BHIC-105

HISTORY OF INDIA-III
(750 - 1206 CE)

School of Social Sciences
Indira Gandhi National Open University

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Course Contents

Guidelines for Study of the Course

In this Course we have followed a uniform pattern for presenting the learning material. This starts with an Introduction to the Course underlining the significant developments in chronological order and covers 17 Units. For the convenience of study, all the Units have been presented with a uniform structure. Objectives as the first section of the Unit have been included to help you find what you are expected to learn from the study of the Unit. Please go through these objectives carefully and keep reflecting and checking them after studying a few sections of the Unit. Introduction of the Unit introduces you to the subject area covered and guides you to the way subject matter is presented. These are followed by the main subject area discussed through sections and sub-sections for ease of comprehension. In between the text, some Check Your Progress Exercises have been provided. We advise you to attempt these as and when you reach them. These will help you assess your study and test your comprehension of the subject studied. Compare your answers with the answer guidelines provided after the Summary. The Key Words and unfamiliar terms have been provided at the end of each Unit. At the end of each Unit under Suggested Readings we have also provided a list of books and references. These include sources and books which are useful or have been consulted for developing the material for the concerned Unit. You should try to study them.

COURSE INTRODUCTION

The present course deals with the history of India from *c*. 750-1206 CE. This period has also been called as the early medieval period. Certain features started emerging in this period which make it different from the early historical period. We see the further crystallization of these changes later in the medieval period. However, we have to remember here that the change from one phase of history to another has to be analyzed not only as a change of political power i.e. from one dynasty to another but also as an emergence of local dynasties. The change has to be seen and analyzed in relation to various areas of life i.e. economic, social, political, cultural etc. In all these areas we find significant changes taking place during this phase. For example the feudal structure got consolidated and towards the end of this period the Delhi Sultanate got established.

Certain characteristics of feudalism had emerged from the Gupta period and they became noticeable in the post-Gupta period. The practice of giving land grants to donees increased, creating a large number of landlords. These landlords also yielded political authority. Restrictions were imposed on the movements of the peasants, artisans and merchants. The condition of the peasantry deteriorated and forced labour gained prominence. The process of urbanization suffered a setback and a decline was witnessed in commerce and trade.

We would like to mention here that the history of the period under study is based on a variety of sources. To seek information, analyze and interpret in the historical context, historians use contemporary literary texts. Epigraphical sources like inscriptions, and archaeological sources provide necessary information on this period. The first Unit deals with these sources which are important for the reconstruction of this period. Certain genres of historical writing became common from this period onwards such as *charitas*, *kavyas* and *vamsiavalis*. This period also saw the beginning of Islamic history writing and many scholars wrote texts which can be considered as truly historical in nature. The Units 2nd, 3rd, and 4th deal with a number of regional polities that emerged and consolidated their hold in their respective regions. We will discuss their nature at a general level and analyze their regional features. Certain polities like that of the Rajputs show some influence of 'lineage'. We will be discussing the operation of such factors as lineage and land-rights in the rise of states. The nature of integration of numerous power levels has also been highlighted. The political set-up in south India shows that evolution of Tamil macro-region as a regional state with distinctive politico-cultural features between the days of the Pallavas (sixth century) and those of the Cholas (thirteenth century). The fifth Unit will try to understand the architectural tradition that crystallized in this period. Three architectural languages called *Dravida*, *Nagara* and *Vesara* emerged. In art and architecture too, the tendency of regionalism took root. Temple architecture and other arts such as stone sculptures, metal images, and paintings are indicative of the impact of changes taking place in the material life of the people in the post-Gupta centuries.

Periodization in Indian history in terms of Ancient, Medieval and Modern is not questionable *per se*; in fact, we cannot do away with this. The problem begins when we tend to identify Ancient India with the 'Hindu', Medieval with the

'Muslim' and the Modern with the 'British' period. But the most difficult exercise is the fixation of dates relating to the above periodization. When does Ancient India end and Medieval India begin? What should be the date for Modern India? Admittedly, no 'scientific' definite dates can be given to resolve this problem. And that perhaps explains why we so easily adopt a periodization, consciously or otherwise, which is hardly distinguishable from the categorization of Indian history into the Hindu, Muslim and British period. Incidentally, all the three 'periods' can be located in foreign invasions — the Aryans, Turkish and the British! Leaving aside this debate, we can assert with some ease that the first significant Muslim military incursions into India in 712 CE (when Muhammad bin Qasim defeated Dahar, the king of Sindh) heralded the beginning of a new 'period' which generated a series of invasions later — from Mahmud of Ghazna to Shahabuddin Muhammad Ghori. If the second battle of Tarain in 1192 CE indicated the impending political destiny of India, the date 1206 CE became a watershed in Indian history when Qutbuddin Aibak became the first Sultan. The Units 6th and 7th discuss the background for understanding the foreign invasions from Arabia in the early medieval period. First the Turks and later the Ghazni and Ghurid invasions paved the way for cultural interaction between the invaders and the inhabitants. We will be also discussing the social, cultural and technological impacts of these invasions.

Most history of India focusses on the major polities that emerged in the north and south. Rarely do we find any discussion on eastern India. Unit 8 will be focusing its attention on the polities that emerged in the eastern Indian region of Bengal and Assam. Were the political and social processes any different from those of north and south India? We will investigate any special features, if any, of this region which will provide a fresh perspective to the history of India and make it more holistic in nature. Indian ideas and practices travelled across the oceans and were incorporated into the historical, political and cultural milieu of Southeast Asia. However to employ the notion of 'Greater India' to Southeast Asia or to view it as a colony of India is not correct. In Unit 9 we will be examining how it was an amalgamation of Indic and indigenous traditions that fashioned the culture and history of Southeast Asia.

For decades, nay almost a century, we have been swayed by the colonialist and imperialist notion about the Indian society being static through the millennia. This was just not true. The next four Units (10, 11, 12, 13) seek to show that like any sensitive organism, Indian society and culture during the early medieval period was extremely vibrant and responsive to the changes taking place in the realm of economy, polity and society. Due to certain changes in the economic sphere, particularly the emergence of the land grant economy, a specific king of socio-cultural pattern emerged. Broadly termed as Feudalism, these interactions between the changing land rights and their consequent economic development on the one hand, and the manifestation of socio-cultural changes on the other, paved the way for the emergence of an agrarian economy that was claimed as both closed and self-sufficient. The urban centres suffered a decay and decline and trade and commerce was reduced to a trickle. A new social ethos emerged which was marked by the changing position of the vaishyas and sudras, rise of new literate class, multiplication of castes, weakening of the *varna* order, emergence of feudal ranks and increasing social tensions. From the tenth century CE onwards trade revived.

This phase saw the emergence of urban centres and maritime and inland trade flourished. India played an important role in the international trade in which many other groups like the Arabs participated. Various merchant organizations like the Ayyavole 500, Nanadesi, Manigramam etc. are known for their pan-Indian trading networks.

Buddhism and Islam became most prominent along routes of trade and migration that ran from one end of Asia to the other. However the patronage keep shifting. While in the beginning the Buddhists enjoyed widespread patronage, after the eighth century, the eastward and southern migrations by Arabs and Turks from West and Central Asia forced a shift in the pattern of religious patronage towards Islam. Inside medieval cultural environments, trends in popular religion indicate the increasing influence of religious feelings of a distinctly non-brahmana kind. Numerous socio-religious movements became prominent which struggled for social equality and freedom from exploitation. In Unit 14 we will discuss all these aspects and try to appreciate the fact that religion in India developed in a complex fashion and was never completely divorced from popular inputs. The next Unit (15) will discuss the various schools of philosophy that emerged in the early medieval period. The philosophy of Shankaracharya and Vaishnava *acharyas* linked the *Vedanta* philosophy with Puranic Hinduism, and this led to the revival of Hinduism. The philosophical basis of the Bhakti cult underlined the need to surrender completely to one's personal god. While the Bhakti tradition opposed the caste based and inequality ridden Brahmanical religious traditions, Shaktism gradually incorporated the philosophy of the Brahmanical tradition, but at the same time, maintained some of its characteristics and shaped the philosophy of other cults and practices. Unit 16 examines how Sanskrit as the elite language of courtly culture was losing out to regional languages in the early medieval period. A certain decadence had crept into the quality of Sanskrit works produced during this period though a few works in the categories of *Kavya*, Law books, scientific treatises and religious works continued to be composed. One of the important features of the literary history of this period is the development of literature in regional languages in various parts of India. Regional languages which grew rapidly during this period in northern India included Hindi, Punjabi, Bengali, Assamese, Odiya, Marathi and Gujarati. The last Unit (17) examines the achievements in the fields of science and technology in the early medieval period. With the coming of the Muslim rule in India, the indigenous classical learning traditions received a setback. In the Arab countries, the pattern of education was characterized by *Maktabs* and *Madrasas*. These institutions came to be established in India as well and royal patronage was extended to them. While locals who were specialists in various branches of learning were made to head these institutions, learned men from Arabia, Persia and Central Asia were also invited to take charge of the *Madrasas*. However indigenous traditions of learning and knowledge production continued unabated. Within this Unit we will be looking at how the environment of South Asia was shaped by various factors. Various opposite ecological niches existed in the Indian subcontinent which led to an ever increasing interaction between the settled centres of society and its more mobile fringes. We see medieval South Asia emerge as still very much a mixed economy, provided with extensive jungles, deserts, savannas, and forests, and full of pastoral nomads and animals, either wild or domesticated. From the second millennium CE, South Asia became

a part of the larger Arid Zone constituting the Sahara desert region of North Africa and the drier zones of Eurasia. Culturally this arid zone saw the spread of what recently has been labelled the Turko-Persian ecumene: a cultural mix of Arabic, Persian, and Turkic elements that melded in ninth and tenth century Khorasan and Transoxania, from where it was carried by conquering horse warriors throughout the Arid Zone, towards northern and central India.

UNIT 1 HISTORICAL SOURCES [1]

Structure

1.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will learn about:

- new forms of historical writing that become current in the early medieval period;
- meaning of *charitas* and *vamsavalis*;
- the inscriptions as source material and what were their main features in the early medieval period;
- Islamic sources which give information about the early Sultanate rule and
- archaeological sources and how limited archaeological work on the early medieval period has hampered historical investigation.

[1] This Unit has been written by Dr. Suchi Dayal, Academic Consultant, Faculty of History, SOSS, IGNOU.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

As with the sources of ancient India, early medieval soures can also be divided into Literary and Archaeological. There are a few accounts by the Chinese pilgrims as well. This period is noteworthy beause the beginning of the Islamic rule in northern India introduced historical writing in a big way. Thus we have a number of Islamic texts which can be used to reconstruct the early history of the Sultanate period.

This unit will be dealing with sources which can be used for the reconstruction of the history from the 8th to the early 13th century. Many new genres of writing became common is this period such as *charitas*, *vamsavalis* and *prasatis*. Except for *Rajatarangini*, the majority of them cannot be labelled as historical writing. Despite this much can be gleaned from them which is of historical import. Presented below is a summary of all different types of source material and how they can be used to generate information that is historically important.

1.2 BIOGRAPHIES OR *CARITAS*

The post-Gupta historical writing is of three kinds: *charitas*, *prasastis* and *vamsavalis*. This kind of historical writing assumes ever greater significance because it was no longer embedded in ritual texts. *Charitas* were historical biographies. The term *charita* — literally "moving", "doing", "going" — refers to the activities of a person. They were written primarily as *kavyas* and are an important source for the reconstruction of history. The most noteworthy in this regard is Banabhatta's *Harshacharita*. It is about Harshavardhana of Kannauj, his attempts to acquire sovereignty and his reign. *Charitas* relate to the activities of persons in authority. The new tradition of historical writing in the form of *charitas* according to Romila Thapar articulated historical consciousness as it concerns the actions of a particular person, indicates their cause and purpose and locates them in time and space. The subject of the *charita* is historically known and the element of fantasy, though present, is of a limited kind. *Charitas* however were not meant to be critical historical writing. They functioned more as literature. Nevertheless they are an important historical source.

The historical context in which biographies, official inscriptions and dynastic chronicles, or chronicles of regions were composed was different from the middle of the first millennium CE. A large number of polities were emerging on the political scene. The new courts needed worthy court poets who could compose their biographies which would legitimise the dynasty and publicize the activities of the kings. The courtly culture was also different from the pre-Gupta times. Historians believe that compared to the less formal, more openness of language and style of earlier courts the post seventh century courts were more hegemonic in nature. The centrality of the individual in the *charita* literature may have been due to the growth of bhakti sects where individual actions were the focus in the assessment of his/her life.

The biographical tradition became more common towards the end of the first millennium CE. The earlier biographies were treated as precedents. Biographies are important because they reflect the changes in historical situation. This was the

time when the *Puranas* were increasingly concerned with sectarian worship. The Puranas post mid-first millennium CE do not carry information on dynastic lists. The *charitas* and inscriptions fill this gap.

An important biography was *Ramacharita* which was written by Sandhyakaranandin in the early 12th century CE. It focusses on the reign of Palas of eastern India particularly king Ramapala. It gives us information about the political events leading to the recovery of the region of Varendri, the heartland of Pala power from the Kaivartas by Ramapala. This text gives us an insight into what has been interpreted as the first peasant revolt in Indian history. The Kaivartas were the feudatories who revolted against the Palas. The text was composed in the reign of Madanapala, Ramapala's successor. It records not only the revolt but also the life history of Ramapala till his voluntary death. This *charita* is not about contemporary events but records something that happened during the days of Madanapala's predecessor Ramapala's reign. It recounts how Mahipala, the elder brother of Ramapala, suspecting his younger brothers of conspiracy against himself, imprisons them. His territory of Varendri is occupied by the Kaivartas who rise in revolt against him under the leadership of Divya and later Bhima. The defeated king flees and the throne is occupied by his younger brother Ramapala. This event challenges the law of primogeniture hence the need for a *charita* to justify his accession. This also fulfils the function of a biography where authority and legitimacy had to be emphasized and endorse royal ambition. In this case this is accomplished by showing the unworthiness of the elder brother. Though there is uncertainty regarding the revolt having been engineered by the lesser feudatories or the peasants, it nevertheless was an event which affords us a rare insight into the complicated process of the organization of the suppression of the revolt which is otherwise not forthcoming (Thapar, 2013). The Palas manage to successfully capture Varendri and this text legitimises their hold over it. It also provides us information about Ramapala's various campaigns against Gahadvalas of Varanasi, the eastern Gangas in Odisha, the Karnatas from the Deccan and the Colas of south India. Dharmapala is also eulogized as the king of Kanyakubja/Kannauj (which was the focus of struggle between the Palas, the Rashtrakutas and the Pratiharas in the late first millennium CE). Further stated is the fact that Dharmapala was accepted by Bhoja, Matsya, Madra, Kuru, Yadu, Yavana, Avanti, Gandhara, Kira and Pancala. These were the peoples of the past so the list is evoking earlier histories (Thapar, 2013).

Caritas like *Ramacharita* become crucial from a historical point of view as they encapsulate the changes in the king's relatiponship with his subordinates especially where the politics of opposition is made apparent (Thapar, 2013). The kings which in the *vamsanucharita* section of the *Puranas* were treated in a perfunctory fashion (due to the fact that many of the new emergent kings were patrons of non brahmanical sects) found space in the *caritas*.

A quasi-historical work is Padmagupta's *Navasahasankacharita* which tells the story of king Sindhuraja Navasahasanka of Malwa and his winning of the hand of a princess named Sashiprabha. Bilhana's work called *Vikramankadevacharita* is a eulogistic work about Vikramaditya VI, the Chalukya king of Kalyani. Hemchandra's *Kumarapalacharita* (in Sanskrit and Prakrit) tells the stody of Kumarapala, king of Anahilawada, while illustrating the rules of grammar.

1.3 INSCRIPTIONS

Inscriptions in early India are of many kinds: royal edicts, votive inscriptions recording gifts, brief biographical statements, eulogies of rulers, records of particular events, legal documents pertaining to rights and obligations over land, and such like. As with all categories of historical data, they reflect historical change. The context of a text involves asking many questions, such as: Who is the author? What is the intention of the text? Who is the intended audience? How does the language reflect history? Where there is a change of language, what determines the choice? The same questions can be asked of inscriptions. Different types of historical sources have different kinds of audience as their focus. The inscriptions held special meaning for the royal court and the persons from other contemporary courts; officials concerned with the administration; religious sects who figure in the context of land grants; and the local community in the area of the grant. The inscriptions were engraved in public spaces such as temple walls, or else on copper plates. The copper plates became the property of a family, passed down from one generation to the next. The inscriptions were usually consulted by later authors and also picked up by the bards. The inscriptions were meant for public consumption and hence were open to the comments of the elite — the *samantas*, *sreshthins*, *kayasthas*, brahmanas etc.

Subsequent to the seventh century CE, many inscriptions become important because they give information about the chronological history of a dynasty along with some events. The inscriptions begin with a *prashasti* which gives historical information about the dynasty. It is in the form of a eulogy on the kings and their achievements. Initially it is of the king but soon included his dynasty. When *prasasti* records the change in the title of the king, then one can know that it marks a significant political moment. *Prashatis* give information regarding the religious affiliation of the king, updated version of dynastic history, important kings, ancestry and much more.The incriptions tell us about the identity of the grantee, nature of the gift whether it was a gift of revenue from land or land itself; the extent of the area that was granted — it could be a small area or several villages; the religious affiliation of the grantee — it could be a Buddhist *matha* as was the case earlier or brahmanas. The inscriptions recording grants simply were not a new feature marking the new transformations that the economy was undergoing, but they record a shift from *yajna* to *dana* — from the sacrificial ritual to the gift — as methods of legitimating the donor as the patron and the donee as the legitimizer (Thapar, 2013). Now the wealth is not movable (as was in the first millennium BCE when the gift was of cows or gold) but immovable — land. With the pratice of land grants, brahmanas become owners of landed wealth and hence powerful. The brahmana grantees settled on gifted land with the full support of royalty. They introduced brahmanical traditions and fostered the acceptance of kingship.

There was a distinct change in the economic structure of the kingdoms from the pre-Gupta to the post-Gupta times and a resultant change can be seen in the inscriptions which are an important source material for this period. From the sixth centurt CE they functioned more as official statements recording events which were deemed to be significant. Mostly these are grants of land to brahmanas, religious establishments, seminaries or even individuals. The official royal

inscriptions (*rajakiyam*) included categories such as *Sasanam* (instructions), *jayapatram* (legal decisions), *ajnapatram* (orders), and *prajnapanam* (proclamations). The instructions were meant for future kings as well which necessitated its keeping in the royal custody. Many inscriptions carried the royal seal for authentication purposes. The inscriptions gave the genealogy of the person issuing the statement, its purpose and a precise date.

The pre-Gupta inscriptions were in Prakrit but subsequently they were in Sanskrit. Sanskrit became the common language in the post-gupta period. While Prakrit was more inclusive in character and cut across caste and community identities, Sanskrit catered to upper-caste sensibilities. By the second millennium CE, regional languages started getting used in inscriptions. However the *prashasti* continued to be in Sanskrit. Sanskrit was widely used by administrators, selective religious sects, philosophers and literateurs.

The early medieval inscriptions carry useful information on subjects which have become central to the major debates concerning this period. Land grants, which beame very prolific from the Gupta period onwards, are especially relevant for the reconstruction of the eonomy, society, status of craftsmen and crafts, crops, samantas, feudatories, kings and queens etc. Infact the debates on state formation in early medieval India, Third Uurbanization, feudalism, status of women etc are alive due to inscriptions and the information that they carry. Subsequent to the Guptas, the *Puranas* ceased to carry dynastic information. In this regard, the inscription fill that void and add much to the history of dynasties.

Royal inscriptions which are common in this period record not only information related to governance but other aspects of life as well. A study of the inscriptions of this period tell us about a number of points. The pre-Gupta inscriptions were ususally of the grant of revenue from the land in lieu of salaries. But later the grants of land came to be made in perpetuity and hence land itself came to be claimed by the grantee. The brahmana donees became very wealthy and powerful. They were mostly responsible for constructing inflated genealogies through their familiarity with the *vamsanucharita* of the *Puranas* and supervision of granted land as is clear from *Krisiparasara*, a manual in Sanskrit for wet rice cultivation. A substantial grant of land could form the nucleus of small kingdoms and principalities. One example is of Khoh copper plate inscription of the *maharaja* Hastin issued in 475 CE and later inscription of Samksobha of 529 CE. The grant consisted of eighteen forest kingdoms. He was thus well able to establish himself as a semi-autonomous ruler with his own feudatories. This is one example of how states and kingdoms encroached into forests and cleared them for cultivation (Thapar, 2013). They coerced the forest dwellers to become their peasants, or settled cultivators from elsewhere to labour on the land. The grantee thus acquired a source of revenue. Many grants were of land already under cultivation, or even a village, which was an immediate source of income for the grantee. These inscriptions have been used by modern scholars to suggest a new periodization of Indian history, differentiating the late first millennium CE from the earlier period. (Thapar, 2013)

Now let us discuss briefly inscriptions have been used to reconstruct the history of the an early medieval dynaty like the Candellas (Thapar, 2013). Candellas were

ruling from the ninth century to the thirteenth century CE in Central India. Their inscriptions help us to reconstruct the process of gradual state formation in the early medieval period. The Candellas emerged in a frontier area at the peripheries of Pratihara, Rashtrakuta and Pala kingdoms. They were initially the samantas of their neighbours the Pratiharas and the Kalachuri-Chedis.The inscriptions tell us about their confrontations with the Cahamanas/Cauhanas and the Gahadvalas to the north-west and fleetingly with Mahmud of Gazni. Through a study of the inscriptions once can discern the processes a newly emergent polity was going through before becoming a full fledged kingdom. We come to know about the early ancestry of Candella kings, their possible low status and how it was circumvented by adding laudatory genealogies, partly fictional and partly historical; the shaping of kingdom was done through political allainces, orgin myths incorporating deities, sages and ancient histories and marriage alliances with Cahamana princess. All of these point to the adoption of measures in the shaping of the kingdom into a state. The inscriptions also tell us about the emergence of *kayasthas* as a powerful group. They record generous donations to various religious sects which are a statement of wealth, power and status of the respective kings.

1.4 TEMPLES

The post Gupta period saw a spurt in temple building. A large number of polities who were emerging on the political scene were attempting to incorporate the sacred space to legitimize their occupation of the throne. The Cholas built enormous temples with their massive enclosures along with gateways, *mandapas*, halls and water bodies. However people with lesser social status were also not left too far behind. For example the Sakta shrines like the Chausath Yogini temple at Khajuraho, dating to the ninth century CE probably catered to the needs of the people who were not part of the mainstream. Such large and small temples carried inscriptions on their walls from the post-Gupta period onwards. With the emergence of the temple, the new kings were looking to align their temporal power with the religious domain. The larger the temple, greater were the chances of its becoming famous. The more famous the temple, the greater would be the glory that was betowed on the king patronising it. Temples had greater longevity since they were built of superior material. The emergence of the temple on the sacred landscape also paralleled the evolution of the kingdom and symbolised the claim to independene and power. Very often temples emerged from modest origins which were usually a cult shrine associated with the origin of the royal family. Gradually it became an elaborate structure with multiple *mandapas*, pavilions, *gopurams*, towers etc.

Temples assume importance because sometimes they are the only way through which a settlement can be dated. They also provide information about architectural traditions, royal ideology, status, kings and their local dignitaries etc. This is so because it is in the inscriptions engraved on the temple walls that information is provided regarding the contexts in which the grant was made. Most settlements in the early medieval period grew around a temple. Thus temples emerged as a central foci in the day-to-day affairs of the settlement. One cannot ignore this source of religious, administrative and economic history if one wants to understand the processes in the early medieval period.

1.5 ORAL TRADITION AS SOURCE

The view of royalty is afforded by another perpective which forms a counterpart to the formal view. This is the bardic tradition. Scholars belive that it continues to this day though now it is fading out. This is represented by literature from the subaltern or the subordinate perpective. This is the view of those who occasionally may have participated in court activities but were essentially at a distance.

The samantas or local lords maintained bards who kept a record of their genealogies and property rights. The court scribe and the brahmana *rajguru* who authored the inscriptions and chronicles, which were regarded as the most impressive historical documents, provided one form of legitimacy. The bardic narrative formed the other. Families of the dominant castes were patrons of the *pandas*, priests-cum-genealogists, residing in places of pilgrimage — such as Pushkar, Hardwar, who were visited by members of these families on special occasions, such as a marriage, the birth of a son, or the death of an elder, or whenever a special rite had to be performed. The bardic narrative along with the inscriptions adds to the diversity in historical awareness (Thapar, 2013). The poems of the bards focused on local heroes. They are important because they reflect the perceptions of groups of a lower status. Here an instance may be given of an epic poem on the Cahamana Rajputs, the *Prithvirajararasau* of Chand Bardai. The epic in its present form is thought to be of the sixteenth or seventeenth century, although it refers back to events four centuries earlier. It tells us about the conflict of the Cahamanas with later Candella kings. What is noteworthy is that it differes from the official history of the Candellas as given in their inscriptions. The conflict not only becomes part of *Prthvirajarasau* but also other bardic compositions of the area, such as *Alha Raso* of Jagnaik Rao. Juxtapposing such narratives with official court documents often fill in the blanks in our knowledge and also provide a subaltern perspective.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1. What is *Carita* literature? What is its significance in the reconstruction of the history of early medieval period? Illustrate with the help of examples.

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2. Discuss the nature of inscriptions of the early medieval period. How is it an important source?

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1.6 *PURANAS*

Purana literally was "that which is ancient". These texts are an important source

for the reconstruction of history of the early medieval period. They provide genealogical information about the various dynasties that were ruling in this period. They were composed in the first millennium CE. Each *Purana* revolved around a deity. Each consisted of the *panca-laksana* or "the five facets". These were the descriptions of the *sarga* (primary creation), *prati-sarga* (secondary creation), *manvantara* (the time cycles), *vamsa* (succession, in this instance, largely of deities and sages), and the *vamsanucarita*. There are eighteen *Mahapuranas* and many *Upa Puranas* which are subsidiary texts, often focusing on lesser deities. Associated with these were texts on sacred topography and places of pilgrimage, such as the *Sthala-Puranas* and the *Mahatmyas*. Still later, the caste *Puranas* — as for example those of the Mallas, the Srimalas, and the Dharmaranyas are historically important. Of the non-brahmanical sects, the Jainas produced their own *Puranas*, presenting a different perspective from the brahmanical.

The *Upa Puranas* in particular provide information on popular beliefs, customs and festivals. They are useful to trace the interaction between the Brahmanical and non-Brahmanical ideas, values and practices which resulted in the emergence of distinct regional configurations (Singh, 2008).

1.7 LAW BOOKS

In the early medieval period a large number of important and influential *Dharmasastra* compilations, digests and commentaries came to be written. This points to the processes of formalisation of law and legal procedures which helped the state to regulate and arbitrate in the social life of its subjects (Singh, 2008). The compilations include the *Chaturvimshatimata*, which put together the teachings of 24 law givers. Jimutavahana wrote a work on procedural law called the *Vyavaharamatrika* and a digest of laws on inheritance called the *Dayabhaga*. Major commentaries include thoes of: Medatithi (9th century), Govindaraja (11/12th century), Kulluka (12th century) on the *Manusmriti*. Vijnaneshwara (11-12th century) and Apararka (12th century) wrote commentaries on the *Yajnavalkya Smriti*. Vijnaneshvara's commentary, *Mitakshara*, became an authority on various aspects of Hindu law. Other important Dharmashastra works include Lakshmidhara's *Kritya Kalpataru* (12th century) and Devanabhatta's *Smritichandrika* (11/12th century).

1.8 POEMS, SONGS AND OTHER LITERARY SOURCES

The devotional songs of *Alvars* and *Nayanars* and the hagiographies of the saints were important Tamil texts. *Nandikkalambakam*, is a poem of 80 stanzas which gives a eulogistic account of the reign of the Pallava king Nandivarman III. The author is not known. Kannada works, many of which were associasted with Jainism were composed under the royal patronage of the Rashtakutas, Hoysalas and Chalukyas.

A Sanskrit and Prakrit work called *Lekhapaddhati* gives useful historical information and contains models of various types of legal documents. It was composed in Gujarat and the author is not known. Another example is *Krishiparashara*, a text composed in Bengal dealing with agriculture. Jain folk tales called *dharma-kathas* of western India ofter have merchants as protaganists.

They offer useful information on trade and traders. Mathematical texts like the 9th century *Ganitasarasangraha* of Mahaviracharya and the 12th century *Lilavati* of Bhaskaracharya offer incidental information on prices, weights and measures, wages and coins (Singh, 2008)

1.9 CHINESE ACCOUNTS

Accounts of monks Xuanzang (c. 600-64 CE) and Yijing (635-713 CE) who visited India are important for reconstructing the history of Buddhist doctrines and practices in India.

1.10 COMMENTARIES

From the mid-first millennium CE many commentaries on the Canonical and non-Canonical texts, particularly of the Theravada *Sangha* came to be composed. The commentaries in turn were commented upon. Pali was the preferred language largely because it had a wider reach than Sanskrit and the the original texts were in it. Besides Sanskrit was the language which the Mahayanists preferred and hence the Theravadins chose to distance themselves by following Pali. The best known scholarly output was of Buddhaghosa who came to Sri Lanka in fifth century CE. His *Visuddhimagga*, the *Samantapasadika* and the *Sumangalavilasini* are important as they constitute an authoritative perspective on the Theravada. Buddhadatta, a close contemporary of Buddhaghosa wrote *Madhuratha-vilasini* which was a commentary on the *Buddhavamsa*.

A well known commentary on Mahavamsa was a twelfth century work called *Vamsatthappakasini*. These various works and the compilation of *Culavamsa* as a sequel to *Mahavamsa* followed by many other additions later led to the construction of an authoritative history of the *sangha*. The thirteenth century saw the composition of the *Dathavamsa* and the *Thupavamsa*, which focussed on the history of objects and relics, such as the Tooth of the Buddha. Because of sectarian conflict there was a need to validate the Theravada. Besides these biographies of kings and royal succession as exemplified by *Rajaratnakara* and the *Rajavali* were also written. All of the above mentioned works deal with the history of sects and the literature gives information on the narratives of the patrons of the *Sangha* who were persons in power.

1.11 CHRONICLES OR *VAMSAVALIS*

Texts like *Rajatarangini* were examples of a chronicle of a state, region, or kingdom. It recorded various changes particularly of the point when the small kingdom got converted into a more powerful larger one. The records covered local events, but their form reflected the processes of change that were taking place in other regions as well (Thapar, 2013). The chronicle incorporates the history of a region from its beginnings to the present. Since the time of William Jones, it has been repeatedly said that there was only one text from early India that could be regarded as historical writing: the *Rajatarangini*, a history of Kashmir written by Kalhan in 1148. Kalhan describes it as a *kavya.*

Kashmir from the ninth to the twelfth century was a significant centre of scholarship

in grammar, aesthetics, and philosophy. This is attested to by Al-Biruni, the Central Asian scholar who spent time in India in the eleventh century. He thinks that the inroads of Mahmud of Ghazni led scholars to flee to Kashmir and Benaras. Kashmir was one of the important centres of Northern Buddhism, from where Buddhist monks and scholars went to Central Asia and China in the early centuries CE. The competition with the Saivas was fierce since, they saw the Buddhists as rivals for royal patronage.

Chronicles or *vamsavalis*, of which genre the *Rajatarangini* is are found in various parts of the subcontinent. *Vamsavalis* focus on the court or the temple or even, on occasion, the caste. In some places they are referred to by different names, such as *pidhiyavali* (the line of generations); *prabandha* and *raso* in Gujarat and Rajasthan; *burunjis* among the Ahoms of Assam; *Madala Panji* in Odisha.

Rajatarangini consists of eight books or *tarangas*, and is composed in verse. The first three *tarangas* deal with the history of the region till the 7th century CE, *tarangas* 4 to 6 carry the story forward till the 11th century, while the last two *tarangas* (which are also the longest) deal with the 12th century. Kalhana is described as the son of Canpaka, a minister at the court of the previous king. The king was deposed and killed in 1101. Canpaka was at the court for many years but may not have had an official position. The successor dynasty may not have continued the services of families who had served the previous king. What the court had experienced in the actions of recent kings was not attractive to a discerning scholar. Kalhana thus was familiar with court circles, even if not serving at the court himself. This distancing probably enabled him to make independent judgements on various rulers.

Kalhana was not writing to pamper any particular patron. His work is about the past of Kashmir, the kingdom where he lived and the court at which his father had served. He is also concerned with understanding the inexplicable behaviour of kings just prior to the current dynasty. Hence his criticism of the actions of kings who were his close contemporaries. His narrative is peppered with severe judgements on various groups who exploited Kashmir. Kalhana is aware of representing the past "as it was", as *itihasa*. His narrative incorporates rulers such as Ashoka and Kanishka, and even Mihirakula. These persons figure in Mahayana Buddhist texts but not in the *Puranas*, barring Ashoka who is just a name in a list of kings. The text narrates the history of Kashmir and incorporates into the narration legends, chronology based on written records, and details of events closer to the author's time. It is written in Sanskrit. He claims that he is correcting the chronology of his predecessors and giving a connected account of the past by partly filling in gaps and removing fictitious genealogies. Unlike many other chronicles, Kalhana takes care to mention the sources that he has consulted. The work shows a familiarity not only with the Epics and *Puranas*, but with more historically-oriented writing, such as the historical biographies written by Bana and more recently by Bilhana. The influence of the *Harshacharita* is noticeable. As sources for the *Rajatarangini* he consulted eleven works on the *rajakatha* (narrative of rulers). He read the *prabandha* or chronicle of Suvrata, a collation and summary of fragmentary chronicles. Other sources include the important local *Purana* called the *Nilamata Purana*, and Ksemendra's *Nrpavali*, or list of kings. Various local inscriptions, especially the *sasanas* (orders) for establishing temples and

monasteries, which were generally grants of land and often included *prasastipattas* (the history of the dynasty in summary form), and coin legends were consulted, as were segments of the oral tradition preserved in popular legends and other historical narratives (Thapar, 2013).

Book Four begins with the Karkota dynasty, which was responsible for consolidating the kingdom of Kashmir in the seventh century. The origin of the Karkotas is linked to Naga Karkota, said to be a deity but also a kinsman of the ruling family. Since this was a dynasty of the seventh century CE, Chinese annals also provide incidental references to corroborate the text, the T'ang rulers being interested in northern India. They mention that the Karkota king Candrapida requested assistance against the Arabs in 713 CE, a time when the Arabs were attempting a conquest of Sindh. The chronology seems to tally. Northern India at this time experienced at its frontiers the proximity of the Chinese, the rise of Tibetan power, the presence of the Arabs, and the threat of Turkish rule in Afghanistan.

Another important chronicle was the *vamsavali* from Chamba. Chamba in the western Himalaya was a small hill state comprising the upper reaches of the Ravi river and touching the Chenab river. Apart from the succession of rulers and events, other significant processes of change are implicit in the *vamsavali*, such as the formation of the kingdom, the emergence of intermediaries, the transition to a caste society, and the coming of Puranic Hinduism (Thapar, 2013). The earlier focus of the text was the settlement at Brahmaur in the upper reaches of the Ravi. This area, though seemingly isolated, was connected by routes in various directions — to Kishtwar, Jammu, and Kangra with access to the plains of Kashmir and Punjab, and others via the Manimahesha lake and Trilokanath to Lahul and Kulu. Brahmaur came to be called Gaderan — the habitat of the Gaddi shepherds known to various parts of the western Himalaya. At the turn of the first millennium CE, when the state was established, the location of the capital moved down to a lower elevation on the plateau of Chamba. Referred to in the inscriptions as Campa or Campaka, the town of Chamba, after which the kingdom was named, was located on a fertile plateau above the junction of the Ravi and Saho rivers. The valleys branching off were generally held by *ranas*, intermediaries who were under the suzerainty of the king of Chamba. The Chamba *vamsavali* lists the succession of rulers of Chamba coming down to the seventeenth century, closing with the war between Chamba and Nurpur (to the south) in 1642. It may not be an exact chronicle, but it does record a historical process. Its authorship is unknown. The Chamba *vamsavali* can be seen as consisting of three sections. The first discusses origin myths and descent from the gods as claimed for royal lineages. The second has a rather garbled account of earlier rulers, borrowing from the kshatriya descent lists of the *Puranas*. The third section provides the evidence for the establishing of the kingdom and the dynasty/dynasties that ruled. Initially the more important kings are listed, but subsequently it mentions virtually all (Thapar, 2013).

1.12 ISLAMIC SOURCES[2]

The Ghurian conquest of north India towards the close of the twelfth century CE is an important event in Indian history. This is because an independent Sultanate,

[2] This section has been taken from MHI 03, Block 3, Unit 10

founded in its wake, opened India to foreign influences on the one hand and led to the unification of the country under a strong centre on the other. It also attracted emigrants from the neighbouring countries who represented different cultural traditions. One of the traditions introduced by them was that of history writing. The historical literature produced by them in Persian language is of vast magnitude. As a matter of fact, the study of history was considered by the Muslim elite as the third important source of knowledge after the religious scripture and the jurisprudence. With the coming of the Mughals in the 16th century the tradition of history writing achieved new heights.

The early writings in Persian on the history of Turks who came to India are traceable to 12th century. As far as Delhi Sultanate is concerned we have a continuity of available texts in Persian till the end of the Sultanate (1526). Many of the authors were attached to the court as officials while a few were independent scholars not associated with any official position. In general, the available histories put forward the official version of events, rather than a critical evaluation of the policies and events. It is rare that one comes across any critical reference to the reigning Sultan. Even the style is also generally eulogising or flattering to the Sultan under whose reign it is written. In most cases, the authors borrowed freely from the earlier works to trace the earlier period.

Apart from historical texts a number of other Persian works are available for the period. Abdu'r Razzaq's *Matla'us Sa'dain* (travelogue), Tutsi's *Siyasatnama* (administration & polity), Fakhr-i Mudabbir's *Adabu'l-Harb wa'as- Shuja'at* (warfare), are a few important ones. A few Arabic works are also available for the period. Ibn Battuta (*Rihla*) and Shihab-al Din al-Umari (*Masalik al-absar Mamalik al-Ansar*) have provided excellent travel accounts.

The pioneer in history-writing was Muhammad bin Mansur, also known as Fakhr-i Mudabbir. He migrated from Ghazna to Lahore during the later Ghaznavid period. In Lahore he compiled *Shajra-i-Ansab*, the book of genealogies of the Prophet of Islam, his companions and the Muslim rulers, including the ancestors of Sultan Muizuddin Muhammad bin Sam (commonly known as Sultan Shihabuddin Muhammad Ghuri). The compiler wanted to present it to the Sultan but the latter's assassination on his way from the Punjab to Ghazna in 1206, led him to append a separate portion as *Muqidimma* (Introduction) to it. This introduction narrates the life and military exploits of Qutbuddin Aibak since his appointment in India as Sipahsalar of Kuhram and Sunam in 1192 upto his accession to the throne in Lahore in 1206. This is the first history of the Ghurian conquest and the foundation of an independent Sultanate in India. It opens with the description of the noble qualities of Sultan Muizuddin Muhammad bin Sam. But the credit of the conquest made in India is given to Qutbuddin Aibak. The Sultan is not mentioned as victor even in the details of the expeditions led by him. However, the details furnished by Fakhr-i Mudabbir about the conciliatory policy followed by Qutbuddin Aibak towards the Hindu chiefs even before his accession to the throne are interesting. Aibak set an example that inspired his successors. All the chiefs who submitted to Aibak's authority were treated as friends. No doubt, Fakhr-i Mudabbir composed the work in the hope of getting reward by eulogising the reigning Sultan, nonetheless, the selection of historical material by him demonstrates the historical sense he possessed. Along with administrative reforms introduced by Aibak after

his accession to the throne in Lahore, he also provides details of rituals that had symbolic significance. For instance, he is the first historian who informs us about the ceremony of public allegiance paid to the new Sultan on his accession to the throne in Lahore. He states that on Qutbuddin Aibak's arrival from Delhi to Lahore in 1206, the entire population of Lahore came out to pay allegiance to him as their new Sultan. Equally important is the evidence about the administrative reforms introduced by Sultan Qutbuddin Aibak. He renewed land-grants made to the deserving persons and fixed maintenance-allowance to others. The collection by the officers of illegal wealth accrued through peasants or forced labour was abolished. The compiler also informs us that the state extracted one-fifth of the agricultural produce as land revenue. In short, it is the first history of the Ghurian conquest and Qutbuddin Aibak's reign compiled in India.

Another important work compiled by Mudbbir is the *Adabu'l-Harb wa'as-Shuja'at*, dedicated to Sultan Shamsuddin Iltutmish. It contains chapters on the duties of king, the functioning of state departments, war tactics, mode of warfare, war-horses, their treatment, etc. The compiler, in order to illustrate his point, has incorporated important events that occurred during the period. Most of them are related to historical events of the Ghaznavid period. The second important history of the Ghurian conquest and the Sultanate is *Tajul Ma'asir*. Its author, Hasan Nizami migrated from Nishapur to India in search of fortune. He took abode in Delhi, sometime before Aibak's accession to the throne. In Delhi, he set to compile the history of Qutbuddin Aibak's achievements after his accession to the throne in 1206. The motive behind writing was to gain royal patronage. He begins his narrative describing the vicissitude of time he went through in his hometown of Nishapur, his journey to Ghazna where he fell ill and then his migration to India. The preface is followed by the description of the second battle of Tarain (1192). No mention has been made of the first battle of Tarain in which Prithvi Raj Chauhan had defeated Sultan Muizuddin Mohammad bin Sam. However, from the year 1192 upto 1196 all the historical events are described in detail. Thereafter Hasan Nizami takes a long jump leaving off all the battles fought and conquests made by Qutbuddin Aibak till 1202 CE. Probably the disturbances that broke out as a result of Aibak's accidental death in 1210 disappointed the author who seems to have stopped writing. Later on, when Iltutmish succeeded in consolidating his rule, he again decided to resume his work. This time he commenced his narrative from the year 1203 because Iltutmish, whom the work was to be presented, had become an important general and was taking part in all the campaigns led by Qutbuddin Aibak. No mentions has been made by the compiler of Aibak's conquest of Badaun in 1197 and the occupation of Kanauj and Chandwar in 1198. It is, however, to be admitted that, in spite of all hyperbolic used in praise of Iltutmish, it is to the credit of the compiler that he was able to collect authentic information about every event that he describes in his work. Besides the gap, Hasan Nizami also fails to describe the friendly treatment meted out by Aibak to the local chiefs who submitted to his authority. His description is often very brief and at times merely symbolic. All the manuscript copies of *Tajul Ma'asir* available in India and abroad come to a close with the capture to Lahore by Iltutmish in 1217.

