between learned Muslims, Hindus, Jainas, Parsis and Christians. Akbar's religious views matured as he queried scholars of different religions and sects and gathered knowledge about their doctrines. Increasingly, he moved away from the orthodox Islamic ways of understanding religions towards a self-conceived eclectic form of divine worship focused on light and the sun. We have seen that Akbar and Abu'l Fazl created a philosophy of light and used it to shape the image of the king and ideology of the state. In this, a divinely inspired individual has supreme sovereignty over his people and complete control over his enemies.

### Akbar Nama and Badsah Nama

Among the important illustrated Mughal chronicles the Akbar Nama and Badshah Nama (The Chronicle of a King) are the most well known. Each manuscript contained an average of 150 full- or double-page paintings of battles, sieges, hunts, building construction, court scenes, etc. The author of the Akbar Nama, Abu'l Fazl grew up in the Mughal capital of Agra. He was widely read in Arabic, Persian, Greek philosophy and Sufism. Moreover, he was a forceful debater and independent thinker who consistently opposed the views of the conservative ulama. These qualities impressed Akbar, who found Abu'l Fazl ideally suited as an adviser and a spokesperson for his policies.

Objective of the emperor was to free the state from the control of religious orthodoxy. In his role as court historian, Abu'l Fazl both shaped and articulated the ideas associated with the reign of Akbar. Beginning in 1589, Abu'l Fazl worked on the Akbar Nama for thirteen years, repeatedly revising the draft. The chronicle is based on a range of sources, including actual records of events (waqai), official documents and oral testimonies of knowledgeable persons. The Akbar Nama is divided into three books of which the first two are chronicles. The third book is the Ain-i Akbari. The first volume contains the history of mankind from Adam to one celestial cycle of Akbar's life (30 years). The second volume closes in the fortysixth regnal year (1601) of Akbar. The very next year Abu'l Fazl fell victim to a conspiracy hatched by Prince Salim, and was murdered by his accomplice, Bir Singh Bundela.

The Akbar Nama was written to provide a detailed description of Akbar's reign in the traditional diachronic sense of recording politically significant events across time, as well as in the more novel sense of giving a

synchronic picture of all aspects of Akbar's empire – geographic, social, administrative and cultural – without reference to chronology. In the Ain-i Akbari the Mughal Empire is presented as having a diverse population consisting of Hindus, Jainas, Buddhists and Muslims and a composite culture. Abu'l Fazl wrote in a language that was ornate and which attached importance to diction and rhythm, as texts were often read aloud. This IndoPersian style was patronised at court, and there were a large number of writers who wanted to write like Abu'l Fazl. A pupil of Abu'l Fazl, Abdul Hamid Lahori is known as the author of the Badshah Nama. Emperor Shah Jahan, hearing of his talents, commissioned him to write a history of his reign modelled on the Akbar Nama. The Badshah Nama is this official history in three volumes (daftars) of ten lunar years each. Lahori wrote the first and second daftars comprising the first two decades of the emperor's rule (1627-47); these volumes were later revised by Sadullah Khan, Shah Jahan's wazir. Infirmities of old age prevented Lahori from proceeding with the third decade which was then chronicled by the historian Waris.

**During the colonial period**, British administrators began to study Indian history and to create an archive of knowledge about the subcontinent to help them better understand the people and the cultures of the empire they sought to rule. The Asiatic Society of Bengal, founded by Sir William Jones in 1784, undertook the editing, printing and translation of many Indian manuscripts. Edited versions of the Akbar Nama and Badshah Nama were first published by the Asiatic Society in the nineteenth century. In the early twentieth century the Akbar Nama was translated into English by Henry Beveridge after years of hard labour. Only excerpts of the Badshah Nama have been translated into English to date; the text in its entirety still awaits translation.



## The Bahmani Kingdom

To begin with, the events which were taking place in northern India did not affect the kingdoms of the peninsula. But this situation changed once Mughal power was established. The Mughals were to extend their control into the peninsula as well and unite almost the whole of India.

In the fifteenth century the Bahmani kingdom prospered. This was partly due to the wise rule of the minister Mahmud Gavan. In 1453, a Persian merchant named Mahmud Gavan arrived in the Bahmani kingdom and took service with the king. He soon rose to be the chief minister of the Bahmani kingdom. For twentyfive years Mahmud Gavan helped the Bahmani kings to rule wisely and justly. He reorganized the revenue system so that there would be enough money to maintain a strong army. But he did not do this by taxing the people heavily as many foolish rulers do. Gavan was always careful about how much tax he took from the people. Instead he also thought of other ways of getting revenue. For example, he captured Goa from Vijayanagara so that the profits of trade would now come to the Bahmani kingdom.

Although Mahmud Gavan was popular with the people he also had his enemies. The court of the Bahmani Sultan was divided into two groups. One was that of the local Muslims who belonged to the Deccan and the other was that of foreigners like Gavan who had come from countries outside India and had taken service with the Bahmani rulers. The two groups were not on friendly terms and were jealous of each other. Finally the local group persuaded the king to have Gavan murdered in 1481.

This was a great loss to the Bahmani kingdom since Gavan was a good minister. Some of the later rulers were weak kings so the kingdom became weak too. The nobles began to fight each other and the king could not control them. Some of the nobles also challenged the power of the Sultan. In addition to this, the attacks from the kingdom of Vijayanagara were increasing. Eventually, the Bahmani kingdom broke up into five new kingdoms. These were Bijapur, Golconda, Ahmadnagar, Bidar and Berar. Later Berar was conquered by Ahmadnagar and Bidar by Bijapur; so only three kingdoms remained, Bijapur, Golconda and Ahmadnagar.

### **Mughal Traditions of Succession**

The Mughals did not believe in the rule of primogeniture, where the eldest son inherited his father's estate. Instead they followed the Mughal and Timurid custom of coparcenary inheritance, or a division of the inheritance amongst all the sons.

### **Mughal Relations with Other Rulers**

You will notice that the Mughal rulers campaigned constantly against rulers who refused to accept their authority. But as the Mughals became powerful many other rulers also joined them voluntarily. The Rajputs are a good example of this. Many of them married their daughters into Mughal families and received high positions. But many resisted as well.

The Sisodiya Rajputs of Mewar refused to accept Mughal authority for a long time. Once defeated, however, they were honourably treated by the Mughals, given their lands (watan) back as assignments (watan jagir). The careful balance between defeating but not humiliating their opponents enabled the Mughals to extend their influence over many kings and chieftains. But it was difficult to keep this balance all the time.

### **Mansabdars and Jagirdars**

As the empire expanded to encompass different regions the Mughals recruited diverse bodies of people. From a small nucleus of Turkish nobles (Turanis) they expanded to include Iranians, Indian Muslims, Afghans, Rajputs, Marathas and other groups. Those who joined Mughal service were enrolled as mansabdars. The term mansabdar refers to an individual who holds a mansab, meaning a position or rank.

It was a grading system used by the Mughals to fix (1) rank, (2) salary and (3) military responsibilities. Rank and salary were determined by a numerical value called zat. The higher the zat, the more prestigious was the noble's position in court and the larger his salary. The mansabdar's military responsibilities required him to maintain a specified number of sawar or cavalrymen.

The mansabdar brought his cavalrymen for review, got them registered, their horses branded and then received money to pay them as salary. Mansabdars received their salaries as revenue assignments called jagirs which were somewhat like iqtas. But unlike muqtis, most mansabdars did not actually reside in or administer their jagirs. They only had rights to the revenue of their assignments which was collected for them by their servants while the mansabdars themselves served in some other part of the country.

In Akbar's reign these jagirs were carefully assessed so that their revenues were roughly equal to the salary of the mansabdar. By Aurangzeb's reign this was no longer the case and the actual revenue collected was

often less than the granted sum. There was also a huge increase in the number of mansabdars, which meant a long wait before they received a jagir. These and other factors created a shortage in the number of jagirs. As a result, many jagirdars tried to extract as much revenue as possible while they had a jagir. Aurangzeb was unable to control these developments in the last years of his reign and the peasantry therefore suffered tremendously.

## Zabt and Zamindars

The main source of income available to Mughal rulers was tax on the produce of the peasantry. In most places, peasants paid taxes through the rural elites, that is, the headman or the local chieftain. The Mughals used one term – zamindars – to describe all intermediaries, whether they were local headmen of villages or powerful chieftains. Akbar's revenue minister, Todar Mal, carried out a careful survey of crop yields, prices and areas cultivated for a 10-year period, 1570-1580. On the basis of this data, tax was fixed on each crop in cash. Each province was divided into revenue circles with its own schedule of revenue rates for individual crops. This revenue system was known as zabt. It was prevalent in those areas where Mughal administrators could survey the land and keep very careful accounts. This was not possible in provinces such as Gujarat and Bengal. In some areas the zamindars exercised a great deal of power. The exploitation by Mughal administrators could drive them to rebellion. Sometimes zamindars and peasants of the same caste allied in rebelling against Mughal authority. These peasant revolts challenged the stability of the Mughal Empire from the end of the seventeenth century.

## Jahangir

As was the case with most princes of the royal family, Jahangir was appointed governor of Avadh and Bengal as a young man, so that he could gain some experience of administration and government. On the death of Akbar in 1605, Jahangir became king. As a person Jahangir was rather different from his father. He shared Akbar's interest in social and religious reforms, but he never studied the problems of religion as deeply as his father. Nor did he have his father's sharp mind. But he was fond of literature and was well-read. He wrote in a fine Persian style as could be seen from his memoirs—the *Tizuk-i-Jahangiri*. They provide us with information about the personality and the reign of Jahangir. He knew a great deal about painting and boasted of having some of the best painters at his court.

In 1611 Jahangir married Nur Jahan. She was a beautiful and intelligent woman. She not only set the fashion in dress and manners at the court, but took an interest in matters of state as well. Jahangir fell ill for a long period and during this time she looked after the affairs of the king and ruled the empire. Jahangir used to take her advice on everything that was important. Finally she became so powerful that even the coins were issued jointly in the name of Jahangir and Nur Jahan.

Jahangir's reign was on the whole quiet as compared to later Mughal rulers. There were not too many campaigns. Jahangir strengthened Mughal control over Bengal. The earlier trouble which Akbar had with the Rana of Mewar was sorted out. Jahangir who was himself married to Rajput princesses such as Jodha Bai and Man Bai, continued his father's policy of matrimonial alliances with the Rajput princes. An army was sent to the Punjab hills and Kangra was conquered. The frontier with the kingdom of Ahmadnagar, which had been a source of trouble, was settled. One of the results of all these campaigns in various parts of India was that many of the small chieftains and Afghan nobles who had not yet acknowledged

Mughal overlordship, were made to do so. In this way the empire was strengthened but Jahangir continued to have his troubles. The area of Qandahar in Afghanistan was lost to the Persians. This was a serious loss as the city of Qandahar was important for Indian trade with western Asia. In addition as long as the Mughals held Qandahar they could defend themselves more easily against attacks from central and western Asia. Jahangir also had trouble with his son Shah Jahan who rebelled against him. Shah Jahan was worried lest one of his brothers should be made the successor to Jahangir, so he decided to show how strong he was by rebelling against his father. Jahangir found it difficult to control his son. And then there was trouble with the Portuguese. The Portuguese, not content with the big profits they were making in the trade with India, took to piracy and began to attack Indian ships. They attacked a ship which belonged to the Mughal government and this made Jahangir so angry that he refused to allow the Portuguese to trade with the merchants of the Mughal State, until the Portuguese made amends.

By this time the English were also getting interested in the possibilities of trade with India. The Portuguese tried their best to keep the English out as the two were jealous of each other. It was during Jahangir's reign that the English king sent his ambassador, Sir Thomas Roe, to the court at Agra, Sir Thomas tried to persuade Jahangir to sign a trade agreement with the English, but the emperor would not do so. Sir Thomas spent three years at Agra and has left a very lively account of his life at the Mughal court.

One of the things for which Jahangir is remembered is his chain of justice. He wished his officers to deal justly with his subjects. So he had a long golden chain made to which bells were attached and tied it to the wall of the palace. He announced that anyone who felt he had been unjustly treated by the government could pull at this chain and make his complaint before the officer. The idea was noble but one wonders how many people had the courage to pull at the chain and make a complaint against an officer of the government.

## Shah Jahan

When the name Shah Jahan is mentioned most people think of two things—the Taj Mahal and the Peacock Throne. The Taj Mahal is the world-famous tomb of Mumtaz Mahal, Shah Jahan's wife. The Peacock Throne was a golden, jewel-studded throne which Shah Jahan used and which was later looted and taken to Iran. But during Shah Jahan's reign other things happened which were of greater importance to the Mughal empire.

Shah Jahan succeeded to the throne on the death of his father in 1628. The first thing he had to face was revolts in Bundelkhand and the Deccan. The former he put down without too much trouble. But the latter was more difficult to handle and the Deccan became a big trouble spot for the Mughals. Finally the kingdom of Ahmadnagar was annexed, Bijapur and Golconda submitted to the Mughals and signed a treaty of peace. Shah Jahan appointed his son, Prince Aurangzeb, as the viceroy of the Deccan. Aurangzeb tried hard to annex these two kingdoms but did not succeed. Another group of people who were beginning to defy the authority of the Mughals were the Marathas, and we shall hear more about them later.

Having attended to matters in the Deccan, Shah Jahan turned his attention to the north-west. He sent his armies to Balkh and Badakshan in Central Asia in order to secure the defence of north-western India. Shah Jahan who had recovered Qandahar from the Iranians but had lost it again tried thrice to capture the city but failed each time. In the end he gave up the attempt.

Shah Jahan also had trouble with the Portuguese who had a settlement at Hughli. They used this as a base for piracy in the Bay of Bengal. The Mughal armies cleared them out of Hughli. The armies then marched north-eastwards and annexed the region of Kamrupa (in Assam).

Meanwhile Shah Jahan had built a new city as his capital, the city of Shahjahanabad. Today it is a part of Delhi. In 1657 Shah Jahan fell ill and his four sons immediately began fighting amongst themselves for the throne. Aurangzeb won. He kept his father a prisoner at the fort of Agra. From the fort Shah Jahan could see the Taj and remember his wife Mumtaz Mahal. When he died in 1666 he was buried alongside his wife in the Taj Mahal.

## The Mughal Empire in the Seventeenth Century and After

The administrative and military efficiency of the Mughal Empire led to great economic and commercial prosperity. International travellers described it as the fabled land of wealth. But these same visitors were also appalled at the state of poverty that existed side by side with the greatest opulence. The inequalities were glaring. Documents from the twentieth year of Shah Jahan's reign inform us that the highest-ranking mansabdars were only 445 in number out of a total of 8,000. This small number – a mere 5.6 per cent of the total number of mansabdars – received 61.5 per cent of the total estimated revenue of the empire as salaries for themselves and their troopers. The Mughal emperors and their mansabdars spent a great deal of their income on salaries and goods. This expenditure benefited the artisans and peasantry who supplied them with goods and produce. But the scale of revenue collection left very little for investment in the hands of the primary producers – the peasant and the artisan. The poorest amongst them lived from hand to mouth and they could hardly consider investing in additional resources – tools and supplies – to increase productivity. The wealthier peasantry and artisanal groups, the merchants and bankers profited in this economic world. The enormous wealth and resources commanded by the Mughal elite made them an extremely powerful group of people in the late seventeenth century. As the authority of the Mughal emperor slowly declined, his servants emerged as powerful centres of power in the regions. They constituted new dynasties and held command of provinces like

Hyderabad and Awadh. Although they continued to recognise the Mughal emperor in Delhi as their master, by the eighteenth century the provinces of the empire had consolidated their independent political identities.

## Jats and Satnamis

The first section to come into conflict with the Mughal government were the Jats of the Agra-Delhi region living on “both sides of the river Yamuna. The Jats were mostly peasant cultivators, only a few of them being zamindars. With a strong sense of brotherhood and justice, the Jats had often come into conflict with the government and taken to rebellion, taking advantage of their difficult terrain. Thus conflict with the Jats had taken place during the reigns of Jahangir and Shah Jahan over collection of land revenue. Since the imperial road to the Deccan and the western seaports passed through this area, the Mughal government had taken a serious view of these rebellions and taken stern measures.

In 1669, the Jats of the Mathura region broke out in rebellion under the leadership of a local zamindar, -Gokla. The rebellion spread rapidly among the peasants of the area and Aurangzeb decided to march in person from Delhi to quell it. Although the Jat levies had swelled to 20,000, they were no match for the organised imperial army. In a stiff battle the Jats were defeated. Gokla was captured and executed.

However, the movement was not completely crushed and discontent continued to simmer. Meanwhile, in 1672, there was another armed conflict between the peasants and the Mughal state at Narnaul, not far from Mathura. This time the conflict was with a religious body called Satnamis. The Satnamis were mostly peasants, artisans and low caste people, called “goldsmiths, carpenters, sweepers, tanners and other ignoble beings” by a contemporary writer. They did not observe distinctions of caste and rank or between Hindus and Muslims and followed a strict code of conduct. Starting from a clash with a local official, it soon assumed the character of an open rebellion. Again the emperor had to march in person to crush it. It is interesting to note that the local Hindu zamindars, many of whom were Rajputs, sided with the Mughals in this conflict.

In 1685, there was a second uprising of the Jats under the leadership of Rajajam. The Jats were better organised this time and adopted the methods of guerilla warfare, combining it with plunder. Aurangzeb approached Raja Bishan Singh, the Kachhawaha ruler to crush the uprising. Bishan Singh was appointed faujdar of Mathura and the entire area was granted to him in zamindari. Conflict between the Jats and the Rajputs over zamindari rights complicated the issue, most of the primary zamindars, that is those cultivating peasants who owned the land being Jats, and the intermediary zamindars, that is those who collected the land revenue being Rajputs. The Jats put up stiff resistance, but by 1691, Rajaram and his successor, Churaman, were compelled to submit. However, unrest among the Jat peasants continued and their plundering activities made the Delhi-Agra road unsafe for travellers. Later on, in the eighteenth century, taking advantage of Mughal civil wars and weakness in the central government, Churaman was able to carve out a separate Jat principality in the area and to oust the Rajput zamindars. Thus, what apparently started as a peasants’ uprising, was diverted from its character, and culminated in a state in which Jat chiefs formed the ruling class.

## The Afghans

Aurangzeb came into conflict with the Afghans also. Conflict with the hardy Afghan tribesmen who lived in the mountain region between the Punjab and Kabul was not new. Akbar had to fight against the Afghans and in the process, lost the life of his close friend and confidant, Raja Birbal. Conflict with the Afghan tribesmen had taken place during the reign of Shah Jahan also. These conflicts were partly economic and partly political and religious. With little means of livelihood in the rugged mountains, the Afghans had little option but to prey on caravans or to enroll in the Mughal armies. Their fierce love of freedom made service in the Mughal armies difficult. The Mughals generally kept them happy by paying them subsidies. But growth of population or the rise of an ambitious leader could lead to a breach of this tacit agreement.

During the reign of Aurangzeb, we see a new stirring among the Pathans. In 1667, Bhagu, the leader of the Yusufzai tribe, proclaimed as king a person named Muhammad Shah who claimed descent from an ancient royal lineage, and proclaimed himself his *wazir*. It would appear that among the Afghans, as among the Jats the ambition of setting up a separate state of their own had begun to stir. A religious revivalist movement called the Raushanai, which emphasised a strict ethical life and devotion to a chosen *pir* had provided an intellectual and moral background to the movement.

Gradually, Bhagu's movement spread till his followers started ravaging and plundering the Hazara, Attock and Peshawar districts and brought the traffic in the Khyber to a standstill. To clear the Khyber and crush the uprising Aurangzeb deputed the Chief Bakhshi, Amir Khan. A Rajput contingent was posted with him. After a series of hard battles, the Afghan resistance was broken. But to watch over them, in 1671, Maharaja Jaswant Singh, the ruler of Marwar, was appointed as thanedar of Jamrud.

There was a second Afghan uprising in 1672. The leader of the opposition this time was the Afridi leader. Akmal Khan, who proclaimed himself king and struck *khutba* and *sikka* in his name. He declared war against the Mughals and summoned all the Afghans to join him. According to a contemporary writer, with a following "more numerous than ants and locusts", they closed the Khyber Pass. Moving forward to clear the pass, Amin Khan advanced too far and suffered a disastrous defeat in the narrow defile. The Khan managed to escape with his life, but 10,000 men perished, and cash and goods worth two crores were looted by the Afghans. This defeat brought other tribesmen into the fray including Khush-hal Khan Khattak, a sworn enemy of Aurangzeb from whose hands he had suffered imprisonment for some time.

## Downfall of Mughal Empire

During the first half of the eighteenth century. Notice how the boundaries of the Mughal Empire were reshaped by the emergence of a number of independent kingdoms. By 1765, notice how another power, the British, had successfully grabbed major chunks of territory in eastern India. What these maps tell us is that political conditions in eighteenth century India changed quite dramatically and within a relatively short span of time. In this chapter we will read about the emergence of new political groups in the subcontinent during the first half of the eighteenth century – roughly from 1707, when Aurangzeb died, till the third battle of Panipat in 1761.

### The causes behind downfall of Mughal Empire

The Mughal Empire reached the height of its success and started facing a variety of crises towards the closing years of the seventeenth century. These were caused by a number of factors.

#### 1. The war In Deccan

Emperor Aurangzeb had depleted the military and financial resources of his empire by fighting a long war in the Deccan.

#### 2. Lack of administration

Under his successors, the efficiency of the imperial administration broke down. It became increasingly difficult for the later Mughal emperors to keep a check on their powerful mansabdars. Nobles appointed as governors (subadars) often controlled the offices of revenue and military administration (diwani and faujdari) as well. This gave them extraordinary political, economic and military powers over vast regions of the Mughal Empire.

#### 3. Mounting Tax

As the governors consolidated their control over the provinces, the periodic remission of revenue to the capital declined. Peasant and zamindari rebellions in many parts of northern and western India added to these problems. These revolts were sometimes caused by the pressures of mounting taxes.

#### 4. Inefficient Successors

At other times they were attempts by powerful chieftains to consolidate their own positions. Mughal authority had been challenged by rebellious groups in the past as well. But these groups were now able to seize the economic resources of the region to consolidate their positions. The Mughal emperors after Aurangzeb were unable to arrest the gradual shifting of political and economic authority into the hands of provincial governors, local chieftains and other groups.

### Role of invaders

In the midst of this economic and political crisis, the ruler of Iran, Nadir Shah, sacked and plundered the city of Delhi in 1739 and took away immense amounts of wealth. This invasion was followed by a series of

plundering raids by the Afghan ruler Ahmad Shah Abdali, who invaded north India five times between 1748 and 1761.

## Nadir Shah attacks Delhi

The devastation of Delhi after Nadir Shah's invasion was described by contemporary observers. One described the wealth looted from the Mughal treasury as follows: sixty lakhs of rupees and some thousand gold coins, nearly one crore worth of gold-ware, nearly fifty crores worth of jewels, most of them unrivalled in the world, and the above included the Peacock throne.

Already under severe pressure from all sides, the empire was further weakened by competition amongst different groups of nobles. They were divided into two major groups or factions, the Iranis and Turanis (nobles of Turkish descent). For a long time, the later Mughal emperors were puppets in the hands of either one or the other of these two powerful groups. The worst possible humiliation came when two Mughal emperors, Farrukh Siyar (1713-1719) and Alamgir II (1754-1759) were assassinated, and two others Ahmad Shah (1748-1754) and Shah Alam II (1759-1816) were blinded by their nobles.

## Responsibility of Aurangzeb

The Mughal empire declined rapidly after the death of Aurangzeb. The Mughal court became the scene for faction fighting among the nobles, and soon ambitious provincial governors began to behave in an independent manner. The Maratha depredations extended from the Deccan to the heartland of the empire, the Gangetic plains.

The working of economic and social forces in medieval India has yet to be fully understood. We have seen in an earlier chapter that trade and commerce were expanding in India during the seventeenth century and that handicraft production was keeping pace with the growing demand. This, in turn, could only have been made possible if the production of raw materials such as cotton, indigo, etc., had expanded simultaneously. The area under *zabti*, that is, where the system of measurement was followed, expanded, according to official Mughal statistics.

**In the political field**, Aurangzeb committed a number of serious mistakes. We have already referred to his inability to understand the true nature of the Maratha movement and his disregard of Jai Singh's advice to befriend Shivaji. The execution of Sambhaji was another mistake, for it deprived Aurangzeb of a recognised Maratha head to negotiate with. Apparently, Aurangzeb had no desire to negotiate with the Marathas. He was convinced that after the extinction of Bijapur and Golconda, he had the Marathas at his mercy and that the Marathas had no option but to accept his terms—a truncated *swarajya*<sup>1</sup> and promise of loyalty and service to the Mughal emperor. When Aurangzeb realised his mistake and opened negotiations with the Marathas, the demand for *chauth* and *sardesh-mukhi* proved a serious obstacle. Even this had been, by and large, surmounted. In 1703, agreement had been, more or less arrived at, but Aurangzeb could not bring himself to trust Shahu and the Maratha sardars, as we have seen.

Aurangzeb failed to solve the Maratha problem, and thus left an open sore. He did give *mansabs* to many Maratha sardars; in fact, Maratha sardars had more *mansabs* at the highest levels than the Rajputs ever had. Yet, the Maratha sardars were not trusted. Unlike the Rajputs, they were never given offices of trust and responsibility. Thus the Marathas could not be integrated into the Mughal political system. Here again, a political settlement with Shivaji, or Sambhaji or Shahu might have made a big difference.

Aurangzeb has been criticised for having failed to unite with the Deccan states against the Marathas, or for having conquered them, thereby making the empire “so large that it collapsed under its own weight.” A unity of hearts between Aurangzeb and the Deccan states was “a psychological impossibility” once the treaty of 1636 was abandoned, a development which took place during the reign of Shah Jahan himself. After his accession, Aurangzeb desisted from pursuing a vigorous forward policy in the Deccan. In fact, he postponed as long as possible the decision to conquer and annex the Deccan state. Aurangzeb's hand was virtually forced by the growing Maratha power, the support extended to Shivaji by Madanna and Akhanna from Golconda, and fear that Bijapur might fall under the domination of Shivaji and the Maratha-dominated Golconda. Later, by giving shelter to the rebel prince Akbar, This is the term used by Marathi writers for the state carved out by Shivaji.

**Sambhaji** virtually threw a challenge to Aurangzeb who quickly realised that the Marathas could not be dealt with without first subduing Bijapur and possibly Golconda.

The attempt to extend Mughal administration over Golconda, Bijapur and Karnataka, stretched the Mughal administration to breaking point. It also laid Mughal lines of communications open to Maratha attacks, so much so, that the Mughal nobles in the area found it impossible to collect their dues from the jagirs assigned to them and sometimes made private pacts with the Marathas. This, in turn, raised the power and prestige of the Marathas, led to demoralisation in the nobility, and a setback to the imperial prestige. Perhaps, Aurangzeb might have been better advised to accept the suggestion apparently put forward by his eldest son, Shah Alam, for a settlement with Bijapur and Golconda, annex only a part of their territories, and let them rule over Karnataka which was far away and difficult to manage.

The impact of the Deccani and other wars on the Mughal empire and of the prolonged absence of Aurangzeb from northern India, should not be overestimated. Despite the mistakes of policy and some of the personal shortcomings of Aurangzeb, such as his excessive suspiciousness and his narrow and cold temperament, the Mughal empire was still a powerful and vigorous military and administrative machinery. The Mughal army might fail against the elusive and highly mobile bands of Marathas in the mountainous region of the Deccan. Maratha forts might be difficult to capture and still more difficult to retain. But in the plains of northern India and the vast plateau extending up to the Karnataka, the Mughal artillery was still master of the field. Thirty or forty years after Aurangzeb's death, when the Mughal artillery had declined considerably in strength and efficiency, the Marathas could still not face it in the field of battle. Continuous anarchy, wars and the depredations of the Marathas may have depleted the population of the Deccan and brought its trade, industry and agriculture to a virtual stand-still. But in northern India which was the heart of the empire and was of decisive economic and political importance in the country, the Mughal administration still retained much of its vigour. In fact, the administration at the district level proved amazingly tenacious and a good deal of it survived and found its way indirectly into the British administration.

**Politically**, despite the military reverses and the mistakes of Aurangzeb, the Mughal dynasty still retained a powerful hold on the mind and imagination of the people.

As far as the Rajputs are concerned, we have seen that the breach with Marwar was not due to an attempt on Aurangzeb's part to undermine the Hindus by depriving them of a recognised head, but to a miscalculation on his part. He wanted to divide the Marwar state between the two principal claimants, and in the process alienated both, as also the ruler of Mewar who considered Mughal interference in such matters to be a dangerous precedent. The breach with Mewar and the long drawn out war which followed damaged the moral standing of the Mughal state. However, the fighting was not of much consequence militarily after 1681. It may be doubted whether the presence of Rathor Rajputs in larger numbers in the Deccan between 1681 and 1706 would have made much difference in the outcome of the conflict with the Marathas. In any case, the demands of the Rajputs related to grant of high *mansabs* as before and restoration of their homelands. These demands having been accepted within half a dozen years of Aurangzeb's death, the Rajputs ceased to be a problem for the Mughals. They played no role in the subsequent disintegration of the empire, but could not arrest the process of decline.

**Aurangzeb's religious policy** should be seen in the social, economic and political context. Aurangzeb was orthodox in his outlook and tried to remain within the frame-work of the Islamic law. But this law was developed outside India in vastly dissimilar situations, and could hardly be applied rigidly to India. His failure to respect the susceptibilities of his non-Muslim subjects on many occasions, his adherence to the time-worn policy towards temples and reimposition of *jizyah* as laid down by the Islamic law did not help him to rally the Muslims to his side or generate a greater sense of loyalty towards a state based on Islamic law. On the other hand, it alienated the Hindus and strengthened the hands of those sections which were opposed to the Mughal empire for political or other reasons. By itself, religion was not a point at issue. *Jizyah* was scrapped within half a dozen years of Aurangzeb's death and restrictions on building new temples eased. But these, again, had no effect on the rapidly accelerating decline and disintegration of the empire,

In the ultimate resort, the decline and downfall of the empire was due to economic, social, political and institutional factors. Akbar's measures helped to keep the forces of disintegration in check for some time. But it was impossible for him to effect fundamental changes in the structure of society. By the time Aurangzeb came to the throne, the socioeconomic forces of disintegration were already strong. Aurangzeb lacked the foresight and statesmanship necessary to effect fundamental changes in the structure or to pursue policies which could, for the time being, reconcile the various competing elements.

Thus Aurangzeb was both a victim of circumstances and helped to create the circumstances of which he became a victim.

## Emergence of New States

With the decline in the authority of the Mughal emperors, the governors of large provinces, subadars, and the great zamindars consolidated their authority in different parts of the subcontinent. Through the eighteenth century, the Mughal Empire gradually fragmented into a number of independent, regional states.

Broadly speaking the states of the eighteenth century can be divided into three overlapping groups:

- (1) States that were old Mughal provinces like Awadh, Bengal and Hyderabad. Although extremely powerful and quite independent, the rulers of these states did not break their formal ties with the Mughal emperor.
- (2) States that had enjoyed considerable independence under the Mughals as watan jagirs. These included several Rajput principalities.
- (3) The last group included states under the control of Marathas, Sikhs and others like the Jats. These were of differing sizes and had seized their independence from the Mughals after a long-drawn armed struggle.

The Old Mughal Provinces amongst the states that were carved out of the old Mughal provinces in the eighteenth century, three stand out very prominently. These were Awadh, Bengal and Hyderabad. All three states were founded by members of the high Mughal nobility who had been governors of large provinces – Sa'adat Khan (Awadh), Murshid Quli Khan (Bengal) and Asaf Jah (Hyderabad). All three had occupied high mansabdari positions and enjoyed the trust and confidence of the emperors. Both Asaf Jah and Murshid Quli Khan held a zat rank of 7,000 each, while Sa'adat Khan's zat was 6,000.

## Nizam of Hyderabad

Hyderabad Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah, the founder of Hyderabad state, was one of the most powerful members at the court of the Mughal Emperor Farrukh Siyar. He was entrusted first with the governorship of Awadh, and later given charge of the Deccan. As the Mughal governor of the Deccan provinces, Asaf Jah already had full control over its political and financial administration. Taking advantage of the turmoil in the Deccan and the competition amongst the court nobility, he gathered power in his hands and became the actual ruler of that region. Asaf Jah brought skilled soldiers and administrators from northern India who welcomed the new opportunities in the south. He appointed mansabdars and granted jagirs. Although he was still a servant of the Mughal emperor, he ruled quite independently without seeking any direction from Delhi or facing any interference. The Mughal emperor merely confirmed the decisions already taken by the Nizam. The state of Hyderabad was constantly engaged in a struggle against the Marathas to the west and with independent Telugu warrior chiefs (nayakas) of the plateau. The ambitions of the Nizam to control the rich textile-producing areas of the Coromandel coast in the east were checked by the British who were becoming increasingly powerful in that region.

## Awadh

Burhan-ul-Mulk Sa'adat Khan was appointed subadar of Awadh in 1722 and founded a state which was one of the most important to emerge out of the break-up of the Mughal Empire. Awadh was a prosperous region, controlling the rich alluvial Ganga plain and the main trade route between north India and Bengal. Burhan-ul-Mulk also held the combined offices of subadari, diwani and faujdari. In other words, he was responsible for managing the political, financial and military affairs of the province of Awadh. Burhan-ul-Mulk tried to decrease Mughal influence in the Awadh region by reducing the number of office holders (jagirdars) appointed by the Mughals. He also reduced the size of jagirs, and appointed his own loyal servants to vacant positions. The accounts of jagirdars were checked to prevent cheating and the revenues of all districts were reassessed by officials appointed by the Nawab's court. He seized a number of Rajput zamindaris and the agriculturally fertile lands of the Afghans of Rohilkhand. The state depended on local bankers and mahajans for loans. It sold the right to collect tax to the highest bidders. These "revenue farmers" (ijaradars) agreed to pay the state a fixed sum of money. Local bankers guaranteed the payment of this contracted amount to the state. In turn, the revenue-farmers were given considerable freedom in the assessment and collection of taxes. These developments allowed new social groups, like moneylenders and bankers, to influence the management of the state's revenue system, something which had not occurred in the past.

## Bengal

Bengal gradually broke away from Mughal control under Murshid Quli Khan who was appointed as the naib, deputy to the governor of the province. Although never a formal subadar, Murshid Quli Khan very quickly seized all the power that went with that office. Like the rulers of Hyderabad and Awadh he also commanded the revenue administration of the state. In an effort to reduce Mughal influence in Bengal he transferred all Mughal jagirdars to Orissa and ordered a major reassessment of the revenues of Bengal. Revenue was collected in cash with great strictness from all zamindars. As a result, many zamindars had to borrow money from bankers and moneylenders. Those unable to pay were forced to sell their lands to larger zamindars. The formation of a regional state in eighteenth century Bengal therefore led to considerable change amongst the zamindars. The close connection between the state and bankers – noticeable in Hyderabad and Awadh as well – was evident in Bengal under the rule of Alivardi Khan (r. 1740- 1756). During his reign the banking house of Jagat Seth became extremely prosperous. If we take a bird's eye view, we can detect three common features amongst these states. First, though many of the larger states were established by erstwhile Mughal nobles they were highly suspicious of some of the administrative systems that they had inherited, in particular the jagirdari system. Second, their method of tax collection differed. Rather than relying upon the officers of the state, all three regimes contracted with revenue-farmers for the collection of revenue. The practice of ijaradari, thoroughly disapproved of by the Mughals, spread all over India in the eighteenth century. Their impact on the countryside differed considerably. The third common feature in all these regional states was their emerging relationship with rich bankers and merchants. These people lent money to revenue farmers, received land as security and collected taxes from these lands through their own agents. Throughout India the richest merchants and bankers were gaining a stake in the new political order.

## Aurangzeb

Aurangzeb successfully defeated all his brothers and claimed the throne in 1658. He had a long reign lasting almost fifty years But his reign was full of troubles. The empire was at its largest under Aurangzeb and he ruled over nearly the whole of India. But various changes had taken place in the system of governing. Mughal administration was not what it had been under Akbar Aurangzeb's trouble arose mainly out of the fact that people in many parts of his empire were in revolt. Much of his time was therefore spent in trying to put down these revolts.

The kingdoms of the Deccan— Bijapur and Golconaa-as we have seen were never actually annexed. By the time of Aurangzeb's reign these kingdoms had become weak Meanwhile the Marathas were gaining in strength. So Aurangzeb felt he had to send his armies to the Deccan to prevent the Marathas from overpowering these kingdoms. The problems of the Deccan were now increased because the Marathas were beginning to assert their strength.

## The Marathas

The Marathas were small chieftains who owed allegiance to the Deccan kingdoms Many of them were employed as officers in these kingdoms as well as under the Mughals. When they saw the Deccan kingdoms being attacked by the Mughals, they began to break away. They gathered bands of soldiers around them and began defying the authority of the Deccan kingdoms.



# 5

## The Rise of Sikh and Maratha

### The Sikhs

The Sikhs began as the followers of Guru Nanak and were devotees of the new religion which he preached. By the seventeenth century Sikhism had become the religion of the peasants and artisans in many areas of the Punjab.

Guru Nanak was succeeded by a series of nine *gurus*. The earlier ones concentrated mainly on the religious aspects of Sikhism. But gradually the *gurus* became the military leaders of the Sikhs as well. After the death of the seventh *guru*, Aurangzeb tried to take advantage of the differences over the succession of the next *guru*. Meantime the power of the Sikhs was increasing. In order to curb this power, the Mughal administration ordered the execution of Guru Teg Bahadur in 1675. This naturally made the Sikhs very angry. So the tenth and last *guru* Govind Singh, began to organize the Sikhs as soldiers and prepared them for battle against the Mughal armies. The term used for the Sikhs now was *khalsa* meaning 'the pure'<sup>1</sup>. They were organized as fighting groups under the leadership of Govind Singh. In addition, soldiers from Afghanistan were also recruited into the Sikh armies. As in the case of the Marathas, the Sikhs carried out raids in various places. But the Sikhs were not able to establish an independent state during the reign of Aurangzeb as the Marathas had done. This the Sikhs achieved in the eighteenth century.

Thus what began as a religious movement became a political one as well. The Mughal government was not strong enough to suppress the Sikh revolt. In the eighteenth century the Mughals became even weaker and everyone was grabbing territory. The Sikh chieftains also saw this as an opportunity to become rulers of small states.

Aurangzeb had problems with the Portuguese and the English Portuguese pirates renewed their activity in the Bay of Bengal. This time they used Chittagong as a base. So the Mughal armies had to be sent out against them. The armies were successful for they not only captured Chittagong but also annexed the eastern part of Bengal. The west coast of India was at this time being threatened by English pirates who attacked Indian ships. This made the Mughal government very angry. There was an English factory at Surat from where the English traded with India. So the Mughal government threatened them that unless they stopped the English pirates and paid a fine of one and half lakhs of rupees, the government would not allow the English to trade with India. This frightened the English and they paid the fine and stopped the pirates from their raids on the west coast.

In the latter part of Aurangzeb's reign, the Mughal empire was no longer as strong as it had once been under Akbar. In fact, the empire was beginning to break up. But Aurangzeb was not really aware of what was happening. To make matters worse he was influenced by an orthodox Muslim group and he decided that he would rule in accordance with the laws of Islam. This was a policy different from that of his ancestors who were tolerant and liberal rulers. Besides, it was quite the wrong policy for a country such as India which has always had a mixture of all kinds of people and religions and where no type of orthodoxy could have worked. Aurangzeb did not understand the problems of India as well as Akbar had done.

### Introduction

The Marathas. The Maratha kingdom was another powerful regional kingdom to arise out of a sustained opposition to Mughal rule. Shivaji (1627-1680) carved out a stable kingdom with the support of powerful warrior families (*deshmukhs*). Groups of highly mobile, peasant pastoralists (*kunbis*) provided the backbone of the Maratha army. Shivaji used these forces to challenge the Mughals in the peninsula. After Shivaji's death, effective power in the Maratha state was wielded by a family of Chitpavan Brahmanas who served Shivaji's successors as Peshwa (or principal minister). Poona became the capital of the Maratha kingdom.

## Early Career of Shivaji

Shahji had left the Poona jagir to his neglected senior wife, Jija Bai and his minor son, Shivaji. Shivaji showed his mettle when at the young age of 18, he overran a number of hill forts near Poona—Rajgarh, Kondana and Toma in the years 1645-47. With the death of his guardian, Dadaji Kondadeo in 1647, Shivaji became his own master and the full control of his father's jagir passed under him.

Shivaji began his real career of conquest in 1656 when he conquered Javli from the Maratha chief, Chandra Rao More. The Javli kingdom and the accumulated treasure of the Mores were important, and Shivaji acquired them by means of treachery. The conquest of Javli made him the undisputed master of the Mavala area or the highlands and freed his path to the Satara area and to the coastal strip, the Konkan. Mavali foot-soldiers became a strong part of his army.

The Mughal invasion of Bijapur in 1657 saved Shivaji from Bijapur reprisal. Shivaji first entered into negotiations with Aurangzeb and asked him for the grant of all the Bijapur territories he held and other areas including the port of Dabhol in the Konkan. Shivaji then changed sides and made deep inroads into Mughal areas, seizing rich booty. When Aurangzeb came to terms with the new Bijapur ruler in preparation for the civil war, he pardoned Shivaji also. But he distrusted Shivaji and advised the Bijapur ruler to expel him from the Bijapuri areas he had seized, and if he wanted to employ him, employ him in Karnataka, away from the Mughal frontiers.

With Aurangzeb away in the north, Shivaji resumed his career of conquest at the expense of Bijapur. He burst into the Konkan, the coastal strip between the Ghats and the sea, and seized the northern part of it. He also overran a number of other hill forts. Bijapur now decided to take stern action. It sent against Shivaji a premier Bijapuri noble, Afzal Khan, at the head of 10,000 troops, with instructions to capture him by any means possible. Treachery was common in those days and both Afzal Khan and Shivaji had resorted to treachery on a number of occasions. Shivaji's forces were not used to open fighting and shrank from an open contest with this powerful chief. Afzal Khan sent an invitation to Shivaji for a personal interview, promising to get him pardoned from the Bijapuri court. Convinced that this was a trap, Shivaji went prepared, and murdered the Khan (1659) in a cunning but daring manner. Shivaji put his leaderless army to rout and captured all his goods and equipment including his artillery.

Shivaji's exploits made him a legendary figure. His name passed from house to house and he was credited with magical powers. People flocked to him from the Maratha areas to join his army, and even Afghan mercenaries who had been previously in the service of Bijapur, joined his army.

Meanwhile, Aurangzeb was anxiously watching the rise of a Maratha power so near the Mughal frontiers. Poona and adjacent areas which had been parts of the Ahmadnagar kingdom had been transferred to Bijapur by the treaty of 1636. But these areas were now claimed by the Mughals. Aurangzeb instructed the new Mughal governor of the Deccan, Shaista Khan, who was related to Aurangzeb by marriage, to invade Shivaji's dominions. Adil Shah, the ruler of Bijapur, was asked to cooperate. The Adil Shah sent Sidi Jauhar, the Abyssinian chief, who invested Shivaji in Panhala. Trapped, Shivaji made his escape while Panhala fell to the Bijapuri forces. The Adil Shah, however, had no desire to see Shivaji destroyed. Hence, he took no further interest in the war against Shivaji, and soon came to a secret understanding with him. This freed Shivaji to deal with the Mughals.

At first, the war went badly for Shivaji. Shaista Khan occupied Poona (1660) and made it his headquarters. He then sent detachments to wrest control of the Konkan from Shivaji. Despite harassing attacks from Shivaji, and the bravery of Maratha defenders, the Mughals secured their control on north Konkan. Driven into a corner, Shivaji made a bold stroke. He infiltrated into the camp of Shaista Khan at Poona, and at night attacked the Khan in his harem (1663), killing his son and one of his captains and wounding the Khan. This daring attack put the Khan into disgrace and Shivaji's stock rose once again. In anger, Aurangzeb transferred Shaista Khan to Bengal, even refusing to give him an interview at the time of transfer as was the custom. Meanwhile, Shivaji made another bold move. He attacked Surat, which was the premier Mughal port, and looted it to his heart's content (1664), returning home laden with treasure.

**Treaty of Pitrandar and Shivaji's Visit to Agra**

After the failure of Shaista Khan, Aurangzeb deputed Raja Jai Singh of Amber, who was one of the most trusted advisers of Aurangzeb, to deal with Shivaji. Full military and administrative authority was conferred on Jai Singh so that he was not in any way dependent on the Mughal viceroy in the Deccan, and dealt directly with the emperor. Unlike his predecessors, Jai Singh did not underestimate the Marathas. He made careful diplomatic and military preparations. He appealed to all the rivals and opponents of Shivaji, and even tried to win over the sultan of Bijapur in order to isolate Shivaji. Marching to Poona, Jai Singh decided to strike at the heart of Shivaji's territories—fort Purandar where Shivaji had lodged his family and his treasure. Jai Singh closely besieged Purandar (1665), beating off all Maratha attempts to relieve it. With the fall of the fort and sight, and no relief likely from any quarter, Shivaji opened negotiations with Jai Singh. After hard bargaining, the following terms were agreed upon:

- (i) Out of 35 forts held by Shivaji, 23 forts with surrounding territory which yielded a revenue of four lakhs of *hurts* every year were to be surrendered to the Mughals, while the remaining 12 forts with an annual income of one lakh of *foms* were to be left to Shivaji “on condition of service and loyalty to the throne”;
- (ii) Territory worth four lakhs of *hurts* a year in the Bijapuri Konkan, which Shivaji had already held, was granted to him. In addition, the Bijapur territory worth five lakhs of *hurts* a year in the uplands (Balaghat), which Shivaji was to conquer, was also granted to him. In return for these, he was to pay 40 lakhs *hurts* in installments to the Mughals.

Shivaji asked to be excused from personal service. Hence, a *martsab* of 5000 was granted in his place to his minor son, Sambhaji. Shivaji promised, however, to join personally in any Mughal campaign in the Deccan.

Jai Singh cleverly threw a bone of contention between Shivaji and the Bijapuri ruler. But the success of Jai Singh's scheme depended upon Mughal support to Shivaji in making up from Bijapur territory worth the amount he had yielded to the Mughals. *This proved to be the fatal flaw* Aurangzeb had not lost his reservations about Shivaji, and was doubtful of the wisdom of a joint Mughal-Maratha attack on Bijapur. But Jai Singh had larger ideas. He considered the alliance with Shivaji the starting point of the conquest of Bijapur and the entire Deccan. And once this had been done, Shivaji would have no option but to remain an ally of the Mughals since, as Jai Singh wrote to Aurangzeb, “We shall hem Shiva in like the centre of a circle”.

However, the Mughal-Maratha expedition against Bijapur failed. Shivaji who had been deputed to capture fort Panhala was also unsuccessful. Seeing his grandiose scheme collapsing before his eyes, Jai Singh persuaded Shivaji to visit the emperor at Agra. If Shivaji and Aurangzeb could be reconciled, Jai Singh thought, Aurangzeb might be persuaded to give greater resources for a renewed invasion of Bijapur. But the visit proved to be a disaster. Shivaji felt insulted when he was put in the category of *mansabdars* of 5000—a rank which had been granted earlier to his minor son. Nor did the emperor, whose birthday was being celebrated, find time to speak to Shivaji. Hence, Shivaji walked off angrily and refused imperial service. Such an episode had never happened, and a strong group at the court argued that exemplary punishment should be meted out to Shivaji in order to maintain and assert imperial dignity. Since Shivaji had come to Agra on Jai Singh's assurances, Aurangzeb wrote to Jai Singh for advice. Jai Singh strongly argued for a lenient treatment for Shivaji. But before any decision could be taken, Shivaji escaped from detention (1666). The manner of Shivaji's escape is too well known to be repeated here Aurangzeb always blamed himself for his carelessness in allowing Shivaji to escape. There is little doubt that Shivaji's Agra visit proved to be the turning point for Mughal relations with the Marathas—although for two years after his return home, Shivaji kept quiet. The visit proved that unlike Jai Singh, Aurangzeb attached little value to the alliance with Shivaji. For him, Shivaji was just a “petty *bhumia*” (land-holder). As subsequent developments proved, Aurangzeb's stubborn reservations about Shivaji, refusal to recognize his importance and attaching a low price to his friendship, was one of the biggest political mistakes made by Aurangzeb.

## Shivaji's Administration and Achievements

Aurangzeb virtually goaded Shivaji into resuming his career of conquest by insisting upon a narrow interpretation of the treaty of Purandar, although with the failure of the expedition against Bijapur, the bottom had dropped out of the treaty. Shivaji could not be reconciled to the loss of 23 forts and territory worth four lakhs *huns* a year to the Mughals without any compensation from Bijapur. He renewed the contest with the Mughals, sacking Surat a second time in 1670. During the next four years, he recovered a large number of his forts, including Purandar, from the Mughals and made deep inroads into Mughal territories, especially Berar and Khandesh. Mughal preoccupation with the Afghan uprising in the north-west helped Shivaji He

also renewed his contest with Bijapur, securing Panhala and Satara by means of bribes, and raiding the Kanara country at leisure.

In 1674 Shivaji crowned himself formally at Rajgarh Shivaji had travelled far from being a petty jagirdar at Poona. He was by now the most powerful among the Maratha chiefs, and by virtue of the extent of his dominions and the size of his army could claim a status equal to the effete Deccan sultans. The formal coronation had, therefore, a number of purposes. It placed him on a pedestal much higher than any of the Maratha chiefs, some of whom had continued to look upon him as an upstart. To strengthen his social position further, Shivaji married into some of the leading old Marath families—the Mohites, the Shirkes, etc. A formal declaration was also made by the priest presiding over the function, Gaga Bhatt, that Shivaji was a high class kshatriya. Finally, as an independent ruler it now became possible for Shivaji to enter into treaties with the Deccan sultans on a footing of equality and not as a rebel. It was also an important step in the further growth of Maratha national sentiment.

In 1676 Shivaji undertook a bold new venture. With the active aid and support of the brothers, Madanna and Akhanna at Hyderabad, Shivaji undertook an expedition into the Bijapuri Karnataka. Shivaji was given a grand welcome by the Qutb Shah at his capital and a formal agreement was arrived at. The Qutb Shah agreed to pay a subsidy of one lakh *huns* (five lakhs of rupees) annually to Shivaji and a Maratha ambassador was to live at his court. The territory and the booty gained in Karnataka was to be shared. The Qutb Shah supplied a contingent of troops and artillery to aid Shivaji and also provided money for the expenses of his army. The treaty was very favourable to Shivaji and enabled him to capture Jinji and Vellore from Bijapuri officials and also to conquer much of the territories held by his half-brother, Ekoji. Although Shivaji had assumed the title of “*Haindava-Dharmoddharak*” (Protector of the Hindu faith) he plundered mercilessly the Hindu population of the area. Returning home laden with treasure, Shivaji refused to share anything with the Qutb Shah, thus straining his relations with him.

The Karnataka expedition was the last major expedition of Shivaji. The base at Jinji built up by Shivaji proved to be a haven of refuge for his son, Rajaram, during Aurang-zeb’s all-out war on the Marathas.

Shivaji died in 1680, shortly after his return from the Karnataka expedition. Meanwhile, he had laid the foundations of a sound system of administration. Shivaji’s system of administration was largely borrowed from the administrative practices of the Deccan states. Although he designated eight ministers, sometimes called the ***Ashtapradhan***, it was not in the nature of a council of ministers, each minister being directly responsible to the ruler. The most important ministers were the Peshwa who looked after the finances and general administration, and the ***sarl-i-naubat*** (*senapati*) which was a post of honour and was generally given to one of the leading Maratha chiefs. The ***majumdar*** was the accountant, while the *wagenavis* was responsible for intelligence, posts and household affairs. The *surumvis* or *chitnis* helped the king with his correspondence. The *dabir* was master of ceremonies and also helped the king in his dealings with foreign powers. The *nyayadhis* and *pandit* were in charge of justice and charitable grants.

More important than the appointment of these officials was Shivaji’s organisation of the army and the revenue system. Shivaji preferred to give cash salaries to the regular soldiers, though sometimes the chiefs received revenue grants (*saranjam*). Strict discipline was maintained in the army, no women or dancing girls being allowed to accompany the army. The plunder taken by each soldier during campaigns was strictly accounted for. The regular army (*paga*) consisting of about 30,000 to 40,000 cavalry, as distinct from the loose auxiliaries (*silahdars*), were supervised by *havaladors* who received fixed salaries. The forts were carefully supervised, Maval foot soldiers and gunners being appointed for it. We are told that three men of equal rank were placed in charge of each fort to guard against treachery.

The revenue system seems to have been patterned on the system of Malik Ambar. A new revenue assessment was completed by Annaji Datto in 1619. It is not correct to think that Shivaji abolished the zamindari (*desh-mukhi*) system, or that he did not award jagirs (*mokasa*) to his officials. However, Shivaji strictly supervised the *mirasdars*, that is, those with hereditary rights in land. Describing the situation, Sabhasad, who wrote in the eighteenth century, says that these sections paid to the government only a small part of their collections. “In consequence, the *mirasdars* grew and strengthened themselves by building bastions, castles and strongholds in the villages, enlisting footmen and musketeers... This class had become unruly and seized the country”. Shivaji destroyed their bastions and forced them to submit.

Shivaji supplemented his income by levying a contribution on the neighbouring Mughal territories. This contribution which came to one-fourth of the land revenue, began to be called *chauthai* (one-fourth) or *chauth*.

Shivaji not only proved to be an able general, a skillful tactician and a shrewd diplomat, he also laid the foundation of a strong state by curbing the power of the *deshmukhs*. The army was an effective instrument of his policies where rapidity of movement was the most important factor. The army depended for its salaries to a considerable extent on the plunder of the neighbouring areas. But the state cannot thereby be called just a “war-state”. It was regional in character, no doubt, but it definitely had a popular base. To that extent, Shivaji was a popular king who represented the assertion of popular will in the area against Mughal encroachments.

## Aurangzeb and the Deccani States (1658-87)

It is possible to trace three phases in the relations of Aurangzeb with the Deccani states. The first phase lasted till 1668 during which the main attempt was to recover from Bijapur the territories belonging to the Ahmadnagar state surrendered to it by the treaty of 1636; the second phase lasted till 1684 during which the major danger in the Deccan was considered to be the Marathas, and efforts were made to pressurise Bijapur and Golconda into joining hands with the Mughals against Shivaji and then against his son, Sambhaji. Simultaneously, the Mughals nibbled at the territories of the Deccani states which they tried to bring under their complete domination and control. The last phase began when Aurangzeb despaired of getting the cooperation of Bijapur and Golconda against the Marathas and decided that to destroy the Marathas it was necessary first to conquer Bijapur and Golconda.

### The First Phase (1658-68)

The treaty of 1636, by which Shah Jahan had given one-third of the territories of Ahmadnagar state as a bribe for withdrawing support to the Marathas, and promised that the Mughals would “never never” conquer Bijapur and Golconda, had been abandoned by Shah Jahan himself. In 1657-58, Golconda and Bijapur were threatened with extinction. Golconda had to pay a huge indemnity, and Bijapur had to agree to the surrender of the Nizam Shahi territories granted in 1636. The “justification” for this was that both these states had made extensive conquests in Karnataka and that “compensation” was due to the Mughals on the ground that the two states were Mughal vassals, and that their conquests had been made possible due to benevolent neutrality on the part of the Mughals. Also, the cost of maintaining the Mughal armies in the Deccan was high, and the income from the Deccani areas under the control of the Mughals was insufficient to meet it. For a long time, the cost was met by subsidies from the treasuries of Malwa and Gujarat.

The resumption of a policy of limited advance in the Deccan had far-reaching implications which, it seems, neither Shah Jahan nor Aurangzeb adequately appreciated: it destroyed for all times confidence in the Mughal treaties amid promises, and made impossible “a union of hearts” against the Marathas—a policy which Aurangzeb pursued with great perseverance for a quarter of a century but with little success.