The compilation by Minhaj Siraj Juzjani of his *Tabaqat-i Nasiri* was epoch making in the history of history-writing. Minhaj Siraj Juzjani (hereafter mentioned as

Minhaj) was also an emigrant scholar from Khorasan. His approach to the history of Islam and Muslim rulers from the early Islamic period upto his own time, the year 1259 CE, seems to have been influenced by his professional training as a jurist and association with the rulers of Central Asia and India. He belonged to a family of scholars who were associated with the courts of the Ghurid Sultans of Firozkuh and Ghazna. He himself served under different Ghurid princes and nobles before his migration to India. In 1227, he came to India and joined the court of Nasiruddin Qubacha. He was appointed as the head of the Firuzi Madrassa (government college) in Ucch, the Capital of Sultan Nasiruddin Qubacha. In 1228, he joined the service of Sultan Iltutmish after Qubacha's power had been destroyed and his territories of Sindh and Multan were annexed to the Delhi Sultanate. He served as *Qazi* (Judicial officer) of Gwalior under Iltutmish. Sultan Razia (1236-40) summoned him to Delhi and appointed him the head of Madrassa-i Nasiri in Delhi. Later on, he rose to the position of the Chief *Qazi* of the Sultanate during the reign of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud. It was during the reign of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud that he decided to write the history of Islam upto his own time. In an attempt to distinguish his work from those of Fakhr-i Mudabbir and Hasan Nizami, Minhaj adopted the *Tabaqat* System of history-writing. The first two writers had produced their works in unitary form, in which each reign was treated as a unit. In the *Tabaqat* form, each dynasty of rulers is presented in a separate *tabaqa* (i.e. section) and was brought to completion in 1259. The last five sections are very important from the point of view of history. In these we find valuable information about the rise and fall of the ruling dynasties of Central Asia, Persia, India and the Mongol activities under Chingis Khan. Undoubtedly, Minhaj is our earliest and best authority on the ruling house of Ghur. His account of the rulers of Ghur is characterised by objectivity in approach. Likewise, the section devoted to the history of the Khwarizm Shahi dynasty and rise of Mongol power under Chingis Khan and his immediate successors supply information, not available in the works of Ata Malik Juvaini and Rahiduddin Fazlullah who wrote under the patronage of the Mongol princes. Minhaj's purpose was to supply the curious readers of the Delhi Sultanate with authentic information about the victory of the Mongols over the Muslim rulers and the destruction of Muslim cities and towns. He drew on a number of sources, including the immigrants and merchants who had trade relations with the Mongol rulers. Moreover, before his migration to India, he had first hand experience of fighting against the Mongols in Khurasan. Therefore, the last *tabaqa* of the work is considered by modern scholars invaluable for its treatments of the rise of Mongol power and the dissolution of the Mongol Empire in 1259 after the death of Emperor Monge Qaan. The sections (*tabaqat*) twentieth and twenty-first devoted to India, describe the history of the Sultans from Aibak to Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah and careers of the leading nobles of Iltutmish respectively. In both the sections he displays his ability to convey critical information on issues. Conscious of his duty as a historian, he invented the method of 'conveying intimation' on camouflaging the critics of the reigning Sultan or his father either by giving hints in a subtle way or writing between the lines. As Sultan Iltutmish could not be criticised directly because his son, Nasiruddin Mahmud happened to be the reigning Sultan, Minhaj builds Iltutmish's criticism through highlighting the noble qualities of Iltumish's rivals Sultan Ghayasuddin Iwaz Khalji of Bihar and Bengal or Sultan Nasirudin Qubacha of Sind and Multan. Likewise, he also hints at policy of getting rid of certain nobles. Praising Malik Saifuddin Aibak, he says that being a God-fearing Musalman, the

noble detested the work of seizing the assets from the children of the nobles killed or assassinated by the order of the Sultan. It is really Minhaj's sense of history that led Ziauddin Barani to pay him homage. Barani thought it presumptious to write on the period covered in the *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*.

1.13 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOURCES[3]

The archaeology of the early medieval period is still a less explored field. Most of the excavations and explorations have dealt with early historical sites. Whatever exploration and limited excavation done on this period have thown up meagre remains and poor archaeological data. Coins are very few if not rare. Habitation remains in many sites have not been discovered. The layers belonging to the early medieval period either are sterile or show poor remains. This has led some scholars like R. S. Sharma to bolster their theory of urban decline and decay of towns and cities in the early medieval period.

It is true that many sites are reported to be bereft of material remains of this period like Atranjikhera and Kausambi or a disturbed archaeological record as at Hastinapur, Sringaverpura, and Ahicchatra with flimsy structures, few stone images, pottery and other material objects. In many cases like at Hastinapur and Sringaverpura the dates of these layers often merge with the post-1200 CE or the 'medieval' period and it is difficult to differentiate the earlier phases. At Hastinapur, situated in Meerut district, Uttar Pradesh, Period V is dated from the eleventh century CE and is characterised by structures of brick-bats including a brick wall and a room, alongwith pottery, iron objects, terracotta objects and three stone images. Sonkh in Mathura district, Uttar Pradesh also portrays a picture of destruction and decay with fragments of mostly unconnected walls. The newly built structures were of poor quality due to the frequent use of brick-bats and rubble instead of compact bricks. However stone plaques with Hindu deities have been recovered from the excavations. Lal Kot in Delhi has been divided into the Rajput period from the eleventh to the twelfth centuries CE and has yielded no major structures except rubble walls and mud and lime floors and pottery mostly red wares. However the subsequent phase called the early Sultanate from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries CE has yielded more structures and artefacts. At Purana Qila in Delhi, the post-Gupta period was marked mainly by structural remains in baked or mud-bricks showing three phases. The baked bricks used in the structures had mostly been robbed from houses of the earlier period. Amongst noteworthy objects, mention may be made of a few decorated potsherds, beads, and a fine but damaged stone sculpture. The associated pottery was mainly a red ware, in which the knife-edged bowl was a distinctive type. The subsequent period called the Rajput period (tenth to twelfth centuries CE) was also characterised by structures built of re-used bricks as also of mud-bricks. One of the house-walls showed alternate courses of baked and mud-bricks. Mud-floors with hearths were also encountered in some houses. The most impressive structure of the period, however, was a fortification-wall, belonging perhaps to the time of the Tomars. Built of rubble with a basal width of 1.5 m, it was exposed to a length of over 30m. The Rajput period was represented by five structural phases, one of them

[3] This section is compiled from some selected paragraphs of MHI 10, Block 4

showing floors with ovens. The principal building-material was the same as in the preceding period, with the addition of rubble. Other significant finds of the period included copper coins, carnelian beads, terracotta objects, ornate moulded bricks and a small figure of Vishnu in stone. The associated pottery was mainly of red and black wares, occasionally decorated with simple painted, stamped or incised designs. Rajghat is a well known site situated in Varanasi, UP and excavations have revealed that the period 300-700 CE marked a great advance in settlement planning and architecture. This is revealed by the development of houses and town planning. Houses were of considerable size with room sizes ranging from 7.08 × 6.25 to 2.30 × 1.30 m. There were large structures close to the river which could not be classified as residential houses. One of the structures had large pillared halls. Underground structures the purpose of which is debatable have also been unearthed. There were wells and brick-built drains. The city had a regular layout divided by many roads and lanes. The town was well planned with elaborate drainage systems, large buildings both residential and 'public', industrial activity and religious structures. All this testified to a large urban centre which had earlier roots but stretched into the post-Gupta phase. This is also evident from the smaller excavations where Period V (700-1200 CE) has evidence of brick walls, two big buildings and many architectural fragments. Pallavamedu in Tamil Nadu has yielded archaeological evidence of the Pallavas. Three periods of occupation have been identified, Period I with pottery and other artefacts, Period II with mud floors, hearths and platforms and Period III with pottery and disturbed structural remains. Excavations have been conducted at many sites in Tamil Nadu associated with dynasties of this period like Pandyas (Korkai), Cholas (Kurumbanmedu and Palyarai) and Hoysalas (Kannanur) and mostly artefacts including pottery have been recovered but no structural remains except an irrgation system at Kannanur and a brick wall at Palayarai. Banavasi in North Kanara district, Karnataka, known for the Kadamba dynastic rule has also been the subject of an archaeological survey in recent times. From the seventh to the sixteenth centuries CE Shiva temples replace the stupas and there is indication of the expansion of the settlement from the presence of extensive pottery scatters, construction of reservoirs, a basalt stone manufacturing site and presence of iron slag indicating some production activity. The settlement seems to have shifted to a different zone than the earlier period due to the absence of later period ceramics in the area of the early historic settlement. At Aihole in Karnataka, the concentration has been on the study of the famous temple complex in this zone but recent survey work has shown that the early Chalukyan temples were a part of a larger settlement system with the discovery of pottery scatters, reservoirs, large architectural complex with a pillared hall and room blocks, stone quarries and mortars in the 1 sq. km area surrounding the temple complex. The pottery found was mostly jars as opposed to bowls which might indicate cooking and storage.

Despite poor remains and limited excavations, early medieval archaeology has given evidence which has been used to construct various theories such as those of urban decay, feudalism, Third Urbanization, emergence and continuation of urban settlements like Siyadoni in Uttar Pradesh, trade routes, traders, guilds, trade with Southeast Asia etc. Thus archaeological evidence in the form of house remains, floors, pits, bricks, brick bats, wells, temples, buildings, ovens etc, no matter how rich or poor the evidence may be, allow the historian/archaeologist to reconstruct

the history of any period. The early medieval period is no exception. The archaeology of this period has great potential and further work in this area can correct many assumptions and perceptions which have been arrived at due to limited excavations and explorations.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1.) What do mean by the term '*Vamsavali*'? Discuss the significance of *Rajatarangini* as a historical source.

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2.) Write a note on Islamic sources of the early Medieval period.

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3.) The archaeology of the early medieval period is still an unexplored field. Examine this statement in the light of excvations and explorations conducted at some sites.

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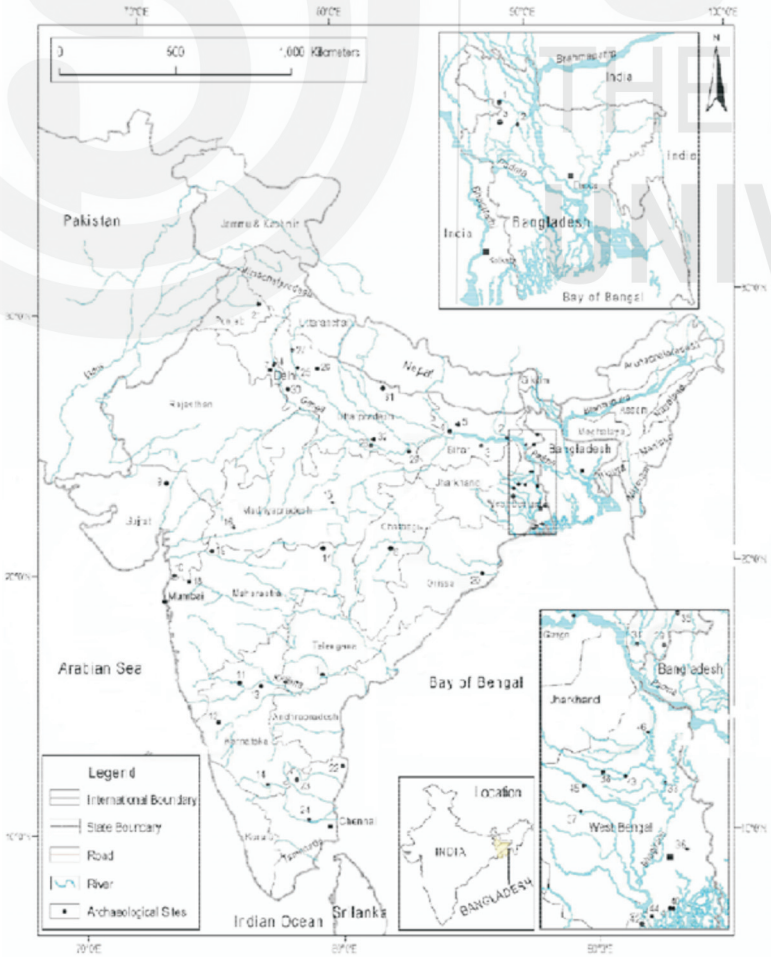

Map 1: Archaeological Remains of the Post-Gupta Period [Map prepared by Sheena Panja]
Source: MHI 10, Block IV

List of Sites: *India:* 1) Yelleswaram, 2) Antichak, 3) Chirand, 4) Krimila, 5) Vaisali, 6) Sirpur, 7) Lal Kot (Quila Rai Pithora), 8) Purana Quila, 9) Vadnagar, 10) Sanjam, 11) Aihole, 12) Banavasi-Gudnapur, 13) Maski, 14) Talakkad, 15) Tripuri, 16) Navdatoli, 17) Manser, 18) Nasik, 19) Prakash, 20) Sisupalgarh, 21) Ropar, 22) Kanchipuram, 23) Kaveripattanam, 24) Uraiyur, 25) Ahar, 26) Ahicchatra, 27) Hastinapur, 28) Kausambi, 29) Rajghat, 30) Sonkh, 31) Sravasti, 32) Sringaverapur, 33) Ballaldhipi, 34) Balupur, 35) Bangarh, 36) Chandraketugarh, 37) Dihar, 38) Goswamikhanda, 39) Jagjivanpur, 40) Jatar Deul, 41) Kankandighi, 42) Mandirtala, 43) Mangolkot, 44) Pakurtala, 45) Pokhanna, 46) Rajabadidanga

***Bangladesh*: 1) Birampur Complex, 2) Mahasthan, 3) Paharpur**

1.14 SUMMARY

In this Unit you learnt about the different categories of sources which are available for the reconstruction of the history of the early medieval period. Certain new kinds of historical writing became current in this period such as *charitas, prashastis and vamsavalis*. You were made aware about the meaning of these terms and how they are significant as a historical source. This was the time when Muslim incursions in India led to the establishment of the Sultanate. A systematic form of historical writing emerged and we have a number of texts which throw light on the early Sultanate period. Lastly we discussed the archaeological sources and how limited excavations and explorations on the early medieval period have hampered our investigation on the processes that made this period different from the earlier one. We also did a small survey of the work done of the major sites of India and the kind of archaeological record that has been unearthed.

1.15 KEY WORDS

Charita : historical biography

Mahayana : literally 'the greater vehicle', a Buddhist school which worships the Buddha in an anthropomorphic form.

Prashasti : eulogy

Rajatarangini : a historical narrative describing the evolution of the kingdom of Kashmir,

Theravada : a conservative branch of Buddhism which developed out of Hinayana Buddhism.

Vamsavali : chronicle written by Kalhana. It is considered as the first true historical work of ancient India.

1.16 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) See Section 1.2

2) See Section 1.3

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) See Section 1.11

2) See Section 1.12

3) See Section 1.13

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UNIT 2 THE POLITICAL SCENARIO I-RAJPUTS: RISE AND STRUGGLE TO POWER[1]

Structure

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you will:

- know about how various political power configurations emerged in western and central India **with reference to Rajputs**;
- understand the nature of the distribution of political authority as well as the structure of polity **of the Rajputs**; and
- be able to analyse the patterns of the formation of political powers and their consolidation.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In conventional studies on Indian polity there is greater stress on the genealogy of the ruling dynasties and chronology of their rules. Changes in polity are mostly

[1] This Unit has been taken from EHI 03, Unit 10.

conceived as changes represented by dynastic shifts. In view of the inadequacy of this framework, recent studies on polity have attempted to view the ancient and medieval polity from the perspective of possible processes which were in operation. There is a marked emphasis now on themes such as state formation, structure of polity, nature of power and political control, etc. However generalization at sub-continental level need to be probed further from a microscopic point of view. In this Unit we shall know about the emergence and evolution of regional polity in western and central India with reference to Rajputs. This region comprises modern states of Rajasthan, Gujarat and most of Madhya Pradesh.

Owing to the fact that regional political formations in various parts of India have not been studied fully, the generalizations at sub-continental level require further precision, The study of regional political formations should, however, assume importance in view of the fact that:

1) there were frequent shifts in the centres of powers, and

2) the formation of new polities was a continuous process.

Western and central India provide us with examples of fresh spurt in the emergence of local states. For example, the Rajput clans such as the Gurjara Pratihara, Guhila, Paramara, Cahamana as well as the Kalachuris and Candella exploited political uncertainties of post-Gupta and post tenth centuries in western and central India. They dominated the political scene for centuries, especially during the period extending from the eighth to the thirteenth centuries. The picture of the political processes that resulted in the replacement of old dynasties by new Rajput powers of uncertain origins is not clear. None the less, an attempt has been made to work out some essential traits of the nature of distribution of political authority. Unlike northern and eastern India, the region under discussion shows some influence of lineage — at least in some parts of the region. Even in these parts, the dispersal of administrative and fiscal powers along with the changes in the bureaucratic set-up — all based on new landholdings — set the tone of feudal polity.

2.2 THE RISE OF RAJPUT DYNASTIES

The Arabs invaded Sindh and Multan in 712-13 CE. Within the next 25 years they overran Marwar, Malwa and Broach and threatened other parts of India. These raids contributed to remarkable changes in the political map of western India and the Deccan. Powers like the Rashtrakutas and clans now known to us as Rajputs came to the fore in this period. These clans not heard of in earlier times, began to play important part from about the eighth century. With obscure origins the lineages like the Paramaras and the Cahamanas, after passing through many vicissitudes, came to the fore in the context of the inter-state conflicts of the major powers such as the Gurjara Pratiharas and Rashtrakutas. The rise of the Rajputs to political prominence appears to be accidental, but an understanding of the early political developments shows that their appearance on political scene was not sudden. The emergence of these clans took place within the existing hierarchical political structure. Their emergence therefore, should be understood as a total process.

2.3 ORIGIN LEGENDS: THEIR POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

The problem of the origin of Rajput dynasties is highly complex and controversial. Their *gotrochhara* makes them kshatriyas of the lunar family (Chandravamshi) while on the basis of old *kavyas* some maintain that they were of the solar race. The myths of solar origin regard them as kshatriya created in *kali Yuga* to wipe-out the *mlecchas* (foreigners). Rajasthani bards and chroniclers regard them as fire-born (*Agnikula*).

According to the *Agnikula* myth recorded by a court poet, the founder of the house of the Paramaras originated from the firepit of sage Vasishtha on Mount Abu. The man who thus sprang out of the fire forcibly wrested the wish-granting cow of sage Vasishtha from sage Vishwamitra and restored it to the former. Sage Vasishtha gave him the fitting name of *paramara*-slayer of the enemy. From him sprang a race which obtained high esteem by virtuous kings. The Paramara inscriptions also declare the origin of the Paramara from the firepit of sage Vasishtha on Mount Abu.

The Rajasthani bards went a step further and ascribed the fire origin not only to Paramaras but also to Pratiharas, the Chalukyas of Gujarat and the Cahamanas. Speaking of the fire origin of the Cahamanas the bardic tales said that Agastya and other sages began a great sacrifice on Mount Abu. Demons rendered it impure by showering down filthy things. Vasishtha created from the firepit three warriors Pratihara, Chalukya, and Paramara, but none succeeded in keeping the demons away. Vasishtha dug a new pit from where issued forth a four armed figure. The sages named him Cahuvana. This warrior defeated the demon. This *Agnikula* myth was nothing more than poetic imagination of bards. In their hunt for a fine pedigree for their patrons they had woven the story of the fire-origin of the Paramaras. They found that it could splendidly explain the origin of the Cahamanas too if they added some more details.

The problem of the origin, when viewed in its totality instead of viewing it from the angle of any particular dynasty, would help us understand its political significance. The practice of new social groups claiming kshatriya status became widespread in the early medieval period. Kshatriya status was one of the various symbols that the emergent social groups sought for the legitimation of their newly acquired power.

The early medieval and medieval Rajput clans, representing a mixed caste and constituting a fairly large section of petty chiefs holding estates, achieved political eminence gradually. There was corresponding relationship between the achievement of political eminence by Pratiharas, Guhilas, Cahamanas and other clans and their movement towards a respectable social status, viz. acquiring a kshatriya lineage. In this context it is important to note that these dynasties claimed descent from ancient kshatriyas long after their accession to power. Let us note the example of the Gurjara Pratiharas, chronologically the earliest and historically the most important of the Rajput dynasties. In an inscription of the late ninth century issued by king Bhoja-I, they claim solar descent for the dynasty and say that Lakshmana, the brother of the epic hero Rama was the ancestor of their family.

Their inscriptions are silent on the question of origin till the glorious days of Bhoja. This epigraphic tradition of the solar descent is connected chronologically with the period during which the Gurjara Pratiharas were the dominant political power. The tradition, thus represents a stage of imperial prominence with the temptation to establish a link with the heroic age of the Epics. The tradition of the legendary kshatriya origin of powers such as the Paramaras and Cahamanas too had not originated at the initial stage of the rise of these powers. In short, the entry into the Rajput fold was possible through the acquisition of political power. And the newly acquired power was to be legitimized by claiming linkages with the kshatriya lines of the mythical past.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) Why did the bards create the *Agnikula myth*? Answer in about five lines.

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2) List the reasons for the need to study regional polity.

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3) Which of the following statements are right (✓) or wrong (×):

a) Rajput clans suddenly appeared on the Indian political scene. ( )

b) New social groups started claiming kshatriya status in the early medieval period. ( )

c) Arabs invaded Sindh in sixth century CE. ( )

d) There is no problem regarding the origin of Rajput dynasties. ( )

2.4 DISTRIBUTION OF POLITICAL AUTHORITY

In India the distribution of political power did not follow a uniform pattern. A study of the process of emergence of the political powers in medieval western India shows that the distribution of political authority could be organized by a network of lineages (*kula, vamsha*) within the framework of the monarchical form of polity. The political annals of the Rajput dynasties such as the Cahamanas of Rajasthan and Paramaras of southern Rajasthan, Gujarat and Malwa provide examples of the clan based distribution of political authority.

2.4.1 Proliferation of Rajput Clans

The bardic chronicles of Marwar state that Dharanivaraha of the Paramara dynasty of Abu made himself master of the Navkot Marwar which he afterwards divided among his nine brothers: Mandovar to one brother, Ajmer to the second and so on. Thus, apart from the Paramaras of Malwa there were at least four lines of the

Paramaras ruling in: i) Abu, ii) Bhinmal iii) Jalor and iv) Vagada. Similarly, apart from the Cahamanas of Broach there was another line of the Cahamanas in Pratabgarh region. It was headed by a *mahasamanta* of the Pratihara overlord. The ancestor of this *mahasamanta* was a member of the famous Cahamana line of Shakambhari. The Cahamanas of Shakambhari with their cradle land in the tract extending from Pushkar to Harsa (central and eastern Rajasthan) had themselves branched off into Cahamanas of (i) Nadol (ii) Jalor (iii) Satyapura and (iv) Abu. During about five centuries of their rule they exercised control over a vast region in western Rajasthan and Gujarat.

The Chapas were another Rajput clan of the early medieval period. They ruled over principalities like Bhillamala, Vadhiar in Kathiawad, and Anahilapataka in Gujarat. Similarly the Guhilas ruled over the regions of Udaipur and Mewar.

Apart from the sub-divisions of major clans, the emergence of various minor clans was another important aspect of the proliferation of the Rajputs in early medieval period: The continuing process of the formation of Rajput clans was through the acquisition of political power. The new clans and sub-divisions of earlier clans were drawn into Rajput political network in a variety of ways.

2.4.2 Formation of Lineage Power

The formation and consolidation of lineage power did not develop in a uniform way. One of the indicators of the process of lineage power formation was the colonization of new areas, as is evident in the expansion of the number of settlements. The colonization of new areas could result from the annexation of the new territories by means of organized military strength. The Chauhan kingdom of Nadol known as *Saptashata* is said to have been made into *Saptasahasrikadesha* by a Chauhan chief who killed chiefs on the boundaries of his kingdom and annexed their villages. Territorial expansion of the western Indian powers was accomplished, in some areas, at the expense of tribal settlements. For example, Mandor Pratihara Kakkuka is said to have resettled a place which was terrible because of being inhabited by the Abhiras. Similarly, there are examples of the suppression of tribal population like Shabaras, Bhillas and Pulindas in western and central India.

Similar movements are found in the case of the Guhilas and the Cahamanas as well. For example, though the Guhila settlements were to be found in various parts of Rajasthan as early as the seventh century, slightly later traditions recorded in the inscriptions of the Nagada-Ahar Guhilas trace their movement from Gujarat. The bardic tradition also suggests that the Guhila kingdoms in south Rajasthan succeeded the earlier tribal chiefdoms of the Bhils.

The movement of the Chauhans was from Ahichhatrapura to Jangaldesha (Shakambhari) which, as the name indicates, was an inhospitable area. Their movement led to its colonization. A tenth century record says that Lakshmana, the son of Vakpati-I of the Shakambhari Cahamana lineage started with few followers and fought against the Medas who had been terrorising the people around Naddula with their free-booting raids. It so pleased the brahmana masters of the area that they appointed him the guard of the towns. Gradually Lakshmana built up a small band of troopers and suppressed the Medas in their own territory. The Medas agreed to keep off from villages paying tribute to Lakshmana. He became a master of 20 horses and extended his dominions at ease and built a great palace in Nadol.

Political authority of a lineage could even be brought about by simply replacing one lineage by another as evident in the case of the Cahamanas of Jalor, a splinter line of the Nadol Cahamana branch. Kirtipala, a son of Nadol Cahamana Alhana was dissatisfied with the share of land assigned to him. A man of ambition, he found that the situation in Mewar offered an advantage for an invader. Having failed there, he made his way into the region which was ruled by the Paramaras. He attacked Jalor, their capital, and made it the capital of his new kingdom. Similarly the Cahamana line of Broach was brought into being when a Cahamana chief Bharatravaddha-II founded a principality over the tract of the Gurjaras of Broach. He was helped by Pratihara Nagabhata-I in ousting the Gurjaras from Broach in the chaotic situation created by the coming of the Arabs. He then assumed the title of *mahasamantadhipati* in 756 CE.

Thus the formation of lineage power evolved through multiple channels and processes which were not compartmentalized and interacted with one another.

2.4.3 Process of Rising in Social Status

The political history of western India shows that a large ethnic group of an area could successfully compete for political power. It could also lay the foundations of large state structures lasting for centuries. Starting from a local agrarian base a lineage could in course of time, emerge as a big regional power by integrating other local lineages. For example, a tract of land variously called as *Gujaratra, Gujarabhumi, Gurjjarashtra***,** etc. all referring possibly to the same area (territories contiguous with southern Rajasthan) was the base from where many lineages emerged.

In the process of stratification that developed within the Gurjara stock, some families attained political dominance and became ruling lineages. From seventh century onwards various lineages that had branched off the Gurjara stock through the channel of political power became widely distributed in western India. Gurjara-Pratihara power represents a classic example of the rise in the social ladder. It would suggest that potential and dominant power structures could emerge from within local agrarian bases by following a path of upward mobility in favourable political circumstances.

2.5 CONSOLIDATION OF LINEAGE POWER

The emergence of the political powers in western and central India was associated with certain features. At the level of economy the patterns of land distribution are noteworthy. From about the late tenth century there are evidences for the distribution of land among the members of Cahamana ruling lineages. King Simharaja, his brothers Vatsaraja and Vigrharaja and his two brothers Chandaraja, and Govindaraja had their own personal estates. In the areas held by the Cahamanas of Nadol assignments called as *grasa, grasabhumi* or *bhukti* were held by the king, the crown prince, other sons of the king, queens and so on. The incidence of these assignments was higher in Rajasthan than in other parts. This feature apparently represented a process which gradually developed and was associated with the spread of a clan. Another pattern was the holding of units consisting of villages which were part of administrative divisions as *mandala* or *bltukti***.** These

units seem to have become centres of some kind of local control. The units of 84 villages *(chaurasia)* which were held in Saurashtra by the Gurjara Pratiharas gradually spread to Rajasthan. This extension facilitated the land distribution and political control among the ruling elites. Between the tenth and twelfth centuries the kings and princes of Cahamana and Paramara clans held such big holdings. The process coincided with the construction of fortresses on a large scale in different locations. Apart from serving defence purposes the fortresses also worked as foci of control for their rural surroundings and helped the process of the consolidation of ruling families.

The marriage network among the ruling clans is another pointer to the process of the consolidation of clan power at the social level. Marriage networks brought about inter-clan relationship which had significant political implications because the families were mostly the ruling Rajput clans. Apart from Paramara-Rashtrakuta and Cahamana-Paramara matrimonial relations, the Guhila marriage network was varied and widespread. Though the Guhilas extended their marriage relations with Chaulkyas, Rashtrakutas, Chedis and Hunas in addition to those Rajput clans like Cahamana and the Paramara, the marriage network mostly constituted the Rajput clan category. The choice obviously was political as the families cited above constituted the ruling elite of the early medieval western India. Inter-clan marriage relationships were expected to lead to collaboration in wider activities of socio-political nature since they facilitated the presence of clan members in different kingdoms and courts.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) Write in about five lines about the settlement of new areas as an indicator of the process of lineage power formation in western India.

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2) Cite examples of the assignment of land among loyal kinsmen in Rajasthan in the post-tenth century.

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3) Which of the following statements are right (✓) and wrong (×):

a) The newly acquired power was sought to be legitimized by claiming respectable social status. ( )

b) The marriage network among the ruling clans had nothing to do with wider activities of socio-political nature. ( )

c) Inter-clan marriages had significant political implications. ( )

d) The acquisition of political power had no role in the formation of Rajput clans. ( )

2.6 NATURE AND STRUCTURE OF POLITY

The political geography of early medieval western India and the evidence of the formation of political authority in disparate zones by ever proliferating lineages in Gujarat, Rajasthan and Malwa show that there was not always a necessary corresponding relation between a ruling lineage and a fixed territory. The movement of lineages outside their early centres of power led to the establishment of new ruling families. Guhilas of Mewar may be cited as one among such lineages.

2.6.1 Political Instability

Mobilization of military strength could not only displace a ruling lineage but also create new locus and network of power. The case of the Vagada branch of the main line of the Paramaras provides an example for this. The Vagada branch was in existence from as early as the first decade of the ninth century. Following the death of Upendra Paramara, his son was ruling in Banswara and Dungarpur area as a feudatory of the house of Malwa. This Vagada branch continued to be a loyal feudatory line for centuries till Chamundaraja, one of its rulers, defied the Paramaras of Malwa and became independent in the second half of the eleventh century. The Vagada was lost to the kingdom of Malwa in the beginning of the twelfth century. After the successor of Chamundaraja nothing is heard of the Vagada branch. Three decades later we find one Maharaja Shurapala ruling over the region of the erstwhile Vagada branch. This shows that by 1155 the Paramaras were dethroned by the members of a family who, as their genealogy shows, were not connected with the Paramara dynasty of Vagada. Within next 25 years this line was also uprooted and a Guhila king was ruling over Vagada by 1179. He in turn appears to have been dispossessed of his newly established kingdom by a ruler who styled himself *maharajadhiraja*. He seems to have established himself there with the help of his Chalukya overlord.

2.6.2 Bureaucratic Structure

It is hardly likely that the early medieval powers such as the Chalukyas, Paramaras and Cahamanas could give stable government to the country without a powerful bureaucracy in the structure of their polities. We come across the names of a number of officers who evidently assisted in the transaction of the affairs of the state.

Lekhapaddhati furnishes the names of *karanas* (departments) of the government. It is supposed to be applicable to the Chalukya government as the largest number of its documents are datable to the Chalukya period in the history of Gujarat. A few *karanas* mentioned in the work also figure in the Chalukya records. *Sri-karana* (Chief secretariat), for instance, was a familiar term in their inscriptions. Also known from their records are *Vyaya Karana* or the accounts department. *Vyapara-karana* or the department in charge of general supervision of trade and the collection of import and export duties and *mandapika-karna* or the secretariat in charge of the collection of taxes. Such *karanas* were headed by ministers known by the term *mahamatyas.* Little except the names of these ministers are available in the records and the actual nature and functions of bureaucracy are difficult to determine. Besides the *mahamatyas,* there were other officers called *mahamantrins, mantrins*

and *sachivas***.** The information about their status is also very meagre as they are only casually mentioned in only a few inscriptions. Of the more frequently mentioned officers in early medieval western India was *mahasandhivigrahika* who was a minister of peace and war and whose duties also included that of conveyor of a grant. A *mahamatya mahasandhhivigrahika* of the Chalukyas as also in charge of tbe *Sri-Karana* and the *Mudra* (the department that issued passports and collected import duties). Another officer mentioned was *mahakshapatalika* or the head of accounts or record office. He kept a full account of the income of the state and also of the expenditure. He also registered land grants under the Paramara administration.

Mahamantrin or *mahapradhana,* literally meaning a chief minister was an official of great importance. He held charge of the royal seal and exercised general supervision over all departments. *Dandanayaka* or *senapati* was also an important official, who was primarily a military officer. The Cahamana records show that the cavalry commanders and *baladhipas* or officers in charge of the military stationed in outposts and towns were placed under him. The whole administration was controlled by a department, the *Baladhikarana***,** stationed at the capital.

The so called central officialdom also included, among others, the *dutaka* who conveyed the ruler's sanction of a grant to local officials who then had the charter drawn up and delivered. *Mahapratihara* (the Lord Chamberlain) and *bhandagarika* (in charge of provisions) also figure as governmental officers.

2.6.3 Lineage State and Feudal Polity

From the Gupta period onwards there was a marked interrelatedness of polities which was the result of the horizontal spread of state society. The differentiated polities, including clan based ruling lineages, had certain vital components that cut across all major political structures of the early medieval period. The region of western and central India was no exception.

To begin with, let us be familiar with the material base of lineage based state. It was not just consolidation of the lineage power in terms of political power. Much more than that was the factor of landholding. One gets the impression of some sort of land grabbing on the part of the members of ruling families. The exercise of important governmental functions was gradually· being linked up with landholding. Thus under the rule of the Gurjara Pratiharas we find references to estates held by chiefs of the Cahamana, Guhila and Chalukya clans. Mathanadeva, another chief of the Gurjara Pratihara lineage also claimed to have obtained his allotment as *svabhogavapta* (own share). The Nadol plate of *Rajaputra* Kirtipala dated in 1161 refers to a group of twelve villages which a junior prince had received from the reigning prince. The Kalvan plates of Yashovarman (of the time of the Paramara king Bhojadeva) mentions a chief who had acquired a royal charter of 84 villages, obviously from his overlord. Unlike the Cahamanas and Gurjara Pratiharas, there seems to be somewhat lesser frequency of land grants based on clan consideration among the Paramaras. But the Paramara records refer to more groups of villages that is the case with the Cahamana records. Groups of villages in units of twelve or its multiples (12, 24, 36 etc.) and even in units of sixteen or its multiples have been mentioned in at least seven cases. A Paramara inscription of 1017 refers to a stray example of district comprising 52 villages, which does

not fit in either in the pattern of the multiples of twelve or in that of sixteen. But, it cannot be ascertained fully, whether the clan system of administration covered the major part of the Paramara kingdom.

Irrespective of the incidence or frequency of clan influences, the more substantive component of the so-called lineage state is the nature of landholding. So far the lineage state or integrative polity has not offered any alternative material base of political structure/ s. No wonder, therefore, even in these states of western and central India the phenomenon of different foci or level ·of power cuts across all major political structures which reiterates the validity of the hypothesis of feudal polity.

What is broadly labelled as *samanta* system was not, however, a uniform category. It included a wide range of status all of which corresponded to the landed aristocracy of the period.

The kingdoms of all the major powers of western and central India included the territories which were under the contro1 of the feudatories who were known under the generic title of *mandalika*, but sometimes styled themselves as *maharajadhiraja*, *mahamandalesvara, mahamandalikas, mahasamantas and samantas.* The most important of the feudatory princes of the Chalukyas were the Paramaras of Abu and the Cahamanas of Jalor; others of minor importance being the Mer king Jagamalla and Paramara Somesvara. Similarly, a considerable portion of the Cahamana state, especially in Nadol and Jalor, was held by landed intermediaries variously known as *thakkuras, ranakas,* and *bhoktas,* on the condition that they supplied certain quotas of soldiers when required by the overlord.

The categories of feudatory chiefs under the Paramaras consisted of those officers and princes:

1) who were rewarded by the king with land in consideration of their valuable services;

2) who had built up their own principalities during the period of aggrandisement and acknowledged the supremacy of the premier line. (To this category belonged the Paramaras of Vagada, and the Paramaras of Kiradu);

3) who had carved out their principalities by the force of their own arms in defiance of the central authority during the difficult days of the Paramaras. (In this category came the Paramara Mahakumaras who used subordinate titles but were for all practical purposes independent); and

4) who were defeated and forced to accept the suzerainty of the Paramaras and were given the status of a vassal.

Big feudatory chiefs such as the Paramaras of Ambudamandala and the Paramara Mahakumaras enjoyed large amount of internal autonomy. They could create their own sub-feudatories and appoint their own officers. It was possible for feudatory chiefs also to distribute their lands among their dependents. The *thakkuras* served the feudatory chiefs in almost all the feudatory states under the Paramaras. The feudatories could also assign taxes, alienate villages and exempt certain people from taxation. This practice of granting land and its associated fiscal and

administrative rights is called sub-infeudation. There is surprisingly sufficient evidence for this, particularly under the Pratiharas. It was practiced both in the areas of direct Pratihara control as well as those under their vassals. Examples of sub-infeudation caused by service grants in Gujarat under Chalukyas are also known. A subordinate functionary, probably a *bania* under Bhimadeva II constructed an irrigation-well and a watering trough attached to it, and for their upkeep he granted certain plots of land to a man of Pragvata clan, probably a merchant. The evidence for the prevalence of sub-infeudation in the Paramara kingdom does not seem to be clear. Thus in the course of time the *samanta* system encompassed a proliferating range of designations and assumed the characteristics of a hierarchical political formation represented by the ranks such as *ranaka, rauta*, *thakkura, samanta, mahasamanta* etc.

The incidence of grants to state officials vary from one region to another. To illustrate, while we hear about half a dozen Paramara official ranks, only a few of them are known to have received land grants — none at least in the eleventh century. But very large territories were granted to vassals and high officers under the Chalukyas of Gujarat. Chalukya copperplates of 12th-13th centuries and their comparison with the data of the *Lekhapaddhati* help us in stressing that vassals and high officers gradually merged into one another. In the 11th to 12th centuries key officials were also being paid through regular and exclusive taxes. Thus, the *pattakilas* and *dushtasadhyas* of the Kalachuri kingdom and *baladhipas* of the Cahamanas received such sustenance. Indeed some Candella inscriptions of the late twelfth and early thirteenth century specifically enjoin the feudatories, royal officials, forest officials, constables, etc. to give up their perquisites in the villages transferred as gifts. There are also references to resumption of such rights.

The feudatories owed fiscal and military obligations to the overlord. Generally the authority of the feudatories was derivative, dependent on the fulfilment of certain conditions of which supplying the overlord with certain quotas of soldiers in time of need was one. The Paramaras of Vagada fought in the cause of the imperial Paramaras of Malwa for more than once. The Paramaras of Abu, Kiradu and Jalor being the feudatory chiefs of the Chalukyas of Gujarat, laid down their lives in the cause of their masters many a times. However, the feudatory chiefs were eager to free themselves whenever there was an opportunity. In this case the relation between the suzerain and vassal rested absolutely on the force one could use. For example, the Guhilas of Mewar accepted the Paramara overlordship when they were defeated by Vakapati-II but tried to re-establish their lost position during the period of confusion which followed the death of Bhoja-1. Similarly, Cahamana Katudeva tried to assert his independence during the last years of his overlord Chalukya Siddharaja so that Chalukya Kumarapala deprived him of his principality and brought Naddula under direct administration placing a *dandanayaka* in charge of the area. Kumarapala also removed from Abu its rebellious prince Vikramasimha and installed the latter's nephew Yasodhavala on the throne. Yasodhavala's son and successor Dharavarsha rendered distinguished service to three generations of Chalukya overlords. But even he turned against Bhima-11 and was either won over or forced to submission to the Chalukya overlordship.

The most important duty of a feudatory prince was to help his suzerain against the enemy. Sometimes the feudatories conquered new territories for the suzerain or

brought another prince under the latter's vassalage. An inscription seems to imply that at the accession of a new king the feudatories swore loyalty to their new overlord who confirmed them in their possession. Feudatories are also said to have paid tribute to their overlord both in cash and kind. However, there was no hard and fast rule regarding the obligations of the feudatory chiefs of different categories. The general relations between the overlord and the feudatory depended upon the circumstances and relative strength of the feudatory *vis-a-vis* his suzerain. The feudatories under Chalukyas of Gujarat such as the Paramaras of Abu or the Cahamanas of Nadol ruled over quite extensive territories and had their own systems of administration.

Instability of the political conditions was partly the result of the *samanta-feudatory* system. Often the strength of the feudatory bonds depended upon the personality of the overlord. Overlords who went on expeditions to distant lands had to entrust some of their capable generals with the administration of certain territories as feudatory chiefs. The personal relations between the king and the subordinate, which might have been strong enough to keep the territories together for a generation or two, faded out in the course of time and the feudatory chiefs tended to assert their independence. Often samantas had no permanent bonds and were prepared to transfer their allegiance to a powerful invader in return for greater privileges.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1) In column A some terms from *Lekhapaddhati* are given and in B the departments with which they were connected. Match A and B:

A	B
i) *Vyaya-karana*	a) Chief Secretariat
ii) *Vyapara-karana*	b) Accounts Department
iii) *Sri-karana*	c) Dept. in charge of supervision of trade
iv) *Mandapika-karana*	d) Dept. in charge of collection of taxes

2) Discuss in 10 lines the powers and functions of the feudatory chiefs.

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.....

3) Which of the following statements is right (✓) or wrong (×):

a) *Samanta* system was not a uniform category and included a wide range of status. ( )

b) Centralization is an essential characteristic of the state structure ( )

c) Feudatories were permanently bonded to their overlords and could not transfer their allegiance to others. ( )

2.7 SUMMARY

From about the beginning of the eighth century there emerged a political set up in western India and central India in which new social groups acquired political power by various means such as settlement of new areas. The pattern of the emergence of the Rajputs which was partly clan based organization of political authority shows some deviations from developments outside western India. However the mobility of new powers towards kshatriya status for legitimation was not specific to western India as a similar process was in operation elsewhere in early medieval India. After seeking legitimacy for their new kshatriya role the ruling clans of western and central India formulated detailed genealogies in the period of their transition from feudatory to independent status. They consolidated their political position by means of specific patterns of land distribution and territorial system. Some other prominent features of the polity in the region are:

- organization of bureaucracy which could connect different modes in their political structures marked by different foci or levels of power;
- dominance of overlord-subordinate relations;
- landholding as an important component of the samanta status;
- integration of local polities into larger state polities;
- certain amount of land based ranking associated with politico-administrative role and services; and
- wielding of vast administrative and financial powers by vassals and officers to the extent of sub-infeudation.

2.8 KEY WORDS

Baladhipa : Military officer put in charge of customs house.

Chaurasia : Holders of grant of 84 villages.

Dushtasadhyas : Police officials in charge of criminal administration.

Gotrocchara : Announcing of *gotra.*

Legitimation : Seeking lawful acceptance or justification.

Lineage : A line of descent, *kula* or *vamsha.*

Mleccha : Name applied to the Arabs, Turks and other foreigners.

Patrimony : lands or villages granted to dependents for maintenance *jagirs*.

2.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) The *Agnikula* myth was created by the bards to find a fine pedigree for their patrons and splendidly explain their origin. See section 2.3

2) See Section 2.1

3) a) × b) ✓ c) × d) ×

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) The colonization and annexation of new areas/territories led to the spread of clans. See Sub-section 2.4.2

2) See Section 2.5

3) A) ✓ b) × c) ✓ d) ×

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1) i) b, ii) c, iii) a, iv) d

2) Your answer should be based on the powers and functions mentioned in Sub-section 2.6.3

3) A) ✓ b) × c) ×

2.10 SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 3 THE POLITICAL SCENARIO II– RASHTRAKUTAS AND PALAS[1]

Structure

3.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we will discuss about the origin and emergence of the Rashtrakutas and the formation of Rashtrakuta and Pala empire. Later, we will also explore the organization and nature of Rashtrakuta polity. After studying the Unit, you will be able to learn about:

- major and minor kingdoms that were ruling over different territories of south India between 8th and 11th centuries;
- emergence of the Rashtrakutas as a dominant power in Deccan;
- the process of the formation of Rashtrakuta empire and contributions of different kings;
- the nature of early medieval polity and administration in the Deccan;
- the Palas and the nature of their polity; and
- Kaivarta rebellion.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

India witnessed the emergence of three powerful kingdoms between *c*. 750 and 1000 CE: Palas, Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas. These kingdoms fought with each other to establish their hegemony. Historian Noboru Karashima treats the empire as a new type of state, i.e. feudal state showing both discontinuities and

[1] This Unit has been taken from BHIC 132, Unit 10 and MHI 04, Block 2, Unit 5.

continuities with states that had emerged in these areas from 3rd century CE onwards. Rashtrakuta Empire dominated the Deccan for almost 200 years till the end of 10th century and also controlled territories in north and south India at various points of time. Amongst the three it lasted the longest. It was not only the most powerful polity of the time but also acted as a bridge between north and south India in economic as well as cultural matters. It also promoted and expanded north Indian traditions and policies in south India. Significantly, India touched new heights of stability and achievements in the field of polity, economy, culture, education and religion in this phase.

Later in the Unit we will be discussing the Palas. Bengal had been part of the Maurya and Gupta empires. For long stretches of its early history Bengal is not known to have played an important role in the political history of India even after the decline of the Guptas. The first significant ruler of Bengal was Sasanka who ruled roughly between 606-637 CE. His death led to the coming to power of Gopala who founded the Pala dynasty. The Palas are also known for Kaivarta rebellion which took place under their rule and was responsible for considerably weakening the position of Palas.

3.2 THE RASHTRAKUTAS: NOMENCLATURE AND ORIGINS

The word 'Rashtrakuta' means the chief of *Rashtra* (division or kingdom). It is possible that they were a class of provincial officers, as the designation appears in the inscriptions of many dynasties. We may say that the Rashtrakutas were high officials, either provincial chiefs or some kind of administrators. For example, a Rashtrakuta Govindaraja, son of Shivaraja acting as *vijnapati* (petitioner), is mentioned in the Naravana plates of Chalukya Vikramaditya II of Badami. Romila Thapar also opines that Dantidurga - founder of the main branch of the Rashtrakutas — was one of the subordinates of Chalukyas and a high official in the administration.

Historians are still not clear about origin of Rashtrakutas and its branches. Following the tradition of devising Puranic pedigrees, the Rashtrakutas also claim in their inscriptions that they belong to the Satyaki branch of *Yaduvamsha* and the line of Tungas. Historian Nilakantha Shastri, based on the study of inscriptions, claims that the Rashtrakutas were of Kannada origin, and their plates indicate that Kannada was their mother tongue despite the extensive use of Sanskrit. Also, the standard title *Lattalura-puravareshvara* ("the eminent lord of the city of Lattalura") assumed by Rashtrakuta princes of both the main line and of the secondary branches indicates their original home. Lattalura has been identified with Latur in the Bidar district of Karnataka. In this way, we can say that Deccan was the original home of the Rashtrakutas, which generally means the whole region occupied by the Telugu speaking population as well as Maharashtra with certain parts of northern Karnataka (Kannada speaking).

The Rashtrakuta dynasty is known for a long line of brave warriors and able administrators, which helped them in the formation of a vast empire. They fought continuously with the Pratiharas, Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi (in modern Andhra Pradesh), Cholas, Pallavas of Kanchi and the Pandyas of Madurai. The Pallavas

were in decline and their successors — the Cholas — were emerging powerful. Weaknesses of these kingdoms became helpful in victories and the establishment of Rashtrakuta polity. There was no power in northern India strong enough to interfere with the affairs of the Deccan which provided an opportunity for the emergence of Rashtrakutas. Thapar argues that the geographical position of the Rashtrakutas, i.e. in the middle of the Indian subcontinent led to their involvement in wars and alliances with both the northern and, more frequently, the southern kings. It resulted in the expansion of their empire in all directions. Historian Karashima argues that one of the crucial factors for the formation of Rashtrakuta power might have been an environment within their territory favourable to the growth of agriculture. Thapar also explores favourable economic factors and mentions that the Rashtrakutas had the advantage of controlling a large part of the western seaboard and, therefore, trade with West Asia, particularly with the Arabs, provided the wealth to back their political ambitions.

3.3 THE RASHTRAKUTA POLITY

There were several branches of the Rashtrakutas ruling in different parts of India in the early medieval period. The earliest known ruling family of the Rashtrakutas was founded by Mananka in Malkhed, having the *Palidhvaja* banner and the *Garuda-lanchhana*. Another Rashtrakuta family was ruling in the Betul district of Madhya Pradesh. The Antroli-Chharoli inscription bearing the *Garuda* seal dated 757 CE mentions four generations: Karka I, his son Dhruva, his son Govinda, and his son Karka II belonging to a collateral branch of the Malkhed line holding sway in the Lata country in Gujarat. Dantidurga was the founder of the imperial Rashtrakuta line. He seems to be the contemporary of Karka II. The exact relation of these kings to the Malkhed line cannot be decided with certainty, though it is not impossible that Karka I of the charter of 757 CE was identical with the grandfather of Dantidurga himself. The kingdom was founded by Dantidurga who fixed his capital at Manyakheta or Malkhed near modern Sholapur. Manyakheta branch of the Rashtrakutas soon became dominant by assimilating other branches in due time. We can prepare a dynastic chart of the imperial line of Rashtrakutas with their titles as follows:

Danti-varman

↓

Indra I

↓

Govindaraja

↓

Kakka I

↓

Indra II

↓

Dantidurga (*Prithivivallabha*, *Maharajadhiraja*, *Parameshvara*, *Paramabhattaraka*)

↓

Krishnaraja I (*Shubhatunga*, *Akalavarsha*, *Rajadhiraja*, *Parameshvara*)

↓

Govinda II (*Prabhutavarsha* and *Vikramavaloka*)

↓

Dhruva (*Nirupama*, *Kali-Vallabha*, *Dharavarsha*, *Shrivallabha*)

↓

Govinda III (*Jagattunga*, *Kirti-Narayana*, *Janavallabha*, *Tribhuvanadhavala*, *Prabhutavarsha*, *Srivallabha*)

↓

Amoghavarsha I (Sarva) (*Nripatunga*, *Atishayadhavala*, *Maharaja-Skanda*, *Vira-Narayana*)

↓

Krishna II (*Akalavarsha* and *Shubhatunga*)

↓

Indra III (*Nityavarsha*, *Rattakandarpa*, *Kirti-Narayana*, *Rajamartanda*)

↓

Amoghavarsha II

↓

Govinda IV (*Suvarnavarsha*, *Prabhutavarsha*, *Chanakyachaturmukha*, *Nripati Trinetra*, *Vikranta Narayana*)

↓

Amoghavarsha III

↓

Krishna III (*Akalavarsha*)

↓

Khottiga

|

Karka II

We now come to the main line of Rashtrakutas. Dantidurga, a strong and able ruler, was the real founder of a lasting empire. The earliest record of his reign – the Ellora inscription of 742 CE – mentions the titles *prithivivallabha* and *khagavaloka* (he whose glances are as keen as the edge of a sword) for him. Lata and Malava were in a disturbed condition after the Arab invasions and taking that

advantage Dantidurga took control of the territories. Dantidurga also attacked Kanchi, the capital of the Pallavas, and struck up an alliance with Nandivarman Pallavamalla to whom he gave his daughter Reva in marriage. The war-like monarch Dantidurga captured the outlying territories of the extensive Chalukyan empire and then assaulted the heart of empire and easily defeated Kirtivarman. The Samangadh inscription of 754 CE records that Dantidurga overthrew the last Chalukya ruler of Badami called Kirtivarman II and assumed full imperial rank and described himself as:

Prithivivallabha,

Maharajadhiraja,

Parameshvara, and

Paramabhattaraka.

Kirtivarman continued to rule with diminished glory until the reign of Dantidurga. Dantidurga describes his territory as comprising of four lakhs of villages, which probably included his sway over a little more than one half of the Chalukyan Empire of Badami.

Dantidurga died childless, which led to a dispute between Krishnaraja I — his uncle — and other family members who succeeded in seizing the throne for a while but whom Krishnaraja I overthrew easily in 756 CE because of his popularity. He had the titles *Shubhatunga* (high in prosperity) and *Akalavarsha* (constant rainer) mentioned in Bhandak Inscription of Krishnaraja I of 772 CE. The newly established Rashtrakuta kingdom expanded in all directions under him. He started with the the overthrow of the Chalukyas of Badami. The Bhandak plates of 772 CE show that the whole of Madhya Pradesh had come under his rule. In other inscriptions, he is said to have overcome Rahappa and thereby gained the *Palidhvaja* banner and the imperial title *Rajadhiraja Parameshvara.* Historian Sastri treats Rahappa as Kakka II of Lata which may be taken to mark the end of the first Lata branch of the Rashtrakutas. Southern Konkana was also conquered and brought under his sway by Krishnaraja I. He also expanded his empire in the southern direction by establishing lordship over the Ganga kingdom. Also, his son and *yuvaraja* Govinda compelled Vijayaditya I of the Vengi branch of Chalukya for formal submission. The Rashtrakuta empire under Krishnaraja I may, thus, be taken to have extended over the whole of the modern Maharashtra state, a good part of the Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, with Vengi farther east acknowledging its supremacy and a good portion of Madhya Pradesh.

Krishnaraja I died sometime between 772 CE and 775 CE and was followed on the throne by his son *yuvaraja* Govinda II. Govinda II bears the titles *Prabhutavarsha* (profuse rainer) and *Vikramavaloka* (the man with a heroic look) in the Alas plates. His name is omitted in some of the later grants of the line. It was due to civil war for the throne between him and his younger brother Dhruva ruling in the region of Nasik and Khandesh as governor. The first war between brothers ended disastrously for Govinda II. He then allied with the Pallava ruler of Kanchi, the Ganga king, the king of Vengi and the ruler of Malava who were traditional foes of the Rashtrakutas, but got defeated in a battle and Dhruva assumed sovereignty. Dhruva assumed the titles:

Nirupama (unequalled),

Kali-vallabha (fond of war),

Dharavarsha (heavy rainer) and

Shrivallabha (the favourite of fortune).

Dhruva severely punished all kings who assisted Govinda II in the late civil war after securing the throne. He made his younger but ablest son Govinda III king during his lifetime.

Govinda III (793-814) became one of the greatest Rashtrakuta rulers who had the titles of:

Jagattunga (prominent in the world),

Kirti-Narayana (the very Narayana in respect of fame),

Janavallabha (favourite of the people),

Tribhuvanadhavala (pure in the three worlds),

Prabhutavarsha (the abundant rainer), and

Shrivallabha.

He first quelled the rebellions of his elder brothers in the south. In the north, after a successful expedition against Nagabhatta of Kanauj and the annexation of Malawa along with Kosala, Kalinga, Vengi, Dahala and Odraka, Govinda III again turned to south. We are told in the Sanjan inscription that Govinda "terrified the Kerala, Pandya and the Chola kings and caused the Pallavas to wither. The Gangas of Karnataka, who became dissatisfied through baseness, were bound down with fitters and met with death." Govinda's southern campaign seems to be no more than a *digvijaya*: the traditional proclamation of superior power by a triumphant march across the territory of the neighbouring rulers demanding tokens of their submission. Performing better than his father's expectations, he spread the fame of the Rashtrakuta empire literally from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin through his skills both in diplomacy and on the battlefield. It is said that the Rashtrakutas became as unassailable as the Yadavas after the birth of Sri Krishna.

Govinda's successor became his only son *Maharaja Sarva* better known as Amoghavarsha I (814-878 CE) who, also like his father, proved himself as one of the greatest of Rashtrakuta monarchs. Amoghavarsha ruled for 68 years, but by temperament he preferred *digvijaya* in the sphere of religion, literature, and architecture better than in war. He had the titles:

Nripatunga (exalted among kings),

Atisayadhavala (wonderfully white in conduct),

Maharaja-shanda (best of the great kings), and

Vira-Narayana (the heroic Narayana).

He was genuinely interested in the religious traditions of contemporary India and used to spend his time in the company of Jaina monks and other forms of spiritual meditation. His inscriptions count him among the most prominent followers of

Jainism. He was not only an author himself but also a patron of authors. Jinasena, the author of *Adipurana,* was among the Jaina preceptors of Amoghavarsha I. He not only promoted Jainism but also the Brahmanical religion and also performed several rituals for the welfare of his subjects. He was also a great builder and is celebrated in the inscriptions Nos. XXIV, XXV, and XXVI as the maker of the capital city Manyakheta.

There were many rebellions in the far-flung Rashtrakuta empire under his long reign. His death was followed by the accession of his son Krishna II in about 879 CE. Krishna II had the titles *Akalavarsha* and *Shubhatunga*. He was not wholly successful in curbing rebellions. The only success of his reign was the termination of Lata viceroyalty. The wars he undertook against Vengi and the Cholas got him on the whole nothing but disaster, disgrace, and exile for some time. His son Indra III became king in 915 CE. Indra III had the titles:

Nityavarsha (constant rainer),

Rattakandarapa

Kirti-Narayana

Rajamarathanda.

Amoghavarsha I's grandson Indra III re-established the empire. The advance of the Rashtrakuta forces through Lata and Malawa right up to Kalpi and Kanauj and the dethronement of Mahipala were, no doubt, significant military achievements of Indra. After the defeat of Mahipala and the sack of Kanauj in 915 CE, Indra III was the most powerful ruler of his times. According to Al-Masudi who visited India at that time, the Rashtrakuta king Balhara or Vallabharaja was the greatest king of India and most of the Indian rulers accepted his suzerainty and respected his envoys.

Indra III's reign comes to a close towards the end of 927 CE. He was followed on the throne by his son Amoghavarsha II and reined for one year according to the Bhandana grant of Silahara Aparajita (997 CE). His younger brother, the ambitious Govinda IV, celebrated his coronation with great pomp. Govinda IV had the titles:

Suvarnavarsha (rainer of gold),

Prabhutavarsha,

Chanakyachaturmukha,

Vikranta Narayana

Nripati Trinetra.

He was not a good king. His life, rule and acquisition of throne provoked resentment among the feudatories. They became united for a revolution which ended with the defeat and dethronement of Govinda IV and the transfer of the crown to Amoghavarsha III in 934-35 CE for saving the fair name of the royal family. Amoghavarsha III had a short reign of four to five years. He was a gentle, peaceful and wise king and strongly marked by a religious turn of mind. He engaged himself in the promotion of the royal family by granting many villages to brahmanas and building many temples of Shiva. His son and *yuvarâja* Krishna III managed all other affairs of the state. His greatness as a soldier is indeed attested by the early

wars he waged as crown prince on behalf of his brother-in-law Butugga, and perhaps by the success of Rashtrakuta arms in the confused struggles that went on the Vengi kingdom. The Deoli and Karhad plates (Nos. XXIV and XXV) indicate that Krishna III became king after his father's death in 939 CE and bestowed with the particular imperial title *Akalavarsha*.

Krishna III was the last in a line of brilliant rulers. He was engaged in a struggle against the Paramaras of Malava and the Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi. The Karhad plates (No. XXV) issued from the king's camp at Melpadi in the North Arcot district mention that he also undertook one of the earliest but extensive military conquest against the Chola ruler of Tanjore, who had supplanted the Pallavas of Kanchi. Krishna III defeated the Chola king Parantaka I (949 CE), annexed the northern part of the Chola empire and distributed the Chola kingdom among his servants. He, then, pressed down to Rameshwaram and set up a pillar of victory there and built a temple. After his death, all in late 966 CE or very early in 967 CE his opponents united against his successor half-brother Khottiga. The Rashtrakuta capital Manyakheta was sacked, plundered and burnt in 972 CE by the Paramara kings and the emperor was forced to abandon Manyakheta. Karka II succeeded Khottiga, who was overthrown by Tailla II, Chalukya. The Bhandana grant of Aparajita (997 CE) and the Kharepatan plates dated 1008 CE state that Tailapa, the Chalukya defeated Karka in battle and the *Rammarâjya* ceased to exist. It marked the end of the Rashtrakuta Empire.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) Read the following sentences and write True or False.

   a) The Rashtrakuta kingdom survived longer than the Pratiharas and the Palas which ruled over the Deccan for more than two centuries. ( )

   b) All the Rashtrakuta princes assumed the title of *Lattalura puravareshvara*. ( )

   c) The Deccan was not the original home of the Rashtrakutas. ( )

   d) The Rashtrakutas were high officials; either provincial chiefs or another kind of administrators. ( )

   e) The warrior Rashtrakuta kings established and expanded their empire supported by the growth of agriculture, the control of western seaboard, and the trade with the Arabs. ( )

2) Fill in the blanks.

   a) The Rashtrakutas often struggled with their contemporary kingdoms such as:

   ……, ……, ……, ..., ...

3) Note down five favourable factors in the formation and expansion of the Rashtrakuta Empire.

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4) How did Krishnaraja I and Govinda III contribute to the expansion of the Rashtrakuta Empire?

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3.4 RASHTRAKUTA ADMINISTRATION

The warrior kings of the Rashtrakutas created a vast empire in south India which was touching the northern parts of India comprising approximately seven and a half lakh villages. The Rashtrakutas not only won and created a vast kingdom but also maintained it well. A powerful monarchy was the core of the empire, assisted by a large number of feudatories. Interestingly, the realm was getting feudalised more and more with the maturity of the reign of each Rashtrakuta king. The system of administration in the realms was based on the ideas and practices of the Gupta Empire and the Harsha's kingdom in the north, and the Chalukyas in the Deccan. As before, the monarch was the fountainhead of all powers including the head of administration and the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The king was responsible for the maintenance of law and order within the kingdom and expected absolute loyalty and obedience from his family, ministers, vassal chiefs, feudatories, officials, and chamberlains. The king's position was generally hereditary, but the rules about succession were not rigidly fixed. The eldest son often succeeded, but there were many instances when the eldest son had to fight his younger brothers and sometimes lost to them. Thus, the Rashtrakuta ruler Dhruva and Govinda IV deposed their elder brothers. Kings were generally advised and helped by many hereditary ministers chosen by them from leading families. We do not know how many of them were there and how they worked. From epigraphic and literary records it appears that in almost every kingdom there was a chief minister, a minister of foreign affairs, a revenue minister and treasurer, chief of armed forces, chief justice, and *purohita*.

In the Rashtrakuta kingdom the directly administered areas were divided into:

Rashtra (province),

Vishaya, and

Bhukti.

The head of a *Rashtra* was called *Rashtrapati* (governor) who sometimes enjoyed the status and title of a vassal king. The *Vishaya* was like a modern district under *Visayapati*, and the *Bhukti* was a smaller unit than it. A body of assistants called the *Rashtramahattaras* and *Vishayamahattaras* respectively assisted provincial governors and district level governors in the Rashtrakuta administration. The roles and powers of these smaller units and their administrators are not clear. It seems that their primary purpose was the realisation of land revenue and some attention to law and order. It appears that all officials were paid by giving them grants of rent-free land.

The feudatories played an essential role in the formation and administration of the Rashtrakuta empire. We know that the Rashtrakutas won many battles and expanded the empire which was not possible without the help of feudatories. The lords from the Ganga kingdom were primarily known for their valour in the expeditions of Rashtrakutas. The kings regularly rewarded these chiefs with land-grants for their loyalty and bravery that resulted in the emergence of lords as powerful as the king. For example, the position of Taila and Ganga Butugga in the reign of Krishna III. Sastri mentions from the study of inscriptions that Butugga was ruling Belvola 300, Purigere 300, Gangavadi 96000, Kisukad 70, Bagenad 70 and Banavasi 12000. The empire consisted of the areas administered directly and areas governed by the vassal chiefs. The areas ruled by the vassal chiefs were autonomous as far as internal affairs were concerned and had a general obligation of loyalty, paying a fixed tribute and supplying a quota of troops to the overlord. The vassal chiefs or their son were required to attend the *darbar* of the overlord on special occasions, and sometimes they were expected to marry one of their daughters to the overlord or one of his sons.

The Rashtrakuta kings had large and well-organised infantry, cavalry, and a large number of war-elephants mentioned in the chronicles of Arab travellers. The large armed forces were directly related to the glamour and power of the king, which was also essential for the maintenance and expansion of the empire in the age of wars. The Rashtrakutas were famous for a large number of horses in their army imported from Arabia, West Asia, and Central Asia. The real power of the Rashtrakutas is reflected from their many forts garrisoned by special troops and independent commanders. The infantry consisted of regular and irregular soldiers and levies provided by the vassal chiefs. The regular forces were often hereditary and sometimes drawn from different regions all over India. There is no reference to war chariots which had fallen out of use.

Below these territorial divisions was the village. The village was the basic unit of administration. The village administration was carried on by the village headman and the village accountant whose posts were generally hereditary. Grants of rent-free lands were paid to them. The headman was often helped in his duties by the village elder called *grama-mahajana* or *grama-mahattara*. In the Rashtrakuta kingdom, particularly in Karnataka, we are told that there were village committees to manage local schools, tanks, temples and roads in close cooperation with the headman and received a particular percentage of the revenue collection. Towns also had similar committees, in which the heads of trade guilds were also associated. Law and order in the cities and areas in their immediate vicinity was the responsibility of the *koshta-pala* or *kotwal*. The petty chieftainship and the

increased hereditary elements weakened the power of village committees. The central rule also found it difficult to assert his authority over them and to control them. It is what we mean when we say that the government was becoming feudalised.

3.5 THE PALAS[2]

Bengal had been part of the Maurya and Gupta empires. For long stretches of its early history Bengal is not known to have played an important role in the political history of India even after the decline of the Guptas. The first significant ruler of Bengal was Sasanka who ruled roughly between 606-637 A.D. Sasanka is considered the first historically known ruler of the area that constituted Bengal. He was also the first in this region to have extended his political sovereignty over areas that lay far beyond the geographical boundary of Bengal. Sasanka had become the master of the whole of Bengal with his capital at Karnasuvarna (near Murshidabad), and had perhaps extended his rule as far as Odisha. He even advanced against Kanauj which was occupied by the rulers of the Maukhari dynasty at that time. Sasanka's military adventures proved successful and this ultimately led to the growth of hostilities between him and the rulers of Thanesar. Harshavardhana, who eventually became king of Thanesar, set out to defeat Sasanka but was unsuccessful. Ultimately, Harsha succeeded in his conquest of Sasanka's empire only after the latter's death.

The death of Sasanka was followed by a period of political decline in the fortunes of Bengal. It was attacked by Yasovarman of Kanauj and Laitaditya of Kashmir and later on perhaps by the king of Kamrupa. It resulted in the weakening of central authority and the rise of independent chiefs. It seems that the prevailing anarchy led the chiefs to elect someone called Gopala as the ruler of the whole kingdom. Gopala, who went on to become the founder of the Pala dynasty in Bengal, consolidated his rule over Bengal and brought the much needed stability and prosperity to the region. The date of his accession is not known in definite terms but is generally believed to be in the second half of the 8th century A.D. He died in about 780 A.D. and was succeeded by his son Dharmpala.

R.C. Majumdar describes Dharmpala as one of the greatest kings that ever ruled in Bengal and one who raised the glory of the kingdom to great heights. It may be mentioned that in the famous tripartite struggle between the Palas, Pratiharas and Rashtrakutas, to establish control over northern India, Dharmpala played a very crucial role. In fact for a while he managed to attain a supreme position in north India. According to R.C. Majumdar, Dharmpala spent his whole life in military campaigns. After having suffered defeat at the hands of Pratiharas and Rashtrakutas, he went on to establish an empire that embraced a considerable part of northern India. Details about his reign are known mostly from copper plate inscriptions found at a place called Khalimpur. Apart from his military campaigns, Dharmpala is also known for his patronage of Buddhism. He founded many Buddhist monasteries but, it was the famous Vikramshila University founded by him, that earned him a lot of fame.

[2] This part has been taken from MHI 04, Block 2. It is based on selected sections.

Dharmpala was succeeded by his son Devapala who ruled for about 40 years. According to R.C. Majumdar his fame had reached as far as the distant isles of the Indian Archipelago. Devapala also emerged as a powerful king. Devapala was the last among the line of powerful kings of the Pala dynasty. He was succeeded by Vigrahapala, who ruled for a short period. It is said that Vigrahapala preferred an ascetic life to an aggressive military career. He was followed in succession by Narayanapala, whose reign saw the decline of the glorious rule established by the Palas.

Of the Pala kings, both Dharmpala and Devapala, won fame and glory thorugh their victories in the famous Tripartite struggle. This was a struggle amongst the Pratiharas, Palas and Rashtrakutas for gaining victory over the imperial capital of Kannauj and for establishing control over northern India.

About the same time that the Palas had established a strong monarchy in Bengal, the Pratiharas under their king, Vatsaraja, seemed to have ruled over large parts of Rajputana and central India. While the Palas were expanding in a westward direction, the Pratiharas were expanding their kingdom towards the East. Conflict between the two powers was thus inevitable. By the time the first encounter between the two took place, the Palas seemed to have extended their kingdom at least as far as Prayagraj (earlier Allahabad). It is not clear who the Pala king was at that time. It may have been either Gopala or Dharmpala.

In the meantime, rulers of the Rashtrakuta dynasty, who had already established their supremacy in the Deccan were trying to extend their dominance over north India. The Rashtrakuta king Dhruva having crossed the Vindhyas, first defeated the Pratihara king Vatsaraja and then advanced upon Dharmpala and defeated him. With this encounter which took place somewhere in the Ganga Yamuna *doab*, began the Tripartite struggle for supremacy between the Palas, Pratiharas and Rashtrakutas.

Though the Rahtrakutas achieved complete triumph in the beginning, the death of Dhruva was followed by chaos in the Rashtrakuta kingdom. Dhruva's son Govinda III was engaged in a struggle against an alliance of twelve kings of south India. The Palas and Pratiharas made use of the respite that this development gave them. Of the two, Dharmpala was quick to recover. He took advantage of this and made his suzerainty to be acknowledged by almost all important states of north India. He managed to capture Kannauj and place his own nominee on the throne. He held a great imperial assembly in the presence of a large number of vassal kings at Kannauj. In this assembly he consecrated himself as the overlord of the whole of northern India. At this time Dharmpala's suzerainty was accepted in areas covering central Punjab, and probably extended upto the Sindhu, Kangra valley, East Punjab, Jaipur, Malwa and probably also Berar. This is inferred from the list of vassal chiefs who attended his imperial assembly. With this event, Bengal emerged from oblivion and rose to the position of a supreme power in north India. The king of Bengal became the supreme head of an empire that stretched from the western part of north India to the east up to central India.

However, this situation did not last for long, given the ever-changing nature of political control during this period. The Pratiharas managed to recover under the leadership of Nagabhatta, the son and successor of Vatsaraja. Nagabhatta attacked

and defeated the nominee whom Dharmpala had placed on the throne of Kannauj, which resulted in a conflict with Dharmpala himself. In a battle fought against Dharmpala, Nagabhatta emerged victorious. After this success, Nagabhatta conquered several territories, including a large portion of the territories under the control of Dharmpala.

In this situation, Dharmpala probably sought the aid of Govinda III, the Rashtrakuta king, to check the advances of Nagabhatta. Govinda III, either in response to this or on his own initiative, undertook a military expedition to north India. Nagabhatta who was unable to resist such an onslaught was forced to flee. His territory was overrun by the Rashtrakutas who then proceeded northwards. However, even after establishing an empire that stretched from south to north Govinda III was unable to sustain his conquests, due to internal dissensions within the empire. In this scenario, Dharmpala managed to gain the upper hand. He seems to have recovered his empire to a large extent. At the time of his death around 815 C.E., his son Devapala became the undisputed ruler of a large part of north India. He is said to have defeated the Dravidas, Gurjaras and Hunas and conquered Utkala and Kamarupa. The court poet described his empire as extending from the Himalayas in the north to the Vindhyas in the south and from the Bay of Bengal in the east to the Arabian sea in the west.

We have already discussed how the power of the Palas gradually declined after the reign of Devapala. The Palas henceforth ruled as a local power in eastern India. They continually faced invasions and occasional raids by the Kalachuris, Candellas and Rashtrakutas who sometimes conquered portions of their territory. North and west Bengal were occupied by the Kambojas in the latter half of the 10th century. Taking advantage of this the Kalachuris advanced against the Palas as far as Mithila. Around the same time, the Chola king Rajendra Chola and a Chalukya king also invaded the Pala territories. It goes to the credit of Mahipala I, the reigning Pala king of the time, to have defended his kingdom successfully against the Kalachuris, Cholas and Chalukyas and also to have recovered territories from the Kambojas. But south and west Bengal were ruled by several independent chiefs and was not under the control of the Palas.

However, Mahipala's successor, Nayapala and his successor Vigrahapala III continued to be engaged in a constant struggle against the Kalachuris of Tripuri. Vigrahapala III was succeeded by his son Mahipala II whose reign witnessed a lot of upheavals. Some of the vassal chiefs rose against him. Mahipala II tried to resist these vassals, but was defeated and killed. Divya, an official who belonged to the Kaivarta caste established control over north Bengal. Mahipala II's brothers Surapala II and Ramapala took shelter in Magadha. Surapala II died soon after and Ramapala took over, but by this time practically the whole of Bengal had passed out of Pala control. A dynasty of kings with names ending in Varman, ruled over east Bengal, while Divya the rebel Kaivarta chief ruled over north Bengal. The remaining territories of Bengal were under the control of different independent chiefs who perhaps still nominally acknowledged the over lordship of the Palas.

Ramapala was able to mobilise the support of a large number of chiefs who helped him to defeat and kill the son of Divya and wrest back north Bengal. Ramapala also forced the Varman ruler of east Bengal to submit to his authority. He also

conquered Kamarupa and sent an expedition against the Gahadavalas. He also interfered in the politics of Odisha. In short, Ramapala was successful in restoring the strength and prestige of the Pala kingdom to a large extent. However, the Pala kingdom disintegrated during the reign of his two sons Kumarapala and Madanapala.

After going through this brief sketch of political events of the early medieval period in north India you may be wondering how to make sense of all these details of dynastic accounts, battles, victories and defeats. After all, the study of history goes far beyond mere listing of political events, and deal mainly with the analysis of political processes and social and economic formations. Of what use, then are these sketches of dynastic histories of the different regions, to a modern day historian. Well, as B.D. Chattopadhyay points out, "Even the seemingly bewildering variety of details of the political history of early medieval India – the absurdly long genealogies, the inflated records of achievements of microscopic kingdoms, the rapidity of the rise and fall of centres of power – are ultimately manifestations of the way in which the polity evolved in the period and hence is worthy, not so much of cataloguing, but of serious analysis."

3.6 THE NATURE OF POLITY UNDER THE PALAS

The Pala kings (referred to as *Parambhattaraka*, *Parameshwara* and *Maharajadhiraja*) gave land grants to brahmanas, priests and temples. These grants were permanent. They also bestowed land grants on Buddhist monastries. The land grants carried with them various economic and administrative perquisites. The Pala grants are specifically related to maintenance of law and order and of administration of justice. A Pala grant (802 A.D.) mentions an official in north Bengal called *Dasagramika* who was given one kula of land as inferred from Manu. Land grants were also given to *Kaivartas* who were peasants. The Pala records (land charters) refer to *rajas*, *Rajputras*, *Ranakas*, *Rajarajanakas*, *Mahasamantas*, *Mahasamantadhipatis*, etc. They were probably feudatories who were given lands in lieu of military services. There is no evidence for sub-infeudation under the Palas. Royal officials are mentioned in the inscriptions who seem to have administered the kingdom comprising of Bengal and Bihar. Some of the titles used for Pala officials are *Maha-daussadhasadhanika*, *Maha-kartakrtika*, *Mahasandhivigrahika*, etc. The Palas operated from several loci of power viz. Pataliputra, Mudgagiri, etc., all located on the Ganga. The victory camps of the Palas were visited by the tributaries. Villages under the Palas were grouped into units of one and ten under the charge of *Gramapati* and *Dasagramika*. They were royal officials responsible for the administration for these units. We have very few epigraphic evidences related to service grants under the Palas.

3.7 KAIVARTA REBELLION[3]

The rising in revolt of Kaivartas against the Pala kings occurred in the last quarter of the eleventh century. It formed the main theme of Sandhyakaranandin's Ramacharita. This so-called rebellion occupies an important place in the history

[3] This section on Kaivarta Rebellion is written by Dr. Suchi Dayal, Academic Consultant, SOSS, IGNOU.

of Bengal. This rebellion overthrew the Palas, ousting from their ancestral territory of Varendra. Soon after with the weakening of the control of the Palas, the Senas emerged victorious and took the place of the Palas. They were successful in integrating almost all the sub-regions of Bengal. Various kinds of studies have been done on this rebellion. The early works considered it a revolt of *samantas* which occurred due to the weakening of the Palas. R.S. Sharma, on the other hand takes it as an instance of peasant revolt which emerged due to feudal suppression.

The Kaivarta chief Divya rose in revolt against the reigning Pala king Mahipala. The Palas were ousted from Varendra, their ancestral stronghold and the king was killed. His younger brother Ramapala tried to get the support of the *samantas* to recapture Varendra. Thereafter Sivaraja, a subordinate of the king raided Varendra and captured and devastated parts of it. This was followed by an onslaught by the Pala army. Ramapala invaded Varendra and confronted Bhima, the nephew of Divya. He succeeded in recapturing Varendra and executed Bhima.

Recent research on Kaivartas has revealed that the rebellion underlined the fluctuating power relations between the Palas and the *samantas*. The *samantas* were ambitious enough to plot the weakening of the Pala power at the apex that would allow them to encroach upon royal rights and prerogatives. These included the control over the donated tracts of land to religious institutions. Donations of land to religious bodies was a royal prerogative and by ousting the Palas the *samantas* hoped to assume control over these assets. The Pala attempts to curtail the power of the *samantas* by changing the nature of land grants also became a cause for friction. In the later phase of the rebellion other social groups extended their support to the rebels and the rebellion assumed the character of a mass uprising. The social cause of unrest was the taxation imposed by the Pala regime. The growing power of the brahmana donees afforded them greater control over the labour power and the agrarian resources of the countryside. Besides this, the brahmana functionaries assisted the royal administration in assuming a tighter fiscal control enabled by the accurate estimation of production. The *samantas* had to wrestle with the brahmanas who as agents of royal power exercised control over the localities. The rebellion forced the Palas to follow a policy of appeasement of the cultivators and they tried to resume regular cultivation**.** Though the Palas were successful in recapturing their stronghold, Varendra, and crushing the rebellion, their position weakened considerably due to their continued dependence on the *samantas*. As a result they were ousted out of Bengal and the next rulers, the Senas, were able to successfully come to power.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) Describe the polity and achievements of the Palas in the early medieval period.

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2) Write a note on Kaivarta rebellion.

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3.8 SUMMARY

The history of the Rashtrakutas is considered as an important phase in the history of India. From the collapse of the Chalukyas of Badami to the revival of Chalukya power under Taila II at Kalyani is roughly two centuries, and during this long interval the line of Rashtrakutas started by Dantidurga continued to rule western Deccan. The circle became complete. Their direct rule was confined to the area that is called Rattapadi seven and a half lakhs in Tamil inscriptions. In the north, the Pratiharas and the Palas were defeated in wars by the Rashtrakutas, and the Paramaras became their vassals. In the south, the Ganga country was a viceroyalty under the Rashtrakutas for many years, and the rising empire of the Cholas suffered a severe loss. In the eastern half of the Deccan, the Rashtrakutas tried to bring the Chalukyas of Vengi under control. A series of battles strained the resources of the state and gave rise to feudal conditions and the growth of mighty vassals who disturbed the peace of the realm and ultimately overthrew the Rashtrakuta power. The tripartite struggle among the three powers – Palas, Pratiharas and Rashtrakutas — was an important political development of this period. The nature of polity under the Rashtrakutas and the Palas helps us to understand the characteristic features of the polity of this period. These included land grants issued by the state for religious and secular purpose, emergence of feudatories within the state system and the transformation of lineages into ruling groups who established supra-local state structures.

3.9 KEY WORDS

Palidhvaja : Royal banner.

Paramesvara : Devotee of Shiva.

AGungajivita : Award for extraordinary military service.

Rashtramahattara : Official of province.

Agrahara : Brahmin village.

3.10 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) (a) True (b) True (c) False (d) True (e) True

2) The Pratiharas, the Palas, the Cholas, the Pallavas, the Eastern Chalukyas.

3) See Sections 3.3.

4) See Section 3.3.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) See Sections 3.5 and 3.6.

2) See Section 3.7

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UNIT 4 THE POLITICAL SCENARIO III— CHOLAS AND CHALUKYAS[1]

Structure

4.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will learn about:

- the Cholas, their territorial expansion, administration and institutional structures;
- the Chalukyas of Kalyana and why they are also called Later-Chalukyas;
- the military achievements of the Chalukya kings; and
- the flowering of culture under the Chalukyas of Kalyana.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The Cholas — the most powerful of the peninsular polities with the Kaveri valley as the nucleus of their power — succeeded in establishing the most enduring regional state in the Tamil macro-region. This Unit will introduce you to the Cholas, their kings, officials and chiefs and their administration. The latter part of the Unit will be about the Chalukyas of Kalyana. They are also known as the Later-Chalukyas owing to the fact that they came after the Chaluyas of Badami or Western Chalukyas. We will be looking at their military achievements and the flowering of culture under their reign.

[1] The Unit has been taken from BHIC 132, Unit 6.

4.2 THE CHOLAS

The Cholas as a ruling power rose to eminence in the 9th century CE when Vijayalaya seized Tanjavur from a feudatory chief of the Pallavas called Muttarayas. Henceforth, the Cholas were able to establish control over Pallava territories and subdued the Pandyan power. The Chola state stood on a firm footing deriving sustenance from the resource-pocket located in the fertile and rich area of the Kaveri valley. In the period of Rajaraja I and subsequent period, various feudatory chiefs were subjugated and the earlier category of *Nadu* was regrouped into *Valanadu* and was placed under the subdued chiefs. The landed magnates were also incorporated into the state system and were provided prestigious titles and were assigned administrative and military duties which included collection and assessment of land revenue.

4.2.1 Chola Kingship

The Cholas traced their origin to *Suryavamsha.* Mythical traditions are mentioned in the inscriptions especially in the *prashastis* containing the genealogies (Tiruvalangad Copper Plates, the Larger Leiden Plates and the Anbil Plates, Kanya Kumari inscription of Vira Rajendra etc.) and these are interspersed with information about historical personages. It appears that these served the purpose of legitimization of the rule of the Cholas. The *prashastis* of the Cholas were based on the *Itihaasa-Purana* tradition. The dominance of the Sanskritic and the Brahmanical traditions is well attested. The Cholas also ascribe to the legacy of the *Sangam* period. The genealogies of the Cholas attribute eminent and prestigious lineage to the king to legitimize his position as king. The period from the eighth year of Rajaraja onwards is marked by absence of genealogical record in the Tamil *Meykirtis*. These compositions narrate the military exploits of the kings, are inscribed on stone and address the Tamil landed magnates. The Cholas ascribe Kshatriya origin to themselves as is attested by the title *Kshatriyasikhamani* of the king Rajaraja. The *Varman* suffix (Sanskritic) added to the names of the kings was also a part of the process of claiming kshatriya status e.g. Adityavarman (871-906 CE) and Parantaka Varman (707-755 CE). The practice of assuming names during coronation also existed under the Cholas e.g. Prakesarivarman, Rajakesarivarman and Arumolivarman (Tamil name with a Sanskrit suffix). The charters of the Cholas consist of the *prashastis* and genealogies in Sanskrit and the details regarding the grant in Tamil. *Hiranyagarbha* and *Tulabhara* ceremonies were conducted by the Chola kings. The anointment ceremony was also a means to claim kshatriya position. A grant of Vira Chola points out that the king was advised by a brahmana moral preacher (*dharmopadeshta*) that bestowment of land to brahmanas would lead his forefathers to heaven. However, actual motive for making the grants was redistribution of resources in the form of land, gold, cattle etc. The gifts were bestowed for meritorious service provided by the brahmanas and also to seek legitimacy from them in political sphere. We have proper records of land-grants but the grants of gold, cattle etc. were merely stated in *prashastis.* Through the land- grants the kings tried to convert unsettled areas into agrarian settlements. These grants did not simply serve a charitable purpose. Rajaraja is regarded as *Ulakalanda Perumel* (the great one who measured the earth like *Trivikrama)* and as Shiva who established control over the land of Bhargava Rama.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) Discuss briefly Chola territorial expansion.