On coming to the throne, Aurangzeb had two problems in the Deccan: the problem posed by the rising power of Shivaji, and the problem of persuading Bijapur to part with the territories ceded to it by the treaty of 1636. Kalyan and Bidar had been secured in 1657. Parenda was secured by bribe in 1660. Shola-pur still remained. However, Aurangzeb’s expectation that, placed in this situation, the Add Shah would willingly cooperate in the campaign against Shivaji was unrealistic. In 1636, Shah Jahan had given a huge bribe to the Add Shah for giving his support against Shivaji. Aurangzeb had nothing to offer to the Add Shah except to surrender the gains of 1636. Yet, angered by Add Shah’s attitude of non-cooperation, Aurangzeb asked Jai Singh to punish both Shivaji and Add Shah. This shows Aurangzeb’s confidence in the superiority of the Mughal arms and the underestimation of his opponents. But Jai Singh was an astute politician. He told Aurangzeb, “It would be unwise to attack both these fools at the same time”.

However, Jai Singh, was the only Mughal politician who advocated an all-out forward policy in the Deccan during this period, Jai Singh was of the opinion that the Maratha problem could not be solved without a forward policy in the Deccan—a conclusion to which Aurangzeb finally came 20 years later.

While planning his invasion of Bijapur, Jai Singh had written to Aurangzeb, “The conquest of Bijapur is the preface to the conquest of all Deccan and Karnataka.” But Aurangzeb shrank from this bold policy. We can only guess at the reasons—the ruler of Iran had adopted a threatening attitude in the northwest; the campaign for the conquest of the Deccan would be long and arduous and would need the presence of the emperor himself for large armies could not be left in charge of a noble or an ambitious prince, as Shah Jahan had discovered to his misfortune. But as long as Shah Jahan was alive, how could Aurangzeb afford to go away on a distant campaign?

With his limited resources, Jai Singh's Bijapur campaign (1665) was bound to fail. The campaign recreated the united front of the Deccani states against the Mughals, for the Qutb Shah sent a large force to aid Bijapur. The Deccanis adopted guerilla tactics, luring Jai Singh on to Bijapur while devastating the countryside so that the Mughals could get no supplies. Jai Singh found that he had no means to assault the city since he had not brought siege guns, and to invest the city was impossible. The retreat proved costly, and neither money nor any additional territory was gained by Jai Singh by this campaign. This disappointment and the censures of Aurangzeb hastened Jai Singh's death (1667). The following year (1668), the Mughals secured the surrender of Sholapur by bribery. The first phase was thus over.

## The Second Phase (1668-81)

The Mughals virtually marked time in the Deccan between 1668 and 1676. A new factor during the period was the rise to power of Madanna and Akhanna in Golconda. These two gifted brothers virtually ruled Golconda from 1672 almost till the extinction of the state in 1687. The brothers followed a policy of trying to establish a tripartite alliance between Golconda, Bijapur and Shivaji. This policy was periodically disturbed by faction fights at the Bijapur court, and by the overweening ambition of Shivaji. The factions at Bijapur could not be depended upon to follow a consistent policy. They adopted a pro- or anti-Mughal stance depending upon their immediate interests. Shivaji looted and alternately supported Bijapur against the Mughals. Although seriously concerned at the growing Maratha power, Aurangzeb, it seems, was keen to limit Mughal expansion in the Deccan.

Hence, repeated efforts were made to install and back a party at Bijapur which would cooperate with the Mughals against Shivaji and which would not be led by Golconda.

In pursuit of this policy, a series of Mughal interventions were made. The first intervention took place in 1676, following the overthrow of the Bijapur regent Khawas Khan, who had agreed to join the Mughals against Shivaji for a price—Mughal help for the destruction of his ' domestic rivals, the Afghans! The invasion had to contend with the united opposition of the Bijapur and Golconda forces. Although the Mughals secured possession of Naldurg and Gulbarga by bribery, the basic objective of placing a pro-Mughal and anti-Maratha group in power could not be realised.

Aurangzeb now made a new approach. The Mughal viceroy, Bahadur Khan, was recalled, and an Afghan noble and soldier, Diler Khan, who had good relations with the Afghan faction in Bijapur was placed in command. Diler Khan persuaded the Afghan leader Bahlol Khan to join in an expedition against Golconda. The Golconda ruler had openly welcomed Shivaji in his capital, while Madanna and Akhanna virtually ruled the state. The failure of the Mughal- Bijapur attack (1677) was in no small measure due to the firm leadership of Madanna and Akhanna. The Afghan party in Bijapur was now discredited, and an appeal was made to Qutb Shah to mediate and save the Adil Shahi monarchy. At the instance of the Qutb Shah, it was agreed that Sidi Masud, the leader of the Deccani party, would become the regent, and that six lakh rupees would be paid to Sidi Masud to pay off the arrears of the Afghan soldiers who would then be disbanded, and that a resident from Golconda would advise the Bijapuri administration; Akhanna was chosen for the post. *This marks the high watermark of Hyderabad influence over Bijapur and in the politics of the Deccan.*

For the time being, Shivaji was not a party to this agreement. Shivaji had angered the Qutb Shah by not agreeing to give him his share of the spoils of the Karnataka campaign. Hence, it was agreed that Shivaji would be "confined to the Konkan," Shivaji was the most uncertain factor in the situation, and was bent on playing a lone hand. Returning from Karnataka, he had continued his policy of "boundless violence" and intrigued to get Bijapur in his hands. Sidi Masud wrote to Shivaji, "We are neighbours We eat the same salt. You are as deeply concerned in (the welfare of) this state as I am. The enemy (that is, the Mughals) are day and night trying to ruin it. We two ought to unite and expel the foreigner."

Masud also met the Mughal chief, Diler Khan. As a peace offering, the sister of the Adil Shah who was widely respected, was promised in marriage to a son of Aurangzeb. Masud also promised to obey Aurangzeb and not to make any alliance with Shivaji. However, news of the negotiations of Sidi Masud with Shivaji leaked out to the Mughals who now decided to besiege Bijapur (1679).

Thus, the only result of Mughal diplomatic and military efforts was the re-assertion of the united front of the three Deccani powers against the Mughals. The last desperate effort of Diler Khan to capture Bijapur (1679-80) also failed, largely because no Mughal viceroy had the means to contend against the united forces of the Deccani states. A new element which was brought into play was the Karnataki foot- soldiers. Thirty thousand

of them sent by the Berad chief, Pern Naik, were a major factor in withstanding the Mughal siege of Bijapur. Shivaji, too, sent a large force to relieve Bijapur, and raided the Mughal dominions in all directions. Thus Diler Khan could achieve nothing except laying Mughal territories open to Maratha raids and he was recalled by Aurangzeb.

### **The Third Phase (1681-87)**

Thus the Mughals achieved little during 1676-80. When Aurangzeb reached the Deccan in 1681 in pursuit of his rebel son, prince Akbar, he concentrated his forces against Sambhaji, the son and successor of Shivaji while making renewed efforts to detach Bijapur and Golconda from the side of the Marathas. His efforts did not have an outcome different from that of the earlier efforts. The Marathas were the only shield against the Mughals, and the Deccani states were not prepared to throw it away.

Aurangzeb now decided to force the issue. He called upon the Add Shah as a vassal to supply provisions to the imperial army to allow the Mughal armies free passage through his territory and to supply a contingent of 5000 to 6000 cavalry for the war against the Marathas. He also demanded that Sharza Khan, the leading Bijapuri noble opposed to the Mughals, be expelled. An open rupture was now inevitable. The Adil Shah appealed for help both to Golconda and Sambhaji, which was promptly given. However, even the combined forces of the Deccani states could not withstand the full strength of the Mughal army, particularly when commanded by the Mughal emperor or an energetic prince, as had been demonstrated earlier. Even then, it took 18 months of siege, with Aurangzeb being personally present during the final stages, before Bijapur fell (1686). This provides an ample justification for the earlier failure of Jai Singh (1665), and Diler Khan (1679-80).

A campaign against Golconda was inevitable following the downfall of Bijapur. The “sins” of the Qutb Shah were too many to be pardoned. He had given supreme power to the infidels, Madanna and Akhanna, and helped Shivaji on various occasions. His latest “treachery” was sending 40,000 men to aid Bijapur, despite Aurangzeb’s warnings. In 1685, despite stiff resistance, the Mughals had occupied Golconda. The emperor had agreed to pardon the Qutb Shah in return for a huge subsidy, the ceding of some areas and the ousting of Madanna and Akhanna. The Qutb Shah agreed Madanna and Akhanna were dragged out into the streets and murdered (1686). But even this crime failed to save the Qutb Shahi monarchy. After the fall of Bijapur, Aurangzeb decided to settle scores with the Qutb Shah. The siege opened early in 1687 and after more than six months of campaigning the fort fell on account of treachery and bribery.

Aurangzeb had triumphed but he soon found that the extinction of Bijapur and Golconda was only the beginning of his difficulties. The last and the most difficult phase of Aurangzeb’s life began now.

### **Aurangzeb, the Marathas and the Deccan—the Last Phase (1687-1707)**

After the downfall of Bijapur and Golconda, Aurangzeb was able to concentrate all his forces against the Marathas. Apart from raiding Burhanpur and Aurangabad, the new Maratha king, Sambhaji had thrown a challenge to Aurangzeb by giving shelter to his rebel son, prince Akbar. Aurangzeb was mortally afraid that a sally by prince Akbar into Mughal territories, backed up by the Marathas, might lead to a protracted civil war. However, Sambhaji took a peculiarly passive attitude towards prince Akbar, spending his energies in a futile war with the Sidis on the coast and with the Portuguese. Prince Akbar chafed and fretted, for even when Aurangzeb was busy in his wars against Bijapur and Golconda, Sambhaji refused to give any large-scale help to prince Akbar. The prince’s dash into Mughal territory in 1686 was, therefore, easily repulsed. Discouraged, prince Akbar escaped by sea to Iran, and sought shelter with the Iranian king.

Even after the fall of Bijapur and Golconda, Sambhaji remained immersed in pleasure, and in dealing with his internal enemies. In 1689, Sambhaji was surprised at his secret hideout at Sangameshwar by a Mughal force. He was paraded before Aurangzeb and executed as a rebel and an infidel. This was undoubtedly another major political mistake on the part of Aurangzeb. He could have set a seal on his conquest of Bijapur and Golconda by coming to terms with the Marathas. By executing Sambhaji, he not only threw away this chance, but provided the Marathas a cause. In the absence of a single rallying point, the Maratha sardars were left free to plunder the Mughal territories, disappearing at the approach of the Mughal forces. Instead of destroying the Marathas, Aurangzeb made the Maratha opposition all-pervasive in the Deccan. Rajaram, the younger brother of Sambhaji, was crowned as king, but had to escape when the Mughals attacked his capital. Rajaram sought shelter at Jinji on the east coast and continued the fight against the Mughals from there, Thus Maratha resistance spread from the west to the east coast.

However, for the moment, Aurangzeb was at the height of his power, having triumphed over all his enemies. Some of the nobles were of the opinion that Aurangzeb should return to north India, leaving to others the task of mopping-up operations against the Marathas. There was also an opinion which, it appears, had the support of the heir-apparent, Shah Alam that the task of ruling over Karnataka should be left to the vassal rulers of Bijapur and Golconda. Aurangzeb rejected all these

suggestions and imprisoned Shah Alam for daring to negotiate with the Deccan rulers. Convinced that the Maratha power had been crushed, Aurangzeb, after 1690, concentrated on annexing to the empire the rich and extensive Karnataka tract. However, Aurangzeb bit off more than he could chew. He unduly extended his lines of communications which became vulnerable to Maratha attacks, and neglected the task of providing a sound administration to the settled areas of Bijapur and Golconda.

During the period between 1690 and 1703, Aurangzeb stubbornly refused to negotiate with the Marathas. Rajaram was besieged at Jinji, but the siege proved to be long drawn out. Jinji fell in 1698, but the chief prize, Rajaram, escaped. Maratha resistance grew and the Mughals suffered a number of serious reverses. The Marathas recaptured many of their forts and Rajaram was able to come back to Satara.

Undaunted, Aurangzeb set out to win back all the Maratha forts. For five and half years, from 1700 to 1705, Aurangzeb dragged his weary and ailing body from the siege of one fort to another. Floods, disease and the Maratha roving bands took fearful toll of the Mughal army. Weariness and disaffection steadily grew among the nobles and the army. Demoralisation set in and many jagirdars made secret pacts with the Marathas and agreed to pay *chauth* if the Marathas did not disturb their jagirs.

In “703, Aurangzeb opened negotiations with the Marathas. He was prepared to release Shahu, the son of Sambhaji, who had been captured at Satara along with his mother. Shahu had been treated well. He had been given the title of raja and the *mansab* of 7000/7000. On coming of age he had been married to two Maratha girls of respectable families. Aurangzeb was prepared to grant Shahu Shivaji’s swarajya and the right of *saiclerhmukhi* over the Deccan, thus recognising his special position. Over 70 Maratha sardars actually assembled to receive Shahu but Aurangzeb cancelled the arrangements at the last minute, uncertain about the intentions of the Marathas.

By 1706, Aurangzeb was convinced of the futility of his effort to capture all the Maratha forts. He slowly retreated to Aurangabad while an exulting Maratha army hovered around and attacked the stragglers. Thus when Aurangzeb breathed his last at Aurangabad in 1707, he left behind an empire which was sorely distracted, and in which all the various internal problems of the empire were coming to a head

## The Sikhs

The organisation of the Sikhs into a political community during the seventeenth century (see Chapter 8) helped in regional state-building in the Punjab. Several battles were fought by Guru Gobind Singh against the Rajput and Mughal rulers, both before and after the institution of the Khalsa in 1699. After his death in 1708, the Khalsa rose in revolt against the Mughal authority under Banda Bahadur’s leadership, declared their sovereign rule by striking coins in the name of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh, and established their own administration between the Sutlej and the Jamuna. Banda Bahadur was captured in 1715 and executed in 1716. Under a number of able leaders in the eighteenth century, the Sikhs organized themselves into a number of bands called jathas, and later on misls. Their combined forces were known as the grand army (dal khalsa). The entire body used to meet at Amritsar at the time of Baisakhi and Diwali to take collective decisions known as “resolutions of the Guru (gurmata)”. A system called rakhi was introduced, offering protection to cultivators on the payment of a tax of 20 per cent of the produce. Guru Gobind Singh had inspired the Khalsa with the belief that their destiny was to rule (raj karega khalsa). Their well-knit organization enabled them to put up a successful resistance to the Mughal governors first and then to Ahmad Shah Abdali who had seized the rich province of the Punjab and the Sarkar of Sirhind from the Mughals. The Khalsa declared their sovereign rule by striking their own coin again in 1765. Significantly, this coin bore the same inscription as the one on the orders issued by the Khalsa in the time of Banda Bahadur. The Sikh territories in the late eighteenth century extended from the Indus to the Jamuna but they were divided under different rulers. One of them, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, reunited these groups and established his capital at Lahore in 1799.



**3**

**MODERN  
HISTORY**



# 1

# Indian States and Society in the 18th Century

In the debris of the Mughal Empire and its political system arose a large number of independent and semi-independent powers such as Bengal, Avadh, Hyderabad, Mysore and the Maratha Kingdom. It is these powers which challenged the British attempt at supremacy in India in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Some arose as a result of the assertion of autonomy by governors of Mughal provinces, others were the product of rebellion against Mughal authority. The rulers of these states established law and order and viable economic and administrative states. They curbed, with varying degrees of success, the lower local officials and petty chiefs and ammdars who constantly fought with higher authorities for control over the surplus produce of the peasant, and who sometimes succeeded in establishing local centres of power and patronage. The politics of these states were invariably non-communal or secular, the motivations of their rulers being similar in economic and political terms. These rulers did not discriminate on religious grounds in public appointments, civil or military; nor did the rebels against their authority pay much attention to the religion of the rulers. None of these states, however, succeeded in arresting the economic crisis.

The zamindars and jagirdars, whose number constantly increased, continued to fight over a declining income from agriculture, while the condition of the peasantry continued to deteriorate. While these states prevented any breakdown of internal trade and even tried to promote foreign trade, they did nothing to modernise the basic industrial and commercial structure of their states,

## Hydrabad and carnatic

On the state of Hyderabad was founded by Nizam-ul-Mulk Asif Jah in 1724. He was one of the leading nobles of the post-Aurangzeb era. He played a leading role in the overview of the Saiyid brothers. From 1710 to 1752 he consolidated his hold over the Deccan by suppressing all opposition to his viceroyalty and organising the administration on efficient lines. From 1722 to 1724 he was the wazir of the Empire. But he soon got disgusted with that office as the Emperor Muhammad Shah frustrated all his attempts at reforming the administration. So he decided to go back to the Deccan where he could safely maintain his supremacy. Here he laid the foundations of the Hyderabad State which he ruled with a strong hand. He never openly declared his independence from the Central Government but in practice he acted like an independent ruler. He waged wars, concluded peace, conferred titles, and gave jagirs and offices without reference to Delhi. He followed a tolerant policy towards the Hindus, For example, a Hindu, Puran Chand, was his Dewan. He consolidated his power by establishing an orderly administration in the Deccan. He forced the big, turbulent zamindars to respect his authority and kept the powerful Marathas out of his dominions. He also made an attempt to rid the revenue system of its corruption. But after his death in 1748, Hyderabad fell prey to the same disruptive forces as were operating at Delhi, The Carnatic was one of the subahs of the Mughal Deccan and as such came under the Nizam of Hyderabad's authority. But just as in practice the Nizam had become independent of Delhi, so also the Deputy Governor of the Carnatic, known as the Nawab of Carnatic, had freed himself of the control of the Viceroy of the Deccan and made his office hereditary. Thus Nawab Saadutullah Khan of Carnatic had made his nephew Dost Ali his successor without the approval of his superior, the Nizam. Later, after 1740, the affairs of the Carnatic deteriorated because of the repeated struggles for its Nawabship and this provided an opportunity to the European trading companies to interfere in Indian politics.

## Bengal

Taking advantage of the growing weakness of the central authority, two men of exceptional ability, Murshid Quh Khan and Alivardi Khan, made Bengal virtually independent, Even though Murshid Quh Khan was

made Governor of Bengal as late as 1717, he had been its effective ruler since 1700, when he was appointed its Dewan. He soon freed himself from central control though he sent regular tribute to the Emperor. He established peace by freeing Bengal of internal and external danger. Bengal was now also relatively free of uprisings by zamindars. The only three major uprisings during his rule were first by Sitaram Ray, Udai Narayan and Ghulani Muhammad, and then by Shujat Khan, and finally by Najat Khan. After defeating them, Murshid Quli Khan gave their zamindaris to his favourite, Ramjivan. Murshid Quli Khan died in 1727, and his son-in-law Salmja-ud-din ruled Bengal till 1739. In that year,

Alivardi Khan deposed and killed Shuja-ud-din's son, Sarfaraz Khan, and made himself the Nawab. These three Nawabs gave Bengal a long period of peace and orderly administration and promoted its trade and industry. Murshid Quli Khan effected economies in the administration and reorganised the finances of Bengal by transferring large parts of jagir lands into khassah lands by carrying out a fresh revenue settlement, and by introducing the system of revenue-farming. He also granted agricultural loans (taccavi) to the poor cultivators to relieve their distress as well as to enable them to pay land revenue in time. He was thus able to increase the resources of the Bengal Government. But the system of revenue-farming led to increased economic pressure on the peasant.

Moreover, even though he demanded only the standard revenue and forbade illegal cesses, he collected the revenue from the zamindars and the peasants with utmost cruelty. Another result of his reforms was that many of the older zamindars were driven out and their place taken by upstart revenue-farmers. Murshid Quli Khan and the succeeding Nawabs gave equal opportunities for employment to Hindus and Muslims. They filled the highest civil posts and many of the military posts with Bengalis, most of whom were Hindus. In choosing revenue farmers Murshid Quli Khan gave preference to local zamindars and mahajans (money-lenders) who were mainly Hindus. He thus laid the foundations of a new landed aristocracy in Bengal. All the three Nawabs recognised that expansion of trade benefited the people and the Government, and, therefore, gave encouragement to all merchants, Indian or foreign. They provided for the safety of roads and rivers from thieves and robbers by establishing regular thanas and chowkies.

They checked private trade by officials. They prevented abuses in the customs administration. At the same time they made it a point to maintain strict control over the foreign trading companies and their servants and prevented them from abusing their privileges. They compelled the servants of the English East India Company to obey the laws of the land and to pay the same customs duties as were being paid by other merchants. Alivardi Khan did not permit the English and the French to fortify their factories in Calcutta and Chandernagore. The Bengal Nawabs proved, however, to be short-sighted and negligent, in one respect, they did not firmly put down the increasing tendency of the English East India Company after 1707 to use military force, or to threaten its use, to get its demands accepted. They had the power to deal with the Company's threats, but they continued to believe that a mere trading company could not threaten their power. They failed to see that the English Company was no mere company of traders but was the representative of the most aggressive and expansionist colonialism of the time. Their ignorance of, and lack of contact with, the rest of the world was to cost the state dear. Otherwise, they would have known of the devastation caused by the Western trading companies in Africa, South-East Asia, and Latin America. The Nawabs of Bengal neglected to build a strong army and paid a heavy price for it. For example, the army of Murshid Quli Khan consisted of only 2000 cavalry and 4000 infantry. Alivardi Khan was constantly troubled by the repeated invasions of the Marathas and, in the end, he had to cede a large part of Oissa to them. And when, 1756-57, the English East India Company declared war on Siraj-ud-Daulah, the successor of Alivardi, the absence of a strong army contributed much to the victory of the foreigner. The Bengal Nawabs also failed to check the growing corruption among their officials. Even judicial officials, the qazis and muftis, were given to taking bribes. The foreign companies took full advantage of this weakness to undermine official rules and regulations and policies.

## Avadh

The founder of the autonomous kingdom of Avadh was Saadat Khan Burhan-ul-Mulk who was appointed Governor of Avadh in 1722. He was an extremely bold, energetic, iron-willed, and intelligent person. At the time of his appointment, rebellious zamindars had raised their heads everywhere in the province. They refused to pay the land tax, organised their own private armies, erected forts, and defied the Imperial Government. For years Saadat Khan had to wage war upon them. He succeeded in suppressing lawlessness and disciplining the big zamindars and thus, increasing the financial resources of his government. Most of the defeated zamindars

were, however, not displaced. They were usually confirmed in their estates after they had submitted and agreed to pay their dues (land revenue) regularly. Moreover, they continued to be refractory. Whenever the Nawab's military hold weakened or he was engaged in some other direction, they would rebel, thus weakening the Nawab's power. As Safdar Jang, Saadat Khan's successor, later wrote. "The Avadh chiefs, were capable of creating a disturbance in the twinkling of an eye and were more dangerous than the Marathas of the Deccan". Saadat Khan also earned out a fresh revenue settlement in 1723. He is said to have improved the lot of the peasant by levying equitable land revenue and by protecting him from oppression by the big zamindars. Like the Bengal Nawabs, he too did not discriminate between Hindus and Muslims. Many of his commanders and high officials were Hindus, and he curbed refractory zamindars, chiefs, and nobles irrespective of their religion. His troops were well-paid, well-armed, and well-trained. His administration was efficient. Before his death in 1739, he had become virtually independent and had made the province a hereditary possession. He was succeeded by his nephew Safdar Jang, who was simultaneously appointed the wazir of the Empire in 1748 and granted in addition the province of Allahabad. Safdar Jang gave a long period of peace to the people of Avadh and Allahabad before his death in 1754. He suppressed rebellious zamindars and made an alliance with the Maratha sardars so that his dominion was saved from their incursions. He carried on warfare against the Rohelas and the Bangash Pathans. In his war against the Bangash Nawabs in 1750-51, he secured Maratha military help by paying a daily allowance of Rs. 25,000 and Jat support by paying Rs. 15,000 a day. Later, he entered into an agreement with the Peshwa by which the Peshwa was to help the Mughal Empire against Ahmad Shah Abdali and to protect it from such internal rebels as the Indian Pathans and the Rajput rajas. In return the Peshwa was to be paid Rs. 50 lakhs, granted the chauth of the Punjab, Sindh, and several districts of northern India, and made the Governor of Ajmer and Agra. The agreement failed, however, as the Peshwa went over to Safdar Jang's enemies at Delhi who promised him the governorship of Avadh and Allahabad. Safdar Jang also organised an equitable system of justice. He too adopted a policy of impartiality in the employment of Hindus and Muslims. The highest post in his Government was held by a Hindu, Maharaja Nawab Rai. The prolonged period of peace and of economic prosperity of the nobles under the government of the Nawabs resulted in time in the growth of a distinct Lucknow culture around the Avadh court. Lucknow, for long an important city of Avadh, and the seat of the Avadh Nawabs after 1775, soon rivalled Delhi in its patronage of arts and literature. It also developed as an important centre of handicrafts. Safdar Jang maintained a very high standard of personal morality. All his life he was devoted to his only wife. As a matter of fact all the founders of the three autonomous kingdoms of Hyderabad, Bengal, and Avadh, namely, Nizam-ul-Mulk, Murshid Quli Khan and Alivardi Khan, and Saadat Khan and Safdar Jang, were men of high personal morality. Nearly all of them led austere and simple lives. Their lives give lie to the belief that all the leading nobles of the 18<sup>th</sup> century led extravagant and luxurious lives. It was only in their public and political dealings that they resorted to fraud, intrigue and treachery,

## Mysore

Next to Hyderabad, the most important power that emerged in South India was Mysore under Haidar Ali. The kingdom of Mysore had preserved its precarious independence ever since the end of the Vijayanagar Empire. Early in the 18<sup>th</sup> century two ministers Nanjaraj (the Sarvadhikan) and Devraj (the Dulwai) had seized power in Mysore reducing the king Chikka Krishna Raj to a mere puppet. Haidar Ali, born in 1721 in an obscure family, started his career as a petty officer in the Mysore army. Though uneducated he possessed a keen intellect and was a man of great energy and daring and determination. He was also a brilliant commander and a shrewd diplomat. Haidar Ali soon found his opportunity in the wars which involved Mysore for more than twenty years. Cleverly using the opportunities that came his way, he gradually rose in the Mysore army. He soon recognised the advantages of western military training and applied it to the troops under his own command. He established a modern arsenal in Dindigul in 1755 with the help of French experts. In 1761 he overthrew Nanjaraj and established his authority over the Mysore state. He extended full control over the rebellious poligars (zamindars) and conquered the territories of Bidnur, Sunda, Sera, Canara and Malabar. Though illiterate he was an efficient administrator. He took over Mysore when it was a weak and divided state and soon made it one of the leading Indian powers. He practised religious toleration and his first Dewan and many other officials were Hindus. Almost from the beginning of the establishment of his power, he was engaged in wars with the Maratha sardars, the Nizam, and the British. In 1769, he repeatedly defeated the British forces and reached the walls of Madras. He died in 1782 in the course of the second Anglo-Mysore War and was succeeded by his son Tipu.

Sultan Tipu, who ruled Mysore till his death at the hands of the British in 1799, was a man of complex character. He was, for one, an innovator. His desire to change with the times was symbolised in the introduction of a new calendar, a new system of coinage, and new scales of weights and measures. His personal library contained books on such diverse subjects as religion, history, military science, medicine, and mathematics. He showed a keen interest in the French Revolution. He planted a “Tree of Liberty” at Srirangapatam and he became a member of a Jacobin Club. His organisational capacity is borne out by the fact that in those days of general indiscipline among Indian armies his troops remained disciplined and loyal to him to the last. He tried to do away with the custom of giving jagirs, and thus increase state income. He also made an attempt to reduce the hereditary possessions of the poligars. However, his land revenue was as high as that of other contemporary rulers—it ranged up to 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the gross produce. But he checked the collection of illegal cesses, and he was liberal in granting remissions.

His infantry was armed with muskets and bayonets in fashion which were, however, manufactured in Mysore. His effort to build a modern navy after 1796. For this purpose two dockyards, the models of the ships being supplied himself. In personal life he was free of vices and kept luxury. He was recklessly brave and, as a commander, was, however, hasty in action and unstable in nature.

The English, in turn, too as their most dangerous enemy in India.

Though not free from contemporary economic backwardness Mysore flourished economically under Haidar Ali and Tipu, especially. In contrast with its immediate past or with the rest of the country the British occupied Mysore after defeating and killing Tipu they were completely surprised to find that the Mysore peasant was more prosperous than the peasant in British occupied John Shore, Governor-General from 1793 to 1798, wrote of his dominions are protected, and their labour rewarded.”

Tipu also seems to have grasped the modern trade and industry. In fact, alone among the rulers he understood the importance of economic strength as the military strength. He made some attempts to introduce reforms in India by importing foreign workmen as experts and state support to many industries. He sent embassies to Iran and Pegu to develop foreign trade. He also tried to set up a trading company on the pattern of the British companies.

Some British historians have described Tipu as a rebel. But this is not borne out by facts. Though he was orthodox in views, he was in fact tolerant and enlightened towards other religions. He gave money for the construction of the goddess Sarda in the Shreegri Temple after the latter the Maratha horsemen in 1791. He regularly gave gifts to well as several other temples. The famous temple of Sri situated barely 100 yards from his palace.

## Kerala

At the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Kerala was divided into a large number of feudal chiefs and rajas. The four most important were those of Calicut under the Zamorin, Chirakkal, Cochin and Travancore. The kingdom of Travancore rose into prominence after 1729 under King Martanda Varma, one of the leading statesmen of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. He combined rare foresight and strong determination with courage and daring. He subdued the feudatories, conquered Quilon and Elayadam, and defeated the Dutch and thus ended their political power in Kerala. He organised a strong army on the western model with the help of European officers and armed it with modern weapons. He also constructed a modern arsenal. Martanda Varma used his new army to expand northwards and the boundaries of Travancore soon extended from Kanya Kumari to Cochin. He undertook many irrigation works, built roads and canals for communication, and gave active encouragement to foreign trade.

By 1763, all the petty principalities of Kerala had been absorbed or subordinated by the three big states of Cochin, Travancore, and Calicut. Haidar Ali began his invasion of Kerala in 1766 and in the end annexed northern Kerala up to Cochin, including the territories of the Zamorin of Calicut.

The 18<sup>th</sup> century saw a remarkable revival in Malayalam literature. This was due in part to the rajas and chiefs of Kerala who were great patrons of literature. Trivandrum, the capital of Travancore, became in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century a famous centre of Sanskrit scholarship. Rama Varma, successor of Martanda Varma, was himself a poet, a scholar, a musician, a renowned actor, and a man of great culture. He conversed fluently in English, took a keen interest in European affairs, and regularly read newspapers and journals published in London, Calcutta and Madras.

## Areas around Delhi

**The Rajput States:** The principal Rajput states took advantage of the growing weakness of Mughal power to virtually free themselves from central control while at the same time increasing their influence in the rest of the Empire. To the reigns of Farrukh Siyar and Muhammad Shah the rulers of Amber and Marwar were appointed governors of important Mughal provinces such as Agra, Gujarat, and Malwa.

The Rajputana states continued to be as divided as before. The bigger among them expanded at the cost of their weaker neighbours, Rajput and non-Rajput. Most of the larger Rajput states were constantly involved in petty quarrels and civil wars, The internal politics of these states were often characterised by the same type of corruption, intrigue, and treachery as prevailed at the Mughal court Thus, Ajit Singh of Marwar was killed by his own son.

The most outstanding Rajput ruler of the this century was Raja Sawai Jai Singh of Amber (1681-1743). He was a distinguished statesman, law-maker, and reformer. But most of all he shone as a man of science in an age when Indians were oblivious to scientific progress. He founded the city of Jaipur in the territory taken from the Jats and made it a great seat of science and art. Jaipur was built upon strictly scientific principles and according to a regular plan. Its broad streets are intersected at right angles.

## The company becomes Diwan

On 12 August 1765, the Mughal emperor appointed the East India Company as the Diwan of Bengal. The actual event most probably took place in Robert Clive's tent, with a few Englishmen and Indians as witnesses. But in the painting above, the event is shown as a majestic occasion, taking place in a grand setting. The painter was commissioned by Clive to record the memorable events in Clive's life. The grant of Diwani clearly was one such event in British imagination. As Diwan, the Company became the chief financial administrator of the territory under its control. Now it had to think of administering the land and organising its revenue resources. This had to be done in a way that could yield enough revenue to meet the growing expenses of the company. A trading company had also to ensure that it could buy the products it needed and sell what it wanted.

Over the years the Company also learnt that it had to move with some caution. Being an alien power, it needed to pacify those who in the past had ruled the countryside, and enjoyed authority and prestige. Those who had held local power had to be controlled but they could not be entirely eliminated.

## Revenue for the Company

The Company had become the Diwan, but it still saw itself primarily as a trader. It wanted a large revenue income but was unwilling to set up any regular system of assessment and collection. The effort was to increase the revenue as much as it could and buy fine cotton and silk cloth as cheaply as possible. Within five years the value of goods bought by the Company in Bengal doubled. Before 1865, the Company had purchased goods in India by importing gold and silver from Britain. Now the revenue collected in Bengal could finance the purchase of goods for export. Soon it was clear that the Bengal economy was facing a deep crisis. Artisans were deserting villages since they were being forced to sell their goods to the Company at low prices. Peasants were unable to pay the dues that were being demanded from them. Artisanal production was in decline, and agricultural cultivation showed signs of collapse. Then in 1770 a terrible famine killed ten million people in Bengal. About one-third of the population was wiped out.

## The need to improve agriculture

If the economy was in ruins, could the Company be certain of its revenue income? Most Company officials began to feel that investment in land had to be encouraged and agriculture had to be improved. How was this to be done? After two decades of debate on the question, the Company finally introduced the Permanent Settlement in 1793. By the terms of the settlement, the rajas and *taluqdars* were recognised as zamindars. They were asked to collect rent from the peasants and pay revenue to the Company. The amount to be paid was fixed permanently, that is, it was not to be increased ever in future. It was felt that this would ensure a regular flow of revenue into the Company's coffers and at the same time encourage the zamindars to invest in improving the land. Since the revenue demand of the state would not be increased, the zamindar would benefit from increased production from the land.

## The problem

The Permanent Settlement, however, created problems. Company officials soon discovered that the zamindars were in fact not investing in the improvement of land. The revenue that had been fixed was so high that the zamindars found it difficult to pay. Anyone who failed to pay the revenue lost his zamindari. Numerous zamindaris were sold off at auctions organised by the Company. By the first decade of the nineteenth century the situation changed. The prices in the market rose and cultivation slowly expanded. This meant an increase in the income of the zamindars but no gain for the Company since it could not increase a revenue demand that had been fixed permanently. Even then the zamindars did not have an interest in improving the land. Some had lost their lands in the earlier years of the settlement; others now saw the possibility of earning without the trouble and risk of investment. As long as the zamindars could give out the land to tenants and get rent, they were not interested in improving the land.

On the other hand, in the villages, the cultivator found the system extremely oppressive. The rent he paid to the zamindar was high and his right on the land was insecure. To pay the rent he had to often take a loan from the moneylender, and when he failed to pay the rent he was evicted from the land he had cultivated for generations.

## A new system is devised

By the early nineteenth century many of the Company officials were convinced that the system of revenue had to be changed again. How could revenues be fixed permanently at a time when the Company needed more money to meet its expenses of administration and trade? In the North Western Provinces of the Bengal Presidency (most of this area is now in Uttar Pradesh), an Englishman called Holt Mackenzie devised the new system which came into effect in 1822. He felt that the village was an important social institution in north Indian society and needed to be preserved. Under his directions, collectors went from village to village, inspecting the land, measuring the fields, and recording the customs and rights of different groups. The estimated revenue of each plot within a village was added up to calculate the revenue that each village (*mahal*) had to pay. This demand was to be revised periodically, not permanently fixed. The charge of collecting the revenue and paying it to the Company was given to the village headman, rather than the zamindar. This system came to be known as the *mahaltwari* settlement.

## The Munro system

In the British territories in the south there was a similar move away from the idea of Permanent Settlement. The new system that was devised came to be known as the *ryotwar* (or *ryotwari*). It was tried on a small scale by Captain Alexander Read in some of the areas that were taken over by the Company after the wars with Tipu Sultan. Subsequently developed by Thomas Munro, this system was gradually extended all over south India. Read and Munro felt that in the south there were no traditional zamindars. The settlement, they argued, had to be made directly with the cultivators (*ryots*) who had tilled the land for generations. Their fields had to be carefully and separately surveyed before the revenue assessment was made. Munro thought that the British should act as paternal father figures protecting the *ryots* under their charge.

**All was not well** Within a few years after the new systems were imposed it was clear that all was not well with them. Driven by the desire to increase the income from land, revenue officials fixed too high a revenue demand. Peasants were unable to pay, *ryots* fled the countryside, and villages became deserted in many regions. Optimistic officials had imagined that the new systems would transform the peasants into rich enterprising farmers. But this did not happen.

## Crops of Europe

The British also realised that the countryside could not only yield revenue, it could also grow the crops that Europe required. By the late eighteenth century the Company was trying its best to expand the cultivation of opium and indigo. In the century and a half that followed, the British persuaded or forced cultivators in various parts of India to produce other crops: jute in Bengal, tea in Assam, sugarcane in the United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh), wheat in Punjab, cotton in Maharashtra and Punjab, rice in Madras. How was this done? The British used a variety of methods to expand the cultivation of crops that they needed. Let us take a closer look at the story of one such crop, one such method of production.

## Why the demand for Indian indigo?

The indigo plant grows primarily in the tropics. By the thirteenth century Indian indigo was being used by cloth manufacturers in Italy, France and Britain to dye cloth. However, only small amounts of Indian indigo reached the European market and its price was very high. European cloth manufacturers therefore had to depend on another plant called woad to make violet and blue dyes. Being a plant of the temperate zones, woad was more easily available in Europe. It was grown in northern Italy, southern France and in parts of Germany and Britain. Worried by the competition from indigo, woad producers in Europe pressurised their governments to ban the import of indigo. Cloth dyers, however, preferred indigo as a dye. Indigo produced a rich blue colour, whereas the dye from woad was pale and dull. By the seventeenth century, European cloth producers persuaded their governments to relax the ban on indigo import. The French began cultivating indigo in St Domingue in the Caribbean islands, the Portuguese in Brazil, the English in Jamaica, and the Spanish in Venezuela. Indigo **plantations** also came up in many parts of North America. By the end of the eighteenth century, the demand for Indian indigo grew further. Britain began to industrialise, and its cotton production expanded dramatically, creating an enormous new demand for cloth dyes. While the demand for indigo increased, its existing supplies from the West Indies and America collapsed for a variety of reasons. Between 1783 and 1789 the production of indigo in the world fell by half. Cloth dyers in Britain now desperately looked for new sources of indigo supply. From where could this indigo be procured?

## Britain turns to India

Faced with the rising demand for indigo in Europe, the Company in India looked for ways to expand the area under indigo cultivation. The indigo plant grows primarily in the tropics. By the thirteenth century Indian indigo was being used by cloth manufacturers in Italy, France and Britain to dye cloth. However, only small amounts of Indian indigo reached the European market and its price was very high. European cloth manufacturers therefore had to depend on another plant called woad to make violet and blue dyes. Being a plant of the temperate zones, woad was more easily available in Europe. It was grown in northern Italy, southern France and in parts of Germany and Britain. Worried by the competition from indigo, woad producers in Europe pressurised their governments to ban the import of indigo. Cloth dyers, however, preferred indigo as a dye. Indigo produced a rich blue colour, whereas the dye from woad was pale and dull. By the seventeenth century, European cloth producers persuaded their governments to relax the ban on indigo import. The French began cultivating indigo in St Domingue in the Caribbean islands, the Portuguese in Brazil, the English in Jamaica, and the Spanish in Venezuela. Indigo **plantations** also came up in many parts of North America. By the end of the eighteenth century, the demand for Indian indigo grew further. Britain began to industrialise, and its cotton production expanded dramatically, creating an enormous new demand for cloth dyes. While the demand for indigo increased, its existing supplies from the West Indies and America collapsed for a variety of reasons. Between 1783 and 1789 the production of indigo in the world fell by half. Cloth dyers in Britain now desperately looked for new sources of indigo supply. From where could this indigo be procured?

From the last decades of the eighteenth century indigo cultivation in Bengal expanded rapidly and Bengal indigo came to dominate the world market. In 1788 only about 30 per cent of the indigo imported into Britain was from India. By 1810, the proportion had gone up to 95 per cent. As the indigo trade grew, commercial agents and officials of the Company began investing in indigo production. Over the years many Company officials left their jobs to look after their indigo business. Attracted by the prospect of high profits, numerous Scotsmen and Englishmen came to India and became planters. Those who had no money to produce indigo could get loans from the Company and the banks that were coming up at the time.

## How was indigo cultivated?

There were two main systems of indigo cultivation – *nij* and *ryoti*. Within the system of *nij* cultivation, the planter produced indigo in lands that he directly controlled. He either bought the land or rented it from other zamindars and produced indigo by directly employing hired labourers.

## The problem with *nij* cultivation

The planters found it difficult to expand the area under *nij* cultivation. Indigo could be cultivated only on fertile lands, and these were all already densely populated. Only small plots scattered over the landscape

could be acquired. Planters needed large areas in compact blocks to cultivate indigo in plantations. Where could they get such land from? They attempted to lease in the land around the indigo factory, and evict the peasants from the area. But this always led to conflicts and tension. Nor was labour easy to mobilise. A large plantation required a vast number of hands to operate. And labour was needed precisely at a time when peasants were usually busy with their rice cultivation.

*Nij* cultivation on a large scale also required many ploughs and bullocks. One *bigha* of indigo cultivation required two ploughs. This meant that a planter with 1,000 *bighas* would need 2,000 ploughs. Investing on purchase and maintenance of ploughs was a big problem. Nor could supplies be easily got from the peasants since their ploughs and bullocks were busy on their rice fields, again exactly at the time that the indigo planters needed them. Till the late nineteenth century, planters were therefore reluctant to expand the area under *nij* cultivation. Less than 25 per cent of the land producing indigo was under this system. The rest was under an alternative mode of cultivation – the *ryoti* system.

### **Indigo on the land of *ryots***

Under the *ryoti* system, the planters forced the *ryots* to sign a contract, an agreement (*satta*). At times they pressurised the village headmen to sign the contract on behalf of the *ryots*. Those who signed the contract got cash advances from the planters at low rates of interest to produce indigo. But the loan committed the *ryot* to cultivating indigo on at least 25 per cent of the area under his holding. The planter provided the seed and the drill, while the cultivators prepared the soil, sowed the seed and looked after the crop.



# 2

## Trade to Treaty

### Introduction

Aurangzeb was the last of the powerful Mughal rulers. He established control over a very large part of the territory that is now known as India. After his death in 1707, many Mughal governors (*subadars*) and big zamindars began asserting their authority and establishing regional kingdoms. As powerful regional kingdoms emerged in various parts of India, Delhi could no longer function as an effective centre.

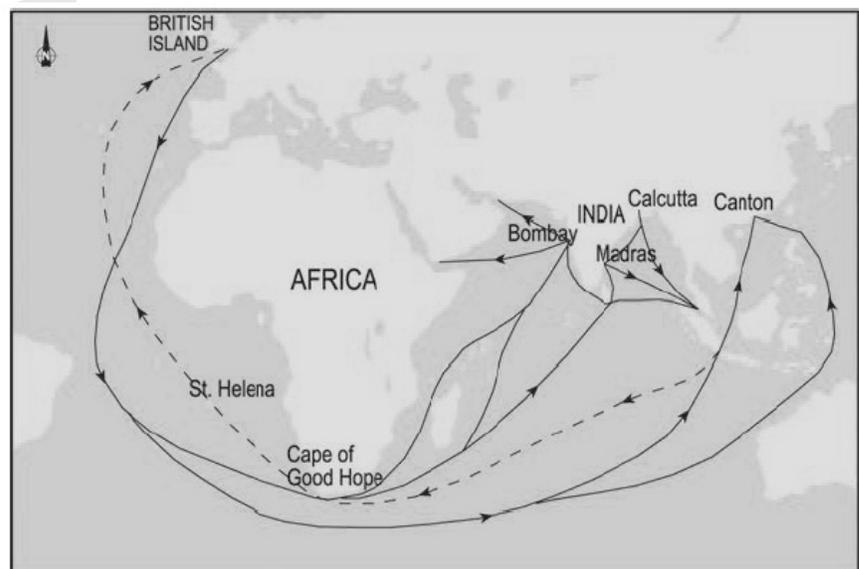
The final blow to the Mughal Empire was given by a series of foreign invasions. Attacks by Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali, which were themselves the consequences of the weakness of the Empire, drained, the Empire of its wealth, ruined its trade and industry in the North, and almost destroyed its military power. Finally, the emergence of the British challenge took away the last hope of the revival of the crisis-ridden Empire. In this last fact lies the most important consequence of the decline of the Mughal Empire.

None of the Indian powers rose to claim the heritage of the Grand Mughals for they were strong enough to destroy the Empire but not strong enough to unite it or to create anything new in its place. They could not create a new social order which could stand up to the new enemy from the West. All of them represented the same moribund social system as headed by the Mughals and all of them suffered from the weaknesses which had destroyed the mighty Mughal Empire.

On the other hand, the Europeans knocking at the gates of India had the benefit of coming from societies which had evolved a superior economic system and which were more advanced in science and technology. The tragedy of the decline of the Mughal Empire was that its mantle fell on a foreign power which dissolved, the centuries-old socio-economic and political structure of the country and replaced it with a colonial structure. But some good was destined to come out of this evil. The stagnation of Indian society was broken and new forces of change emerged. This process because it grew out of a colonial contact inevitably brought with it extreme misery and national degradation, not to mention economic, political, and cultural backwardness. But it was precisely these new forces of change which were to provide the dynamism of modern India.

### Industries in India late eighteenth century

This chapter tells the story of the crafts and industries of India during British rule by focusing on two industries, namely, textiles and iron and steel. Both these industries were crucial for the industrial revolution in the modern world. Merchandised production of cotton textiles made Britain the foremost industrial nation in the nineteenth century. And when its iron and steel industry started growing from the 1850s, Britain came to be known as the “workshop of the world”. The Industrialisation of Britain had a close connection with the conquest and colonization of India. In the late eighteenth century



the Company was buying goods in India and exporting them to England and Europe, making profit through this sale. With the growth of industrial production, British industrialists began to see India as a vast market for their industrial products, and over time manufactured goods from Britain began flooding India.

In 1600, the East India Company acquired a charter from the ruler of England, Queen Elizabeth I, granting it the sole right to trade with the East. This meant that no other trading group in England could compete with the East India Company. With this charter the Company could venture across the oceans, looking for new lands from which it could buy goods at a cheap price, and carry them back to Europe to sell at higher prices. The Company did not have to fear competition from other English trading companies. Mercantile trading companies in those days made profit primarily by excluding competition, so that they could buy cheap and sell dear. The royal charter, however, could not prevent other European powers from entering the Eastern markets. By the time the first English ships sailed down the west coast of Africa, round the Cape of Good Hope, and crossed the Indian Ocean, the Portuguese had already established their presence in the western coast of India, and had their base in Goa. In fact, it was Vasco da Gama, a Portuguese explorer, who had discovered this sea route to India in 1498. By the early seventeenth century, the Dutch too were exploring the possibilities of trade in the Indian Ocean. Soon the French traders arrived on the scene. The problem was that all the companies were interested in buying the same things. The fine qualities of cotton and silk produced in India had a big market in Europe. Pepper, cloves, cardamom and cinnamon too were in great demand. Competition amongst the European companies inevitably pushed up the prices at which these goods could be purchased, and this reduced the profits that could be earned. The only way the trading companies could flourish was by eliminating rival competitors. The urge to secure markets therefore led to fierce battles between the trading companies.

## East India Company begins trade in Bengal

The first English factory was set up on the banks of the river Hugli in 1651. This was the base from which the Company's traders, known at that time as "factors", operated. The factory had a warehouse where goods for export were stored, and it had offices where Company officials sat. As trade expanded, the Company persuaded merchants and traders to come and settle near the factory. By 1696 it began building a fort around the settlement. Two years later it bribed Mughal officials into giving the Company zamindari rights over three villages. One of these was Kalikata, which later grew into the city of Calcutta or Kolkata as it is known today. It also persuaded the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb to issue a *farman* granting the Company the right to trade duty free. The Company tried continuously to press for more concessions and manipulate existing privileges. Aurangzeb's *farman*, for instance, had granted only the Company the right to trade duty free. But officials of the Company, who were carrying on private trade on the side, were expected to pay duty. This they refused to pay, causing an enormous loss of revenue for Bengal.

## How trade led to battles

Through the early eighteenth century the conflict between the Company and the nawabs of Bengal intensified. After the death of Aurangzeb, the Bengal nawabs asserted their power and autonomy, as other regional powers were doing at that time. Murshid Quli Khan was followed by Alivardi Khan and then Sirajuddaulah as the Nawab of Bengal. Each one of them was a strong ruler. They refused to grant the Company concessions, demanded large tributes for the Company's right to trade, denied it any right to mint coins, and stopped it from extending its fortifications.

Accusing the Company of deceit, they claimed that the Company was depriving the Bengal government of huge amounts of revenue and undermining the authority of the nawab. It was refusing to pay taxes, writing disrespectful letters, and trying to humiliate the nawab and his officials. The Company on its part declared that the unjust demands of the local officials were ruining the trade of the Company, and trade could flourish only if the duties were removed. It was also convinced that to expand trade it had to enlarge its settlements, buy up villages, and rebuild its forts. The conflicts led to confrontations and finally culminated in the famous Battle of Plassey.

## Company officials become "nabobs"

What did it mean to be nawabs? It meant of course that the Company acquired more power and authority. But it also meant something else. Each company servant began to have visions of living like nawabs.

After the Battle of Plassey the actual nawabs of Bengal were forced to give land and vast sums of money as personal gifts to Company officials. Robert Clive himself amassed a fortune in India. He had come to Madras (now Chennai) from England in 1743 at the age of 18. When in 1767 he left India his Indian fortune was worth £401,102. Interestingly, when he was appointed Governor of Bengal in 1764, he was asked to remove corruption in Company administration but he was himself cross-examined in 1772 by the British Parliament which was suspicious of his vast wealth. Although he was acquitted, he committed suicide in 1774.

However, not all Company officials succeeded in making money like Clive. Many died an early death in India due to disease and war and it would not be right to regard all of them as corrupt and dishonest. Many of them came from humble backgrounds and their uppermost desire was to earn enough in India, return to Britain and lead a comfortable life. Those who managed to return with wealth led flashy lives and flaunted their riches. They were called “nabobs” – an anglicised version of the Indian word nawab. They were often seen as upstarts and social climbers in British society and were ridiculed or made fun of in plays and cartoons.

## Company Rule Expands

If we analyse the process of annexation of Indian states by the East India Company from 1757 to 1857, certain key aspects emerge. The Company rarely launched a direct military attack on an unknown territory. Instead it used a variety of political, economic and diplomatic methods to extend its influence before annexing an Indian kingdom.

## Indian Textile

Around 1750, before the British conquered Bengal, India was by far the world’s largest producer of cotton textiles. Indian textiles had long been renowned both for their fine quality and exquisite craftsmanship.

They were extensively traded in Southeast Asia (Java, Sumatra and Penang) and West and Central Asia. From the sixteenth century European trading companies began buying Indian textiles for sale in Europe. Memories of this flourishing trade and the craftsmanship of Indian weavers is preserved in many words still current in English and other languages. It is interesting to trace the origin of such words, and see what they tell us.

European traders first encountered fine cotton cloth from India carried by Arab merchants in Mosul in present-day Iraq. So they began referring to all finely woven textiles as “muslin” a word that acquired wide currency. When the Portuguese first came to India in search of spices they landed in Calicut on the Kerala coast in south-west India. The cotton textiles which they took back to Europe, along with the spices, came to be called “calico” (derived from Calicut), and subsequently calico became the general name for all cotton textiles. There are many other words which point to the popularity of Indian textiles in Western markets. The order that year was for 5,89,000 pieces of cloth. Browsing through the order book you would have seen a list of 98 varieties of cotton and silk cloths. These were known by their common name in the European trade as piece goods usually woven cloth pieces that were 20 yards long and 1 yard wide.

## Indian textiles in European markets

By the early eighteenth century, worried by the popularity of Indian textiles, wool and silk makers in England began protesting against the import of Indian cotton textiles. In 1720, the British government enacted a legislation banning the use of printed cotton textiles – chintz – in England. Interestingly, this Act was known as the Calico Act. At this time textile industries had just begun to develop in England. Unable to compete with Indian textiles, English producers wanted a secure market within the country by preventing the entry of Indian textiles. The first to grow under government protection was the calico printing industry. Indian designs were now imitated and printed in England on white muslin or plain unbleached Indian cloth. Competition with Indian textiles also led to a search for technological innovation in England. In 1764, the spinning jenny was invented by John Kaye which increased the productivity of the traditional spindles. The invention of the steam engine by Richard Arkwright in 1786 revolutionised cotton textile weaving. Cloth could now be woven in immense quantities and cheaply too. However, Indian textiles continued to dominate world trade till the end of the eighteenth century. European trading companies – the Dutch, the French and the English – made enormous profits out of this flourishing trade. These companies purchased cotton and silk textiles in India by importing silver. When the English East India Company gained political power in Bengal, it no longer had to



This affected not only specialist weavers but also spinners. Thousands of rural women who made a living by spinning cotton thread were rendered jobless. Handloom weaving did not completely die in India. This was because some types of cloths could not be supplied by machines. These had a wide demand not only amongst the rich but also amongst the middle classes. Nor did the textile manufacturers in Britain produce the very coarse cloths used by the poor people in India. You must have heard of Sholapur in western India and Madura in South India.

These towns emerged as important new centres of weaving in the late nineteenth century. Later, during the national movement, Mahatma Gandhi urged people to boycott imported textiles and use hand-spun and handwoven cloth. Khadi gradually became a symbol of nationalism. The charkha came to represent India, and it was put at the centre of the tricolour flag of the Indian National Congress adopted in 1931.

Many weavers became agricultural labourers. Some migrated to cities in search of work, and yet others went out of the country to work in plantations in Africa and South America. Some of these handloom weavers also found work in the new cotton mills that were established in Bombay (now Mumbai), Ahmedabad, Sholapur, Nagpur and Kanpur. Cotton mills came up. The first cotton mill in India was set up as a spinning mill in Bombay in 1854. From the early nineteenth century, Bombay had grown as an important port for the export of raw cotton from India to England and China. It was close to the vast black soil tract of western India where cotton was grown. When the cotton textile mills came up they could get supplies of raw material with ease. By 1900, over 84 mills started operating in Bombay. Many of these were established by Parsi and Gujarati businessmen who had made their money through trade with China. Mills came up in other cities too. The first mill in Ahmedabad was started in 1861. A year later a mill was established in Kanpur, in the United Provinces. Growth of cotton mills led to a demand for labour. Thousands of poor peasants, artisans and agricultural labourers moved to the cities to work in the mills. In the first few decades of its existence, the textile factory industry in India faced many problems. It found it difficult to compete with the cheap textiles imported from Britain. In most countries, governments supported industrialisation by imposing heavy duties on imports. This eliminated competition and protected infant industries. The colonial government in India usually refused such protection to local industries. The first major spurt in the development of cotton factory production in India, therefore, was during the First World War when textile imports from Britain declined and Indian factories were called upon to produce cloth for military supplies.

## **Tipu Sultan – The “Tiger of Mysore”**

The Company resorted to direct military confrontation when it saw a threat to its political or economic interests. This can be illustrated with the case of the southern Indian state of Mysore.

Mysore had grown in strength under the leadership of powerful rulers like Haidar Ali (ruled from 1761 to 1782) and his famous son Tipu Sultan (ruled from 1782 to 1799). Mysore controlled the profitable trade of the Malabar coast where the Company purchased pepper and cardamom. In 1785 Tipu Sultan stopped the export of sandalwood, pepper and cardamom through the ports of his kingdom, and disallowed local merchants from trading with the Company. He also established a close relationship with the French in India, and modernised his army with their help.

The British were furious. They saw Haidar and Tipu as ambitious, arrogant and dangerous rulers who had to be controlled and crushed. Four wars were fought with Mysore (1767- 69, 1780-84, 1790-92 and 1799).

Only in the last – the Battle of Seringapatam – did the Company ultimately win a victory. Tipu Sultan was killed defending his capital Seringapatam, Mysore was placed under the former ruling dynasty of the Wodeyars and a subsidiary alliance was imposed on the state.