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2) Trace the characteristic features of Chola kingship on the basis of *prashastis*.

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4.3 LOCAL ADMINISTRATION: *UR* AND *NADU*

The Chola copper plate evidence refers to the following while executing the land-grant:

1) *Nattar*
2) *Brahmadeyakkilavar*
3) a) *Devadana*
   b) *Palliccanda*
   c) *Kanimurruttu*
   d) *Vettapperu-Urkalilar*
4) *Nagarattar*

Nattars were the representatives of *nadu* (locality). The *brahmadeyakkilavars* were the brahmana donees of *brahmadeya* (lands given to the brahmanas). *Nagarattars* comprised of the trading community and belonged to the *nagaram* (settlement of a group of traders). *Devadana*, *palliccanda*, *kavimurruttu* and *vettaperu* have been identified as tax-free villages. Y. Subbarayalu has pointed out that *nattars* were analogous to the *vellanvagai urars* (peasant villages) since a number of *urs* constituted a *nadu.* Subbarayalu considers the village (*ur*) as a small component (fractional) of the *nadu.* As a constituent of administrative structure the *nadu* was important but it incorporated and represented the *urs* (*vellanvagai* villages). Thus, in the territorial sphere *nadu* comprised of *vellanvagai* villages. *Nattars* were the important members (land holders) of the *nadu* (locality). There are very few inscriptions related to the *vellanvagai* villages. It seems that the *ur* being the common populace represented the section which was not literate. However, the inscriptional evidence related to *urs* which is found in the temples is attributed to literate groups.

N. Karashima has analysed the two Tanjavur inscriptions of Rajaraja I and Gangaikondacolapuram inscription of Virarajendra. According to him, the *vellanvagai* villages comprised of agricultural lands, lands used by pastoralists, irrigation devices, funeral place, dwelling place etc. The dwelling area comprised of:

l) habitation sites of landholders/cultivators *(ur-nattam/ur-irukkai)*,

2) those of the artisans *(kammanacceri)*,

3) those of agricultural labour *(paraicceri)*.

Karashima is of the opinion that in the *vellanvagai* villages differentiation is not noticed. Subbarayalu, however, refutes this argument and suggests the existence of a hierarchical structure in these villages comprising of:

- cultivators *(kaniyudaiyar)*,
- tenant cultivators *(ulukudi)*,
- artisans, and
- the agricultural labourers.

The cultivators were generally referred to as *vellalas*. The functions of the *ur* included: supervision of village lands viz. activities related to sale, purchase and gift. An important prerequisite for becoming a member of the *ur* was to be a holder of land. From the inscriptional evidence we come to know that the members of the *ur* also possessed the titles like:

- *Udaiyan*,
- *Kilan (kilavan)*,
- *Velan*, and
- *Peraraiyan.*

All these titles point to landholding. Thus, the epigraphical testimony enables us to infer that *ur* was the group/assembly of non-brahmana land holders of a village.

Karashima has argued that the land was held in common in the *ur* villages. In some other instances he refers to sale of land by members of *ur* as individuals. Subbarayalu also refers to the tendency towards 'individual holdings' in this period. *Nadus* were named after a village which formed a part of a *nadu.* Inscriptional evidence indicates that in several *nadus* the main village was *brahmadeya* (land given to brahmanas). However, many *nadus* did not have *brahmadeya.* Subbrayalu refers to increase in *nadus* from the 9th century CE. Initially, *nadus* emerged in fertile areas which had more villages and later spread to periphery (less fertile areas) where the number of villages was comparatively less. Nilakantha Shastri points out that the *nadu* comprised of many villages which were the smallest component of administration. Mahalingam suggests that *nadu* was an administrative unit and it was sub-divided into villages. There is no unanimity of opinion among scholars regarding whether *nadu* comprised of only *vellanvagai* or also consisted of *brahmadeya*, *devadana* etc. Subbrayalu points out that *nadu* and *ur* represented a locality comprising of *vellanvagai* villages and its representatives participated in the assembly of *nadu*. It is difficult to delineate the exact area over which the *nadus* were spread. *Nadus* differed in size and they did not have any natural divisions (e.g. rivers). Therefore, they could not possibly have been been artificially created units or divisions. Sometimes, *nadus* covered the area beyond a river. In conventional historiography *Nattar* was regarded as a territorial assembly of a territorial unit, *nadu,* which comprised of eminent members of every village. Other assemblies such as of *brahmedeya*, *pallicandam* were also considered subordinate to *nadu* in the administrative machinery. Recently, historians have argued that *nadu* was not an administrative unit created by the Chola state but it was a natural collection of peasant settlements which was

incorporated into the state system of the Cholas as a legacy from the previous period. This is proved by the fact that these *nadus* were not of same size and were nucleated. The *valanadus* which came into existence in the period of Rajaraja I were artificially created as administrative divisions. *Nadus* initially emerged in fertile areas and later spread to comparatively less fertile zones. This is how the agrarian economy expanded. *Nadus* located in the fertile tracts were more populated than those in other areas.

There are several inscriptions which give us information about *nadus.* Kiranur inscription of 1310 refers to the '*urom* of villages Nanjil, Peruncevur, Viraikkudi...as qualified for the *Nadu* or Vada-chiruvayil-nadu.' (Veluthat 1993: 184). It is clear from the evidence of the records that the *nattars* were the *vellalas* and the functions of *nattar (nadu)* were performed by the *vellala* who held the title of *Velan.* The main occupation of *nattar* was agriculture since *nadu* was a collection of agricultural settlements. The copper plates which basically deal with land-grants address the *nattar* and the execution of the grant made by the king was entrusted to them (deciding the limits of the lands granted by the establishment of superior rights of new grantees etc.) *Nattar* was subservient to the will of the ruler. *Nattar* also supervised irrigation works. They bestowed land on temples. They also served as stockists of donation made to temples. They also supervised the grants made by individuals and exempted the lands donated from tax and, in return, took a certain sum of money as a deposit. *Nadu* also bestowed land on temples which was tax-free *(nattiraiyili)*. The tax payments exempted on lands donated to the temple were now the responsibility of *nadu* towards the state. *Nadu* seems to have levied a cess for meeting these expenses. These levies or imposts were:

- *Nadatci*,
- *Nattu viniyogan*, or
- *Nattu-vyavasthai.*

The temple lands were sold and leased out, a process in which the *nattar* played an important role. *Nadu* seems to have been engaged in tax collection and assessment. Sometimes, the *nattar* performed the revenue collection task on behalf of the state and sometimes king's personnel *(komarravar)* were responsible for this work. *Mudaligal* and *Dandanayakam* were functionaries deputed in *nadu* and as royal officials; they were entrusted with administrative responsibility. Thus, the land holders in a locality were absorbed into the state system by the Cholas. These constituted the local landed magnates and worked on behalf of the king who exercised authority over them.

Nadu was the smallest unit for revenue administration. *Nattup-puravu*, *nattu-vari* (land revenue) and *nattukkanakku*: all refer to revenue of *nadu. Nattuk-kanakku* was the personnel responsible for revenue administration of *nadu.* The collection and fixation of the revenue of a village was carried out within the context of *nadu* where the village was located. When *ur* exempted taxes this got reflected in *nadu* accounts.

The king's decision to transfer the funds of temple for a specific purpose in the temple was reflected in:

- the *Variyilarkanakku* (revenue register of royal authority) and
- the *Nattuk-kanakku* (revenue register of *nadu*).

This testifies to the relevance of *nadu* as an important part of administrative system of the Cholas in spite of its locally independent character. *Nadu-vagai-ceyvar*, *Nadu-kurk-ceyvar*, *Nadu-kankani-nayagam* and *Nadu-kankatci* were the personnel who represented royal power in *nadu. Nadu Kuru* is mentioned in an inscription of *Kulottunga* I (1116 CE) who managed the functioning of new *devadana.* These personnel were given the role of maintaining the accounts of temples in localities. *Nadu vagai* is mentioned as participating in the assembly of *brahmadeya* (*sabha*). In an inscription *Nadu-kankani-nayagam* is placed below *Senapati.* These posts of *nadu* officers were transferable. Some officers were entrusted with the administrative responsibility in more than one *nadu.* Thus, they worked as part of royal administrative machinery.

4.4 *BRAHMADEYA* AND *NAGARAM*

Brahmadeyas constituted the category of brahmanas who were landholders in the agricultural tracts and who had been endowed with land (tax-free) and had organised themselves into a distinct group. *Nagaram* comprised of traders who carried out trading and exchange activities in the pockets which had developed into commercial centres on account of the spurt in craft production and other activities carried out by artisans.

When the Cholas emerged as an important ruling power in the middle of 9th century CE in Thanjavur, there already existed many *brahmadeyas* which were densely populated and rich tracts in the Kaveri region. The Karantai plates of Rajendra I refer to 1080 brahmanas who inhabited Tribhuvanamahadevi Caturvedimangalam. The assembly of these brahmanas which inhabited agricultural tracts was called *Sabha* or *Mahasabha.* Most of the *brahmadeyas* or brahmana settlements were centred round the temple. Through the temple and the ideological focus based on the *Puranas* and *Itihasas*, *Bhakti* and *varnashramadharma* the differentiated society and monarchical polity were legitimized. Therefore, the kings endowed lands to brahmanas and created *brahmadeyas* as a means to legitimize their power.

The inscriptions inform us that many of the *brahmadeyas* in the Chola period were *taniyur* (separate village) in a *nadu.* They had a separate administrative system (revenue and justice). Many of the agricultural villages were clubbed together with a *taniyur.* Sometimes a *taniyur* was placed subordinate to a temple. Here the *Mulparusai* was the body which looked after the work of administration.

The inscriptions give the important prerequisites like age, landholding, knowledge, good behaviour for membership to an executive committee of *sabha.* The Karantai plates (1080 brahmanas) refer to *brahmadeyas* but do not inform us how the *sabha* and other committees were formed. They were not established by royal authority. Their origin may be attributed to *Dharamashastric* norms. The *sabha* and its committees supervised the temple lands, cattle and other resources. They assigned lands to tenants and levied rent. They kept a record of revenue collected and expenses incurred. They supervised the temple functionaries from priest to cleaner and organised the daily services of temples. *Sabha* acted as a group and the decisions taken were for the benefit of the organization and not individuals.

The *brahmadeya* settlements where the temple played a pivotal role lost importance in the later phase of the Chola period. After mid-11th century CE we find fewer *brahmadeya* tracts and more temples were constructed and the older ones were improved upon. Sometimes, the *mahasabha*, unable to pay the amount taken from a temple due to shortage of funds, was forced to fall back upon its income from the neighbouring village.

Nagaram settlement was a tract where traders and others (including artisans) lived. "An inscription of 1036 CE from Chidambaram distinguishes between non-brahmana inhabitants of superior status *(kudiga)* and those of inferior status *(kil kalanai)*. *Kudiga* included two merchant groups: *Sankarappadiyar* (lower group) and *Vyaparin* (higher group) plus three other groups — *Vellalas* (cultivators), *Saliyar* (cloth merchants) and *Pattinavar* (fishermen). The subordinate workmen (*kil kalanai*) were *Taccar* (carpenters), *Kollar* (blacksmiths), *Tattar* (goldsmiths) and *Koliyar* (weavers)" (Stein, 1980).

Nagarattar was the representative body of traders. *Nagaram* settlement was a separate area. Committee of *nagarattar* was referred to as *nagaravariyam. Nagaram* also held land in common called *nagarakkani.* This they acquired through purchase but they also leased out land and performed the task of levying taxes and rendering services to the local groups. They maintained their records regarding income and expenditure. They also paid royal levies in the form of gold and paddy. They also allocated taxes to the local temples viz. *Kadamai* (tax on land), *nagaraviniyogam* (a tax for sustenance of *nagaram)* etc. In some cases *Nagaram* were independent of *nadu* (*taniyur*).

4.5 KINGS, OFFICIALS AND CHIEFS

A number of officers were responsible for the administration in the Chola kingdom. Although there is no clear evidence of a council of ministers but *Uddan-kottam* seems to have served this purpose. Upward and downward mobility is noticed in the administrative hierarchy. According to conventional historiography *Perundanan* and *Sirutaram* were higher and lower category officials respectively. *Senapatis* (commander of troops) had the middle position referred to as *Sirudanattup Perundaram. Nyayattar* (judges) were of both category. Recently, historians have pointed out that these divisions are not conclusively borne out by evidence. Officials were paid by allotting land rights. Tax on land was levied in cash and kind both. Officials were referred to as holders *(udaiyan, kilan)* of lands. They could further sub-assign land or even sell it. Communal ownership was prevalent and customary rights of villagers were recognised. The lowest unit of administration was the village. They combined to form a *nadu*. A *valanadu* comprised of a few *nadus*. *Taniyur* was a separate village or settlement site. Above *valanadu* there was *mandalam* which was equivalent to a province. *Karumigal* and *Panimpkkal* meant officers and servants. Anbil plates refer to a brahmana Manya Sachiva. He was granted land by the king. The king conveyed his orders orally (*triuvaykkelvi*) especially with regard to gift to temples. The directive was conveyed through a letter (*sri-mukham*) issued by *Anatti* (executive officer) appointed by the king. The local bodies were apprised and when the process was completed a record was prepared in the presence of the local magnates called *Nattukkon*, *Nadukilavan*, *Urudaiyan*.

Officers associated with the process of bestowment and registration of land-grants were many and some are also referred to as *Uttaramantris*. *Puravu-vari-tinaikkalam* was the department of land revenue. *Varipottagam* was the record of land rights and *Vari-pottagak-kanakku* was the register of revenue department. Officers associated with the task of maintaining records and registers of land rights and land revenue department were *Varipottagam* and *Variyiledu. Kankanis* (supervisors) were the audit officers. Entry in a record was called *Variyilidu. Mugavettis* wrote royal letters and *Pattolais* were junior functionaries of land revenue department. Officers of *Nadu* (of the status of *adhikari*) were *Nadu kuru* (revenue assessment and settlement officer) and *Nadu vagai* (revenue official). *Mandira olai* was the officer who wrote the *Tirumugam* (letter containing the royal order). The term *Naduvirukkai* was used for *Vijnapti* (*vaykkelvi*) or petitioner and *Anatti* (executive officer) who served as a link between monarch and the persons who wished to approach the king. The king made oral orders *(triuvaykkelvi)* regarding the issues brought to him by the officers. These requests transformed into orders were sent to local administration and central administration for implementation. The *Olai nayagam* were the officers who verified the letters written by *Mandira-olai.* The oral order of the king was put to writing *(eluttu)* and compared *(oppu)* and then entered *(pugunda)*. *Vidaiyil adigari* got the order listed in the record. The document was called *Tittu* and the charity deed, *aravolai.*

Justice was carried out by the village assemblies through the committees comprising of *Nyayattar.* The central court of justice was the *Dharmasana* which conducted its affairs through *Dharamasana bhattas* (brahmanas proficient in law). It appears that civil and criminal offences were not dealt separately. The penalty for crime committed by a person affecting the king or ruling dynasty was decided by the king himself. Several methods of punishment prevailed viz. imposition of fines, capital punishment etc.

Adhikaris were the king's officers. They possessed the titles *Udaiyan*, *Kilan/ Kilavan*, *Velan*, *Muvendavelan*, *Brahma*, *Pallavaraiyan*, *Vilupparaiyan* and other chiefly nomenclature. Sometimes, more than one nomenclature was adopted. At times the name of the Chola ruler or his epithet was used as a prefix by the *Adhikaris*. *Naduvirukkai* were mostly brahmana (held titles like *Bhatta*, *Barhmadhirajan)* officers and acted as a link between the royal authority and the bureaucracy and they are always referred to in connection with the *adhikaris*. Personnel in charge of temples were *Srikaryam* but they did not look after the ritual related aspects like worship etc. In some cases we have the evidence of *Adhikaris* holding the *Srikaryam* office. Generally, they had a distinctive position in the administrative system. The titles held by them were *Kilan/Kilavan*, *Velan*, *Muvendvelan*, *Brahma*, *Bhatta*, *Kon*, *Pallavaraiyan*, *Vilupparaiyan*, *Nadu* title, King's title. *Senapati* was in charge of military affairs. They bore the king's title/ name and other titles such as *Udaiyan*, *Brahma*, *Araiyan*, *Kilans.* The office of *Dandanayakam* was probably akin to the *Senapati* (military office). The title mentioned for this office is *Pallavaaraiyans.* The titles held by *Senapatis* were:

- *udaiyan*,
- *brahma*,
- *araiyan* etc.

The office of *Tiru-mandria olai nayakam* was an important office associated with preparation of land-grant documents. The titles of these officers were *Muvendavelan*, *Brahma* etc.

Officers deputed at *Nadu* who discharged their duties at the behest of the king were *Nadu Vagai* who were revenue assessment officers. *Kottam-vagai* was deputed in *Tondaimandalam* area and performed the same function as *Nadu vagai. Nadukankaninayakam* had control over more than one *Nadu* and had a higher position than *Nadu vagai.* The titles which occur with the office of *Nadu vagai* were: *Araiyan* and *Udaiyan. Muvendavelan* was borne by *Nadu kuru* (officer of *nadu*) who was an officer of the rank of *Adhikari*.

Rajaraja I (1001 CE) adopted an elaborate land revenue fixation and assessment mechanism and thus, *Valanadus* were created and this practice was also adopted by other rulers. The land revenue department was called *Puravuvari tinaikkalam.* This department was an administrative division of the king's government and had the following personnel:

- *Puravu vari*,
- *Vari pottagan*,
- *Mugavetti*,
- *Vari pottaga*,
- *Kanakku*,
- *Variyi/idu*,
- *Pattolai* etc.

In the time of Rajendra II the administrative personnel had more elaborate designations: *Puravu-vari-tinaikkala-kanakkar* etc. The period of Kulottunga I witnessed few officers:

- *Puravu-vari-Srikarana*,
- *Nayagam* and
- *Mugavetti.*

Later, the term *Variyilar* refers to personnel of revenue department as a general terminology. These officers had the epithets: *Udaiyan*, *Muvendavelan* etc.

The titles held by the king's personnel such as *Udaiyan*, *Kilan* and *Kilavan* refer to possession. Other titles were *Velan* and *Muvendavelan.* The latter is a typical Chola title and occurs from the time of Parantaka. These titles suggest that those who bore them were land-holders or associated with land. The title *Muvendavelan* was bestowed by the Chola King and K. Veluthat points out: "...the strong association of those who bore this high title with offices of some importance is ... borne in mind, demonstrating that the major *Vellal* landed magnates were enlisted in the service of the king by which process they became an integral part of the state system." It appears that the title used by chiefs and their families viz. *Araiyan* was used by other eminent people as well. In the period of Rajaraja I the chiefly rule suffered a setback but the number of *Araiyan* title holders was on the rise. This title was more prestigious than *Muvendavelan.* It is conjectured that the chiefs were subdued to the position of landed magnates or cultivators from the period of

Rajaraja and his successors although they still held the title.

The cattle herders *(manradi)* supervised the grants for lighting lamps in the temples. Merchants held the titles of *Cetti*, *Mayilatti* and *Palan.* They even occupied the important offices like *Senapati* and accountant. *Peruntaccan* and *Perunkollan* were titles used by artisan category but at the most their important positions were confined to royal palace and the temple connected with it.

We do not get clear evidence of a council of ministers but there existed officers like:

- *Purohita (dharmopadeshta)*,
- *Rajagurus*,
- *Tirumandira olai*,
- *Adhikari*,
- *Vayilketpar* (officer who noted the king's directives) etc.

M. G. S. Narayanan points out that *Udan kuttams* were like king's companions of honour. They might have had a head because we have mention of *Adhikari* of *Udankuttam.* There are references to the court in literature *(Periyapuranam* etc.). The king's court comprised of:

- brahmana advisors,
- priests,
- *Rajaguru*,
- *Adhikaris*,
- *Tirumandira olai nayagams*,
- *Vayilketpar*,
- head of the king's bodyguards, and
- *Samantas* (feudatory chiefs).

The various levies of this period were:

- *Antarayam*,
- *Eccoru*,
- *Kadamai* (produce-rent),
- *Kudimai*,
- *Muttaiy-al*,
- *Vetti* (labour-rent) and
- *Tattar-pattan* (cash payment).

Most of the imposts were exacted in kind viz. paddy.

The Cholas undertook military expedition to Sri Lanka (during the time of Rajaraja I) and SriVijaya (during the time of Rajendra I). This shows the military strength of the Chola state. It seems that the cavalrymen *(kudiraiccevagar)*, *Anaiyatkal* (those who fought on elephant), archers *(villigal*, *anukkar)* were names of the categories constituting the military force. *Valangai* (right hand) *Velaikkarar* were the soldiers recruited from among the peasants. Soldiers were also recruited from

the artisan groups (*idangai* - left hand). These were basically mercenary soldiers. Chola *Meykkirttis* refer to Kantalur *Salai* which has been interpreted as an educational institution in the Chera kingdom which imparted military education and training to the brahmanas which is mentioned in *Meykkirttis* was the place where Chera fleet was destroyed by the Chola king. This proves that Chola military prowess was insurmountable.

The chiefs held an important position in the state system. In the Pandyan kingdom the only category of chiefs was *Ays.* In the *Sangam* literature there is reference to many chiefs viz. *Ays*, *Vels*, *Muvas*, *Kodumbalurs* and *Adigamans.* The records of the Pallavas refer to chiefs such as *Gangas* and *Adigamans.* The various other chiefs who accepted the suzerainty of Pallavas were *Banas, Vettuva-adiaraiyan, Muttaraiyar* etc. The chiefs of the Chola period were:

- *Paluvettaraiyar,*
- *Vels,*
- *Malavas,*
- *Gangas,*
- *Banas* etc.

It appears that the chiefs were assigned land and collected dues from it in return for *padi kaval* (protection of territory). In the post-Kulottunga period there is reference to *Nilamaittittu:* diplomatic agreement between two or more chiefs. These chiefs also had their soldiers and retainers. Their services were utilized by the Chola kings.[2]

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) Discuss the role and functions of *ur* and *nadu*.

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2) Define *Brahmadeya* settlements.

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3) What were the *nagarams*?

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4) Discuss briefly the Chola administrative set-up.

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[2] The entire section on the Cholas is adapted from MHI-04, *Political Structures in India*, Unit 15.5, pp. 14-21.

4.6 CHALUKYAS OF KALYAN [3]

The Chalukyas of Kalyana are also known as the Later Chalukyas owing to the fact that they came after the Chalukyas of Badami. They are also known as the Kalyani Chalukyas, though Kalyan became their capital only around the middle of the eleventh century. They trace their descent from Badami Chalukyas. However, the evidence is rather tenuous. The fortunes of the family were established by Taila II who seems to have been a subordinate of the Rashtrakutas. Taila II, who claimed to be the direct descendent of the Chalukyas of Badami, was governing the area of Melpati in 957 CE. It is found that later in 965 CE, The Rashtrakuta monarch Krishna III conferred Tardavadi 1000 on Tailaparasa (Taila II). The inscription from Muttagi, in Bijapur district, of 965 CE, describes him as *Samadhigata-Panchamahashabda, Mahasamantadhipati, Ahvamalla Satyasraya Kulatikala*. From this, it is obvious that but this time, he had risen to a high and influential status. Tardavadi referred to in the epigraph is modern Tardevadi in Bijapur district. Various inscriptions of the Chalukyas of Kalyan as also an account found in the Kannada literary work Gadayuddha of poet Ranna trace the descent of Taila II from Bhima I who was the brother of Keertivarma II, the last ruler of the Chalukyas of Badami. Taila II is mentioned as the eighth in the line from Bhima I. Vikramaditya, who was the father of Taila II, had married Bontadevi who was a Kalachuri princess of Tripuri.

The Gangas who has matrimonial alliances with the Rashtrakutas, were hostile to the growing power of the Chalukyas. However the Chalukyas succeeded in routing the Gangas in 975 CE. The Hangas now acknowledged the sezerainty of the Chalukyas of Kalyana. In 992 CE, Rajaraja Cjola, who was intervening in Nolambavadi and in a succession struggle among the Chalukyas of Vengi, was also defeated by Taila II. Taila II continued with his successful campaigns and he won victories over the Latas of southern Gujarat, Gurjaras of northern Gujarat and the Chedis and the Paramaras of Malwa. The chief of the Sevunas (Yadavas) named Billama who became a feudatory of Taila II assisted the latter in his campaigns against the Paramaras. Taila II, who had several martial achievements to his credit, assumed the titled of *Ranaranga-Bheema, Nija-bhuja-chakravarti* (emperor by the might of his own arms) and *Ratta-gharatta* (grindmill to the Rattas).The period of his reign was occupied by ceaseless warfare for the consolidation and stabilization of the new Chalukyan power. The Rashtrakuta princess Jakabbe had borne him two sons. Irivabedanga Satyashraya and Dasavarma alias Yashovarma. Iribabedanga Satyashraya succeeded his father Taila II in 997 CE,in 1004 CE, the Cholas invaded Gangavadi, captured Talakad and subjugated the Gangas. The Cholas then marched deep into the Chalukyan territory upto Donur in Bijapur district.Irivabedanga sent expeditionary forces against the Chalukyas of Vengi, the Silharas of Konkan and the Paramaras of Malwa in order to secure the Chalukyan position in the east, west and north respectively. The next Chalukyan monarch was Vikramaditya V (1008-1014 CE). According to a literary work entitled Ayyanavamsha-charita-kavyam, Ayyana, a younger brother of Vikaramaditya V ascended the Chalukyan throne and ruled for a short time.

[3] This Section has been written by Dr. Suchi Dayal, Academic Consultant, Faculty of History, SOSS, IGNOU.

Jadadekamalla Jayasimha II, another younger brother of Vikramaditya V was the monarch from 1015-1044 CE. Some sources indicate that there was an understanding among the Paramaras, Kalachuris and the Chalukyas of Vengi and the Cholas to encircle the Chalukyan kingdom and to launch simultaneously fierce actions against the Chanlukyas of Malkhed. The Paramara king made inroads into the northern and western regions of the Chalukyan kingdom and fought a severe battle on the banks of the Godavari which ended in a victory to Jayasimha. The Paramara chief had occupied parts of the Konkan from which he was dislodged after a tough fighting. From the south, the Cholas advanced through the Banavasi region and the Raichur doab up to Kollipake (Kulpak) in the present Telangana, which was a subsidiary capital of the Chalukyas of Manyakheta. Evetually the Chola forces were driven back and to mark his success against the Chola invasion Jayasimha assumed the title of cholagra-kalanala. It was during his reign that Kalyana came into prominence.

Someshvara I (1044-1068 CE), the eldest son of Jayasimha II was crowned king in 1044 CE. In about 1048 CE, Kalyana became the metropolis of the kingdom in place of Manyakheta. During this time, Vengi had become the bone of contention between the Chalukyas and the Cholas. The Chalukyas of Vengi, despite being the cousins of the Chalukyas of Kalyana, had not acknowledged the suzerainty of the latter. Someshvara I embarked upon a campaign against Vengi. But his march was hampered by the Cholas. An inconclusive battle followed. The next year in 1045 CE, the Cholas carried their arms into the Chalukyan dominion and pillaged Kollipake which was a subsidiary capital of the Chalukyas. But very soon Someshvara I was able to reassert the Chalukya suzerainty over Vengi. An inscription of 1047 CE claims that he subdued Vengi and Kalinga. His son Bhuvanaikamalla Someshvara II is styled as *Vengipuravareshvara* in several records dating from 1049-1054 CE . The Chalukta ruler of Vengi continued to be the vassal of the Chalukyas of Kalyana to the end of his reign. It is seen that Narayana Bhatta, a noted scholar, was resident representative of Someshvara I at Vengi and he helped Vengi's court poet in composing a Telugu *Mahabharata*. In the north and west he led successful campaigns against Paramaras, Chedis, Sihararas and the Yadavas.

Bhuvanaikamalla Someshvara II, the eldest son of Someshvara I became the next sovereign in 1068 CE. During his reign he was constantly engaged in sudiung the growing power of the Vengi Chalukyas and the Cholas of deep south. Vikramaditya VI the next ruler inaugurated a new era of reckoning known as the Chalukya Vikrama-Varsha from the date of his coronation (26 February, 1077 CE). He led military expeditions into Lata and Malwa thrice in order to secure the northern frontiers of his kingdom. He sent a cordial embassy to Vijayabahu, the ruler of Sri Lanka, who was an adversary of Koluttunga I. He extended his sway in the Vengi territory. He led an expedition to Kanchi and put Kulottunga I to flight and restored Chalukyan suzerainty over Vengi. As a result many of his inscriptions have been found in the Vengidesha.

In the south the Hoysalas of Dorasamudra were becoming powerful and they were waging successful wars against the Cholas and Chalukyas. However they were forced to accept the suzerainty of the Chalukyas after being defeated at Halasuru and Hosavidu in 1122 CE. Vikramaditya Vi was a great patron of learning and

arts. Bilhana, who had migrated from Kashmir was an eminent scholar who wrote *Vikramankadevacharita* and Vijnaneshvara wrote Mitakshara, a celebrated book on Hindu law. Both sang the glory of Vikramaditya Vi and his capital, Kalyana. He was succeeded by his son Someshvara II in 1127 CE. He had the epithets of *Sarvajna-Bhupa* and *Bhulokamalla*. The former appelation indicates that he was a man of deep learning. The authorship of a valuable encyclopaedic literary work called *Manosollasa* (also called *Abhilashitartha-Chintamani*) is attributed to him. He was a peace loving ruler and did not move out of the capital much.

Someshvara III was followed by his son Jagadekamalla II on the throne about 1139 CE. He was known as *Perma* and *Tribhuvanamalla Permadideva*. In his northern expeditions he was assisted by the Hoysalas. However he had to contend with the growing power of Hoysalas in south, the Kakatiyas in the east and Sevunas in the north. The Kadambas of Goa were also acting independently. However Chalukya generals were able to successfully subdue the subordinate rulers and restored the prestige of the Chalukyas.

The successor of Jagadekamalla II was his younger brother Trailokvamalla Taila III. By this time the Chalukya power was on wane. His feudatories were growing in power. Kalachuri Bijjala II, who was a nephew of king Someshvara III and cousin of Jagadekamalla II was functioning as a mahamandaleshvara by this time had become very powerful. He was able to win several of the feudatories to his side and established a firm hold on the region of the Chalukyan capital itself. An epigraph of Bijjala II found at Chikkalige dated in 1157 CE does not mention the reign of Taila III at all. In another inscription of Bijjala of the same year discovered at Haveri he is described as *Maharajadhiraja Bhujabala Chakravarti Kalachurya Bijjaladeva*. And finally Bijjala II declared himself the monarch of the whole Chalukyan kingdom in 1162 CE. The Kalachuri interregnum lasted for 22 years (116201184 CE). Someshvara Iv who had been declared king by his father Taila III but who had to flee due to unfavourable circumstances resumed power once again and resurrected the Chalukya power. Banavasi became the chief seat of Chalukya Someshvara IV and only a few parts of the Varada was under his sway in 1183-84. By about 1200 CE, the Chalukyan power faded out in this region and Karnataka became an arena of struggle for power mainly between the Sevunas of Devagiri and Hoysalas of Dorasamudra.

4.7 CULTURE UNDER THE CHALUKYAS OF KALYANA

The Chalukya empire saw the flourisging trading activities of many guils. The most notreworthy was the guild of *Ayyavole 500*. It originated at Aihole, the capital of the Chalukyas of Badami and spread its activities on the whole of south India by the time of the Chalukyas of Kalyana. They participated in the giving of land grants and in some of these grants the rioyal power was one of the donors. They had close assoiation with the ruling kings and helped in the construction of many temples. Other guilds were Nanadesi and Veera Bananju.

The building activity initiated by the Chalukyas of Badami were developed even more by the Chalukyas of Kalyana. Narayanapur, Shivapur, Jalasangi and Mailara (present Khanapur) are some of the places in Bijapur where their temples have

survived. Itgi, Kuravatti, Lakumdi, Balligave, Gadag, Dambal, Begali and Chandanapur are notable places where beautiful temples of this dynasty have bneen found. The temples were adorned with many madanike (bracket figures), scenes from Epics and *Panchatrantra*. Many images are of Siva, Virbhadra, Bhairava, Durga and Kali. Some very impressive images of Siva in dhyanamudra and in the posture of cosmic dance as Nataraja were also crafted.

Many *agraharas, brahmapuris, ghatika-sthanas* and monasteries emerged as places of learning in Kalyana, Bhallunke (Bhalki) and Gorta which were patronised by kings, noblemen, traders and merchant-guilds. They imparted education in various branches of learning and were equipped with libraries, feeding houses and residential facilities. Sanskrit and Kannada literature flourishing under the reign of the Chalukyas of Kalyana. Some of the literary luminaries of Kannada during this period were Pampa, Ranna, DUrgasimha, Nagavarma etc. Probably Machiraja, one of the mandalikas of Jayasimha II, patronised a brahmana poet, Chanraraja who composed *Madanatilaka*. The Kannada sript was further refined and received its elegant round shape. Many people took to writing and as a result of this, there was production of a large body of *vachana* literature which came to be looked upon as vachana-shastra. These were not professional writers receiving royal patronage but ame from all walks of life and wrote to help in the reconstruction of society.

Various sects of Saivism, which were prevalent during this period such as Pashupata, Lakulisa and Kalamukha joined the main stream of Virashaivism. Virasaivism was a socio-religious movement which was revolutionary in nature. It was a mass movement seeking to bring about radical changes and to reconstruct the society on the basis of certain new human values. This movement was led by Basavanna (also known as Basava, Basaveshvara, Basavesha, Basavaraja, and Basavadeva) and other towering personages like saint Allama Prabhu, Siddharama, Madivala Machayya. Basavanna and his companions denounced the compartmentalization of the soiety into castes and sub-castes and its various connotations including untouchability and threw open the portals of the treasures of wisdom to all the people by their vachana writings and preachings in the regional language and brought into actual practice what they taught. They used the term Siva for the absolute Supreme Being, and not in the sense of the Trimurtis or Gods. They described those who were immersed only in worldly affairs as bhavis (worldly) as distinguished from bhaktas (spiritual minded). They were opposed to priest craft and hypiocrisy, exploitation and inequalities and steadfastly preached egalitarian valued.

The protestant movement further developed with time, remaining within the broad framework of the Sanatana Dharma. Many Virashaiva monasteries helped in the promotion of education among the weaker sections of the society and to implement the programmes of social and religious reforms. As pointed out by K.A. Nilkantha Shastri, the reformist movements of this time prepared the way for the foundation of the Vijayanagara empire. It was the forerunner of the reformist movements of Mahanubhavis of Maharashtra in the 13th century, Ramananda and Kabir in the 14th century and of Guru Nanak in the 15th century.During the Vijayanagara period, the movement gathered momentum and there was a renaissance.

Self Check Exercise 3

1. Describe the military aqchievements of the Chalukyan kings.
2. Write a note on the culture under the Chalukyas of Kalyana.

4.8 SUMMARY

The Cholas re-emerged on the scene as the most powerful polity in the Tamil macro-region with the nucleus of their activities in the Kaveri delta. The practice of land grants intensified during this time. In this Unit we became familiar with some of the terms that occur in the inscriptions such as *nattar, brahmadeya, pallichandam, devadana* etc. We also studied their sifnificance in the institutional framework of the agrarian economy. The chief characteristics of *nadu, ur* and *nagram* were also taken into consideration. Later in the Unit we studied the military exploits of the Chalukyas of Kalyana. Under their reign and subsequently under the Kalachuries, many cultural achievements were attained. The Virashaiva movement which came into existence during the Kalachuri interregnum, attacked the caste system and promoted equality. It attracted followers from far and wide.

4.9 KEY WORDS

Ur	:	a south Indian village
Nadu	:	a locality consisting of many settlements, in early medieval south India
Nagaram	:	market or commercial centre in early medieval south Induia
Nagarattar	:	the corporate organization of the nagaram.
Nattar	:	leading men of the nadu in early medieval south India
Mandapika	:	a local entre of exchange, in between small periodic markets and larger trade entres.

4.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1. See Section 4.2
2. See Section 4.2.1

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1. See Section 4.3
2. See Section 4.4
3. See Section 4.4
4. See Section 4.5

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1. See Section 4.6
2. See Section 4.7

4.11 SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 5 ART AND ARCHITECTURE: NORTH INDIA AND SOUTH INDIA[1]

Structure

5.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will learn about:

- emergence of regional architectural styles;
- the basis of classifying different temples;
- terminology used in the description of architectural features;
- emergence of localised schools of sculpture in stone and metal; and
- linkages between the essence of the 'medieval factor'—the spread of feudal ethos and the cultural manifestations.

[1] This Unit has been taken from EHI 03, Block 2, Unit 7

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The centuries between the eighth and the thirteenth stand out rather prominently from the point of view of the making of cultural traditions in India. The most arresting feature of these traditions is regionalism, which gets reflected in every sphere, whether it be the formation of political power or the development of arts or the transformations in languages and literature or even religious manifestations. In very general terms, the emergence of regional cultural units such as Andhra, Assam, Bengal, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, etc. was the outcome of significant material changes. The pace of agrarian changes and the developments in the non-agrarian sector were setting the tone of feudal socio-economic formation. The political structure was deeply affected by these developments. It should, not, therefore, surprise us if the cultural ethos too got permeated by similar strains.

The *Mudrakshasa*, a play written in Sanskrit by Vishakhadatta and generally ascribed to the fifth century, speaks of different regions whose inhabitants differ in customs, clothing and language. The identity of some kind of sub-national groups is recognized by the Chinese pilgrim Huien-Tsang who visited India in the first half of the seventh century and mentions several nationalities. The *Kuvalayamala*, a Jain text of the eighth century and largely concerned with western India, notes the existence of 18 major nationalities and describes the anthropological character of sixteen peoples, pointing out their psychological features and citing the examples of their language. The *Brahmavaivarta Purana*, ascribed to the thirteenth century Bengal explicates *deshabheda* — differences based on regions/territories.

This feature is reflected in art and architecture as well. We see the emergence of various regional traditions and it was during this time that different architectural languages such as *Nagara*, *Dravida* and *Vesara* matured.

Let us begin our survey by looking at the various types of architectural styles and art traditions.

5.2 TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE

Indian temples have symbolised the very ethos of life-style of people through the millennia. The panorama of Indian temple architecture may be seen across at extremely wide chronological and geographical horizon. From the simple beginnings at Sanchi in the fifth century of the Common Era to the great edifices at Kanchi, Jhanjawur and Madurai, is a story of more than a millennium.

The prominent *Shilpasastras* that deal with the subject of temple architecture are: *Mayamata*, *Manasara*, *Shilparatna*, *Kamikagama*, *Kashyapasilpa* and *Ishanagurudevapaddhati.* In the majority of these works the subject is dealt with under the three heads:

- the geographical distribution
- their differentiation from the point of view of shapes, and
- their presiding deities and castes.

All these topics, however, are not mentioned in all these works. Some later texts as the *Kamikagama* and *Kashyapasilpa* show that the nature of ornamentation, number of storeys, the size of *prasadas* etc. also constituted bases of differentiation.

5.2.1 Major Styles

The ancient texts on Indian temple architecture broadly classify them into three orders. The terms *Nagara*, *Dravida* and *Vesara* indicate a tendency to highlight typological features of temples and their geographical distribution: These terms describe respectively temples that primarily employ square, octagonal and apsidal ground plans which also regulate the vertical profile of the structure. *Nagara* and *Dravida* temples are generally identified with the northern and southern temple styles respectively. All of northern India, from the foothills of the Himalayas to the central plateau of the Deccan is furnished with temples in the northern style. There are, of course, certain regional variations in the great expanse of this area. A work entitled *Aparajitapriccha* confines the *Nagari* (*Nagara*) style to the Madhyadesha (roughly the Ganga-Yamuna plains) and further mentions *Lati* and *Vairati* (Gujarat and Rajasthan respectively) as separate styles. The local manuscripts of Odisha recognise four main types of Odisha style temples, viz., the *Rehka*, *Bhadra*, *Khakhara* and *Gaudiya*.

The *Dravida* or southern style, comparatively speaking, followed a more consistent development track and was confined to the most southerly portions of the sub-continent, specially between the Krishna river and Kanyakumari. The term *Vesara* is not free from vagueness. Some of the texts ascribe the *Vesara* style to the country between the Vindhyas and the river Krishna but there are texts placing it between the Vindhyas and the Agastya, the location of which is uncertain.

Since the temples of the *Nagara* type are found as far south as Dharwad (in Karnataka) and those of the Dravidian type as far north as Ellora (in Maharashtra), a narrow and compartmentalised geographical classification is misleading. At certain periods there occurred striking overlapping of major styles as influences from different regions confronted each other, e.g., the temples of the early Chalukyas whose kingdom was strategically positioned in the middle of the peninsula in the seventh and eighth centuries. The Kandariya Mahadeva temple in Khajuraho is another striking example where the various architectural elements combined into an integrated whole. Similarly, the Kerala temples display variety in their plan types. Square, circular or apsidal-ended buildings are utilized. The earliest examples in Kerala go back to the twelfth century.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) List six works which deal with the subject of temple architecture.

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2) List the three major temple styles with their geographical distribution.

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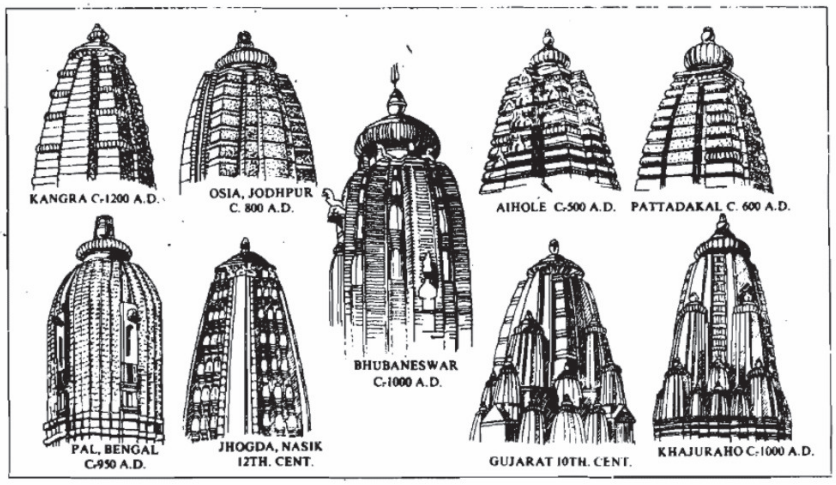
5.2.2 Presiding Deities

Temples were dedicated not only to two great gods of the Brahmanical pantheon, viz., Shiva and Vihnu but to the great Mother Goddess as well. In fact, consecration and depiction of divinities big and small, benevolent and malevolent, celestial and terrestrial, atmospheric .and heavenly, *devas* and *asuras* and countless folk deities such as *yakshas*, *vakshis*, *apsaras* and *kinnaris* represent a world of their own. It is indeed fascinating to see that even animal or bird 'vehicles' (*vahanas*) of these divinities shed their muteness and become eloquent carriers of meaningful symbolism. Thus, *Nandi*, the agricultural bull of Shiva is fully expressive of the god's sexuality; tiger, the mount of Durga embodies her fierce strength and aggressiveness. The river goddesses, Ganga and Yamuna are identified by their vahanas, viz. crocodile and tortoise respectively. Lakshmi's association with elephants, lotus flowers and water not only symbolise her popularity as the goddess of fortune but more importantly as a divinity conveying the magical power of agricultural fertility — an aspect that goes back to the days of the *Rigveda*. Swan carrying Saraswati typified not only her grace and elegance but classic *Kshira-nira viveka* — the tremendous intellectual discerning capacity which is an integral element of this goddess of learning. The *Kashyapashilpa* has a chapter on the deities to be enshrined in the principal styles mentioned above. Thus, the Shantamurtis (peaceful, calm and serene deities) are to be installed in *Nagara*; couples or moving deities in *vesara* shrines; and heroic, dancing or enjoying deities in the *Dravida* structures. However, these injunctions about presiding deities, like the basic styles, ought not to be taken in a compartmentalised sense. Similarly, textual prescriptions about the *Nagara, Dravida* and *Vesara* styles being associated with brahmana, kshatriya and vaishya *varnas* respectively cannot be taken literally.

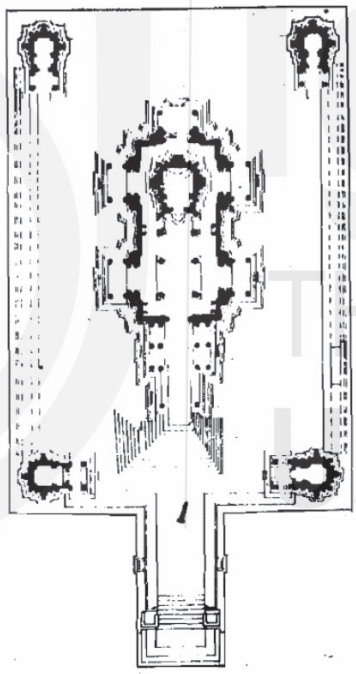
5.2.3 Shapes, Plans and Language of Temples

Each temple style has its own distinctive technical language, though some terms are common but applied to different parts of the building in each style. The sanctuary, which is the main part is called the *vimana* where the *garbhagriha* or the inner sanctum containing the main presiding deity is located. The part surmounting the *vimana* is known as the *shikhara*. The other elements of ground plan are: *mandapa* or pavilion for the assembly of devotees; *antarala*, which is a vestibule connecting the *vimana* and *mandapa* and the *pradakshinapatha*, i.e. circumambulatory passage surrounding these. The *natmandir* or dance hall and *bhogamandapa* evolved subsequently in the Odishan temples such as the famous Sun temple at Konarka, to add to the dignity and magnificence of the deities who were honoured in them. The exterior of the *Nagara* type is characterised by horizontal tiers, as in the *jagamohan* or porch in front of the sanctum of the Lingaraja temple at Bhubaneswar, and the *vimana* is usually circular in plan. Fundamentally, there is no structural similarity between the Brahmanical and the Jain temples in the north except that the need for housing the various *Tirthankaras* dominates the disposition of space in the latter. The *Dravida* style has a polygonal, often octagonal *shikhara* and a pyramidal *vimana*, which is rectangular in plan. A temple of the *Dravida* type is also notable for the towering *gopurams* or gate towers of the additional *mandapas*. From the

days of Ganesh *ratha* of the Pallava times (seventh century) at Mahabalipuram (near Chennai) to the gigantic Brihadishvara temple (c. 985-

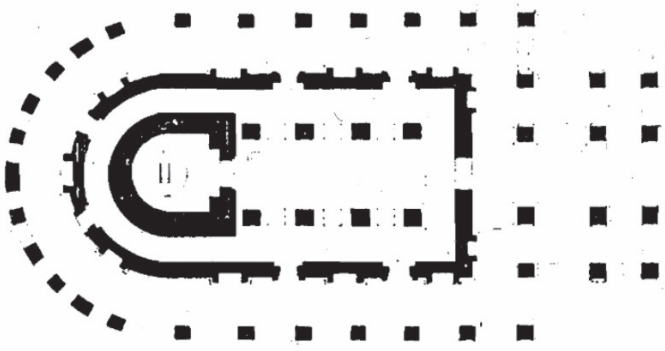


1. Temple *Shikharas* (Northern Style).

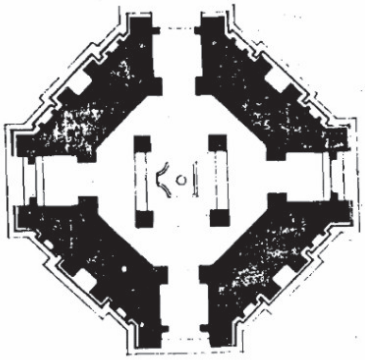


2. Shiva and Parvati seated on Nandi (Hinglajgarh 10th century).

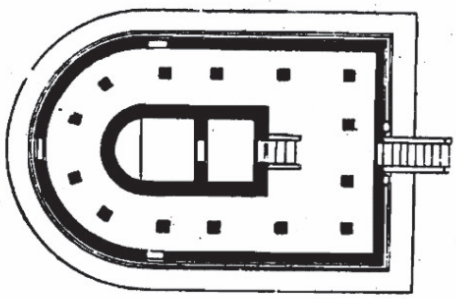
3. Plan of Lakshmana Temple (Khajuraho, 10th century).



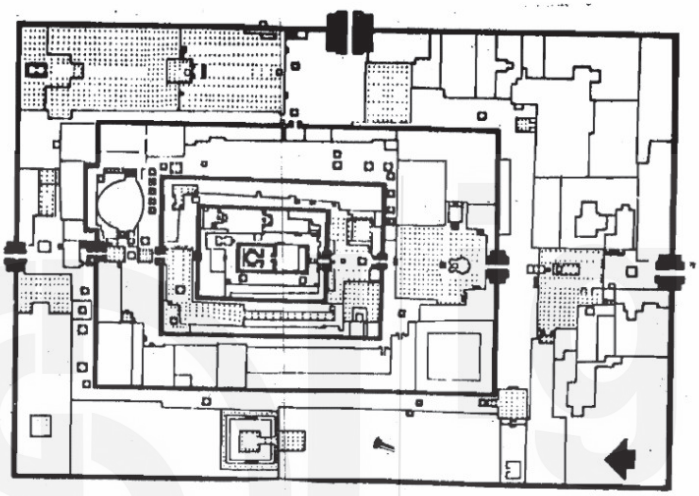
4. Plan (semi-circular) of Durga Temple (Aihole, 8th century).



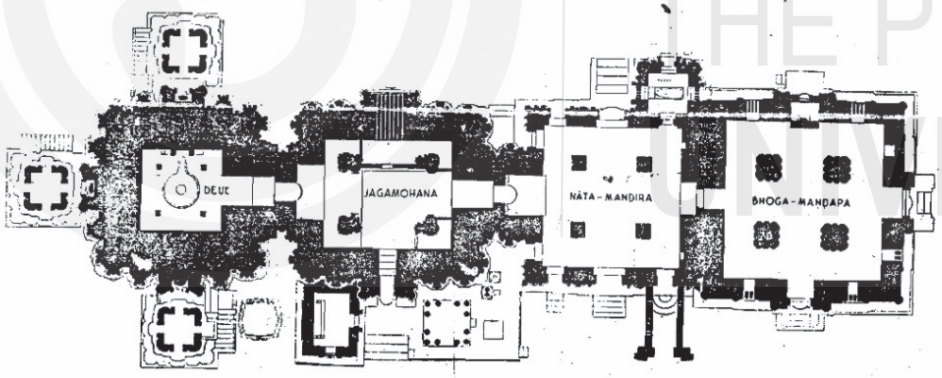
5. Plan (octagonal) of Mundeshvari Temple (Ramgarh, 7th century).



6. Plan (apsidal) of Vamana Temple (Kizhavellur, 11th century).



7. Plan of Vishnu Temple (Shrirangam).



8. Plan of Lingaraja Temple.

1012 CE) of the Cholas at Thanjavur: the *Dravida* style took many strides.

5.2.4 Ecological Setting, Raw Materials and Regionalisation

The stylistic evolution of temples was also rooted in ecological setting which gave them specific regional identity. In the relatively heavy rainfall areas of the western coast of India and Bengal, temples have sloping tiled roofs, giving rise to timber gables. To overcome the hazards of snow and hail, wooden sloped roofs are also employed in the temples of the Himalayan belt. In general, the hotter and drier the climate, the flatter the roof; open porches provide shaded seating, and pierced stone screens are utilised to filter the light. Some such features which are noticeable in the famous Ladkhan temple of the Chalukyas at Aihole (north Karnataka) are direct adaptations of thatch and timber village and community

halls. The distribution of space in Jain shrines was affected by their placements on high hills. These structures are characterised by an air of seclusion and aloofness. Some such typical examples can be seen at the Shatrunjaya and Palitana hills in Gujarat or the Dilwara temples at Mount Abu in southern Rajasthan. Apart from the ecological influences, the availability of raw materials also affected styles of craftsmanship. While the transition from wood to stone attributed to the Mauryas of the third century BCE was in itself a great step forward, local raw materials played a dominant role in techniques of construction and carving. No wonder, the Pallava King Mahendravarman (early seventh century) is called *vichitra-chitta* (curious minded) because he discarded conventional perishable materials such as brick, timber and mortar and used the hardest rock surface (granite) for his cave temples at Mahabalipuram. Hard and crystalline rocks prevented detailed carving, whereas soft and sedimentary stone permitted great precision. Friable and schist like stones, such as those used by the Hoysala architects and craftsmen at Belur and Halebid (Karnataka) in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries promoted the carving of mouldings created by sharp and angled incisions. Brick building traditions continued to survive where there was an absence of good stone and techniques of moulding and carving bricks doubtless influenced the style of temples in these areas, e.g. the temples at Bishnupur in Bengal. The influence of timber and bamboo techniques of construction represent a unique architectural development in north-eastern state of Assam. Almost no stone temples are found in the Himalayan valleys of Kulu, Kangra and Chamba. It is obvious that timber and brick building traditions dominate temple forms in these areas. The sloping and gabled roofs which are preserved only in stone in the temples of Kashmir can be seen in these areas in pure wooden context. In the ninth century or so, a remarkable multi-towered temple was excavated into a natural escarpment at Masrur in Kangra.

5.2.5 Role of Decorative Elements

The evolution of various styles in terms of decorations, ornamentations and other embellishments is a natural phenomenon. However, it needs to be stressed that these elements did not affect the basic structure of temples already outlined above. Amongst conspicuous decorative elements one can mention the growth of pillars from simple oblong shafts in early Pallava structures to extremely finely chiselled (almost giving the impression of lathe work) columns in Hoysala temples. Later still, the temples of Madurai and Rameshvaram give extraordinary place to long corridors studded with animals based caryatids. The niches, pavilions and horse shoe-shaped windows (*kudu*), among others, are also important decorative motifs which help in the delineation of stages of evolution. In general, the tendency is to make constant increase in embellishments. To illustrate, the *kudu* which at the Mahabalipuram monuments has a plain shovel-headed finial, develops a lion head in the Chola monuments. The process of excessive ornamentation is noticeable in north India too. *Shikharas*, ceilings and other walls receive great attention of artisans and craftsmen. Extremely exquisite carvings in marble in the ceilings at Dilwara Jain temples at Mt. Abu do not serve any structural purpose and are purely decorative.

Sometimes it is argued that multiplication of roofs constitutes a distinctive feature of temples of Malabar, Bengal and the eastern and western Himalayas. In a west coast or Malabar temple the walls resemble a wooden railing in structure and

were made of wood, though stone copies from about the fourteenth century also exist. Such temples (for example, the Vadakkunath temple at Trichur —15th-16th century) may have either a simple pitched roof of overlapping slabs, or they may have a series of pitched roofs one above another, which bear an obvious resemblance to the multiple pitched roofs of Chinese and Nepalese temples. In the Kashmir valley of the western Himalayas, temples bear two or three roofs which were also copied from the usual wooden roofs. In the wooden examples the interval between the two roofs seems to have been left open for light and air; in the stone buildings it is closed with ornaments. Besides this, all these roofs are relieved by types of windows comparable to those found in medieval buildings in Europe. Example of such roofs in Kashmir may be seen in Shiva temple at Pandrethan and Sun temple at Martand. In Bengal, temples have been identified which have been borrowed from leaf-huts that are very common in the region. In this form of temple we also find the same tendency to a multiplication of roofs one above another. The temples at Bishnupur such as the famous Keshta Raya (17th century) are built with a variety of roofs forms on square and rectangular plans. Even contemporary Mughal architecture makes use of this so-called "Bengal roof" in sandstone or marble.

5.3 ORGANIZATION OF BUILDING PROGRAMME

In the erection of the structural temple an organised building programme was followed. Bricks were baked either on or near the site and stone was mostly quarried locally. From reliefs carved on temples and from a palm-leaf manuscript that has been discovered and which concerns the building operations carried out at the world famous thirteenth century Sun temple at Konarka it is learnt that stone from quarries was sometimes transported to the building site on wooden rollers drawn by elephants or floated on barges along rivers and canals. At the site the masons roughly shaped the stone blocks which were then hoisted into position by rope pulleys on scaffolding. Ramps were also constructed of timber and sand to facilitate the placing of extremely heavy stone pieces in place. A classic example of this is the stone constituting the huge *shikhara* of the Brihadishvara temple at Thanjavur. This stone weighing about 80 tonnes is popularly believed to have been raised to its present height of about 200 feet by being dragged on an inclined plane, which had its base about seven kilometres away at Sarapallan (literally, meaning 'elevation from depression'). Occasionally, as in Konark, iron beams were used in the sanctuary and hall. The architects, artisans and workmen engaged in the various activities associated with the building of a temple were organised into groups which functioned as guilds. The above-mentioned Konark temple manuscript lists the workmen, their salaries and rules of conduct and provides an account over several years of the various building operations. Quite often, these get reflected in stone as well, e.g., an eleventh century panel from Khajuraho shows cuttings, chiselling and transporting stone for temples.

5.4 CHRONOLOGICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL SPREAD OF INDIAN TEMPLES

In this section we mention some of the prominent temples according to their

chronology and geographical spread.

5.4.1 The Northern Style

northern, central and western India (fifth-seventh centuries): The Parvati temple at Nachna (south-east of Khajuraho, M.P.); the Dashavatara temple at Deogarh. (Jhansi District, U.P.); the brick temple at Bhitaragon (Kanpur District, U.P.); the Vishnu temple at Gop (Gujarat); Mundeshwari temple (an unusual example of octagonal plan) at Ramgarh (Bihar) and temples at Sanchi and Jigawa (both in Madhya Pradesh).

The Deccan and Central India (sixth-eighth centuries): The Cave temples at Ellora (near Aurangabad in Maharashtra), Elephanta (near Mumbai) and Badami (north Karnataka); Early-Chalukyan temples in north Karnataka at Badami, Aihole (Ladkhan temples), and Pattadakal (Papanatha and Galganatha temples).

western and central India (eighth — thirteenth centuries): Harihara and other temples at Osian (north of Jodhpur, Rajasthan); Jelika Mandir (Gwalior); Candella temples at Khajuraho (specially, Lakshman, Kandariya Mahadev and Vishvanatha); temples at Roda (north of Modhera in Gujarat); Sun temple at Modhera (Gujarat) and Marble temples of the Jains at Mt. Abu (Rajasthan).

eastern India (eighth — thirteenth centuries): Parashurameshvar Vaital Deul, Mukteshvar, Lingaraj and Rajarani temples (all at Bhubaneshwar); Sun temple at Konarka (Odisha) and the Jagannatha temple at Puri (Odisha).

The Himalayan belt (eighth century onwards): Sun temple at Martand; Shiva temple at Pandrethan and Vishnu temple at Aventesvamin (all in Kashmir); temple at Masrur (Kangara, Himachal Pradesh) and Brahmanical temples in Nepal (Kathmandu, Patan and Bhadgaon).

5.4.2 The Southern Style

The Deccan and Tamil Nadu (sixth — tenth centuries): Cave temples, the Rathas and the 'Shore' temple of the Pallavas at Mahabalipuram (near Chennai); the Vaikunthaperumal and Kailasanatha temples at Kanchipuram (also near Chennai); Chalukyan structures at Aihole (Meguti temple), Badami (Malegitti Shiva temple) and Pattadakal (Virupaksha temple) and the Kailash temple at Ellora carved out under the patronage of the Rashtrakutas.

Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala (tenth — seventeenth centuries): Brihadishvara temples of the Cholas at Jhanjavur and Gangaikondacholapuram; Hoysala temples at Belur, Halebid and Somnathpur (all in Karnataka); Later-Chalukya temples in Karnataka (at Lakkundi and Gadag); the Pampati temple of the Pandyas at Vijaynagar; the Shrirangam (near Trichinopoly, Tamil Nadu) and Minakshi temples (Madurai, Tamil Nadu); the Kattilmadam (at Chalpuram, district Palghat, Kerala) temple and Parashuram temple at Tiruvallam (near Trivandrum).

5.4.3 The *Vesara* Style

The Buddhist chaitya halls of the early centuries of the Common Era and situated in the Western Ghats in the modern state of Maharashtra may be said to be prototypes of this style. Its most conspicuous feature is the apsidal ground plan.

As already mentioned, there is certain vagueness about its essential components and geographical distribution. Amongst the early examples (seventh — tenth centuries) can be cited the structures at Chezarla (Andhra Pradesh), Aihole (Durga temple), Mahabalipuram (Sahdeva and Draupadi rathas) and Kerala (Shiva temples at Trikkandiyur and Tiruvannur). The classic post-tenth century examples include the Nataraja shrine at Chidambaram (Tamil Nadu) and the Vamana temple at Kizhavellur (District Kottayam, Kerala).

5.5 TEMPLES AND INDIAN CULTURAL ETHOS

Indian temples symbolised the very mundane urges of humans and were for varied activities of the community as a whole. To begin with, general education within the temple was of great importance. Many endowments to temples were specifically made for the establishment of colleges which were incorporated into temple complexes. Teaching of such subjects as grammar and astrology as well as recital and teaching of texts such as the *Vedas*, the Epics *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* and the *Puranas* were encouraged. Music and dance generally formed part of the daily ritual of the temples and during special celebrations and annual festivals these played a particularly dominant role. Large temples would maintain their own musicians — both vocal and instrumental, together with dancers, actors and teachers of performing arts. The life-size delineations of such musicians in a tenth-century temple at Khajuraho as well as in the Sun temple at Konark and *nata mandir* (dancing hall) forming an absolutely integral element in the Odishan and other temples also provide eloquent testimonies to that effect. And, of course, who can forget the performance of the great cosmic-dance of the Mahadeva Shiva himself at the Chidambaram temple. No less important was the institution of *devadasi*. These temple maidens played a significant role in dancing as well as in singing of devotional hymns by which the temple god was entertained. The fact that the Chola emperor Rajaraja 1 (984-1012) constructed two long streets for the accommodation of four hundred dancing women attached to the Brihadishvara temple (Thanjavur), gives us an idea of the lavish scale on which he endowed the temple and its functions. Many temples had regular festivals which provided opportunities for mingling of mythology and folklore, as for instance, the annual *rathayatra* of the Jagannatha temple at Puri. The undertaking of pilgrimage (*tirthayatra*) is yet another mechanism through which the participation of the community in temple activities was facilitated. As temples provided work and the means of livelihood for a large number of persons, they were able to exert great influence upon the economic life of people. Even small temples needed the services of priests, garland-makers and suppliers of clarified butter, milk and oil. One of the most detailed accounts that have been preserved of the number of people who were supported by a temple and the wages they received is that given in an inscription on the above-mentioned Thanjavur temple, and dated 1011 CE. The list includes cooks, gardeners, dance-masters, garland-makers, musicians, wood-carvers, painters, choir-groups for singing hymns in Sanskrit and Tamil, accountants, watchmen and a host of other officials and servants of temples, totalling more than six hundred persons.

5.6 SCULPTURES: STONE AND METAL IMAGES

The regional spirit asserting itself is seen in sculptural arts as well. Stylistically, schools of artistic depictions of the human form developed in eastern, western, central and northern India. Distinctive contribution also emerged in the Himalayan regions, the Deccan and the far south. A great majority of these regions produced works of art that were characterised by what has been described as the "medieval factor" by the great art historian and critic Niharranjan Rai. This "medieval factor" was marked by a certain amount of slenderness and an accent on sharp angles and lines: The roundness of bodily form acquires flatness. The curves lose their convexity and turn into the concave. Western and central Indian sculptures, eastern Indian and Himalayan metal images, Gujarati and Rajasthani book and textile illustrations, Bengal terracottas and wood carvings and certain Deccan and Odisha miniatures registered this new conception of form through the post-tenth centuries. The pivot of the early medieval sculpture is the human figure, both male and female, in the form of gods and goddesses and their attendants. Since these cult images rest on the assured foundations of a regulated structure of form, it maintains a more or less uniform standard of quality in all art-regions of India. Curiously, the creative climax of each art-region is not reached at one and the same time all over India. In Bihar and Bengal it is reached in the ninth and tenth centuries; in Odisha in the twelfth and thirteenth; in central India in the tenth and eleventh; in Rajasthan in the tenth; in Gujarat in the eleventh; and in the far south in the tenth-eleventh centuries. It is in the Deccan alone that the story is of increasing torpor and petrification — indeed, Deccan ceases to be a sculptural province after the eighth century.

It is not only the cult images but non-iconic figure sculptures too which conform to more or less standardised types within each art-province and hardly reveal any personal attitude or experience of the artist. The multitude of figures related themselves to a large variety of motifs and subjects. These include: narrative reliefs, historical or semi-historical scenes; music and dance scenes, *mithuna* couples in a variety of poses and attitudes, arrays of warriors and animals and *shalabhanjikas* (women and the tree).

Metal images cast in brass and octa-alloy (*ashta-dhatu*), copper and bronze emerge in profusion in eastern India (Bihar, Bengal and Assam), Himalayan kingdoms (especially Nepal and Kashmir) and more particularly in the south. The north Indian images largely portray Brahmanic and Buddhist deities permeated with tantric influences. The main types represented in the remarkable galaxy of south Indian metal images are the various forms of Shiva, especially the Nataraja; Parvati; the Shaiva saints such as Appar, Sambandar and Sundarar; Vaishnav saints called *Alvars* and figures of royal donors.

All over the country, the post-Gupta iconography prominently displays a divine hierarchy which reflects the pyramidal ranks in feudal society. Vishnu, Shiva and Durga appear as supreme deities lording over many other divinities of unequal sizes and placed in lower positions as retainers and attendants. The supreme Mother Goddess is clearly established as an independent divinity in iconography from this time and is represented in a dominating posture in relation to several minor deities. Even hitherto a puritanical religion like Jainism could not resist the pressure of incorporating the Mother Goddess in its fold, which is fully reflected in the famous Dilwara temples at Mt. Abu in Rajasthan. The pantheons do not so much

reflect syncretism as forcible. In the rock-cut sculptures of Ellora one can feel the fighting mood of the divinities engaged in violent struggles against their enemies. The reality of unequal ranks appear in the Shaivite, Jain and Buddhist monastic organizations. The ceremonies recommended for the consecration of the *acharya*, the highest in rank, are practically the same as those for the coronation of the prince.

5.7 PAINTINGS, TERRA-COTTA AND THE "MED-IEVAL FACTOR"

The medieval tradition in paintings has the following traits: sharp, jerky and pointed angles, e.g., at the elbow and the shoulders, sensuous facial features — sharp and peaked nose, long wide swollen eyes projected sharply and crescent lips, richness of variegated patterns, motifs etc. gathered and adapted to the grip of sharp curves, and an intense preference for geometric and abstract patterns of decoration. The manifestations of these traits can be seen in the paintings on the walls of the Kailasha temple (eighth century) of Ellora; the Jaina shrine at Sittanavasal (ninth century) and the Brihadishvara temple at Thanjavur (eleventh century), both in Tamil Nadu. However, these traits are still more pronounced in the well-known manuscript-illustrations of Bihar and Bengal, Nepal and Tibet in the post-tenth centuries. Textiles surfaces also offered a very rich field for the development of this tradition. At least from the thirteenth century onwards west Indian textile designs, and later, those of the Deccan, south, Odisha and Bengal also register their impact in unmistakable terms. The feudal ethos of the post-Gupta economy, society and polity is also noticeable in the terracotta art. The change is noticeable in the patrons and content of depictions. Art activity, as a whole, was being feudalised. The pre-Gupta art at Bharhut, Sanchi, Karle, Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda, etc. was patronised mainly by the mercantile and commercial class, artisans and craft-guilds as well as royal families. Art in the Gupta period (fourth-sixth centuries), when feudal tendencies had just begun to appear, reflects that vitality and zest of renewed Brahmanism - for the first time Brahmanical temples were constructed in permanent material, i.e. stone.

The art of the post-Gupta centuries (650-1300 CE) was supported mainly by kings of different principalities, feudatories, military chiefs, etc. who alone could patronise large-scale art activities. The terracotta art, which had once symbolised the creative urges of the common man, ceased to be so and instead became a tool in the hands of resourceful patrons. The output of miniature portable terracottas made for the urban market dwindled in the post-Gupta period. Though some of the old urban centres such as Varanasi, Ahichchhatra and Kannauj survived and some new ones like Tattanandapur (near Bulandshahr in U.P.) emerged in the early medieval period, very few of them have yielded terracottas. Instead of producing for the market, the clay modeller (*pustakaraka*) become subservient to the architect and now produced for big landlords, Brahmanical temples and non-Brahmanical monasteries. Terracotta acquired the character of an elite art and was preserved in feudal headquarters and religious centres such as Paharpur, Rajbadidanga (Bengal), Vikramashila (Bihar), Akhnur and Ushkar (Kashrnir). Terracottas in the post-Gupta centuries were used by landed aristocrats and

kings to decorate religious buildings and their own places on auspicious occasions such as marriages as recorded by Bana in the *Harshacarita*.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) List the main deities placed in different styles of temples.

.....

2) What are the main parts in a temple plan?

.....

3) List two main temples each of the five categories listed under northern style.

.....

4) List four temples of the southern and *Vesara* style.

.....

5) What were the peculiar features of sculptures described by art historians as 'medieval factor'?

.....

5.8 SUMMARY

This unit explores the notion of regionalism as the hallmark of the making of Indian cultural traditions with special reference to art and architecture between the 8th – 13th centuries. Architectural styles like the *Nagara*, *Dravida* and *Vesara* developed with broad regional specificities. The basis of classifying the temple styles in terms of geographical distribution, differentiation in ground plans and presiding deities has been offered in this Unit. In this period distinctive technical language developed for describing architectural features. The role of 'medieval factors' in sculptures, terra-cottas and paintings have been explored.

5.9 KEY WORDS

Antarala	:	vestibule, ante-room
Apsidal	:	Building with a ground plan of semi-circular termination
Bhadra	:	flat face or facet of the *shikhara*
Bhattaraka	:	Jaina religious teacher/preceptor
Bhadra-deul	:	auspicious temple; it refers, however, to the *jagamohana* in front of the *deul*
Bhoga-mandapa	:	the refectory hall of a temple
Caryatid	:	Sculptured female/animal figures used as columns or supports
Deul	:	general name for a temple as a whole
Finial	:	finishing portion of a pinnacle
Garbha-griha	:	sanctum sanctorum, the most sacred part of the temple
Gopuram	:	monumental gateway
Jagamohana	:	hall in front of the sanctum

Kalasha	:	water-pot; pitcher shaped element on the finial of a temple
Kudu	:	foliated arch on Dravidian temple = ornamental motif derived from the Buddhist *caitya* arch
Mandapa	:	large open hall
Matha	:	monastery
Nata-mandir	:	dancing/festive hall, usually in front of the *jagamohana*
Prasada	:	place/shrine; also used in the sense of favour by God
Pustakaraka	:	clay modeller
Ratha	:	literally a temple chariot used on ceremonial occasions in south Indian temples; also applied incorrectly to the monolithic Pallava structures at Mahabalipuram
Rekha-deul	:	order of temple characterised by curvilinear *shikhara*
Shikhara	:	spire, tower
Torpor	:	inactiveness
Vimana	:	tower over sanctuary containing the cell in which the deity is enshrined

5.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) See Section 5.2.

2) See Sub-section 5.2.1

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) See Sub-section 5.2.2

2) See Sub-section 5.2.3

3) See Sub-section 5.4.1

4) See Sub-section 5.4.2 and 5.4.3.

5) See Section 5.6

5.11 SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 6 ARAB CONQUEST OF SINDH, TURKISH INVASIONS, MAHMUD GHAZNI AND MOHD. GHOURI[1]

Structure

6.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will know:

- the background for understanding the foreign invasions from Arabia in the early medieval period;
- the sources on the Arab conquest of Sindh;
- the reasons for the capture of Sindh by the Arabs;

[1] This unit has been taken from BHIC 132, Units 11 and 12

- the phases of conquest of Sindh;
- the nature of Mahmud Ghazni's invasions;
- reasons for the rise of Ghurid power;
- phases of conquest of north India by Mohammad Ghouri;
- reasons for defeat of the Rajputs;
- causes behind the success of Mohammad Ghouri; and
- difference between the Ghaznavids and the Ghurids.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the Units so far, we have studied about the social, political, economic or cultural aspects of Ancient India. Based on the unique traits of the period, historians have called it as Ancient history. Similarly, the period that followed had its own characteristic features to be termed as Medieval. The rise of Islam in West Asia and the Muslim conquests around the world occurred in the early medieval period. In this Unit, we will study one such inter-related development in the Indian subcontinent. This is the Arab conquest of Sindh in the north-western region of the subcontinent.

THE EARLY MEDIEVAL IN INDIAN HISTORY

The Early Medieval is a phase of transition from ancient to medieval period. In relation to north India, the period before the sultanate phase is termed as early medieval. Many historians also refer to it as post-Gupta period. It signifies a different chronological construct in Indian history that has characteristics of its own that are not found in the earlier or later phases. The use of such terms in academic circles is of more recent origin. Before its usage, the medieval period was mostly understood in terms of foreign or Muslim invasions and their rule in India. However, with in-depth micro-studies in medieval Indian history, it was realized that the various cultural traits found in the region cannot be aggregated together under a single term of medieval. In the beginning, Niharranjan Ray attempted a multi-dimensional characterization of medievalism. He envisaged three sub periods within the medieval, namely:

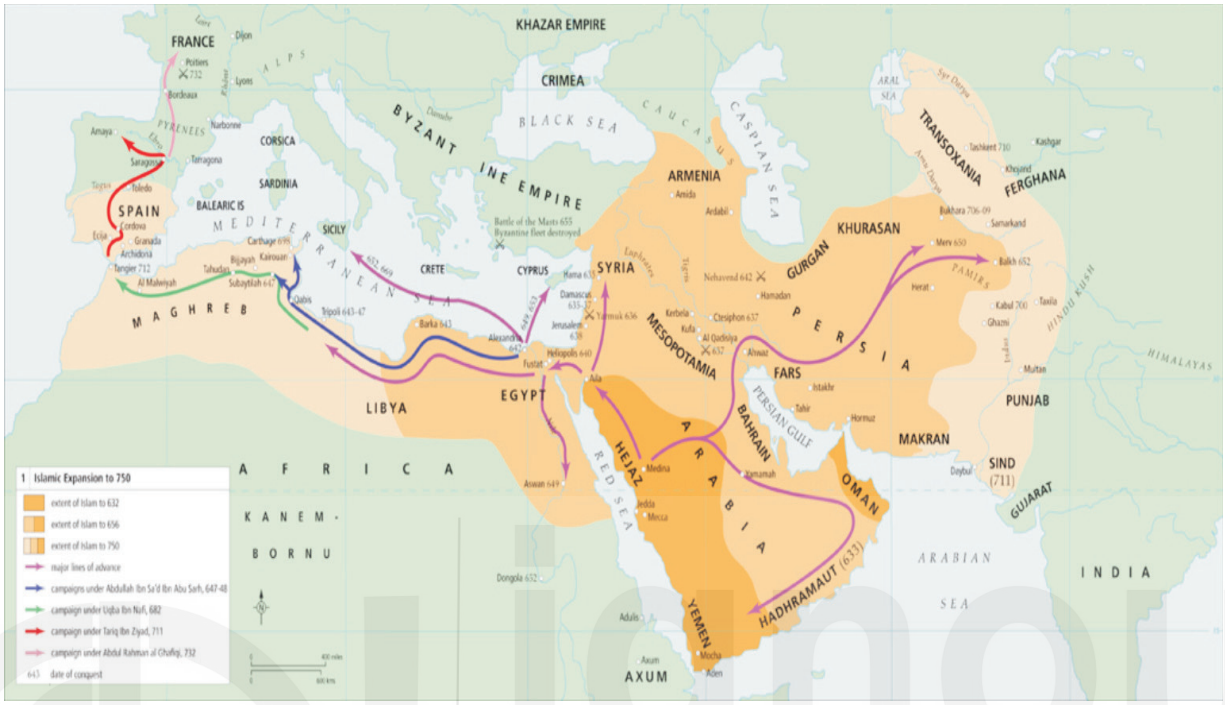
(i) 7^{th} to 12^{th} century

(ii) 12^{th} to first quarter of 16^{th} century

(iii) first quarter of 16^{th} century to the close of 18^{th} century.

According to historians like B. D. Chattopadhyaya, the time-spans in history are culturally diverse enough not to be comfortably categorized together. Therefore, even these sub-periods can be broken into different periods with their own cultural traits. In line with such an argument, it can be said that the post-Gupta or early medieval carried distinct traits. For instance, 7^{th} to 10^{th} and 10^{th} to 12^{th} centuries can be differentiated on different grounds. One such ground is the Arab conquest of Sindh in the 8^{th} century or the rise of Turkish invasion in north India between 10^{th} to 12^{th} centuries.

6.2 THE RISE AND SPREAD OF ISLAM IN 7TH-8TH CENTURIES



SPREAD OF ISLAM.
Source: http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/full/opr/t253/e17/images 0195334012.spread-of-islam-the.1.jpg

Islam was founded in the 7th century by Prophet Muhammad: an Arabian merchant from Mecca. At this time, the region of Arabia was inhabited by several warring Bedouin tribes following pagan faiths, worshipping many deities. They constantly fought with each other over economic or religious issues. However, Prophet Muhammad unified these Arabian tribes with his monotheistic teachings. Perhaps this was the biggest contribution of Prophet Muhammad in Arabia. Along with bringing this unity, his new faith greatly influenced the political and economic policies of the future Muslim states as well.

After his death, the rapid expansion of Muslim polity in and outside the Arabian peninsula happened under the Rashudin and Umayyad Caliphates. The expanded empire stretched from Central Asia across the Middle East and North Africa to the Atlantic. Some scholars opine that the political formation of a state in the Arabian Peninsula and religious unity and mobilization were the most significant reasons for the establishment of the largest empire in the pre-modern period. This empire formed by the Islamic Caliphate was around 13 million square kilometres. With Islam as their religion and the new empire as their booty, the Arabs lived amongst a vast array of people belonging to different races, among which they formed a ruling minority of conquerors. However, the gradual end of wars and the development of economic life produced a new governing class of administrators and traders, heterogeneous in race, language and ethnicity. This is how the Muslim population kept spreading in and around the Arabian peninsula. The conquest of Sindh in the Indian subcontinent was an extension of this endeavour by the Muslim world.

6.3 THE *CHACHNAMA*

As far as the historical sources on the Arab conquest on Sindh are concerned, there is a miserable dearth. Even the Arab sources only give brief, scant details or passing reference to this episode while discussing the rise and expansion of early Islam. The conquest is compressed into a few pages of the *Futuh al Buldan* of Al-Baladhuri. Al-Madaini gives plentiful information on the Arab conquest of Transoxiana, but Sindh finds little mention in his account. However, this dearth of the Arab sources on the theme is largely compensated for by the *Chachnama*, a Persian text written by Ali Kufi in 1226 CE. It is a reliable historical work that claims to be the translation of a lost Arab account dealing with the history of this conquest; it is only to the *Chachnama* that one can give the credit of providing detailed information on the Arab invasion of Sindh.

The *Chachnama* gives details on the history of Sindh from 680-718 CE. Etymologically, the term *Chachnama* means the story of Chach. Chach was the Hindu brahmana ruler of Sindh. This book was a Persian prose work written in the city of Uchch, which was the political capital of Sindh in those times. Presently, it can be located around 70 kilometres north of the port city of Karachi in Pakistan.

As an important historical source of Muslim India, the *Chachnama* has not received its due share of attention. Its partial translation in English was done by Elliot and Dowson, and a full translation from Persian to English was done in 1900 by Mirza Kalich Beg, the first Sindhi novelist. The first and only edition of the Persian text appeared in 1939.

The *Chachnama* has not been given adequate importance since most historians, like the colonial and the nationalist historians, have seen it only as a narrative on the advent of early Islam to the Indian subcontinent. However, Ali Kufi's claim of the *Chachnama* being a translation of an 8th century work in Arabic shows that it can be a repository of other types of information apart from that on the advent of Islam. In fact, the text indeed gives more information. Scholars like Yohanan Friedmann, Manan Ahmed Asif etc., who have read and analyzed it, contend that it has a wide variety of information, and no systematic attempt has been made to classify and analyse all the available data. After its detailed examination, they certified the fact that it has relevant information on the history of Sindh, its government and politics. Therefore, the scholars who have read this text realize the dire need to read and understand this medieval source in entirety, and refrain from seeing it only as a text on the advent of early Islam and its capture of Sindh.

6.3.1 The Narrative of *Chachnama*

As mentioned before, historians like Friedmann and Ahmed Asif have rejected the view of seeing it only as a history of conquest of Sindh. Their detailed study throws light on other aspects as well. Friedmann opines that the text may be divided into four parts starting from the varied details on the praise of Prophet Muhammad, the Arab warriors and the Arab manuscript describing Muhammad Bin Qasim's military exploits in Sindh. Further, it describes the Arab invasion of Sindh.

Starting from king Chach, it gives the intricate details on his successors. It enumerates the journey of a brahamana named Chach bin Silaij from being the

chief minister of the king of Sindh to his own rise to power with the queen's help after the king's death. As a king, Chach established a successful state of Sindh by capturing forts, signing agreements and winning over both the Buddhist and Hindu subjects. It was a mixture of his offensive, defensive and tolerant policies that enabled him to rule over Sindh for a long time. However, his success as a good ruler was undone by the war of succession between his two sons Dahar and Daharsia. As the text shows, Dahar came to power, and it was he who welcomed the Arab rebels, pirates and warlords to Sindh. This had raised the ire of the Muslim state of Iraq in the 8th century.

According to Ahmed Asif, this text is divided into three portions. The first one discusses three intertwined themes of the need of legitimacy for the king, the good counsel of the advisor and the requirement for creating a justly governed polity. The second describes the history from the Caliphs to Walid. It talks about the time of Caliph Umar (*c*. 634-644 CE) when the Muslim campaigns were led to Sindh and Hind. It gives intricate details on the governors dispatched to regions such as Makran, Zabulistan and Qandahar, as also the rebellious Muslim groups running away to the frontiers. The revolting troops conspiring against the state in Damascus have also been discussed. It is mentioned here that in order to fight such groups and assert political control over the region, the governor of Iraq had sent the young commander named Muhammad Bin Qasim to Sindh in 711 CE. This is when the regions of Makran, Dabol or Daybul, Nerun were attacked and taken over. The forces of raja Dahar were defeated in a battle fought at the banks of river Indus. After defeating the king of Sindh, Qasim also occupied the regions of Aror, Brahmanabad and Multan. This is how Dahar was avenged for supporting the Arab rebels and pirates against Iraq.

The end narrative discusses the downfall of Qasim at length. As it shows, Qasim was killed at the orders of the Caliph at Baghdad after being accused of sexual violence by the daughters of Dahar. The last portion of the text revolves around the themes of good governance, good advisory and the political theory needed for the creation of a successful polity. This part is a discussion of the military campaigns of both Chach and Qasim. According to Ahmed Asif, the text contains speeches on policy and taxation, private conversations between commanders and their prophecies and dreams. It also discusses the statements of significant men on political theory and governance.