## **War with the Marathas**

From the late eighteenth century the Company also sought to curb and eventually destroy Maratha power. With their defeat in the Third Battle of Panipat in 1761, the Marathas’ dream of ruling from Delhi was shattered. They were divided into many states under different chiefs (sardars) belonging to dynasties such as Sindhia, Holkar, Gaikwad and Bhonsle. These chiefs were held together in a confederacy under a Peshwa (Principal Minister) who became its effective military and administrative head based in Pune. Mahadji Sindhia and Nana Phadnis were two famous Maratha soldiers and statesmen of the late eighteenth century. The Marathas were subdued in a series of wars. In the first war that ended in 1782 with the Treaty of Salbai,

there was no clear victor. The Second Anglo- Maratha War (1803-05) was fought on different fronts, resulting in the British gaining Orissa and the territories north of the Yamuna river including Agra and Delhi. Finally, the Third Anglo-Maratha War of 1817-19 crushed Maratha power. The Peshwa was removed and sent away to Bithur near Kanpur with a pension. The Company now had complete control over the territories south of the Vindhya.

## The claim to paramountcy

It is clear from the above that from the early nineteenth century the Company pursued an aggressive policy of territorial expansion. Under Lord Hastings (Governor- General from 1813 to 1823) a new policy of “paramountcy” was initiated. Now the Company claimed that its authority was paramount or supreme, hence its power was greater than that of Indian states. In order to protect its interests it was justified in annexing or threatening to annex any Indian kingdom. This view continued to guide later British policies as well. This process, however, did not go unchallenged. For example, when the British tried to annex the small state of Kitoor (in Karnataka today), Rani Channamma took to arms and led an anti-British resistance movement. She was arrested in 1824 and died in prison in 1829. But Rayanna, a poor *chowkidar* of Sangoli in Kitoor, carried on the resistance. With popular support he destroyed many British camps and records. He was caught and hanged by the British in 1830.

We begin the story of Indian steel and iron metallurgy by recounting the famous story of Tipu Sultan who ruled Mysore till 1799, fought four wars with the British and died fighting with his sword in his hand. Tipu’s legendary swords are now part of valuable collections in museums in England. The sword had an incredibly hard and sharp edge that could easily rip through the opponent’s armour.

This quality of the sword came from a special type of high carbon steel called Wootz which was produced all over south India. Wootz steel when made into swords produced a very sharp edge with a flowing water pattern. This pattern came from very small carbon crystals embedded in the iron.

Francis Buchanan who toured through Mysore in 1800, a year after Tipu Sultan’s death, has left us an account of the technique by which Wootz steel was produced in many hundreds of smelting furnaces in Mysore. In these furnaces, iron was mixed with charcoal and put inside small clay pots. Through an intricate control of temperatures the smelters produced steel ingots that were used for sword making not just in India but in West and Central Asia too. Wootz is an anglicised version of the Kannada word *ukku*, Telugu *hukku* and Tamil and Malayalam *urukku* – meaning steel. Indian Wootz steel fascinated European scientists.

Michael Faraday, the legendary scientist and discoverer of electricity and electromagnetism, spent four years studying the properties of Indian Wootz (1818-22). However, the Wootz steel making process, which was so widely known in south India, was completely lost by the midnineteenth century. The swords and armour making industry died with the conquest of India by the British and imports of iron and steel from England displaced the iron and steel produced by crafts people in India.

Abandoned furnaces in villages Production of Wootz steel required a highly specialised technique of refining iron. But iron smelting in India was extremely common till the end of the nineteenth century. In Bihar and Central India, in particular, every district had smelters that used local deposits of ore to produce iron which was widely used for the manufacture of implements and tools of daily use. The furnaces were most often built of clay and sun-dried bricks. The smelting was done by men while women worked the bellows, pumping air that kept the charcoal burning.

In the late 1830s the East India Company became worried about Russia. It imagined that Russia might expand across Asia and enter India from the north-west. Driven by this fear, the British now wanted to secure their control over the north-west. They fought a prolonged war with Afghanistan between 1838 and 1842 and established indirect Company rule there. Sind was taken over in 1843. Next in line was Punjab. But the presence of Maharaja Ranjit Singh held back the Company. After his death in 1839, two prolonged wars were fought with the Sikh kingdom. Ultimately, in 1849, Punjab was annexed.

## The Doctrine of Lapse

The final wave of annexations occurred under Lord Dalhousie who was the Governor-General from 1848 to 1856. He devised a policy that came to be known as the Doctrine of Lapse.

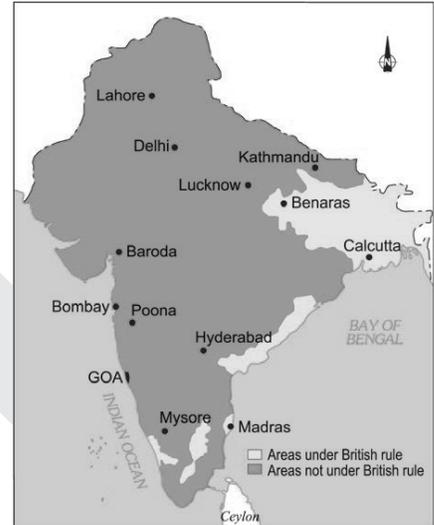
The doctrine declared that if an Indian ruler died without a male heir his kingdom would “lapse”, that is, become part of Company territory. One kingdom after another was annexed simply by applying this doctrine: Satara (1848), Sambalpur (1850), Udaipur (1852), Nagpur (1853) and Jhansi (1854).

Finally, in 1856, the Company also took over Awadh. This time the British had an added argument – they said they were “obliged by duty” to take over Awadh in order to free the people from the “misgovernment” of the Nawab! Enraged by the humiliating way in which the Nawab was deposed, the people of Awadh joined the great revolt that broke out in 1857.

### Late nineteenth century

By the late nineteenth century, however, the craft of iron smelting was in decline. In most villages, furnaces fell into disuse and the amount of iron produced came down. When the colonial government prevented people from entering the reserved forests, how could the iron smelters find wood for charcoal? Where could they get iron ore? Defying forest laws, they often entered the forests secretly and collected wood, but they could not sustain their occupation on this basis for long. Many gave up their craft and looked for other means of livelihood. In some areas the government did grant access to the forest. But the iron smelters had to pay a very high tax to the forest department for every furnace they used. This reduced their income. Moreover, by the late nineteenth century iron and steel was being imported from Britain.

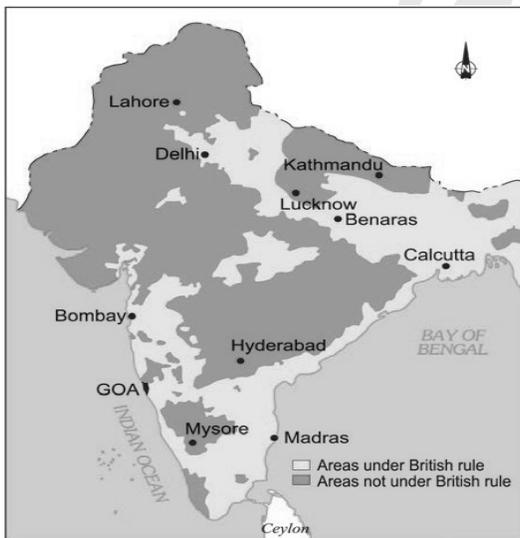
Ironsmiths in India began using the imported iron to manufacture utensils and implements. This inevitably lowered the demand for iron produced by local smelters.



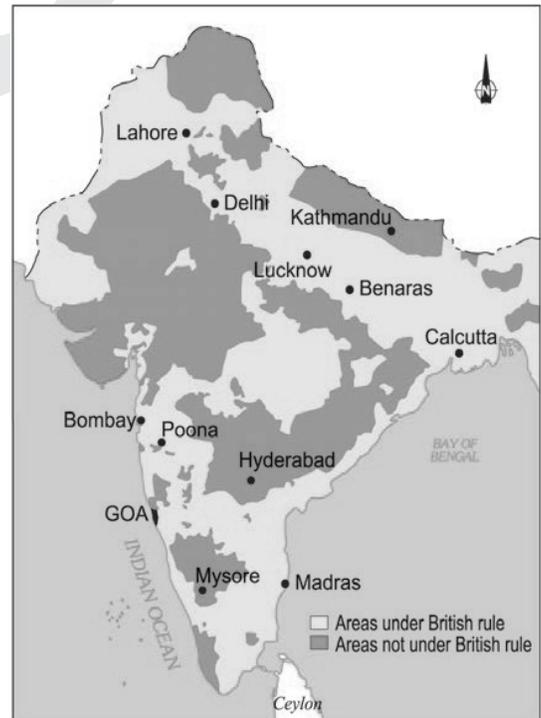
### India 1797 India 1840

#### India 1857

By the early twentieth century, the artisans producing iron and steel faced a new competition. Iron and steel factories come up in India



The year was 1904. In the hot month of April, Charles Weld, an American geologist and Dorabji Tata, the eldest son of Jamsetji Tata, were travelling in Chhattisgarh in search of iron ore deposits. They had spent many months on a costly venture looking for sources of good iron ore to



set up a modern iron and steel plant in India. Jamsetji Tata had decided to spend a large part of his fortune to build a big iron and steel industry in India.

But this could not be done without identifying the source of fine quality iron ore. One day, after travelling for many hours in the forests, Weld and Dorabji came upon a small village and found a group of men and women

carrying basket loads of iron ore. These people were the Agarias. When asked where they had found the iron ore, the Agarias pointed to a hill in the distance. Weld and Dorabji reached the hill after an exhausting trek through dense forests. On exploring the hill the geologist declared that they had at last found what they had been looking for. Rajhara Hills had one of the finest ores in the world. But there was a problem. The region was dry and water – necessary for running the factory – was not to be found nearby. The Tatas had to continue their search for a more suitable place to set up their factory. However, the Agarias helped in the discovery of a source of iron ore that would later supply the Bhilai Steel Plant.

A few years later a large area of forest was cleared on the banks of the river Subarnarekha to set up the factory and an industrial township – Jamshedpur. Here there was water near iron ore deposits.

The Tata Iron and Steel Company (TISCO) that came up began producing steel in 1912. TISCO was set up at an opportune time. All through the late nineteenth century, India was importing steel that was manufactured in Britain. Expansion of the railways in India had provided a huge market for rails that Britain produced. For a long while, British experts in the Indian Railways were unwilling to believe that good quality steel could be produced in India.

## ELSEWHERE

### Early years of industrialisation in Japan

The history of industrialisation of Japan in the late nineteenth century presents a contrast to that of India. The colonial state in India, keen to expand the market for British goods, was unwilling to support Indian industrialists. In Japan, the state encouraged the growth of industries.

The Meiji regime, which assumed power in Japan in 1868, believed that Japan needed to industrialise in order to resist Western domination. So it initiated a series of measures to help industrialisation. Postal services, telegraph, railways, steam powered shipping were developed. The most advanced technology from the West was imported and adapted to the needs of Japan. Foreign experts were brought to train Japanese professionals. Industrialists were provided with generous loans for investment by banks set up by the government. Large industries were first started by the government and then sold off at cheap rates to business families.

In India colonial domination created barriers to industrialisation. In Japan the fear of foreign conquest spurred industrialisation. But this also meant that the Japanese industrial development from the beginning was linked to military needs.

By the time TISCO was set up the situation was changing. In 1914 the First World War broke out. Steel produced in Britain now had to meet the demands of war in Europe. So imports of British steel into India declined dramatically and the Indian Railways turned to TISCO for supply of rails. As the war dragged on for several years, TISCO had to produce shells and carriage wheels for the war. By 1919 the colonial government was buying 90 per cent of the steel manufactured by TISCO. Over time TISCO became the biggest steel industry within the British empire. In the case of iron and steel, as in the case of cotton textiles, industrial expansion occurred only when British imports into India declined and the market for Indian industrial goods increased. This happened during the First World War and after. As the nationalist movement developed and the industrial class became stronger, the demand for government protection became louder. Struggling to retain its control over India, the British government had to concede many of these demands in the last decades of colonial rule.

### Implication by British in India

The British in India wanted not only territorial conquest and control over revenues. They also felt that they had a cultural mission: they had to “civilise the natives”, change their customs and values. What changes were to be introduced? How were Indians to be educated, “civilised”, and made into what the British believed were “good subjects”? The British could find no simple answers to these questions. They continued to be debated for many decades



# 3

## The British conquest during 1757 to 1818 on Indian States

The zamindars and jagirdars, whose number constantly increased, continued to fight over a declining income from agriculture, while the condition of the peasantry continued to deteriorate. While these states prevented any breakdown of internal trade and even tried to promote foreign trade, they did nothing to modernise the basic industrial and commercial structure of their states,

### The Battle of Plassey

When Alivardi Khan died in 1756, Sirajuddaulah became the nawab of Bengal. The Company was worried about his power and keen on a puppet ruler who would willingly give trade concessions and other privileges. So it tried, though without success, to help one of Sirajuddaulah's rivals become the nawab. An infuriated Sirajuddaulah asked the Company to stop meddling in the political affairs of his dominion, stop fortification, and pay the revenues. After negotiations failed, the Nawab marched with 30,000 soldiers to the English factory at Kassimbazar, captured the Company officials, locked the warehouse, disarmed all Englishmen, and blockaded English ships. Then he marched to Calcutta to establish control over the Company's fort there. On hearing the news of the fall of Calcutta, Company officials in Madras sent forces under the command of Robert Clive, reinforced by naval fleets. Prolonged negotiations with the Nawab followed. Finally, in 1757, Robert Clive led the Company's army against Sirajuddaulah at Plassey.

The defeat of the Nawab was that the forces led by Mir Jafar, one of Sirajuddaulah's commanders, never fought the battle. Clive had managed to secure his support by promising to make him nawab after crushing Sirajuddaulah.

The Battle of Plassey became famous because it was the first major victory the Company won in India.

After the defeat at Plassey, Sirajuddaulah was assassinated and Mir Jafar made the nawab. The Company was still unwilling to take over the responsibility of administration. Its prime objective was the expansion of trade. If this could be done without conquest, through the help of local rulers who were willing to grant privileges, then territories need not be taken over directly.

Soon the Company discovered that this was rather difficult. For even the puppet nawabs were not always as helpful as the Company wanted them to be. After all, they had to maintain a basic appearance of dignity and sovereignty if they wanted respect from their subjects. What could the Company do? When Mir Jafar protested, the Company deposed him and installed Mir Qasim in his place. When Mir Qasim complained, he in turn was defeated in a battle fought at Buxar (1764), driven out of Bengal, and Mir Jafar was reinstalled. The Nawab had to pay Rs 500,000 every month but the Company wanted more money to finance its wars, and meet the demands of trade and its other expenses. It wanted more territories and more revenue. By the time

Mir Jafar died in 1765 the mood of the Company had changed. Having failed to work with puppet nawabs, Clive declared: "We must indeed become nawabs ourselves." Finally, in 1765 the Mughal emperor appointed the Company as the Diwan of the provinces of Bengal. The

Diwani allowed the Company to use the vast revenue resources of Bengal. This solved a major problem that the Company had earlier faced. From the early eighteenth century its trade with India had expanded. But it had to buy most of the goods in India with gold and silver imported from Britain. This was because at this time Britain had no goods to sell in India. The outflow of gold from Britain slowed after the Battle of Plassey, and entirely stopped after the assumption of Diwani. Now revenues from India could finance Company expenses. These revenues could be used to purchase cotton and silk textiles in India, maintain Company troops, and meet the cost of building the Company fort and offices at Calcutta.

## After the Battle of Buxar (1764)

The Company appointed Residents in Indian states. They were political or commercial agents and their job was to serve and further the interests of the Company. Through the Residents, the Company officials began interfering in the internal affairs of Indian states. They tried to decide who was to be the successor to the throne, and who was to be appointed in administrative posts. Sometimes the Company forced the states into a “subsidiary alliance”. According to the terms of this alliance, Indian rulers were not allowed to have their independent armed forces. They were to be protected by the Company, but had to pay for the “subsidiary forces” that the Company was supposed to maintain for the purpose of this protection. If the Indian rulers failed to make the payment, then part of their territory was taken away as penalty.

### The anglo-Mysore war

War with Haidar Ali- had started in 1780. Repeating his earlier exploits, Haidar Ali inflicted one defeat after another on the British armies in the Carnatic and forced them to surrender in larger numbers. He soon occupied almost the whole of the Carnatic. But once again British arms and diplomacy saved the day. Warren Hastings bribed the Nizam with the cession of Guntur district and gained his withdrawal from the anti-British alliance. During 1781-82 he made peace, with the Marathas and thus freed a large part of his army for use against Mysore. After Haidar Ali's death in December 1782, the war was carried on by his son, Tipu Sultan. Since neither side was capable of overpowering the other, peace was signed by them in March 1784 and both sides restored all conquests. Thus, though the British had been shown to be too weak to defeat either the Marathas or Mysore, they had certainly proved their ability to hold their own in India. Not only had they been saved from extinction in the South, they had emerged from their recent wars as one of the three great powers in India.

**The third British encounter** with Mysore was more fruitful from the British point of view. The peace of 1784 had not removed the grounds for struggle between Tipu and the British; it had merely postponed the struggle. The authorities of the East India Company were acutely hostile to Tipu. They looked upon him as their most formidable rival in the South and as the chief obstacle standing between them and complete domination over South India. Tipu, on his part, thoroughly disliked the English, saw them as the chief danger to his own independence and nursed the ambition to expel them from India.

War between the two again began in 1789 and ended in Tipu's defeat in 1792. Even though Tipu fought with exemplary bravery, Lord Cornwallis, the then Governor-General, had succeeded through shrewd diplomacy in isolating him by winning over the Marathas, the Nizam, and the rulers of Travancore. This war again revealed that the Indian powers were shortsighted enough to aid the foreigner against another Indian power for the sake of temporary advantages. By the treaty of Srirangapatnam, Tipu ceded half of his territories to the allies and paid 330 lakhs of rupees as indemnity. The Third Anglo-Mysore war destroyed Tipu's dominant position in the South and firmly established British supremacy there.

Wellesley's expansionist policy had been checked near the end. All the same it had resulted in the East India Company becoming the paramount power in India. A young officer in the Company's judicial service, Henry Roberclaw, could write about 1805:

An Englishman in India is proud and tenacious, he feels himself a conqueror amongst a vanquished people and looks down with some degree of superiority on all below him.

The beginnings of British political sway over India may be traced to the battle of Plassey in 1757, when the English East India Company's forces defeated Siraj-ud-Daulah, the Nawab of Bengal. The earlier British struggle with the French in South India had been but a dress rehearsal. The lessons learnt there were profitably applied in Bengal.

Bengal was the most fertile and the richest of India's provinces. Its industries and commerce were well developed. As has been noted earlier, the East India Company and its servants had highly profitable trading interests in the province. The Company had secured valuable privileges in 1717 under a royal *farman* by the Mughal Emperor, which had granted the Company the freedom to export and import their goods in Bengal without paying taxes and the right to issue passes or *dastaks* for the movement of such goods. The Company's servants were also permitted to trade but were not covered by this *farman*. They were required to pay the same taxes as Indian merchants. This *farman* was a perpetual source of conflict between the Company and the Nawabs of Bengal.

All the Nawabs of Bengal, from Murshid Quli Khan to Alivardi Khan, had objected to the English interpretation of the *farman* of 1717. They had compelled the Company to pay lump sums to their treasury, and firmly suppressed the misuse of *dastaks*. The Company had been compelled to accept the authority of the Nawabs in the matter, but its servants had taken every opportunity to evade and defy this authority.

Matters came to a head in 1756 when the young and quick-tempered Siraj-ud-Daulah succeeded his grandfather, Alivardi Khan. He demanded of the English that they should trade on the same basis as in the times of Murshid Quli Khan. The English refused to comply as they felt strong after their victory over the French in South India.

### **After the Battle of Buxar (1764)**

The Company appointed Residents in Indian states. They were political or commercial agents and their job was to serve and further the interests of the Company. Through the Residents, the Company officials began interfering in the internal affairs of Indian states. They tried to decide who was to be the successor to the throne, and who was to be appointed in administrative posts. Sometimes the Company forced the states into a “subsidiary alliance”. According to the terms of this alliance, Indian rulers were not allowed to have their independent armed forces. They were to be protected by the Company, but had to pay for the “subsidiary forces” that the Company was supposed to maintain for the purpose of this protection. If the Indian rulers failed to make the payment, then part of their territory was taken away as penalty.

**The Second Anglo-Maratha War** had shattered the power of the Maratha chiefs but not their spirit. The loss of their freedom rankled in their hearts. They made a desperate last attempt to regain their independence and old prestige in 1817. The lead in organising a united front of the Maratha chiefs was taken by the Peshwa who was smarting under the rigid control exercised by the British Resident. However, once again the Marathas failed to evolve a concerted and well-thought out plan of action, The Peshwa attacked the British Residency at Poona in November 1817. Appa Sahib of Nagpur attacked the Residency at Nagpur, and Madhav Rao Holkar made preparations for war.

The Governor-General, Lord Hastings, struck back with characteristic vigour. He compelled Sindhia to accept British suzerainty, and defeated the armies of the Peshwa, Bhonsle and Holkar. The Peshwa was dethroned and pensioned off at Bithur near Kanpur. His territories were annexed and the enlarged Presidency of Bombay brought into existence. Holkar and Bhonsle accepted subsidiary forces. All the Maratha chiefs had to cede to the Company large tracts of their territories. To satisfy Maratha pride, the small Kingdom of Satara was founded out of the Peshwa’s lands and given to the descendant of Chatrapati Shivaji who ruled it as a complete dependent of the British.

### **Wars Under Warren Hastings (1772-1785) and Cornwallis (1786-1793)**

The East India Company had by 1772 become an important Indian power and its Directors in England and its officials in India set out to consolidate their control over Bengal before beginning a new round of conquests. However, their habit of interfering in the internal affairs of the Indian States and their lust for territory and money soon involved them in a series of wars.

In 1766 they entered into an alliance with the Nizam of Hyderabad to help him in attacking Haidar Ali of Mysore in return for the cession of the Northern Sarkars. But Haidar Ali was more than a match for the Company’s armies. Having beaten back the British attack, he threatened Madras in 1769 and forced the Madras Council to sign peace on his terms. Both sides restored each other’s conquests and promised mutual help in case of attack by a third party. But when Haidar Ali was attacked by the Marathas in 1771, the English went back on their promise and did not come to his help. This led Haidar Ali to distrust and dislike them.

Then, in 1775, the English clashed with the Marathas. An intense struggle for power was taking place at that time among the Marathas between the supporters of the infant Peshwa Madhav Rao II, led by Nana Phadnis, and Raghunath Rao. The British officials in Bombay decided to take advantage of this struggle by intervening on behalf of Raghunath Rao. They hoped thus to repeat the exploits of their countrymen in Madras and Bengal and reap the consequent monetary advantages. This involved them in a long war with the Marathas which lasted from 1775 to 1782.

## Maratha state

In the beginning, the Marathas defeated the British forces at Talegaon and forced them to sign the Convention of Wadgaon by which the English renounced all their conquests and gave up the cause of Raghunath Rao. But the war was soon resumed;

This was a dark hour indeed for the British power in India, All the Marathia chiefs were united behind the, Peshwa and his chief minister, Nana Phadnis. The Southern Indian powers had long been resenting the presence of the British among them, and Haidar Ali and the Nizam chose this moment to declare war against the Company. Thus the British were faced with the powerful combination of the Marathas, Mysore and Hyderabad. Moreover, abroad they were waging a losing war in their colonies in America where the people had rebelled in 1776. They had also to counter the determined design of the French to exploit the difficulties of their old rival.

The British in India were, however, led at this time by their brilliant, energetic, and experienced Governor-General, Warren Hastings. Acting with firm resolve and determination, he retrieved the vanishing British power and prestige. A British force under Goddard marched across Central India in a brilliant military manoeuvre and after a series of victorious engagements reached Ahmedabad which he captured in 1780. The English had found in the Marathas a determined enemy, with immense resources. Mahadji Sindhia had given evidence of his power which the English dreaded to contest. Neither side won victory and the war had come to a standstill. With the intercession of Mahadji, peace was concluded in 1782 by the Treaty of Salbai by which the status quo was maintained. It saved the British from the combined opposition of Indian powers.

This war, known in history as the **First Anglo-Maratha War**, did not end in victory for either side. But it did give the British 20 years of peace with the Marathas, the strongest Indian power of the day. The British utilized this period to consolidate their rule over the Bengal Presidency, while the Maratha chiefs frittered away their energy in bitter mutual squabbles. Moreover, the Treaty of Salbai enabled the British to exert pressure on Mysore as the Marathas promised to help them in recovering their territories from Haidar Ali. Once again, the British had succeeded in dividing the Indian powers.

The Rajputana states had been dominated for several decades by Sindhia and Holkar. After the downfall of the Marathas, they lacked the energy to reassert their independence and readily accepted British supremacy. Thus, by 1818, the entire Indian sub-continent excepting the Punjab and Sindh had been brought under British control. Part of it was ruled directly by the British and the rest by a host of Indian rulers over whom the British exercised paramount power. These states had virtually no armed forces of their own, nor did they have any independent foreign relations.

### Expansion under Lord Wellesley (1798-1805)

The next large-scale expansion of British rule in India occurred during the Governor-Generalship of Lord Wellesley who came to India in 1798 at a time when the British were locked in a life and death struggle with France all over the world.

By 1797 the two strongest Indian powers, Mysore and the Marathas, had declined in power, The Third Anglo-Mysore war had reduced Mysore to a mere shadow of its recent greatness and the Marathas were dissipating their strength, in mutual intrigues and wars. In other words, political conditions in India were propitious for a policy of expansion: aggression was easy as well as profitable. Moreover, the trading and industrial classes of Britain desired further expansion in India- Hitherto they had favoured a policy of peace in the belief that war was injurious to trade. But by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century they had come to think that British goods would sell in India on a large scale only when the entire country had come under British control.

The Company too was in favour of such a policy provided it could be pursued successfully and without adversely affecting its profits. Lastly, the British in India were determined to keep French influence from penetrating India and, therefore, to curb and crush any Indian state which might try to have dealings with France. The security of the Company's dominion in India was threatened by the impending invasion of Zaman Shah, the ruler of Kabul, who could expect support from the Indian chiefs in northern India and who was invited by Tipu to join in a concerted effort to oust the British from this country.

To achieve his political aims Wellesley relied on three methods: the system of Subsidiary Alliances, outright wars, and assumption of the territories of previously' subordinated rulers. While the practice of helping an

Indian ruler with a paid British force was quite old, it was given a definite shape by Wellesley who used it to subordinate the Indian States to the paramount authority of the Company. Under his Subsidiary Alliance system, the ruler of the allying Indian State was compelled to accept the permanent stationing of a British force within his territory and to pay a subsidy for its maintenance.

Sometimes the ruler ceded part of his territory instead of paying annual subsidy. The Subsidiary Treaty also usually provided that the Indian ruler would agree to the posting at his court of a British Resident, that he would not employ any European in his service without the approval of the British, and that he would not negotiate with any other Indian ruler without consulting the Governor-General. In return the British undertook to defend the ruler from his enemies. They also promised non-interference in the internal affairs of the allied state, but this was a promise they seldom kept.

In reality, by signing a Subsidiary Alliance, an Indian ruler virtually signed away its independence. It lost the right of self-defence, of maintaining diplomatic relations, of employing foreign experts, and of settling its disputes with its neighbours. In fact, the Indian ruler lost all vestiges of sovereignty in external matters and became increasingly subservient to the British Resident who interfered in the day to day administration of the state. In addition, the system tended to bring about the internal decay of the protected state. The cost of the subsidiary force provided by the British was very high and, in fact, much beyond the paying capacity of the state.

The Nawab of Avadh was forced to sign a Subsidiary Treaty in 1801. To return for a larger subsidiary force, the Nawab was made to surrender to the British nearly half of his kingdom consisting of Rohilkhand and the territory lying between the Ganga and the Jatnuna. Moreover, the Nawab was no longer to be independent. He must accept any 'advice' or order from the British authorities regarding the internal administration of his state. His police was to be reorganised under the control and direction of British officers. His own army was virtually disbanded and the British had the right to station their troops in any part of his state.

Wellesley dealt with Mysore, Carnatic, Tanjore, and Surat even more sternly. Tipu of Mysore would, of course, never agree to a Subsidiary Treaty. On the contrary, he had never reconciled himself to the loss of half of his territory in 1792. He worked incessantly to strengthen his forces for the inevitable struggle with the British. He entered into negotiations for an alliance with Revolutionary France. He sent missions 'to Afghanistan, Arabia and Turkey to forge an anti-British alliance.

Lord Wellesley was no less determined to bring Tipu to heel and to prevent any possibility of the French re-entering India. The British army attacked and defeated Tipu in a brief but fierce war in 1799, before French help could reach him. Tipu still refused to beg for peace on humiliating terms. He proudly declared that it was "better to die like a soldier, than to live a miserable dependent on the infidels, in the list of their pensioned rajas and nabobs." He met a hero's end on 4 May 1799 while defending his capital Seringapatam. His army remained loyal to him to the very end.

In 1801, Lord Wellesley forced a new treaty upon the puppet Nawab of Carnatic compelling him to cede his kingdom to the Company in return for a handsome pension. The Madras Presidency as it existed till 1947 was now created, by attaching the Carnatic to territories seized from Mysore, including the Malabar. Similarly, the territories of the rulers of Tanjore and Surat were taken over and their rulers pensioned off.

The Marathas were the only major Indian power left outside the sphere of British control. Wellesley now turned his attention towards them and began aggressive interference in their internal affairs.

The Maratha Empire at this time consisted of a confederacy of five big chiefs, namely, the Peshwa at Poona, the Gaekwad at Baroda, the Sindhia at Gwalior, the Holkar at Indore, and the Bhonsle at Nagpur, the Peshwa, being the nominal head of the confederacy. Unfortunately for the Marathas, they lost nearly all of their wise and experienced leaders towards the close of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Mahadji Sindhia, Tukoji Holkar, Ahilya Bai Holkar, Peshwa Madhav Rao U, and Nana Phadnis, the man who had kept the Maratha confederacy together for the last 30 years, all were dead by the year 1800. What was worse, the Maratha chiefs were engaged in bitter fratricidal strife, blind to the real danger from the rapidly advancing foreigner.

Yeshwant Rao Holkar on one side and Daulat Rao Sindhia and Peshwa Baji Rao II on the other were locked in mortal combat.

Wellesley had repeatedly offered a subsidiary alliance to the Peshwa and Sindhia. But the far-sighted Nana Phadnis had refused to fall into the trap. However, when on 25 October 1802, the day of the great festival of Diwali, Holkar defeated the combined armies of the Peshwa and Sindhia, the cowardly Peshwa Baji Rao

He rushed into the arms of the English and on the fateful last day of 1802 signed the Subsidiary Treaty at Bassein. The British had finally realised their ambition. Lord Wellesley wrote on 24 December 1802:

This crisis of affairs appeared to me to afford the most favourable opportunity for the complete establishment of the interests of the British power in the Maratha Empire, without the hazard of involving us in a contest with any party.

The victory had been a little too easy and Wellesley was wrong in one respect: the proud Maratha chiefs would not surrender their great tradition of independence without a struggle. But even in this moment of their peril they would not unite against their common enemy. When Sindhia and Bhonsle fought the British, Holkar stood on the side-lines and Gaekwad gave help to the British. When Holkar took up arms, Bhonsle and Sindhia nursed their wounds. Moreover, the Maratha chiefs underestimated the enormously increased strength of the enemy and went into battle without adequate preparation.

In the South, the British armies led by Arthur Wellesley defeated the combined armies of Sindhia and Bhonsle at Assaye in September 1803 and at Argaon in November. In the North, Lord Lake routed Sindhia's army at Laswari on the first of November and occupied Aligarh, Delhi and Agra. Once again the blind Emperor of India became a pensioner of the Company. The Maratha allies had to sue for peace. Both became subsidiary allies of the Company. They ceded part of their territories to the British, admitted British Residents to their Courts and promised not to employ any Europeans without British approval. The British gained complete control over the Orissa coast and the territories between the Ganga and the Jamuna. The Peshwa became a disgruntled puppet in their hands.

Wellesley now turned his attention towards Holkar, but Yeshwant Rao Holkar proved more than a match for the British. Using traditional Maratha tactics of mobile warfare and in alliance with the Jats, he fought British armies to a standstill. Holkar's ally, the Raja of Bharatpur, inflicted heavy losses on Lake who unsuccessfully attempted to storm his fort. Moreover, overcoming his age-old antagonism to the Holkar family, Sindhia began to think of joining hands with Holkar. On the other hand, the shareholders of the East India Company discovered that the policy of expansion through war was proving costly and was reducing their profits. The Company's debt had increased from £ 17 million in 1797 to £ 31 million in 1806. Moreover, Britain's finances were getting exhausted at a time when Napoleon was once again becoming a major threat in Europe. British statesmen and the Directors of the Company felt that time had come to check further expansion, to put an end to ruinous expenditure, and to digest and consolidate Britain's recent gains in India. Wellesley was therefore recalled from India and the Company made peace with Holkar in January 1806 by the Treaty of Rajghat giving back to the latter the greater part of his territories.

### **The Conquest of Sindh**

The conquest of Sindh occurred as a result of the growing Anglo-Russian rivalry in Europe and Asia and the consequent British fears that Russia might attack India through Afghanistan or Persia. To counter Russia, the British Government decided to increase its influence in Afghanistan and Persia. It further felt that this policy could be successfully pursued only if Sindh was brought under British control. The commercial possibilities of the river Sindh were an additional attraction.

The roads and rivers of Sindh were opened to British trade by a treaty in 1832. The chiefs of Sindh, known as Amirs, were made to sign a Subsidiary Treaty in 1839. And finally, in spite of previous assurances that its territorial integrity would be respected, Sindh was annexed in 1843 after a brief campaign by Sir Charles Napier who had earlier written in his Diary: "We have no right to seize Sind, yet we shall do so, and a very advantageous, useful humane piece of rescality it will be." He received seven lakhs of rupees as prize money for accomplishing the task.

### **The Conquest of the Punjab**

The death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in June 1839 was followed by political instability and rapid changes of government in the Punjab. Selfish and corrupt leaders came to the front. Ultimately, power fell into the hands of the brave and patriotic but utterly indisciplined army. This led the British to look greedily across the Sutlej upon the land of the five rivers even though they had signed a treaty of perpetual friendship with Ranjit Singh in 1809. The British officials increasingly talked of having to wage a campaign in the Punjab.

The Punjab army let itself be provoked by the warlike actions of the British and their intrigues with the corrupt chiefs of the Punjab. In November 1844, Major Broadfoot, who was known to be hostile to the Sikhs, was appointed the British agent in Ludhiana. Broadfoot repeatedly indulged in hostile actions and gave provocations. The corrupt chiefs and officials found that the army would sooner or later deprive them of their power, position, and possessions. They conceived the idea of saving themselves by embroiling the army in a war with the British. In the autumn of 1845, news reached that boats designed to form bridges had been despatched from Bombay to Ferozepur on the Sutlej. Barracks for additional troops were built in the forward area and additional regiments began to be despatched to the frontier with the Punjab. The Punjab Army, now convinced that the British were determined to occupy the Punjab, took counter measures. When it heard in December that Lord Gough, the Commander-in-Chief, and Lord Hardinge, the Governor-General, were marching towards Ferozepur, it decided to strike. War between the two was thus declared on 13 December 1845. The danger from the foreigner immediately united the Hindus, the Muslims, and the Sikhs. The Punjab army fought heroically and with exemplary courage. But some of its leaders had already turned traitors. The Prime Minister, Raja Lai Singh, and the Commander-in-Chief, Misar Tej Singh, were secretly corresponding with the enemy. The Punjab Army was forced to concede defeat and to sign the humiliating Treaty of Lahore on 8 March 1846. The British annexed the Jullundhar Doab and handed over Jammu and Kashmir to Raja Gulab Singh Dogra for a cash payment of five million rupees. The Punjab army was reduced to 20,000 infantry and 12,000 cavalry and a strong British force was stationed at Lahore.

Later, on 16 December 1846, another treaty was signed giving the British Resident at Lahore full authority over all matters in every department of the state. Moreover, the British were permitted to station their troops in any part of the state. From now on the British Resident became the real ruler of the Punjab which lost its independence and became a vassal state.

But the aggressively imperialist sections of the British officialdom in India were still unsatisfied, for they wanted to impose direct British rule over the Punjab. Their opportunity came in 1848 when the freedom-loving Punjabis rose up in numerous local revolts. Two of the prominent revolts were led by Mulraj at Multan and Chattar Singh Attanwala near Lahore. The Punjabis were once again decisively defeated. Lord Dalhousie seized this opportunity to annex the Punjab. Thus, the last independent state of India was absorbed in the British Empire of India.

### **Dalhousie and the Policy of Annexation (1848-1856)**

Lord Dalhousie came out to India as the Governor-General in 1848. He was from the beginning determined to extend direct British rule over as large an area as possible. He had declared that “the extinction of all native states of India is just a question of time”. The ostensible reason for this policy was his belief that British administration was far superior to the corrupt and oppressive administration of the native rulers. However, the underlying motive of this policy was the expansion of British exports to India. Dalhousie, in common with other aggressive imperialists, believed that British exports to the native states of India were suffering because of the maladministration of these states by their Indian rulers. Moreover, they thought that their “Indian allies” had already served the purpose of facilitating British conquest of India and could now be got rid of profitably.

The chief instrument through which Lord Dalhousie implemented his policy of annexation was the Doctrine of Lapse. Under this Doctrine, when the ruler of a protected state died without a natural heir, his state was not to pass to an adopted heir as sanctioned by the age-old tradition of the country. Instead, it was to be annexed to the British dominions unless the adoption had been clearly approved earlier by the British authorities. Many states, including Satara in 1848 and Nagpur and Jhansi in 1854, were annexed by applying this doctrine.

Dalhousie also refused to recognise the titles of many ex-rulers or to pay their pensions. Thus, the titles of the Nawabs of Carnatic and of Surat and the Raja of Tanjore were extinguished. Similarly, after the death of the ex-Peshwa Baji Rao II, who had been made the Raja of Bithur, Dalhousie refused to extend his pay or pension to his adopted son, Nana Saheb.

### **Saheb.**

Lord Dalhousie was keen on annexing the kingdom of Avadh. But the task presented certain difficulties. For one, the Nawabs of Avadh had been British allies since the Battle of Buxar. Moreover, they had been most

obedient to the British over the years. The Nawab of Avadh had many heirs and could not therefore be covered by the Doctrine of Lapse. Some other pretext had to be found for depriving him of his dominions. Finally, Lord Dalhousie hit upon the idea of alleviating the plight of the people of Avadh. Nawab Wajid Ali Shah was accused of having misgoverned his state and of refusing to introduce reforms. His state was therefore annexed in 1856.

Undoubtedly, the degeneration of the administration of Avadh was a painful reality for its people. The Nawabs of Avadh, like other princes of the day, were selfish rulers absorbed in self-indulgence who cared little for good administration or for the welfare of the people. But the responsibility for this state of affairs was in part that of the British who had at least since 1801 controlled and indirectly governed Avadh. In reality, it was the immense potential of Avadh as a market for Manchester goods which excited Dalhousie's greed and aroused his 'philanthropic' feelings. And for similar reasons, to satisfy Britain's growing demand for raw cotton, Dalhousie took away the cotton-producing province of Berar from the Nizam in 1853.

It needs to be clearly understood that the question of the maintenance or annexation of the native states was of no great relevance at this time. In fact, there were no Indian *States* in existence at that time. The protected native states were as much a part of the British Empire as the territories ruled directly by the Company. If the form of British control over some of these states was changed, it was to suit British convenience. The interests of their people had little to do with the change.



# 4

## The Structure of Economic and Administrative policies of British Empire (1757-1857)

In 1817, James Mill, a Scottish economist and political philosopher, published a massive three-volume work *A History of British India*. In this he divided Indian history into three periods – Hindu, Muslim and British.

They reflect our ideas about the past. They show how we see the significance of the change from one period to the next. Mill thought that all Asian societies were at a lower level of civilisation than Europe. According to his telling of history, before the British came to India, Hindu and Muslim despots ruled the country. Religious intolerance, caste taboos and superstitious practices dominated social life. British rule, Mill felt, could civilise India.

To do this it was necessary to introduce European manners, arts, institutions and laws in India. Mill, in fact, suggested that the British should conquer all the territories in India to ensure the enlightenment and happiness of the Indian people. For India was not capable of progress without British help.

In this idea of history, British rule represented all the forces of progress and civilization. The period before British rule was one of darkness.

Having acquired the vast empire of India, the East India Company had to devise suitable methods of government to control and administer it. The administrative policy of the Company underwent frequent changes during the long period between 1757 and 1857. However, it never lost sight of its main objects which were to increase the Company's profits, to enhance the profitability of its Indian possessions to Britain, and to maintain and strengthen the British hold over India; all other purposes were subordinated to these aims. The administrative machinery of the Government of India was designed and developed to serve these ends. The main emphasis in this respect was placed on the maintenance of law and order so that trade with India and exploitation of its resources could be carried out without disturbance.

### The Structure of Government

When the officials of the East India Company acquired control over Bengal in 1765, they had little intention of making any innovations in its administration. They only desired to carry on their profitable trade and to collect taxes for remission to England. From 1765 to 1772, in the period of the Dual Government, Indian officials were allowed to function as before but under the over-all control of the British Governor and British officials. The Indian officials had responsibility but no power while the Company's officials had power but no responsibility. Both sets of officials were venal and corrupt men. In 1772 the Company ended the Dual Government and undertook to administer Bengal directly through its own servants. But the evils inherent in the administration of a country by a purely commercial company soon came to the surface.

### Regulating Act of 1773

The first important parliamentary act regarding the Company's affairs was the Regulating Act of 1773. This Act made changes in the constitution of the Court of Directors of the Company and subjected their actions to the supervision of the British Government. The Directors were to lay before the Ministry all correspondence dealing with the civil and military affairs and the revenues of India. In India, the Government of Bengal was to be carried on by a Governor-General and his Council who were given the power to superintend and control the Bombay and Madras Presidencies in matters of war and peace.- The Act also provided for the establishment of a Supreme Court of Justice at Calcutta to administer justice to Europeans, their employees, and the citizens

of Calcutta. The Regulating Act soon broke down in practice. It had not given the British Government effective and decisive control over the Company.

In India it had placed the Governor-General at the mercy of his Council. Three of the Councilors could combine and outvote the Governor-General on any matter.

In practice, Warren Hastings, the first Governor-General under the Act, and three of his Councilors quarreled incessantly, often creating deadlocks in the administration. The Governor-General's control over the other two Presidencies also proved inadequate in practice. Most important of all, the Act had failed to resolve the conflict between the Company and its opponents in England who were daily growing stronger and more vocal. Moreover, the Company remained extremely vulnerable to the attacks of its enemies as the administration of its Indian possessions continued to be corrupt, oppressive, and economically disastrous.

### **Pitt's India Act**

The defects of the Regulating Act and the exigencies of British politics necessitated the passing in 1784 of another important act known as Pitt's India Act. This Act gave the British Government supreme control over the Company's affairs and its administration in India. It established six Commissioners for the affairs of India, popularly known as the Board of Control, including two Cabinet Ministers. The Board of Control was to guide and control the work of the Court of Directors and the Government of India. In important and urgent matters it had the power to send direct orders to India through a secret committee of Directors. The Act placed the Government of India in the hands of the Governor-General and a Council of three, so that if the Governor-General could get the support of even one member, he could have his way. The Act clearly subordinated the Bombay and Madras Presidencies to Bengal in all questions of war, diplomacy, and revenues. With this Act began a new phase of the British conquest of India. While the East India Company became the instrument of British national policy, India was to be made to serve the interests of all sections of the ruling classes of Britain. The Company having saved its monopoly of the Indian and Chinese trade was satisfied. Its Directors retained the profitable right of appointing and dismissing its British officials in India. Moreover, the Government of India was to be carried out through their agency.

While Pitt's India Act laid down the general framework in which the Government of India was to be carried on till 1857, later enactments brought about several important changes which gradually diminished the powers and privileges of the Company. In 1786, the Governor-General was given the authority to overrule his Council in matters of importance affecting safety, peace, or the interests of the Empire in India.

### **Charter Act of 1813**

By the Charter Act of 1813, the trade monopoly of the Company in India was ended and trade with India was thrown open to all British subjects. But trade in tea and trade with China were still exclusive to the Company. The Government and the revenues of India continued to be in the hands of the Company.

The Company also continued to appoint its officials in India. The Charter Act of 1833 brought the Company's monopoly of tea trade and trade with China to an end. At the same time the debts of the Company were taken over by the Government of India which was also to pay its shareholders a 10% percent dividend on their capital. The Government of India continued to be run by the Company under the strict control of the Board of Control. Thus, the various acts of Parliament discussed above completely subordinated the Company and its Indian administration to the British Government. At the same time, it was recognised that day to day administration of India could not be run or even superintended from a distance of 6,000 miles. Supreme authority in India was, therefore, delegated to the Governor-General in Council. The Governor-General, having the authority to overrule his Council in important questions, became in fact the real, effective ruler of India, functioning under the superintendence, control and direction of the British Government. It is to be noted that Indians were allowed no share in their own administration. The three seats of authority, as far as India was concerned, were the Court of Directors of the Company, the Board of Control representing the British Government, and the Governor-General. With none of the three was any Indian associated even remotely or in any capacity.

The British created a new system of administration in India to serve their purposes. But before we discuss the salient features of this system, it would be better if we first examine the purposes which it was designed to serve, for the main function of the administrative system of a country is to accomplish the aims and objects of its rulers. The chief aim of the British was to enable them to exploit India economically to the maximum

advantage of various British interests, ranging from the Company to the Lancashire manufacturers. At the same time India was to be made to bear the full cost of its own conquest as well as of the foreign rule. An examination of the economic policies of the British in India is, therefore, of prime importance.

### Commercial Policy.

From 1600 to 1757 the East India Company's role in India was that of a trading corporation which brought goods or precious metals into India and exchanged them for Indian goods like textiles, spices, etc., which it sold abroad. Its profits came primarily from the sale of Indian goods abroad. Naturally, it tried constantly to open new markets for Indian goods in Britain and other countries. Thereby, it increased the export of Indian manufactures and thus encouraged their production. This is the reason why the Indian rulers tolerated and even encouraged the establishment of the Company's factories in India.

### The Permanent Settlement:

We have seen that in 1765, the East India Company acquired the Dewan, or control over the revenues, of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa. Initially, it made an attempt to continue the old system of revenue collection though it increased the amount to be collected from Rs. 14,290,000 in 1722 and Rs. 8,180,000 in 1764 to Rs. 23,400,000 in 1771. In 1773, it decided to manage the land revenues directly. Warren Hastings auctioned the Right to collect revenue to the highest bidders. But his experiment did not succeed. Though the amount of land revenue was pushed high by zamindars and other speculators bidding against each other, the actual collection varied from year to year and seldom came up to official expectations. This introduced instability in the Company's revenues at a time when the Company was hard pressed for money. Moreover, neither the ryot nor the zamindar would do anything to improve cultivation when they did not know what the next year's assessment would be or who would be the next year's revenue collector.

It was at this stage that the idea first emerged of fixing the land revenue at a permanent amount. Finally, after prolonged discussion and debate, the Permanent Settlement was introduced in Bengal and Bihar in 1793 by Lord Cornwallis. It had two special features.

**Firstly**, the zamindars and revenue collector were converted into so many landlords. They were not only to act as agents of the Government in collecting land revenue from the ryot but also to become the owners of the entire land in their zamindaris. Their Right of ownership was made hereditary and transferable. On the other hand the cultivators were reduced to the low status of mere tenants and were deprived of long-standing rights to the soil and other customary rights. The use of the pasture and forest lands, irrigation canals, fisheries, and homestead plots and protection against enhancement of rent were some of their rights which were sacrificed. In fact the tenantry of Bengal was left entirely at the mercy of the zamindars. This was done so that the zamindars might be able to pay in time the exorbitant land revenue demand of the Company.

**Secondly**, the zamindars were to give 10/11<sup>th</sup> of the rental they derived from the peasantry to the state, keeping only 1/11<sup>th</sup> for themselves. But the sums to be paid by them as land revenue were fixed in perpetuity. If the rental of a zamindar's estate increased due to extension of cultivation and improvement in agriculture, or his capacity to extract more from his tenants, or any other reason, he would keep the entire amount of the increase. The state would not make any further demand upon him. At the same time, the zamindar had to pay his revenue rigidly on the due date even if the crop had failed for some reason; otherwise his lands were to be sold.

The initial fixation of revenue was made arbitrarily and without any consultation with the zamindars. The attempt of the officials was to secure the maximum amount. As a result, the rates of revenue were fixed very high. John Shore, the man who planned the Permanent Settlement and later succeeded Cornwallis as Governor-General, calculated that if the gross produce of Bengal be taken as 100, the Government claimed 45, zamindars and other intermediaries below them received 15, and only 40 remained with the actual cultivator.

It was later generally admitted by officials and non-officials alike that before 1793 the zamindars of Bengal and Bihar did not enjoy proprietary rights over most of the land. The question then arises: why did the British recognise them as such? One explanation is that this was in part the result of a misunderstanding. In England, the central figure in agriculture at the time was the landlord and the British officials made the mistake of thinking that the zamindar was his Indian counterpart. It is, however, to be noted that in one crucial respect the British officials clearly differentiated between the positions of the two. The landlord in

Britain was the owner of land not only in relation to the tenant but also in relation to the state. But in Bengal while the zamindar was landlord over the tenant, he was further subordinated to the state.

In fact he was reduced virtually to the status of a tenant of the East India Company. In contrast to the British landlord, who paid a small share of his income as land tax, he had to pay as tax 10/11<sup>th</sup> of his income from the land of which he was supposed to be the owner; and he could be turned out of the land unceremoniously and his estate sold if he failed to pay the revenue in time.

Other historians think that the decision to recognise the zamindars as the proprietors of land was basically determined by political, financial, and administrative expediency. Here the guiding factors were three. The first arose out of clever statecraft: the need to create political allies. The British officials realised that as they were foreigners in India, their rule would be unstable unless they acquired local supporters who would act as a buffer between them and the people of India. This argument had immediate importance as there were a large number of popular revolts in Bengal during the last quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. So they brought into existence a wealthy and privileged class of zamindars which owed its existence to British rule and which would, therefore, be compelled by its own basic interests to support it. This expectation was, in fact, fully justified later when the zamindars as a class supported the foreign government in opposition to the rising movement for freedom, Second, and perhaps the predominant motive, was that of financial security. Before 1793 the Company was troubled by fluctuations in its chief source of income, the land revenue. The Permanent Settlement guaranteed the stability of income. The newly created property of the zamindars acted as a security of this. Moreover the Permanent Settlement enabled the Company to maximise its income as land revenue was now fixed higher than it had ever been in the past. Collection of revenue through a small number of zamindars seemed to be much simpler and cheaper than the process of dealing with lakhs of cultivators. Thirdly, the Permanent Settlement was expected to increase agricultural production. Since the land revenue would not be increased in future even if the zamindar's income went up, the latter would be inspired to extend cultivation and improve agricultural productivity.

The Permanent Zamindari Settlement was later extended to Orissa, the Northern Districts of Madras, and the District of Varanasi.

In parts of Central India and Avadh the British introduced a temporary zamindari settlement under which the zamindars were made owners of land but the revenue they had to pay was revised periodically. Another group of landlords was created all over India when the Government started the practice of giving land to persons who had rendered faithful service to the foreign rulers.

### **Ryotwari Settlement:**

The establishment of British rule in South and South-Western India brought new problems of land settlement. The officials believed that in these regions there were no zamindars with large estates with whom settlement of land revenue could be made and that the introduction of zamindari system would upset the existing state of affairs. Many Madras officials led by Reed and Munro recommended that settlement should therefore be made directly with the actual cultivators. They also pointed out that under the Permanent Settlement the Company was a financial loser as it had to share the revenues with the zamindars and could not claim a share of the growing income from land. Moreover, the cultivator was left at the mercy of the zamindar who could oppress him at will. Under the system they proposed, which is known as the Ryotwari Settlement, the cultivator was to be recognised as the owner of his plot of land subject to the payment of land revenue. The supporters of the Ryotwari system claimed that it was a continuation of the state of affairs that had existed in the past.

Munro said: "It is the system which has always prevailed in India".

The Ryotwari Settlement was in the end introduced in parts of the Madras and Bombay Presidencies in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The settlement under the Ryotwari system was not made permanent. It was revised periodically after 20 to 30 years when the revenue demand was usually raised.

The Ryotwari Settlement did not bring into existence a system of peasant ownership. The peasant soon discovered that the large number of zamindars had been replaced by one giant zamindar—the state. In fact, the Government later openly claimed that land revenue was rent and not a tax. The ryot's rights of ownership of his land were also negated by three other factors:

1. In most areas the land revenue fixed was exorbitant; the ryot was hardly left with bare maintenance even in the best of seasons. For instance, in Madras the Government claim was fixed as high as 45 to 55 per cent of gross production in the earlier settlement. The situation was nearly as bad in Bombay.

2. The Government retained the right to enhance land revenue at will.
3. The ryot had to pay revenue even when his produce was partially or wholly destroyed by drought or floods.

**Mahalwari System:** A modified version of the zamindari settlement, introduced in the Gangetic valley, the North-West Provinces, parts of Central India, and the Punjab, was known as the Mahalwari System. The revenue settlement was to be made village by village or estate (*mahal*) by estate with landlords or heads of families who collectively claimed to be the landlords of the village or the estate. In the Punjab a modified Mahalwari System known as the village system was introduced. In Mahalwari areas also, the land revenue was periodically revised.

Both the Zamindari and the Ryotwari systems departed fundamentally from the traditional land systems of the country. The British created a new form of private property in land in such a way that the benefit of the innovation did not go to the cultivators. All over the country land was now made salable, mortgagable, and alienable. This was done primarily to protect the Government's revenue. If land had not been made transferable or salable, the Government would find it very difficult to realise revenue from a cultivator who had no savings or possessions out of which to pay it. Now he could borrow money on the security of his land or even all part of it and pay his land revenue. If he refused to do so, the Government could and often did auction his land and realise the amount. Another reason for introducing private ownership in land was provided by the belief that only right of ownership would make the landlord or the ryot exert himself in making improvements.

The British by making land a commodity which could be freely bought and sold introduced a fundamental change in the existing land systems of the country. The stability and the continuity of the Indian villages were shaken. In fact, the entire structure of rural society began to break up.

**After the Battle of Plassey in 1757** the pattern of the Company's commercial relations with India underwent a qualitative change. Now the Company could use its political control over Bengal to push its Indian trade. Moreover, it utilised the revenues of Bengal to finance its export of Indian goods. The activity of the Company should have encouraged Indian manufacturers, but this was not so. The Company used its political power to dictate terms to the weavers of Bengal who were forced to sell their products at a cheaper and dictated price, even at a loss. Moreover, their labour was no longer free. Many of them were compelled to work for the Company for low wages and were forbidden to work for Indian merchants. The servants of the Company monopolised the sale of raw cotton and made the Bengal weaver pay exorbitant prices for it. Thus, the weaver lost both ways, as buyer as well as seller. At the same time, Indian textiles had to pay heavy duties on entering England. The British Government was determined to protect its rising machine industry whose products could still not compete with the cheaper and better Indian goods. Even so Indian products held some of their ground. The real blow on Indian handicrafts fell after 1813 when they lost not only their foreign markets but, what was of much greater importance, their market in India itself.

The Industrial Revolution in Britain completely transformed Britain's economy and its economic relations with India. During the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the first few decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Britain underwent profound social and economic transformation, and British industry developed and expanded rapidly on the basis of modern machines, the factory system, and capitalism. This development was aided by several factors.

British overseas trade had been expanding rapidly in the previous centuries. Britain had come to capture and monopolise many foreign markets by means of war and colonialism. These export markets enabled its export industries to expand production rapidly, utilizing the latest techniques in production and organisation. Africa, the West Indies, Latin America, Canada, Australia, China and above all India provided unlimited opportunities for export. This was particularly true of the cotton textile industry which served as the main vehicle of the Industrial Revolution in Britain. Britain had already evolved the colonial pattern of trade which helped the Industrial Revolution which in turn strengthened this pattern: the colonies and underdeveloped countries exported agricultural and mineral raw materials to Britain while the latter sold them its manufactures.

**Secondly**, there was sufficient capital accumulated in the country for investment in new machinery and the factory system. Moreover, this capital was concentrated not in the hands of the feudal class which would waste it in luxurious living but in the hands of merchants and industrialists who were keen to invest it in trade and industry. Here again the immense wealth drawn from Africa, Asia, the West Indies, and Latin America, including that drawn from India by the East India Company and its servants after the Battle of Plassey, played an important role in financing industrial expansion.