6.4 THE CONQUEST OF SINDH

The region of Sindh is located on the south-eastern-zone of present-day Pakistan. This area on the western coast of the Indian subcontinent has a long history. Since ancient times, it has been a hotbed of trade and commerce. The Arab merchants had active trade relations with their Indian and Southeast Asian counterparts. They knew of the sea routes to the western coast of India. To be precise, these merchants sailed from Siraf and Hormuz on the Persian Gulf to the mouth of the Indus, and thence to Spara and Cambay, and further to Calicut and other ports on the Malabar Coast. They brought back tidings of Indian wealth and luxury goods like gold, diamond, jewelled idols etc. to Arabia. Therefore, as India had been famous for its riches for long, the Arabs wanted to conquer it. After their "Islamization", they

had the proselytizing zeal that made them overrun many regions in the Middle East, Europe, Africa and Asia.

Source: Wikimedia Commons (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad_bin_Qasim).

The penetration of the Arabs in the coastal towns of Sindh in Indian subcontinent had started as early as 636 CE during the reign of Caliph Umar, the second successor of the Prophet. The pillaging expeditions such as the one in Thane (near Mumbai) in 637 CE continued for a long time. However, such expeditions were only plundering raids and not conquests. A systematic Arab conquest happened only in 712 CE during the reign of the Umayyad Caliph al-Walid. It was then that Sindh was incorporated into the Muslim empire.

As mentioned before, along with the aspiration to own Indian riches, the reason for the conquest of Sindh was the desire of the Arabs to spread Islam. But, the immediate cause was the Sindhi pirates who had plundered some Arab ships near the coast of Dabol/Daybul or Karachi. Historical evidences show that these ships carried gifts sent by the king of Ceylon for the Caliph of Baghdad, and also al-Hajjaj, the governor of Iraq. This was sent to establish cordial relations with Hajjaj. However, the ship was plundered by the pirates near the mouth of the river Indus, and the Arabs were detained at the port of Dabol. A demand for restitution was made to Dahar, the king of Sindh, to compensate for the outrage and to punish the offenders. But, he refused to do so. He showed his inability to control the pirates as a reason behind his refusal. Nevertheless, he was not trusted, and was rather accused by Baghdad of protecting the pirates. So, Hajjaj took the permission of Caliph Walid to attack Sindh. Thereafter, three military expeditions, one after the other, were led against the king. It was in the third expedition by Muhammad Bin Qasim in Debal that Dahar was defeated and killed. Subsequently, all the

neighbouring towns of Nirun, Rewar, Brahmanabad, Alor and Multan were also captured. This is how the state of Sindh was finally conquered by the Arabs in 712 CE.

6.4.1 Muhammad bin Qasim: the Conqueror and his Expeditions

Qasim was a 17 years old Umayyad general who had led the conquest of Sindh. This adolescent conqueror followed in the footsteps of Alexander in carrying a new faith and a new culture into the Indus basin. He has been mentioned in the *Chachnama* between the years 709-711 CE when Hajjaj, the governor of Iraq, had made him the head of an expedition against Sindh. Qasim was the nephew of Hajjaj, and being an able commander he was appointed by his uncle as the head of the frontier district of Makran. He was given a mission of conquest in the direction of Sindh. Qasim's expedition against Sindh was prepared with utmost care. The backbone of his force consisted of 6,000 men of the *gund* of Syria, and also various other contingents. Shiraz was the base for planning the eastward campaign. Under Hajjaj's orders, Qasim had stayed there for months concentrating on his troops. From here, he moved eastward with Muhammad ibn Harun (who died during this march), his predecessor in the command of the frontier district. As the Arab sources show, the Indus basin was ruled by a king named Dahar in the 8th century. He was the son and successor of king Chach. The Arab forces wanted to conquer this basin. According to the *Chachnama*, Chach had a vast empire that extended from Makran, Kashmir, etc. But, his son's dominions were not as expansive, and it only comprised of the lower Indus region consisting of cities like Brahmanabad, Aror, Debal, etc. Therefore, the huge empire established by Chach could sustain only till his lifetime. After him, it was reduced to a small state under king Dahar, especially after the Arab invasion.

As a general, Qasim reached the delta of the Indus besieging the city of Debal by land; the additional war materials reached him by sea. Debal was a great city on the mouth of river Indus that was ruled by a lieutenant of king Dahar. After this, the forces proceeded upwards in the Indus valley. They reached Nirun (near to present-day Hyderabad in Pakistan), and it surrendered peacefully. After this, many other regions like Sadusan, Sawandri, Basmad, etc. were captured. Finally, Qasim aimed to tackle Dahar himself by crossing the river Indus. On his part, Dahar along with his strong army valiantly fought the invaders for many days. However, he was badly defeated and killed by the Arab forces. Subsequently, the capital of Brahmanabad, and also Alor were captured. Moving further northwards towards the eastern bank of the Indus, Qasim aimed to conquer Multan. The *Chachnama* mentions that Hajjaj had directed Qasim to capture Multan as the final goal.

As a matter of principle and policy, even after getting a series of victories in Sindh, this conquest by Qasim did not blindly lead to *en masse* conversion to Islam. Though the Arab conquests in Debal and Multan were followed by massacre, there were examples like Alor, Nirun, Surast, Sawandri, etc. that saw negotiations and settlement between the victor and the vanquished. The principle of tolerance and religious freedom practiced by Qasim in Alor paved the way for the co-existence of conquering Islam with the religion and culture of India. As the *Chachnama* says, Qasim followed a policy of tolerance towards the defeated population. He allowed religious freedom to both the Brahmanic and Buddhist

people. He preserved the privileges of the priests from both religions. It shows Qasim to be upholding the Indian social tradition of privileging the brahmanas. In fact, *Chachnama* mentions that he used to call the brahmanas as "good and faithful people", and after the siege of Brahmanabad they were reappointed to the same positions as they had held under the Hindu dynasty. Furthermore, these positions were also made hereditary by him. The common people were also left free to worship as per their wish, provided they paid the Arabs the same taxes as they had paid to raja Dahar. In short, he did not meddle with the social systems of Sindh, and agreed to maintain peace in many regions. Such a policy was followed by Qasim under the instructions of Hajjaj who believed in granting religious freedom to people. Therefore, as the *Chachnama* states, Qasim had left Brahmanabad in an orderly and peaceful condition to proceed northward towards Alor. Such a policy of flexibility and tolerance was particular to Islam during its initial period of conquest, and its followers practiced it.

6.5 ARAB ADMINISTRATION

After being conquered, the region of Sindh saw the Arab form of administration. This was the same pattern that was practiced by the Arab conquerors in the other regions they had conquered. Scholars opine that this pattern of administration was more liberal than the later systems. This was mainly because the school of Islamic law in the earlier centuries was not as strict.

The Arab rule of the early medieval period was lenient and flexible. The Arab victors or conquerors followed a general policy of keeping the local practices unhindered. As one of the creators of the Arab system of administration, Caliph Umar disallowed the Arabs from either interfering with the local administration or acquiring landed property in subjugated areas. Even though the chief military general of a conquered region was made its governor, he could not have interfered with its civil administration. It was mainly in the hands of the local chiefs, who mostly were non-Muslims. Such an arrangement of Qasim made after his victory over Dahar was known as the 'Brahmanabad Settlement'. It mainly comprised of the treatment of the Hindus as "the people of the book" or the *zimmis* (the protected ones). This settlement was mainly the work of Hajjaj under the instructions of the Caliph. It was outlined that since the *zimmis* had agreed to pay taxes to the Caliph, they were taken under the latter's protection. They were given the permission to follow their faith and worship their own gods. Also, the Arab rulers or administrators were disallowed from snatching away their property. Such a pronouncement was mainly the result of a plea from the people of Brahmanabad to repair their temple and practise their religion. This request to Qasim was forwarded to Hajjaj, and Hajjaj, in turn, consulted the Caliph on it; the latter adopted a policy of tolerance which, in turn, was diligently carried forward by Hajjaj and Qasim. The aforementioned cases of Qasim's tolerant policy towards the brahmanas and the native tradition can be understood in this light.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) Who was Ali Kufi and why is he important to the study of Indian history?

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2) What is the *Chachnama*?

.....

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.....

.....

3) Match the following

i)	**Person**	**Known As**
	Palmaldevi	Umayyad General
	Muhammad bin Qasim	Governor of Baghdad
	al-Hajjaj	Brother of Walid
	Sulaiman	Princess

6.6 ARAB CONQUEST OF SINDH: A TRIUMPH WITHOUT RESULTS?

The Arab conquest of Sindh has been seen as "a triumph without results" by scholars like Stanley Lane Poole, Elphinstone, etc. because there was no major victory for either the Muslim Arabs or the Indian rulers. They opine that this victory of the Arabs was without any impact or result on the history of the Indian subcontinent. It could not affect the political or military conditions of the rest of India. The Arab rule only got confined to the Sindh region, and the Indian rulers ruled their states without fearing or ousting the Arabs from their frontiers. The influence of the Arabs was restricted to only a small part of the subcontinent. They could not get a foothold in the Indian subcontinent, unlike the Turks who had established a full-fledged state a few centuries later (i.e. the Delhi Sultanate from 12th century onwards).

However, the scholars critiquing this viewpoint have given varied arguments for refuting it. They hold that even though the conquest did not have any substantial effect on the political geography of India, it had definite political influences on both sides. As seen before from the sources, Muhammad bin Qasim was as able an administrator as a warrior. After his victories, he maintained the law and order of a region, and believed in placing good administration under the Muslim rule. The arrangements made by him with the non-Muslims provided the basis for later Muslim policy in the subcontinent. Under the able guidance from his uncle Hajjaj, he had given socio-cultural and religious freedom to the defeated population. By the time Islamic law had been codified, stringent provisions were given for the idolaters. The reason why we find these provisions were not followed on the Hindus was mainly due to the tolerant policies of Qasim. He exhibited the political acumen to keep the native social customs and traditions intact. Neither did it lead to forceful conversion of the non-Muslims nor to end the social institutions like the caste system etc. This was how the caste system remained untouched and was

followed as ever before.

The prevalence of such practices showed the internal weaknesses of the Indian social and political systems to the Arabs and the Muslim world. Therefore, these fissures in the social fabric were used by them to their own advantage. As discussed before, perhaps the brahmanas of Brahmanabad were termed as faithful people by him to continue their all-round support in running the Arab polity and administration. Undoubtedly, the Arab invasion did not affect the political set up of India then, but it definitely gave a good view of the social weaknesses of the region. These were used by the invaders a few centuries later.

Further, the cultural intermingling between the Indian and Arab cultures showed its effects on various other fields like literature, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, etc. Such contacts at an intellectual level led to the mutual growth and development of both the cultures. The earliest recorded Indo-Arab intellectual contact happened in 771 CE when a Hindu astronomer and mathematician reached Baghdad with a Sanskrit work called *Brahma Siddhanta* by Brahmagupta. This text was translated into Arabic with the help of an Arab mathematician, and was named as *Sind Hind*. It had the greatest influence on the development of Arab astronomy even though three other works on mathematics were also translated into Arabic. In mathematics, the most important contribution of the Indian culture to Arab learning was the Arabic numerals.

Similarly, even greater attention was given to Indian medicine by the Arabs. At least 15 Sanskrit works were translated, including those of Charaka and Sushruta. The Indian doctors were given great prestige and honour at Baghdad, and so they were found in good numbers there. Manka was one such doctor who had earned prestige and money by curing the ailing Caliph Harun-al-Rashid.

Further, astrology and palmistry also gained Arab attention, and many books from these fields were translated into Arabic. They, too, have been preserved in the Arab historiographies. Other translations were from the fields of statecraft, art of war, logic, ethics, magic, etc. This is how the famous *Panchatantra* was translated and known as the story of Kalila and Dimna in Arabic.

Indian music had a considerable influence on Arabic music even if no translated works have been found. The work of an Arab author named Jahiz reveals the appreciation he got at Baghdad. He called the music of the people of Indian subcontinent as pleasing. Another such reference on Indian music was from an Arab author who talks about an Indian book on tunes and melodies. It has been suggested by some scholars that many of the technical terms for Arab music were borrowed from Persia and India. Likewise, even Indian music incorporated many Perso-Arab airs like *Yeman* and *Hijj*.

As against the availability of such information from the Arab works on the vibrant relations between the Indian and Arabic cultures, it will be unreasonable to call the Arab conquest of Sindh as a triumph without results. In other words, it would be incorrect to give leverage to the political consequences alone and negate the socio-cultural or other impacts or results.

6.7 SITUATION OF CONSTANT FLUX IN WEST

AND CENTRAL ASIA

The successful invasion of India by the Muslim Turks like Mahmud Ghazni and Muhammad Ghouri in the 11th and 12th centuries respectively can be seen as the climax of the background prepared by the conquest of Sindh in the 8th century.

In the 11th and 12th centuries with the rise of Turks in Central Asia and their subsequent invasions in India they were able to gain a foothold on the north-western frontiers. Islam could enter India due to the plundering raids by Mahmud Ghazni and Muizzuddin Mohammad Ghouri. The invasions by Muslim Turks started with mere plunder and loot by Mahmud Ghazni in early 11th century. It went on to see its climax in the establishment of first Muslim state in India by Muizzuddin Mohammad Ghouri in the late 12th century. We will discuss here different phases of invasion, conquest and expansion of the Muslim rule in India, as also the factors aiding such phenomena. As seen earlier, the Abbasids had been the most powerful empire in West Asia since the 5th century CE. However, this situation started changing from the end of 9th century. It was mostly because of the dissipation of its energy and resources in fighting the heathen Turks of Central Asia. The empire got fragmented into several aggressive fledgling states ruled by both non-Turk rulers and Turkish kings or *Sultans*. All these states accepted the suzerainty of the Caliph or *Khalifa*[2] who received his formal legitimacy through the grant of *manshur* (formal letter).

Now most of these Muslim rulers called themselves *Sultans*. On the other hand,

Map of the Region and Principal Localities of Transoxiana in 8th Century. Source: Guy Le Strange (1905). *The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate: Mesopotamia, Persia, and Central Asia, from the Moslem Conquest to the Time of Timur*. New York: Barnes & Noble. Credit: Cplakidas. Photo Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Transoxiana_8th_century.svg).

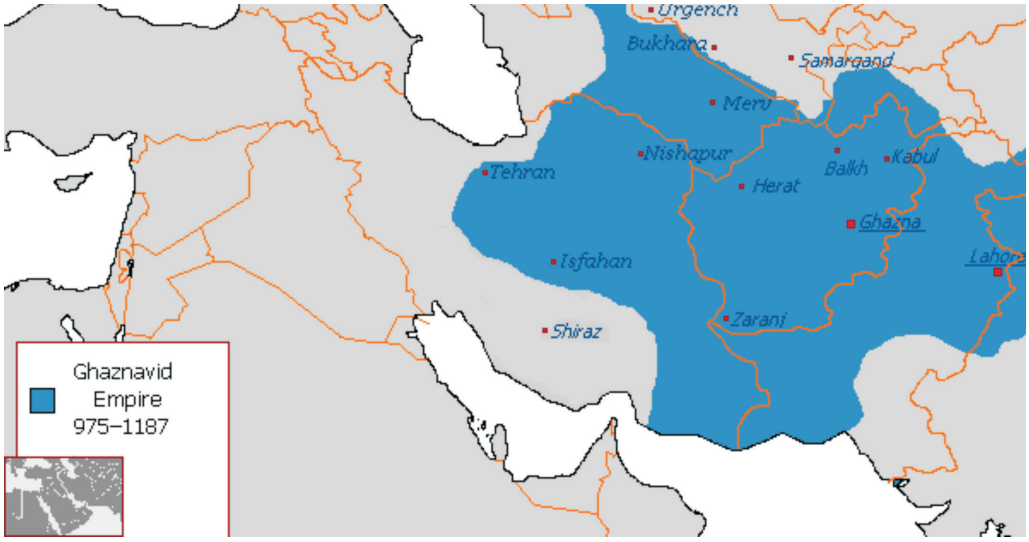
[2] The chief Muslim civil and religious authority vested in a person regarded as Prophet Muhammad's successor and a leader of entire *ummah* (community). The Caliph ruled in Baghdad until 1258 and then in Egypt until the Ottoman invasion and conquest of 1517; the title was then held by Ottoman *sultans* until it was abolished in 1924 by Atatürk. The central religious text of Islam – *Quraan* – uses the term *Khalifa* twice. Firstly, it refers to God creating humanity as his *Khalifa* on Earth. Secondly, it addresses King David as God's *Khalifa* and reminds him of his responsibility and obligation to rule with piety and justice.

in the 8th century the Turkish nomads had been infiltrating into Transoxiana: the region between Central and East Asia (it is known as *Mawaraun Nahr* in Arabic sources and *Fararud* in Persian). As they had superior military skills they were converted to Islam and recruited as mercenaries, palace guards and slaves by Abbasid Caliphs and Iranian rulers. Gradually, these Islamized Turkish commanders also got "Persianized" in language, etiquettes, administrative policies etc. It means that this Turkish governing class had assimilated Persian culture and was proud of its racial origin. They were bilingual in speech. Ultimately, they became the ones to expand their power in both West Asia and the Indian subcontinent.

After the fall of the Abbasid empire in this region the situation was just like that in north India in the post-Gupta period. It was ruled by many rulers, each fighting with the other for expansion of one's own territory and power. Also, in such states even the ambitious officials tried dethroning the king to usurp power for themselves. This is how many dynasties rose and fell. Amidst such political flux in West and Central Asia the main factor behind the strength and survival of any dynasty was its military power and efficiency. Therefore, we see many dynasties coming to power one after another. This is how the Samanid dynasty ruled from *c*. 874 to 999 CE.

Samanid Dynasty. Credit: Arab League. Source: Wikimedia Commons. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Samanid_dynasty_(819%E2%80%93999).GIF).

It was established by an Iranian noble from Balkh who was a convert. He had governed regions like Samarqand, Herat etc. in Central Asia and Afghanistan. This dynasty was followed by that of the Ghaznavids who ruled from 962 to 1186 CE.



Ghaznavid Empire at its Greatest Extent in *c.* 1030 CE. Credit: Arab League. Source: Wikimedia Commons. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ghaznavid_Empire_975_-_1187_(AD).PNG).

It was founded by Alp-tigin/Alp-tegin: a Turkish slave under the Samanids. Further, the Ghaznavids were defeated by the Seljukid and also the Khwarizmi dynasties. In fact, the latter also established a vast empire that was shattered by the ruthless Mongol attacks of Chengiz Khan/Genghis Khan.

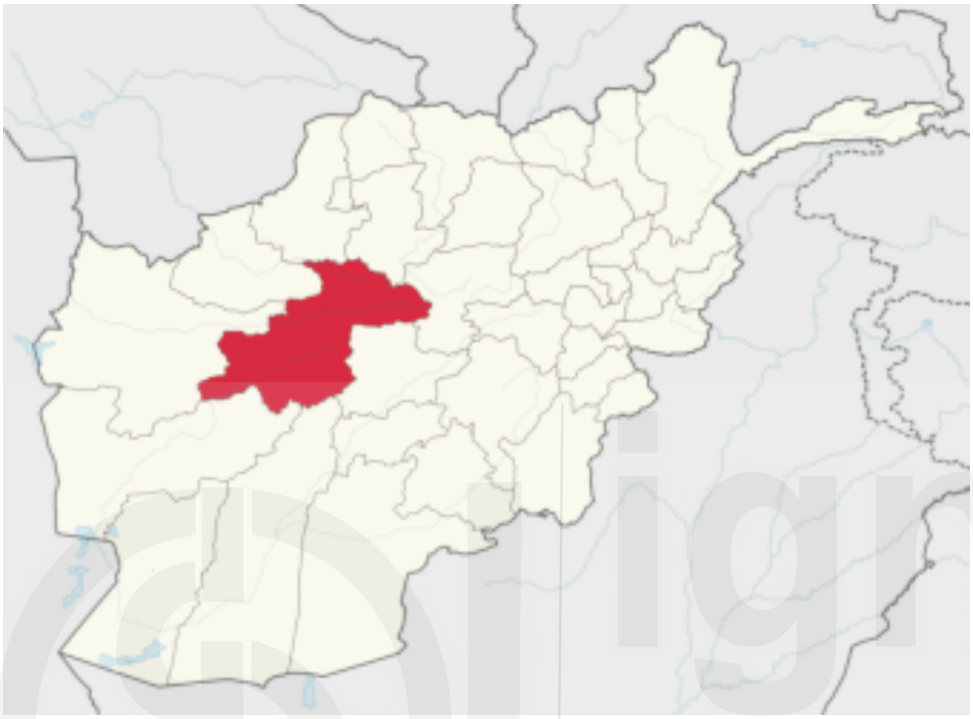
As seen above, there were constant skirmishes or wars between different groups of Islamized Turks to expand their territories. All of them exhibited good military skills in the battlefield and competed with each other for power. Satish Chandra mentions certain factors that favoured and increased military efficiency of the Turkish warriors of Central Asia. One needs to know these factors since these were some of the reasons behind their success against Indian monarchs:

a) First important reason was the availability of finest breed of horses in the steppes of Central Asia. They were the best varieties in the entire world and they were bred by sturdy, disciplined warriors. They were imported into Arabia and India because the native breeds there were not as good as the Central Asian ones. The people of Ghur enjoyed far-reaching fame as horse-rearers.

b) Second cause was easy availability of war implements. The region of Ghur (also spelled Ghowr or Ghor) – one of the 34 provinces of Afghanistan – and its neighbouring areas were rich in metals, especially iron. The people of Ghur specialized in production of weapons and war-equipment and exported them to neighbouring lands. In the words of the anonymous author of *Hududul Alam*[3], "From this province come slaves, armour (*zirah*), coats of mail (*jaushan*) and good arms." According to another writer of that time the entire region from Ghur and Kabul to Qarluq/Karkluk/Qarluk/Karluq – a prominent Turkic tribal confederacy west of Altay mountains in Central Asia – was metal-working. Therefore, war implements and materials were easily available to the Turkish warriors. When Mahmud Ghazni attacked Ghur in 1020 CE its chief Abul Hasan Khalaf brought him shields and cuirasses and a tribute of

[3] In Arabic it means "Boundaries of the World" or "Limits of the World". It is a 10th century work on geography authored in Persian by an unknown author from Jowzjan/Jawzjan/Jozjan, one of the 34 provinces of Afghanistan.

arms was levied on him. The value of Ghurid arms was identified and admired by Mahmud and he employed Ghurid officers as experts in siege-warfare. Thereby, the supply of good-quality horses and war materials to the Turks helped them in their military pursuits everywhere. Ghur had very recently opened its doors to Muslim cultural interface and possessed two most significant and crucial requisites of war in the middle ages – horses and iron.



Map of Afghanistan with Ghor Highlighted. Credit: TUBS. Source: Wikimedia Commons (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ghor_in_Afghanistan.svg).

c) Another factor responsible for the success of Turkish warriors was their *Ghazi*[4] spirit. This was seen for the first time in West Asia when the Turkish warriors had to constantly fight against the non-Turkish nomadic warriors called the Turkmen or *Turkomans*. At this time the region of Transoxiana was under Iranian rule and its surrounding areas were inhabited by Turks and non-Muslim nomadic *Turkomans*. There were constant fights between the Turks and the *Turkomans* like Guzz or Oguzz etc. living in the Kara-Khitai (Central Asian steppes). During this period the Turkish emperors made continuous inroads into the Turkmen areas for capturing slaves who were in great demand in the slave-markets of Herat in present-day Afghanistan, Sistan in present-day Iran, Samarqand/Samarkand and Bukhara in modern-day Uzbekistan. Ghur had a reputation for supplying slaves to these markets. The warriors who were involved in such raids were free to earn through plunders in such expeditions. However, another aim of the Muslim Turkish warriors behind such loot and plunder was to spread Islam amongst the non-Muslim population and so, they were known as the *Ghazis*. Hence, we see that the *Ghazi* spirit was first employed and exhibited in fighting the Central Asian nomadic tribes and later it was deployed against the "non-believers" in India. Mahmud Ghazni – a plunderer from Afghanistan – embodied and displayed the same spirit in

[4] Islamic term for a warrior. It was a title ascribed to the Muslim warriors or champions and used by several Ottoman *Sultans*.

his raids in India. Few historians view his invasions and conquests in Indian subcontinent as some sort of a Holy War for which there was no dearth of volunteers to aid and assist in. His triumphs were popularly known all over the East and some 20,000 warriors came to him from the land beyond the Oxus[5], praying and urging to be granted the privilege of fighting for Islamic faith, and possibly, attaining the crown of martyrdom for this lofty and noble cause. With a huge army strengthened and solidified by such zealots he undertook and fought his greatest campaign in India in 1018 CE and forayed into farther east than ever before.

6.8 GHAZI INROADS IN THE NORTH-WESTERN REGION OF INDIA

As understood so far, the Turkish and non-Turkish hordes from Central Asia constantly competed with each other to expand their spheres of influence in their surrounding areas. In such endeavours they also conquered many regions in Afghanistan. This is how Alp-tigin – a commander of the Samanid rulers in Khurasan – marched towards Ghazni in south Zabulistan in 963 CE and proclaimed himself as an independent ruler.

The Hindu Shahi kings of Afghanistan allied with former Samanid governor of Ghazni, Bhatti emperors near Multan as well as the Muslim *Amir* of Multan to protect their borders and territories.

They had helped the Hindu Shahi ruler named Jayapal since they were constantly pestered by slave raids of the invaders of Ghazni. Sabuktagin/Sabuktigin/ Sebuktigin – Alp-tigin's successor – had the same intention in Hindu Shahi areas since 977 CE. Consequently, by the end of the 10th century Zabulistan and Afghanistan were already conquered. The conquest of these areas laid the foundation for the Turkish inroads in India.

Further, Ghazi raids were continued since 999 CE by Mahmud Ghazni (also known as *Sultan* Mahmud bin Sabuktigin) – Sabuktigin's successor. Interestingly, the title "Mahmud Ghazni" is not found on his coins which simply designate him as *Amir Mahmud*, nor was it given to him by the Caliph. He deserved this title based on his conquests in Persia and Transoxiana. He fought a furious battle against Jayapal in 1001 CE. It was a battle of cavalry and skilful military tactics. Jayapal was severely routed by Mahmud's forces and his capital of Waihind/Peshawar was devastated. Nevertheless, perhaps the latter made peace with the former and only conquered the territory west of the Indus. However, this defeat gave a severe jolt to Jayapal and he died some time later. According to the sources he self-immolated in a funeral pyre as a result of humiliation of his defeat because his subjects thought that he had brought disgrace and disaster to the Shahi dynasty.

He was succeeded by his son Anandapal/Anantpal who continued to challenge Turkish raids in his territory. Before entering Punjab, Mahmud still had to contend with Anandapal's forces near the Indus. After a tough interface his army conquered

[5] Oxus is the Latin name of a major river in Central Asia, popularly known as the *Amu Darya*, also called the Amu or Amo river. In ancient times it constituted the boundary between the modern Greater Iran and Turan.

the upper Indus in 1006 CE. The Punjab province was finally won over three years later in Chhachh/Chach plains on the eastern zone of Indus. This was followed by the over-running of Nandana/Nandna fort in Salt Range in present-day Punjab province of Pakistan to which the Shahis had shifted their capital after their previous defeat at Waihind. Despite the heavy losses of men and resources suffered by Mahmud's army, Anandapal lost the battle and suffered much financial and territorial loss. This was his last resistance to Mahmud. He was forced to sign a treaty with the Ghaznavids in 1010 CE and shortly a year later died a natural death.

The Bhimgarh fort, also called the Reasi fort as it is located near Reasi which is a town at the bank of river Chenab to the north-west of present-day Jammu, was also captured but Anandapal was allowed to rule over Punjab as Mahmud's feudatory. However, in 1015 CE Mahmud even annexed Lahore to extend his empire up to the Jhelum river. Multan which was ruled by a Muslim *Sultan* was also conquered despite Anandapal's alliance with him. However, Mahmud's desire to conquer Kashmir remained unfulfilled with the defeat of his forces in 1015 CE due to unfavourable weather conditions and this was his first defeat in India.

This is how Mahmud made his way into India by conquering eastern Afghanistan and then Punjab and Multan. Next in line was his aim to acquire wealth through his raids in the Gangetic plains. Before studying Mahmud's victorious raids in this region it is imperative and significant to have an idea of northern Indian states during this period.

6.8.1 Political Geography of North India in Early 11th Century

From the post-Gupta period to the establishment of Delhi Sultanate the northern Indian region was divided into many Rajput states. Almost same was the case with south India. In fact, the north zone lacked a vast empire like that of the Guptas in this period. The political climate of this time was characterised by the tripartite struggle between Gurjara-Pratiharas, Palas and the Rashtrakutas.

Credit: w:user:Planemad. Source: John Keay, History of India, 2000, Grove publications, New York, p. 198. Photo Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Indian_Kanauj_triangle_map.svg).

Gurjara-Pratiharas and Rashtrakutas were two of the most powerful polities in India then. However, both of them had declined by the

middle of the 10th century. The sway of Gurjara-Pratiharas that once spanned from the Himalayan foothills in the north to Ujjain in the south and from Mongyr in the east to Gujarat in the west got confined to only present-day Uttar Pradesh by the second quarter of the 10th century. Meanwhile, a number of states mushroomed in north and central India; the most prominent among which were:

- Candelas of Kalinjar and Mahoba in the modern state of Madhya Pradesh,
- Chauhans/Chahamanas of Sakambhari or Sambhar in Rajasthan,
- Chalukyas of Gujarat (also known as Solanki dynasty in vernacular literature) with their capital at Anahilavada (modern Patan), and
- Paramaras of Malwa with Dhara (now Dhar) in western Madhya Pradesh as their capital which was later shifted to Mandapa-Durga (now Mandu), about 35 km. from the present-day Dhar city, after Dhara was sacked multiple times by their enemies.

Kashmir was ruled by queen Didda who reigned for 26 years[6] and had old rivalry with Hindu Shahi dynasty due to which she did not offer help against the Ghaznavid inroads. Therefore, we can see that north India was thoroughly disunited against the foreign invaders. Precisely for this reason, undertaking raids in this region was all the more easier for Mahmud. After Punjab he made three expeditions in the Gangetic plains for acquisition of wealth. Towards the end of 1015 CE he marched along the Himalayan foothills and defeated a local Rajput ruler at Baran or Bulandshahar with the help of some feudatory rulers. After this he plundered the temple towns of both Mathura and Vrindavan.

Plunder of Mathura by Mahmud

The holy city of Mathura – an ancient home of Hindu worship – was filled with temples which Mahmud thought were "not built by man but by *Jinn*"; where colossal golden and silver idols flashed with jewels stood so gigantically that they had to be broken up in order to be weighed. He faced the town wall which was an exquisite structure constructed of hard stone and had opening on to the river Yamuna with two gates raised on high and massive basements to protect them from floods. On two sides of the city were thousands of houses with temples attached, all of masonry and strengthened throughout with bars of iron, and opposite them were other buildings supported on stout wooden pillars. In middle of the city was a temple – larger and finer than the rest – to which neither a painting nor description could do justice. He wrote about it in wonder and amazement:

"If any one wished to construct a building equal to it he would not be able to do so without expending 100 million *dinars* and the work would occupy 200 years even though the most able and experienced workmen were employed."

[6] She was the ruler of Kashmir from 958 to 1003 CE, first as a Regent for her son and various grandsons and from 980 CE as the sole monarch. We get most knowledge about her and her reign from the 12th century *Rajatarangini* of Kalhana: a legendary historical chronicle in Sanskrit of the north-western Indian subcontinent, particularly the rulers of Kashmir.

> Orders were given for all temples to be burnt with naphtha and fire, crushed and levelled to the ground. The city was ravaged and plundered for 20 days. Among the spoils are said to have been five great idols of pure gold with eyes of rubies and adornments of other precious stones, together with a vast number of smaller silver images which, when broken up, constituted a load for more than a hundred camels. The total value of the booty has been estimated at three millions of rupees while the number of Hindus carried away into captivity exceeded 5000. Many of the temples, after being emptied of all their valuable contents, were left standing, probably because they were too massive for an easy destruction. Some historians allege that Mahmud spared them on account of their splendid beauty, magnificence and exuberance, basing their opinion on his glorifying and eulogistic tone in his letter to the Governor of Gazni quoted above.

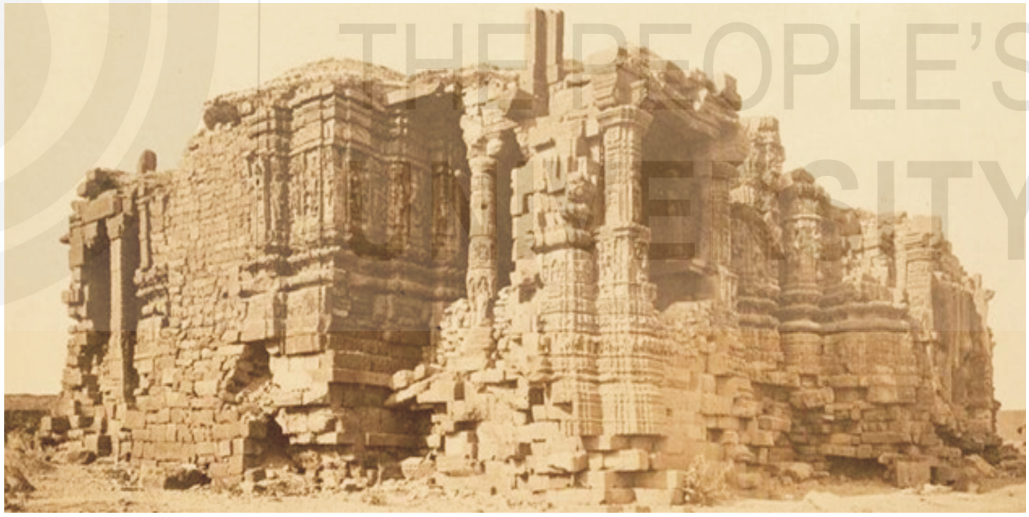
These spectacular victories were followed by his attack on Kannauj – capital of the Gurjara-Pratiharas – reputed and touted as the chief city of Hindustan. This was the most stunning foray for him in the Ganga valley. The *raja* fled at a mere knowledge of the *Sultan*'s coming and seven forts of the great city on the Ganges fell during the span of one day. Of all its opulent and gorgeous temples not even one was spared. Nor were the neighbouring rulers any more fortunate, such as Chandal Bhor of Asi, Chand Rai, the Hindu raja of Sharwa – a kingdom that stretched in the Shivalik hills – collected his treasures and departed for the hills but was tracked down through forest by Mahmud. He brought home such booty and prisoners that the slave-markets of Persia were satiated and saturated and a slave could be purchased for a couple of shillings. The wealth looted and earned from plunders in India helped him against his enemies in Central Asia. He even extended his empire in Iran and additionally got more recognition from the Khalifa at Baghdad.

He made two more raids in Ganga valley in 1019 and 1021 CE but these were without much gain for him. The first one was to break a Rajput alliance in the Gangetic valley. The Rajput king of Gwalior had provided help to the Hindu Shahi emperor against Mahmud. Mahmud defeated both the Hindu Shahi as well as the Candela rulers. Further, he also moved on to defeat the Candela monarch Vidyadhar but nothing conclusive happened between the two and Mahmud chose to accept a nominal tribute from Vidyadhar.

It is to be understood that such expeditions in north India were not aimed at expanding Mahmud's empire beyond Punjab. They were only to plunder the wealth of the states on one hand and make the upper Ganga *doab* as a neutral territory without any powerful local stronghold on the other. Indeed, these raids thoroughly ravaged even the powerful Shahi and Candela territories. Mahmud's last major raid was on Somnatha temple in Saurashtra on the western coast of Gujarat in 1025 CE. It took him across the Thar desert in Rajasthan that had previously deterred most invaders from raiding it.

Plunder of Somnath by Mahmud

Mahmud undertook in the winter of 1025-26 CE his final invasion of Gujarat, crowning his triumphs by the sack of the inordinately wealthy Somnatha temple. It is said that a hundred thousand pilgrims assembled there at any given point of time, a thousand brahmanas served the temple and guarded its treasures and hundreds of dancers and singers performed before its gates. In the *garbhagriha* stood the famous *linga*, a pillar-stone decked with sparkling gems and lighted by jewelled candelabra reflected in the rich hangings embroidered with precious stones like stars that adorned the shrine. So long as this worshipful emblem stood inviolate in its pristine glory Mahmud could not rest from the iconoclasm he inflicted upon India, nor could his treasury boast of the finest gems from India. Hence, his back-breaking march continued across the desert from Multan to Anhalwara and on to the coast, fighting and slaughtering as he progressed, until he reached at last the temple fortress washed by the waves of Arabian sea. Undaunted by the sheer strength of men in guard in the service of the shrine, he along with his force scaled the walls, slaying about 50,000 Hindus. The great stone was cast down and its fragments transported to grace the conqueror's palace. The temple-gates were put up at Ghazni and a million pounds' worth of treasure was the reward for the invader-plunderer's men who joined him in his wrathful expeditions to India and beyond.



Somnatha Temple Ruins. Photograph taken in *c*. 1869 by D. H. Sykes from the Archaeological Survey of India.
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ruins_somnath_temple.jpg. Credit: D. H. Sykes. Photo Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons. (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Somnath_temple_ruins_(1869).jpg).

Somnath's devastation made Mahmud of Ghazni a champion and trailblazer of Islamic faith – a faith antagonistic to the Hindu belief-system – in the eyes of every Muhammadan for nearly nine centuries and the feat got associated and embellished with fantastic legends extolling him and his army.

The strength and scale of his successful military campaigns do not belie or undermine the difficulties faced by him and his troops while coming and even

more while returning back. His forces were led astray by the perfidious guides and a substantial number of men perished in the desert due to scarcity of water. Those who survived fell into the hands of the rapacious *Jats* of the Salt Range who hassled the exhausted soldiers as they toiled homewards, laden with the items of loot. Before the year was over Mahmud led his troops for the last time into India to punish the antithetical and protesting forces. According to the sources, he built a fleet at Multan, armed it with spikes and rams and placed 20 archers with naphtha bombs on each of his 1400 boats confronting and engaging the opposed army of the *Jats*, 4000 in numerical strength. By raining the naphtha he sank or burnt their vessels. However, these details could be fabricated or exaggerated because firstly, there could never be that many boats on the upper Indus and secondly, the mountain-tribes are not usually adept in fighting naval wars. Taking revenge from the *Jats*, whether by the way of land or water cannot be said with assurance, he returned to Ghazni where he died four years later in 1030 CE.

He was a bold warrior who had great military capabilities and political achievements. He had turned the small state of Ghazna/Ghazni/Ghaznin into a vast and wealthy empire comprising most parts of the present-day Afghanistan, eastern Iran and north-western parts of Indian subcontinent. Apart from his martial skills he was also a patron of Persian literature in the Ghaznavid Empire. Taking cue from the cultural centers of Samanid Bukhara and Khurasan he transformed Ghazni into a center of Persian learning by inviting poets and writers like:

- Firdausi,
- Alberuni,
- Uzari,
- Unsuri etc.

Such display of pomp and show by him and the grandeur maintained in his state of Ghazni was made possible mostly due to the wealth amassed from his plundering raids in India.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) Which factors favoured and increased military efficiency of the Turkish warriors?

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2) Throw light on Rajput disunity in north India in the 11th century.

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6.9 FALL OF THE GHAZNAVIDS AND RISE OF THE GHURIDS IN CENTRAL ASIA AND INDIA

It was seen that despite the amount of wealth plundered from India, Mahmud could not become a good and capable ruler. He built no lasting institutions in his state and his rule outside Ghazni was tyrannical. Perhaps this was the reason as to why the Ghaznavid historian Utbi[7] said in reference to Khurasan/Khorasan[8] when it was under the sway of Mahmud:

"Affairs were characterized there by nothing but tax levies, sucking which sucked dry and attempt to extract fresh sources of revenue without any constructive measure. Hence, in sometime Khurasan was pauperized since water had been thrown on her udder, not a trickle of milk could be got nor any trace of fat."

An unexpected rise of Ghurids at a small and isolated province of Ghur located between the Ghaznavid Empire and that of the Seljukids was an unusual development in the 12th century. It was one of the least developed regions of the present-day territory of Afghanistan. It lay west of Ghazni and east of the Herat province in the fertile valley of Herat/Hari river in western Afghanistan. Since it was a hilly tract of land the main occupation was mostly cattle-rearing or agriculture. It had remained a pagan region surrounded by Muslim principalities. However, it was "Islamicized" by Ghaznavids in the late 10th and the early 11th century.

The Ghurid rulers or the Shansabanids were humble pastoral chieftains. They tried to make themselves supreme in the middle of the 12th century by intervening in Herat when its governor had rebelled against the Seljuqid king named Sanjar. Further, as the Ghaznavids felt threatened by this act of the Ghurids they captured and poisoned the brother of the Ghurid emperor Alauddin Hussain Shah. Subsequently, he captured Ghazni by defeating the Ghaznavid ruler Bahram Shah. The city of Ghazni was plundered and thoroughly destroyed. For the same reason Alauddin was given the title of *Jahan Soz* ("world burner"). This marked the fall of Ghaznavids and the rise of Ghurids.

By now the Ghurids wanted to break free of the Seljuqids and fight for their control over the rich areas of Khurasan and Merv. Like the Ghaznavids they were also unpopular for their burdensome levies on people. This made it difficult for them to maintain their authority and order in the region. Apart from this, they were constantly at loggerheads with the other Turkish tribes across the Oxus river. These were the broad reasons behind their inroads into India in the latter half of the 12th century. Ghiyasuddin Muhammad who became the ruler of Ghur in 1163 CE made his younger brother Muizzuddin Muhammad the king of Ghazna. On the other side he himself concentrated on the Central and West Asian matters.

[7] Full name: Abu Nasr Muhammad ibn Muhammad al Jabbaru-l 'Utbi (or *al-Utbi*).

[8] Region to the north-east of greater Iran that includes parts of Central Asia and Afghanistan. The term simply connotes "East" (literally "Sunrise").

6.9.1 Political Geography of North India in the Early 12th Century

In the 12th century north India saw the same disunity between different Rajput states that was evidenced in the 11th century during the Ghaznavid raids. One of the powerful states of this period was that of the Cahmanas or Chauhans. It tried to expand its territories towards Delhi, Mathura, Gujarat, Rajputana etc. The Chauhan king Vigraharaj conquered Chittor and also Delhi from the Tomar monarchs in 1151 CE and tried annexing the area between Delhi and Hansi as well, which was a disputed zone between the Tomars and the Ghaznavids. The Chauhans faced the Ghaznavid raids.