**Thirdly**, rapid increase in population met the need of the growing industries for more labour and cheaper labour. The population of Britain increased rapidly after 1740; it doubled in fifty years after 1780.

**Fourthly**, Britain had a government which was under the influence of commercial and manufacturing interests and which, therefore, fought other countries determinedly for markets and colonies.

**Fifthly**, the demands for increased production were met by developments in technology. Britain's rising industry could base itself on the inventions of Hargreaves, Watt, Crompton, Cartwright, and many others. Many of the inventions now utilised-had been available for centuries. In order to take full advantage of these inventions and steam-power, production was now increasingly concentrated in factories. It should be noted that it was not these inventions which produced the Industrial Revolution, Rather it was the desire of manufacturers to increase production rapidly for the expanding markets and their capacity to invest the needed capital which led them to utilise the existing technology and to call forth new inventions. In fact, new organisation of industry was to make technical change a permanent feature of human development. The Industrial Revolution has, in this sense, never come to an end, for modern industry and technology have gone on developing from one stage to another ever since the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The Industrial Revolution transformed British society in a fundamental manner. It led to rapid economic development which is the foundation of today's high standard of living in Britain as well as in Europe, the Soviet Union, the U.S.A., Canada, Australia, and Japan. In fact, until the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the difference in the standards of living of what are today economically the advanced and the backward countries was very slight. It was the Absence of the Industrial Revolution in the latter group of countries which has led to the immense income gap that we see in the world of today.

Britain became increasingly urbanised as a result of the Industrial Revolution. More and more men began to live in factory towns. In 1750, Britain had only two cities with more than 50,000 inhabitants; in 1851, their number was 29.

The rise of a powerful class of manufacturers had an important impact on Indian administration and its policies. As this class grew in number and strength and political influence, it began to attack the trade monopoly of the Company. Since the profits of this class came from manufacturing and not trade, it wanted to encourage not imports of manufactures from India but exports of its own products to India as well as imports of raw materials like raw cotton from India. In 1769 the British industrialists compelled the Company by law to export every year British manufactures amounting to over £380,000, even though it suffered a loss on the transaction.

In 1793, the forced the Company to grant them the use of 3,000 tons of its shipping every year to carry their goods. Exports of British cotton goods to the East, mostly to India, increased from £ 156 in 1794 to nearly £ 110,000 in 1813, that is, by nearly 700 times. But this increase was not enough to satisfy the wild hopes of the Lancashire manufacturers who began to actively search for ways and means of promoting the export of their products to India.

The Economic History of India, the effort of the Parliamentary Select Committee of 1812 was "to discover how they (Indian manufactures) could be replaced by British manufactures, and how British industries could be promoted at the expense of Indian industries."

The British manufacturers looked upon the East India Company, its monopoly of Eastern trade, and its methods of exploitation of India through control of India's revenues and export trade, to be the chief obstacles in the fulfilment of their dreams. Between 1793 and 1813, they launched a powerful campaign against the Company and its commercial privileges and, finally succeeded in 1813 in abolishing its monopoly of Indian trade.

With this event, a new phase in Britain's economic relations with India began. Agricultural India was to be made an economic colony of industrial England.

The Government of India now followed a policy of free trade or unrestricted entry of British goods. Indian handicrafts were exposed to the fierce and unequal competition of the machine-made products of Britain and faced extinction. India had to admit British goods free or at nominal tariff rates. The Government of India also tried to increase the number of purchasers of British goods by following a policy of fresh conquests and direct occupation of protected states like Avadh. Many British officials, political leaders, and businessmen advocated reduction in land revenue so that the Indian peasant might be in a better position to buy foreign manufactures They also advocated the modernisation of India so that more and more Indians might develop

a taste for Western goods.

Indian hand-made goods were unable to compete against the much cheaper products of British mills which had been rapidly improving their productive capacity by using inventions and a wider use of steam power. Any government wedded to Indian interests alone would have protected Indian industry through high tariff walls and used the time thus gained to import the new techniques of the West Britain had done this in relation to its own industries in the 18<sup>th</sup> century; France, Germany, and the U.S.A. were also doing so at the time; Japan and the Soviet Union were to do it many decades after and free India is doing it today. However, not only were Indian industries not protected by the foreign rulers but foreign goods were given free entry. Foreign imports rose rapidly. Imports of British cotton goods alone increased from £ 110,000 in 1813 to £ 6,300,000 in 1856.

While the doors of India were thus thrown wide open to foreign goods, Indian handicraft products continued to pay heavy duties on entry into Britain. The British would not take in Indian goods on fair and equal terms even at this stage when their industries had achieved technological superiority over Indian handicrafts. Duties in Britain on several categories of Indian goods continued to be high till their export to Britain virtually ceased. For example, in 1824, a duty of 67% per cent was levied on Indian calicos and a duty of 37% percent on Indian muslins. Indian sugar had to pay on entry into Britain a duty that was over three times its cost price. In some cases duties in England went up as high as 400 per cent. As a result of such prohibitive import duties and development of machine industries, Indian exports to foreign countries fell rapidly. The unfairness of British commercial policy has been summed up by the British historian, H.H. Wilson, in the following words:

It was stated in evidence, that the cotton and silk goods of India up to this period could be sold for a profit in the British market, at a price from 50 to 60 per cent lower than those fabricated in England. It consequently became necessary to protect the latter by duties of 70 to 80 percent on their value, or by positive prohibition. Had this not been the case, had not such prohibitory duties and decrees existed, the mills of Paisley and of Manchester would have been stopped in their outset and could scarcely have been again set in motion, even by the power of steam. They were created by the sacrifice of the Indian manufacture. Had India been independent, she would have retaliated, would have imposed preventive duties upon British goods, and would thus have preserved her own productive industry from annihilation. This act of self-defence was not permitted her; she was at the mercy of the stranger. British goods were forced upon her without paying any duty; and the foreign manufacturer employed the arm of political injustice to keep down and ultimately strangle a competitor with whom he could not have contended on equal terms.

Thus, the commercial policy of the East India Company after 1813 was guided by the needs of British industry. Its main aim was to transform India into a consumer of British manufactures and a supplier of raw materials.

### **The Drain of Wealth:**

The British exported to Britain part of India's wealth and resources for which India got no adequate economic or material return. This 'Economic Drain' was peculiar to British rule. Even the worst of previous Indian governments had spent the revenue they extracted from the people inside the country. Whether they spent it, on irrigation canals and trunk roads, or on palaces, temples and mosques, or on wars and conquests, or even on personal luxury, it ultimately encouraged Indian trade and industry or gave employment to Indians. This was so because even foreign conquerors, for example the Mughals, soon settled in India and made it their home. But the British remained perpetual foreigners. Englishmen working and trading in India nearly always planned to go back to Britain and the Indian government was controlled by a foreign company of merchants and the Government of Britain. The British, consequently, spent a large part of the taxes and income they derived from Indian people not in India but in Britain, their home country.

The drain of wealth from Bengal began in 1757 when the Company's servants began to carry home immense fortunes extorted from Indian rulers, zamindars, merchants and the common people. They sent home nearly £ 6 million between 1758 and 1765. This amount was more than four times the total land revenue collection of the Nawab of Bengal in 1765. This amount of drain did not include the trading profits of the Company which were often no less illegally derived. In 1765 the Company acquired the dewan of Bengal and thus gained control over its revenues. The Company, even more than its servants, soon directly organised the drain. It began to purchase Indian goods out of the revenue of Bengal and to export them. These purchases were known as 'Investments' Thus, through 'Investments', Bengal's revenue was sent to England. For example, from 1765 to 1770, the Company sent out in the form of goods nearly four million pounds or about 33 per cent of the net revenue of Bengal. The actual drain was even more, as a large part of the salaries and other incomes of English

officials and the trading fortunes of English merchants also found their way into England.

While the exact amount of the annual drain has not been calculated so far and historians differ on its quantum, the fact of the drain, at least from 1757 to 1857, was widely accepted by British officials. Thus, for example, Lord Ellenborough, Chairman of the Select Committee of the House of Lords, and later Governor-General of India, admitted in 1840 that India was “required to transmit annually to this country (Britain), without any return except in the small value of military stores, a sum amounting to between two and three million sterling”. And John Sullivan, President of the Board of Revenue, Madras, remarked: “Our system acts very much like a sponge, drawing up all the good things from the banks of the Ganges, and squeezing them down on the banks of the Thames.”

### **Development of Means of Transport and Communication:**

Up to the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the means of transport in India were backward. They were confined to bullock-cart, camel, and packhorse. The British rulers soon realised that a cheap and easy system of transport was a necessity if British manufactures were to flow into India on a large scale and her raw materials secured for British industries. They introduced steamships on the rivers and set about improving the roads. Work on the Grand Trunk Road from Calcutta to Delhi was begun in 1839 and completed in the 1850's. Efforts were also made to link by road the major cities, ports, and markets of the country; But real improvement in transport came only with the coming of the railways.

The first, railway engine designed by George Stephenson was put on the rails in England in 1814, Railways developed rapidly in that country during the 1830's and 1840's. Pressure soon mounted for their speedy construction in India. The British manufacturers hoped thereby to open the vast and hitherto untapped market in the interior of the country and to facilitate the export of Indian raw materials and food-stuffs to feed their hungry machines and operatives. The British bankers and investors looked upon railway development in India as a channel for safe investment of their surplus capital. The British steel manufacturers regarded it as an outlet for their products like rails, engines, wagons, and other machinery and plant. The Government of India soon fell in step with these views and found additional merit in the railways.

They would enable it to administer the country more effectively and efficiently and to protect their regime from internal rebellion or external aggression by enabling more rapid mobilization and movement of troops.

The earliest suggestion to build a railway in India was made in Madras in 1831. But the wagons of this railway were to be drawn by horses. Construction of steam-driven railways in India was first proposed in 1834 in England. It was given strong political support by England's railway promoters, financiers, mercantile houses trading with India, and textile manufacturers. It was decided that the Indian railways were to be constructed and operated by private companies who were guaranteed a minimum of five percent return on their capital by the Government of India. The first railway line running from Bombay to Thana was opened to traffic in 1853.

Lord Dalhousie, who became Governor-General of India in 1849, was an ardent advocate of rapid railway construction. In a famous note, written in 1853, he laid down an extensive programme of railway development, He proposed a network of four main trunk lines which would link the interior of the country with the big ports and inter-connect the different parts of the country.



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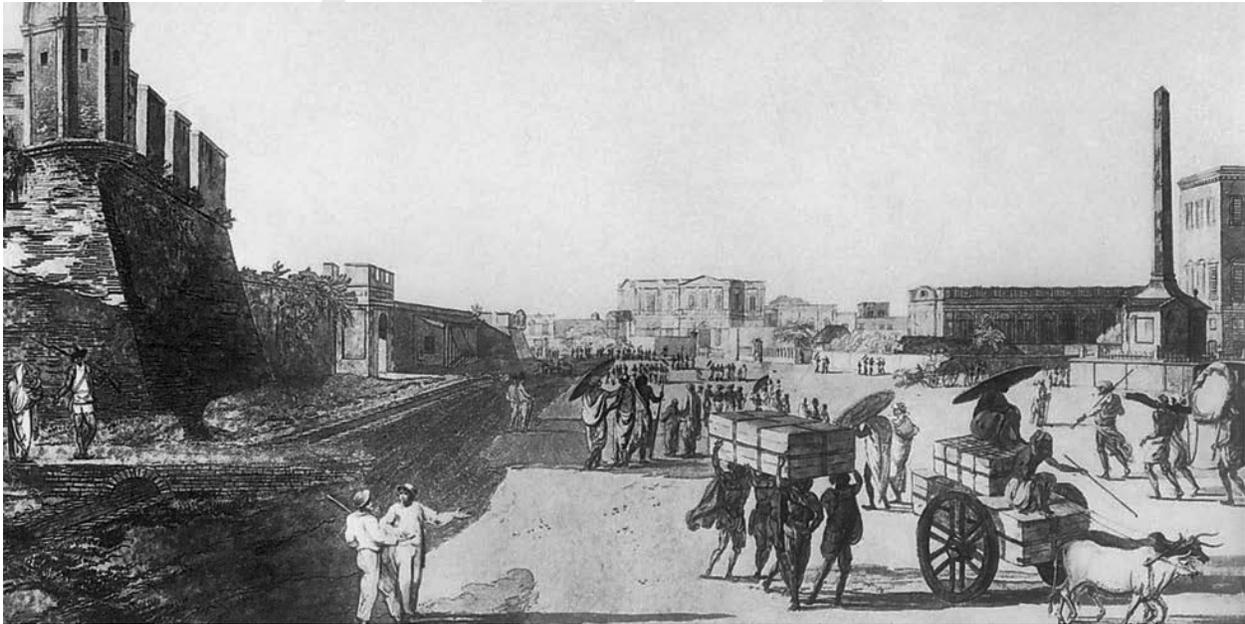
## The Changing World on Visual Arts

### Introduction

When you look at a work of art – a painting, sculpture, etc. – it may not be obvious that like most other things, art too is influenced by the world around it. You may not realise that what you see also shapes your own ideas. In this chapter we will be looking at the changes in the world of visual arts during the colonial period, and how these changes are linked to the wider history of colonialism and nationalism. Colonial rule introduced several new art forms, styles, materials and techniques which were creatively adapted by Indian artists for local patrons and markets, in both elite and popular circles. You will find that many of the visual forms that you take for granted today – say, a grand public building with domes, columns and arches; a scenic landscape, the realistic human image in a portrait, or in popular icons of gods and goddesses; a mechanically printed and mass-produced picture – had their origins in the period we will discuss in this chapter. To understand this history we will focus primarily on the changes in one sphere – painting and print making.

### New form of Imperial arts

From the eighteenth century a stream of European artists came to India along with the British traders and rulers. The artists brought with them new styles and new conventions of painting. They began producing pictures which became widely popular in Europe and helped shape Western perceptions of India.



European artists brought with them the idea of realism. This was a belief that artists had to observe carefully and depict faithfully what the eye saw. What the artist produced was expected to look real and lifelike. European artists also brought with them the technique of oil painting – a technique with which Indian artists were not very familiar. Oil painting enabled artists to produce images that looked real. Not all European artists in India were inspired by the same things. The subjects they painted were varied, but invariably they seemed to emphasise the superiority of Britain – its culture, its people, its power. Let us look at a few major trends within imperial art.

## Looking for the picturesque

One popular imperial tradition was that of picturesque landscape painting. What was the picturesque? This style of painting depicted India as a quaint land, to be explored by travelling British artists; its landscape was rugged and wild, seemingly untamed by human hands. Thomas Daniell and his nephew William Daniell were the most famous of the artists who painted within this tradition. They came to India in 1785 and stayed for seven years, journeying from Calcutta to northern and southern India. They produced some of the most evocative picturesque landscapes of Britain's newly conquered territories in India. Their large oil paintings on canvas were regularly exhibited to select audiences in Britain, and their albums of **engravings** were eagerly bought up by a British public keen to know about Britain's empire.

This image of British rule bringing modern civilisation to India is powerfully emphasised in the numerous pictures of late-eighteenth-century Calcutta drawn by the Daniells. In these drawings you can see the making of a new Calcutta, with wide avenues, majestic European-style buildings,

## Portraits of authority

Another tradition of art that became immensely popular in colonial India was **portrait** painting. The rich and the powerful, both British and Indian, wanted to see themselves on canvas. Unlike the existing Indian tradition of painting portraits in miniature, colonial portraits were life-size images that looked lifelike and real. The size of the paintings itself projected the importance of the patrons who commissioned these portraits. This new style of **portraiture** also served as an ideal means of displaying the lavish lifestyles, wealth and status that the empire generated.



**Portrait** – A picture of a person in which the face and its expression is prominent

**Portraiture** – The art of making portraits

**Commission** – To formally choose someone to do a special piece of work usually against payment.

As portrait painting became popular, many European portrait painters came to India in search of profitable **commissions**. One of the most famous of the visiting European painters was Johann Zoffany. He was born in Germany, migrated to England and came to India in the mid-1780s for five years. Figs. 3 and 4 are two examples of the portraits that Zoffany painted. Notice the way figures of Indian servants and the sprawling lawns of colonial mansions appear in such portraits. See how the Indians are shown as submissive, as inferior, as serving their white masters, while the British are shown as superior and imperious: they flaunt their clothes, stand regally or sit arrogantly, and live a life of luxury. Indians are never at the centre of such paintings; they usually occupy a shadowy background.



*Portrait of Governor-General Hastings with his wife in their Belvedere estate, painted by Johann Zoffany (oil, 1784)*

*The Aural and Dashwood Families of Calcutta, painted by Johann Zoffany (oil, 1784)*

Thomas Dashwood was married to Charlotte Lousia Aural. Here you see them entertaining their friends and relatives. Notice the various servants serving tea.

Many of the Indian nawabs too began commissioning imposing oil portraits by European painters. You have seen how the British posted Residents in Indian courts and began controlling the affairs of the state, undermining the power of the king. Some of these nawabs reacted against this interference; others accepted the political and cultural superiority of the British. They hoped to socialise with the British, and adopt their styles and tastes. Muhammad Ali Khan was one such nawab. After a war with the British in the 1770s he became a dependant pensioner of the East India Company. But he nonetheless commissioned two visiting European artists, Tilly Kettle and George Willison, to paint his portraits, and gifted these paintings to the King of England and the Directors of the East India Company. The nawab had lost political power, but the portraits allowed him to look at himself as a royal figure.



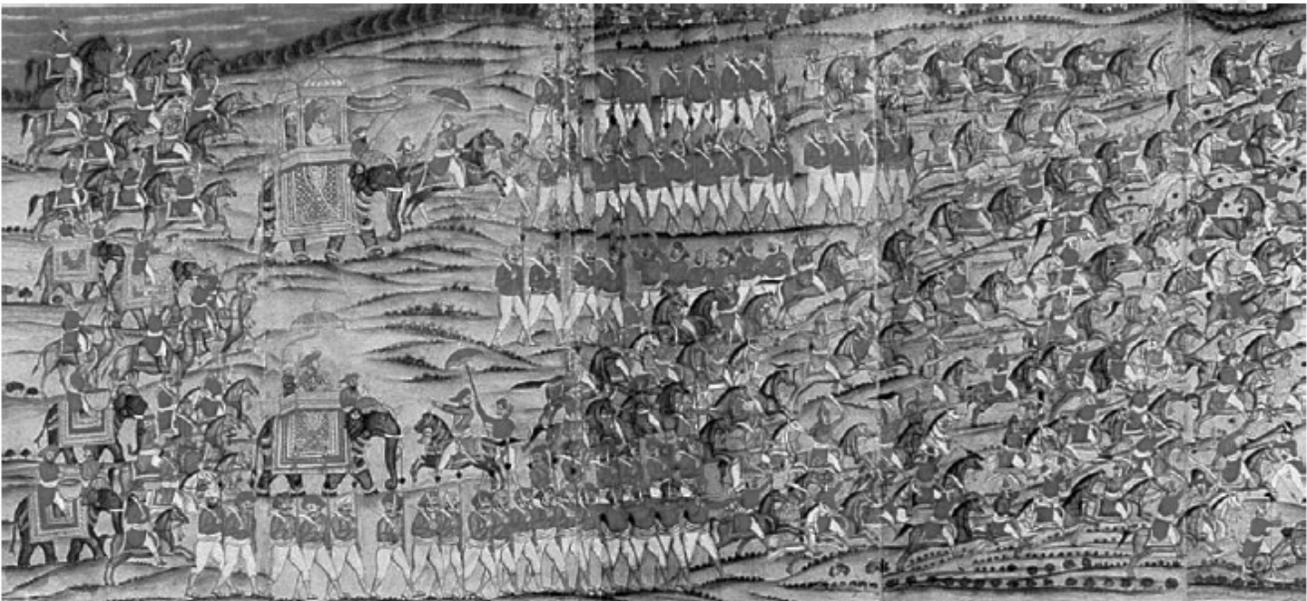
*Portrait of Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan of Arcot, painted by George Willison (oil, 1775)*

## Painting history

There was a third category of imperial art, called “history painting”. This tradition sought to dramatise and recreate various episodes of British imperial history, and enjoyed great prestige and popularity during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. British victories in India served as rich material for history painters in Britain. These painters drew on firsthand sketches and accounts of travellers to depict for the British public a favourable image of British actions in India. These paintings once again celebrated the British: their power, their victories, their supremacy. One of the first of these history paintings was produced by Francis Hayman in 1762 and placed on public display in the Vauxhall Gardens in London. The British had just defeated Sirajuddaulah in the famous Battle of Plassey and installed Mir Jafar as the Nawab of Murshidabad. It was a victory won through conspiracy, and the traitor Mir Jafar was awarded the title of Nawab. In the painting by Hayman this act of aggression and conquest is not depicted. It shows Lord Clive being welcomed by Mir Jafar and his troops after the Battle of Plassey.

### *What happened to the court Artist*

What happened to artists who earlier painted miniatures? How did the painters at Indian courts react to the new traditions of imperial art? We can see different trends in different courts. In Mysore, Tipu Sultan not only fought the British on the battlefield but also resisted the cultural traditions associated with them. He continued to encourage local traditions, and had the walls of his palace at Seringapatam covered with **mural** paintings done by local artists. Fig. 10 shows you one of these. This painting celebrates the famous battle of Polilur of 1780 in which Tipu and Haidar Ali defeated the English troops.



*a mural painting commissioned by Tipu Sultan at the Dariya Daulat palace at Seringapatam, commemorating Haidar Ali's victory over the English army at the battle of Polilur of 1780.*

In the court of Murshidabad we see a different trend. Here, after defeating Sirajuddaulah the British had successfully installed their puppet Nawabs on the throne, first Mir Zafar and then Mir Qasim. The court at Murshidabad encouraged local miniature artists to absorb the tastes and artistic styles of the British. This is a picture of an Id procession painted by a court painter in the late eighteenth century. Notice how local miniature artists at Murshidabad began adopting elements of European realism. They use **perspective**, which creates a sense of distance between objects that are near and those at a distance. They use light and shade to make the figures look life like and real. With the establishment of British power many of the local courts lost their influence and wealth. They could no longer support painters and pay them to paint for the court. How could the artists earn a living? Many of them turned to the British.



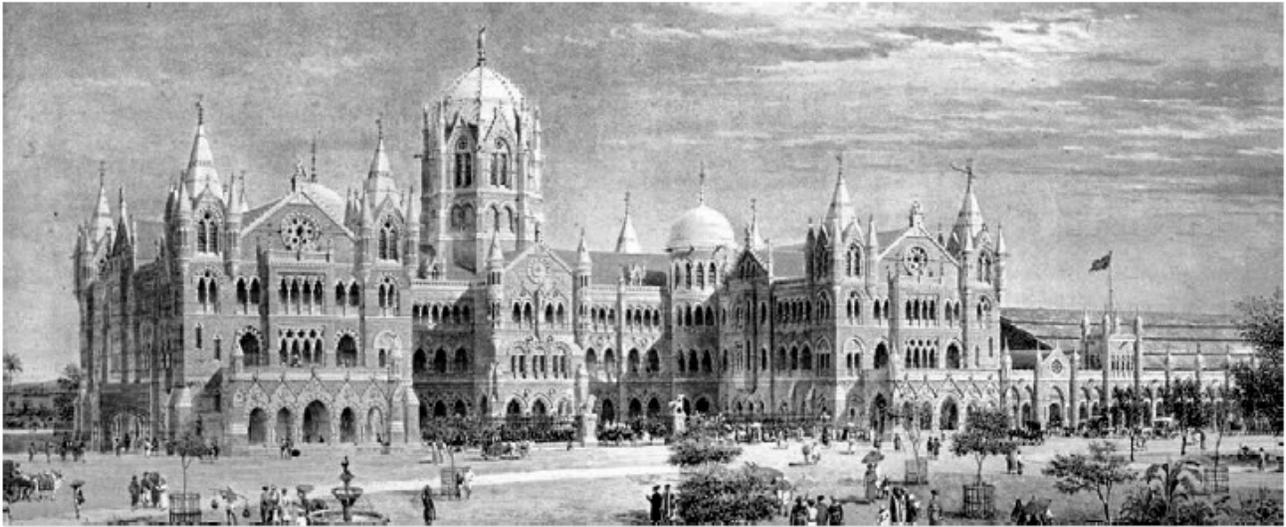
You can see this in Fig..

At the same time, British officials, who found the world in the colonies different from that back home, wanted images through which they could understand India, remember their life in India, and depict India to the Western world. So we find local painters producing a vast number of images of local plants and animals, historical buildings and monuments, festivals and processions, trades and crafts, castes and communities. These pictures, eagerly collected by the East India Company officials, came to be known as Company paintings. Not all artists, however, were court painters. Not all of them painted for the nawabs. Let us see what was happening outside the court.

### The new Popular Indian Art

In the nineteenth century a new world of popular art developed in many of the cities of India. In Bengal, around the pilgrimage centre of the temple of Kalighat, local village **scroll painters** (called *patuas*) and potters (called *kumors* in eastern India and *kumhars* in north India) began developing a new style of art. They moved from the surrounding villages into Calcutta in the early nineteenth century. This was a time when the city was expanding as a commercial and administrative centre. Colonial offices were coming up, new buildings and roads were being built, markets were being established. The city appeared as a place of opportunity where people could come to make a new living. Village artists too came and settled in the city in the hope of new patrons and new buyers of their art. Before the nineteenth century, the village *patuas* and *kumors* had worked on mythological themes and produced images of gods and goddesses. On shifting to Kalighat, they continued to paint these religious images. Traditionally, the figures in scroll paintings looked flat, not rounded. Now Kalighat painters began to use shading to give them a rounded form, to make the images look three-dimensional. Yet the images were not realistic and lifelike. In fact, what is specially to be noted in these early Kalighat paintings is the use of a bold, deliberately non-realistic style, where the figures emerge large and powerful, with a minimum of lines, detail and colours. After the 1840s, we see a new trend within the Kalighat artists. Living in a society where values, tastes, social norms and customs were undergoing rapid changes, Kalighat artists responded to the world around, and produced paintings on social and political themes. Many of the late-nineteenth-century Kalighat paintings depict social life under British rule. Often the artists mocked at the changes they saw around, ridiculing the new tastes of those who spoke in English and adopted Western habits, dressed like sahibs, smoked cigarettes, or sat on chairs. They made fun of the westernised *baboo*, criticised the corrupt priests, and warned against women moving out of their homes. They often expressed the anger of common people against the rich, and the fear many people had about dramatic changes of social norms. Many of these Kalighat pictures were printed in large numbers and sold in the market. Initially, the images were engraved in wooden blocks. The carved block was inked, pressed against paper, and then the woodcut prints that were produced were coloured by hand. In this way, many copies could be produced from the same block. By the late-nineteenth century, mechanical printing presses were set up in different parts of India, which allowed prints to be produced in even larger numbers. These prints could

therefore be sold cheap in the market. Even the poor could buy them. Popular prints were not painted only by the poor village Kalighat *patuas*. Often, middle-class Indian artists set up printing presses and produced prints for a wide market. They were trained in British art schools in new methods of **life study** (**Life study** – Study of human figures from living models who pose for the artists), oil painting and print making. One of the most successful of these presses that were set up in late-nineteenth-century Calcutta was the Calcutta Art Studio. It produced lifelike images of eminent Bengali personalities as well as mythological pictures. But these mythological pictures were realistic. The figures were located in picturesque landscape settings, with mountains, lakes, rivers and forests. You must have seen many popular calendar pictures of Hindu deities in shops and roadside stalls. The characteristic elements of these pictures came into being in the late nineteenth century. These types of popular pictures were printed and circulated in other parts of India too. With the spread of nationalism, popular prints of the early twentieth century began carrying nationalist messages. In many of them you see Bharat Mata appearing as a goddess carrying the national flag, or nationalist heroes sacrificing their head to the Mata, and gods and goddesses slaughtering the British.



*New Building and new style With British rule architectural styles also changed. New styles were introduced as new city were built, new building came up.*

*Victoria Terminus, Bombay*

**The railway station was built between 1878 and 1887.**

### **The search for a National Art**

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, a stronger connection was established between art and nationalism. Many painters now tried to develop a style that could be considered both modern and Indian. What could be defined as a national style?

### **The art of Raja Ravi Varma**

Raja Ravi Varma was one of the first artists who tried to create a style that was both modern and national. Ravi Varma belonged to the family of the Maharajas of Travancore in Kerala, and was addressed as Raja. He mastered the Western art of oil painting and realistic life study, but painted themes from Indian mythology. He dramatised on canvas, scene after scene from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, drawing on the theatrical performances of mythological stories that he witnessed during his tour of the Bombay Presidency. From the 1880s, Ravi Varma's mythological paintings became the rage among Indian princes and art collectors, who filled their palace galleries with his works. Responding to the huge popular appeal of such paintings, Ravi Varma decided to set up a picture production team and printing press on the outskirts of Bombay. Here colour prints of his religious paintings were mass produced. Even the poor could now buy these cheap prints.

## A different vision of national art

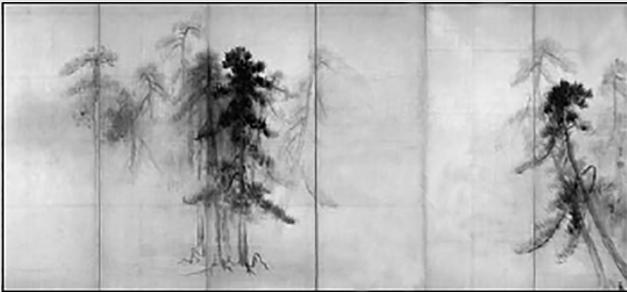
In Bengal, a new group of nationalist artists gathered around Abanindranath Tagore (1871-1951), the nephew of Rabindranath Tagore. They rejected the art of Ravi Varma as imitative and westernised, and declared that such a style was unsuitable for depicting the nation's ancient myths and legends. They felt that a genuine Indian style of painting had to draw inspiration from non-Western art traditions, and try to capture the spiritual essence of the East. So they broke away from the convention of oil painting and the realistic style, and turned for inspiration to medieval Indian traditions of miniature painting and the ancient art of mural painting in the Ajanta caves. They were also influenced by the art of Japanese artists who visited India at that time to develop an Asian art movement.

The effort to define what ought to be an authentic Indian style of art continued. After the 1920s, a new generation of artists began to break away from the style popularised by Abanindranath Tagore. Some saw it as sentimental, others thought that spiritualism could not be seen as the central feature of Indian culture. They felt that artists had to explore real life instead of illustrating ancient books, and look for inspiration from living folk art and tribal designs rather than ancient art forms. As the debates continued, new movements of art grew and styles of art changed.

### ELSEWHERE

#### Kakuzo and the movement for an Asian art

In 1904, Okakura Kakuzo published a book in Japan called *The Ideals of the East*. This book is famous for its opening lines: "Asia is one." Okakura argued that Asia had been humiliated by the West and Asian nations had to collectively resist West domination.



**Fig. 28** Pine trees, painted by Hasegawa Tohaku, sixteenth century

Okakura researched on Japan art and emphasised the need to save traditional techniques of traditional Japanese art at a time they were being replaced by Western-style painting. He tried to define what modern art could be and how tradition could be retained and modernised. He was the principal founder of the first Japanese art academy.

Okakura visited Santiniketan and had a powerful influence on Rabindranath Tagore and Abanindranath Tagore.

# 6

## Colonialism and The City

### What is colonial?

you will read about the way the British came to conquer the country and establish their rule, subjugating local nawabs and rajas. You will see how they established control over the economy and society, collected revenue to meet all their expenses, bought the goods they wanted at low prices, produced crops they needed for export, and you will understand the changes that came about as a consequence. You will also come to know about the changes

British rule brought about in values and tastes, customs and practices. When the subjugation of one country by another leads to these kinds of political, economic, social and cultural

changes, we refer to the process as colonisation. You will, however, find that all classes and groups did not experience these changes in the same way. That is why the book is called *Our Pasts* in the plural.

### What Happened to Cities Under Colonial Rule?

You have seen how life in the countryside changed after the establishment of British power. What happened to the cities during the same period? The answer will depend on the kind of town or city we are discussing. The history of a temple town like Madurai will not be the same as that of a manufacturing town like Dacca, or a port like Surat, or towns that simultaneously served many different functions. In most parts of the Western world modern cities emerged with industrialisation. In Britain, industrial cities like Leeds and Manchester grew rapidly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as more and more people sought jobs, housing and other facilities in these places. However, unlike Western Europe, Indian cities did not expand as rapidly in the nineteenth century.

In the late eighteenth century, Calcutta, Bombay and Madras rose in importance as Presidency (**Presidency – For administrative purposes, colonial India was divided into three “Presidencies” (Bombay, Madras and Bengal), which developed from the East India Company’s “factories” (trading posts) at Surat, Madras and Calcutta.**) cities. They became the centres of British power in the different regions of India. At the same time, a host of smaller cities declined. Many towns manufacturing specialized goods declined due to a drop in the demand for what they produced. Old trading centres and ports could not survive when the flow of trade moved to new centres.

**Dargah** – The tomb of a Sufi saint.

**Khanqah** – A sufi lodge, often used as a rest house for travellers and place where people come to discuss spiritual matters, get the blessings of saints, and hear sufi music

**Idgah** – An open prayer place of Muslims primarily meant for *id* prayers

**Cul-de-sac** – Street with a dead end

Similarly, earlier centres of regional power collapsed when local rulers were defeated by the British and new centres of administration emerged. This process is often described as deurbanisation. Cities such as Machlipatnam, Surat and Seringapatam were deurbanised during the nineteenth century. By the early twentieth century, only 11 per cent of Indians were living in cities.

The historic imperial city of Delhi became a dusty provincial town in the nineteenth century before it was rebuilt as the capital of British India after 1912. You know Delhi as the capital of modern India. Did you also know that it has been a capital for more than a 1,000 years, although with some gaps? As many as 14 capital cities were founded in a small area of about 60 square miles on the left bank of the river Jamuna. The remains of all other capitals may be seen on a visit to the modern city-state of Delhi. Of these, the most important are the capital cities built between the twelfth and seventeenth centuries. The most splendid capital of all was built by Shah Jahan. Shahjahanabad was begun in

1639 and consisted of a fort-palace complex and the city adjoining it. Lal Qila or the Red Fort, made of red sandstone, contained the palace complex. To its west lay the Walled City with 14 gates. The main streets of Chandni Chowk and Faiz Bazaar were broad enough for royal processions to pass. A canal ran down the centre of Chandni Chowk. Set amidst densely packed mohallas and several dozen bazaars, the Jama Masjid was among the largest and grandest mosques in India. There was no place higher than this mosque within the city then. Delhi during Shah Jahan's time was also an important centre of Sufi culture. It had several *dargahs*, *khanqahs* and *idgahs*. Open squares, winding lanes, quiet *cul-desacs* and water channels were the pride of Delhi's residents. No wonder the poet Mir Taqi Mir said, "The streets of Delhi aren't mere streets; they are like the album of a painter." Yet, even this was no ideal city, and its delights were enjoyed only by some. There were sharp divisions between rich and poor. *Havelis* or mansions were interspersed with the far more numerous mud houses of the poor. The colourful world of poetry and dance was usually enjoyed only by men. Furthermore, celebrations and processions often led to serious conflicts.

## The Making of New Delhi

In 1803, the British gained control of Delhi after defeating the Marathas. Since the capital of British India was Calcutta, the Mughal emperor was allowed to continue living in the palace complex in the Red Fort. The modern city as we know it today developed only after 1911 when Delhi became the capital of British India. Demolishing a past Before 1857, developments in Delhi were somewhat different from those in other colonial cities. In Madras, Bombay or Calcutta, the living spaces of Indians and the British were sharply separated. Indians lived in the "black" areas, while the British lived in well-laid-out "white" areas. In Delhi, especially in the first half of the nineteenth century, the British lived along with the wealthier Indians in the Walled City.

The British learned to enjoy Urdu/Persian culture and poetry and participated in local festivals. The establishment of the Delhi College in 1792 led to a great intellectual flowering in the sciences as well as the humanities, largely in the Urdu language. Many refer to the period from 1830 to 1857 as a period of the Delhi renaissance. All this changed after 1857. During the Revolt that year, as you have seen, the rebels gathered in the city, and persuaded Bahadur Shah to become the leader of the uprising. Delhi remained under rebel control for four months. When the British regained the city, they embarked on a campaign of revenge and plunder. The famous poet Ghalib witnessed the events of the time. This is how he described the ransacking of Delhi in 1857: "When the angry lions (the British) entered the town, they killed the helpless ... and burned houses. Hordes of men and women, commoners and noblemen, poured out of Delhi from the three gates and took shelter in small communities, and tombs outside the city." To prevent another rebellion, the British exiled Bahadur Shah to Burma (now Myanmar), dismantled his court, razed several of the palaces, closed down gardens and built barracks for troops in their place.

The British wanted Delhi to forget its Mughal past. The area around the Fort was completely cleared of gardens, pavilions and mosques (though temples were left intact). The British wanted a clear ground for security reasons. Mosques in particular were either destroyed, or put to other uses. For instance, the Zinatal-Masjid was converted into a bakery. No worship was allowed in the Jama Masjid for five years. One-third of the city was demolished, and its canals were filled up. In the 1870s, the western walls of Shahjahanabad were broken to establish the railway and to allow the city to expand beyond the walls. The British now began living in the sprawling Civil Lines area that came up in the north, away from the Indians in the Walled City. The Delhi College was turned into a school, and shut down in 1877. Planning a new capital The British were fully aware of the symbolic importance of Delhi. After the Revolt of 1857, many spectacular events were held there. In 1877, Viceroy Lytton organised a Durbar to acknowledge Queen Victoria as the Empress of India. Remember that Calcutta was still the capital of British India, but the grand Durbar was being held in Delhi. Why was this so? During the Revolt, the British had realised that the Mughal emperor was still important to the people and they saw him as their leader. It was therefore important to celebrate British power with pomp and show in the city the Mughal emperors had earlier ruled, and the place which had turned into a rebel stronghold in 1857.

In 1911, when King George V was crowned in England, a Durbar was held in Delhi to celebrate the occasion. The decision to shift the capital of India from Calcutta to Delhi was announced at this Durbar.

New Delhi was constructed as a 10-square-mile city on Raisina Hill, south of the existing city. Two architects, Edward Lutyens and Herbert Baker, were called on to design New Delhi and its buildings. The government complex in New Delhi consisted of a two-mile avenue, Kingsway (now Rajpath), that led to the Viceroy's Palace

(now Rashtrapati Bhavan), with the Secretariat buildings on either sides of the avenue. The features of these government buildings were borrowed from different periods of India's imperial history, but the overall look was Classical Greece (fifth century BCE). For instance, the central dome of the Viceroy's Palace was copied from the Buddhist stupa at Sanchi, and the red sandstone and carved screens or *jalis* were borrowed from Mughal architecture. But the new buildings had to assert British importance: that is why the architect made sure that the Viceroy's Palace was higher than Shah Jahan's Jama Masjid!

### How was this to be done?

New Delhi took nearly 20 years to build. The idea was to build a city that was a stark contrast to Shahjahanabad. There were to be no crowded mohallas, no mazes of narrow bylanes. In New Delhi, there were to be broad, straight streets lined with sprawling mansions set in the middle of large compounds. The architects wanted New Delhi to represent a sense of law and order, in contrast to the chaos of Old Delhi. The new city also had to be a clean and healthy space. The British saw overcrowded spaces as unhygienic and unhealthy, the source of disease. This meant that New Delhi had to have better water supply, sewage disposal and drainage facilities than the Old City. It had to be green, with trees and parks ensuring fresh air and adequate supply of oxygen.

### The vision of New Delhi

This is how Viceroy Hardinge explained the choice of Delhi as capital: The change would strike the imagination of the people of India ... and would be accepted by all as the assertion of an unfaltering determination to maintain British rule in India. The architect Herbert Baker believed: The New Capital must be the sculptural monument of the good government and unity which India, for the first time in its history, has enjoyed under British rule. British rule in India is not a mere veneer of government and culture. It is a new civilisation in growth, a blend of the best elements of East and West ... It is to this great fact that the architecture of Delhi should bear testimony. (2 October 1912) .

### Life in the time of Partition

The Partition of India in 1947 led to a massive transfer of populations on both sides of the new border. As a result, the population of Delhi swelled, the kinds of jobs people did changed, and the culture of the city became different. Days after Indian Independence and Partition, fierce rioting began. Thousands of people in Delhi were killed and their homes looted and burned. As streams of Muslims left Delhi for Pakistan, their place was taken by equally large numbers of Sikh and Hindu refugees from Pakistan. Refugees roamed the streets of Shahjahanabad, searching for empty homes to occupy. At times they forced Muslims to leave or sell their properties. Over two-thirds of the Delhi Muslims migrated, almost 44,000 homes were abandoned. Terrorised Muslims lived in makeshift camps till they could leave for Pakistan.

At the same time, Delhi became a city of refugees. Nearly 500,000 people were added to Delhi's population (which had a little over 800,000 people in 1951). Most of these migrants were from Punjab. They stayed in camps, schools, military barracks and gardens, hoping to build new homes. Some got the opportunity to occupy residences that had been vacated; others were housed in refugee colonies. New colonies such as Lajpat Nagar and Tilak Nagar came up at this time. Shops and stalls were set up to cater to the demands of the migrants; schools and colleges were also opened. The skills and occupations of the refugees were quite different from those of the people they replaced. Many of the Muslims who went to Pakistan were artisans, petty traders and labourers. The new migrants coming to Delhi were rural landlords, lawyers, teachers, traders and small shopkeepers. Partition changed their lives, and their occupations. They had to take up new jobs as hawkers, vendors, carpenters and ironsmiths. Many, however, prospered in their new businesses. The large migration from Punjab changed the social milieu of Delhi. An urban culture largely based on Urdu was overshadowed by new tastes and sensibilities, in food, dress and the arts.



**Thousands stayed in the refugee camps set up in Delhi after Partition.**

## Inside the Old City

Meanwhile, what happened to the old city, that had been Shahjahanabad? In the past, Mughal Delhi's famed canals had brought not only fresh drinking water to homes, but also water for other domestic uses. This excellent system of water supply and drainage was neglected in the nineteenth century. The system of wells (or *baolis*) also broke down, and channels to remove household waste (called effluents) were damaged. This was at a time when the population of the city was continuously growing. The broken-down canals could not serve the needs of this rapidly increasing population. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Shahjahani drains were closed and a new system of open surface drains was introduced. This system too was soon overburdened, and many of the wealthier inhabitants complained about the stench from roadside privies and overflowing open drains. The Delhi Municipal Committee was unwilling to spend money on a good drainage system. At the same time, though, millions of rupees were being spent on drainage systems in the New Delhi area.

## The decline of havelis

The Mughal aristocracy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries lived in grand mansions called *havelis*. A map of the mid-nineteenth century showed at least a hundred such *havelis*, which were large walled compounds with mansions, courtyards and fountains. A *haveli* housed many families. On entering the *haveli* through a beautiful gateway, you reached an open courtyard, surrounded by public rooms meant for visitors and business, used exclusively by males.

The inner courtyard with its pavilions and rooms was meant for the women of the household. Rooms in the *havelis* had multiple uses, and very little by way of furniture. Even in the mid-nineteenth century Qamr-al-din Khan's *haveli* had several structures within it, and included housing for the cart drivers, tent pitchers, torchbearers, as well as for accountants, clerks and household servants. Many of the Mughal amirs were unable to maintain these large establishments under conditions of British rule. *Havelis* therefore began to be subdivided and sold. Often the street front of the *havelis* became shops or warehouses. Some *havelis* were taken over by the upcoming mercantile class, but many fell into decay and disuse.

## Herbert Baker in South Africa

If you look at Fig. 16 and Fig. 17 you will find a startling similarity between the buildings. But these buildings are continents apart. What does this show?



Fig.16



Fig.17

In the early 1390s, a young English architect named Herbert Baker went to South Africa in search of work. It was in South Africa that Baker came in touch with Cecil Rhodes, the Governor of Cape Town, who inspired in Baker a love for the British empire and an admiration for the architectural heritage of ancient Rome and Greece.

Fig. 17 shows the Union Building that Baker designed in the city of Pretoria in South Africa. It used some of the elements of ancient classical architecture that Baker later included in his plans of the Secretariat building in New Delhi. The Union Building was also located on a steep hill as is the Secretariat Building in New Delhi (Fig. 16). Have you not noticed that people in positions of power want to look down on others from above rather than up towards them from below? The Union Building and the Secretariat were both built to house imperial offices.

The colonial bungalow was quite different from the *haveli*. Meant for one nuclear family, it was a large single storeyed structure with a pitched roof, and usually set in one or two acres of open ground.

It had separate living and dining rooms and bedrooms, and a wide veranda running in the front, and sometimes on three sides. Kitchens, stables and servants' quarters were in a separate space from the main house. The house was run by dozens of servants. The women of the household often sat on the verandas to supervise tailors or other tradesmen. The Municipality begins to plan The census of 1931 revealed that the walled city area was horribly crowded with as many as 90 persons per acre, while New Delhi had only about 3 persons per acre.

The poor conditions in the Walled City, however, did not stop it from expanding. In 1888 an extension scheme called the Lahore Gate Improvement Scheme was planned by Robert Clarke for the Walled City residents. The idea was to draw residents away from the Old City to a new type of market square, around which shops would be built. Streets in this redevelopment strictly followed the grid pattern, and were of identical width, size and character. Land was divided into regular areas for the construction of neighbourhoods. Clarkegunj, as the development was called, remained incomplete and did not help to decongest the Old City. Even in 1912, water supply and drainage in these new localities was very poor.

The Delhi Improvement Trust was set up 1936, and it built areas like Daryaganj South for wealthy Indians. Houses were grouped around parks. Within the houses, space was divided according to new rules of privacy. Instead of spaces being shared by many families or groups, now different members of the same family had their own private spaces within the home.



# 7

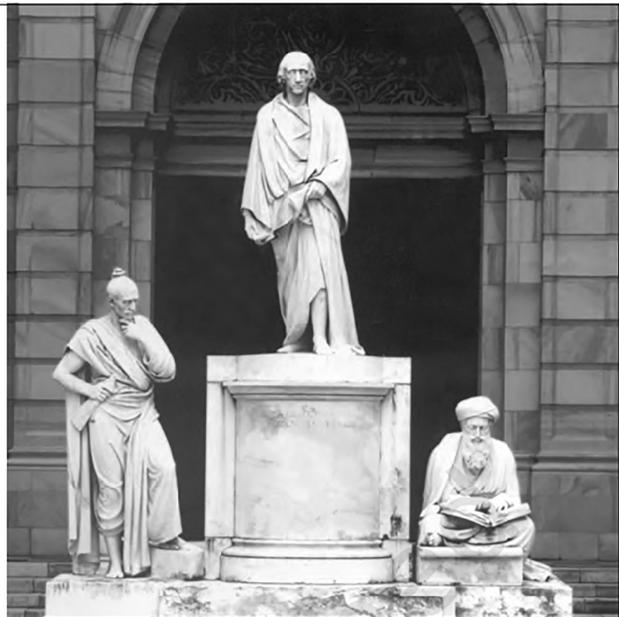
## Education System in British India

### How the British saw Education

Let us look at what the British thought and did, and how some of the ideas of education that we now take for granted evolved in the last two hundred years. In the process of this enquiry we will also see how Indians reacted to British ideas, and how they developed their own views about how Indians were to be educated.

**Fig.** – Monument to Warren Hastings, by Richard Westmacott, 1830, now in Victoria Memorial in Calcutta

This image represents how **Orientalists** thought of British power in India. You will notice that the majestic figure of Hastings, an enthusiastic supporter of the Orientalists, is placed between the standing figure of a **pandit** on one side and a seated **munshi** on the other side. Hastings and other Orientalists needed Indian scholars to teach them the “**vernacular**” languages, tell them about local customs and laws, and help them translate and interpret ancient texts. Hastings took the initiative to set up the Calcutta Madrasa, and believed that the ancient customs of the country and Oriental learning ought to be the basis of British rule in India.



The tradition of Orientalism In 1783, a person named William Jones arrived in Calcutta. He had an appointment as a junior judge at the Supreme Court that the Company had set up. In addition to being an expert in law, Jones was a linguist. He had studied Greek and Latin at Oxford, knew French and English, had picked up Arabic from a friend, and had also learnt Persian. At Calcutta, he began spending many hours a day with pandits who taught him the subtleties of Sanskrit language, grammar and poetry. Soon he was studying ancient Indian texts on law, philosophy, religion, politics, morality, arithmetic, medicine and the other sciences. Jones discovered that his interests were shared by many British officials living in Calcutta at the time. Englishmen like Henry Thomas Colebrooke and Nathaniel Halhed were also busy discovering the ancient Indian heritage, mastering Indian languages and translating Sanskrit and Persian works into English. Together with them, Jones set up the Asiatic Society of Bengal, and started a journal called Asiatick Researches. Jones and Colebrooke came to represent a particular attitude towards India.

**Orientalists** – Those with a scholarly knowledge of the language and culture of Asia

**Munshi** – A person who can read, write and teach Persian

**Vernacular** – A term generally used to refer to a local language or dialect as distinct from what is seen as the standard language. In colonial countries like India, the British used the term to mark the difference between the local languages of everyday use and English – the language of the imperial masters.

They shared a deep respect for ancient cultures, both of India and the West. Indian civilization, they felt, had attained its glory in the ancient past, but had subsequently declined. In order to understand India it was

necessary to discover the sacred and legal texts that were produced in the ancient period. For only those texts could reveal the real ideas and laws of the Hindus and Muslims, and only a new study of these texts could form the basis of future development in India. So Jones and Colebrooke went about discovering ancient texts, understanding their meaning, translating them, and making their findings known to others.

This project, they believed, would not only help the British learn from Indian culture, but it would also help Indians rediscover their own heritage, and understand the lost glories of their past. In this process the British would become the guardians of Indian culture as well as its masters. Influenced by such ideas, many Company officials argued that the British ought to promote Indian rather than Western learning. They felt that institutions should be set up to encourage the study of ancient Indian texts and teach Sanskrit and Persian literature and poetry.

The officials also thought that Hindus and Muslims ought to be taught what they were already familiar with, and what they valued and treasured, not subjects that were alien to them. Only then, they believed, could the British hope to win a place in the hearts of the “natives”; only then could the alien rulers expect to be respected by their subjects. With this object in view a madrasa was set up in Calcutta in 1781 to promote the study of Arabic, Persian and Islamic law; and the Hindu College was established in Benaras in 1791 to encourage the study of ancient Sanskrit texts that would be useful for the administration of the country.

Not all officials shared these views. Many were very strong in their criticism of the Orientalists. “Grave errors of the East” From the early nineteenth century many British officials began to criticise the Orientalist vision of learning. They said that knowledge of the East was full of errors and unscientific thought; Eastern literature was non-serious and light-hearted. So they argued that it was wrong on the part of the British to spend so much effort in encouraging the study of Arabic and Sanskrit language and literature. James Mill was one of those who attacked the Orientalists.

The British effort, he declared, should not be to teach what the natives wanted, or what they respected, in order to please them and “win a place in their heart”. The aim of education ought to be to teach what was useful and practical. So Indians should be made familiar with the scientific and technical advances that the West had made, rather than with the poetry and sacred literature of the Orient. By the 1830s the attack on the Orientalists became sharper.

One of the most outspoken and influential of such critics of the time was Thomas Babington Macaulay. He saw India as an uncivilised country that needed to be civilised. No branch of Eastern knowledge, according to him could be compared to what England had produced. Who could deny, declared Macaulay, that “a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia”. He urged that the British government in India stop wasting public money in promoting Oriental learning, for it was of no practical use. With great energy and passion, Macaulay emphasised the need to teach the English language. He felt that knowledge of English would allow Indians to read some of the finest literature the world had produced; it would make them aware of the developments in Western science and philosophy. Teaching of English could thus be a way of civilising people, changing their tastes, values and culture. Following Macaulay’s minute, the English Education Act of 1835 was introduced. The decision was to make English the medium of instruction for higher education, and to stop the promotion of Oriental institutions like the Calcutta Madrasa and Benaras Sanskrit College.

These institutions were seen as “temples of darkness that were falling of themselves into decay”. English textbooks now began to be produced for schools.

## Education for commerce

In 1854, the Court of Directors of the East India Company in London sent an educational despatch to the **Governor-General in India. Issued by Charles Wood**, the President of the Board of Control of the Company, it has come to be known as **Wood’s Despatch**.

Outlining the educational policy that was to be followed in India, it emphasised once again the practical benefits of a system of European learning, as opposed to Oriental knowledge. One of the practical uses the Despatch pointed to was economic. European learning, it said, would enable Indians to recognise the advantages that flow from the expansion of trade and commerce, and make them see the importance of developing the resources of the country. Introducing them to European ways of life, would change their tastes and desires, and create a demand for British goods, for Indians would begin to appreciate and buy things that were produced in Europe.

Wood's Despatch also argued that European learning would improve the moral character of Indians. It would make them truthful and honest, and thus supply the Company with civil servants who could be trusted and depended upon. The literature of the East was not only full of grave errors, it could also not instill in people a sense of duty and a commitment to work, nor could it develop the skills required for administration. Following the 1854 Despatch, several measures were introduced by the British. Education departments of the government were set up to extend control over all matters regarding education. Steps were taken to establish a system of university education. In 1857, while the sepoys rose in revolt in Meerut and Delhi, universities were being established in Calcutta, Madras and Bombay. Attempts were also made to bring about changes within the system of school education.

## The demand for moral education

### Kakuzo and the movement for an Asian art

In 1904, Okakura Kakuzo published a book in Japan called *The Ideals of the East*. This book is famous for its opening lines: "Asia is one." Okakura argued that Asia had been humiliated by the West and Asian nations had to collectively resist West domination.



**Fig. -** William Carey was a Scottish missionary who helped establish the Serampore Mission

The argument for practical education was strongly criticised by the Christian missionaries in India in the nineteenth century. The missionaries felt that education should attempt to improve the moral character of the people, and morality could be improved only through Christian education.

Until 1813, the East India Company was opposed to missionary activities in India. It feared that missionary activities would provoke reaction amongst the local population and make them suspicious of British presence in India. Unable to establish an institution within British-controlled territories, the missionaries set up a mission at Serampore in an area under the control of the Danish East India Company. A printing press was set up in 1800 and a college established in 1818.

Over the nineteenth century, missionary schools were set up all over India. After 1857, however, the British government in India was reluctant to directly support missionary education. There was a feeling that any strong attack on local customs, practices, beliefs and religious ideas might enrage "native" opinion.

The report of William Adam In the 1830s, William Adam, a Scottish missionary, toured the districts of Bengal and Bihar. He had been asked by the Company to report on the progress of education in vernacular schools. The report Adam produced is interesting. Adam found that there were over 1 lakh *pathshalas* in Bengal and Bihar.

These were small institutions with no more than 20 students each. But the total number of children being taught in these *pathshalas* was considerable – over 20 lakh. These institutions were set up by wealthy people, or the local community. At times they were started by a teacher (*guru*). The system of education was flexible. Few things that you associate with schools today were present in the *pathshalas* at the time. There were no fixed fee, no printed books, no separate school building, no benches or chairs, no blackboards, no system of separate classes, no rollcall registers, no annual examinations, and no regular time-table. In some places classes were held under a banyan tree, in other places in the corner of a village shop or temple, or at the *guru's* home. Fee depended on the income of parents: the rich had to pay more than the poor. Teaching was oral, and the *guru* decided what to teach, in accordance with the needs of the students. Students were not separated out into different classes: all of them sat together in one place. The *guru* interacted separately with groups of children with different levels of learning. Adam discovered that this flexible system was suited to local needs. For instance, classes were not held during harvest time when rural children often worked in the fields. The *pathshala* started once again when the crops had been cut and stored. This meant that even children of peasant families could study.

## The report of William Adam on the progress of education

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New routines, new rules Up to the mid-nineteenth century, the Company was concerned primarily with higher education. So it allowed the local *pathshalas* to function without much interference. After 1854 the Company decided to improve the system of vernacular education. It felt that this could be done by introducing order within the system, imposing routines, establishing rules, ensuring regular inspections.

It appointed a number of government pandits, each in charge of looking after four to five schools. The task of the pandit was to visit the *pathshalas* and try and improve the standard of teaching. Each *guru* was asked to submit periodic reports and take classes according to a regular timetable. Teaching was now to be based on textbooks and learning was to be tested through a system of annual examination. Students were asked to pay a regular fee, attend regular classes, sit on fixed seats, and obey the new rules of discipline. *Pathshalas* which accepted the new rules were supported through government grants. Those who were unwilling to work within the new system received no government support.

Over time *gurus* who wanted to retain their independence found it difficult to compete with the government aided and regulated *pathshalas*. The new rules and routines had another consequence. In the earlier system children from poor peasant families had been able to go to *pathshalas*, since the timetable was flexible. The discipline of the new system demanded regular attendance, even during harvest time when children of poor families had to work in the fields. Inability to attend school came to be seen as indiscipline, as evidence of the lack of desire to learn.

## The Agenda for a National Education

British officials were not the only people thinking about education in India. From the early nineteenth century many thinkers



Fig. - Sri Aurobindo Chose

In a speech delivered on January 15, 1908 in Bombay, Aurobindo Ghose stated that the goal of national education was to awaken the spirit of nationality among the students. This required a contemplation of the heroic deeds of our ancestors. The education should be imparted in the vernacular so as to reach the largest number of people. Aurobindo Ghose emphasised that although the students should remain connected to their own roots, they should also take the fullest advantage of modern scientific discoveries and Western experiments in popular governments.

Moreover, the students should also learn some useful crafts so that they could be able to find some moderately remunerative employment after leaving their schools.)

from different parts of India began to talk of the need for a wider spread of education. Impressed with the developments in Europe, some Indians felt that Western education would help modernise India. They urged the British to open more schools, colleges and universities, and spend more money on education. You will read about some of these efforts in There were other Indians, however, who reacted against Western education. Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore were two such individuals. Let us look at what they had to say. “English education has enslaved us” Mahatma Gandhi argued that colonial education created a sense of inferiority in the minds of Indians. It made them see Western civilisation as superior, and destroyed the pride they had in their own culture.

There was poison in this education, said Mahatma Gandhi, it was sinful, it enslaved Indians, it cast an evil spell on them. Charmed by the West, appreciating everything that came from the West, Indians educated in these institutions began admiring British rule. Mahatma Gandhi wanted an education that could help Indians recover their sense of dignity and self-respect. During the national movement he urged students to leave educational institutions in order to show to the British that Indians were no longer willing to be enslaved. Mahatma Gandhi strongly felt that Indian languages ought to be the medium of teaching. Education in English crippled Indians, distanced them from their own social surroundings, and made them “strangers in their own lands”. Speaking a foreign tongue, despising local culture, the English educated did not know how to relate to the masses. Western education, Mahatma Gandhi said, focused on reading and writing rather than oral knowledge; it valued textbooks rather than lived experience and practical knowledge. He argued that education ought to develop a person’s mind and soul. Literacy – or simply learning to read and write – by itself did not count as education. People had to work with their hands, learn a craft, and know how different things operated. This would develop their mind and their capacity to understand.

**“Literacy in itself is not education”**

**Mahatma Gandhi wrote:**

By education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man - body, mind and spirit. Literacy is not the end of education nor even the beginning. It is only one of the means whereby man and woman can be educated. Literacy in itself is not education. I would therefore begin the child’s education by teaching it a useful handicraft and enabling it to produce from the moment it begins its training ... I hold that the highest development of the mind and the soul is possible under such a system of education. Only every handicraft has to be taught not merely mechanically as is done today but scientifically, i.e. the child should know the why and the wherefore of every process.

As nationalist sentiments spread, other thinkers also began thinking of a system of national education which would be radically different from that set up by the British. Tagore’s “abode of peace” Many of you may have heard of Santiniketan. Do you know why it was established and by whom? Rabindranath Tagore started the institution in 1901. As a child, Tagore hated going to school. He found it suffocating and oppressive. The school appeared like a prison, for he could never do what he felt like doing. So while other children listened to the teacher, Tagore’s mind would wander away. The experience of his school days in Calcutta shaped Tagore’s ideas of education. On growing up, he wanted to set up a school where the child was happy, where she could be free and creative, where she was able to explore her own thoughts and desires. Tagore felt that childhood ought to be a time of self-learning, outside the rigid and restricting discipline of the schooling system set up by the British. Teachers had

to be imaginative, understand the child, and help the child develop her curiosity.

According to Tagore, the existing schools killed the natural desire of the child to be creative, her sense of wonder. Tagore was of the view that creative learning could be encouraged only within a natural environment. So he chose to set up his school 100 kilometres away from Calcutta, in a rural setting. He saw it as an abode of peace (santiniketan), where living in harmony with nature, children could cultivate their natural creativity. In many senses Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi thought about education in similar ways. There were, however, differences too. Gandhiji was highly critical of Western civilisation and its worship of machines and technology. Tagore wanted to combine elements of modern Western civilisation with what he saw as the best within Indian tradition. He emphasised the need to teach science and technology at Santiniketan, along with art, music and dance. Many individuals and thinkers were thus thinking about the way a national educational system could be fashioned. Some wanted changes within the system set up by the British, and felt that the system could be extended so as to include wider sections of people. Others urged that alternative systems be created so that people were educated into a culture that was truly national.

Who was to define what was truly national? The debate about what this “national education” ought to be continued till after independence. Education as a civilising mission Until the introduction of the Education Act in 1870, there was no widespread education for the population as a whole for most of the nineteenth century. Child labour being widely prevalent, poor children could not be sent to school for their earning was critical for the survival of the family. The number of schools was also limited to those run by the Church or set up by wealthy individuals. It was only after the coming into force of the Education Act that schools were opened by the government and compulsory schooling was introduced.

One of the most important educational thinkers of the period was Thomas Arnold, who became the headmaster of the private school Rugby. Favouring a secondary school curriculum which had a detailed study of the Greek and Roman classics, written 2,000 years earlier, he said: It has always seemed to me one of the great advantages of the course of study generally pursued in our English schools that it draws our minds so continually to dwell upon the past. Every day we are engaged in studying the languages, the history, and the thoughts of men who lived nearly or more than two thousand years ago... Arnold felt that a study of the classics disciplined the mind. In fact, most educators of the time believed that such a discipline was necessary because young people were naturally savage and needed to be controlled. To become civilised adults, they needed to understand society’s notions of right and wrong, proper and improper behaviour. Education, especially one which disciplined their minds, was meant to guide them on this path.



# 8

## Tribels and Visions of Golden Age

In 1895, a man named Birsa was seen roaming the forests and villages of Chottanagpur in Jharkhand. People said he had miraculous powers – he could cure all diseases and multiply grain. Birsa himself declared that God had appointed him to save his people from trouble, free them from the slavery of *dikus* (outsiders). Soon thousands began following Birsa, believing that he was *bhagwan* (God) and had come to solve all their problems. Birsa was born in a family of Mundas – a tribal group that lived in Chottanagpur. But his followers included other tribals of the region – Santhals and Oraons. All of them in different ways were unhappy with the changes they were experiencing and the problems they were facing under British rule. Their familiar ways of life seemed to be disappearing, their livelihoods were under threat, and their religion appeared to be in danger. What problems did Birsa set out to resolve? Who were the outsiders being referred to as *dikus*, and how did they enslave the people of the region? What was happening to the tribal people under the British? How did their lives change? These are some of the questions you will read about in this chapter. You have read about tribal societies last year. Most tribes had customs and rituals that were very different from those laid down by Brahmans. These societies also did not have the sharp social divisions that were characteristic of caste societies. All those who belonged to the same tribe thought of themselves as sharing common ties of kinship. However, this did not mean that there were no social and economic differences within tribes.

### How did tribal groups live

By the nineteenth century, tribal people in different parts of India were involved in a variety of activities.

### Some were *jhum* cultivators

Some of them practised *jhum* cultivation, that is, shifting cultivation. This was done on small patches of land, mostly in forests. The cultivators cut the treetops to allow sunlight to reach the ground, and burnt the vegetation on the land to clear it for cultivation. They spread the ash from the firing, which contained potash, to fertilise the soil. They used the axe to cut trees and the hoe to scratch the soil in order to prepare it for cultivation. They broadcast the seeds, that is, scattered the seeds on the field instead of ploughing the land and sowing the seeds. Once the crop was ready and harvested, they moved to another field. A field that had been cultivated once was left **fallow** for several years. Shifting cultivators were found in the hilly and forested tracts of north-east and central India. The lives of these tribal people depended on free movement within forests and on being able to use the land and forests for growing their crops. That is the only way they could practise shifting cultivation.

### Some were hunters and gatherers

In many regions tribal groups lived by hunting animals and gathering forest produce. They saw forests as essential for survival. The Khonds were such a community living in the forests of Orissa. They regularly went out on collective hunts and then divided the meat amongst themselves. They ate fruits and roots collected from the forest and cooked food with the oil they extracted from the seeds of the sal and *mahua*. They used many forest shrubs and herbs for medicinal purposes, and sold forest produce in the local markets. The local weavers and leather workers turned to the Khonds when they needed supplies of *kusum* and *palash* flowers to colour their clothes and leather.

**Fallow** – A field left uncultivated for a while so that the soil recovers fertility

*Sal* – A tree

*Mahua* A flower that is eaten or used to make alcohol.

At times forest people exchanged goods – getting what they needed in return for their valuable forest produce. At other times they bought goods with the small amount of earnings they had. Some of them did odd jobs in the villages, carrying loads or building roads, while others laboured in the fields of peasants and farmers. When supplies of forest produce shrank, tribal people had to increasingly wander around in search of work as labourers. But many of them – like the Baigas of central India – were reluctant to do work for others. The Baigas saw themselves as people of the forest, who could only live on the produce of the forest. It was below the dignity of a Baiga to become a labourer. Tribal groups often needed to buy and sell in order to be able to get the goods that were not produced within the locality. This led to their dependence on traders and moneylenders. Traders came around with things for sale, and sold the goods at high prices. Moneylenders gave loans with which the tribals met their cash needs, adding to what they earned. But the interest charged on the loans was usually very high. So for the tribals, market and commerce often meant debt and poverty. They therefore came to see the moneylender and trader as evil outsiders and the cause of their misery.

## Some herded animals

Many tribal groups lived by herding and rearing animals. They were pastoralists who moved with their herds of cattle or sheep according to the seasons. When the grass in one place was exhausted, they moved to another area. The Van Gujjars of the Punjab hills and the Labadis of Andhra Pradesh were cattle herders, the Gaddis of Kulu were shepherds, and the Bakarwals of Kashmir reared goats. You will read more about them in your history book next year.

## A time to hunt, a time to sow, a time to move a new field

Have you ever noticed that people living in different types of societies do not share the same notion of work and time? The lives of the shifting cultivators and hunters in different regions were regulated by a calendar and divisions and tasks for men and women.

Verrier Elwin, a British anthropologist who lived among the Baigas and Khonds of central India for many years in the 1930s and 1940s.

In Chait women went to clearings to ... Cut stalks that were already reaped; men cut large trees and go for their ritual hunt. The hunt began at full moon from the east. Traps of bamboo were used for hunting. The women gathered fruits like sago, tamarind and mushroom. Baiga women can only roots and kanda and mahua seeds. Of all the adivasis in central India, the Baigas were known as the best hunters. In Baisakh the firing of the forest took place, the women gathered unburnt wood to burn. Men continued to hunt but nearer the villages.

In Jeth sowing took place and hunting still went on.

From Asadh to Bhadon the worked in the fields. In Kuar the first fruits of beans were ripened and in Kartik kutki became ripe. In Aghan every crop was ready and in Pus winnowing took place.

Pus was also the time of dance and marriages.

In Magh shifts were made to new bewars and hunting-gathering was the main subsistence activity.

## Some took to settled cultivation

Even before the nineteenth century, many from within the tribal groups had begun settling down, and cultivating their fields in one place year after year, instead of moving from place to place. They began to use the plough, and gradually got rights over the land they lived on. In many cases, like the Mundas of Chotanagpur, the land belonged to the clan as a whole. All members of the clan were regarded as descendants of the original settlers, who had first cleared the land. Therefore, all of them had rights on the land. Very often some people within the clan acquired more power than others, some became chiefs and others followers. Powerful men often rented out their land instead of cultivating it themselves. British officials saw settled tribal groups like the Gonds and Santhals as more civilised than hunter-gatherers or shifting cultivators. Those who lived in the forests were considered to be wild and savage: they needed to be settled and civilised.

## Colonial rule Affect tribal lives

The lives of tribal groups changed during British rule.

Let us see what these changes were.

## What happened to tribal chiefs?

Before the arrival of the British, in many areas the tribal chiefs were important people. They enjoyed a certain amount of economic power and had the right to administer and control their territories. In some places they had their own police and decided on the local rules of land and forest management. Under British rule, the functions and powers of the tribal chiefs changed considerably. They were allowed to keep their land titles over a cluster of villages and rent out lands, but they lost much of their administrative power and were forced to follow laws made by British officials in India. They also had to pay tribute to the British, and discipline the tribal groups on behalf of the British. They lost the authority they had earlier enjoyed amongst their people, and were unable to fulfil their traditional functions.

## What happened to the shifting cultivators?

The British were uncomfortable with groups who moved about and did not have a fixed home. They wanted tribal groups to settle down and become peasant cultivators. Settled peasants were easier to control and administer than people who were always on the move. The British also wanted a regular revenue source for the state. So they introduced land settlements – that is, they measured the land, defined the rights of each individual to that land, and fixed the revenue demand for the state. Some peasants were declared landowners, others tenants. The tenants were to pay rent to the landowner who in turn paid revenue to the state. The British effort to settle *jhum* cultivators was not very successful. Settled plough cultivation is not easy in areas where water is scarce and the soil is dry. In fact, *jhum* cultivators who took to plough cultivation often suffered, since their fields did not produce good yields. So the *jhum* cultivators in north-east India insisted on continuing with their traditional practice. Facing widespread protests, the British had to ultimately allow them the right to carry on shifting cultivation in some parts of the forest.

## Forest laws and their impact

The life of tribal groups, as you have seen, was directly connected to the forest. So changes in forest laws had a considerable effect on tribal lives. The British extended their control over all forests and declared that forests were state property. Some forests were classified as Reserved Forests for they produced timber which the British wanted. In these forests people were not allowed to move freely, practise *jhum* cultivation, collect fruits, or hunt animals. How were *jhum* cultivators to survive in such a situation? Many were therefore forced to move to other areas in search of work and livelihood. But once the British stopped the tribal people from living inside forests, they faced a problem. From where would the Forest Department get its labour to cut trees for railway sleepers and to transport logs? Colonial officials came up with a solution. They decided that they would give *jhum* cultivators small patches of land in the forests and allow them to cultivate these on the condition that those who lived in the villages would have to provide labour to the Forest Department and look after the forests. So in many regions the Forest Department established forest villages to ensure a regular supply of cheap labour.

Many tribal groups reacted against the colonial forest laws. They disobeyed the new rules, continued with practices that were declared illegal, and at times rose in open rebellion. Such was the revolt of Songram Sangma in 1906 in Assam, and the forest satyagraha of the 1930s in the Central Provinces.

### **“In this land of the English how hard it is to live”**

In the 1930s Verrier Elwin visited the land of the Baigas – a tribal group in central India. He wanted to know about them - their customs and practices, their art and folklore. He recorded many songs that lamented the hard

In this land of the English how hard it is to live

How hard it is to live

In the village sits the landlord

In the gate sits the Kotwar

In the garden sits the Patwari

In the field sits the government

In this land of the English how hard it is to

live To pay cattle tax we have to sell cow

To pay forest tax we have to sell buffalo

To pay land tax we have to sell bullock

How are we to get our food?

In this land of the English

## The problem with trade

During the nineteenth century, tribal groups found that traders and moneylenders were coming into the forests more often, wanting to buy forest produce, offering cash loans, and asking them to work for wages. It took tribal groups some time to understand the consequences of what was happening. Let us consider the case of the silk growers. In the eighteenth century, Indian silk was in demand in European markets. The fine quality of Indian silk was highly valued and exports from India increased rapidly. As the market expanded, East India Company officials tried to encourage silk production to meet the growing demand. Hazaribagh, in present-day Jharkhand, was an area where the Santhals reared cocoons. The traders dealing in silk sent in their agents who gave loans to the tribal people and collected the cocoons. The growers were paid Rs 3 to Rs 4 for a thousand cocoons. These were then exported to Burdwan or Gaya where they were sold at five times the price. The middlemen – so called because they arranged deals between the exporters and silk growers – made huge profits. The silk growers earned very little. Understandably, many tribal groups saw the market and the traders as their main enemies.

## The search for work

The plight of the tribals who had to go far away from their homes in search of work was even worse. From the late nineteenth century, tea plantations started coming up and mining became an important industry. Tribals were recruited in large numbers to work the tea plantations of Assam and the coal mines of Jharkhand. They were recruited through contractors who paid them miserably low wages, and prevented them from returning home.



*Coal miners of Bihar, 1948* In the 1920s about 50 per cent of the miners in the Jharia and Raniganj coal mines of Bihar were tribals. Work deep down in the dark and suffocating mines was not only backbreaking and dangerous, it was often literally killing. In the 1920s over 2,000 workers died every year in the coal mines in India.

Through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, tribal groups in different parts of the country rebelled against the changes in laws, the restrictions on their practices, the new taxes they had to pay, and the exploitation by traders and moneylenders. The Kols rebelled in 1831-32, Santhals rose in revolt in 1855, the Bastar Rebellion

in central India broke out in 1910 and the Warli Revolt in Maharashtra in 1940. The movement that Birsa led was one such movement.

## Birsa Munda

Birsa was born in the mid-1870s. The son of a poor father, he grew up around the forests of Bohonda, grazing sheep, playing the flute, and dancing in the local *akhara*. Forced by poverty, his father had to move from place to place looking for work. As an adolescent, Birsa heard tales of the Munda uprisings of the past and saw the *sirdars* (leaders) of the community urging the people to revolt. They talked of a golden age when the Mundas had been free of the oppression of *dikus*, and said there would be a time when the ancestral right of the community would be restored. They saw themselves as the descendants of the original settlers of the region, fighting for their land (*mulk ki larai*), reminding people of the need to win back their kingdom. Birsa went to the local missionary school, and listened to the sermons of missionaries. There too he heard it said that it was possible for the Mundas to attain the Kingdom of Heaven, and regain their lost rights. This would be possible if they became good Christians and gave up their “bad practices”. Later Birsa also spent some time in the company of a prominent **Vaishnav** preacher. He wore the sacred thread, and began to value the importance of purity and piety. Birsa was deeply influenced by many of the ideas he came in touch with in his growing-up years. His movement was aimed at reforming tribal society. He urged the Mundas to give up drinking liquor, clean their village, and stop believing in witchcraft and sorcery. But we must remember that Birsa also turned against missionaries and Hindu landlords. He saw them as outside forces that were ruining the Munda way of life. In 1895 Birsa urged his followers to recover their glorious past. He talked of a golden age in the past – a *satyug* (the age of truth) – when Mundas lived a good life, constructed embankments, tapped natural springs, planted trees and orchards, practised cultivation to earn their living. They did not kill their brethren and relatives. They lived honestly. Birsa also wanted people to once again work on their land, settle down and cultivate their fields. What worried British officials most was the political aim of the Birsa movement, for it wanted to drive out missionaries, moneylenders, Hindu landlords, and the government and set up a Munda Raj with Birsa at its head. The movement identified all these forces as the cause of the misery the Mundas were suffering.



# 9

## Administrative Organisation and Social Structure in British Administration

In the beginning the Company left the administration of its possessions in India in Indian hands, confining its activities to supervision. But it soon found that British aims were not adequately served by following old methods of administration. Consequently, the Company took all aspects of administration in its own hand. Under Warren Hastings and Cornwallis, the administration of Bengal was completely overhauled and the foundations of a new system based on the English pattern laid. The spread of British power to new areas, new problems, new needs, new experiences and new ideas led to changes in the system of administration. But the overall objectives of imperialism were never forgotten.

### Administration produces

One important source is the official records of the British administration. The British believed that the act of writing was important. Every instruction, plan, policy decision, agreement, investigation had to be clearly written up.

Once this was done, things could be properly studied and debated. This conviction produced an administrative culture of memos, notings and reports.

The British also felt that all important documents and letters needed to be carefully preserved. So they set up record rooms attached to all administrative institutions. The village *tahsildar's* office, the collectorate, the commissioner's office, the provincial secretariats, the lawcourts – all had their record rooms.

Specialised institutions like archives and museums were also established to preserve important records.

Letters and memos that moved from one branch of the administration to another in the early years of the nineteenth century can still be read in the archives. You can also study the notes and reports that district officials prepared, or the instructions and directives that were sent by officials at the top to provincial administrators.

In the early years of the nineteenth century these documents were carefully copied out and beautifully written by calligraphists – that is, by those who specialised in the art of beautiful writing. By the middle of the nineteenth century, with the spread of printing,

multiple copies of these records were printed as proceedings of each government department.

When New Delhi was built, the National Museum and the National Archives were both located close to the Viceregal Palace. This location reflects the importance these institutions had in British imagination.

### Surveys become important

The practice of surveying also became common under the colonial administration. The British believed that a country had to be properly known before it could be effectively administered.

By the early nineteenth century detailed surveys were being carried out to map the entire country.

In the villages, revenue surveys were conducted. The effort was to know the topography, the soil quality, the flora, the fauna, the local histories, and the cropping pattern – all the facts seen as necessary to know about to administer the region.

From the end of the nineteenth century, Census operations were held every ten years. These prepared detailed records of the number of people in all the provinces of India, noting information on castes, religions and occupation. There were many other surveys— botanical surveys, zoological surveys, archaeological surveys, anthropological surveys, forest surveys.

## What official records do not tell

From this vast corpus of records we can get to know a lot, but we must remember that these are official records. They tell us what the officials thought, what they were interested in, and what they wished to preserve for posterity. These records do not always help us understand what other people in the country felt, and what lay behind their actions.

For that we need to look elsewhere. When we begin to search for these other sources we find them in plenty, though they are more difficult to get than official records. We have diaries of people, accounts of pilgrims and travellers, autobiographies of important personalities, and popular booklets that were sold in the local bazaars.

As printing spread, newspapers were published and issues were debated in public. Leaders and reformers wrote to spread their ideas, poets and novelists wrote to express their feelings.

All these sources, however, were produced by those who were literate. From these we will not be able to understand how history was experienced and lived by the tribals and the peasants,

the workers in the mines or the poor on the streets. Getting to know their lives is a more difficult task.

Yet this can be done, if we make a little bit of effort. When you read this book you will see how this can be done.

They were interested in, and what they wished to preserve for posterity. These records do not always help us understand what other people in the country felt and what lay behind their actions. For that we need to look elsewhere. When we begin to search for these other sources we find them in plenty, though they are more difficult to get than official records. We have diaries of people, accounts of pilgrims and travellers, autobiographies of important personalities, and popular booklets that were sold in the local bazaars.

As printing spread, newspapers were published and issues were debated in public. Leaders and reformers wrote to spread their ideas, poets and novelists wrote to express their feelings.

All these sources, however, were produced by those who were literate. From these we will not be able to understand how history was experienced and lived by the tribals and the peasants, the workers in the mines or the poor on the streets. Getting to know their lives is a more difficult task.

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The British administration in India was based on three pillars:

## The Civil Service, The Army, and The Police.

This was so for two reasons. For one, the chief aim of British-Indian administration was the maintenance of law and order and the perpetuation of British rule. Without law and order British merchants and British manufacturers could not hope to sell their goods in every nook and corner of India. Again, the British, being foreigners, could not hope to win the affections of the Indian people; they, therefore, relied on superior force rather than on public support for the maintenance of their control over India. The Duke of Wellington, who had served in India under his brother, Lord Wellesley, remarked after his return to Europe:

The system of Government in India, the foundation of authority, and the modes of supporting it and of carrying on the operations of government are entirely different from the systems and modes adopted in Europe for the same purpose. The foundation and the instrument of all power there is the sword.

## Civil Service

The Civil Service was brought into existence by Lord Cornwallis. As we have seen in an earlier chapter, the East India Company had from the beginning carried on its trade in the East through servants who were paid low wages but who were permitted to trade privately. Later, when the Company became a territorial power, the same servants assumed administrative functions. They now became extremely corrupt, by oppressing local weavers and artisans, merchants, and zamindars, by extorting bribes and 'gifts' from rajas and nawabs, and

by indulging in illegal private trade, they amassed untold wealth with which they retired to England. Clive and Warren Hastings made attempts to put an end to their corruption, but were only partially successful.

Cornwallis, who came to India as Governor-General in 1786, was determined to purify the administration, but he realised that the Company's servants would not give honest and efficient service so long as they were not given adequate salaries. He therefore enforced the rules against private trade and acceptance of presents and bribes by officials with strictness.

At the same time, he raised the salaries of the Company's servants. For example, the Collector of a district was to be paid Rs.1500 a month and one per cent commission on the revenue collection of his district. In fact the Company's Civil Service became the highest paid service in the world. Cornwallis also laid down that promotion in the Civil Service would be by seniority so that its members would remain independent of outside influence.

In 1800, Lord Wellesley pointed out that even though civil servants often ruled over vast areas, they came to India at the immature age of 18 or so and were given no regular training before starting on their jobs. They generally lacked knowledge of Indian languages. Wellesley therefore established the College of Fort William at Calcutta for the education of young recruits to the Civil Service. The Directors of the Company disapproved of his action and in 1806 replaced it by their own East Indian College at Haileybury in England.

Till 1853 all appointments to the Civil Service were made by the Directors of the East India Company who placated the members of the Board of Control by letting them make some of the nominations. The Directors fought hard to retain this lucrative and prized privilege and refused to surrender it even when their other economic and political privileges were taken away by Parliament. They lost it finally in 1853 when the Charter Act decreed that all recruits to the Civil Service were to be selected through a competitive examination.

A special feature of the Indian Civil Service since the days of Cornwallis was the rigid and complete exclusion of Indians from it. It was laid down officially in 1793 that all higher posts in administration worth more than £ 500 a year in salary were to be held by Englishmen. This policy was also applied to other branches of Government, such as the army, police, judiciary, engineering.

### **In the words of John Shore, who succeeded Cornwallis:**

The fundamental principle of the English had been to make the whole Indian nation subservient, in every possible way, to the interests and benefits of ourselves. The Indians have been excluded from every honour, dignity, or office, which the lowest Englishmen could be prevailed to accept.

Why did the British follow such a policy? Many factors combined to produce it. For one, they were convinced that an administration based on British ideas, institutions, and practices could be firmly established only by English personnel. And, then, they did not trust the ability and integrity of the Indians. For example, Charles Grant, Chairman of the Court of Directors, condemned the people of India as "a race of men lamentably degenerate and base; retaining but a feeble sense of moral obligation;... and sunk in misery by their vices." Similarly, Cornwallis believed that "Every native of Hindustan is corrupt". It may be noted that this criticism did apply to some extent to a small class of Indian officials and zamindars of the time. But, then, it was equally if not more true of British officials in India. In fact, Cornwallis had proposed to give them high salaries in order to help them resist temptations and to become honest and obedient. But he never thought of applying the same remedy of adequate salaries to eradicate corruption among Indian officials.

In reality, the exclusion of Indians from higher grades of services was a deliberate policy. These services were required at the time to establish and consolidate British rule in India. Obviously the task could not be left to Indians who did not possess the same instinctive sympathy for, and understanding of, British interests as Englishmen. Moreover, the influential classes of British society were keen to preserve the monopoly of lucrative appointments in the Indian Civil Service and other services for their sons. In fact they fought tooth and nail among themselves over these appointments. The right to make them was a perpetual bone of contention between the Directors of the Company and the members of the British Cabinet. How could the English then agree to let Indians occupy these posts? Indians were, however, recruited in large numbers to fill subordinate posts as they were cheaper and much more readily available than Englishmen.

The Indian Civil Service gradually developed into one of the most efficient and powerful civil services in the world. Its members exercised vast power and often participated in the making of policy. They developed certain traditions of independence, integrity, and hard work, though these qualities obviously served British

and not Indian interests, At the same no time they gradually came to form a rigid and exclusive and proud caste with an extremely conservative and narrow outlook.

They came to believe that they had an almost Divine right to rule India. The Indian Civil Service has often been called the 'steel frame' which reared and sustained British rule in India. In course of time it became the chief opponent of all that was progressive and advanced in Indian life and one of the main targets of attack by the rising Indian national movement.

## **Army**

The second important pillar of the British regime in India was the army. It fulfilled three important functions. It was the instrument through which the Indian powers were conquered; it defended the British Empire in India from foreign rivals; and it safeguarded British supremacy from the ever-present threat of internal revolt.

The bulk of the Company's army consisted of Indian soldiers, recruited chiefly from the area at present included in U.P. and Bihar. For instance, in 1857, the strength of the army in India was 311,400 of whom 265,900 were Indians. Its officers were, however, exclusively British, at least since the days of Cornwallis. In 1856, only three Indians in the army received a salary of Rs. 300 per month and the highest Indian officer was a subedar.

A large number of Indian troops had to be employed as British troops were far too expensive. Moreover, the population of Britain was perhaps too small to provide the large soldiery needed for the conquest of India. As a counterweight, the army was officered entirely by British officials and a certain number of British troops were maintained to keep the Indian soldiers under control. Even so, it appears surprising today that a handful of foreigners could d conquer and control India with a predominantly Indian army. This was possible because of two factors. On the one hand, there was absence of modern nationalism in the country at the time. A soldier from Bihar or Avadh did not think, and could not have thought, that in helping the Company defeat the Marathas or the Punjabis he was being anti-Indian. On the other, the Indian soldier had a long tradition of loyally serving those who paid his salary. This was popularly known as loyalty to the salt. In other words, the Indian soldier was a good mercenary, and the Company on its part was a good paymaster. It paid its soldiers regularly and well, something that the Indian rulers and chieftains were no longer doing.

## **Police**

The third pillar, of British rule, was the police whose creator was once again Cornwallis, He relieved the zamindars of their police, functions and established a regular police force to maintain law and order. In. this respect, he went, back to, and modernized, the old Indian system of thanas. Interestingly, this put India ahead of Britain where a system of police had not developed yet. Cornwallis established a system of circles or thanas headed by a daroga, who was an Indian. Later, the post of the District Superintendent of Police was created to head the police organisation in a district. Once again, Indians were excluded from all superior posts. In the villages the duties of the police continued to be performed by village-watchmen who were maintained by the villagers. The police gradually succeeded in reducing major crimes such as dacoity. One of its major achievements was the suppression of thugs who robbed and killed travellers on the highways, particularly in Central India. The police also prevented the organisation of a large- scale conspiracy against foreign control, and when the national movement arose, the police was used to suppress it. In its dealings with the people, the Indian police adopted an unsympathetic attitude. A Committee of Parliament reported in 1813 that the police committed "depredations on the peaceable inhabitants, of the same nature as those practised by the dacoits whom they were employed to suppress." And William Bentinck, the Governor-General, wrote in 1832:

As for the police so far from being a protection to the people, I cannot better illustrate the public feeling regarding it, than by the following fact, that nothing can exceed the popularity of a recent regulation by which, if a robbery has been committed, the police are prevented from making any enquiry into it, except upon the requisition of the persons robbed: that is to say, the shepherd is a more ravenous beast of prey than the wolf.

## **Judicial Organisation**

The British laid the foundations of a new system of dispensing justice through a hierarchy of civil and criminal courts. Though given a start by Warren Hastings, the system was stabilised by Cornwallis in 1793. In each district was established a Diwani Adalat, or civil court, presided over by the District Judge who belonged to the Civil Service. Cornwallis thus separated the posts of the Civil Judge and the Collector. Appeal from the

District Court lay first to four Provincial Courts of Civil Appeal and then, finally, to the Sadar Diwani Adalat. Below the District Court were Registrars' Courts, headed by Europeans, and a number of subordinate courts headed by Indian judges known as Munsifs and Amins. To deal with criminal cases, Cornwallis divided the Presidency of Bengal into four Divisions, in each of which a Court of Circuit presided over by the civil servants was established. Below these courts came a large number of Indian magistrates to try petty cases. Appeals from the Courts of circuit lay with the Sadar Nizamat Adalat. The criminal courts applied Muslim Criminal Law in a modified and less harsh form so that the tearing apart of limbs and such other punishments were prohibited. The civil courts applied the customary law that had prevailed in any area or among a section of the people since times immemorial. In 1831, William Bentinck abolished the Provincial Courts of Appeal and Circuit. Their work was assigned first to Commissions and later to District Judges and District Collectors. Bentinck also raised the status and powers of Indians in the judicial service and appointed them as Deputy Magistrates, Subordinate Judges and Principal Sadar Amins. In 1865, High Courts were established at Calcutta, Madras and Bombay to replace the Sadar Courts of Diwani and Nizamat.

The British also established a new system of laws through the processes of enactment and codification of old laws. The traditional system of justice in India had been largely based on customary law which arose from long tradition and practice, though many laws were based on the shastras and shariat as well as on imperial authority. Though they continued to observe customary law in general, the British gradually evolved a new system of laws. They introduced regulations, codified the existing laws, and often systematised and modernised them through judicial interpretation. The Charter Act of 1833 conferred all lawmaking power on the Governor-General-in-Council. All this meant that Indians were now to live increasingly under man-made laws, which might be good or bad but which were openly the products of human reason, and not under laws which had to be obeyed blindly and which could not be questioned as they were supposed to be divine and therefore sacred.

In 1833, the Government appointed a Law Commission headed by Lord Macaulay to codify Indian laws. Its labours eventually resulted in the Indian Penal Code, the Western-derived Codes of Civil and Criminal Procedure and other codes of laws. The same laws now prevailed all over the country and they were enforced by a uniform system of courts. Thus it may be said that India was judicially unified.

### **The Rule of Law**

The British introduced the modern concept of the rule of law. This meant that their administration was to be carried out, at least in theory, in obedience to laws, which clearly defined the rights, privileges, and obligations of the subjects and not according to the caprice or personal discretion of the ruler. In practice, of course, the bureaucracy and the police enjoyed arbitrary powers and interfered with the rights and liberties of the people. One important feature of the concept of the rule of law was that any official could be brought before a court of law for breaches of official duty or for acts done in excess of his official authority. The rule of law was to some extent a guarantee of the personal liberty of a person. It is true that previous rulers of India had been in general bound by tradition and custom. But they always had the legal right to take any administrative steps they wanted and there existed no other authority before whom their acts could be questioned. The Indian rulers and chiefs sometimes exercised this power to do as they wanted. Under British rule, on the other hand, administration was largely carried on according to laws as interpreted by the courts though the laws themselves were often defective, were made not by the people through a democratic process but autocratically by the foreign rulers, and left a great deal of power in the hands of the civil servants and the police. But that was perhaps inevitable in a foreign regime that could not in the very nature of things be democratic or libertarian.

### **Equality before Law**

The Indian legal system under the British was based on the concept of equality before law. This meant that in the eyes of law all men were equal. The same law applied to all persons irrespective of their caste, religion, or class. Previously, the judicial system had paid heed to caste distinctions and had differentiated between the so-called high-born and low-born. For the same crime lighter punishment was awarded to a Brahmin than to a non-Brahmin. Similarly, in practice zamindars and nobles were not judged as harshly as the commoner. In fact, very often they could not be brought to justice at all for their actions. Now the humble could also move the machinery of justice.

There was, however, one exception to this excellent principle of equality before law. The Europeans and their descendants had separate courts and even laws. In criminal cases they could be tried only by European judges. Many English officials, military officers, planters, and merchants behaved with Indians in a haughty, harsh, and even brutal manner. When efforts were made to bring them to justice, they were given indirect and undue protection and consequently light or no punishment by many of the European judges before whom alone they could be tried. Consequently, miscarriage of justice occurred frequently.

In practice, there emerged another type of legal inequality. Justice became quite expensive as court fees had to be paid, lawyers engaged, and the expenses of witnesses met. Courts were often situated in distant towns. Law suits dragged on for years. The complicated laws were beyond the grasp of the illiterate and ignorant peasants. Invariably, the rich could turn and twist the laws and courts to operate in their own favour. The mere threat to take a poor person through the long process of justice from the lower court to the highest court of appeal and thus to face him with complete ruin often sufficed to bring him to heel. Moreover, the widespread prevalence of corruption in the ranks of the police and the rest of the administrative machinery led to the denial of justice. Officials often favoured the rich, The zamindars oppressed the ryots without fear of official action. In contrast, the system of justice that had prevailed in pre-British times was comparatively informal, speedy, and inexpensive. Thus, while the new judicial system marked a great step forward in so far as it was based on the laudable principles of the rule of law and equality before law and on rational and humane man-made laws, it was a retrograde step in some other respects: it was now costlier and involved long delays.

### **Social and Cultural Policy**

We have seen that British authorities reorganised and regulated India's economy in the interests of British trade and industry and organised a modern administrative system to guarantee order and security. Till 1813 they also followed a policy of non-interference in the religious, social, and cultural life of the country, but after 1813 they took active steps to transform Indian society and culture. This followed the rise of new interests and new ideas in Britain during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Industrial Revolution, which had begun in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and the consequent growth of industrial capitalism, were fast changing all aspects of British society. The rising industrial interests wanted to make India a big market for their goods. This could not be accomplished merely by adhering to the policy of keeping peace, and required the partial transformation and modernisation of Indian society. And so, in the words of the historians Thompson and Garratt, "the mood and methods of the old brigandage were changing into those of modern industrialism and capitalism."

Science and technology also opened new vistas of human progress. The 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries witnessed a great ferment of new ideas in Britain and Europe which influenced the British outlook towards Indian problems. All over Europe "new attitudes of mind, manners, and morals were appearing." The great French Revolution of 1789 with its message of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity generated powerful democratic sentiments and unleashed the force of modern nationalism. In the realm of thought, the new trend was represented by Bacon, Locke, Voltaire, Rousseau, Kant, Adam Smith, and Bentham; in the realm of literature by Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, and Charles Dickens. The impact of the new thought—the product of the intellectual revolution of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the French Revolution, and the Industrial Revolution—was naturally felt in India and affected the official notions of government.

The three outstanding characteristics of the new thought were rationalism or faith in reason and science, humanism or love of man, and confidence in the capacity of man to progress. The rational and scientific attitude indicated that only that was true which was in conformity with human reason and capable of being tested in practice. The scientific progress of the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and the tremendous powers of production released by the application of science to industry were visible proofs of the power of human reason. Humanism was based on the belief that every human being was an end in himself and should be respected and prized as such. No man had the right to look upon another human being as a mere agent of his own happiness. The humanistic outlook gave birth to the doctrines of individualism, liberalism, and socialism. According to the doctrine of progress, all societies must change with time: nothing was or could be static. Moreover, man had the capacity to remodel nature and society on rational and just lines.

The new currents of thought in Europe came into conflict with the old outlook and produced a dash of attitudes among those who determined Indian policy or ran the Indian administration. The older attitude, known as the conservative or traditional attitude, was that of making as few changes in India as possible. The early representatives of this attitude were Warren Hastings and Edmund Burke, the famous writer and

parliamentarian, and the later ones were the famous officials Munro, Malcolm, Elphinstone, and Metcalfe. The conservatives maintained that Indian civilisation was different from European civilisation but was not necessarily inferior to it. Many of them respected and admired Indian philosophy and culture. Realising that it might be necessary to introduce some Western ideas and practices, they proposed to introduce them very cautiously and gradually. Favouring social stability above all, they opposed any programme of rapid modernisation. Sweeping or hasty innovations, they felt, would produce a violent reaction in the country. The conservative outlook remained influential in England as well as in India up to the very end of British rule. In fact, the majority of British officials in India were generally of conservative persuasion. But among the policy makers in Britain it was a gradually diminishing view because the course of trade and events was showing that the conservative policy did not lead to the desired expansion of trade or provide adequately for the perpetuation of British supremacy.

By 1800 the conservative attitude was fast giving way to a new attitude which was sharply critical of Indian society and culture. Indian civilisation was condemned as static; it was looked down upon with scorn. Indian customs were considered uncivilised, Indian institutions corrupt and decadent, and Indian thought narrow and unscientific. This critical approach was used by most of the officials and writers and statesmen of Britain to justify political and economic enslavement of India and to proclaim that it was incapable of improvement and must therefore remain permanently under British tutelage.



# 10

## The Revolt of 1857

The policies of the East India Company and the effect they had on different people. Kings, queens, peasants, landlords, tribals, soldiers were all affected in different ways. You have also seen how people resist policies and actions that harm their interests or go against their sentiments. Nawabs lose their power Since the mid-eighteenth century, nawabs and rajas had seen their power erode. They had gradually lost their authority and honour. Residents had been stationed in many courts, the freedom of the rulers reduced, their armed forces disbanded, and their revenues and territories taken away by stages. Many ruling families tried to negotiate with the Company to protect their interests. For example, Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi wanted the Company to recognise her adopted son as the heir to the kingdom after the death of her husband. Nana Saheb, the adopted son of Peshwa Baji Rao II, pleaded that he be given his father's pension when the latter died.

However, the Company, confident of its superiority and military powers, turned down these pleas. Awadh was one of the last territories to be annexed. In 1801, a subsidiary alliance was imposed on Awadh, and in 1856 it was taken over. Governor-General Dalhousie declared that the territory was being misgoverned and British rule was needed to ensure proper administration. The Company even began to plan how to bring the Mughal dynasty to an end. The name of the Mughal king was removed from the coins minted by the Company. In 1849, Governor-General Dalhousie announced that after the death of Bahadur Shah Zafar, the family of the king would be shifted out of the Red Fort and given another place in Delhi to reside in. In 1856, Governor-General Canning decided that Bahadur Shah Zafar would be the last Mughal king and after his death none of his descendants would be recognised as kings – they would just be called princes.

### The peasants and the sepoys

In the countryside peasants and zamindars resented the high taxes and the rigid methods of revenue collection. Many failed to pay back their loans to the money lenders and gradually lost the lands they had tilled for generations. The Indian sepoys in the employ of the Company also had reasons for discontent. They were unhappy about their pay, allowances and conditions of service. Some of the new rules, moreover, violated their religious sensibilities and beliefs. Did you know that in those days many people in the country believed that if they crossed the sea they would lose their religion and caste? So when in 1824 the sepoys were told to go to Burma by the sea route to fight for the Company, they refused to follow the order, though they agreed to go by the land route. They were severely punished, and since the issue did not die down, in 1856 the Company passed

#### The list of eighty-four rules

Given here are excerpts from the book *Majha Pravaas*, written by Vishnubhatt Godse, a Brahman from a village in Maharashtra. He and his uncle had set out to attend a *yajna* being organised in Mathura. Vishnubhatt writes that they met some sepoys on the way who told them that they should not proceed on the journey because a massive upheaval was going to break out in three days. The sepoys said:

the English were determined to wipe out the religions of the Hindus and the Muslims ... they had made a list of eighty-four rules and announced these in a gathering of all big kings and princes in Calcutta. They said that the kings refused to accept these rules and warned the English of dire consequences and massive upheaval if these are implemented ... that the kings all returned to their capitals in great anger ... all the big people began making plans. A date was fixed for the war of religion and the secret plan had been circulated from the cantonment in Meerut by letters sent to different cantonments.

a new law which stated that every new person who took up employment in the Company's army had to agree to serve overseas if required. Sepoys also reacted to what was happening in the countryside. Many of them were peasants and had families living in the villages. So the anger of the peasants quickly spread among the sepoys.

## Responses to reforms

The British believed that Indian society had to be reformed. Laws were passed to stop the practice of sati and to encourage the remarriage of widows. English-language education was actively promoted. After 1830, the Company allowed Christian missionaries to function freely in its domain and even own land and property. In 1850, a new law was passed to make conversion to Christianity easier. This law allowed an Indian who had converted to Christianity to inherit the property of his ancestors. Many Indians began to feel that the British were destroying their religion, their social customs and their traditional way of life.

## A mutiny becomes a popular Rebellion

Though struggles between rulers and the ruled are not unusual, sometimes such struggles become quite widespread as a popular resistance so that the power of the state breaks down. A very large number of people begin to believe that they have a common enemy and rise up against the enemy at the same time. For such a situation to develop people have to organise, communicate, take initiative and display the confidence to turn the situation around. Such a situation developed in the northern parts of India in 1857. After a hundred years of conquest and administration, the English East India Company faced a massive rebellion that started in May 1857 and threatened the Company's very presence in India. Sepoys mutinied in several places beginning from Meerut and a large number of people from different sections of society rose up in rebellion. Some regard it as the biggest armed resistance to colonialism in the nineteenth century anywhere in the world.

## From Meerut to Delhi

On 29 March 1857, a young soldier, Mangal Pandey, was hanged to death for attacking his officers in Barrackpore. Some days later, some sepoy of the regiment at Meerut refused to do the army drill using the new cartridges, which were suspected of being coated with the fat of cows and pigs. Eighty-five sepoy were dismissed from service and sentenced to ten years in jail for disobeying their officers. This happened on 9 May 1857. The response of the other Indian soldiers in Meerut was quite extraordinary. On 10 May, the soldiers marched to the jail in Meerut and released the imprisoned sepoy. They attacked and killed British officers. They captured guns and ammunition and set fire to the buildings and properties of the British and declared war on the **frangis (Foreigners The term reflects an attitude of contempt)**. The soldiers were determined to bring an end to their rule in the country. But who would rule the land instead? The soldiers had an answer to this question – the Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar. The sepoy of Meerut rode all night of 10 May to reach Delhi in the early hours next morning. As news of their arrival spread, the regiments stationed in Delhi also rose up in rebellion. Again British officers were killed, arms and ammunition seized, buildings set on fire. Triumphant soldiers gathered around the walls of the Red Fort where the Badshah lived, demanding to meet him. The emperor was not quite willing to challenge the mighty British power but the soldiers persisted. They forced their way into the palace and proclaimed Bahadur Shah Zafar as their leader.

The ageing emperor had to accept this demand. He wrote letters to all the chiefs and rulers of the country to come forward and organise a confederacy of Indian states to fight the British. This single step taken by Bahadur Shah had great implications. The Mughal dynasty had ruled over a very large part of the country. Most smaller rulers and chieftains controlled different territories on behalf of the Mughal ruler. Threatened by the expansion of British rule, many of them felt that if the Mughal emperor could rule again, they too would be able to rule their own territories once more, under Mughal authority. The British had not expected this to happen. They thought the disturbance caused by the issue of the cartridges would die down. But Bahadur Shah Zafar's decision to bless the rebellion changed the entire situation dramatically. Often when people see an alternative possibility they feel inspired and enthused. It gives them the courage, hope and confidence to act.

## The rebellion spreads

After the British were routed from Delhi, there was no uprising for almost a week. It took that much time for news to travel. Then, a spurt of mutinies began. Regiment after regiment mutinied and took off to join other troops at nodal points like Delhi, Kanpur and Lucknow. After them, the people of the towns and villages also rose up in rebellion and rallied around local leaders, zamindars and chiefs who were prepared to establish their authority and fight the British. Nana Saheb, the adopted son of the late Peshwa Baji Rao who lived

near Kanpur, gathered armed forces and expelled the British garrison from the city. He proclaimed himself Peshwa. He declared that he was a governor under Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar.

In Lucknow, Birjis Qadr, the son of the deposed Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, was proclaimed the new Nawab. He too acknowledged the suzerainty of Bahadur Shah Zafar. His mother Begum Hazrat Mahal took an active part in organising the uprising against the British.

**In Jhansi, Rani Lakshmibai** joined the rebel sepoys and fought the British along with Tantia Tope, the general of Nana Saheb. In the Mandla region of Madhya Pradesh, Rani Avantibai Lodhi of Ramgarh raised and led an army of four thousand against the British who had taken over the administration of her state. The British were greatly outnumbered by the rebel forces. They were defeated in a number of battles. This convinced the people that the rule of the British had collapsed for good and gave them the confidence to take the plunge and join the rebellion. A situation of widespread popular rebellion developed in the region of Awadh in particular. On 6 August 1857, we find a telegram sent by Lieutenant Colonel Tytler to his Commander-in-Chief expressing the fear felt by the British: "Our men are cowed by the numbers opposed to them and the endless fighting. Every village is held against us, the zamindars have risen to oppose us." Many new leaders came up. For example, Ahmadullah Shah, a maulvi from Faizabad, prophesied that the rule of the British would come to an end soon. He caught the imagination of the people and raised a huge force of supporters. He came to Lucknow to fight the British. In Delhi, a large number of *ghazis* or religious warriors came together to wipe out the white people.

**Bakht Khan**, a soldier from Bareilly, took charge of a large force of fighters who came to Delhi. He became a key military leader of the rebellion.

**In Bihar, an old zamindar, Kunwar Singh**, joined the rebel sepoys and battled with the British for many months. Leaders and fighters from across the land joined the fight.

## The Company Fights Back

Unnerved by the scale of the upheaval, the Company decided to repress the revolt with all its might. It brought reinforcements from England, passed new laws so that the rebels could be convicted with ease, and then moved into the storm centres of the revolt. Delhi was recaptured from the rebel forces in September 1857. The last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar was tried in court and sentenced to life imprisonment. He and his wife Begum Zinat Mahal were sent to prison in Rangoon in October 1858. Bahadur Shah Zafar died in the Rangoon jail in November 1862. The recapture of Delhi, however, did not mean that the rebellion died down after that. People continued to resist and battle the British. The British had to fight for two years to suppress the massive forces of popular rebellion. Lucknow was taken in March 1858. Rani Lakshmibai was defeated and killed in June 1858.

A similar fate awaited Rani Avantibai, who after initial victory in Kheri, chose to embrace death when surrounded by the British on all sides. Tantia Tope escaped to the jungles of central India and continued to fight a guerrilla war with the support of many tribal and peasant leaders. He was captured, tried and killed in April 1859. Just as victories against the British had earlier encouraged rebellion, the defeat of rebel forces encouraged desertions. The British also tried their best to win back the loyalty of the people. They announced rewards for loyal landholders would be allowed to continue to enjoy traditional rights over their lands. Those who had rebelled were told that if they submitted to the British, and if they had not killed any white people, they would remain safe and their rights and claims to land would not be denied. Nevertheless, hundreds of sepoys, rebels, nawabs and rajas were tried and hanged.

The modern educated Indians also did not support the Revolt. They were repelled by the rebels' appeals to superstitions and their opposition to progressive social measures. As we have seen, the educated Indians wanted to end the backwardness of their country. They mistakenly believed that British rule would help them accomplish these tasks of modernisation while the rebels would take the country backward.

The revolutionaries of 1857 proved to be more farsighted in this respect; they had a better, instinctive understanding of the evils of foreign rule-and of the necessity, to get rid of it. On the other hand, they did not realise, as did the educated intelligentsia, that the country had fallen prey to foreigners precisely because it had stuck to rotten and outmoded customs, traditions, and institutions. They failed to see that national salvation lay not in going back to feudal monarchy but in going forward to a modern society, a modern economy, scientific education, and modern political institutions. In any case, it cannot be said that the educated Indians

were anti-national or loyal to a foreign regime. As events after 1858 were to show, they were soon to lead a powerful and modern national movement against British rule.

Whatever the reasons for the disunity of Indians, it was to prove fatal to the Revolt. But this was not the only weakness from which the cause of the rebels suffered. They were short of modern weapons and other materials of war. Most of them fought with such ancient weapons as pikes and swords. They were also poorly organised. The sepoys were brave and selfless but they were also ill-disciplined. Sometimes they behaved more like a riotous mob than a disciplined army- The rebel units did not have a common plan of action, or authoritative heads, or centralised leadership. The uprisings in different parts of the country were completely uncoordinated. The leaders were joined together by a common feeling of hatred for the alien rule but by nothing else. Once they overthrew British power from an area, they did not know what sort of power to create in its place. They failed to evolve unity of action. They were suspicious and jealous of one another and often indulged in suicidal quarrels For example, the Begum of Avadh quarrelled with Maulavi Ahmadullah and the Mughal princes with the sepoy-generals; Azimullah, the political adviser of Nana Saheb, asked him not to visit Delhi lest he be overshadowed by the Emperor. Thus, selfishness and cliquishness of the leaders sapped the strength of the Revolt and prevented its consolidation. Similarly, the peasantry having destroyed revenue records and money-lenders' books, and overthrown the new zamindars, became passive, not knowing what to do next. The British succeeded in crushing the leaders of the Revolt one by one.

In fact, the weakness of the Revolt went deeper than the failings of individuals. The entire movement lacked a unified and forward-looking programme to be implemented after the capture of power. The movement, thus, came to consist of diverse elements, united only by their hatred of British rule, but each having different grievances and differing conceptions of the politics of free India. This absence of a modern and progressive programme enabled the reactionary princes and zamindars to seize the levers of power of the revolutionary movement since the same feudal leaders, the Mughals, the Marathas and others, had earlier failed in preserving the independence of their kingdoms, it was hardly to be expected that they would now succeed in founding a new all-India State. But the feudal character of the Revolt should not be stressed overmuch. Gradually the soldiers and the people were beginning to evolve a different type of leadership- The very effort to make the revolt a success was compelling them to create new types of organisation. As Benjamin Disraelie warned the British Government at the time, if they did not suppress the Revolt in time, they would “find other characters on the stage, with whom to contend, besides the princes of India.”

The lack of unity among Indians was perhaps unavoidable at this stage of Indian history. Modern nationalism was yet unknown in India. Patriotism meant love of one's small locality or region or at most one's state. Common all-India interests and the consciousness that these interests bound all Indians together were yet to come.

In fact the Revolt of 1857 played an important role in bringing the Indian people together and imparting to them the consciousness of belonging to one country.

In the end British imperialism, at the height of its power the world over, supported by most of the Indian princes and chiefs, proved militarily too strong for the rebels. The British Government poured immense supplies of men, money, and arms into the country, though Indians had later to repay the entire cost of their own suppression. The Revolt was suppressed. Sheer courage could not win against a powerful and determined enemy who planned its every step. The rebels were dealt an early blow when the British captured Delhi on 20 September 1857 after prolonged and bitter fighting. The aged Emperor Bahadur Shah was taken prisoner. The Royal Princes were captured and butchered on the spot. The Emperor was tried and exiled to Rangoon where he died in 1862, lamenting bitterly the fate which had buried him far away from the city of his birth. Thus the great House of the Mughals was finally and completely extinguished.

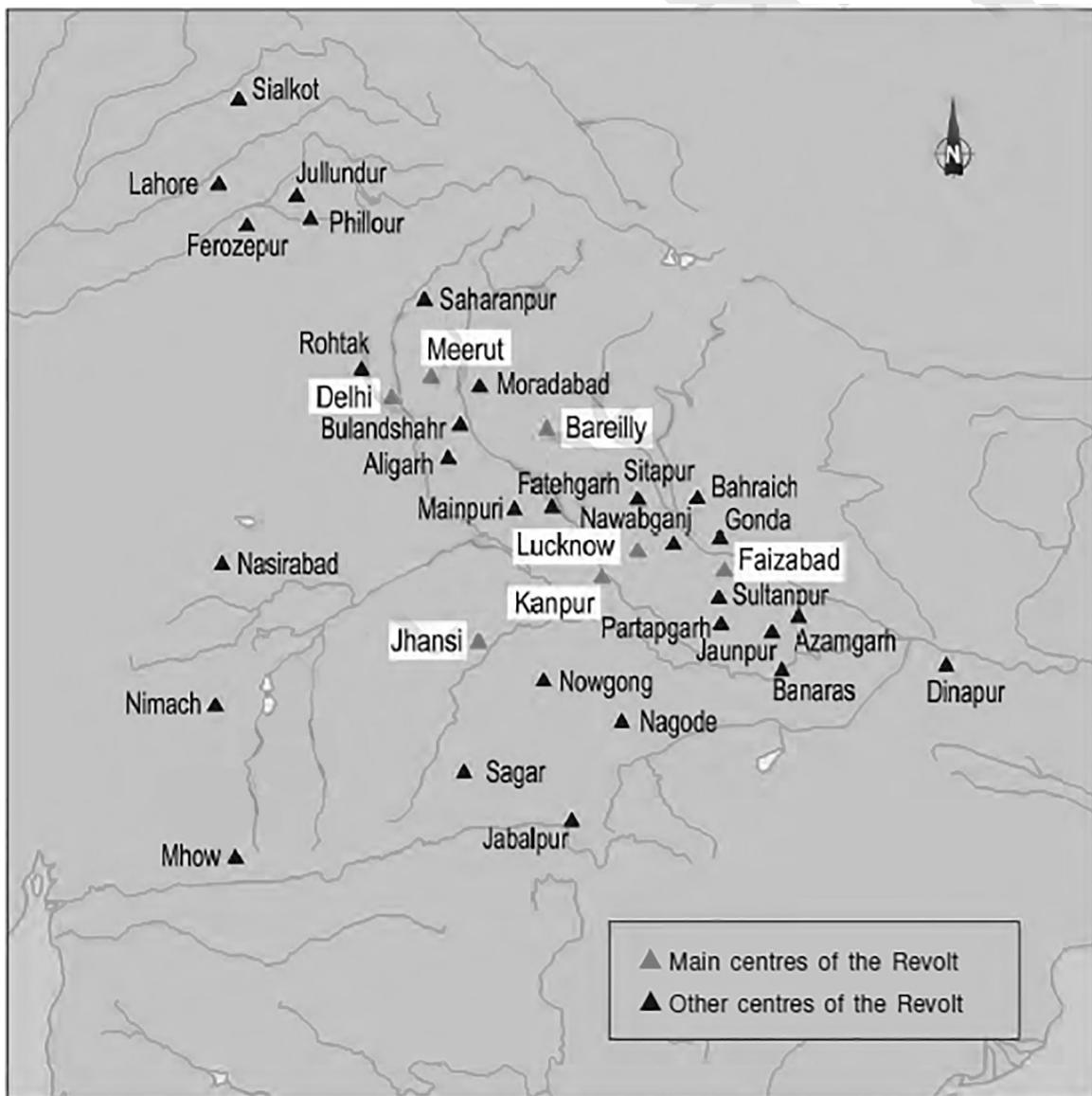
## Aftermath

The British had regained control of the country by the end of 1859, but they could not carry on ruling the land with the same policies any more. Given below are the important changes that were introduced by the British.