Prithviraj III, popularly known as Prithviraj Chauhan or Rai Pithora in folk legends, was the most prominent and reputed emperor of this dynasty. He acsended the throne possibly at the age of 16 and rapidly expanded his empire in Rajputana[9]. Many of the petty Rajput states were conquered. He also led an expedition towards the Candelas of Khajuraho and Mahoba. As had been witnessed in the 11th century the Candelas formed the most powerful state spanning the north and central regions of India. They had a proud history of giving a tough fight to even the Ghaznavids. The battles of the famous warriors Alha and Udal who died fighting saving Mahoba from the Chauhans have been mentioned and extolled in the literary pieces of *Prithviraj-Raso* and *Alha-Khanda*. However, since these works were written much later, their narratives are doubted by the historians. Nonetheless, what is worth believing is that in reality the Candelas were thoroughly defeated by the Chauhans. The latter were also aspirational about defeating their old rival – the Chalukyas of Gujarat – but to no avail. Henceforth, they tried fulfilling the same ambition in Ganga valley and Punjab.

At this time the Gahadwalas ruled over the northern plains with their capital at Kannauj. As per the oral narratives which are historically unreliable and unauthentic, the main reason behind rivalry between both the political powers was abduction of the daughter of the Gahadwala *samrat* Jai Chand. According to the story his daughter Sanyogita was abducted by Prithviraj Chauhan in her *svayamvara* which raised the ire of Jai Chand. However, since this tale is not corroborated by other historical sources like literary works, inscriptions etc. it is not trusted. The chief cause of rivalry may have been Prithviraj's urge to annex the Ganga plains.

In a nutshell it could be conclusively argued that the northern and central states of India were thoroughly divided and they could not unify against the foreign invader, Muizzuddin Muhammad Ghori. Consequently, it was not so difficult for the Ghurids to defeat the Chauhans in 1192 CE. As had been mentioned earlier, Ghori was made to ascend the throne of Ghazna by his elder brother Ghiyasuddin in 1173 CE. He almost followed the same route to India as the Ghaznavids. In other words, Muizzuddin too started moving towards India from the north-western region. At first he conquered Multan in 1175 CE from the Carmathians or Karamati whose state boundaries spread from north-west portion of the Indian subcontinent

[9] Literally meaning "Land of the Rajputs", it was a region that included mainly the present-day Indian state of Rajasthan, parts of Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat and some adjoining areas of Sindh in the modern-day southern Pakistan.

up to Iran further west. In next couple of years he captured Uchch and moved on to Neharwala in Gujarat.

Top: Statue of Prithviraj Chauhan at Ajmer, Rajasthan.
Source: Prithvi Raj Chauhan.JPG. Photo Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons. (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Prithvi_Raj_Chauhan_(Edited).jpg).

Below: Prithviraj Chauhan statue at Qila Rai Pithora, Delhi. Credit: Ashish Bhatnaagar. Source: Wikimedia Commons (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Prithviraj_Chauhan_III_statue_at_Qila_Rai_Pithora,_Delhi.jpg).

As known from before, during this period Gujarat was ruled by Chalukyas and they badly defeated the Ghurids near Mt. Abu. The Chalukyas had requested the Chauhans for help against the Ghurids but to no avail. Prithviraj declined to help since he saw the Chalukyas as much an arch-rival as the Ghurids. After the debacle experienced in Gujarat, Ghori changed his action-plan. He chose to subjugate the Ghaznavids first at the north-western borders of India. After defeating them at Peshawar in 1179-80 CE he marched towards Lahore to beat the Ghaznavid ruler Khusrau Malik that he did in 1181 CE. Subsequently, Malik was allowed to rule Lahore for some time since Ghori was busy expanding his control over parts of Punjab and Sindh. However, very soon even Malik was put to death by the Ghurids.

6.9.2 The Battles of Tarain in 1191 and 1192 CE

After these victories in the north-western region Ghori captured the fortress of Tabarhinda in Punjab. Tabarhinda was strategically important for the security and protection of Delhi. Perhaps for the same reason, without wasting any time Prithviraj Chauhan reached Tabarhinda to reverse the situation. The war fought between the two forces in 1191 CE is known as the First Battle of Tarain. Not only did Prithviraj win, he also left Ghori badly wounded. However, Ghori was saved by a Khalji horseman who carried him to safety. With this triumph Prithviraj took the Ghurids for granted and surmised that like the Ghaznavids the Ghurs would also rule only the frontier areas outside India. The Ghurid attack on Tabarhinda was treated only as a frontier attack by him and he maintained complacency in not ousting the Ghurid forces from the outlying areas. This cost him dearly some time later.

Turkish forces attacked for the second time in 1192 CE which is known as the Second Battle of Tarain. This time Ghori came with good preparations. He had carefully planned his moves to defeat the Chauhans. His army consisted of 120,000 men who were fully armoured and equipped. A 17th century historian named Ferishta reveals that Prithviraj's forces consisted of 300,000 cavalry, 3000 elephants etc. Such figures may be gross exaggerations to show the challenge and scale of Ghori's victory on Prithviraj. Ferishta also claimed that Prithviraj sought help from the other "*Rais* of Hind" who joined him against Ghori. Given the fact that Prithviraj's expansionist tendencies had annoyed most of his neighbouring states, it is difficult for the historians to accept Ferishta's claim. Also, since not even one of the friendly *Rais* is named by him, this assertion of his is doubtful. Perhaps Prithviraj's army consisted of his feudatories who may have supplied their military forces to him. His decentralized army was inferior to the disciplined and centralized army of Muizzuddin.

Satish Chandra opines that the Second Battle of Tarain was "more a war of movement than of position". He explains it by saying that the "lightly armed mounted archers" of Muizzuddin kept harassing the "slow moving forces" of Prithviraj and created confusion by attacking from all sides. The Chauhan ruler was badly defeated in this war and he was caught by the Turkish forces near Sarsuti or Sirsa in the present-day Hissar district of Haryana. Minhaj Siraj mentions that he was captured and executed after his defeat. However, a modern scholar named Hasan Nizami on the basis of available numismatic evidence refuted this claim of Siraj and opined that Prithviraj was still allowed to rule in Ajmer after

his defeat. On the basis of Prithviraj's coins that reveal these words – "Sri Muhammad Sam" – on the obverse Nizami has contended this. According to him, Prithviraj was executed only after his rebellion sometime later. Therefore, all the narratives on his execution that are not based on historical sources are aberrations and doubtful.

6.9.3 Movement towards the Upper Ganga Valley

After the battle Muizzuddin adopted a cautious policy and at many places still continued the indigenous rule. He placed Govindraj's son as a vassal in Delhi. If Ferishta is to be believed, Govindraj was the Tomar chief of Delhi and he had helped Prithviraj in the Second Battle of Tarain. He had died in this battle. Further, Prithviraj was reinstated at Ajmer as a vassal. On the other hand, important places were kept under Turkish control. Muizzuddin had annexed whole of the region between the Siwalik area and Ajmer, Hissar and Sirsa. He had placed Hissar and Sirsa under the charge of one of his loyal slaves named Qutubuddin Aibak. Having the plan of moving towards the upper Ganga valley, the Turks had realized the importance of the strategic location of Delhi and, therefore, wanted to keep it in Turkish hands. Henceforth, the revolts at Ajmer and Delhi by Prithviraj's son were immediately quelled. Thereafter, Delhi was kept under direct Turkish control and the Tomar vassal was removed in 1193 CE when he was found to be involved in treason. Along with Delhi, now Ajmer was also taken away after defeating Prithviraj's brother Hari Singh who had been leading the Rajput resistance against the Turks. Further, Ajmer was also placed under a Turkish governor and Prithviraj' son named Govind was forced to move to Ranthambhor.

After putting Delhi and Ajmer under Turkish control, the Ghurids planned to attack the most powerful kingdom in India then, i.e. the state of the Gahadvalas of Kannauj. With his return to India in 1194 CE Muizzuddin captured the neighbouring regions of Delhi in the upper *doab*, namely Meerut, Baran or Bulandshahar and Koil or Aligarh. This upper *doab* area was ruled by the Dor Rajputs and the region had been attacked sometime after the Second Battle of Tarain. Though the Gahadvala king Jai Chand could have helped his neighbouring states once again he chose to stay away. Rulers like him who rather rejoiced at or stayed neutral to the defeats of the Chauhans and others forgot that they may also be attacked if the Turks were not stopped. Such disunity between the different Rajput states cost India heavily. Most of the states were conquered by Muizzuddin without much effort.

Further, even the Gahadvalas were attacked. In 1194 CE the Muzzi forces marched towards Kannauj and Benaras. A battle was fought at Chandawar in the modern Etawah district. The exaggerated figures in the contemporary literary works on Jai Chand's army show it to be consisting of 80,000 armourers, 30,000 cavalry, 300,000 infantry, 200,000 archers etc. Nonetheless, the Gahadvalas were badly defeated. Kannauj was also sieged in 1198 CE. The defeat was followed by plunder, especially of the fort of Asni in Fatehpur district which was a treasure-house of the Gahadvalas. Even Benaras was plundered and its temples were looted and destroyed.

The defeat of the Chauhans and the Gahadvalas in the Second Battle of Tarain and the Battle of Chandawar respectively were biggest victories for the Turks,

since these were the most powerful foes for them. The Turks laid the foundation of the Turkish rule in the Ganga valley with these victories. Even after the two wars there was resistance to the Turkish invasions in the Ganga valley but these minor revolts were easily suppressed.

To consolidate and protect their stronghold of the upper Ganga valley the Turks attacked its western and southern regions. They tried to conquer the strategic forts between Delhi and Malwa. Therefore, Bayana was sieged in 1195-96 CE and the strong Gwalior fort was also besieged within a couple of years. Likewise, Bundelkhand, Khajuraho, Mahoba and Kalinjar were conquered from the Candela rulers. As mentioned earlier, the Candela state was also powerful but to no avail. The Turkish forces also started expanding towards east and west of their stronghold of the upper Ganga valley. Muizzuddin's forces sieged Anhilwara in Gujarat in retaliation to the *Rai* who had assisted in a Rajput rebellion earlier. Towards the east, even Bihar and Bengal were conquered by Muhammad-bin-Bakhtiyar Khalji.

Despite such expansion in all directions, the Turks were mostly unable to control the conquered areas that were far away from the stronghold of Delhi and the upper Ganga valley. This problem cost them very heavily due to fresh Central Asian developments in 1204 C.E. In this year the Ghurid Turks were badly defeated by the pagan Kara Khanid Turks of Samarqand at the Battle of Andkhui near the Oxus river. The rumours of Muizzuddin's death in this battle led to the revolt of the Khokhars in Punjab and he was coaxed to come back to suppress it. He successfully quelled the rebellion but on his way back from Punjab to Central Asia he was killed by the Karamatias. However, his death did not stop the expansion of Turkish rule in India as was seen in the case of the Ghaznavids. In fact, his loyal slaves conquered more territories in India to extend their rule in India, thereby establishing the first Muslim state in India i.e. the Delhi Sultanate.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1) Match the following:

i)

Dynasty	**Ruler**
Chauhan	Jayapal
Hindu Shahi	Vigrahraja
Candela	Jai Chand
Gahadvala	Prithviraj

ii)

Dynasty	**Region**
Chauhan	Delhi
Tomar	Bundelkhand
Candela	Ajmer
Chalukya	Kannauj
Gahadvala	Gujarat

2) Discuss the factors that led to the Turkish military success in India and elsewhere.

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6.10 REASONS BEHIND RAJPUT DEFEAT AND TURKISH VICTORY

Several reasons have been assigned for defeat of the Rajputs and success of the Turks in India. Initially, this debate started with the British historians who were trying to understand Indian history in depth. Primarily, they stuck to two reasons for Turkish victory over the Rajput rulers. These factors were military power and expertise of the Turks and pacifist nature of the Rajput rulers. They opined that Ghurid armies consisted of men who were drawn from war-like tribes residing in the mountainous areas between the Indus and Oxus rivers in Central Asia. Also, they had got military training and expertise by fighting against the fierce tribes of Central and West Asia. By drawing a comparison between the Turks and the Indians the British historians held that the latter lacked such training as they were pacifist in nature. Alternatively, the Indians were not used to fighting wars like the Turks and therefore, the Rajputs were defeated by them. Also, the lack of unity between them added to the advantage of the invaders.

However, other historians have rejected this explanation by citing that the early medieval period from 8th to 12th century was one of warfare and violent internal struggles between the different states within India. This in itself proves that the Rajputs were not pacifist or of docile temperament, and they did not lack martial spirit or bravery.

Some other historians like Jadunath Sarkar and Mohammad Habib have traced Turkish success to the Indian social structure and also the one newly created by Islam in India. Sarkar emphasized on the characteristics imparted by Islam to the Muslim groups like the Arabs, the Pathans, the Turks, etc. that prepared the foundation of their victory in India. He argued that unlike the caste-divided society of India the Islamic social system was based on equality and social solidarity in legal and religious fields. He also held that absolute faith in God in the Islamic system gave a drive and a sense of mission to the Muslims. It provided a strong bond of unity between different groups of people and imbued them with a strong sense of mission and fighting spirit. A somewhat similar view was given by Mohammad Habib on the basis of the observation of an 11th century Arab writer named Alberuni on Indian caste system. Habib argued that resistance to the Ghurid invasions by Hindu rulers was undermined by two factors:

1) Since the caste system allowed only the warrior kshatriyas to participate in wars, it seriously impaired the military effectiveness of Hindu kingdoms.

2) The caste system discounted the social unity of Hindu society vis-a-vis its Muslim counterpart that believed in equality. Therefore, a section of the urban

masses of the Muslim society accepted Islam for a better social status. Such views have also been rejected since the historical sources show that groups like *Jats*, *Meenas* and *kuvarnas* (lower castes) were also included in the Rajput armies. Also, sources supporting mass conversion of vaishyas and sudras to Islam around the 12th century do not exist. Additionally, they show that like the Hindu rulers the Muslim conquerors were also indifferent to degraded status of the lower castes.

Further, the Turkish military tactics and technology have been seen as another reason behind the Turkish victory. As mentioned before, the Central Asian regions like Ghur were renowned for their metal deposits and manufacture of weapons and other commodities of warfare. The use of iron-stirrup that enabled horsemen to use spears without being thrown off the horse was known to the Turks. The use of such armaments like iron-stirrup or crossbow was, perhaps, not widely known, especially in India. Over and above this, as has been said earlier, the good breed of Central Asian horses vis-a-vis Indian horses has also been cited as a reason for military efficiency of the Turks. Many scholars have also named the unique Turkish tactics of warfare on the battlefield as a reason behind their success. However, scholars like Peter Jackson have declined to give utmost importance to Turkish military tactics and technology.

The causes behind the defeat of Rajputs and victory of the Turks are to be understood by enlarging one's frame of reference. We should not restrict ourselves to only one particular reason or to the events happening since the Second Battle of Tarain. One has to understand the happenings in north-western region of India since the early 11th century. The invasions and plundering raids by Mahmud Ghazni happened in India only after breaching the outer defences, namely Afghanistan and Punjab in the north-western region of India. By having a hold over these regions Mahmud could plan out his further inroads into India. Here, disunity between various Rajput states can be seen as a major factor behind Mahmud's victory. As seen before, the internal rivalries were so strong that the regional kingdoms remained disunited even after Mahmud's death. Their disunity, as also the raids by Mahmud's successors continued in Rajasthan, Ajmer, Kannauj, Benaras etc. in upper Ganga valley. The only repose of relief for the Rajputs was that unlike the earlier time they could succeed in ousting the successors.

Analysing the socio-political system of the Rajputs, Satish Chandra has given plausible reasons of their defeat. He contends that irrespective of not being inferior in numbers or in the quality of mounts and weapons, the Rajputs lacked proper organization and leadership. Their armies did not have a unified command since they were supplied by different feudal lords to the ruler. On the contrary, the Turkish *Sultans* were used to maintaining large standing armies which were paid in cash or by means of the *iqta* system. They bought and trained slaves for warfare who were loyal and devoted to their *Sultans*.

Another reason for Rajput defeat mentioned by Chandra is the lack of a strategic perspective of the Rajputs. As he says, Alberuni had mentioned in his writings, "The Hindus believe that there is no country but theirs, no nation but theirs, no kings but theirs, no science like theirs. They are haughty, foolishly vain, self-conceited and stolid. Their haughtiness is such that if you tell them of any science or scholar in Khurasan or Persia they think you both as ignoramus and a liar."

Chandra holds that this sense of insularity restricted the Indians from going to the West or Central Asia and bring back scientific or social knowledge from there. Such an attitude was due to *kali varjya*: ban on Hindus from crossing the salt seas or travelling to countries where the *munja* grass did not grow. Therefore, neglect and ignorance of the outside world and also the lack of strategic perspective "led to long-term repercussions of which the Turkish conquest was, perhaps, the first but not the last consequence".

Thus, the defeat of Rajputs by the Turks is to be understood by broadening the horizons to be able to see the long-term perspective. Disunity amongst the Rajput rulers, their weak military organization and leadership vis-a-vis the Turks, as also their inferior military tactics/technology were not the only reasons for their defeat. It was also rooted in the defective social organization that led to the growth of states that were structurally weak in comparison to the Turkish states. The aforementioned Hindu insularity rooted in Indian cultural ethos barred the development of a strategic perspective. Hence, the foreign invaders could not be kept away from the Indian soil through military or diplomatic means.

6.11 COMPARISON BETWEEN THE GHAZNAVIDS AND THE GHURS

In the interpretation of early medieval Indian history the Turkish invasions from northern and western frontiers of India is widely known. Frequent attacks by Mahmud Ghazni and Muizzuddin Muhammad Ghouri are largely discussed and understood. However, differences between them are not discussed so commonly. Nonetheless, few scholars like Satish Chandra, who have briefly touched upon it, at least acknowledge the distinction between them. Largely, he has discussed these differences in the context of their invasions and other activities in India. He extols Mahmud as a better general than Muizzuddin since he had never seen a defeat in India. But he praises Muizzuddin for being a tough fighter whose spirit was not defeated even after facing defeats. He argues, "Muizzuddin could recover and take lessons from his defeats, and change his entire approach which showed both a dogged tenacity of purpose and a grim sense of political realism." Chandra exemplifies his argument with Muizzuddin's defeat at Anhilwara. After this defeat Muizzuddin was seen to have changed his entire approach towards India by shifting his gaze from Rajasthan to Punjab. The same tenacity, approach and preparedness were seen after his defeat in the First Battle of Tarain leading to his resounding victory in the Second Battle. Further, Chandra gives credit to Mahmud for laying the foundations on which Muizzuddin could build and achieve his mission in India. He contends that by breaching the outer defences of India by defeating the Hindu Shahis in Afghanistan and conquering Punjab, Mahmud had laid the roots of Turkish expansion in India. Chandra's close study does help one in distinguishing Mahmud from Muizuddin rather than only seeing them as invaders with similar mission and activities in India.

However, an attempt to intricately differentiate between the two invaders, their processes, methods and the underlying designs outside India has hardly come under the purview of most historians till late. The discussions on them have mostly been concentrated around their plundering raids or attacks on the north and western

regions of India or their military tactics. Therefore, a gap remains in understanding the pre-sultanate history of north-western India and its intricate linkage with the developments in the regions of Afghanistan, West and Central Asia.

Thankfully, in the recent times this gap has been filled by the in-depth analysis by scholars like Peter Jackson and Sunil Kumar. In fact, Kumar has vividly studied the pre-Sultanate India and its northern and western regions to understand their underlying, interlinked political and economic processes. His nuanced approach has brought out distinctive features of the Ghaznavid and the Ghurid systems. Some of these are as follows:

1) Even though their military and political systems were based in Afghanistan and both lacked in internal resources, their political systems were quite different. The ruling family of the Ghaznavids comprised of Turkish military slaves who, perhaps, had come to eastern Afghanistan from the Samanid capital of Bukhara. They created an authoritarian political regime that ignored its local ties and rather strengthened its links with Khurasan in eastern Iran or Persia. After gaining more political strength they tried aping the grandeur of Persian culture and learning. Kumar contends that historical sources of the period reveal that Mahmud even carried his interpreters with him during his campaigns into Ghur. On the contrary, the Shansabanids or the Ghurids were of more humble origin and designs. As mentioned before, they were pastoral chieftains from Ghur: a poor and scarcely developed region of Afghanistan. It was a region between Ghazni and Herat that was "Islamicized" by the Ghaznavids. Nonetheless, neither did the Ghurids have the same wherewithal nor the aims like that of the Ghaznavids to imitate Persian culture and glory in their state.

2) Almost the same level of difference was seen between their forms of governance. While the Ghaznavids tried their best to maintain a centralized form of governance, the Ghurids even at the peak of their power in the 12th century had only military commanders for administrative purposes. In comparison to the Ghaznavids, the Ghurids rather followed a decentralized form of governance in which even during the zenith of their strength and power they gave governorship to all the males of the ruling family. These military governors, indeed, functioned as autonomous *sultans* or kings in their provinces and their royal administrative posts and titles were given as a mark of honour to them.

3) Further, their reasons for invading India were also found to be different. The Ghaznavids only intended to plunder and loot the riches from India. Their ambition of getting territorial gains was restricted to Sindh, Multan, Lahore etc. on the north-western frontier and did not extend eastwards towards the Indian heartland. This was clearly seen from the shifting of their capital to Lahore after their defeat at the hands of the Seljuks at Dandanqan in 1040 CE.

6.12 SUMMARY

The rise of Islam in the early medieval period had far-reaching political, socio-economic and cultural implications around the world. Its first contact with the

Indian subcontinent in the 8th century is mostly known from the Persian text named *Chachnama*, a source that enumerates the history of Sindh in general. The descriptive account of the conquest involves the discussion of a young general named Muhammad Bin Qasim, who valiantly conquered the region of Sindh. The text elucidates the tolerant and broad minded approach of this Muslim conqueror towards the vanquished Hindu population. However, his rise as well as fall depended upon his relations with the Caliphate, and the change of the Caliph led to his decline and many other able and promising Arab conquerors. Such politics at the court of the Caliphate greatly affected the fate of Arab conquests in the Indian subcontinent and around the world. The containment of the Arab empire to the north-western region of India should be understood under this light.

In this Unit we discussed the situation of the constant political flux in West and Central Asia after the downfall of the Abbasid empire in the 9th century. This period was characterized by continuous upheavals between different Turkish and non-Turkish tribes. Amidst this, the Ghaznavid dynasty rose to power in Ghazni and it plundered neighbouring areas including India. Mahmud Ghazni as one of the Ghaznavid kings raided India 17 times to plunder its wealth. He did not have any territorial ambitions in India. However, the next Turkish invader in India – Muizzuddin Muhammad Ghouri – aimed to conquer India. After defeating Prithviraj Chauhan in 1192 CE he gained access to Delhi. Keeping Delhi as the centre of his operations, within a decade, he conquered many areas in eastern, central and western India. This is how he laid the foundation of first Muslim state in India – the Delhi Sultanate.

This period in Indian history was characterised by utmost disunity between different Rajput states. Be it the Arab, Ghaznavid or Ghurid invasions of India, the disunity aided invaders in their plunders or conquests. Historians opine that lack of unified resistance from the Indian side was one of the biggest reasons behind the success of Muslim invaders. Good availability of arms, ammunitions, equipments and horses in Central Asia can be counted as another factor behind the Turkish success. Also, their tactics and technology of warfare was mostly superior to that of the Indian rulers. However, over and above all these causes is the lack of strategic perspective and social solidarity that had cocooned the Indian, mostly the Hindu society, to not understand good or bad side of the outside world.

6.13 KEY WORDS

Aid : Help

Climax : Most important point of something; culmination

Cocooned : Surrounded in a protective way

Containment : Action of preventing the expansion of something

Dearth : Shortage

Elucidate : Throw light on

Endeavour : Attempt

Etymology : The study of the sources and development

Omayyads : The dynasty of Caliphs which ruled from 661-750 CE.

Pronouncement : A formal and authoritative announcement or declaration

Proximity : Nearness

Repository : A place where things are stored

Resounding : Unmistakable; loud enough to echo

Silk Route : Overland route starting from China, passed through the north-west frontier of India, across Central Asia and Russia to the Baltic.

Tatars : A nomadic tribe

Tenacity : Ability to grip something firmly

Tidings : Information

Vanquished : Defeated

Vis-a-vis : In comparison to

6.14 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) See Section 6.3

2) See and Sub-section 6.3.1

3)

Palmaldevi	Princess
Muhammad bin Qasim	Umayyad General
al-Hajjaj	Governor of Baghdad
Sulaiman	Brother of Walid

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) See Section 6.7

2) See Section 6.8

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1)

i)	Chauhan	Prithviraj, Vigrahraja
	Hindu Shahi	Jayapal
	Gahadvala	Jai Chand
ii)	Chauhan	Ajmer
	Tomar	Delhi
	Candela	Bundelkhand
	Chalukya	Gujarat
	Gahadvala	Kannauj

2) See Section 6.9

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UNIT 7 SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL IMPACTS: ARAB AND TURKISH INVASIONS[1]

Structure

7.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will know about:

- the background for understanding the Arab and Turkish Invasions;
- new perspectives on the arrival of Islam in India; and
- social, cultural and technological impact of both the Arab and the Turkish invasions.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, we had read about the invasions in India by the Muslim invaders from the Arab and Central Asian regions in early Medieval and Medieval periods. These attacks have been seen in a monochromatic light as only attacks without any meaningful results. This unit will try to analyze the impacts of these attacks, if any. These have been largely categorized into social, cultural and technological impact or results.

7.2 SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL IMPACT OF ARAB INVASIONS OF SINDH

The Arab conquest of Sindh has been seen as "a triumph without results" by scholars like Stanley Lane Poole, Elphinstone, etc. because there was no major victory for either the Muslim Arabs or the Indian rulers. They opine that the victory

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of the Arabs was without any impact or result on the history of Indian subcontinent. Such an understanding arose from the fact that their victory could not affect the political or military conditions in the rest of India. The Arab rule got confined to the Sindh region and the Indian rulers ruled their states without fearing or ousting the Arabs from their frontiers. The influence of the Arabs was restricted to only a small part of the subcontinent. They could not get a foothold inside the Indian subcontinent, unlike the Turks who had established a full-fledged state a few centuries later (i.e., the Delhi Sultanate from 12th century onwards).

However, some other scholars refute this viewpoint, and they hold that indeed there were multifarious effects on the life and times of the region. They have given varied arguments in support of this view. It is believed that even though their conquest did not have any substantial effect on the political geography of India it had considerable impact in other fields.

Cultural Impact of Arab Invasions

Chachnama, the Persian text written by Ali Kufi in 1226 CE is a major historical text on the history of Sindh. It has good information on its government, politics, etc. However, the details given on the advent of Islam in the Indian subcontinent had been over-emphasized in the colonial and national understandings to an extent that *Chachnama* has only been seen as a text on the conquest of Sindh and the advent of Islam in the subcontinent. This has led to a skewed understanding of this medieval source in general. Nevertheless, scholars like Yohanan Friedmann, Manan Ahmed Asif, etc. who have read and analyzed it contend that apart from the details on Sindh conquest, it is also a repository of other sorts of information on the history of Sindh. A nuanced reading of this and other texts from the Arab peninsula show that the Arab conquest of Sindh had led to overarching social and cultural impacts on both the Indian and Arab worlds. In this regard, Iqtidar Husain Siddiqui holds that —

> "…the regions of Sindh and south Punjab (Multan territory) conquered by the Arabs in the beginning of the eighth century AD (812-13), under the command of Muhammad bin Qasim al-Saqafi underwent rapid socio-economic and demographic changes, owing to the imposition of a different system of governance, the introduction of a new legal system that ensured impartial justice irrespective of caste and creed and the addition of foreign settlers' colonies to the old caste towns. The settlers included, besides officers and army men, merchants who were engaged in overland and overseas trade between different countries as far as China in the east and regions of Africa in the west. The foreign trade thus not only gave a boost to trade and commerce in the region but also led to the modification of indigenous crafts and the introduction of new ones."

As *Chachnama* shows, Muhammad bin Qasim had not interfered with the caste system. Yohanan Friedmann, a scholar who has read and analysed the *Chachnama* in depth holds that 'Qasim gave his unqualified blessing to the characteristic feature of the (traditional) society which he encountered and sanctioned both the privileges of the high-caste and the degradation of the lower ones.' He upheld the Indian social tradition of privileging the brahmins. He used to call the brahmins as "good and faithful people", and after the siege of Brahmanabad, they were reappointed to the same positions as they had held under the Hindu dynasty. Furthermore,

these positions were also made hereditary by him. The notables were given the title of Rana. The common people were also left free to worship as per their wish, provided they paid the Arabs the same taxes as they had paid to raja Dahar. He allowed them to build temples, celebrate their festivals and ceremonies, and to treat the Brahmanas with kindness as before. Similarly, the treatment of the Jats was as bad as under the Hindu rulers of Sindh. As Friedmann says —

> "They were obliged to wear coarse clothing and to move around barefoot. If they were apprehended wearing fine clothes, they were fined. They were supposed to take their dogs with them when they went out. This was to be done so that they were recognized. They were burnt alive with their family when they were caught stealing. They were not allowed to ride horse; and if they did, they rode without saddle and reins. They were infamous for committing highway robberies. Due to such reasons, Muhammad Qasim considered them as wicked people, and continued with their low status in society."

In short, he did not meddle with the social systems of Sindh, and agreed to maintain peace in many regions. Such a policy was followed by Qasim under the instructions of Hajjaj, the governor of Iraq who believed in granting religious freedom to people. Therefore, as one understands from the *Chachnama*, Qasim had left Brahmanabad in an orderly and peaceful condition to proceed northward towards Alor. Such a policy of flexibility and tolerance was a characteristic of Islam during its initial period of conquest.

It is important to reiterate this policy of tolerance of Arab conquerors by examining the phenomenon of Islamic proselytization. As known from the sources, religious conversion had brought about social change among the people of Sindh. Iqtidar Husain Siddiqui says in this regard

> "The reference to *Maula-i-Islam*, a term used to refer to a person of high status who had converted to Islam, tends to reveal that not only did the downtrodden people take to the new faith for freedom from caste restrictions but some local chiefs also entered the fold of Islam."

Siddiqui mentions that due to religious tension between the brahmanas and Buddhists, many of the Buddhists living in Sindh had converted to Islam when they had come in contact with the Arabs. In fact, they had befriended the Arabs even before or during the Sindh conquest. Here, Muhammad Illafi, the lieutenant of Muhammad bin Qasim who had led to a liaison between the Buddhist chiefs and the Arab governor is especially important. Due to his agility, many Buddhist chiefs had acknowledged the suzerainty of the Caliph. This was mainly because of the brahmana ruling elite who used to oppress the Buddhists in general. As Siddiqui says, such an atmosphere of goodwill and friendship later helped in the consolidation of Muslim rule in the conquered territories, and was not alone due to Islamic proselytization alone. Such peaceful interface between the Arabs and the Indians in Sindh region led to cultural exchange between India and the Islamic world. He further says that the urban ethos represented by the Arab settlers in their colonies, led to the old towns playing an important role in the process of acculturation in the entire region of Sindh and Multan. The egalitarian atmosphere of Islamic faith fascinated the low caste people in Hindu society. It led to their conversion to a new faith that maintained equality among all its followers. The

communities of these local converts and Arabs comingled with each other to boost the urban culture of the region.

However, the influence of Islam could not penetrate into the countryside, and rather remained confined to the urban areas. On the other hand, the population in the countryside kept following their ancestral religion. It was only in the tenth century that Muslim missionaries entered this region, and worked amongst the urban and rural people to win their trust for converting them to a new faith. Even though the conversion of the people was partial, the converts ruled their region till its annexation by the Ghaznavid Sultanate in 1025 CE

Apart from the socio-religious impact of the Arab invasion, there were considerable intellectual influences as well. At a larger level, the cultural intermingling between the Indian and Arab cultures encouraged the intellectual cultures of both the regions. This is to say that it showed it effects in various fields like literature, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, etc. Such contacts at an intellectual level led to the mutual growth and development of both the cultures. The earliest recorded Indo-Arab intellectual contact happened in 771 CE when a Hindu astronomer and mathematician reached Baghdad with a Sanskrit work called *Brahma Siddhanta* of Brahmagupta. This text was translated into Arabic with the help of an Arab mathematician, and was named as *Sind hind*. It had the greatest influence on the development of Arab astronomy even though three other works on mathematics were also translated to Arabic. In mathematics, the most important contribution of the Indian culture to Arab learning was the Arabic numerals.

Similarly, even greater attention was given to Indian medicine by the Arabs. At least fifteen Sanskrit works were translated, including those of Charaka and Sushruta. The Indian doctors were given great prestige and honour at Baghdad, and so they were found in good numbers there. Manka was one such doctor who had earned prestige and money by curing the ailing Caliph Harun-al-Rashid.

Further, astrology and palmistry also gained Arab attention, and many books from these fields were translated into Arabic. They too have been preserved in the Arab historiographies. Other translations were from the fields of statecraft, art of war, logic, ethics, magic, etc. Also, the famous *Panchatantra* was translated and known as the story of Kalila and Dimna in many Arabic and Persian traditions. The Indian games of *chausar* and chess were transmitted to the Arab and other regions of the world.

Sindh also contributed towards the popularization of Sufism. The great, early sufi named Bayazid of Bistam had a Sindhi as his spiritual teacher. He used to say – "I learned the lessons of science or *ilm-i-fana* or annihilation and *tauhid* or unity from Abu Ali of Sindh and Abu Ali learned the lessons of Islamic unity from me." The link between Sufism and Sindh is well known.

Indian music had a considerable influence on Arabic music even if no translated works have been found. The work of an Arab author named Jahiz reveals the appreciation got by the Indian music at Baghdad. He called the music of the people of Indian subcontinent as pleasing. Another such reference on Indian music was from an Arab author who talks about an Indian book on tunes and melodies. It has been suggested by some scholars that many of the technical terms for Arab music were borrowed from Persia and India. Likewise, even Indian music incorporated many Perso-Arab airs like *Yeman Hijj* and *Jangla*.

There is a paucity of sources connecting the history of Sindh and Multan after the recall of Muhammad bin Qasim. However, the works of Arab travelers and geographers provide some information. Travelers like Masudi and Ibn Haukul who visited western Pakistan in the first quarter of tenth century agree to the presence of Arab colonies at Mansura, Multan, Daybul, Nirun, etc. The non-Muslims were said to be in good numbers in Daybul and Alor, and they were at good terms with the Arabs. Unlike the historians of Delhi Sultanate, the Arab travelers called the non-Muslims as *zimmis* and not *kafirs* or infidels. It is known from the sources that after the conquest of Sindh and Multan, cow slaughter was banned. The reasons behind it was the aim to preserve cattle wealth, or even to show regard for Hindu sentiments. Some Hindu chiefs even showed interest in Islam. For example, in 886 CE, a Hindu king commissioned an Arab linguist from Mansura to translate the *Quran* in local language.

As far as the adoption of local cultures is concerned, it can be said that the Arab rulers adopted local practices to a greater extent than the Ghaznavids did at Lahore or the Turks and Afghans at Delhi later. Similar to the Hindu rulers of Sindh, the Arab ruler of Mansura used to maintain war elephants, and ride in elephant driven chariots. The dresses of the Arabs of Mansura were like that of the people of Iraq; but those were quite similar to that of Hindu *rajas* as well. They also wore similar earrings and long hair.

Further, after Muhammad Qasim, there were no large-scale Arab immigrations, and any Arab or mutual influences gradually faded away. However, Sindh and Multan remained in touch with the Arab world, especially by way of long-distance trade and Islam. There was vibrant trade between Sindh and other parts of the Muslim world, with caravans going to Khurasan, especially via the Kabul and Bamiyan route. Sindhi Hindus were excellent traders and had good share in this trade. Alor in Sindh is mentioned as a great commercial center. As a part of the Muslim region, Sindh and Multan contributed almost five times to the Abbasid exchequer than Kabul. Further, the active trade relations of the Arabs were much more extensive and far reaching. After the rise of Islam, there were many colonies of the Muslim Arab traders in the major ports of Cambay, Chaul and Honawar on the west coast of India. Hajjaj, the governor of Baghdad who had led the Sindh expedition was indirectly responsible for maintaining a large colony of Muslim traders in south India. After assuming the governorship of Baghdad, many of his political enemies had settled down on the southern coast of the Indian subcontinent, in order to seek refuge from him. The Nawayat community settled on the Konkan coast of Mumbai, and Tirunelveli in Tamil Nadu is one such community. Other Muslim groups which settled on the Bay of Bengal can trace their roots to the eighth century.

The largest Arab settlement on Indian coast was in Malabar region; its presence in the same region is seen even till today. The conspicuous presence of the Muslim Arab population was the result of the conversion of a local ruler. All such Muslim colonies on various coasts were important for providing the base from which traders, sailors and missionaries went to the Far East thereby spreading Islam in the Southeast Asian regions like Malay Peninsula and Indonesia. The eastward movement from the Middle Eastern or South Asian regions was popular since ancient times, and was linked to both spice trade and religion. This is how Indian

religions like Brahmanism or Buddhism gained ground here. Similarly, the rise of Islam through Arab trade can be easily linked to this trend that saw the displacement of both Brahmanism and Buddhism since eighth century. Bali remains Hindu till today, and Malaysia and Indonesia are mostly Muslim, and owe their present religious and literary tradition mainly to the influences emanating from the Muslim colonies on the coastline of the subcontinent. The Muslim emigrants such as traders, sailors and religious leaders/men from Arabia, Persia, coastal regions of Gujarat, Malabar, Coromandel and Bengal are specifically important in this development.

Technological impact

Another impact of the arrival of the Arabs was in the field of technology. Since they came as invaders, their technological know-how can be seen mainly in the field of weaponry and warfare. As has been seen in the earlier Units, the technology of the Indian forces was not as good as those of the invaders, and this became a major reason behind the former's defeat.

Two different weapons came with the Arabs in their invasion in 712 CE The first one was *Naphtha* or Greek fire which was obtained by distillation from crude petroleum. They had seen its use in their unsuccessful attacks on Constantinople in 671-78 CE Subsequently, they had learnt to use it. As the *Chachnama* says about Sindh attack, there were nine hundred naphtha throwers or *naft-andazan* in the Arab army. They used to set alight the naphtha-tipped arrows to attack the Sindh troops.

Manjaniq or mangonel/trebuchet was another such weapon. *Chachnama* mentions its usage in the description of the attack on the port of Daybul in Sindh. *Manjaniq* was used to throw stones at the temple pinnacle. It consisted of a wooden beam pivoted on a wooden stand, and the short arm of the beam had a counterweight put on it. The long arm had a sling suspended at its far end which carried the missile, usually a round and large piece of stone. The long arm, pulled down manually, would raise the weighed short arm. If the rope was released after this, the short arm would have fallen, making the long arm ascend fast, shooting the missile out of the swinging sling. This weapon known by the Arabs from the Constantinople war was simpler in version. It was modified for a better and more efficient use. It was also used by the Chinese and Mongols. A modified version of the same weapon using lesser manpower was also used by the Delhi Sultanate in the fourteenth century. The different types of mangonels used by them were called *manjaniq*, *maghribi* and *arrada*.

Such weapons were one of the main reasons behind the Sindh victory by the Arabs. The inferior tactics and technology of weapons and warfare used by Indians helped the Arab army all the more.

As against the availability of such information from the Arab works on the vibrant relations between the Indian and Arabic cultures, it will be unreasonable to call the Arab conquest of Sindh as a triumph without results. In other words, it would be incorrect to give leverage to the political consequences alone and negate the socio-cultural or other impacts or results.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) Was there any social impact of the Arab invasion of Sindh?

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2) Discuss the cultural effects of Arab presence in Sindh after the invasion.

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7.3 THE COMING OF THE TURKS

The Arab inroads into India in the eight century was followed by Turkish penetration by 1192 CE. The early medieval period from 10th to 12th centuries is an important period in Indian history as it served as a preparatory phase for the final establishment of the Delhi Sultanate in 1206.

The encounter between the Turkish and Indian cultures happened in two phases.

The first was in the form of invading raids by Mahmud Ghazni in early eleventh century. These invasions in a short period of time were in the form of plunder and loot of the Somnatha temple on the Gujarat coast. This loot was mainly aimed at enriching Ghazni, the home of Mahmud Ghazni in Afghanistan. The invasions led to immense damage to the temple, however, these raids were devoid of any intentions of spreading Islam or establishing a full-fledged Muslim state in India. The historical sources of this period do not specify any such intentions.

These Ghaznavid invasions were of a brief span, but their impacts were tremendous. As argued by Satish Chandra, the constant Ghaznavid invasions in the north-western region of India acted as a torchbearer for the later Turkish invaders like Muhammad Ghouri in invading India. Secondly, it helped in opening overland commerce between India and Central as well as West Asia. This accelerated the growth of towns in India, especially after the establishment of the Muslim state in India by Ghouri.

The impacts of the Turkish invasions in India were manifold, but these were not highlighted. The primary reason behind it was the divisive narrative and intent of colonial interpreters of Indian History. The British scholars or administrators like James Mill interpreted Indian History with the purpose of prolonging British rule over India. This was easily done by creating a rift between the Hindu and Muslims. Alongside, they even tried to depict that the British had come to India with the only intention of civilizing its people. Hence, to validate both the arguments, Indian history was categorized into three phases, namely Ancient, Medieval and Modern. They named the Ancient as Hindu, Medieval as Muslim and Modern was termed as British. The Medieval period was shown as a Dark Age, when the Muslim invaders penetrated India only to spread Islam; They led to the destruction of

Hindu temples, conversion of Hindu population, rape and murder of its women and children and so on and so forth. This was done to create a dichotomy between the two religions and their followers. Keeping in line with this communal interpretation, they showed the Arabs or Turks as only invaders with the crusading zeal of conversion and destruction.