1. The British Parliament passed a new Act in 1858 and transferred the powers of the East India Company to the British Crown in order to ensure a more responsible management of Indian affairs. A member of the British Cabinet was appointed Secretary of State for India and made responsible for all matters related to the governance of India. He was given a council to advise him, called the India Council. The Governor-General of India was given the title of Viceroy, that is, a personal represen-

tative of the Crown. Through these measures the British government accepted direct responsibility for ruling India.

2. All ruling chiefs of the country were assured that their territory would never be annexed in future. They were allowed to pass on their kingdoms to their heirs, including adopted sons. However, they were made to acknowledge the British Queen as their Sovereign Paramount. Thus the Indian rulers were to hold their kingdoms as subordinates of the British Crown.
3. It was decided that the proportion of Indian soldiers in the army would be reduced and the number of European soldiers would be increased. It was also decided that instead of recruiting soldiers from Awadh, Bihar, central India and south India, more soldiers would be recruited from among the Gurkhas, Sikhs and Pathans.
4. The land and property of Muslims was confiscated on a large scale and they were treated with suspicion and hostility. The British believed that they were responsible for the rebellion in a big way.
5. The British decided to respect the customary religious and social practices of the people in India.
6. Policies were made to protect landlords and zamindars and give them security of rights over their lands. Thus a new phase of history began after 1857.



Some important centres of the Revolt in North India

## The Khurda Uprising – A Case Study

Much before the event of 1857, there had taken place another event of a similar nature at a place called Khurda in 1817. Here, it would be instructive for us to study that event and reflect on how resentment against the colonial policies of the British had been building up since the beginning of the 19th Century in different parts of the country.

Khurda, a small kingdom built up in the late 16th Century in the south-eastern part of Odisha, was a populous and well-cultivated territory consisting of 105 *garhs*, 60 large and 1109 small villages at the beginning of the 19th century. Its king, Raja Birakishore Dev had to earlier give up the possession of four *parganas*, the superintendence of the Jagannath Temple and the administration of fourteen *garjats* (Princely States) to the Marathas under compulsion. His son and successor, Mukunda Dev II was greatly disturbed with this loss of fortune. Therefore, sensing an opportunity in the Anglo-Maratha conflict, he had entered into negotiations with the British to get back his lost territories and the rights over the Jagannath Temple. But after the occupation of Odisha in 1803, the British showed no inclination to oblige him on either score. Consequently, in alliance with other feudatory chiefs of Odisha and secret support of the Marathas, he tried to assert his rights by force. This led to his deposition and annexation of his territories by the British. As a matter of consolation, he was only given the rights of management of the Jagannath Temple with a grant amounting to a mere one-tenth of the revenue of his former estate and his residence was fixed at Puri. This unfair settlement commenced an era of oppressive foreign rule in Odisha, which paved the way for a serious armed uprising in 1817.

Soon after taking over Khurda, the British followed a policy of resuming service tenures. It bitterly affected the lives of the ex-militia of the state, the *Paiks*. The severity of the measure was compounded on account of an unreasonable increase in the demand of revenue and also the oppressive ways of its collection. Consequently, there was large scale desertion of people from Khurda between 1305 and 1317. Yet, the British went for a series of short-term settlements, each time increasing the demands, not recognising either the productive capacity of the land or the paying capacity of the *ryot*. No leniency was shown even in case of natural calamities, which Odisha was frequently prone to. Rather, lands of defaulters were sold off to scheming revenue officials or speculators from Bengal.

The hereditary Military Commander of the deposed king, Jagabandhu Bidyadhar Mahapatra Bhramarabar Rai or Buxi Jagabandhu as he was popularly known, was one among the dispossessed land-holders. He had in effect become a beggar, and for nearly two years survived on voluntary contributions from the people of Khurda before deciding to fight for their grievances as well as his own. Over the years, what had added to these grievances were (a) the introduction of sicca rupee (silver currency) in the region, (b) the insistence on payment of revenue in the new currency, (c) an unprecedented rise in the prices of food-stuff and salt, which had become far-fetched following the introduction of salt monopoly because of which the traditional salt makers of Odisha were deprived of making salt, and (d) the auction of local estates in Calcutta, which brought in absentee landlords from Bengal to Odisha. Besides, the insensitive and corrupt police system also made the situation worse for the armed uprising to take a sinister shape.

The uprising was set off on 29 March 1817 as the *Paiks* attacked the police station and other government establishments at Banpur killing more than a hundred men and took away a large amount of government money. Soon its ripples spread in different directions with Khurda becoming its epicenter. The *zamindars* and *ryot*: alike joined the *Paiks* with enthusiasm. Those who did not, were taken to task. A no-rent campaign was also started. The British tried to dislodge the *Paiks* from their entrenched position but failed. On 14

April 1817, Buxi Jagabandhu, leading five to ten thousand *Paiks* and men of the Kandh tribe seized Puri and declared the hesitant king, Mukunda Dev II as their ruler. The priests of the Jagannath Temple also extended the *Paiks* their full support.

Seeing the situation going out of hand, the British clamped Martial Law. The King was quickly captured and sent to prison in Cuttack with his son. The Buxi with his close associate, Krishna Chandra Bhramarabar Rai, tried to cut off all communications between Cuttack and Khurda as the uprising spread to the southern and the north-western parts of Odisha. Consequently, the British sent Major-General Martindell to clear off the area from the clutches of the *Paiks* while at the same time announcing rewards for the arrest of Buxi Jagabandhu and his associates. In the ensuing operation hundreds of *Paiks* were killed, many fled to deep jungles and some returned home under a scheme of amnesty. Thus by May 1817 the uprising was mostly contained.

However, outside Khurda it was sustained by Buxi Jagabandhu with the help of supporters like the Raja of Kujung and the unflinching loyalty of the *Paiks* until his surrender in May 1325. On their part, the British henceforth adopted a policy of leniency, indulgence and forbearance' towards the people of Khurda. The price of salt was reduced and necessary reforms were made in the police and the justice systems. Revenue officials found to be corrupt were dismissed from service and former land-holders were restored to their lands. The son of the king of Khurda. Ram Chandra Dev III was allowed to move to Puri and take charge of the affairs of the Jagannath Temple with a grant of rupees twenty-four thousand.

In sum, it was the first such popular anti-British armed uprising in Odisha. which had far reaching effect on the future of British administration in that part of the country. To merely call it a 'Paik Rebellion' will thus be an understatement.

## For a Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace

### Kakuzo and the movement for an Asian art

In 1904, Okakura Kakuzo published a book in Japan called *The Ideals of the East*. This book is famous for its opening lines: "Asia is one." Okakura argued that Asia had been humiliated by the West and Asian nations had to collectively resist West domination.



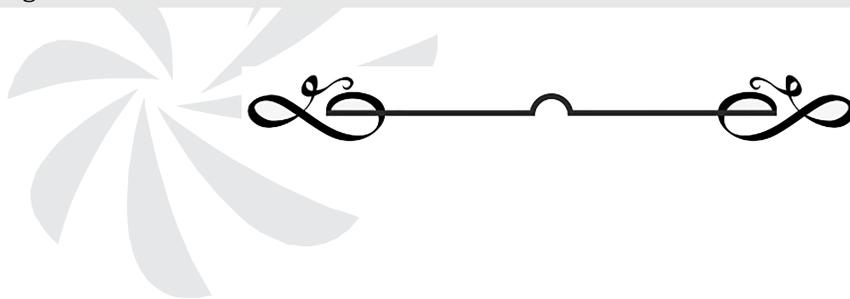
**Fig. -** Taiping army meeting their leader

While the revolt was spreading in India in 1857, a massive popular uprising was raging in the southern parts of China. It had started in 1850 and could be suppressed only by the mid-1860s. Thousands of labouring, poor people were led by Hong Xiuquan to fight for the establishment of the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace. This was known as the Taiping Rebellion.

Hong Xiuquan was a convert to Christianity and was against the traditional religions practised in China such as Confucianism and Buddhism. The rebels of Taiping wanted to establish a kingdom where a form of Christianity was practised, where no one held any private property,

where there was no difference between social classes and between men and women, where consumption of opium, tobacco, alcohol, and activities like gambling, prostitution, slavery, were prohibited.

The British and French armed forces operating in China helped the emperor of the Qing dynasty to put down the Taiping Rebellion.



# 11

## Economic Impact of British Rule

The British conquest had a pronounced and profound economic impact on India. There was hardly any aspect of the Indian economy that was not changed for better or for worse during the entire period of British rule down to 1947.

The economic policies followed by the British led to the rapid transformation of India's economy into a colonial economy whose nature and structure were determined by the needs of the British economy. In this respect the British conquest differed from all previous foreign conquests. The previous conquerors had overthrown Indian political powers but had made no basic changes in the country's economic structure; they had gradually become a part of Indian life, political as well as economic. The peasant, the artisan, and the trader had continued to lead the same type of existence as before. The basic economic pattern, that of the self-sufficient village economy, had been perpetuated. Change of rulers had merely meant change in the personnel of those who appropriated the peasant's surplus. But the British conquerors were entirely different. They totally disrupted the traditional structure of the Indian economy. Moreover they never became an integral part of Indian life. They always remained foreigners in the land, exploiting Indian resources and carrying away India's wealth as tribute. The results of this subordination of the Indian economy to the interests of British trade and industry were many and varied.

### Ruin of Artisans and Craftsmen

There was a sudden and quick collapse of the urban handicrafts which had for centuries made India's name a byword in the markets of the entire civilised world. This collapse was caused largely by competition with the cheaper imported machine-goods from Britain. As we have seen earlier, the British imposed a policy of one-way free trade on India after 1813 and the invasion of British manufactures, in particular cotton textiles, immediately followed. Indian goods made with primitive techniques could not compete with goods produced on a mass scale by powerful steam-operated machines.

The ruin of Indian industries, particularly rural artisan industries, proceeded even more rapidly once the railways were built. The railways enabled British manufactures to reach and uproot the traditional industries in the remotest villages of the country.

The cotton weaving and spinning industries were the worst hit. Silk and woollen textiles fared no better and a similar fate overtook the iron, pottery, glass, paper, metals, shipping, oil-pressing, tanning and dyeing industries.

Apart from the influx of foreign goods, some other factors arising out of British conquest also contributed to the ruin of Indian industries. The oppression practised by the East India Company and its servants on the craftsmen of Bengal during the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, forcing them to sell their goods below the market price and to hire their services below the prevailing wage, compelled a large number of them to abandon their ancestral professions. In the normal course Indian handicrafts would have benefited from the encouragement given by the company to their export, but this oppression had an opposite effect.

The high import duties and other restrictions imposed on the import of Indian goods into Britain and Europe during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, combined with the development of modern manufacturing industries in Britain, led to the virtual closing of the European markets to Indian manufacturers after 1820. For instance, the production of military weapons depended entirely on the Indian states. The British purchased all their military and other government stores in Britain. Moreover, Indian rulers and nobles were replaced as the ruling class by British officials and military officers who patronised their own home-products almost exclusively. The British policy of exporting raw materials also injured Indian handicrafts by raising the prices of raw materials like cotton and leather. This increased the cost of handicrafts and reduced their capacity to compete with foreign goods.

The ruin of Indian handicrafts was reflected in the ruin of the towns and cities which were famous for their manufactures. Cities which had withstood the ravages of war and plunder failed to survive British conquest. Dacca, Surat, Murshidabad and many other populous and *flourishing* centres were depopulated and laid waste. William Bentinck, the Governor-General, reported in 1834-35:

The misery hardly finds a parallel in the history of commerce. The bones of the cotton-weavers are bleaching the plains of India.

The tragedy was heightened by the fact that the decay of the traditional industries was not accompanied by the growth of modern machine industries as was the case in Britain and western Europe. Consequently, the ruined handicrafts men and artisans failed to find alternative employment. The only choice open to them was to crowd into agriculture. Moreover, the British rule also upset the balance of economic life in the villages. The gradual destruction of rural crafts broke up the union between agriculture and domestic industry in the countryside and thus contributed to the destruction of the self-sufficient village economy. On the one hand, millions of peasants, who had supplemented their income by part-time spinning and weaving, now had to rely overwhelmingly on cultivation; on the other, millions of rural artisans lost their traditional livelihood and became agricultural labourers or petty tenants holding tiny plots. They added to the general pressure on land.

Thus British conquest led to the deindustrialisation of the country and increased dependence of the people on agriculture. No figures for the earlier period are available but, according to Census Reports, between 1901 and 1941 alone the percentage of population dependent on agriculture increased from 63.7 per cent to 70 per cent. This increasing pressure on agriculture was one of the major causes of the extreme poverty of India under British rule.

In fact India now became an agricultural colony of manufacturing Britain which needed it as a source of raw materials for its industries. Nowhere was the change more glaring than in the cotton textile industry. While India had been for centuries the largest exporter of cotton goods in the world, it was now transformed into an importer of British cotton products and an exporter of raw cotton.

## Impoverishment of the Peasantry

The peasant was also progressively impoverished under British rule. In spite of the fact that he was now free of internal wars, his material condition deteriorated and he steadily sank into poverty.

In the very beginning of British rule in Bengal, the policy of Clive and Warren Hastings of extracting the largest possible land revenue had led to such devastation that even Cornwallis complained that one-third of Bengal had been transformed into “a jungle inhabited only by wild beasts.” Nor did improvement occur later. In both the Permanently and the Temporarily Settled Zamindari areas, the lot of the peasants remained unenviable. They were left to the mercies of the zamindars who raised rents to unbearable limits, compelled them to pay illegal dues and to perform forced labour or *begar*, and oppressed them in diverse other ways.

The condition of the cultivators in the Ryotwari and Mahalwan areas was no better. Here the Government took the place of the zamindars and levied excessive land revenue which was in the beginning fixed as high as one-third to one-half of the produce. Heavy assessment of land was one of the main causes of the growth of poverty and the deterioration of agriculture in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Many contemporary writers and officials noted this fact. For instance, Bishop Heber wrote in 1826:

Neither Native nor European agriculturist, I think, can thrive at the present rate of taxation. Half of the gross produce of the soil is demanded by Government. In Hindustan (Northern India) I found a general feeling among the King's officers . . . that the peasantry in the Company's Provinces are on the whole worse off, poorer and more dispirited than the subjects of the Native Provinces; and here in Madras, where the soil is, generally speaking, poor, the difference is said to be still more marked. The fact is, no Native Prince demands the rent which we do.

Even though the land revenue demand went on increasing year after year—it increased from Rs. 15.3 crores in 1857-58 to Rs. 35.8 crores in 1936-37—the proportion of the total produce taken as land revenue tended to decline as the prices rose and production increased. No proportional increase in land revenue was made as the disastrous consequences of demanding extortionate revenue became obvious. But by now the population pressure on agriculture had increased to such an extent that the lesser revenue demand of later years weighed on the peasants as heavily as the higher revenue demand of the earlier years of the Company's administration.

The evil of high revenue demand, was made worse by the fact that the peasant got little economic return for it. The Government spent very little on improving agriculture. It devoted almost its entire income to meeting the

needs of British-Indian administration, making the payments of direct and indirect tribute to England, and serving the interests of British trade and industry. Even the maintenance of law and order tended to benefit the merchant and the money-lender rather than the peasant.

The harmful effects of an excessive land revenue demand were further heightened by the rigid manner of its collection. Land revenue had to be paid promptly on the fixed dates even if the harvest had been below normal or had failed completely, But in bad years the peasant found it difficult to meet the revenue demand even if he had been able to do so in good years.

Whenever the peasant failed to pay land revenue, the government put up his land on sale to collect the arrears of revenue. But in most cases the peasant himself took this step and sold part of his land to meet in time the government demand. In either case he lost his land.

More often the inability to pay revenue drove the peasant to borrow money at high rates of interest from the money-lender. He preferred getting into debt by mortgaging his land to a money-lender or to a rich peasant neighbour to losing it outright. He was also forced to go to the money-lender whenever he found it impossible to make his two ends meet, But once in debt he found it difficult to get out of it. The money-lender charged high rates of interest and through cunning and deceitful measures, such as false accounting, forged signatures, and making the debtor sign for larger amounts than he had borrowed, got the peasant deeper and deeper into debt till he parted with his land.

The money-lender was greatly helped by the new legal system and the new revenue policy. In pre-British times, the money-lender was subordinated to the village community. He could not behave in a manner totally disliked by the rest of the village. For instance, he could not charge usurious rates of interest. In fact, the rates of interest were fixed by usage and, public opinion. Moreover he could not seize the land of the debtor; he could at most take possession of the, debtor's personal effects like ' jewellery or parts of his standing crop. By introducing transferability of land the British revenue system enabled the money-lender or the rich peasant to take possession of land. Even the benefits of peace and security established by the British through their legal system and police were primarily reaped by the money-lender in whose hands the law placed enormous power; he also used the power of the purse to turn the expensive process of litigation in his favour and to make the police serve his purposes. Moreover, the literate and shrewd money-lender could easily take advantage of the ignorance and illiteracy of the peasant to twist the complicated processes of law to get favourable judicial decisions.

Gradually the cultivators in the Ryotwari and Mahalwari areas sank deeper and deeper into debt and more and more land passed into the hands of money-lenders, merchants, rich peasants and other moneyed classes. The process was repeated in the zamindan areas where the tenants lost their tenancy rights and were ejected from the land or became subtenants of the money-lender.

The process of transfer of land from cultivators was intensified during periods of scarcity and famines The Indian peasant hardly had any savings for critical times and whenever crops failed he fell back upon the money-lender not only to pay land revenue but also to feed himself and his family.

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the money-lender had become a major curse of the countryside and an important cause of the growing poverty of the rural people. In 1911 the total rural debt was estimated at Rs.300 crores. By 1937 it amounted to Rs. 1,800 crores. The entire process became a vicious circle. The pressure of taxation and growing poverty pushed the cultivators into debt which in turn increased their poverty. In fact, the cultivators often failed to understand that the money-lender was an inevitable cog in the mechanism of imperialist exploitation and turned their anger against him as he appeared to be the visible cause of their impoverishment. For instance, during the Revolt of 1857, wherever the peasantry rose in revolt, quite often its first target of attack was the money-lender and his account books. Such peasant actions soon became a common occurrence.

The growing commercialisation of agriculture also helped the money- lender-cum-merchant to exploit the cultivator. The poor peasant was forced to sell his produce just after the harvest and at whatever price he could get as he had to meet in time the demands of the Government, the landlord, and the money-lender.. This placed him at the mercy of the grain merchant, who was in a position to dictate terms and who purchased his produce at much less than the market price. Thus a large share of the benefit of the growing trade in agricultural products was reaped by the merchant, who was very often also the village money-lender.

The loss of land and the over-crowding of land caused by deindustrialisation and lack of modern industry compelled the landless peasants and ruined artisans and handicrafts men to become either tenants of the

money-lenders and zamindars by paying rack-rent or agricultural labourers at starvation wages. Thus the peasantry was crushed under the triple burden of the Government, the zamindar or landlord, and the money-lender. After these three had taken their share not much was left for the cultivator and his family to subsist on. It has been calculated that in 1950-51 land rent and money-lenders interest amounted to Rs. 1400 crores or roughly equal to one-third of the total agricultural produce for the year. The result was that the impoverishment of the peasantry continued as also an increase in the incidence of famines. People died in millions whenever droughts or floods caused failure of crops and produced scarcity.

## Ruin of Old Zamindars and Rise of New Landlordism

The first few decades of British rule witnessed the ruin of most of the old zamindars in Bengal and Madras. This was particularly so with Warren Hastings' policy of auctioning the rights of revenue collection to the highest bidders. The Permanent Settlement of 1793 also had a similar effect in the beginning. The heaviness of land revenue—the Government claimed ten-elevenths of the rental—and the rigid law of collection, under which the zamindari estates were ruthlessly sold in case of delay in payment of revenue, worked havoc for the first few years. Many of the great zamindars of Bengal were utterly ruined. By 1815 nearly half of the landed property of Bengal had been transferred from the old zamindars, who had resided in the villages and who had traditions of showing some consideration to their tenants, to merchants and other moneyed classes, who usually lived in towns and who were quite ruthless in collecting to the last pie what was due from the tenant irrespective of difficult circumstances. Being utterly unscrupulous and possessing little sympathy for the tenants, they began to subject the latter to rack-renting and ejection.

The Permanent Settlement in North Madras and the Ryotwari Settlement in the rest of Madras were equally harsh on the local zamindars.

But the condition of the zamindars soon improved radically. In order to enable the zamindars to pay the land revenue in time, the authorities increased their power over the tenants by extinguishing the traditional rights of the tenants. The zamindars now set out to push up the rents to the utmost limit. Consequently, they rapidly grew in prosperity.

**In the Ryotwari** areas too the system of landlord-tenant relations spread gradually. As we have seen above, more and more land passed into the hands of money-lenders, merchants, and rich peasants who usually got the land cultivated by tenants. One reason why the Indian moneyed classes were keen to buy land and become landlords was the absence of effective outlets for investment of their capital in industry. Another process through which this landlordism spread was that of subletting. Many owner-cultivators and occupancy tenants, having a permanent right to hold land, found it more convenient to lease out land to land-hungry tenants at exorbitant rent than to cultivate it themselves. In time, landlordism became the main feature of agrarian relations not only in the zamindar areas but also in the Ryotwari areas.

A remarkable feature of the spread of landlordism was the growth of subinfeudation or intermediaries. Since the cultivating tenants were generally unprotected and the overcrowding of land led tenants to compete with one another to acquire land, the rent of land went on increasing. The zamindars and the new landlords found it convenient to sublet their right to collect rent to other eager persons on profitable terms. But as rents increased, sublessees of land their turn, sublet their rights in land. Thus by a chain-process a large number of rent-receiving intermediaries between the actual cultivator and the government sprang up. In some cases in Bengal their number went as high as fifty! The condition of the helpless cultivating tenants who had ultimately to bear the unbearable burden of maintaining this horde of superior landlords was precarious beyond imagination. Many of them were little better than slaves.

An extremely harmful consequence of the rise and growth of zamindars



# 12

## British Raj and National Movement 1857-1905

### British Rule

The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the full flowering of national political consciousness and the growth of an organised national movement in India. In December 1885 was born the Indian National Congress under whose leadership Indians waged a prolonged and courageous struggle for independence from foreign rule, which India finally won on 15 August 1947.

#### Consequence of Foreign Domination

Basically, modern Indian nationalism arose to meet the challenge of foreign domination. The very conditions of British rule helped the growth of national sentiment among the Indian people. It was British rule and its direct and indirect consequences which provided the material, moral and intellectual conditions for the development of a national movement in India.

The root of the matter lay in the clash of the interests of the Indian people with British interests in India. The British had conquered India to promote their own interests and they ruled it primarily with that purpose in view, often subordinating Indian welfare to British gain. The Indians realised gradually that their interests were being sacrificed to those of Lancashire manufacturers and other dominant British interests. They now began to recognise the evils of foreign rule. Many intelligent Indians saw that many of these evils could have been avoided and overcome if Indian and not foreign interests had guided the policies of the Indian Government.

The foundations of the Indian nationalist movement lay in the fact that increasingly British rule became the major cause of India's economic backwardness. It became the major barrier to India's further economic, social, cultural, intellectual, and political development. Moreover, this fact began to be recognised by an increasingly larger number of Indians.

Every class, every section of Indian society gradually discovered that its interests were suffering at the hands of the foreign rulers. The peasant saw that the Government took away a large part of his produce as land revenue; that the Government and its machinery—the police, the courts, the officials—favoured and protected the zamindars and landlords, who rack-rented him, and the merchants and money-lenders, who cheated and exploited him in diverse ways and who took away his land from him. Whenever the peasant struggled against landlord, money-lender oppression, the police and the army suppressed him in the name of law and order.

The artisan or the handicraftsman saw that the foreign regime had helped foreign competition to ruin him and had done nothing to rehabilitate him.

Later, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the worker in modern factories, mines, and plantations found that, in spite of lip sympathy, the Government sided with the capitalists, especially the foreign capitalists. Whenever he tried to organise trade unions and to improve his lot through strikes, demonstrations, and other struggles, Government machinery was freely used against him. Moreover, he soon realised that the growing unemployment could be checked only by rapid industrialisation which only an independent government could bring about.

All these three classes of Indian society—the peasants, the artisans, the workers, constituting the overwhelming majority of Indian population—discovered that they had no political rights or powers, and that virtually nothing was being done for their intellectual or cultural improvement. Education did not percolate down to them. There were hardly any schools in villages and the few that were there were poorly run. The doors of higher education were barred to them in practice. Moreover, many of them belonged to the lower castes and

had still to bear social and economic oppression by the upper castes.

Other sections of Indian society were no less dissatisfied. The rising intelligentsia—the educated Indians—used their newly acquired modern knowledge to understand the sad economic and political condition of their country. Those who had earlier, as in 1857, supported British rule in the hope that, though alien, it would modernise and industrialise the country were gradually disappointed. Economically, they had hoped that British capitalism would help develop India's productive forces as it had done at home. Instead, they found that British policies in India, guided by the British capitalists at home, were keeping the country economically backward or underdeveloped and checking the development of its productive forces. In fact, economic exploitation by Britain was increasing India's poverty. They began to complain of the extreme costliness of the Indian administration, of the excessive burden of taxation especially on the peasantry, of the destruction of India's indigenous industries, of official attempts to check the growth of modern industries through a pro-British tariff policy, of the neglect of nation-building and welfare activities such as education, irrigation, sanitation, and health services. In brief, they could see that Britain was reducing India to the status of an economic colony, a source of raw materials for British industries, a market for British manufactures, and a field for the investment of British capital. Consequently, they began to realise that so long as imperialist control of the Indian economy continued, it would not be possible to develop it, especially so far as industrialisation was involved.

Politically, educated Indians found that the British had abandoned all previous pretensions of guiding India towards self-government. Most of the British officials and political leaders openly declared that the British were in India to stay. Moreover, instead of increasing the freedom of speech, of the press, and of the person, the Government increasingly restricted them. British officials and writers declared Indians to be unfit for democracy or self-government. In the field of culture, the rulers were increasingly taking a negative and even hostile attitude towards higher education and the spread of modern ideas.

Moreover, the Indian intelligentsia suffered from growing unemployment. The few Indians who were educated were not able to find employment and even those who did find jobs discovered that most of the better paid jobs were reserved for the English middle and upper classes, who looked upon India as a special pasture for their sons. Thus, educated Indians found that the economic and cultural development of the country and its freedom from foreign control alone could provide them with better employment opportunities.

The rising Indian capitalist class was slow in developing a national political consciousness. But it too gradually saw that it was suffering at the hands of imperialism. Its growth was severely checked by the government trade, tariff, taxation, and transport policies. As a new and weak class it needed active government help to counterbalance many of its weaknesses. But no such help was given. Instead, the Government and its bureaucracy favoured foreign capitalists who came to India with their vast resources and appropriated the limited industrial field. The Indian capitalists were particularly opposed to the strong competition from foreign capitalists. In the 1940's many of the Indian industrialists demanded that "all British investments in India be repatriated." And, in 1945, M.A. Master, President of the Indian Merchants' Chamber warned: "India would prefer to go without industrial development rather than allow the creation of new East India Companies in this country, which would not only militate against her economic independence but would also effectively prevent her from acquiring her political freedom." The Indian capitalists too therefore realised that there existed a contradiction between imperialism and their own independent growth, and that only a national government would create conditions for the rapid development of Indian trade and industries.

The zamindars, landlords, and princes were the only section of Indian society whose interests coincided with those of the foreign rulers and who, therefore, on the whole supported foreign rule to the end. But even from these classes, many individuals joined the national movement. In the prevailing nationalist atmosphere, patriotism made an appeal to many. Moreover, policies of racial dominance and discrimination appalled and aroused every thinking and self-respecting Indian to whichever class he might belong. Most of all, the foreign character of the British regime in itself produced a nationalist reaction, since foreign domination invariably generates patriotic sentiments in the hearts of a subject people.

To sum up, it was as a result of the intrinsic nature of foreign imperialism and of its harmful impact on the lives of the Indian people that a powerful anti-imperialist movement gradually arose and developed in India. This movement was a national movement because it united people from different classes and sections of the society who sank their mutual differences to unite against the common enemy.

## Administrative and Economic Unification of the Country

Nationalist sentiments grew easily among the people because India was unified and welded into a nation during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The British had gradually introduced a uniform and modern system of government throughout the country and thus unified it administratively. The destruction of the rural and local self-sufficient economy and the introduction of modern trade and industries on an all-India scale had increasingly made India's economic life a single whole and inter-linked the economic fate of people living in different parts of the country. For example, if famine or scarcity occurred in one part of India, prices and availability of foodstuffs were affected in all other parts of the country too. This was not usually the case before the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Similarly, the products of a factory in Bombay were sold far north in Lahore or Peshawar. The lives of the workers and capitalists in Madras, Bombay, or Calcutta were closely linked with the lives of the countless peasants in rural India. Furthermore, introduction of the railways, telegraphs, and unified postal system had brought the different parts of the country together and promoted mutual contact among the people, especially among the leaders.

Here again, the very existence of foreign rule acted as a unifying factor. All over the country people saw that they were suffering at the hands of the same enemy—British rule. Thus anti-imperialist feeling was itself a factor in the unification of the country and the emergence of a common national outlook.

## Western Thought and Education

As a result of the spread of modern western education and thought during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a large number of Indians imbibed a modern rational, secular, democratic, and nationalist political outlook. They also began to study, admire, and emulate the contemporary nationalist movements of European nations. Rousseau, Paine, John Stuart Mill, and other western thinkers became their political guides, while Mazzini, Garibaldi, and Irish nationalist leaders became their political heroes.

These educated Indians were the first to feel the humiliation of foreign subjection. By becoming modern in their thinking, they also acquired the ability to study, the evil effects of foreign rule. They were inspired by the dream of a modern, strong, prosperous, and united India. In course of time, the best among them became the leaders and organisers of the national movement.

It should be clearly understood that it was not the modern educational system that created the national movement which was the product of the conflict of interests between Britain and India. That system only enabled the educated Indians to imbibe western thought and thus to assume the leadership of the national movement and to give it a democratic and modern direction. In fact, in the schools and colleges, the authorities tried to inculcate notions of docility and servility to foreign rule. Nationalist ideas were a part of the general spread of modern ideas. In other Asian countries such as China and Indonesia, and all over Africa, modern and nationalist ideas spread even though modern schools and colleges existed on a much smaller scale.

Modern education also created a certain uniformity and community of outlook and interests among the educated Indians. The English language played an important role in this respect. It became the medium for the spread of modern ideas. It also became the medium of communication and exchange of ideas between educated Indians from different linguistic regions of the country. This point should not, however, be over-emphasised. After all the educated Indians of the past also possessed a common language in the form of Sanskrit and later on Persian as well. Nor was English essential for the acquisition of modern scientific knowledge and thought. Other countries of Asia such as Japan and China were able to do so through translations into their own languages. In fact English soon became a barrier to the spread of modern knowledge among the common people. It also acted as a wall separating the educated urban people from the common people, especially in the rural areas. Consequently, it came about that modern ideas spread faster and deeper in many countries where they were propagated through indigenous languages than in India where emphasis on English confined them to a narrow urban section.

## Political leaders

From Dadabhai Naoroji, Sayyid Ahmed Khan, and Justice Ranade to Tilak and Gandhiji, they agitated for a bigger role for the Indian languages in the educational system. In fact, so far as the common people were concerned, the spread of modern ideas occurred through the developing Indian languages, the growing literature in them, and most of all the popular Indian language press. More important than a common

language was the fact that modern education introduced identical courses of study all over the country. The books prescribed in the new schools and colleges tended to give the students a common political and economic outlook. Consequently, educated Indians tended to have common views, feelings, aspirations and ideals.

## The Role of the Press and Literature

The chief instrument through which the nationalist-minded Indians spread the message of patriotism and modern economic, social and political ideas and created an all-India consciousness was the press. Large numbers of nationalist newspapers made their appearance during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In their columns, the official policies were constantly criticised; the Indian point of view was put forward; the people were asked to unite and work for national welfare; and ideas of self-government, democracy, industrialisation, etc., were popularised among the people. The press also enabled nationalist workers living in different parts of the country to exchange views with one another.

Some of the prominent nationalist newspapers of the period were the *Hindu Patriot*, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, the *Indian Mirror*, the *Bengalee*, the *Som Prakash* and the *Sanjivani* in Bengal; the *Past Goftar*, the *Native Opinion*, the *Indu Prakash*, the *Mahratta*, and the *Kesari* in Bombay; the *Hindu*, the *Swadesamitran*, the *Andhra Prakasika*, and the *Kerala Patrika* in Madras; the *Advocate*, the *Hindustani*, and the *Azad* in U. P.; and the *Tribune*, the *Akhbar-i-Am*, and the *Koh-i-Noor* in the Punjab.

National literature in the form of novels, essays, and patriotic poetry also played an important role in arousing national consciousness. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Rabindranath Tagore in Bengali, Lakshminath Bezbarua in Assamese; Vishnu Shastri Chiplunkar in Marathi, Sub-ramanya Bharati in Tamil; Bharatendu Harishchandra in Hindi; and Altaf Husain Hall in Urdu were some of the prominent nationalist writers of the period.

## Rediscovery of India's Past

Many Indians had fallen so low as to have lost confidence in their own capacity for self-government. Moreover, many British officials and writers of the time constantly advanced the thesis that Indians had never been able to rule themselves in the past, that Hindus and Muslims had always fought one another, that Indians were destined to be ruled by foreigners, that their religion and social life were degraded and uncivilised making them unfit for democracy or even self-government. Many of the nationalist leaders tried to arouse the self-confidence and self-respect of the people by countering this propaganda. They pointed to the cultural heritage of India with pride and referred the critics to the political achievements of rulers like Asoka, Chandragupta Vikramaditya, and Akbar. In this task they were helped and encouraged by the work of European and Indian scholars in rediscovering our national heritage in art, architecture, literature, philosophy, science, and politics. Unfortunately, some of the nationalists went to the other extreme and began to glorify India's past uncritically ignoring its weakness and backwardness. Great harm was done, in particular, by the tendency to look up only to the heritage of ancient India while ignoring the equally great achievements of the medieval period. This encouraged the growth of communal sentiments among the Hindus and the counter tendency among the Muslims of looking to the history of the Arabs and the Turks for cultural and historical inspiration. Moreover, in meeting the challenge of cultural imperialism of the West, many Indians tended to ignore the fact that in many respects the people of India were culturally backward. A false sense of pride and smugness was produced which tended to prevent Indians from looking critically at their society. This weakened the struggle against social and cultural backwardness, and led many Indians to turn away from healthy and fresh tendencies and ideas from other peoples.

## Racial Arrogance of the Rulers

An important though secondary factor in the growth of national sentiments in India was the tone of racial superiority adopted by many Englishmen in their dealings with Indians. Many Englishmen openly insulted even educated Indians and sometimes even assaulted them. A particularly odious and frequent form taken by racial arrogance was the failure of justice whenever an Englishman was involved in a dispute with an Indian. Indian newspapers often published instances in which an Englishman had hit and killed an Indian but escaped 'very lightly, often with a mere fine. This was not only because of conscious partiality by the judges and administrators but even more because of racial prejudice. As G.O. Trevelyan pointed out in 1864: "The testimony of a single one of our countrymen has more weight with the court than that of any number

of Hindus, a circumstance which puts a terrible instrument of power into the hands of an unscrupulous and grasping Englishman”.

Racial arrogance branded all Indians irrespective of their caste, religion, province, or class with the badge of inferiority. They were kept out of exclusively European clubs and were often not permitted to travel in the same compartment in a train with the European passengers. This made them conscious of national humiliation, and led them to think of themselves as one people when facing Englishmen.

## Immediate Factors

By the 1870's it was evident that Indian nationalism had gathered enough strength and momentum to appear as a major force on the Indian political scene. However, it required the reactionary regime of Lord Lytton to give it visible form and the controversy around the Ilbert Bill to make it take up an organised form.

During Lytton's viceroyalty from 1876-80 most of the import duties on British textile imports were removed to please the textile manufacturers of Britain. This action was interpreted by Indians as proof of the British desire to ruin the small but growing textile industry of India. It created a wave of anger in the country and led to widespread nationalist agitation. The Second War against Afghanistan aroused vehement agitation against the heavy cost of this imperialist war which the Indian Treasury was made to bear.

The Arms Act of 1878, which disarmed the people, appeared to them as an effort to emasculate the entire nation. The Vernacular Press Act of 1878 was condemned by the politically conscious Indians as an attempt to suppress the growing nationalist criticism of the alien government. The holding of the Imperial Durbar at Delhi in 1877 at a time when the country was suffering from a terrible famine led people to believe that their rulers cared very little even for their lives. In 1878, the government announced new regulations reducing the maximum age limit for sitting in the Indian Civil Service Examination from 21 years to 19. Already Indian students had found it difficult to compete with English boys since the examination was conducted in England and in English. The new regulations further reduced their chances of entering the Civil Service. The Indians now realised that the British had no intention of relaxing their near-total monopoly of the higher grades of services in the administration.

Thus, Lytton's viceroyalty helped intensify discontent against foreign rule. We may quote in this respect the words of Surendranath Banerjee, one of the founders of the national movement:

The reactionary administration of Lord Lytton had aroused the public from its attitude of indifference and had given a stimulus to public life. In the evolution of political progress, bad rulers are often a blessing in disguise. They help to stir a community into life, a result that years of agitation would perhaps have failed to achieve.

If Lytton fed the smouldering discontent against British rule, the spark was provided by the Ilbert Bill controversy. In 1883, Ripon, who succeeded Lytton as the Viceroy, tried to pass a law to enable Indian district magistrates and session judges to try Europeans in criminal cases. It was a very meagre effort to remove a glaring instance of racial discrimination. Under the existing law even Indian members of the Indian Civil Service were not authorised to try Europeans in their courts. The Europeans in India organised a vehement agitation against this Bill which came to be known after Ilbert, the Law Member. They poured abuse on Indians and their culture and character. They declared that even the most highly educated among the Indians were unfit to try a European. Some of them even organised a conspiracy to kidnap the Viceroy and deport him to England. In the end, the Government of India bowed before the Europeans and amended the Bill to meet their criticism.

The Indians were horrified at the racial bitterness displayed by the critics of the Bill. They also became more fully conscious of the degradation to which foreign rule had reduced them. They organised an all-India campaign in favour of the Bill. And, most of all, they learnt the useful lesson that to get their demands accepted by the Government they too must organise themselves on a national scale and agitate continuously and unitedly.

## Predecessors of the Indian National Congress

The Indian National Congress, founded in December 1885, was the first organised expression of the Indian National Movement on an all-India scale. It had, however, many predecessors.

As we have seen in an earlier chapter, Raja Rammohun Roy was the first Indian leader to start an agitation for political reforms in India. The earliest public association in modern India was the Landholders' Society—

an association of the landlords of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, founded in 1837 with the purpose of promoting the class interests of the landlords. Then, in 1843, was organised the Bengal British Indian Society to protect and promote general public interests. These two organisations merged in 1851 to form, the British India Association. Similarly, the Madras Native Association and the Bombay Association were established in 1852. Similar, though lesser known clubs and associations, such as the Scientific Society founded by Sayyid Ahmad Khan, were established in different towns and parts of the country. All these associations were dominated by wealthy and aristocratic elements—called in those days ‘prominent persons’—and were provincial or local in character. They worked for reform of administration, association of Indians with the administration, and spread of education, and sent long petitions, putting forward Indian demands, to the British Parliament.

The period after 1858 witnessed a gradual widening of the gulf between the educated Indians and the British Indian administration. As the educated Indians studied the character of British rule and its consequences for the Indians, they became more and more critical of British policies in India. The discontent gradually found expression in political activity. The existing associations no longer satisfied the politically-conscious Indians.

In 1866, Dadabhai Naoroji organised the East India Association in London to discuss the Indian question and to influence British public men to promote Indian welfare. Later he organised branches of the Association in prominent Indian cities.

## Dadabhai Naurogi

Born in 1825, Dadabhai devoted his entire life to the national movement and soon came to be known as the Grand Old Man of India. He was also India’s first economic thinker. In his writings on economics he showed that the basic cause of India’s poverty lay in the British exploitation of India and the drain of its wealth. Dadabhai was honoured by being thrice elected president of the Indian National Congress. In fact he was the first of the long line of popular nationalist leaders of India whose very name stirred the hearts of the people.

Justice Ranade and others organised the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha in the 1870’s. The Madras Mahajan Sabha was started in 1881 and the Bombay Presidency Association in 1885. These organisations were mainly devoted to criticism of important administrative and legislative measures. The Poona Sarvajanik Sabha brought out a quarterly journal under the guidance of Justice Ranade. This journal became the intellectual guide of new India particularly on economic questions.

The most important of the pre-Congress nationalist organisations was the Indian Association of Calcutta. The younger nationalists of Bengal had been gradually getting discontented with the conservative and pro-landlord policies of the British India Association. They wanted sustained political agitation on issues of wider public interest. They found a leader in Surendranath Banerjea who was a brilliant writer and orator. He was unjustly turned out of the Indian Civil Service as his superiors could not tolerate the presence of an independent-minded Indian in the ranks of this service. He began his public career in 1875 by delivering brilliant addresses on nationalist topics to the students of Calcutta, led by Surendranath and Anandamohan Bose, the younger nationalists of Bengal founded the Indian Association in July 1876. The Indian Association set before itself the aims of creating a strong public opinion in the country on political questions and the unification of the Indian people on a common political programme. In order to attract large numbers of people to its banner, it fixed a low membership fee for the poorer classes.

The first major issue it took up for agitation was the reform of the Civil Service regulations and the raising of the age limit for its examination. Surendranath Banerjea toured different parts of the country during 1877-78 in an effort to create an all-India public opinion on this question.

The Indian Association also carried out agitation against the Arms Act and the Vernacular Press Act and in favour of protection of the tenants from oppression by the zamindars. During 1883-85 it organised popular demonstrations of thousands of peasants to get the Rent Bill changed in favour of the tenants. It also agitated for better conditions of work for the workers in the English-owned tea plantations where conditions of near-slavery prevailed. Many branches of the Association were opened in the towns and villages of Bengal and also in many towns outside Bengal.

The time was now ripe for the formation of an all-India political organisation of the nationalists who felt the need to unite politically against the common enemy—foreign rule and exploitation. The existing organisations had served a useful purpose but they were narrow in their scope and functioning. They dealt mostly with local questions and their membership and leadership were confined to a few people belonging to a single city or

province. Even the Indian Association had not succeeded in becoming an all-Indian body.

The Indian Association sponsored an all-India National Conference at Calcutta in December 1883. This Conference was attended by several leaders from outside Bengal. It adopted a programme very similar to the one adopted by the Indian National Congress with which it merged in 1886. It did not, however, succeed in becoming a representative body of political workers and leaders all over the country.

## The Indian National Congress

Many Indians had been planning to form an all-India organisation of nationalist political workers. But the credit for giving the idea a concrete and final shape goes to A.O. Hume, a retired English Civil Servant. He got in touch with prominent Indian leaders and organised with their cooperation the first session of the Indian National Congress at Bombay in December 1885. It was presided over by W.C. Bonnerjee and attended by 72 delegates. The aims of the National Congress were declared to be the promotion of friendly relations between nationalist political workers' from different parts of the country, development and consolidation of the feeling of national unity irrespective of caste, religion, or province, formulation of popular demands and their presentation before the Government, and, most important of all, the training and organisation of public opinion in the country.

One of the main aims of Hume in helping to found the National Congress was to provide an outlet—'a safety valve'—to the increasing popular discontent against British rule. Already in 1879, Wasudeo Balwant Phadke, a clerk in the commissariat department, had gathered a band of Ramoshi peasants and started an armed uprising in Maharashtra. Though this crude and ill prepared attempt was easily crushed, it was a portent of events to come. Hume as well as other English officials and statesmen were afraid that the educated Indians might provide leadership to the masses and organise a powerful rebellion against the foreign government. As Hume put it: "A safety valve for the escape of great and growing forces generated by our own action was urgently needed." He believed that the National Congress would provide a peaceful and constitutional outlet to the discontent among the educated Indians and would thus help to avoid the outbreak of a popular revolt.

The 'safety valve' theory is, however, a small part of the truth. More than anything else, the National Congress represented the urge of the politically conscious Indians to set up a national organisation to work for their political and economic advancement. We have already seen above that a national movement was already growing in the country as a result of the working of powerful forces. No one man or group of men can be given credit for creating this movement. Even Hume's motives were mixed ones. He was also moved by motives nobler than those of the 'safety valve'. He possessed a sincere love for India and its poor cultivators. In any case, the Indian leaders, who cooperated with Hume in starting this National Congress, were patriotic men of high character who willingly accepted Hume's help as they did not want to arouse official hostility towards their efforts at so early a stage of political activity.

Thus with the foundation of the National Congress in 1885, the struggle for India's freedom from foreign rule was launched in a small but organised manner. The national movement was to grow and the country and its people were to know no rest till freedom was won.

Surendranath Banerjea and many other leaders of Bengal had not attended the first session of the National Congress as they were busy with the Second National Conference at Calcutta. In 1886 they merged their forces with those of the National Congress whose second session met in Calcutta in December 1886 under the presidency of Dadabhai Naoroji. From this session the National Congress became 'the whole country's Congress'. Its delegates, numbering 436, were elected by different local organisations and groups. Hereafter, the National Congress met every year in December, in a different part of the country each time. The number of its delegates soon increased to thousands. Its delegates consisted mostly of lawyers, journalists, traders, industrialists, teachers, and landlords. In 1890, Kadambini Ganguli, the first woman graduate of Calcutta University, addressed the Congress session. This was symbolic of the fact that India's struggle for freedom would raise Indian women from the degraded position to which they had been reduced for centuries past.

The Indian National Congress was not the only channel through which the stream of nationalism flowed. Provincial conferences, provincial and local associations, and nationalist newspapers were the other prominent organs of the growing nationalist movement. The press, in particular, was a powerful factor in developing nationalist opinion and the nationalist movement. Some of the great presidents of the National Congress during its early years were Dadabhai Naoroji, Badruddin Tyabji, Pherozeshah Mehta, P. Ananda Charlu, Surendranath Banerjea, Ramesh Chandra Dutt, Ananda Mohan Bose, and Gopal Krishna Gokhale. Other

prominent leaders of the Congress and the national movement during this period were Mohadev Govind Ranade, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the brothers Sisir Kumar and Motilal Ghosh, Madan Mohan Malaviya, G. Subramaniya Iyer, C. Vijayaraghavachariar, and Dinshaw E. Wacha.

The programme of the Indian national movement during its early phase (1885-1905) can be studied under various heads.

### Constitutional Reforms

The early nationalists wanted a larger share in the government of their own country and made an appeal to the principle of democracy. But they did not ask for the immediate fulfilment of their goal. Their immediate demands were extremely moderate. They hoped to win freedom through gradual steps. They were also extremely cautious, lest the Government suppress their activities. From 1885 to 1892 they demanded the expansion and reform of the Legislative Councils. They demanded membership of the councils for elected representatives of the people and also an increase in the powers of the councils.

The British Government was forced by their agitation to pass the Indian Councils Act of 1892. By this Act the number of members of the Imperial Legislative Council as well as of the provincial councils was increased. Some of these members could be elected indirectly by Indians, but the officials' majority remained. The councils were also given the right to discuss the annual budgets though they could not vote on them.

The nationalists were totally dissatisfied with the Act of 1892 and declared it to be a hoax. They demanded a larger share for Indians in the councils as also wider powers for them. In particular, they demanded Indian control over the public purse and raised the slogan that had earlier become the national cry of the American people during their War of Independence: 'No taxation without representation.'

By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the nationalist leaders advanced further and put forward the claim for *swarajya* or self-government within the British Empire on the model of self-governing colonies like Australia and Canada. This demand was made from the Congress platform by Gokhale in 1905 and by Dadabhai Naoroji in 1906.

### Economic Reforms

In the economic field, the early nationalists complained of India's growing poverty and economic backwardness and the failure of modern industry and agriculture to grow; and they put the blame on the policies of the British rulers. Thus Dadabhai Naoroji declared as early as 1881 that British rule was "an everlasting, increasing, and every day increasing foreign invasion" that was "utterly, though gradually, destroying the country." The nationalists' blamed the British for the destruction of India's indigenous industries. The chief remedy suggested for the removal of India's poverty was the rapid development of modern industries. They wanted the government to promote modern industries through tariff protection and direct government aid. They popularised the idea of *swadeshi* or the use of Indian goods and the boycott of British goods as a means of promoting Indian industries. For example, students in Poona and in other towns of Maharashtra publicly burnt foreign clothes in 1896 as part of the larger *swadeshi* campaign.

The nationalists complained that India's wealth was being drained to England, and demanded that this drain be stopped. They carried on persistent agitation for the reduction of land revenue in order to lighten the burden of taxation on the peasant. They also agitated for improvement in the conditions of work of the plantation labourers. They declared high taxation to be one of the causes of India's poverty and demanded abolition of the salt tax and reduction of land revenue. They condemned the high military expenditure of the Government of India and demanded its reduction. As time passed more and more nationalists came to the conclusion that economic exploitation and impoverishment of the country and the perpetuation of its economic backwardness by foreign imperialism more than outweighed some of the beneficial aspects of the alien rule. Thus, regarding the benefits of security of life and property, Dadabhai Naoroji remarked:

The *romance* is that there is security of life and property in India; the reality is that there is no such thing. There is security of life and property in one sense or way—i.e., the people are secure from any violence from each other or from Native despots, but from England's own grasp there is no security of property at all and, as a consequence, no security for life. India's property is not secure. What is secure, and well secure, is that England is perfectly safe and secure, and does so with perfect security, to carry away from India, and to eat up in India, her property at the present rate of £30,000,000 or £40,000,000 a year. I therefore venture to submit that India *does not* enjoy security of her property and life. To millions in India life is simply "half-feeding", or starvation, or famine and disease.

### **With regard to law and order, Dadabhai said:**

There is an Indian saying. 'Pray strike on the back, but don't strike on the belly.' Under the native despot the people keep and enjoy what they produce, though at times they suffer some violence on the back Under the British Indian despot the man is at peace, there is no violence; his substance is drained away, unseen, peaceably and subtly—he starves in peace and perishes in peace, with law and order !

### **Administrative and other Reforms**

The most important administrative reform the Indians desired at this time was Indianisation of the higher grades of administrative services. They put forward this demand on economic, political and moral grounds economically, the European monopoly of the higher services was harmful on two grounds,

(a) Europeans were paid at very high rates and this made Indian administration very costly Indians of similar qualifications could be employed on lower salaries;

(b) Europeans sent out of India a large part of their salaries and their pensions were paid in England. This added to the drain of wealth from India Politically, the nationalists hoped that the Indianisation of these services would make the administration more responsive to Indian needs The moral aspect of the question was stated by Gopal Krishna Gokhale in 1897:

The excessive costliness of the foreign agency is not, however, its only evil. There is a moral evil which, if anything, is even greater A kind of dwarfing or stunting of the Indian race is going on under the present system. We must live all the days of our life in an atmosphere of inferiority, and the tallest of us must bend., The full height of which our manhood is capable of rising can never be reached by us under the present system The moral elevation which every self- governing people feel cannot be felt by us Our administrative and military talents must gradually disappear, owing to sheer disuse, till at last our lot, as hewers of wood and drawers of water in our own country, is stereo typed.

The nationalists demanded separation of the judicial from executive powers. They opposed the curtailment of the powers of the juries. They opposed the official policy of disarming the people and asked the government to trust the people and grant them the right to bear arms and thus defend themselves and their country in times of need.

They urged the government to undertake and develop welfare activities of the state. They laid a great deal of emphasis on the spread of primary education among the masses. They also demanded greater facilities for technical and higher education.

They urged the development of agricultural banks to save the peasant from the clutches of the money-lender. They wanted the government to undertake a large-scale programme of extension of irrigation for the development of agriculture and to save the country from famines. They demanded extension of medical and health facilities and improvement of the police system to make it honest, efficient, and popular.

The nationalist leaders also spoke up in defence of Indian workers who had been compelled by poverty to migrate to foreign countries such as South Africa, Malaya, Mauritius, the West Indies and British Guiana in search of employment. In many of these foreign lands they were subjected to severe oppression and racial discrimination. This was particularly true of South Africa where Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was leading a popular struggle in defence of the basic human rights of the Indians.

### **Defence of Civil Rights**

The early nationalists fully recognised the value of the freedoms of speech and the press and opposed all attempts to curtail them. In fact, the struggle for these freedoms became an integral part of the nationalist struggle for freedom. In 1897 the Bombay Government arrested B.G. Tilak and several other leaders and tried them for spreading disaffection against the government through their speeches and writings. They were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. At the same time two Poona leaders, the Natu brothers, were deported without trial. The entire country protested against this attack on the liberties of the people. Tilak, hitherto known largely in Maharashtra, became over-night an all-India leader. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* wrote: "There is scarcely a home in this vast country, where Mr. Tilak is not now the subject of melancholy talk and where his imprisonment is not considered as a domestic calamity." Tilak's arrest, in fact, galvanised the country and marked the beginning of a new phase of the nationalist movement.

## Methods of Political Work

The Indian national movement up to 1905 was dominated by leaders who have often been described as moderate nationalists or Moderates. The political methods of the Moderates can be summed up briefly as constitutional agitation within the four walls of the law, and slow, orderly political progress. They believed that if public opinion was created and organised and popular demands presented to the authorities through petitions, meetings, resolutions, and speeches, the authorities would concede these demands gradually and step by step.

Their political work had, therefore, a two-pronged direction., Firstly, to build up a strong public opinion in India to arouse the political consciousness and national spirit of the people, and to educate and unite them on political questions. Basically, even the resolutions and petitions of the National Congress were directed towards this goal. Secondly, to persuade the British Government to introduce reforms along directions laid down by the nationalists. The moderate nationalists believed that the British people and Parliament wanted to be just to India but that they did not know the true state of affairs there. Therefore, next to educating Indian 'public opinion, the moderate nationalists worked to educate British public opinion. For this purpose, they carried on active propaganda in Britain. Deputations of leading Indians were sent to Britain to propagate the Indian view. In 1889, a British Committee of the Indian National Congress was founded. In 1890 this Committee started a journal called *India*. Dadabhai Naoroji spent a major part of his life and income in England in popularising India's case among its people.

## Evaluation of the Early National Movement

According to some critics, the nationalist movement and the National Congress did not achieve much success in their early phase. Very few of the reforms for which the nationalists agitated were introduced by the government. Critics also point out that the national movement during these years had no roots among the masses.

There is a great deal of truth in this criticism. But the critics are not quite correct in declaring the early national movement a failure. It succeeded in creating a wide national awakening, in arousing among the people the feeling that they belonged to one common nation—the Indian nation. It trained people in the art of political work, popularised among them the ideas of democracy and nationalism, propagated among them a modern outlook and exposed before them the evil results of British rule. Most of all, it made people recognise the economic content and character of British imperialism—that Britain was making India a supplier of raw materials, a market for British manufacture, and a field for investment of British capital. It evolved a common political and economic programme around which the Indian people could gather and wage political struggles later on. It established the political truth that India must be ruled in the interests of the Indians. It made the issue of nationalism a dominant one in Indian life. While its weaknesses were to be removed by the succeeding generations, its achievements were to serve as a base for a more vigorous national movement in later years.



# 13

## Religious and social Reform in New India After 1857

### Introduction

IMPACT of modern Western culture soon gave birth to a new awakening in India. Western conquest exposed the weakness and decay of Indian society, Thoughtful Indians began to look for the defects of their society and for ways and means of removing them. While large number of Indians refused to come to terms with the West and still put their faith in traditional Indian ideas and institutions, others gradually came to hold that modern Western thought provided the key to the regeneration of their society. They were impressed in particular by modern science and the doctrines of reason and humanism. Moreover, the new social groups—the capitalist class, the working class, the modern intelligentsia—demanded modernisation since their own interests demanded it.

The central figure in this awakening was Rammohan Roy, who is rightly regarded as the first great leader of modern India. Rammohun Roy was moved by deep love for his people and country and worked hard all his life for their social, religious, intellectual, and political regeneration. He was pained by the stagnation and corruption of contemporary Indian society which was at that time dominated by caste and convention. Popular religion was full of superstitions and was exploited by ignorant and corrupt priests. The upper classes were selfish and often sacrificed social interest to their own narrow interests.

Nowadays most girls from middle-class families go to school, and often study with boys. On growing up, many of them go to colleges and universities, and take up jobs after that. They have to be adults before they are legally married, and according to law, they can marry anyone they like, from any caste and community, and widows can remarry too. All women, like all men, can vote and stand for elections. Of course, these rights are not actually enjoyed by all. Poor people have little or no access to education, and in many families, women cannot choose their husbands. Two hundred years ago things were very different. Most children were married off at an early age. Both Hindu and Muslim men could marry more than one wife. In some parts of the country, widows were praised if they chose death by burning themselves on the funeral pyre of their husbands. Women who died in this manner, whether willingly or otherwise, were called “sati”, meaning virtuous women. Women’s rights to property were also restricted. Besides, most women had virtually no access to education. In many parts of the country people believed that if a woman was educated, she would become a widow.

Differences between men and women were not the only ones in society. In most regions, people were divided along lines of caste. Brahmins and Kshatriyas considered themselves as “upper castes”. Others, such as traders and moneylenders (often referred to as Vaishyas) were placed after them. Then came peasants, and artisans such as weavers and potters (referred to as Shudras). At the lowest rung were those who laboured to keep cities and villages clean or worked at jobs that upper castes considered “polluting”, that is, it could lead to the loss of caste status. The upper castes also treated many of these groups at the bottom as “untouchable”. They were not allowed to enter temples, draw water from the wells used by the upper castes, or bathe in ponds where upper castes bathed. They were seen as inferior human beings. Over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many of these norms and perceptions slowly changed. Let us see how this happened.

### SOCIAL SYSTEM:

Women, Caste and Reform Have you ever thought of how children lived about two hundred years ago? Now a days most girls from middle-class families go to school, and often study with boys. On growing up, many of them go to colleges and universities, and take up jobs after that. They have to be adults before they are legally married, and according to law, they can marry anyone they like, from any caste and community, and widows can remarry too. All women, like all men, can vote and stand for elections. Of course, these rights are not

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They were seen as inferior human beings. Over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many of these norms and perceptions slowly changed. Let us see how this happened. Working Towards Change From the early nineteenth century, we find debates and discussions about social customs and practices taking on a new character. One important reason for this was the development of new forms of communication. For the first time, books, newspapers, magazines, leaflets and pamphlets were printed.

Therefore ordinary people could read these, and many of them could also write and express their ideas in their own languages.

All kinds of issues – social, political, economic and religious – could now be debated and discussed by men (and sometimes by women as well) in the new cities.

The discussions could reach out to a wider public, and could become linked to movements for social change.

These debates were often initiated by Indian reformers and reform groups.

## **Working Towards Change**

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## **Rammohun Roy**

The central figure in this awakening was Rammohun Roy, who is rightly regarded as the first great leader of modern India. Rammohun Roy was moved by deep love for his people and country and worked hard all his life for their social, religious, intellectual, and political regeneration.

All his life Rammohun Roy paid heavily for his daring religious outlook. The orthodox condemned him for criticising idolatry and for his philosophic admiration of Christianity and Islam. They organised a social boycott against him in which even his mother joined. He was branded a heretic and an outcaste.

. In 1829 he founded a new religious reform society known as the Brahma Sabha (later known as the Brahma Samaj) in Calcutta. People such as Rammohun Roy are described as reformers because they felt that changes were necessary in society, and unjust practices needed to be done away with. They thought that the best way to ensure such changes was by persuading people to give up old practices and adopt a new way of life.

## Changing the lives of widows

Rammohun Roy was particularly moved by the problems widows faced in their lives. He began a campaign against the practice of sati. Rammohun Roy was well versed in Sanskrit, Persian and several other Indian and European languages. He tried to show through his writings that the practice of widow burning had no sanction in ancient texts. By the early nineteenth century, as you have read in Chapter 7, many British officials had also begun to criticise Indian traditions and customs. They were therefore more than willing to listen to Rammohun who was reputed to be a learned man. In 1829, sati was banned. The strategy adopted by Rammohun was used by later reformers as well. Whenever they wished to challenge a practice that seemed harmful, they tried to find a verse or sentence in the ancient sacred texts that supported their point of view. They then suggested that the practice as it existed at present was against early tradition.

Source 1

“We first tie them down to the pile”

Rammohun Roy published many pamphlets to spread his ideas. Some of these were written as a dialogue between the advocate and critic of a traditional practice. Here is one such dialogue on sati:

**ADVOCATE OF SATI:**

Women are by nature of inferior understanding, without resolution, unworthy of trust ... Many of them, on the death of their husbands, become desirous of accompanying them; but to remove every chance of their trying to escape from the blazing fire, in burning them we first tie them down to the pile.

**OPPONENT OF SATI:**

When did you ever afford them a fair opportunity of exhibiting their natural capacity? How then can you accuse them of want of understanding? If, after instruction in knowledge and wisdom, a person cannot comprehend or retain what has been taught him, we may consider him as deficient; but if you do not educate women how can you see them as inferior.

For instance, one of the most famous reformers, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, used the ancient texts to suggest that widows could remarry. His suggestion was adopted by British officials, and a law was passed in 1856 permitting widow remarriage. Those who were against the remarriage of widows opposed Vidyasagar, and even boycotted him. By the second half of the nineteenth century, the movement in favour of widow remarriage spread to other parts of the country. In the Telugu-speaking areas of the Madras Presidency, Veerasalingam Pantulu formed an association for widow remarriage. Around the same time young intellectuals and reformers in Bombay pledged themselves to working for the same cause. In the north, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, who founded the reform association called Arya Samaj, also supported widow remarriage. Yet, the number of widows who actually remarried remained low. Those who married were not easily accepted in society and conservative groups continued to oppose the new law.

### Ishwar chandra Vidyasagar

### Girls begin going to school

Many of the reformers felt that education for girls was necessary in order to improve the condition of women. Vidyasagar in Calcutta and many other reformers in Bombay set up schools for girls. When the first schools were opened in the mid-nineteenth century, many people were afraid of them. They feared that schools would

take girls away from home, prevent them from doing their domestic duties. Moreover, girls had to travel through public places in order to reach school. Many people felt that this would have a corrupting influence on them. They felt that girls should stay away from public spaces.

Therefore, throughout the nineteenth century, most educated women were taught at home by liberal fathers or husbands. Sometimes women taught themselves. Do you remember what you read about Rashsundari Debi in your book *Social and Political Life* last year? She was one of those who secretly learned to read and write in the flickering light of candles at night.

In the latter part of the century, schools for girls were established by the Arya Samaj in Punjab, and Jyotirao Phule in Maharashtra. In aristocratic Muslim households in North India, women learnt to read the Koran in Arabic. They were taught by women who came home to teach. Some reformers such as Mumtaz Ali reinterpreted verses from the Koran to argue for women's education. The first Urdu novels began to be written from the late nineteenth century. Amongst other things, these were meant to encourage women to read about religion and domestic management in a language they could understand.

## Ramakrishna and Vivekananda

Ramakrishna Parmhansa (1834-1886) was a saintly person who sought religious salvation in the traditional ways of renunciation, meditation, and devotion (*bhakti*). In his search for religious truth or the realisation of God he lived with mystics of other faiths, Muslims and Christians. He again and again emphasised that there were, many roads to God and salvation and that service of man was service of God, for man was the embodiment of God.

It was his great disciple, Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), whose original name was Narendra Nath Dutta, combined the simple teachings of Sri Ramakrishna with his well founded modern outlook and spread them all over the world, who popularised his religious message and who tried to put it in a form that would suit the needs of contemporary Indian society. Above all, Vivekananda stressed social action. Knowledge unaccompanied by action in the actual world in which we lived was useless, he said. He too, like his guru, proclaimed the essential oneness of all religions and condemned any narrowness in religious matters. Thus, he wrote in 1898, "For our own motherland a junction of the two great systems, Hinduism and Islam... is the only hope." At the same time, he was convinced of the superior approach of the Indian philosophical tradition.

After hearing him in the World Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893, the New York Herald reported, "We feel how foolish it is to send missionaries to this learned nation". Indeed, Swami Vivekananda was the first Indian in modern times, who re-established the spiritual pre-eminence of the Vedanta philosophy on a global scale. But his mission was not simply to talk of religion. He was extremely pained at the poverty and the misery of his country men. He firmly believed that any reform could become successful only by uplifting the condition of the masses.

He himself subscribed to *Vedanta* which he declared to be a fully rational system.

Vivekananda criticised Indians, for having lost touch youth the rest of the world and become stagnant and mummified.

He wrote: "The fact of our isolation from all other nations of the world is the cause of our degeneration and its only remedy is getting back into the current of the rest of the world. Motion is the sign of life."

Vivekananda condemned the caste system and the current Hindu emphasis on rituals, ceremonies, and superstitions, and urged the people to imbibe the spirit of liberty, equality, and free-thinking. -Thus he bitingly remarked:

There is a danger of our religion getting into the kitchen. We are neither Vedantists, most of us now, nor Pauranics, nor Tantrics. We are just "don't touchists". Our religion is in the kitchen. Our God is in the cooking-pot, and our religion is "Don't touch me, I am holy". If this goes on for another century, everyone of us will be in a lunatic asylum.

### Regarding liberty of thought, he said:

'Liberty in thought and action is the only condition of life, growth and well being: Where it does not exist, the man, the race, and the nation must go down.

In 1896, Vivekananda founded the Ramakrishana Mission to carry on humanitarian relief and social work.

The Mission had many branches in different parts of the country and carried on social service by opening schools, hospitals and dispensaries, orphanages, libraries, etc. It thus laid emphasis not on personal salvation but on social good or social service.

## Swami Dayanand and Arya Samaj

The Arya Samaj undertook the task of reforming Hindu religion in North India. It was founded in 1875 by Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824-1883). Swami Dayanand believed that selfish and ignorant priests had perverted Hindu religion with the aid of the Puranas which he said were full of false teachings. For his own inspiration, Swami Dayanand went to the Vedas which he regarded as infallible, being the inspired word of God, and as the fount of, all knowledge. He rejected all later religious thought if it conflicted with the Vedas. This total dependence on the Vedas -and their infallibility gave his teachings an, orthodox colouring, for infallibility meant that human reason was not to be the final deciding factor. However, his approach had a rationalist aspect, because the Vedas, though repealed, were to be interpreted, by himself and others.

## Theosophical Society

The Theosophical Society was founded in the United States by Madam j H.P. Blavatsky and Colonel H.S. Olcott, who later came to India and , founded the headquarters of the Society at Adyar near Madras in 1886. The Theosophist movement soon grew in India as a result of the leadership given to it by Mrs. Annie Besant who had come to India in 1893. The Theosophists advocated the revival and strengthening of the ancient religion's of Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, and Buddhism. They recognised the doctrine of the transmigration of the soul. They also preached the universal brotherhood of man. As religious revivalists the Theosophists were not very successful. But they made a peculiar contribution to developments in modern India. It was a movement led by westerners who glorified Indian religions and philosophical tradition. This helped Indians recover their self-confidence, even though it tended to give them a sense of false pride in their past greatness. One of Mrs. Besant's many achievements in India was the establishment of the Central Hindu School at Benaras which was later developed by Madan Mohan Malaviya into the Benaras Hindu University.

## Sayyid Ahmad Khan and the Aligarh School

Movements for religious reform were late in emerging among the Muslims. The Muslim upper classes had tended to avoid contact with western education and culture, and it was mainly after the Revolt of 1857 that modern ideas of religious reform began to appear. A beginning in this direction was made when the Muhammedan Literary Society was founded at Calcutta in 1863. This Society promoted discussion of religious, social, and political questions in the light of modern ideas and encouraged upper and middle class Muslims to take to western education.

The most important reformer among the Muslims was Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898). He was tremendously impressed by modern scientific thought and worked all his life to reconcile it with Islam. This he did, first of all, by declaring that the Quran alone was the authoritative work for Islam and all other Islamic writings were secondary. Even the Quran he interpreted in the light of contemporary rationalism and science. In his view any interpretation of the Quran that conflicted with human reason, science or nature was in reality a misinterpretation. All his life he struggled against blind obedience to tradition, dependence on custom, ignorance and irrationalism. He urged the people to develop a critical approach and freedom of thought. "So long as freedom of thought is not developed, there can be no civilized life," he declared. He also warned against fanaticism, narrow-mindedness, and exclusiveness, and urged students and others to be broadminded and tolerant. A closed mind, he said, was the hallmark of social and intellectual backwardness. Praising the study of world classics, he remarked:

The student will learn to appreciate the temper with which great minds approach the consideration of great questions, he will discover that truth is many-sided, that it is not identical or merely coextensive with individual opinion and that world is a good deal wider than his own society or class.

## Religious Reform among the Parsis

Religious reform was begun among the Parsis in Bombay in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1851 the Rehnumai Mazdayasan Sabha or Religious Reform Association was started by Naoroji Furdonji, Dadabhai

Naoroji, S.S. Bengalee, and others. It campaigned against the entrenched orthodoxy in the religious field and initiated the modernisation of Parsi social customs regarding the education of women, marriage and the social position of women in general. In course of time, the Parsis became socially the most westernised section of Indian society.

## Religious Reform among the Sikhs

Religious reform among the Sikhs was begun at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the Khalsa College was started at Amritsar. But the reform effort gained momentum after 1920 when the Akah Movement rose in the Punjab. The main aim of the Akalis was to purify the management of the *gurudwaras* or Sikh shrines. These *gurudwaras* had been heavily endowed with land and money by devout Sikhs. But they had come to be managed autocratically by corrupt and selfish *mahanis*. The Sikh masses led by the Akalis started in 1921 a powerful Satyagraha against the *mahants* and the Government which came to their aid. The Akalis soon forced the Government to pass a new Sikh Gurudwaras Act in 1922 which was later amended in 1925. Sometimes with the aid of this Act, but often through direct action, the Sikhs gradually turned out of the *gurudwaras* the corrupt *mahants*, even though hundreds of lives had to be sacrificed in the process.

Apart from the reform movements and individual reformers discussed above, there were numerous other similar movements and individuals during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

## Women write about women

From the early twentieth century, Muslim women like the Begums of Bhopal played a notable role in promoting education among women. They founded a primary school for girls at Aligarh. Another remarkable woman, Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain started schools for Muslim girls in Patna and Calcutta. She was a fearless critic of conservative ideas, arguing that religious leaders of every faith accorded an inferior place to women.

By the 1880s, Indian women began to enter universities. Some of them trained to be doctors, some became teachers. Many women began to write and publish their critical views on the place of women in society. Tarabai Shinde, a woman educated at home at Poona, published a book, *Stripurushtulna*, (A Comparison between Women and Men), criticising the social differences between men and women.

## Pandita Ramabai

### Law against child marriage



Fig. - Bride at the age of eight

With the growth of women's organisations and writings on these issues, the momentum for reform gained strength. People challenged another established custom - that of child marriage. There were a number of Indian legislators in the Central Legislative Assembly who fought to make a law preventing child marriage. In 1929 the Child Marriage Restraint Act was passed without the kind of bitter debates and struggles that earlier laws had seen. According to the Act no man below the age of 18 and woman below the age of 16 could marry. Subsequently these limits were raised to 21 for men and 18 for women.

This is a picture of a child bride at the beginning of the twentieth century. Did you know that even today over 20 per cent of girls in India are married below the age of 18?

**Pandita Ramabai**, a great scholar of Sanskrit, felt that Hinduism was oppressive towards women, and wrote a book about the miserable lives of upper-caste Hindu women. She founded a widows' home at Poona to provide shelter to widows who had been treated badly by their husbands' relatives. Here women were trained so that they could support themselves economically. Needless to say, all this more than alarmed the orthodox. For instance, many Hindu nationalists felt that Hindu women were adopting Western ways and that this would corrupt Hindu culture and erode family values. Orthodox Muslims were also worried about the impact

of these changes. As you can see, by the end of the nineteenth century, women themselves were actively working for reform. They wrote books, edited magazines, founded schools and training centres, and set up women's associations. From the early twentieth century, they formed political pressure groups to push through laws for female suffrage (the right to vote) and better health care and education for women. Some of them joined various kinds of nationalist and socialist movements from the 1920s. In the twentieth century, leaders such as Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose lent their support to demands for greater equality and freedom for women. Nationalist leaders promised that there would be full suffrage for all men and women after Independence. However, till then they asked women to concentrate on the anti-British struggles.

## Caste and Social Reform

Some of the social reformers we have been discussing also criticised caste inequalities. Rammohun Roy translated an old Buddhist text that was critical of caste. The Prarthana Samaj adhered to the tradition of Bhakti that believed in spiritual equality of all castes. In Bombay, the Paramhans Mandali was founded in 1840 to work for the abolition of caste. Many of these reformers and members of reform associations were people of upper castes. Often, in secret meetings, these reformers would violate caste taboos on food and touch, in an effort to get rid of the hold of caste prejudice in their lives. There were also others who questioned the injustices of the caste social order. During the course of the nineteenth century, Christian missionaries began setting up schools for tribal groups and "lower"-caste children. These children were thus equipped with some resources to make their way into a changing world.

At the same time, the poor began leaving their villages to look for jobs that were opening up in the cities. There was work in the factories that were coming up, and jobs in municipalities. Think of the new demands of labour this created. Drains had to be dug, roads laid, buildings constructed, and cities cleaned. This required coolies, diggers, carriers, bricklayers, sewage cleaners, sweepers, palanquin bearers, rickshaw pullers. Where did this labour come from? The poor from the villages and small towns, many of them from low castes, began moving to the cities where there was a new demand for labour. Some also went to work in plantations in Assam, Mauritius, Trinidad and Indonesia. Work in the new locations was often very hard. But the poor, the people from low castes, saw this as an opportunity to get away from the oppressive hold that upper-caste landowners exercised over their lives and the daily humiliation they suffered.



### Who could produce shoes?

Leatherworkers have been traditionally held in contempt since they work with dead animals which are seen as dirty and polluting. During the First World War, however, there was a huge demand for shoes for the armies. Caste prejudice against leather work meant that only the traditional leather workers and shoemakers were ready to supply army shoes. So they could ask for high prices and gain impressive profits.

**Fig. –** Madigas making shoes, nineteenth-century Andhra Pradesh  
Madigas were an important untouchable caste of present-day Andhra Pradesh. They were experts at cleaning hides, tanning them for use, and sewing sandals.

There were other jobs too. The army, for instance, offered opportunities. A number of Mahar people, who were regarded as untouchable, found jobs in the Mahar Regiment. The father of B.R. Ambedkar, the leader of the Dalit movement, taught at an army school.

## Demands for equality and justice

Gradually, by the second half of the nineteenth century, people from within the Non-Brahman castes began organising movements against caste discrimination, and demanded social equality and justice. The Satnami

movement in Central India was founded by Ghasidas who worked among the leatherworkers and organised a movement to improve their social status. In eastern Bengal, Haridas Thakur's Matua sect worked among Chandala cultivators. Haridas questioned Brahmanical texts that supported the caste system. In what is present-day Kerala, a guru from Ezhava caste, Shri Narayana Guru, proclaimed the ideals of unity for his people. He argued against treating people unequally on the basis of caste differences. According to him, all humankind belonged to the same caste. One of his famous statements was: "*oru jati, oru matam, oru daivam manushyanu*" (one caste, one religion, one god for humankind). All these sects were founded by leaders who came from Non- Brahman castes and worked amongst them. They tried to change those habits and practices which provoked the contempt of dominant castes. They tried to create a sense of self-esteem among the subordinate castes.

### **Jyotirao Phule**

Gulamgiri was One of the most vocal amongst the "low-caste" leaders was Jyotirao Phule. Born in 1827, he studied in schools set up by Christian missionaries. On growing up he developed his own ideas about the injustices of caste society. He set out to attack the Brahmins' claim that they were superior to others, since they were Aryans. Phule argued that the Aryans were foreigners, who came from outside the subcontinent, and defeated and subjugated the true children of the country – those who had lived here from before the coming of the Aryans. As the Aryans established their dominance, they began looking at the defeated population as inferior, as lowcaste people. According to Phule, the "upper" castes had no right to their land and power: in reality, the land belonged to indigenous people, the so-called low castes. Phule claimed that before Aryan rule there existed a golden age when warrior-peasants tilled the land and ruled the Maratha countryside in just and fair ways. He proposed that Shudras (labouring castes) and Ati Shudras (untouchables) should unite to challenge caste discrimination. The Satyashodhak Samaj, an association Phule founded, propagated caste equality.

### **The Brahmo Samaj**

One such reformer was Raja Rammohun Roy (1772-1833). He founded a reform association known as the Brahmo Sabha (later known as the Brahmo Samaj) in Calcutta. People such as Rammohun Roy are described as reformers because they felt that changes were necessary in society, and unjust practices needed to be done away with. They thought that the best way to ensure such changes was by persuading people to give up old practices and adopt a new way of life. The Brahmo Samaj, formed in 1830, prohibited all forms of idolatry and sacrifice,

believed in the Upanishads, and forbade its members from criticising other religious practices. It critically drew upon the ideals of religions – especially of Hinduism and Christianity – looking at their negative and positive dimensions.

### **Derozio and Young Bengal**

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, a teacher at Hindu College, Calcutta, in the 1820s, promoted radical ideas and encouraged his pupils to question all authority. Referred to as the Young Bengal Movement, his students attacked tradition and custom, demanded education for women and campaigned for the freedom of thought and expression.

### **The Prarthana Samaj**

Established in 1867 at Bombay, the Prarthana Samaj sought to remove caste restrictions, abolish child marriage, encourage the education of women, and end the ban on widow remarriage. Its religious meetings drew upon Hindu, Buddhist and Christian texts.

### **The Veda Samaj**

Established in Madras (Chennai) in 1864, the Veda Samaj was inspired by the Brahmo Samaj. It worked to abolish caste distinctions and promote widow remarriage and women's education.

Its members believed in one God. They condemned the superstitions and rituals of orthodox Hinduism.

## Black slaves and white planters

You have read about how Jyotirao Phule established a connection in his book *Gulamgiri* between caste oppression and the practice of slavery in America. What was this system of slavery? From the time that European explorers and traders landed in Africa in the seventeenth century, a trade in slaves began. Black people were captured and brought from Africa to America, sold to white planters, and made to work on cotton and other plantations – most of them in the southern United States. In the plantations they had to work long hours, typically from dawn to dusk, punished for “inefficient work”, and whipped and tortured. Many people, white and black, opposed slavery through organised protest. In doing so, they invoked the spirit of the American Revolution of 1776, exhorting: “See your Declaration, Americans! Do you understand your own language?” In his moving Gettysburg Address, Abraham Lincoln held that those who had fought slavery had done so for the cause of democracy. He urged the people to strive for racial equality so that “government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth”.



# 14

# The Making of National Movement

## The Emergence of Nationalism:

The above-mentioned developments led the people to ask a crucial question: what is this country of India and for whom is it meant? The answer that gradually emerged was: India was the people of India – *all the people* irrespective of class, colour, caste, creed, language, or gender. And the country, its resources and systems, were meant for all of them. With this answer came the awareness that the British were exercising control over the resources of India and the lives of its people, and until this control was ended India could not be for Indians. This consciousness began to be clearly stated by the political associations formed after 1850, especially those that came into being in the 1870s and 1880s. Most of these were led by English-educated professionals such as lawyers. The more important ones were the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, the Indian Association, the Madras Mahajan Sabha, the Bombay Presidency Association, and of course the Indian National Congress. Note the name, “Poona Sarvajanik Sabha”.

The literal meaning of “*sarvajanik*” is “of or for all the people” (*sarva* = all + *janik* = of the people). Though many of these associations functioned in specific parts of the country, their goals were stated as the goals of all the people of India, not those of any one region, community or class. They worked with the idea that the people should be sovereign – a modern consciousness and a key feature of nationalism. In other words, they believed that the Indian people should be empowered to take decisions regarding their affairs. The dissatisfaction with British rule intensified in the 1870s and 1880s.

The Arms Act was passed in 1878, disallowing Indians from possessing arms. In the same year the Vernacular Press Act was also enacted in an effort to silence those who were critical of the government. The Act allowed the government to confiscate the assets of newspapers including their printing presses if the newspapers published anything that was found “objectionable”. In 1883, there was a furore over the attempt by the government to introduce the Ilbert Bill. The bill provided for the trial of British or European persons by Indians, and sought equality between British and Indian judges in the country. But when white opposition forced the government to withdraw the bill, Indians were enraged. The event highlighted the racial attitudes of the British in India.

## Sovereign – The capacity to act independently without outside interference

The need for an all-India organisation of educated Indians had been felt since 1880, but the Ilbert Bill controversy deepened this desire. The Indian National Congress was established when 72 delegates from all over the country met at Bombay in December 1885. The early leadership – Dadabhai Naoroji, Pherozeshah Mehta, Badruddin Tyabji, W.C. Bonnerji, Surendranath Banerji, Romesh Chandra Dutt, S. Subramania Iyer, among others – was largely from Bombay and Calcutta. Naoroji, a businessman and publicist settled in London, and for a time member of the British Parliament, guided the younger nationalists. A retired British official, A.O. Hume, also played a part in bringing Indians from the various regions together.

## A nation in the making

It has often been said that the Congress in the first twenty years was “moderate” in its objectives and methods. During this period it demanded a greater voice for Indians in the government and in administration. It wanted the Legislative Councils to be made more representative, given more power, and introduced in provinces where none existed. It demanded that Indians

be placed in high positions in the government. For this purpose it called for civil service examinations to be held in India as well, not just in London.

The demand for Indianisation of the administration was part of a movement against racism, since most important jobs at the time were monopolised by white officials, and the British generally assumed that Indians could not be given positions of responsibility. Since

British officers were sending a major part of their large salaries home, Indianisation, it was hoped, would also reduce the drain of wealth to England.

Other demands included the separation of the judiciary from the executive, the repeal of the Arms Act and the freedom of speech and expression. The early Congress also raised a number of economic issues. It declared that British rule had led to poverty and famines: increase in the land revenue had impoverished peasants and zamindars, and exports of grains to Europe had created food shortages.

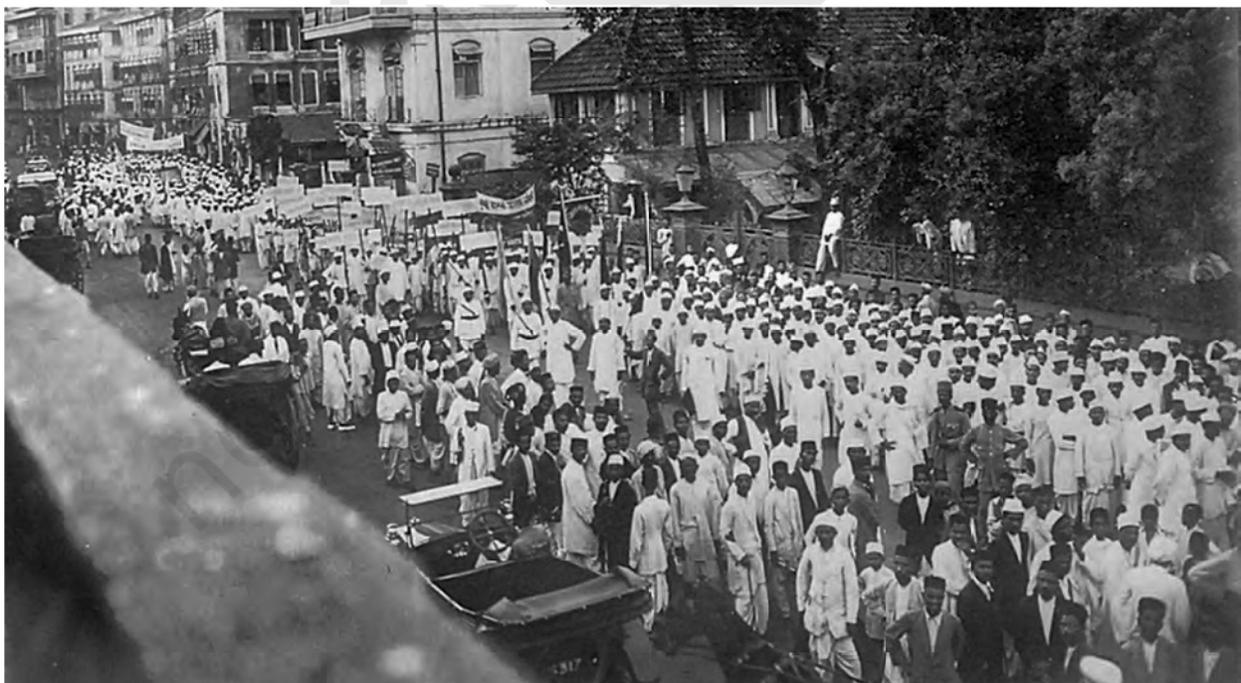
The Congress demanded reduction of revenue, cut in military expenditure, and more funds for irrigation. It passed many resolutions on the salt tax, treatment of Indian labourers abroad, and the sufferings of forest dwellers – caused by an interfering forest administration. All this shows that despite being a body of the educated elite, the Congress did not talk only on behalf of professional groups, zamindars or industrialists.

The Moderate leaders wanted to develop public awareness about the unjust nature of British rule. They published newspapers, wrote articles, and showed how British rule was leading to the economic ruin of the country. They criticised British rule in their speeches and sent representatives to different parts of the country to mobilise public opinion. They felt

that the British had respect for the ideals of freedom and justice, and so they would accept the just demands of Indians. What was necessary, therefore, was to express these demands, and make the government aware of the feelings of Indians.

### **“Freedom is our birthright”**

By the 1890s many Indians began to raise questions about the political style of the Congress. In Bengal, Maharashtra and Punjab, leaders such as Bepin Chandra Pal, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai were beginning to explore more radical objectives and methods. They criticised the Moderates for their “politics of prayers”, and emphasised the importance of self-reliance and constructive work. They argued that people must rely on their own strength, not on the “good” intentions of the government; people must fight for *swaraj*. Tilak raised the slogan, “Freedom is my birthright and I shall have it!”



In 1905 Viceroy Curzon partitioned Bengal. At that time Bengal was the biggest province of British India and included Bihar and parts of Orissa. The British argued for dividing Bengal for reasons of administrative convenience. Clearly, it was closely tied to the interests of British officials and businessmen. Even so, instead

of removing the non-Bengali areas from the province, the government separated East Bengal and merged it with Assam. Perhaps the main British motives were to curtail the influence of Bengali politicians and to split the Bengali people. The partition of Bengal infuriated people all over India. All sections of the Congress – the Moderates and the Radicals, as they may be called – opposed it. Large public meetings and demonstrations were organised and novel methods of mass protest developed. The struggle that unfolded came to be known as the Swadeshi movement, strongest in Bengal but with echoes elsewhere too – in deltaic Andhra for instance, it was known as the **Vandemataram Movement**.

The Swadeshi movement sought to oppose British rule and encourage the ideas of self-help, swadeshi enterprise, national education, and use of Indian languages. To fight for swaraj, the radicals advocated mass mobilisation and boycott of British institutions and goods. Some individuals also began to suggest that “revolutionary violence” would be necessary to overthrow British rule. The opening decades of the twentieth century were marked by other developments as well. A group of Muslim landlords and nawabs formed the All India Muslim League at Dacca in 1906. The League supported the partition of Bengal. It desired separate electorates for Muslims, a demand conceded by the government in 1909. Some seats in the councils were now reserved for Muslims who would be elected by Muslim voters. This tempted politicians to gather a following by distributing favours to their own religious groups. Meanwhile, the Congress split in 1907.

The Moderates were opposed to the use of boycott. They felt that it involved the use of force. After the split the Congress came to be dominated by the Moderates with Tilak’s followers functioning from outside. The two groups reunited in December 1915. Next year the Congress and the Muslim League signed the historic Lucknow Pact and decided to work together for representative government in the country.

## The Growth of Mass Nationalism

After 1919 the struggle against British rule gradually became a mass movement, involving peasants, tribals, students and women in large numbers and occasionally factory workers as well. Certain business groups too began to actively support the Congress in the 1920s. Why was this so? The First World War altered the economic and political situation in India. It led to a huge rise in the defence expenditure of the Government of India. The government in turn increased taxes on individual incomes and business profits. Increased military expenditure and the demands for war supplies led to a sharp rise in prices which created great difficulties for the common people. On the other hand, business groups reaped fabulous profits from the war. As you have seen (Chapter 7), the war created a demand for industrial goods (jute bags, cloth, rails) and caused a decline of imports from other countries into India. So Indian industries expanded during the war, and Indian

business groups began to demand greater opportunities for development. The war also led the British to expand their army. Villages were pressurised to supply soldiers for an alien cause. A large number of soldiers were sent to serve abroad. Many returned after the war with an understanding of the ways in which imperialist powers were exploiting the peoples of Asia and Africa and with a desire to oppose colonial rule in India. Furthermore, in 1917 there was a revolution in Russia. News about peasants’ and workers’ struggles and ideas of socialism circulated widely, inspiring Indian nationalists.

## The advent of Mahatma Gandhi

It is in these circumstances that Mahatma Gandhi emerged as a mass leader. As you may know, Gandhiji, aged 46, arrived in India in 1915 from South Africa. Having led Indians in that country in non-violent marches against racist restrictions, he was already a respected leader, known internationally. His South African campaigns had brought him in contact with various types of Indians: Hindus, Muslims, Parsis and Christians; Gujaratis, Tamils and north Indians; and upper-class merchants, lawyers and workers. Mahatma Gandhi spent his first year in India travelling throughout the country, understanding the people, their needs and the overall situation. His earliest interventions were in local movements in Champaran, Kheda and Ahmedabad where he came into contact with Rajendra Prasad and Vallabhbhai Patel. In Ahmedabad he led a successful millworkers’ strike in 1918. Let us now focus in some detail on the movements organised between 1919 and 1922.

## The Rowlatt Satyagraha

In 1919 Gandhiji gave a call for a *satyagraha* against the Rowlatt Act that the British had just passed. The Act curbed fundamental rights such as the freedom of expression and strengthened police powers. Mahatma

Gandhi, Mohammad Ali Jinnah and others felt that the government had no right to restrict people's basic freedoms. They criticised the Act as "devilish" and tyrannical. Gandhiji asked the Indian people to observe 6 April 1919 as a day of non-violent opposition to this Act, as a day of "humiliation and prayer" and *hartal* (strike). *Satyagraha Sabhas* were set up to launch the movement.

The Rowlatt Satyagraha turned out to be the first all-India struggle against the British government although it was largely restricted to cities. In April 1919 there were a number of demonstrations and hartals in the country and the government used brutal measures to suppress them. The Jallianwala Bagh atrocities, inflicted by General Dyer in Amritsar on Baisakhi day (13 April), were a part of this repression. On learning about the massacre, Rabindranath Tagore expressed the pain and anger of the country by renouncing his knighthood.

## **Knighthood – An honour granted by the British Crown for exceptional personal achievement or public service**

During the Rowlatt Satyagraha the participants tried to ensure that Hindus and Muslims were united in the fight against British rule. This was also the call of Mahatma Gandhi who always saw India as a land of *all* the people who lived in the country – Hindus, Muslims and those of other religions. He was keen that Hindus and Muslims support each other in any just cause.

## **Khilafat agitation and the Non-Cooperation Movement**

The Khilafat issue was one such cause. In 1920 the British imposed a harsh treaty on the Turkish Sultan or Khalifa. People were furious about this as they had been about the Jallianwala massacre. Also, Indian Muslims were keen that the Khalifa be allowed to retain control over Muslim sacred places in the erstwhile Ottoman Empire. The leaders of the Khilafat agitation, Mohammad Ali and Shaukat Ali, now wished to initiate a full-fledged Non-Cooperation Movement. Gandhiji supported their call and urged the Congress to campaign against "Punjab wrongs" (Jallianwala massacre), the Khilafat wrong and demand *swaraj*. The Non-Cooperation Movement gained momentum through 1921-22. Thousands of students left government-controlled schools and colleges. Many lawyers such as Motilal Nehru, C.R. Das, C. Rajagopalachari and Asaf Ali gave up their practices. British titles were surrendered and legislatures boycotted. People lit public bonfires of foreign cloth. The imports of foreign cloth fell drastically between 1920 and 1922. But all this was merely the tip of the iceberg. Large parts of the country were on the brink of a formidable revolt.

### **People's initiatives**

In many cases people resisted British rule non-violently. In others, different classes and groups, interpreting Gandhiji's call in their own manner, protested in ways that were not in accordance with his ideas. In either case, people linked their movements to local grievances. Let us look at a few examples. In Kheda, Gujarat, Patidar peasants organised nonviolent campaigns against the high land revenue demand of the British. In coastal Andhra and interior Tamil Nadu, liquor shops were picketed. In the Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh, tribals and poor peasants staged a number of "forest *satyagrahas*", sometimes sending their cattle into forests without paying grazing fee. They were protesting because the colonial state had restricted their use of forest resources in various

ways. They believed that Gandhiji would get their taxes reduced and have the forest regulations abolished. In many forest villages, peasants proclaimed *swaraj* and believed that "Gandhi Raj" was about to be established. In Sind (now in Pakistan), Muslim traders and peasants were very enthusiastic about the Khilafat call. In Bengal too, the Khilafat-Non-Cooperation alliance gave enormous communal unity and strength to the national movement. In Punjab, the Akali agitation of the Sikhs sought to remove corrupt *mahants* – supported by the British – from their gurdwaras. This movement got closely identified with the Non-Cooperation Movement. In Assam, tea garden labourers, shouting "*Gandhi Maharaj ki Jai*", demanded a big increase in their wages. They left the British-owned plantations amidst declarations that they were following Gandhiji's wish. Interestingly, in the Assamese Vaishnava songs of the period the reference to Krishna was substituted by "Gandhi Raja".

### **The people's Mahatma**

We can see from the above that sometimes people thought of Gandhiji as a kind of messiah, as someone who could help them overcome their misery and poverty. Gandhiji wished to build class unity, not class conflict, yet

peasants could imagine that he would help them in their fight against zamindars, and agricultural labourers believed he would provide them land. At times, ordinary people credited Gandhiji with their *own* achievements. For instance, at the end of a powerful movement, peasants of Pratapgarh in the United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh) managed to stop illegal eviction of tenants; but they felt it was Gandhiji who had won this demand for them. At other times, using Gandhiji's name, tribals and peasants undertook actions that did not conform to Gandhian ideals.

## The happenings of 1922-1929

Mahatma Gandhi, as you know, was against violent movements. He abruptly called off the Non-Cooperation Movement when in February 1922 a crowd of peasants set fire to a police station in Chauri Chaura. Twentytwo policemen were killed on that day. The peasants were provoked because the police had fired on their peaceful demonstration. Once the Non-Cooperation movement was over, Gandhiji's followers stressed that the Congress must undertake constructive work in the rural areas. Other leaders such as Chitta Ranjan Das and Motilal Nehru argued that the party should fight elections to the councils and enter them in order to influence government policies. Through sincere social work in villages in the mid-1920s, the Gandhians were able to extend their support base. This proved to be very useful in launching the Civil Disobedience movement in 1930. Two important developments of the mid-1920s were the formation of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a Hindu organisation, and the Communist Party of India. These parties have held very different ideas about the kind of country India should be. Find out about their ideas with the help of your teacher. The revolutionary nationalist Bhagat Singh too was active in this period.



**Fig.** – Demonstrators oppose the Simon Commission

In 1927 the British government in England decided to send a commission headed by Lord Simon to decide India's political future. The Commission had no Indian representative. The decision created an outrage in India. All political groups decided to boycott the Commission. When the Commission arrived it was met with demonstrations with banners saying "Simon Go Back".

The decade closed with the Congress resolving to fight for *Purna Swaraj* (complete independence) in 1929 under the presidency of Jawaharlal Nehru.

Consequently, "Independence Day" was observed on 26 January 1930 all over the country.

Revolutionary nationalists such as Bhagat Singh, Chandra Shekhar Azad, Sukhdev and others wanted to fight against the colonial rule and the rich exploiting classes through a revolution of workers and peasants. For this purpose they founded the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA) in 1928 at Ferozeshah Kotla in Delhi. On 17 December, 1928, Bhagat Singh, Azad and Rajguru assassinated Saunders, a police officer who was involved in the lathi-charge that had caused the death of Lala Lajpat Rai. On 8 April, 1929, Bhagat Singh

and B.K. Dutt threw a bomb in the Central Legislative Assembly. The aim, as their leaflet explained, was not to kill but “to make the deaf hear”, and to remind the foreign government of its callous exploitation. Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru were executed on March 23, 1931. Bhagat Singh’s age at that time was only 23. “It takes a loud voice to make the deaf hear. Inquilab Zindabad!”

## The march to Dandi

*Purna Swaraj* would never come on its own. It had to be fought for. In 1930, Gandhiji declared that he would lead a march to break the salt law. According to this law, the state had a monopoly on the manufacture and sale of salt. Mahatma Gandhi along with other nationalists reasoned that it was sinful to tax salt since it is such an essential item of our food. The Salt March related the general desire of freedom to a specific grievance shared by everybody, and thus did not divide the rich and the poor. Gandhiji and his followers marched for over 240 miles from Sabarmati to the coastal town of Dandi where they broke the government law by gathering natural salt found on the seashore, and boiling sea water to produce salt.

## Women in the freedom struggle: Ambabai from Karnataka

Women from diverse backgrounds participated in the national movement. Young and old, single and married, they came from rural and urban areas, from both conservative and liberal homes. Their involvement was significant for the freedom struggle, for the women’s movement, and for themselves personally. Both British officials and Indian nationalists felt that women’s participation gave the national struggle an immense force. Participation in the freedom movement brought women out of their homes. It gave them a place in the professions, in the governance of India, and it could pave the way for equality with men. What such participation meant for women is best recounted by them. Ambabai of Karnataka had been married at age twelve. Widowed at sixteen, she picketed foreign cloth and liquor shops in Udipi. She was arrested, served a sentence and was rearrested. Between prison terms she made speeches, taught spinning, and organised prabhat pheris. Ambabai regarded these as the happiest days of her life because they gave it a new purpose and commitment. Women, however, had to fight for their right to participate in the movement. During the Salt Satyagraha, for instance, even Mahatma Gandhi was initially opposed to women’s participation. Sarojini Naidu had to persuade him to allow women to join the movement.

Peasants, tribals and women participated in large numbers. A business federation published a pamphlet on the salt issue. The government tried to crush the movement through brutal action against peaceful *satyagrahis*. Thousands were sent to jail. The combined struggles of the Indian people bore fruit when the Government of India Act of 1935 prescribed provincial autonomy and the government announced elections to the provincial legislatures in 1937. The Congress formed governments in 7 out of 11 provinces. In September 1939, after two years of Congress rule in the provinces, the Second World War broke out. Critical of Hitler, Congress leaders were ready to support the British war effort. But in return they wanted that India be granted independence after the war. The British refused to concede the demand. The Congress ministries resigned in protest.

Veer Lakhan Nayak was hanged Baji Mohammed, President of the Nabrangpur Congress, Orissa in the 1930s, reports: On August 25, 1942 . nineteen people died on the spot in police firing at Papparandi in Nabarangpur. Many died thereafter from their wounds. Over 300 were injured. More than a thousand were jailed in Koraput district. Several were shot or executed. Veer Lakhan Nayak (a legendary tribal leader who defied the British) was hanged.

**Provincial autonomy** : Capacity of the provinces to make relatively independent decisions while remaining within a federation.

## Bose and the INA

A radical nationalist, with socialist leanings, Bose did not share Gandhiji’s ideal of ahimsa, though he respected him as the “Father of the Nation”. In January 1941, he secretly left his Calcutta home, went to Singapore, via Germany, and raised the Azad Hind Fauj or the Indian National Army (INA). To free India from British control, in 1944, the INA tried to enter India through Imphal and Kohima but the campaign failed. The INA members were imprisoned and tried. People across the country, from all walks of life, participated in the movement against the INA trials.

## Quit India and Later

Mahatma Gandhi decided to initiate a new phase of movement against the British in the middle of the Second World War. The British must quit India immediately, he told them. To the people he said, “do or die” in your effort to fight the British – but you must fight non-violently. Gandhiji and other leaders were jailed at once but the movement spread. It specially attracted peasants and the youth who gave up their studies to join it. Communications and symbols of state authority were attacked all over the country. In many areas the people set up their own governments. The first response of the British was severe repression. By the end of 1943 over 90,000 people were arrested, and around 1,000 killed in police firing. In many areas orders were given to machine-gun crowds from airplanes. The rebellion, however, ultimately brought the Raj to its knees.

## Towards Independence and Partition

Meanwhile, in 1940 the Muslim League had moved a resolution demanding “Independent States” for Muslims in the north-western and eastern areas of the country. The resolution did not mention partition or Pakistan. Why did the League ask for an autonomous arrangement for the Muslims of the subcontinent? From the late 1930s, the League began viewing the Muslims as a separate “nation” from the Hindus. In developing this notion it may have been influenced by the history of tension between some Hindu and Muslim groups in the 1920s and 1930s. More importantly, the provincial elections of 1937 seemed to have convinced the League that Muslims were a minority, and they would always have to play second fiddle in any democratic structure. It feared that Muslims may even go unrepresented. The Congress’s rejection of the League’s desire to form a joint Congress- League government in the United Provinces in 1937 also annoyed the League. The Congress’s failure to mobilise the Muslim masses in the 1930s allowed the League to widen its social support. It sought to enlarge its support in the early 1940s when most Congress leaders were in jail. At the end of the war in 1945, the British opened negotiations between the Congress, the League and themselves for the independence of India. The talks failed because the League saw itself as the sole spokesperson of India’s Muslims. The Congress could not accept this claim since a large number of Muslims still supported it. Elections to the provinces were again held in 1946. The Congress did well in the “General” constituencies but the League’s success in the seats reserved for Muslims was spectacular. It persisted with its demand for “Pakistan”. In March 1946 the British cabinet sent a three-member mission to Delhi to examine this demand and to suggest a suitable political framework for a free India. This mission suggested that India should remain united and constitute itself as a loose confederation with some autonomy for Muslim-majority areas. But it could not get the Congress and the Muslim League to agree to specific details of the proposal. Partition now became more or less inevitable.



**Fig. 16** – Maulana Azad with other members at the Congress Working Committee, Sevagram, 1942

Azad was born in Mecca to a Bengali father and an Arab mother. Well-versed in many languages, Azad was a scholar of Islam and an exponent of the notion of *wahadat-t-deen*, the essential oneness of all religions. An active participant in Gandhian movements and a staunch advocate of Hindu-Muslim unity, he was opposed to Jinnah’s two-nation theory.

**Fig. 17** – Chakravarti Rajagopalachari speaking to Gandhiji before the Gandhiji-Jinnah talks, 1944

A veteran nationalist and leader of the Salt Satyagraha in the south, C. Rajagopalachari, popularly known as Rajaji, served as member of the Interim Government of 1946 and as free India's first Indian Governor-General.



**Fig. 18** – Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel played an important role in the negotiations for independence during 1945-47

Patel hailed from an impoverished peasant-proprietor family of Nadiad, Gujarat. A foremost organiser of the freedom movement from 1918 onwards, Patel served as President of the Congress in 1931.

**Fig. 19** – Mohammad Ali Jinnah with Mahatma Gandhi, Bombay, September 1944

An ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity until 1920, Jinnah played an important role in the making of the Lucknow Pact. He reorganised the Muslim League after 1934, and became the major spokesperson for the demand for Pakistan.

After the failure of the Cabinet Mission, the Muslim League decided on mass agitation for winning its Pakistan demand. It announced 16 August 1946 as “Direct Action Day”. On this day riots broke out in Calcutta, lasting several days and resulting in the death of thousands of people. By March 1947 violence spread to different parts of northern India. Many hundred thousand people were killed and numerous women had to face untold brutalities during the Partition. Millions of people were forced to flee their homes. Torn asunder from their homelands, they were reduced to being refugees in alien lands. Partition also meant that India changed, many of its cities changed, and a new country – Pakistan – was born. So, the joy of our country's independence from British rule came mixed with the pain and violence of Partition.

## Nationalism in Africa: The case of Ghana

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed the rise of nationalism in many Afro-Asian countries. In many of these, nationalism arose as a part of the anti-colonial struggles for independence.

Colonial rule in Africa was dictatorial. Only the “Chiefs” were allowed to rule on behalf of the foreign powers. Alternately, laws affecting Africans were created in all-white legislatures. Africans had no decision-making powers or representation, not until after the Second World War at least. The forcible takeover of land from

local owners or users, increased taxation and poor working conditions led to many African protests.

In 1957, Ghana, known until then as the Gold Coast, became the first sub-Saharan African country to gain independence. The freedom movement was led by Kwame Nkrumah's Convention People's Party through strikes, boycotts and mass rallies. In 1951 this party won a huge electoral victory. It opposed the existing system in which the British rulers had allowed the Chiefs to nominate representatives to the legislature. It pressed the British to grant a legislature that contained no nominated or special members and won this demand in 1954. Elections to the new Legislative Council were held in 1956. The Convention People's Party won these, thus paving the way for the proclamation of an independent nation under the name "Ghana".



# 15 The Mahatma Gandhi and the Nationalist Movement

In the history of nationalism a single individual is often identified with the making of a nation. Thus, for example, we associate Garibaldi with the making of Italy, George Washington with the American War of Independence, and Ho Chi Minh with the struggle to free Vietnam from colonial rule. In the same manner, Mahatma Gandhi has been regarded as the 'Father' of the Indian nation. In so far as Gandhiji was the most influential and revered of all the leaders who participated in the freedom struggle, that characterisation is not misplaced. However, like Washington or Ho Chi-Minh, Mahatma Gandhi's political career was shaped and constrained by the society in which he lived. For individuals, even great ones, are made by history even as they make history. This chapter analyses Gandhiji's activities in India during the crucial period 1915-1948. It explores his interactions with different sections of the Indian society and the popular struggles that he inspired and led. It introduces the student to the different kinds of sources that historians use in reconstructing the career of a leader and of the social movements that he was associated with.



It introduces the student to the different kinds of sources that historians use in reconstructing the career of a leader and of the social movements that he was associated with.

A Leader Announces Himself In January 1915, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi returned to his homeland after two decades of residence abroad. These years had been spent for the most part in South Africa, where he went as a lawyer, and in time became a leader of the Indian community in that territory. As the historian Chandran Devanesan has remarked, South Africa was “the making of the Mahatma”. It was in South Africa that Mahatma Gandhi first forged the distinctive techniques of non-violent protest known as satyagraha, first promoted harmony between religions, and first alerted upper-caste Indians to their discriminatory treatment of low castes and women. The India that Mahatma Gandhi came back to in 1915 was rather different from the one that he had left in 1893. Although still a colony of the British, it was far more active in a political sense. The Indian National Congress now had branches in most major cities and towns. Through the Swadeshi movement of 1905-07 it had greatly broadened its appeal among the middle classes. That movement had thrown up some towering leaders – among them Bal Gangadhar Tilak of Maharashtra, Bipin Chandra Pal of Bengal, and Lala Lajpat Rai of Punjab. The three were known as “Lal, Bal and Pal”, the alliteration conveying the all-India character of their struggle, since their native provinces were very distant from one another. Where these leaders advocated militant opposition to colonial rule, there was a group of “Moderates” who preferred a more gradual and persuasive approach. Among these Moderates was Gandhiji's acknowledged political mentor, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, as well as Mohammad Ali Jinnah, who, like Gandhiji, was a lawyer of Gujarati extraction trained in London. On Gokhale's advice, Gandhiji spent a year travelling around British India, getting to know the land and its peoples.

His first major public appearance was at the opening of the Banaras Hindu University (BHU) in February 1916. Among the invitees to this event were the princes and philanthropists whose donations had contributed to the founding of the BHU. Also present were important leaders of the Congress, such as Annie Besant. Compared to these dignitaries, Gandhiji was relatively unknown. He had been invited on account of his work in South Africa, rather than his status within India. When his turn came to speak, Gandhiji charged the Indian elite with a lack of concern for the labouring poor.

**The opening of the BHU, he said, was “certainly a most gorgeous show”.** But he worried about the contrast between the “richly bedecked noblemen” present and “millions of the poor” Indians who were absent. Gandhiji told the privileged invitees that “there is no salvation for India unless you strip yourself of this jewellery and hold it in trust for your countrymen in India”. “There can be no spirit of selfgovernment about us,” he went on, “if we take away or allow others to take away from the peasants almost the whole of the results of their labour. Our salvation can only come through the farmer. Neither the lawyers, nor the doctors, nor the rich landlords are going to secure it.” The opening of the BHU was an occasion for celebration, marking as it did the opening of a nationalist university, sustained by Indian money and Indian initiative. But rather than adopt a tone of self-congratulation, Gandhiji chose instead to remind those present of the peasants and workers who constituted a majority of the Indian population, yet were unrepresented in the audience.

Gandhiji’s speech at Banaras in February 1916 was, at one level, merely a statement of fact – namely, that Indian nationalism was an elite phenomenon, a creation of lawyers and doctors and landlords. But, at another level, it was also a statement of intent – the first public announcement of Gandhiji’s own desire to make Indian nationalism more properly representative of the Indian people as a whole. In the last month of that year, Gandhiji was presented with an opportunity to put his precepts into practice. At the annual Congress, held in Lucknow in December 1916, he was approached by a peasant from Champaran in Bihar, who told him about the harsh treatment of peasants by British indigo planters. 2. The Making and Unmaking of Noncooperation Mahatma Gandhi was to spend much of 1917 in Champaran, seeking to obtain for the peasants security of tenure as well as the freedom to cultivate the crops of their choice. The following year, 1918, Gandhiji was involved in two campaigns in his home state of Gujarat. First, he intervened in a labour dispute in Ahmedabad, demanding better working conditions for the textile mill workers. Then he joined peasants in Kheda in asking the state for the remission of taxes following the failure of their harvest. These initiatives in Champaran, Ahmedabad and Kheda marked Gandhiji out as a nationalist with a deep sympathy for the poor. At the same time, these were all localised struggles. Then, in 1919, the colonial rulers delivered into Gandhiji’s lap an issue from which he could construct a much wider movement. During the Great War of 1914-18, the British had instituted censorship of the press and permitted detention without trial. Now, on the recommendation of a committee chaired by Sir Sidney Rowlatt, these tough measures were continued.

In response, Gandhiji called for a countrywide campaign against the “Rowlatt Act”. In towns across North and West India, life came to a standstill, as shops shut down and schools closed in response to the bandh call. The protests were particularly intense in the Punjab, where many men had served on the British side in the War – expecting to be rewarded for their service.

Instead they were given the Rowlatt Act. Gandhiji was detained while proceeding to the Punjab, even as prominent local Congressmen were arrested. The situation in the province grew progressively more tense, reaching a bloody climax in Amritsar in April 1919, when a British Brigadier ordered his troops to open fire on a nationalist meeting. More than four hundred people were killed in what is known as the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

It was the Rowlatt satyagraha that made Gandhiji a truly national leader. Emboldened by its success, Gandhiji called for a campaign of “non-cooperation” with British rule. Indians who wished colonialism to end were asked to stop attending schools, colleges and law courts, and not pay taxes. In sum, they were asked to adhere to a “renunciation of (all) voluntary association with the (British) Government”. If noncooperation was effectively carried out, said Gandhiji, India would win swaraj within a year. To further broaden the struggle he had joined hands with the Khilafat Movement that sought to restore the Caliphate, a symbol of Pan-Islamism which had recently been abolished by the Turkish ruler Kemal Attaturk.

## **Knitting a popular movement**

Gandhiji hoped that by coupling non-cooperation with Khilafat, India’s two major religious communities, Hindus and Muslims, could collectively bring an end to colonial rule. These movements certainly unleashed a surge of popular action that was altogether unprecedented in colonial India. Students stopped going to schools and colleges run by the government. Lawyers refused to attend court. The working class went on strike in many towns and cities: according to official figures, there were 396 strikes in 1921, involving 600,000 workers and a loss of seven million workdays. The countryside was seething with discontent too. Hill tribes in northern Andhra violated the forest laws. Farmers in Awadh did not pay taxes. Peasants in Kumaun refused to carry loads for colonial officials. These protest movements were sometimes carried out in defiance

of the local nationalist leadership. Peasants, workers, and others interpreted and acted upon the call to “non-cooperate” with colonial rule in ways that best suited their interests, rather than conform to the dictates laid down from above. “Non-cooperation,” wrote Mahatma Gandhi’s American biographer Louis Fischer, “became the name of an epoch in the life of India and of Gandhiji. Non-cooperation was negative enough to be peaceful but positive enough to be effective. It entailed denial, renunciation, and self-discipline. It was training for self-rule.” As a consequence of the Non-Cooperation Movement the British Raj was shaken to its foundations for the first time since the Revolt of 1857. Then, in February 1922, a group of peasants attacked and torched a police station in the hamlet of Chauri Chaura, in the United Provinces (now, Uttar Pradesh and Uttaranchal). Several constables perished in the conflagration. This act of violence prompted Gandhiji to call off the movement altogether. “No provocation,” he insisted, “can possibly justify (the) brutal murder of men who had been rendered defenceless and who had virtually thrown themselves on the mercy of the mob.”

During the Non-Cooperation Movement thousands of Indians were put in jail. Gandhiji himself was arrested in March 1922, and charged with sedition. The judge who presided over his trial, Justice C.N. Broomfield, made a remarkable speech while pronouncing his sentence. “It would be impossible to ignore the fact,” remarked the judge, “that you are in a different category from any person I have ever tried or am likely to try. It would be impossible to ignore the fact that, in the eyes of millions of your countrymen, you are a great patriot and a leader. Even those who differ from you in politics look upon you as a man of high ideals and of even saintly life.” Since Gandhiji had violated the law it was obligatory for the Bench to sentence him to six years’ imprisonment, but, said Judge Broomfield, “If the course of events in India should make it possible for the Government to reduce the period and release you, no one will be better pleased than I”.

The Khilafat Movement, (1919-1920) was a movement of Indian Muslims, led by Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali, that demanded the following: The Turkish Sultan or Khalifa must retain control over the Muslim sacred places in the erstwhile Ottoman empire; the jazirat-ul-Arab (Arabia, Syria, Iraq, Palestine) must remain under Muslim sovereignty; and the Khalifa must be left with sufficient territory to enable him to defend the Islamic faith. The Congress supported the movement and Mahatma Gandhi sought to conjoin it to the Non-cooperation Movement.

A people’s leader By 1922, Gandhiji had transformed Indian nationalism, thereby redeeming the promise he made in his BHU speech of February 1916. It was no longer a movement of professionals and intellectuals; now, hundreds of thousands of peasants, workers and artisans also participated in it. Many of them venerated Gandhiji, referring to him as their “Mahatma”. They appreciated the fact that he dressed like them, lived like them, and spoke their language. Unlike other leaders he did not stand apart from the common folk, but empathised and even identified with them. This identification was strikingly reflected in his dress: while other nationalist leaders dressed formally, wearing a Western suit or an Indian bandgala, Gandhiji went among the people in a simple dhoti or loincloth. Meanwhile, he spent part of each day working on the charkha (spinning wheel), and encouraged other nationalists to do likewise. The act of spinning allowed Gandhiji to break the boundaries that prevailed within the traditional caste system, between mental labour and manual labour. In a fascinating study, the historian Shahid Amin has traced the image of Mahatma Gandhi among the peasants of eastern Uttar Pradesh, as conveyed by reports and rumours in the local press. When he travelled through the region in February 1921, Gandhiji was received by adoring crowds everywhere.

## Charkha

Mahatma Gandhi with the charkha has become the most abiding image of Indian nationalism. In 1921, during a tour of South India, Gandhiji shaved his head and began wearing a loincloth in order to identify with the poor. His new appearance also came to symbolise asceticism and abstinence – qualities he celebrated in opposition to the consumerist culture of the modern world.

Khaddar does not seek to destroy all machinery but it does regulate its use and check its weedy growth. It uses machinery for the service of the poorest in their own cottages. The wheel is itself an exquisite piece of machinery.

This is how a Hindi newspaper in Gorakhpur reported the atmosphere during his speeches: At Bhatni Gandhiji addressed the local public and then the train started for Gorakhpur. There were not less than 15,000 to 20,000 people at Nunkhar, Deoria, Gauri Bazar, Chauri Chaura and Kusmhi (stations) ... Mahatmaji was very pleased to witness the scene at Kusmhi, as despite the fact that the station is in the middle of a jungle there were not less than 10,000 people here. Some, overcome with their love, were seen to be crying. At Deoria people

wanted to give bhent (donations) to Gandhiji, but he asked them to give these at Gorakhpur. But at Chauri Chaura one Marwari gentleman managed to hand over something to him. Then there was no stopping. A sheet was spread and currency notes and coins started raining. It was a sight ... Outside the Gorakhpur station the Mahatma was stood on a high carriage and people had a good darshan of him for a couple of minutes. Wherever Gandhiji went, rumours spread of his miraculous powers. In some places it was said that he had been sent by the King to redress the grievances of the farmers, and that he had the power to overrule all local officials. In other places it was claimed that Gandhiji's power was superior to that of the English monarch, and that with his arrival the colonial rulers would flee the district. There were also stories reporting dire consequences for those who opposed him; rumours spread of how villagers who criticised Gandhiji found their houses mysteriously falling apart or their crops failing. Known variously as "Gandhi baba", "Gandhi Maharaj", or simply as "Mahatma", Gandhiji appeared to the Indian peasant as a saviour, who would rescue them from high taxes and oppressive officials and restore dignity and autonomy to their lives. Gandhiji's appeal among the poor, and peasants in particular, was enhanced by his ascetic lifestyle, and by his shrewd use of symbols such as the dhoti and the charkha. Mahatma Gandhi was by caste a merchant, and by profession a lawyer; but his simple lifestyle and love of working with his hands allowed him to empathise more fully with the labouring poor and for them, in turn, to empathise with him. Where most

other politicians talked down to them, Gandhiji appeared not just to look like them, but to understand them and relate to their lives. While Mahatma Gandhi's mass appeal was undoubtedly genuine – and in the context of Indian politics, without precedent – it must also be stressed that his success in broadening the basis of nationalism was based on careful organisation. New branches of the Congress were set up in various parts of India. A series of "Praja Mandals" were established to promote the nationalist creed in the princely states. Gandhiji encouraged the communication of the nationalist message in the mother tongue, rather than in the language of the rulers, English. Thus the provincial committees of the Congress were based on linguistic regions, rather than on the artificial boundaries of British India. In these different ways nationalism was taken to the farthest corners of the country and embraced by social groups previously untouched by it. By now, among the supporters of the Congress were some very prosperous businessmen and industrialists. Indian entrepreneurs were quick to recognise that, in a free India, the favours enjoyed by their British competitors would come to an end. Some of these entrepreneurs, such as G.D. Birla, supported the national movement openly; others did so tacitly. Thus, among Gandhiji's admirers were both poor peasants and rich industrialists, although the reasons why peasants followed Gandhiji were somewhat different from, and perhaps opposed to, the reasons of the industrialists.

While Mahatma Gandhi's own role was vital, the growth of what we might call "Gandhian nationalism" also depended to a very substantial extent on his followers. Between 1917 and 1922, a group of highly talented Indians attached themselves to Gandhiji.

They included Mahadev Desai, Vallabh Bhai Patel, J.B. Kripalani, Subhas Chandra Bose, Abul Kalam Azad, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sarojini Naidu, Govind Ballabh Pant and C. Rajagopalachari. Notably, these close associates of Gandhiji came from different regions as well as different religious traditions. In turn, they inspired countless other Indians to join the Congress and work for it. Mahatma Gandhi was released from prison in February 1924, and now chose to devote his attention to the promotion of home-spun cloth (khadi), and the abolition of untouchability. For, Gandhiji was as much a social reformer as he was a politician. He believed that in order to be worthy of freedom, Indians had to get rid of social evils such as child marriage and untouchability. Indians of one faith had also to cultivate a genuine tolerance for Indians of another – hence his emphasis on Hindu-Muslim harmony. Meanwhile, on the economic front Indians had to learn to become self-reliant – hence his stress on the significance of wearing khadi rather than mill-made cloth imported from overseas.

## The Salt Satyagraha

A Case Study For several years after the Non-cooperation Movement ended, Mahatma Gandhi focused on his social reform work. In 1928, however, he began to think of re-entering politics. That year there was an all-India campaign in opposition to the all-White Simon Commission, sent from England to enquire into conditions in the colony. Gandhiji did not himself participate in this movement, although he gave it his blessings, as he also did to a peasant satyagraha in Bardoli in the same year.

In the end of December 1929, the Congress held its annual session in the city of Lahore. The meeting was significant for two things: the election of Jawaharlal Nehru as President, signifying the passing of the baton of leadership to the younger generation; and the proclamation of commitment to “Purna Swaraj”, or complete independence. Now the pace of politics picked up once more. On 26 January 1930, “Independence Day” was observed, with the national flag being hoisted in different venues, and patriotic songs being sung. Gandhiji himself issued precise instructions as to how the day should be observed. “It would be good,” he said, “if the declaration [of Independence] is made by whole villages, whole cities even ... It would be well if all the meetings were held at the identical minute in all the places.” Gandhiji suggested that the time of the meeting be advertised in the traditional way, by the beating of drums. The celebrations would begin with the hoisting of the national flag. The rest of the day would be spent “in doing some constructive work, whether it is spinning, or service of ‘untouchables’, or reunion of Hindus and Mussalmans, or prohibition work, or even all these together, which is not impossible”. Participants would take a pledge affirming that it was “the inalienable right of the Indian people, as of any other people, to have freedom and to enjoy the fruits of their toil”, and that “if any government deprives a people of these rights and oppresses them, the people have a further right to alter it or abolish it”.

## Dandi

Soon after the observance of this “Independence Day”, Mahatma Gandhi announced that he would lead a march to break one of the most widely disliked laws in British India, which gave the state a monopoly in the manufacture and sale of salt. His picking on the salt monopoly was another illustration of Gandhiji’s tactical wisdom. For in every Indian household, salt was indispensable; yet people were forbidden from making salt even for domestic use, compelling them to buy it from shops at a high price. The state monopoly over salt was deeply unpopular; by making it his target, Gandhiji hoped to mobilise a wider discontent against British Rule.



Where most Indians understood the significance of Gandhiji’s challenge, the British Raj apparently did not. Although Gandhiji had given advance notice of his “Salt March” to the Viceroy Lord Irwin, Irwin failed to grasp the significance of the action. On 12 March 1930, Gandhiji began walking from his ashram at Sabarmati towards the ocean. He reached his destination three weeks later, making a fistful of salt as he did and thereby making himself a criminal in the eyes of the law. Meanwhile, parallel salt marches were being conducted in other parts of the country.

## Why the Salt Satyagraha?

### Why was salt the symbol of protest?

This is what Mahatma Gandhi wrote: The volume of information being gained daily shows how wickedly the salt tax has been designed. In order to prevent the use of salt that has not paid the tax which is at times even fourteen times its value, the Government destroys the salt it cannot sell profitably. Thus it taxes the nation’s vital necessity; it prevents the public from manufacturing it and destroys what nature manufactures without effort. No adjective is strong enough for characterising this wicked dog-in-the-manger policy. From various sources I hear tales of such wanton destruction of the nation’s property in all parts of India. Maunds if not tons of salt are said to be destroyed on the Konkan coast. The same tale comes from Dandi. Wherever there is likelihood of natural salt being taken away by the people living in the neighbourhood of such areas for their personal use, salt officers are posted for the sole purpose of carrying on destruction. Thus valuable national property is destroyed at national expense and salt taken out of the mouths of the people. The salt monopoly is thus a fourfold curse. It deprives the people of a valuable easy village industry, involves wanton destruction of property that nature produces in abundance, the destruction itself means more national expenditure, and fourthly, to crown this folly, an unheard-of tax of more than 1,000 per cent is exacted from a starving people. This tax has remained so long because of the apathy of the general public. Now that it is sufficiently roused, the tax has to go. How soon it will be abolished depends upon the strength the people.

As with Non-cooperation, apart from the officially sanctioned nationalist campaign, there were numerous other streams of protest. Across large parts of India, peasants breached the hated colonial forest laws that kept them and their cattle out of the woods in which they had once roamed freely. In some towns, factory workers went on strike while lawyers boycotted British courts and students refused to attend government-run educational institutions. As in 1920-22, now too Gandhiji's call had encouraged Indians of all classes to make manifest their own discontent with colonial rule. The rulers responded by detaining the dissenters. In the wake of the Salt March, nearly 60,000 Indians were arrested, among them, of course, Gandhiji himself. The progress of Gandhiji's march to the seashore can be traced from the secret reports filed by the police officials deputed to monitor his movements. These reproduce the speeches he gave at the villages en route, in which he called upon local officials to renounce government employment and join the freedom struggle. In one village, Wasna, Gandhiji told the upper castes that "if you are out for Swaraj you must serve untouchables. You won't get Swaraj merely by the repeal of the salt taxes or other taxes. For Swaraj you must make amends for the wrongs which you did to the untouchables. For Swaraj, Hindus, Muslims, Parsis and Sikhs will have to unite. These are the steps towards Swaraj." The police spies reported that Gandhiji's meetings were very well attended, by villagers of all castes, and by women as well as men. They observed that thousands of volunteers were flocking to the nationalist cause. Among them were many officials, who had resigned from their posts with the colonial government. Writing to the government, the District Superintendent of Police remarked, "Mr Gandhi appeared calm and collected. He is gathering more strength as he proceeds." The progress of the Salt March can also be traced from another source: the American news magazine, *Time*. This, to begin with, scorned at Gandhiji's looks, writing with disdain of his "spindly frame" and his "spidery loins". Thus in its first report on the march, *Time* was deeply sceptical of the Salt March reaching its destination. It claimed that Gandhiji "sank to the ground" at the end of the second day's walking; the magazine did not believe that "the emaciated saint would be physically able to go much further". But within a week it had changed its mind. The massive popular following that the march had garnered, wrote *Time*, had made the British rulers "desperately anxious". Gandhiji himself they now saluted as a "Saint" and "Statesman", who was using "Christian acts as a weapon against men with Christian beliefs".

**Dialogues** The Salt March was notable for at least three reasons. First, it was this event that first brought Mahatma Gandhi to world attention. The march was widely covered by the European and American press. Second, it was the first nationalist activity in which women participated in large numbers. The socialist activist Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay had persuaded Gandhiji not to restrict the protests to men alone. Kamaladevi was herself one of numerous women who courted arrest by breaking the salt or liquor laws. Third, and perhaps most significant, it was the Salt March which forced upon the British the realisation that their Raj would not last forever, and that they would have to devolve some power to the Indians. To that end, the British government convened a series of "Round Table Conferences" in London. The first meeting was held in November 1930, but without the pre-eminent political leader in India, thus rendering it an exercise in futility. Gandhiji was released from jail in January 1931 and the following month had several long meetings with the Viceroy. These culminated in what was called the "Gandhi-Irwin Pact", by the terms of which civil disobedience would be called off, all prisoners released, and salt manufacture allowed along the coast. The pact was criticised by radical nationalists, for Gandhiji was unable to obtain from the Viceroy a commitment to political independence for Indians; he could obtain merely an assurance of talks towards that possible end. A second Round Table Conference was held in London in the latter part of 1931. Here, Gandhiji represented the Congress. However, his claims that his party represented all of India came under challenge from three parties: from the Muslim League, which claimed to stand for the interests of the Muslim minority; from the Princes, who claimed that the Congress had no stake in their territories; and from the brilliant lawyer and thinker B.R. Ambedkar, who argued that Gandhiji and the Congress did not really represent the lowest castes. The Conference in London was inconclusive, so Gandhiji returned to India and resumed civil disobedience. The new Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, was deeply unsympathetic to the Indian leader. In a private letter to his sister, Willingdon wrote: "It's a beautiful world if it wasn't for Gandhi ... At the bottom of every move he makes which he always says is inspired by God, one discovers the political manoeuvre. I see the American Press is saying what a wonderful man he is ... But the fact is that we live in the midst of very unpractical, mystical, and superstitious folk who look upon Gandhi as something holy, ..." In 1935, however, a new Government of India Act promised some form of representative government. Two years later, in an election held on the basis of a restricted franchise, the Congress won a comprehensive victory. Now eight out of 11 provinces had a Congress "Prime Minister", working under the supervision of a British Governor.

The offer was refused. In protest, the Congress ministries resigned in October 1939. Through 1940 and 1941, the Congress organised a series of individual satyagrahas to pressure the rulers to promise freedom once the war had ended. Meanwhile, in March 1940, the Muslim League passed a resolution demanding a measure of autonomy for the Muslim-majority areas of the subcontinent. The political landscape was now becoming complicated: it was no longer Indians versus the British; rather, it had become a threeway struggle between the Congress, the Muslim League, and the British. At this time Britain had an all-party government, whose Labour members were sympathetic to Indian aspirations, but whose Conservative Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, was a diehard imperialist who insisted that he had not been appointed the King's First Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire. In the spring of 1942, Churchill was persuaded to send one of his ministers, Sir Stafford Cripps, to India to try and forge a compromise with Gandhiji and the Congress. Talks broke down, however, after the Congress insisted that if it was to help the British defend India from the Axis powers, then the Viceroy had first to appoint an Indian as the Defence Member of his Executive Council. In September 1939, two years after the Congress ministries assumed office, the Second World War broke out. Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru had both been strongly critical of Hitler and the Nazis. Accordingly, they promised Congress support to the war effort if the British, in return, promised to grant India independence once hostilities ended.

**Quit India After the failure of the Cripps Mission**, Mahatma Gandhi decided to launch his third major movement against British rule. This was the "Quit India" campaign, which began in August 1942. Although Gandhiji was jailed at once, younger activists organised strikes and acts of sabotage all over the country. Particularly active in the underground resistance were socialist members of the Congress, such as Jayaprakash Narayan. In several districts, such as Satara in the west and Medinipur in the east, "independent" governments were proclaimed. The British responded with much force, yet it took more than a year to suppress the rebellion. "Quit India" was genuinely a mass movement, bringing into its ambit hundreds of thousands of ordinary Indians. It especially energised the young who, in very large numbers, left their colleges to go to jail. However, while the Congress leaders languished in jail, Jinnah and his colleagues in the Muslim League worked patiently at expanding their influence. It was in these years that the League began to make a mark in the Punjab and Sind, provinces where it had previously had scarcely any presence. In June 1944, with the end of the war in sight, Gandhiji was released from prison. Later that year he held a series of meetings with Jinnah, seeking to bridge the gap between the Congress and the League.

In 1945, a Labour government came to power in Britain and committed itself to granting independence to India. Meanwhile, back in India, the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, brought the Congress and the League together for a series of talks. Early in 1946 fresh elections were held to the provincial legislatures. The Congress swept the "General" category, but in the seats specifically reserved for Muslims the League won an overwhelming majority. The political polarisation was complete.

A Cabinet Mission sent in the summer of 1946 failed to get the Congress and the League to agree on a federal system that would keep India together while allowing the provinces a degree of autonomy. After the talks broke down, Jinnah called for a "Direct Action Day" to press the League's demand for Pakistan. On the designated day, 16 August 1946, bloody riots broke out in Calcutta. The violence spread to rural Bengal, then to Bihar, and then across the country to the United Provinces and the Punjab. In some places, Muslims were the main sufferers, in other places, Hindus. In February 1947, Wavell was replaced as Viceroy by Lord Mountbatten. Mountbatten called one last round of talks, but when these too proved inconclusive he announced that British India would be freed, but also divided. The formal transfer of power was fixed for 15 August. When that day came,

### **Satara, 1943**

From the late nineteenth century, a non-Brahman movement, which opposed the caste system and landlordism, had developed in Maharashtra. This movement established links with the national movement by the 1930s. In 1943, some of the younger leaders in the Satara district of Maharashtra set up a parallel government (prati sarkar), with volunteer corps (seba dals) and village units (tufan dals). They ran people's courts and organised constructive work. Dominated by kunbi peasants and supported by dalits, the Satara prati sarkar functioned till the elections of 1946, despite government repression and, in the later stages, Congress disapproval.

It was celebrated with gusto in different parts of India. In Delhi, there was “prolonged applause” when the President of the Constituent Assembly began the meeting by invoking the Father of the Nation – Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. Outside the Assembly, the crowds shouted “Mahatma Gandhi ki jai”. 5. The Last Heroic Days As it happened, Mahatma Gandhi was not present at the festivities in the capital on 15 August 1947. He was in Calcutta, but he did not attend any function or hoist a flag there either. Gandhiji marked the day with a 24-hour fast. The freedom he had struggled so long for had come at an unacceptable price, with a nation divided and Hindus and Muslims at each other’s throats. Through September and October, writes his biographer D.G. Tendulkar, Gandhiji “went round hospitals and refugee camps giving consolation to distressed people”. He “appealed to the Sikhs, the Hindus and the Muslims to forget the past and not to dwell on their sufferings but to extend the right hand of fellowship to each other, and to determine to live in peace ...” At the initiative of Gandhiji and Nehru, the Congress now passed a resolution on “the rights of minorities”. The party had never accepted the “two-nation theory”: forced against its will to accept Partition, it still believed that “India is a land of many religions and many races, and must remain so”. Whatever be the situation in Pakistan, India would be “a democratic secular State where all citizens enjoy full rights and are equally entitled to the protection of the State, irrespective of the religion to which they belong”. The Congress wished to “assure the minorities in India that it will continue to protect, to the best of its ability, their citizen rights against aggression”. Many scholars have written of the months after Independence as being Gandhiji’s “finest hour”. After working to bring peace to Bengal, Gandhiji now shifted to Delhi, from where he hoped to move on to the riot-torn districts of Punjab. While in the capital, his meetings were disrupted by refugees who objected to readings from the Koran, or shouted slogans asking why he did not speak of the sufferings of those Hindus and Sikhs still living in Pakistan. In fact, as D.G. Tendulkar writes, Gandhiji “was equally concerned with the sufferings of the minority community in Pakistan. He would have liked to be able to go to their succour. But with what face could he now go there, when he could not guarantee full redress to the Muslims in Delhi?” There was an attempt on Gandhiji’s life on 20 January 1948, but he carried on undaunted. On 26 January, he spoke at his prayer meeting of how that day had been celebrated in the past as Independence Day. Now freedom had come, but its first few months had been deeply disillusioning. However, he trusted that “the worst is over”, that Indians would henceforth work collectively for the “equality of all classes and creeds, never the domination and superiority of the major community over a minor, however insignificant it may be in numbers or influence”. He also permitted himself the hope “that though geographically and politically India is divided into two, at heart we shall ever be friends and brothers helping and respecting one another and be one for the outside world”. Gandhiji had fought a lifelong battle for a free and united India; and yet, when the country was divided, he urged that the two parts respect and befriend one another. Other Indians were less forgiving. At his daily prayer meeting on the evening of 30 January, Gandhiji was shot dead by a young man. The assassin, who surrendered afterwards, was a Brahmin from Pune named Nathuram Godse, the editor of an extremist Hindu newspaper who had denounced Gandhiji as “an appeaser of Muslims”. Gandhiji’s death led to an extraordinary outpouring of grief, with rich tributes being paid to him from across the political spectrum in India, and moving appreciations coming from such international figures as George Orwell and Albert Einstein. Time magazine, which had once mocked Gandhiji’s physical size and seemingly non-rational ideas, now compared his martyrdom to that of Abraham Lincoln: it was a bigoted American who had killed Lincoln for believing that human beings were equal regardless of their race or skin colour; and it was a bigoted Hindu who had killed Gandhiji for believing that friendship was possible, indeed necessary, between Indians of different faiths. In this respect, as Time wrote, “The world knew that it had, in a sense too deep, too simple for the world to understand, connived at his (Gandhiji’s) death as it had connived at Lincoln’s.”



# 16

## National Movement for Independence

Modern nationalism in Europe came to be associated with the formation of nation-states. It also meant a change in people's understanding of who they were, and what defined their identity and sense of belonging. New symbols and icons, new songs and ideas forged new links and redefined the boundaries of communities. In most countries the making of this new national identity was a long process. How did this consciousness emerge in India?

In India, as in Vietnam and many other colonies, the growth of modern nationalism is intimately connected to the anti-colonial movement. People began discovering their unity in the process of their struggle with colonialism. The sense of being oppressed under colonialism provided a shared bond that tied many different groups together. But each class and group felt the effects of colonialism differently, their experiences were varied, and their notions of freedom were not always the same. The Congress under Mahatma Gandhi tried to forge these groups together within one movement. But the unity did not emerge without conflict.

In the years after 1919, we see the national movement spreading to new areas, incorporating new social groups, and developing new modes of struggle. First of all, the war created a new economic and political situation. It led to a huge increase in defence expenditure which was financed by war loans and increasing taxes: customs duties were raised and income tax introduced.

Through the war years prices increased – doubling between 1913 and 1918 – leading to extreme hardship for the common people. Villages were called upon to supply soldiers, and the forced recruitment in rural areas caused widespread anger. Then in 1918-19 and 1920-21, crops failed in many parts of India, resulting in acute shortages of food. This was accompanied by an influenza epidemic. According to the census of 1921, 12 to 13 million people perished as a result of famines and the epidemic. People hoped that their hardships would end after the war was over. But that did not happen. At this stage a new leader appeared and suggested a new mode of struggle.

### The Idea of Satyagraha

Mahatma Gandhi returned to India in January 1915, The idea of satyagraha emphasised the power of truth and the need to search for truth. It suggested that if the cause was true, if the struggle was against injustice, then physical force was not necessary to fight the oppressor. Without seeking vengeance or being aggressive, a satyagrahi could win the battle through nonviolence. This could be done by appealing to the conscience of the oppressor. People – including the oppressors – had to be persuaded to see the truth, instead of being forced to accept truth through the use of violence. By this struggle, truth was bound to ultimately triumph. Mahatma Gandhi believed that this dharma of non-violence could unite all Indians.

Emboldened with this success, Gandhiji in 1919 decided to launch a nationwide satyagraha against the proposed Rowlatt Act (1919). This Act had been hurriedly passed through the Imperial Legislative Council despite the united opposition of the Indian members. It gave the government enormous powers to repress political activities, and allowed detention of political prisoners without trial for two years. Mahatma Gandhi wanted non-violent civil disobedience against such unjust laws, which would start with a hartal on 6 April. Rallies were organised in various cities, workers went on strike in railway workshops, and shops closed down. Alarmed by the popular upsurge, and scared that lines of communication such as the railways and telegraph would be disrupted, the British administration decided to clamp down on nationalists. Local leaders were picked up from Amritsar, and Mahatma Gandhi was barred from entering Delhi.

Mahatma Gandhi on Satyagraha 'It is said of "passive resistance" that it is the weapon of the weak, but the power which is the subject of this article can be used only by the strong. This power is not passive resistance;

indeed it calls for intense activity. The movement in South Africa was not passive but active ... ‘Satyagraha is not physical force. A satyagrahi does not inflict pain on the adversary; he does not seek his destruction ... In the use of satyagraha, there is no ill-will whatever. ‘Satyagraha is pure soul-force. Truth is the very substance of the soul. That is why this force is called satyagraha. The soul is informed with knowledge. In it burns the flame of love. ... Nonviolence is the supreme dharma ... ‘It is certain that India cannot rival Britain or Europe in force of arms. The British worship the war-god and they can all of them become, as they are becoming, bearers of arms. The hundreds of millions in India can never carry arms. They have made the religion of non-violence their own ...’ Source Source A Read the text carefully. What did Mahatma Gandhi mean when he said satyagraha is active resistance?

Activity India and the Contemporary World 56 On 13 April the infamous Jallianwalla Bagh incident took place. On that day a large crowd gathered in the enclosed ground of Jallianwalla Bagh. Some came to protest against the government’s new repressive measures. Others had come to attend the annual Baisakhi fair. Being from outside the city, many villagers were unaware of the martial law that had been imposed. Dyer entered the area, blocked the exit points, and opened fire on the crowd, killing hundreds. His object, as he declared later, was to ‘produce a moral effect’, to create in the minds of satyagrahis a feeling of terror and awe. As the news of Jallianwalla Bagh spread, crowds took to the streets in many north Indian towns. There were strikes, clashes with the police and attacks on government buildings. The government responded with brutal repression, seeking to humiliate and terrorise people: satyagrahis were forced to rub their noses on the ground, crawl on the streets, and do salaam (salute) to all sahibs; people were flogged and villages (around Gujranwala in Punjab, now in Pakistan) were bombed. Seeing violence spread, Mahatma Gandhi called off the movement. While the Rowlatt satyagraha had been a widespread movement, it was still limited mostly to cities and towns. Mahatma Gandhi now felt the need to launch a more broad-based movement in India. But he was certain that no such movement could be organised without bringing the Hindus and Muslims closer together. One way of doing this, he felt, was to take up the Khilafat issue.

The First World War had ended with the defeat of Ottoman Turkey. And there were rumours that a harsh peace treaty was going to be imposed on the Ottoman emperor – the spiritual head of the Islamic world (the Khalifa). To defend the Khalifa’s temporal powers, a Khilafat Committee was formed in Bombay in March 1919. A young generation of Muslim leaders like the brothers Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali, began discussing with Mahatma Gandhi about the possibility of a united mass action on the issue. Gandhiji saw this as an opportunity to bring Muslims under the umbrella of a unified national movement. At the Calcutta session of the Congress in September 1920, he convinced other leaders of the need to start a non-cooperation movement in support of Khilafat as well as for swaraj.

## The Movement in the Towns

The movement started with middle-class participation in the cities. Thousands of students left government-controlled schools and colleges, headmasters and teachers resigned, and lawyers gave up their legal practices. The council elections were boycotted in most provinces except Madras, where the Justice Party, the party of the non-Brahmans, felt that entering the council was one way of gaining some power – something that usually only Brahmans had access to. The effects of non-cooperation on the economic front were more dramatic. Foreign goods were boycotted, liquor shops picketed, and foreign cloth burnt in huge bonfires.

But this movement in the cities gradually slowed down for a variety of reasons. Khadi cloth was often more expensive than massproduced mill cloth and poor people could not afford to buy it. How then could they boycott mill cloth for too long? Similarly the boycott of British institutions posed a problem. For the movement to be successful, alternative Indian institutions had to be set up so that they could be used in place of the British ones. These were slow to come up. So students and teachers began trickling back to government schools and lawyers joined back work in government courts.

## Rebellion in the Countryside

From the cities, the Non-Cooperation Movement spread to the countryside. It drew into its fold the struggles of peasants and tribals New words Picket – A form of demonstration or protest by which people block the entrance to a shop, factory or office The year is 1921. You are a student in a government-controlled school. Design a poster urging school students to answer Gandhiji’s call to join the Non-Cooperation Movement. Activity 59 Nationalism in India which were developing in different parts of India in the years after the war. In Awadh,

peasants were led by Baba Ramchandra – a sanyasi who had earlier been to Fiji as an indentured labourer. The movement here was against talukdars and landlords who demanded from peasants exorbitantly high rents and a variety of other cesses. Peasants had to do begar and work at landlords' farms without any payment. As tenants they had no security of tenure, being regularly evicted so that they could acquire no right over the leased land. The peasant movement demanded reduction of revenue, abolition of begar, and social boycott of oppressive landlords. In many places nai – dhobi bandhs were organised by panchayats to deprive landlords of the services of even barbers and washermen. In June 1920, Jawaharlal Nehru began going around the villages in Awadh, talking to the villagers, and trying to understand their grievances. By October, the Oudh Kisan Sabha was set up headed by Jawaharlal Nehru, Baba Ramchandra and a few others. Within a month, over 300 branches had been set up in the villages around the region. So when the NonCooperation Movement began the following year, the effort of the Congress was to integrate the Awadh peasant struggle into the wider struggle. The peasant movement, however, developed in forms that the Congress leadership was unhappy with. As the movement spread in 1921, the houses of talukdars and merchants were attacked, bazaars were looted, and grain hoards were taken over. In many places local leaders told peasants that Gandhiji had declared that no taxes were to be paid and land was to be redistributed among the poor. The name of the Mahatma was being invoked to sanction all action and aspirations.

### **Role of Tribal peasants**

Tribal peasants interpreted the message of Mahatma Gandhi and the idea of swaraj in yet another way. In the Gudem Hills of Andhra Pradesh, for instance, a militant guerrilla movement spread in the early 1920s – not a form of struggle that the Congress could approve. Here, as in other forest regions, the colonial government had closed large forest areas, preventing people from entering the forests to graze their cattle, or to collect fuelwood and fruits. This enraged the hill people. Not only were their livelihoods affected but they felt that their traditional rights were being denied. When the government began forcing them to contribute begar for road building, the hill people revolted. The person who came to lead them was an interesting figure. Alluri Sitaram Raju claimed that he had a variety of special powers: he could make correct astrological predictions and heal people, and he could survive even bullet shots. Captivated by Raju, the rebels proclaimed that he was an incarnation of God. Raju talked of the greatness of Mahatma Gandhi, said he was inspired by the Non-Cooperation Movement, and persuaded people to wear khadi and give up drinking. But at the same time he asserted that India could be liberated only by the use of force, not non-violence. The Gudem rebels attacked police stations, attempted to kill British officials and carried on guerrilla warfare for achieving swaraj. Raju was captured and executed in 1924, and over time became a folk hero.

### **Role of different social groups**

Let us now look at the different social groups that participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement. Why did they join the movement? What were their ideals? What did swaraj mean to them? In the countryside, rich peasant communities – like the Patidars of Gujarat and the Jats of Uttar Pradesh – were active in the movement. Being producers of commercial crops, they were very hard hit by the trade depression and falling prices. As their cash income disappeared, they found it impossible to pay the government's revenue demand. And the refusal of the government to reduce the revenue demand led to widespread resentment. These rich peasants became enthusiastic supporters of the Civil Disobedience Movement, organising their communities, and at times forcing reluctant members, to participate in the boycott programmes. For them the fight for swaraj was a struggle against high revenues. But they were deeply disappointed when the movement was called off in 1931 without the revenue rates being revised. So when the movement was restarted in 1932, many of them refused to participate.

### **The Sense of Collective Belonging**

Nationalism spreads when people begin to believe that they are all part of the same nation, when they discover some unity that binds them together. But how did the nation become a reality in the minds of people? How did people belonging to different communities, regions or language groups develop a sense of collective belonging? This sense of collective belonging came partly through the experience of united struggles. But there were also a variety of cultural processes through which nationalism captured people's imagination. History and fiction, folklore and songs, popular prints and symbols, all played a part in the making of nationalism.

## The identity of the nation

In the twentieth century, with the growth of nationalism, that the identity of India came to be visually associated with the image of Bharat Mata. The image was first created by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay. In the 1870s he wrote 'Vande Mataram' as a hymn to the motherland. Later it was included in his novel Anandamath and widely sung during the Swadeshi movement in Bengal. Moved by the Swadeshi movement, Abanindranath Tagore painted his famous image of Bharat Mata. In this painting Bharat Mata is portrayed as an ascetic figure; she is calm, composed, divine and spiritual. In subsequent years, devotion to this mother figure came to be seen as evidence of one's nationalism. Ideas of nationalism also developed through a movement to revive Indian folklore. In late-nineteenth-century India, nationalists began recording folk tales sung by bards and they toured villages to gather folk songs and legends. These tales, they believed, gave a true picture of traditional culture that had been corrupted and damaged by outside forces. It was essential to preserve this folk tradition in order to discover one's national identity and restore a sense of pride in one's past.

In Bengal, Rabindranath Tagore himself began collecting ballads, nursery rhymes and myths, and led the movement for folk revival. In Madras, Natesa Sastri published a massive four-volume collection of Tamil folk tales, The Folklore of Southern India. He believed that folklore was national literature; it was 'the most trustworthy manifestation of people's real thoughts and characteristics'. As the national movement developed, nationalist leaders became more and more aware of such icons and symbols in unifying people and inspiring in them a feeling of nationalism. During the Swadeshi movement in Bengal, a tricolour flag (red, green and yellow) was designed. It had eight lotuses representing eight provinces of British India, and a crescent moon, representing Hindus and Muslims. By 1921, Gandhiji had designed the Swaraj flag. It was again a tricolour (red, green and white) and had a spinning wheel in the centre, representing the Gandhian ideal of self-help. Carrying the flag, holding it aloft, during marches became a symbol of defiance. Another means of creating a feeling of nationalism was through reinterpretation of history. By the end of the nineteenth century many Indians began feeling that to instill a sense of pride in the nation, Indian history had to be thought about differently. The British saw Indians as backward and primitive, incapable of governing themselves. In response, Indians began looking into the past to discover India's great achievements. They wrote about the glorious developments in ancient times when art and architecture, science and mathematics, religion and culture, law and philosophy, crafts and trade had flourished. This glorious time, in their view, was followed by a history of decline, when India was colonised. These nationalist histories urged the readers to take pride in India's great achievements in the past and struggle to change the miserable conditions of life under British rule. These efforts to unify people were not without problems. When the past being glorified was Hindu, when the images celebrated were drawn from Hindu iconography, then people of other communities felt left out.



# 17

## India after Independence

### A new and divided nation

When India became independent in August 1947, it faced a series of very great challenges. As a result of Partition, 8 million refugees had come into the country from what was now Pakistan. These people had to be found homes and jobs. Then there was the problem of the princely states, almost 500 of them, each ruled by a maharaja or a nawab, each of whom had to be persuaded to join the new nation. The problems of the refugees and of the princely states had to be addressed immediately. In the longer term, the new nation had to adopt a political system that would best serve the hopes and expectations of its population.

India's population in 1947 was large, almost 345 million. It was also divided. There were divisions between high castes and low castes, between the majority Hindu community and Indians who practised other faiths. The citizens of this vast land spoke many different languages, wore many different kinds of dress, ate different kinds of food and practised different professions. How could they be made to live together in one nation-state? To the problem of unity was added the problem of development. At Independence, the vast majority of Indians lived in the villages. Farmers and peasants depended on the monsoon for their survival. So did the non-farm sector of the rural economy, for if the crops failed, barbers, carpenters, weavers and other service groups would not get paid for their services either. In the cities, factory workers lived in crowded slums with little access to education or health care. Clearly, the new nation had to lift its masses out of poverty by increasing the productivity of agriculture and by promoting new, job-creating industries. Unity and development had to go hand in hand. If the divisions between different sections of India were not healed, they could result in violent and costly conflicts – high castes fighting with low castes, Hindus with Muslims and so on. At the same time, if the fruits of economic development did not reach the broad masses of the population, it could create fresh divisions – for example, between the rich and the poor, between cities and the countryside, between regions of India that were prosperous and regions that lagged behind.

### A constitution is written

Between December 1946 and November 1949, some three hundred Indians had a series of meetings on the country's political future. The meetings of this "Constituent Assembly" were held in New Delhi, but the participants came from all over India, and from different political parties. These discussions resulted in the framing of the Indian Constitution, which came into effect on 26 January 1950. One feature of the Constitution was its adoption of universal adult franchise. All Indians above the age of 21 would be allowed to vote in state and national elections. This was a revolutionary step – for never before had Indians been allowed to choose their own leaders. In other countries, such as the United Kingdom and the United States, this right had been granted in stages. First only men of property had the vote. Then men who were educated were also added on. Working-class men got the vote only after a long struggle. Finally, after a bitter struggle of their own, American and British women were granted the vote. On the other hand, soon after Independence, India chose to grant this right to all its citizens regardless of gender, class or education. A second feature of the Constitution was that it guaranteed equality before the law to all citizens, regardless of their caste or religious affiliation. There were some Indians who wished that the political system of the new nation be based on Hindu ideals, and that India itself be run as a Hindu state. They pointed to the example of Pakistan, a country created explicitly to protect and further the interests of a particular religious community – the Muslims. However, the Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, was of the opinion that India could not and must not become a "Hindu Pakistan". Besides Muslims, India also had large populations of Sikhs and Christians, as well as many Parsis and Jains. Under the new Constitution, they would have the same rights as Hindus

– the same opportunities when it came to seeking jobs in government or the private sector, the same rights before the law. A third feature of the Constitution was that it offered special privileges for the poorest and most disadvantaged Indians. The practice of untouchability, described as a “slur and a blot” on the “fair name of India”, was abolished. Hindu temples, previously open to only the higher castes, were thrown open to all, including the former untouchables. After a long debate, the Constituent Assembly also recommended that a certain percentage of seats in legislatures as well as jobs in government be reserved for members of the lowest castes. It had been argued by some that Untouchable or as they were now known, Harijan, candidates did not have good enough grades to get into the prestigious Indian Administrative Service. But, as one member of the Constituent Assembly, H.J. Khandekar, argued, it was the upper castes who were responsible for the Harijans “being unfit today”. Addressing his more privileged colleagues, Khandekar said: We were suppressed for thousands of years. You engaged us in your service to serve your own ends and suppressed us to such an extent that neither our minds nor our bodies and nor even our hearts work, nor are we able to march forward. Along with the former Untouchables, the adivasis or Scheduled Tribes were also granted reservation in seats and jobs. Like the Scheduled Castes, these Indians too had been deprived and discriminated against. The tribals had been deprived of modern health care and education, while their lands and forests had been taken away by more powerful outsiders. The new privileges granted them by the Constitution were meant to make amends for this. The Constituent Assembly spent many days discussing the powers of the central government versus those of the state governments. Some members thought that the Centre’s interests should be foremost. Only a strong Centre, it was argued, “would be in a position to think and plan for the well-being of the country as a whole”. Other members felt that the provinces should have greater autonomy and freedom. A member from Mysore feared that under the present system “democracy is centred in Delhi and it is not allowed to work in the same sense and spirit in the rest of the country”. A member from Madras insisted that “the initial responsibility for the well-being of the people of the provinces should rest with the Provincial Governments”. The Constitution sought to balance these competing claims by providing three lists of subjects: a Union List, with subjects such as taxes, defence and foreign affairs, which would be the exclusive responsibility of the Centre; a State List of subjects, such as education and health, which would be taken care of principally by the states; a Concurrent List, under which would come subjects such as forests and agriculture, in which the Centre and the states would have joint responsibility. Another major debate in the Constituent Assembly concerned language. Many members believed that the English language should leave India with the British rulers. Its place, they argued, should be taken by Hindi. However, those who did not speak Hindi were of a different opinion. Speaking in the Assembly, T.T. Krishnamachari conveyed “a warning on behalf of people of the South”, some of whom threatened to separate from India if Hindi was imposed on them. A compromise was finally arrived at: namely, that while Hindi would be the “official language” of India, English would be used in the courts, the services, and communications between one state and another. Many Indians contributed to the framing of the Constitution. But perhaps the most important role was played by Dr B.R. Ambedkar, who was Chairman of the Drafting Committee, and under whose supervision the document was finalised. In his final speech to the Constituent Assembly, Dr Ambedkar pointed out that political democracy had to be accompanied by economic and social democracy. Giving the right to vote would not automatically lead to the removal of other inequalities such as between rich and poor, or between upper and lower castes. With the new Constitution, he said, India was going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. In politics we will be recognising the principle of one man one vote and one value. In our social and economic life, we shall, by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man one value.

### **How were states to be formed**

Back in the 1920s, the Indian National Congress – the main party of the freedom struggle – had promised that once the country won independence, each major linguistic group would have its own province. However, after independence the Congress did not take any steps to honour this promise. For India had been divided on the basis of religion: despite the wishes and efforts of Mahatma Gandhi, freedom had come not to one nation but to two. As a result of the partition of India, more than a million people had been killed in riots between Hindus and Muslims. Could the country afford further divisions on the basis of language? Both Prime Minister Nehru and Deputy Prime Minister Vallabhbhai Patel were against the creation of linguistic states. After the Partition, Nehru said, “disruptionist tendencies had come to the fore”; to check them, the nation had to be strong and united. Or, as Patel put it: ... the first and last need of India at the present moment is

that it should be made a nation ... Everything which helps the growth of nationalism has to go forward and everything which throws obstacles in its way has to be rejected ... We have applied this test to linguistic provinces also, and by this test, in our opinion [they] cannot be supported. That the Congress leaders would now go back on their promise created great disappointment. The Kannada speakers, Malayalam speakers, the Marathi speakers, had all looked forward to having their own state. The strongest protests, however, came from the Telugu-speaking districts of what was the Madras Presidency. When Nehru went to campaign there during the general elections of 1952, he was met with black flags and slogans demanding “We want Andhra”. In October of that year, a veteran Gandhian named Potti Sriramulu went on a hunger strike demanding the formation of Andhra state to protect the interests of Telugu speakers. As the fast went on, it attracted much support. Hartals and bandhs were observed in many towns. On 15 December 1952, fifty-eight days into his fast, Potti Sriramulu died. As a newspaper put it, “the news of the passing away of Sriramulu engulfed entire Andhra in chaos”. The protests were so widespread and intense that the central government was forced to give in to the demand. Thus, on 1 October 1953, the new state of Andhra came into being, which subsequently became Andhra Pradesh. After the creation of Andhra, other linguistic communities also demanded their own separate states. A States Reorganisation Commission was set up, which submitted its report in 1956, recommending the redrawing of district and provincial boundaries to form compact provinces of Assamese, Bengali, Oriya, Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada and Telugu speakers respectively. The large Hindi-speaking region of north India was also to be broken up into several states. A little later, in 1960, the bilingual state of Bombay was divided into separate states for Marathi and Gujarati speakers. In 1966, the state of Punjab was also divided into Punjab and Haryana, the former for the Punjabi speakers (who were also mostly Sikhs), the latter for the rest (who spoke not Punjabi but versions of Haryanvi or Hindi).

## Planning for development

Lifting India and Indians out of poverty, and building a modern technical and industrial base were among the major objectives of the new nation. In 1950, the government set up a Planning Commission to help design and execute suitable policies for economic development. There was a broad agreement on what was called a “mixed economy” model. Here, both the State and the private sector would play important and complementary roles in increasing production and generating jobs. What, specifically, these roles were to be – which industries should be initiated by the state and which by the market, how to achieve a balance between the different regions and states – was to be defined by the Planning Commission. In 1956, the Second Five Year Plan was formulated. This focused strongly on the development of heavy industries such as steel, and on the building of large dams. These sectors would be under the control of the State. This focus on heavy industry, and the effort at state regulation of the economy was to guide economic policy for the next few decades. This approach had many strong supporters, but also some vocal critics.

### Nehru on the Five Year Plans

Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was a great supporter of the planning process. He explained the ideals and purposes of planning in a series of letters he wrote to the chief ministers of the different states. In a letter of 22 December 1952, he said that:

... behind the First Five Year Plan lies the conception of India’s unity and of a mighty co-operative effort of all the peoples of India ... We have to remember always that it is not merely the governmental machinery that counts in all this, but even more so the enthusiasm and co-operation of the people. Our people must have the sensation of partnership in a mighty enterprise, of being fellow-travellers towards the next goal that they and we have set before us. The Plan may be, and has to be, based on the calculations of economists, statisticians and the like, but figures and statistics, very important as they are, do not give life to the scheme. That breath of life comes in other ways, and it is for us now to make this Plan, which is enshrined in cold print, something living, vital and dynamic, which captures the imagination of the people.

Some felt that it had put inadequate emphasis on agriculture. Others argued that it had neglected primary education. Still others believed that it had not taken account of the environmental implications of economic policies. As Mahatma Gandhi’s follower Mira Behn wrote in 1949, by “science and machinery he [mankind] may get huge returns for a time, but ultimately will come desolation. We have got to study Nature’s balance, and develop our lives within her laws, if we are to survive as a physically healthy and morally decent species.”

## The search for an independent foreign policy



India gained freedom soon after the devastations of the Second World War. At that time a new international body - the United Nations - formed in 1945 was in its infancy. The 1950s and 1960s saw the emergence of the Cold War, that is, power rivalries and ideological conflicts between the USA and the USSR, with both countries creating military alliances. This was also the period when colonial empires were collapsing and many countries were attaining independence. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, who was also the foreign minister of newly independent India, developed free India's foreign policy in this context. Non-alignment formed the bedrock of this foreign policy.

Led by statesmen from Egypt, Yugoslavia, Indonesia, Ghana and India, the non-aligned movement urged countries not to join either of the two major alliances. But this policy of staying away

from alliances was not a matter of remaining "isolated" or "neutral". The former means remaining aloof from world affairs whereas non-aligned countries such as India played an active role in mediating between the American and Soviet alliances. They tried to prevent war — often taking a humanitarian and moral stand against war. However, for one reason or another, many non-aligned countries including India got involved in wars. By the 1970s, a large number of countries had joined the non-aligned movement.

### The Nation Sixty year on

On 15 August 2007, India celebrated sixty years of its existence as a free nation. How well has the country done in this time? And to what extent has it fulfilled the ideals set out in its Constitution? That India is still united, and that it is still democratic, are achievements that we might justly be proud of. Many foreign observers had felt that India could not survive as a single country, that it would break up into many parts, with each region or linguistic group seeking to form a nation of its own. Others believed that it would come under military rule. However, as many as thirteen general elections have been held since Independence, as well as hundreds of state and local elections. There is a free press, as well as an independent judiciary. Finally, the fact that people speak different languages or practise different faiths has not come in the way of national unity. On the other hand, deep divisions persist. Despite constitutional guarantees, the Untouchables or, as they are now referred to, the Dalits, face violence and discrimination. In many parts of rural India they are not allowed access to water sources, temples, parks and other public places. And despite the secular ideals enshrined in the Constitution, there have been clashes between different religious groups in many states. Above all, as many observers have noted, the gulf between the rich and the poor has grown over the years. Some parts of India and some groups of Indians have benefited a great deal from economic development. They live in large houses and dine in expensive restaurants, send their children to expensive private schools and take expensive foreign holidays. At the same time many others continue to live below the poverty line. Housed in urban slums, or living in remote villages on lands that yield little, they cannot afford to send their children to school. The Constitution recognises equality before the law, but in real life some Indians are more equal than others. Judged by the standards it set itself at Independence, the Republic of India has not been a great success. But it has not been a failure either.

In the histories written by British historians in India, the rule of each Governor-General was important. These histories began with the rule of the first Governor-General, Warren Hastings, and ended with the last Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten.

## The List of the Governor Generals of India

### Warren Hastings (1773-1785)

Warren Hastings became the first Governor general of India. Hastings brought the Dual Government system to an end by enforcing the Regulating Act of 1773. The Zamindars were given judicial powers and civil and criminal courts were established in each district during his tenure as the Governor General of India.

### Sir John Macpherson (1785-1786)

Sir John Macpherson was temporarily held the position of the Governor General of India from 1785 to 1786.

### Lord Cornwallis (1786-1793)

Lord Cornwallis enjoyed the confidence of the British Government and was knighted in 1786. In the same year became the Governor-General of India.

Lord Cornwallis enacted various significant reforms within the East India Company and its territories, including the Cornwallis code, part of which was responsible for implementing a number of significant land taxation reforms known as the Permanent Settlement of Bengal (also known as the Zamindari system). The settlement was an agreement between the East India Company and the then Bengali landlords to fix revenues to be raised from land. He was the pioneer of the Police reforms according to which each district was divided into 400 square miles and placed under a police superintendent. Lord Cornwallis also introduced Civil Services in our country and established lower courts and appellate courts. From 1789 to 1792, he led the British and Company forces in the Third Anglo-Mysore War to defeat Tipu Sultan, the ruler of Mysore.

### Sir John Shore (1793-1798)

Sir John Shore succeeded Lord Cornwallis as the Governor General of India in 1793. The period of Sir John Shore's rule as the governor-general of India was comparatively uneventful as he followed the policy of non-intervention. He introduced the Charter Act of 1793. The attack of the Marathas on the Nizam was the important event that happened during his tenure as the Governor General of India.

### Lord Wellesley (1789-1805)

When the British were involved in struggle with France in battle field, Lord Wellesley became the Governor General of India. He realized about political conditions in India and He observed that time was favorable for the expansion of the British Empire in India.

Lord Wellesley adopted the policy of Subsidiary Alliance to keep the Indian rulers under control and to further strengthen the British Empire in India. He opened a college to train the Company's servants in Calcutta and is known as the Father of Civil Services in India. Lord Wellesley founded the Fort William College in Calcutta, which was a training center for those who would be involved in governing India. The important events that took place during Lord Wellesley's tenure as the Governor General of India were the fourth Anglo-Mysore War (1799) and the second Anglo-Maratha War (1803-1805).

### Sir George Barlow (1805-1807)

Sir George Barlow served as the Acting Governor General of India from 1805 to 1807 until the arrival of Lord Minto in 1807. He is perhaps the only Governor General of India who diminished the area of British territory because of his passion for economy and retrenchment. It was during the tenure of Sir George Barlow that the Mutiny of Vellore took place in 1806 in which the Indian soldiers killed many English officials.

### Lord Minto (1807-1813)

Lord Minto was a well-trained politician and had been engaged for many years in the management of public affairs. Lord Minto concluded the treaty of Amritsar with Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1809. He also introduced the Charter Act of 1813.



### **Lord Hastings (1813-1823)**

Lord Hastings served as the Governor General of India from 1813 to 1823, a long ten years term. His tenure is known for the policy of intervention and war.

Lord Hastings put an end to the policy of non-intervention which was adopted by John Shore. He abolished the censorship of the press and established the Ryotwari System in Madras and the Mahalwari System in Central India, Punjab, and Western UP. The important events that took place during the tenure of Lord Hastings are Third Anglo-Maratha War (1816-1818), the treaty of Sagauli with Nepal in 1816, and the creation of Bombay Presidency in 1818.

### **Lord Amherst (1823-1828)**

Lord Amherst was the Governor General of India from 1823 to 1828. The principal events of his tenure were the annexation of Assam leading to the first Burmese war of 1824, resulting in the surrender of Arakan and Tenasserim to the British Empire. The mutiny of Barrackpur in 1824 also took place during Lord Amherst's tenure.

### **Lord William Bentinck (1828-1835)**

Lord William Bentinck is known as the liberal Governor General of India. He is credited with very important social and educational reforms in India including the abolishing of Sati, the suppression of female infanticide and Thuggee, ending lawlessness, human sacrifices.

Lord William Bentinck was instrumental in introducing English as the language of instruction in India.

### **Sir Charles Metcalfe (1835-1836)**

Sir Charles Metcalfe held the office of the Governor-General of India briefly for a year. His tenure is remembered for the carrying out and execution of all the measures that were initiated before him by Lord William Bentinck. Sir Charles Metcalfe removed the restrictions on the Vernacular Press and repealed the 1823 licensing regulations.

### **Lord Auckland (1836-1842)**

Lord Auckland served as the Governor General of India from 1836 to 1842. As a legislator, he dedicated himself especially to the improvement of native schools and the expansion of the commercial industry of India. During Lord Auckland's tenure, the first Anglo-Afghan war gave a severe blow to the British Prestige in India.

### **Lord Dalhousie (1848 -1856)**

James Andrew Ramsay, also known as Lord Dalhousie served as the Governor General of India from 1848 to 1856. During his tenure, the Second Anglo-Sikh War (1849) was fought in which the Sikhs were again defeated and Lord Dalhousie annexed the whole of Punjab to the British administration. He introduced the Doctrine of Lapse and captured Satara (1848), Jaipur and Sambhalpur (1849), Udaipur (1852), Jhansi (1853), and Nagpur (1854).

During Lord Dalhousie's tenure, the first railway line between Bombay and Thane was opened in 1853 and in the same year, Calcutta and Agra were connected by telegraph. In 1854, Wood's Despatch was passed which provided the proper system of education from the School to the University. His other reforms include setting up of P.W.D. and passing of the Widow Remarriage Act (1856). Lord Dalhousie was the one who made Shimla the summer capital of India.



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