However, scholars like Satish Chandra understood the scheme of polarization of Indian population by way of historical narratives. The new research carried out by contemporary historians like B. D. Chattopadhyaya, Richard Eaton, Finbarr Barry Flood, etc. tried to study the varied impacts of the Turkish invasion in India. The next section of the unit focuses on such impacts.

7.4 SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL IMPACT OF THE TURKISH INVASIONS

In the words of Richard Eaton, one sees the evidence of a "creative conflict" when Muslim Turks encountered the non-Muslim peoples of Punjab and the Gangetic plains. It is to be understood that above expeditions not always led to the plunder and loot of wealth, massacre of masses, conversion of people, desecration of worshipping places etc., it also provided enough background and opportunities that led to different kind of impacts. Rather than seeing it as confrontation, it would be more fruitful to see the level of exchanges happening in different spheres. According to Satish Chandra, the processes of interaction between "Islam" and "Hinduism" can be posited at three different levels:

1) At the political level, including state formation.
2) At the level of the masses, involving religious movements and economic developments.
3) At the intellectual and cultural level, involving the middle sections and professionals.

Here an attempt will be made to study different kinds of impact at different levels.

Cultural Impact

Invasions can also be seen as a process of encounter between two different cultures. This process is always in two ways; One of confrontation and the other of healthy contact. In the context of Ghaznavid invasion of Punjab, Satish Chandra states that this conquest led to a setting of two distinct patterns of relations between the Muslims and the Hindus. One was the lure for plunder and other in the form of trade. The caravan routes between Khurasan and India were reopened as soon as military operations were over. Muslim traders augmented India's trade with the Central and West Asian countries which led to the development of towns in north India. The resultant outcome of this process was the coming of religious preachers called Sufis to the region of Punjab. The preaching was mainly directed towards the Muslim settlers, but in the process, they also influenced some Hindus, paving the way for the opening of a channel of interaction between Islam and Hindu religion and society.

Due to such interactions, Lahore too emerged as an influential centre for the development of Arabic and Persian languages and literature. The Persian language

was later adopted as the court language during the Ghaznavid period, and it continued to hold the same position throughout Muslim rule.

Further, religious sentiments posed no bar for the Ghaznavids in many areas. This was seen in the recruiting of non-Muslim soldiers in the Ghaznavid armies. In fact, in its military recruitment many Hindu soldiers were recruited, and it was commanded by several Hindu generals such as Tilak who was a barber by caste. He became a *confidante* of khwaja Ahmed Hasan Maimandi, the influential *wazir* of Sultan Mahmud.

During the 11th and 12th centuries the Muslim rulers of Lahore continued to issue the coins of their predecessors from the Hindu Shahi dynasty. These coins included Siva's bull called Nandi on one side, and Muhammad Ghouri's name in Devanagari script prefaced with the Sanskrit phrase *sri samanta deva* on the reverse side. According to Richard Eaton, such measures showed that the Ghourid rulers wanted to establish cultural and monetary continuity with north Indian kingdoms. Thus, the circulation of coins through many hands bearing the words and images, some kind of political ideology was communicated to their subjects. Secondly, another reason behind continuing the old coins was that the new rulers did not want any disruptions in commerce. Since coins were linked to trade and commerce, these new rulers from a different faith continued with the existing trade patterns.

Yet further, the cultural assimilation between the Hindu and Turkish cultures led to significant contribution in literary field. Mahmud Ghazni with his great military capabilities and political achievements had turned the small state of Ghazna into a vast and wealthy empire comprising of most parts of modern-day Afghanistan, eastern Iran and north-western parts of the Indian subcontinent. As an able ruler, he had transformed Ghazni into a center of Persian learning. He was inspired by the cultural centers of Samanid Bukhara and Khurasan. He invited poets and writers like Firdausi, Alberuni, Uzari, Unsuri, etc to Ghazni. Such display of pomp and show by Mahmud Ghazni was made possible with India's help. In other words, the grandeur maintained in his state of Ghazni was mostly due to the wealth amassed from Mahmud's plundering raids in India. India became one of the benefactors because the period between the Samanids and the Ghaznavids is seen as one of Persianization of kingship and administration, i.e. one of divine and monarchical kingship, centralization of power, bureaucratization and professionalization of army, etc. The successors of Mahmud initiated the diffusion of Persian culture into north India. In the words of Richard Eaton, "The entire gamut of Persianate institutions and practices which the Ghaznavids inherited from the Samanid rulers of Bukhara were brought to the area of Punjab which included the elaboration of a ranked and salaried bureaucracy tied to the state's land revenue and military systems; the institution of elite, or military, slavery; an elaboration of the office of 'sultan'; the courtly patronage of Persian arts, crafts and literature; and a tradition of spiritually powerful holy men, or Sufis, whose relations with royal power were ambivalent."

The occupation of the Punjab by the Ghaznavids allowed the Indo-Islamic culture of Lahore to receive the Persian influence which it has retained. The successors of the Ghaznavids made concerted efforts to connect their dynastic history not just with Islamic religious tradition but also with the Persian pre-Islamic past as argued

by Andre Wink. Even the Ghourid leaders shed their provincial identity and adopted a more cosmopolitan posture, embracing both the substance and the trappings of the Persianate bureaucratic and centralized state. This included proclaiming their sovereignty at the Friday prayer and using the imperial umbrella (*chahtr*) and kettledrums (*naubat*), both of them Persianate symbols of political authority. They also discarded the modest title of *malik al- jabal*, 'king of the mountains.' Muhammad Ghouri styled himself as 'the great sultan' (*sultan al- mu'azzam*). Thus, the theme of Perso-Islamic tradition of Kingship and Persianate traditions which attained a mature phase during the Sultanate period permeated due to the invasions carried out first by Mahmud Ghazni and later by Muhammad Ghouri.

Intellectual Impact

Due to Mahmud Ghazni's invasions, we have information of India's social, political, economic and religious conditions during the tenth and eleventh centuries. Writers like Firdausi, Alberuni etc. have written extensively about India's prevailing conditions during this era. Abu Raihan Mohammad bin Ahmad popularly known as Alberuni was a famous personality, a renowned philosopher, mathematician and a historian who accompanied Mahmud Ghazni during his invasions in India. His association with the ruler was less, but his accounts on Indian customs and traditions, as well as his remarks on the Islamic conquest are remarkable. Out of his many works like *Qanum-i-Masudi*, *Chronology of Ancient Nations*, the most important is *Kitab-ul-Hind* which throws light on the religion, sciences, social customs, culture, art, astrology etc. of the Hindus. Simultaneously, his account also mentions the attitude and behavior of the Hindus, especially the brahmanas. It also provides ample information about the destructive effects of Mahmud's Indian invasion.

Another effect of the Turkish invasion can be seen in the compilation of oldest surviving *Veda* manuscript in Nepal in 1040 CE. It shows that Nepal emerged as an important destination for the migration of brahmanas after the dislocation of Indian ruling groups due to Turkish invasions.

Social Impact

The available evidence on the Turkish invasion in the last decade of thirteenth century provides minimal or negligible information on the social impact of the invasion. Nonetheless, the picture that emerges provides a fragmentary view that hints at important developments.

The effect of the Muslim invasion on various Indian religions is highly debatable. The colonial interpretation focuses more on temple destruction, idol desecration and conversion of the native population. However, such a viewpoint has been negated by scholars like Mohammad Habib and others. He argues that Mahmudi agenda never involved conversion because there is no evidence to show that people were forced to follow a new faith altogether. He believes that reason for conversion was more economic than religious. Similarly, Richard Eaton states that no single reason can be attributed to explain conversion. It was rather a gradual, socializing process stretched over a long period of time. As it had happened in the sixth century BCE, the low castes were soothed by the equality followed by the new religion. Therefore, they took to conversion to get some respect from their brethren of the new faith.

Another important impact of Turkish invasion can be seen in the virtual disappearance of Buddhism by the twelfth century from the land of its origin. As R.S. Sharma says, during the 11th and 12th centuries, some Buddhist centres and monasteries known for their riches came to be attacked by the Turks. Also, a large number of Buddhist monks in Bihar were killed by the Turks especially by Bhaktiyar Khalji during his invasion of Bengal.

Further, as far as the caste system is concerned, it stayed intact in society. However, Alberuni's account shows that the power and position of the brahmanas associated with the ruling houses declined. This was because with the coming of the Turks many powerful ruling houses were dismantled. Their sovereign power was subjugated, and their position was made subordinate. So, the power and position of the brahmanas associated with these courts also declined. Nonetheless, as Alberuni mentions, the position of the priest employed in the religious institutions remained the same, and it was not affected.

As mentioned earlier, Mahmud Ghazni and Muhammad Ghouri brought with them the Persianate traditions to India. Iqta system was one of the integral political institutions of this tradition. Under this system, the empire was divided into several large and small tracts of land that were assigned to soldiers, officers, nobles, etc. This system was also seen during the times of the Delhi Sultanate. It was given in lieu of salary, but over a period of time it became hereditary in nature, as seen under Firoz Shah Tughlaq. It encouraged peasants to grow cash crops which led to the emergence of artisans and craftsmen in towns. The result was the flourishing state of trade and commerce. The regular flow of commodity led to the rise of merchant groups like *banjaras*, *caravanis*, brokers etc. With the coming of the Turks, the horse emerged as one of the important animals. It was used in fighting battles. Therefore, many jobs associated with horse came into prominence which basically dealt with making of saddles, horse shoe, etc.

Technological Impact

The Turks brought a lot of technological innovations with them. But their usage could be more proficiently seen from thirteenth century onwards. For example, craft production which includes spinning wheel and needle work, knowledge of sericulture, carpet weaving, discovery of paper, distillation methods, the building materials and techniques, military technology etc. came with the arrival of the Turks.

The establishment of Turkish rule led to the immigration of people from the regions of Iran, Iraq, Turkistan, Khurasan, etc. who brought with them not only rituals, customs and religion, but also their skills and dresses. Before the arrival of Turks, the art of stitched clothes was unfamiliar which can be verified from the account of Marco Polo wherein he reported that 'in all this Province of Malabar there is never a tailor, to cut a coat or stitch'. The coming of the Turks popularized the use of *Salwar Kameez* etc. in India. Moti Chandra concluded that 'jackets, tunics and trousers' became more common in the twelfth century owing to greater contact with the Arabs and Persians. Also, the discovery of Spinning Wheel (*charkha*) was a revolutionary step in the field of textile industry. The use of this mechanical device is known from the account of Isami's *Futuhu-s Salatin*. During the Sultanate period this device had played an important role in the expansion of cotton cloth production.

Under the head of military technology, mention could be made of horse-shoe (*nal*) of iron and steel which are mentioned in the verses of the Ghaznavid poet Mas'ud Sa'd Salman and the Persian poet Nizami Ganjawi.

In the field of architecture important technological innovations were the use of lime and mortar as cementing material and the use of arch and dome. The practice of constructing minarets to commemorate military victories was known at the Ghaznavid court. Also, during the time of Ghurid *sultans* one of the preeminent architectural monument was high minaret at Jam which is situated in central Afghanistan. Jam Minaret is believed to be a precursor of Qutb Minar in Delhi. The inspiration of the Minar came from the Ghorian minaret of Khwaja Siyah Posh in Sistan. It served as a memorial of victory and a mazinah to call the faithful to prayer.

As found in the case of Arab invasion, even the Turkish invasions had far reaching social, cultural and technological impacts. One of the significant differences between the two was the establishment of a full-fledged state by the latter in 13th century.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) How far do you agree with the view that Turkish invasions led to confrontation and conflict?

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2) Discuss the impact of Turkish invasions on the Indian Territory?

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7.5 SUMMARY

To conclude it can be said that the rhetoric of medieval Muslim invaders and rulers as iconoclastic and mere plunderer and looter is not correct and justified. In fact, any invasion has elements of both confrontation and interaction. Highlighting one and ignoring the other is uncalled for. In this context, it can be suggested that the annexation of Sindh had far-reaching commercial results. Similarly, the Turkish invasions resulted in the establishment of a long-standing state in India called the Delhi Sultanate.

7.6 KEY WORDS

Nomad : Groups of people who do not have settled habitation

Eurasian Steppes : A Geographic region on the borders of Europe and Asia

Shahnama	:	A tenth century poetic work written by Firdausi in Persian
Persian wheel	:	a water-lifting device used to lift water from some depth
Spinning wheel	:	Device for spinning the cotton. This was moved with the help of crank-handle and had six spindles.
Iconoclast	:	A destroyer of images used in religious worship
Inroads	:	A hostile attack; a raid
Mamluk	:	slave

7.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) See Section 7.2

2) See Section 7.2

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) See Section 7.4

2) See Section 7.4

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UNIT 8 SOCIETY, ECONOMY, POLITY AND CULTURE: EAST AND NORTH-EAST INDIA[1]

Structure

8.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will learn about:

- the polities which were ruling in Bengal and Assam in the early medieval period;
- the nature of economy, society and polity under the Palas of Bengal and during the early medieval period in Assam; and
- cultural achievements in the early medieval period.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The early medieval period in east and north-east India, like the rest of the subcontinent, was marked by the rise of small kingdoms, some of which took an active part in the politics of north India. The chief political power was that of the Palas in Bengal. Their kingdom roughly covered the areas of Bihar and Bengal, with an occasional control over Assam. Some rulers of this dynasty were involved in the infamous tripartite struggle over Kannauj, thus at times extending their control over north India. Their rule lasted from 750 CE-1156 CE, after which they were replaced by the Senas. For a brief period, in the ninth century they lost power which they regained again in the 10th century. The dynasty is known for its patronage to art and education with the great universities of Nalanda, Vikramshila, Odantpuri and others flourishing under their reign. Their artwork, in form of paintings and sculpture, deeply influenced the arts in Tibet, Nepal and Southeast Asia.

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For north-eastern India, we have comparatively more data for Assam. Its ancient name was Kamrupa or Pragjyotisha. The chief sources for reconstructing the history are the inscriptions issued by the different rulers and *Kalika Purana*, a text roughly dated to the 10th century CE. At the start of this period, it seems that the region was under the control of the Palas. However, their rule ended sometime in the ninth century, and the region saw a succession of two dynasties – Salambas and Palas of Assam.

8.2 POLITY

To reconstruct the elements of Pala polity we generally rely on the numerous inscriptions issued by the various rulers of this dynasty. These generally deal with donations of land to religious institutions and persons – brahmanas, Shaiva temples and Buddhist monasteries. However, only a few inscriptions have the relevant information for understanding their administrative apparatus. Some of the important ones are: Khalimpur Copper Plate Inscription issued by Dharmapala (775-810 CE) in the 32nd regnal year after his victory at Kannauj; Badal pillar inscription issued during the reign of king Narayanapala (861-917 CE); and Kamauli Copper Plate Inscription issued during the reign of Kumarapala (1126-1128 CE).

While their rule was monarchical in nature, it seems that the first ruler of this dynasty Gopala (750-775 CE) was elected by his people. According to the Khalimpur inscription, the region was plunged into chaos after the successive attacks by Yashovarman of Kannauj, Lalitaditya of Kashmir and Harsha of Kamarupa. In order to end the *matsyanyaya* or the law of the jungle people had elected Gopala as their ruler. However, his successors generally followed the principles of hereditary succession. The rulers adopted high sounding titles like *maharajadhiraja*, *parameshvara*, *parama-bhattaraka* etc. The king was perhaps assisted by *mantrins* and *sachivas*. The Badal pillar inscription indicates that the position of the ministers was hereditary. From the limited references in the inscriptions, we understand that their administrative machinery in many ways resembled those of the Guptas. The kingdom was divided into provinces called *bhuktis* which were governed by *uparikas*. Within the *bhuktis* were *vishayas* or districts, and *gramikas* or villages governed respectively by *vishyapati*, and *gramika* (Majumdar, 1980). Another official who served at the *vishayas* was *adhikarana* who dealt with the land-grants. It is possible that an intermediate unit consisting of 10 villages managed by *dasa-gramika* existed between the province and village. There is also mention of officials like *rajaputra*, *rajan*, *rajanyaka*, *rajanaka*, and *ranaka* in the inscriptions who may have been defeated rulers and vassals in the kingdom. A particular feature of their polity was the absence of any fixed capital. Thus, several places on the banks of river Ganga like Pataliputra, Mudgagiri, Ramavati, Vataparvataka, Vilasapura or Haradhama, Sahasaganda, Kancanapura, and Kapilavaska served as their capitals (R. S. Sharma, 2009).

Assam on the other hand, while initially under the rule of the Palas, became independent under Harjavarman of Salamba dynasty. This dynasty ruled the region from 800 CE to 1000 CE. An insight into the their polity is gained from copper plate and rock inscriptions issued by three rulers of the dynasty – Harjaravarman,

Vanamala Varmadeva and Balavarman III (M. M. Sharma, 1978). From these inscriptions, we know that the rulers took imperial titles like *Parameshavara*, *Paramabhattaraka*, and *Maharajadhiraja*. The Hayunthal copper plate inscription of Harjaravarman describes an *abhisheka* (water sprinkling) ceremony during his coronation by merchants and princes. Some high officials are mentioned in the inscriptions like *Mahapratihara*, *Mahasainyapati*, *Brahmanadhikara* and others. Some more insight is gained from the two copper plate inscriptions of Balavarman III – Parbatiya and Nowgong copper plate. From these inscriptions, we come to know that the kingdom was sub-divided into *mandalas* and *vishyas*. An official at the level of *vishaya*, *vishya-karnika* is mentioned in the Nowgong copper plate. In the same copper plate there is also the mention of *rajani*, *rajaputra*, *ranaka* and others who might have been vassals. The last ruler of the dynasty Tyagasimha died without an heir, and this ended the dynasty. After this, a new dynasty Palas of Assam came to power. It is claimed in their inscriptions that the first ruler of the dynasty Brahmapala I was elected by his people, a claim quite reminiscent of the election of Gopala. He made Durjaya as his new capital. It has been identified with Guwahati. The most famous ruler of this dynasty was Ratnapala who ruled for more than 26 years. The dynasty remained in power perhaps till the early 13th century.

Regarding the nature of the east Indian state, scholars have advocated different models to analyse them. For instance in the case of Assam, scholars like J.B Bhattacharya have argued the state to be a stable entity with little change in its apparatus since 4th century CE (Sharma, 2014). Assam was a monarchical state, very similar to the contemporary polities in the Gangetic plains and had remained unchanged during the early medieval.

A study of Pala inscriptions has led R. S. Sharma to argue that the Pala state represented feudalization of polity which is reflected in the several land grants given from the time of Dharmapala. The terms of these grants – given mostly to the brahmanas, Shaiva temples, and Buddhist monasteries – significantly eroded the authority of the state. They gave donees the authority to collect taxes and also impose fines on the inhabitants. These grants also gave them freedom from any royal interference (R. S. Sharma, 2009). In the 9th and the 10th century, there was further feudalization of power as such grants were also made to the officials. The rulers took such imperial titles such as – *paramabhattaraka*, *parameshvara* and *maharajadhiraja.* The vassals adorned themselves with feudal titles like *rajas*, *rajaputras*, *rankas*, *rajarajankas*, *mahasamantas* and others. Perhaps a similar argument could also be made for Assam, where brahmanas had been receiving land grants since the 4th century CE. However, scholars like B.D. Chattopadhyaya have seen the land grants as part of the process of integration rather than feudalization. Land grants were the instrument by which the state polity expanded into the former tribal areas. According to him, the post-Gupta period was characterised by the transition from a pre-state society to monarchy in the hilly areas. The means that this transition was accomplished through the brahmanas who gave legitimacy to the new monarchies, and thus were patronized by the local ruling family. They would settle in new areas and appropriate a popular local tribal cult or deity and identify it with a Brahmanical deity. This process, in Assam is visible in the legend of Naraka, from which all the royal dynasties of

Assam traced their descent. Naraka in the early Sanskrit texts like *Arthashastra* and the Epics is mostly seen as a malevolent figure, a *danava*. But by the 9th and 10th century his legend is completely transformed in the *Kalika Purana* and the inscriptions, which declare him to an ideal ruler with an ancestry going back to Ikshvakus (Chattopadhyaya, 2018).

8.3 ECONOMY

Land grants in this period have been seen as instruments of important social and economic change. In economy, it has been thought that these grants led to significant expansion of agriculture. The Palas were under the control of the fertile eastern Ganga plains which were well suited for the cultivation of rice. The importance of agriculture can be gauged from composition of texts like *Krishiparashara* which details the agricultural operations. Further insights into the rural life are glimpsed from inscriptions which talk of the presence of a variety of trees – coconut, jackfruit, mango, betel nuts and others. Similarly for Assam, we know that the Brahmaputra valley was a focal point for rice cultivation. In order to further encourage agriculture king Harjaravarman in the 9th century had built embankments (Thapar, 2004).

Trade was also important for these two kingdoms. Assam was connected with Tibet and China through trade routes. Similarly, the Palas controlled the ports on the Bay of Bengal with access to Southeast Asia and China. These ports were also connected to inner riverine routes on the Ganges and Brahmaputra. Regarding the goods which were traded the Arabic texts speak highly of textiles and swords from the Palas kingdom (Chakravarti, 2020). The state of Assam, on the other hand was known for its good black aloe timber. Its other important products were bamboo, cane, silk cotton trees which were used for feeding silk worms. It also had rich gold deposits on the banks of Brahmaputra. It possibly imported horses from Tibet (Ghosh, 2010).

8.4 SOCIETY

The sources for understanding the society of Bengal in this period are *Brahmavaivrata Purana* and *Brihadharma Purana*. According to R.S Sharma, the society reflected in these texts differed significantly from that of north India. The *varna* society here only consisted of two castes: brahmanas and sudras. The existence of kshatriyas and vaishyas is not reflected in the texts. Sudras were more in number, and formed main ranks of the peasantry and artisansal class. A significant number of them were tribals. The *Brahmavaivrata Purana* divides the sudras into three categories – *uttama* or high ones included *ambastha* or physician, *gandhika* or perfumer, *vanik* or trader, *modaka* or confectioner, *malakara* or garland maker. These were also known as *sat* sudras or the ones who could offer water to the brahmanas. The *Madhyama* sudras or the middle category included *svarnakara* or gold smith, *abhira* or tribal, *jailka* or fishermen, *rajaka* or washerman and others. And low-born or *antyaja* consisted of groups like *chandala*, and *charmakara*. A study of land grants also indicates the growing complexity with the emergence of brahmana sub-castes. In these grants, the brahmanas are identified by their branch of Vedic learning, gotra, and the village they belonged to. In Bengal, almost 56 sub-castes of brahmanas are mentioned. The ranks of brahmanas not

just included priests from north India, but also priests of non-Aryan tribes who were given Arya *gotras* (R. S. Sharma, 2003).

Important insights into the nature of society of Assam can be gained from the inscriptional data of Assam. According to Nayanjot Lahiri (1990), unlike other kingdoms, brahmanas were granted land in areas with a long tradition of agricultural practice. These lands were cultivated by a number of tribes like Mikirs, Khasis, Kukis and Kacharis. The contact with brahmanas led to the assimilation of these groups into the traditional Hindu fold. The ranks of peasantry swelled with the inclusion of other professions like boatmen, weavers and potters who took to agriculture as there were not enough demand for their profession. Besides this the inscriptions also mention the presence of other middle caste groups like *Kayasthas*, *Lekhakas*, *Daivajnas*, and *Vaidyas*. These according to (Baruah, 2016) may have been more like occupations and officers, and it is only in the later period that these became castes.

8.5 CULTURE

A great contribution to cultural life in the east was made by Pala dynasty. The dynasty is celebrated as a great patron of art and literature, some of which also influenced the artwork in Southeast Asia, Nepal, and Tibet. Their most significant legacy is sculptural art – depicting Hindu and Buddhist themes – in metal and stone. The stone sculpture was mostly made of schist or phyllite stone, with colour ranging from greyish to grey-black. In the Buddhist images, most images depict the Buddha and important events of his life. The most common scene depicted is his victory over Mara just before his Enlightenment. A very significant departure from the previous schools is the ornamentation of the Buddha image. The Buddha is now depicted wearing a crown and a necklace, which signifies his spiritual achievements ((Huntington & Huntington, 1989). The Hindu images become more common from the 11th century CE. A significant number depict saint (*rishi*) Agastya, whose worship had also become popular in Nepal and Southeast Asia. Other than Agastya, the Pala sculptures also depict the Sun god, Surya. The images in metal are mostly made of copper or its alloy; although, some of gold and silver images also exist. They either depict Boddhisattvas or the Hindu gods like Vishnu. These images are distinguished by their intricate ornamentation which was a great technical achievement.

The Pala period was also known for its paintings but only a few of the samples have come down to us. Some murals have been located at Nalanda, but most of these survive in the extant palm leaf manuscripts dealing with Buddhism. Like the sculptures, the paintings mainly depict the scenes from the life of the Buddha. These miniatures painting could be placed anywhere in the manuscript: beginning, middle or the end. Most common colours used were red, yellow, blue, green, black, and white; with black used for creating outlines. The look of the figures were more animated than their sculptural counterparts (Huntington & Huntington, 1989). Their painting style was greatly copied, with samples discovered in Kashmir and Ladakh, and outside India in Myanmar, Nepal and Tibet.

Beside artwork, the Palas were also patrons of learning and education. The great Nalanda university flourished under their reign, and was popular among foreign

monks for the study of linguistics, grammar, and monastic rules (T. Sen, 2003). Many foreign rulers had also built monasteries at Nalanda to facilitate the stay of monks. Thus, a Nalanda copper plate issued by King Devapala, records a donation of five villages by the king Srivijayan, ruler of Java, Sumatara and Malaysia for the upkeep of a monastery built by the latter. Similarly, a Chinese Buddhist monk Jiye reported the presence of several Chinese monasteries (*Hansi*) in Nalanda, which were mainly rented out to foreign students. The Pala rulers are also credited with the opening of several other universities and monasteries: Odantapuri, Vikramshila, Somapura and others.

Sanskrit continued to be the cultivated language of the court, and several important literary and technical works were composed during their rule. In law, Jimutavahana composed a treatise called *Dayabhaga* which even now is influential in Bengal and Assam; In medicine, *Rug-vinischaya*, a treatise on ailments was written by Madhava; Surpala listed the medicinal plants in *Sabda pradipa*, and Chakrapanidutt authored commentaries on the works of Charaka and Susruta (S. N. Sen, 1999). In Kavya, we have *Ramacarita* written by the court poet Sandhyakaranandi with a unique dual narrative of telling us the story of Rama, as well as his patron Ramapala. On the other hand, the great universities produced treatises on Tantric Buddhism. An important development in this period was the beginning of the composition of works in proto-Bengali. We have the composition of *Charyyapadas*, poems composed by the Buddhists.

In neighbouring Assam, after freeing the kingdom from Palas, the Salamba dynasty ruler Harjavarman built a new capital at Haruppeswara. He was a follower of Shaivism, and had built several Siva temples, the ruins of which are still visible in Tezpur. While the rulers here patronized Sanskrit, it was in this period that we also see the beginning of literature in Assamese – *Bihu Geet*, a set of poems and, *Dakabanita* a collection of wise sayings (Dikshit & Dikshit, 2013, pp. 26–27).

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) Discuss the polity, economy and society of Assam and Bengal in the early medieval period.

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2) What were the cultural achievements of Palas and Assam kings of the early medieval period.

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8.6 SUMMARY

This Unit familiarised you with the early medieval period in Assam and Bengal.

The Palas were the most important kingdom that ruled in this period in Bengal. In Assam too, several small kingdoms rose one after another. Both the regions were marked by the expansion of agriculture due to the practise of land grants. The officials and *samantas* mentioned in the inscriptions and copper plate charters indicate the practice of sub-infeudation as is clear from their titles. The Palas are known for their contribution to culture. Many images in metal and stone along with paintings, seats of education and learning were established by them. Assam was not too far behind. The rulers of Assam in this period encouraged the rise of vernacular languages such as Assamese and some noteworthy literature in regional languages was composed.

8.7 KEY WORDS

Agastya : a Vedic sage of Hinduism. He is credited with the writing of a number of texts which are included in the various *Puranas*.

Tantric : a religion based on the Sanskrit texts called the *Tantras*, *Samhitas*, and *Agamas*. It includes a broad range of "magical beliefs and practices" such as Yoga and Shaktism.

Kamarupa : ancient name of Assam.

8.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) See Sections 8.2, 8.3, 8.4

2) See Section 8.5

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UNIT 9 POLITICAL AND CULTURAL EXPANSION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA[1]

Structure

9.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will learn about:

- the motivations behind the Indian expansion in Southeast Asia;
- how Indian ideas and practices travelled across and how they were incorporated into the historical, political and cultural mileu of Southeast Asia;
- to what extent Indian traditions altered as they entered into the Southeast Asian environment and the factors contributing to these changes; and
- what are the discourses pertaining to different aspects of this interaction.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

During the early medieval period, India was actively involved in maritime trade in the Persian Gulf and the South China Sea region, the two extremities between which India was situated. The Arabs enjoyed monopoly over Asian trade and India was seen as a popular destination for trade. The ancient spice and silk trade routes connected India with the outside world. Inscriptional records, indigenous sources, archaeological sources and travellers' accounts show evidence for trade and commercial links between India and Southeast Asia. The Telaga Batu inscription (Indonesia) of the 7th century refers to a ship captain and the long distance maritime trade. The Kaladi inscription (a collection of Javanese inscriptions) of the 10th century mentions Dravidians, Kalingas, Sinhalese, etc. as

[1] Dr. Richa Singh, PhD from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

foreigners coming to the region. The foreign traders in the Javanese and old Balinese inscriptions are mentioned as *banyaga* and merchant guilds as *banigrama*. From the 5th to 13th centuries powerful states started emerging in Southeast Asia. They adopted Hinduism and Buddhism and some adopted Sanskrit as their official language. But we cannot maintain that Indian influence was imposed on Southeast Asia from outside. There were different centres of diffusion from India and different centres of assimilation in Southeast Asia. The Malay Archipelago was crucial for establishing this link.

In the ancient Indian literary works such as the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya, the *Puranas*, the *Ramayana*, the Niddesa in the *Khuddaka Nikaya* of the *Sutta Pitaka* (a canonical work in Pali of Theravada Buddhism), the *Milinda-Panha*, the Ceylonese chronicle, *Mahavamsa*, and in Tibetan sources some of the regions in Southeast Asia were denoted by terms like: Suvarnabhumi (the land of gold), Suvarndvipa[2] (the island of gold), *Yavadvipa*, etc. The ancient Greek writings, *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* and Ptloemy's *Geography* mention the region as Chryse (the Land of Gold) and Chersonesus Aurea respectively. I-tsing, a 7th century Chinese traveller visited the Srivijaya kingdom of Sumatra. Thus Southeast Asia (especially the Malay Peninsula and Indonesia) was well known to the outside world since antiquity due to its strategic geographical location. The Arab writers such as Al Biruni, Haraki, Yakut too refer to both Suvarnabhumi and Suvarnadvipa.

In the following sections, you will realize that despite Indian merchants and priests going to Southeast Asia and settling there, the dominant Indian influence that we get to see by this period was certainly not due to the outcome of Indian colonization as early historians believed it to be. There were no Indian colonies in Southeast Asia and by and large, there was no use of force on the people to integrate Indian elements. But it cannot be denied that Indian traditions were a significant dominating factor contributing to the rise of the civilization in Southeast Asia. The local chieftains of Southeast Asia carefully selected and adopted Indian concepts of kingship through the aid of Indian priests and scholars. Therefore, the rulers and elite of the Southeast Asian society became an effective channel through which Indian traditions were transmitted. As the traditions reached the local level, they witnessed further localization. Now let us understand various theories concerning Indian expansion in Southeast Asia.

9.2 DIFFUSION OF INDIAN TRADITIONS

The precise source of diffusion of Indian traditions is a much debated topic. There is no unanimity among historians on whether the spread of Indian traditions to Southeast Asia was from south India as propounded by George Coedes, Stargardt, etc. or was it through its western part or the eastern coast. Some scholars stress that no one particular region of the Indian subcontinent can be attributed for the spread of Indian influence as the region was ruled by a number of different kingdoms. There was no single culture practiced throughout the subcontinent. By

[2] There are different theories pertaining to the exact location of Suvarnabhumi and Suvarnadvipa but it is commonly believed that Suvarnabhumi was the region comprising the lower Myanmar and the Malay Peninsula while Suvarnadvipa included the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra, Java, Borneo, and Bali islands of Indonesia.

the early medieval period there were various religions like Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism flourishing along with many new religious traditions comprising Vaishnavism, Shaivism, Bhakti, Tantrism, etc. For instance, the Indonesian kingdoms assimilated Indian traditions in the 5th century from south India, in the 7th century from north India and Bengal in the east. The east coast of India had many seaports which facilitated trade via sea routes. Odisha played a vital role in promoting Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism in Southeast Asia as it was one of the important trade centres. Possibly the cotton textile of Kalinga constituted one of the main items of export to Indonesia. Thus according to some historians the origin of Indian influence in Southeast Asia can be understood in terms of continual shifts.

Another question i.e., whether the Southeast Asian culture was completely influenced by Indian culture or it had indigenous elements is also a topic of discussion. The nationalist Indian historians and some Western scholars in the early twentieth century regarded Southeast Asia as 'Farther India' or 'Greater India' in accordance with the 'Indianization' theory. In 1926 the 'Greater Indian Society' was founded and Southeast Asia was deemed as Indian colony. They believed that Southeast Asia was entirely under the influence of Indian traditions. And it was believed that the process of Indianization was on account of Indian initiative. The members of this society and historians like Quaritch Wales argued that Indian rulers or adventurers via sea routes reached Southeast Asia and established kingdoms and thus, initiated the 'Indianization' process. In contrast to this, George Coedes credited Indian brahmanas or others high castes from India for initiating the process of interaction. The Indians fortified the authority of the local chiefs or sometimes exercised their control over the local population. Through the process of intermarriages with the daughters of the local elite, they gave political legitimacy to the 'Hinduized' rulers. But the problem with the 'Indianization' theory is that it projected the indigenous population as passive recipients of Indian culture and traditions. Besides, Indians did not arrive in large numbers in Southeast Asia. Had that been the fact, it would have resulted in a major demographic change. Politically, none of the states of Southeast Asia showed any political allegiance to any ruler of medieval India and there was no economic exploitation. The basic feature of Indian society i.e., the caste system was also absent in Southeast Asia.

Later I. W. Mabbett, J. G. de Casparis and others questioned this theory though failed to explain the penetration of Indian influence in pre-modern Southeast Asian society and culture. By 1960s the 'Indianization' hypothesis was rejected. Oliver Wolters views the Indian influence as the result of a process involving mutual sharing. Southeast Asian traders brought the knowledge of Indian traditions. The Southeast Asian rulers saw this interaction as favourable for administrative and technological reasons and advantageous against their rivals. Thus the Southeast Asian initiative inaugurated a slow process of cultural amalgamation. Recent writings propose that it was neither a blatant appropriation nor imposition of Indian traditions but a synthesis of indigenous and Indian elements. Indian influences were selectively assimilated into the Southeast Asian societies and it has been suggested that this should not be seen as a process of cultural colonization. The Indian interaction led to 'localization of Indian culture' in Southeast Asia.

Another way through which Indian expansion in Southeast Asia is explained is by putting forward a hypothesis that examines the role of kshatriyas, vaishyas and brahmanas. The kshatriyas, the warrior class, by the means of warfare, conquest, armed colonization, and intermarriages between Indian princes and daughters of the local chiefs brought the region under Indian influence. However, this theory of coercive dissemination of culture has long been debunked. The Indian interactions with Southeast Asia are seen as a pacific penetration now and the naval victory of the Cholas against Srivijaya was an exception. The vaishyas or trading class according to N. J. Krom, etc, married local women and hence were responsible for transmitting Indian culture. But the theory fails to explain how merchants of low caste and with limited knowledge could possibly transmit the complex concepts of Indian thought and philosophy. It is unable to explain how Indian influence was disseminated in remote areas such as Kedu and Pranbana in Java from coastal and port areas by the vaishyas. Thus, this hypothesis is objected by historians like J. C. Van Lear. Another theory is that the brahmanas and Buddhist monks propagated Indian culture in Southeast Asia who reached there by following the trade routes. They were literate. The brahmanas belonged to a high caste and were well-versed in Sanskrit which would explain numerous Sanskrit loan words in Southeast Asian languages. The brahmana missionaries travelled with Indian merchants and traders to the region.

Largely, scholars now have come to believe that the penetration of Indian traditions commenced with the coming of merchants and some kshatriya adventurers. Slowly, brahmanas too started accompanying them. Collective interaction of mainly brahmanas and vaishyas with the Southeast Asians led to cultural adaptation. Now in the next section, you will see the role of Indian merchants and traders and priests in state formation during the early medieval period in Southeast Asia.

9.3 STATE FORMATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

As trade relations between India and Southeast Asia were established, the dynamics concerning the process of state formation in Southeast Asia became more multifaceted. Archaeological sources corroborate the relevance of burgeoning trade in stimulating political development. Through the study of changing trade patterns, the process of political integration in the region can be understood more coherently. But recent writings show that though trade was an important factor, it was not the only motive behind the undertaking of sea voyages. The nature of interactions was diverse which included not just traders and merchants but also seafaring communities, religious groups, scholars and pilgrims. The role of religions in propelling seafaring activity is also significant. The diverse channels of communication aided in the transition of chiefdoms into nascent states in Southeast Asia.

Kenneth R. Hall regards the rise of the kingdom of Funan (in the present day south Cambodia and south Vietnam) in the first century CE owing to its developed trade and port facilities. It was the first Southeast Asian state with a sophisticated political base and the use of Indian vocabulary and technical knowledge. It was also the first dynasty in Southeast Asia to adopt Hinduism as its state-religion. It declined due to a civil war in the late 6th century and it was succeeded by a Hindu Khmer state called Chen-la. Later, out of these two kingdoms evolved the Angkor

or Khmer Empire (9th-13th century) which reached its glory under the rule of Jayavarman VII (c. 1181-1218). By his time, the kingdom comprised of a vast territory which included most of modern Thailand, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam. They had a complex network of irrigation system which they learned from India.

Srivijaya, the most important Hindu kingdom in Sumatra was founded in 670 CE. It emerged as a great centre of trade and culture with its developed maritime polity. The kingdom later evolved into Shailendra Empire which was a great maritime and commercial power. I-tsing informs us that Srivijaya supplanted the Malayu kingdom in Sumatra in the late 7th century and promoted Buddhism. The Vat Sema Murong inscription (dated 775 CE) emphasizes the rapid rise of Srivijaya as the overlord of the neighbouring territories and as a significant naval and commercial power.

By the 9th century the kingdom of Mataram in Central Java (an important political ally of Srivijaya) along with other kingdoms in Java and Bali had developed intricate economic infrastructure owing to regional and long-distance trading networks. Java had huge paddy terraces on the volcanic slopes and their wet rice farming promoted agricultural surplus which was exported, thus facilitating trade. The Mataram dynasty was Buddhist. Sanskrit inscriptional records show the arrival of a number of religious teachers from Gujarat and Gaur (Bengal). Such interactions helped Mataram to create the first standardized indigenous coinage which incorporated local and Indian systems. There were several prominent Indian Buddhists who visited Southeast Asia. A south Indian Buddhist monk, Vajrabodhi on his way to China halted at Srivijaya for five months in the early 8th century. As per Tibetan sources Atisa Dipankara, a Buddhist in the Pala kingdom (750-900) stayed in Srivijaya for 12 years and returned to the kingdom which was located in Bengal and Bihar in 1025 CE. The Palas who patronized Mahayana Buddhism had cordial relations with Srivijaya.

The Indian influence on Southeast Asia and the origin of Southeast Asian kingship is explained through a popular Southeast Asian folklore i.e. the marriage between an Indian brahmana named Kaundinya and a local Naga princess, Soma. That is how the Hindu kingdoms in the region came into being.[3] Historians like Paul Wheatley, Kenneth R. Hall argue that the early Southeast Asian society was tribal and ruled by chiefs. G. Coedes puts emphasis on cultural dependency of Southeast Asian states on India which was caused by the introduction of Hinduism and Buddhism in the region. I. W. Mabbett puts forward the proposition that the establishment of first states in Southeast Asia was made possible due to the borrowing of Indian concepts of leadership, ideology and agricultural technology. O. Wolster argues that these tribal societies with their local beliefs and customs viewed some chieftains as superior to others and their personal achievements played a crucial role in establishing and sustaining their respective authority. The religious traditions of India were conducive to the political aspirations of chiefs who projected themselves as secular and spiritually superior. It is in this context that Brahmanism and Buddhism functioned as a political tool and were absorbed into these tribal societies, imparting sanctity to chiefs. This gave rise to various religious cults.

[3] The Royal families of Cambodia and Vietnam to this day trace their lineages to Soma and Kaundinya.

Brahmana priests played an important role in royal rituals. The brahmanas introduced Indian court rituals, customs and concepts related to kingship and governance. Since they were adept in Sanskrit, they sacralized rulers through Brahmanical rituals and sacrifices and concocted genealogies for the indigenous rulers in order to accentuate their divine status, thereby increasing their prestige and power in the eyes of their subjects. They also aided the ruling class in organizing their administration which was based on the Indian model. They introduced *Manusmriti* (Manu's Code of Law). Therefore, they became a channel through which political legitimacy was gained. Southeast Asian rulers related themselves to the Hindu or Buddhist deities to accentuate their divine status and strengthen temporal authority. The production of the images of Hindu deities enabled them to enforce political ideology. Temples were constructed in which the idols of the Hindu deities were installed and sometimes even of the king or the members of the royal family (whether deceased or living). For instance, in the 9th century, Indravarman I, the Angkor or Khmer king built six towers of the Preah Ko temple which had images of the royal family. The image of his predecessor, Jayavarman II (802-825 CE) bears a strong resemblance to the image of Shiva. He built a Shiva temple which also served as a funerary site. After his death, his image was to be fashioned after Shiva and he would be revered as an incarnation of Shiva. Similarly, Bayon's towers adorn 216 colossal faces of Bodhisattva Lokesvara which as per one belief resemble Jayavarman VII. The worship of Shiva and Vishnu was fused with ancestor worship which helped Khmer, Javanese, and Champa rulers to claim the status of godly divine beings. In Java, rulers as incarnations of god were sometimes represented as Vishnu with Shiva emblems. In general, Southeast Asian rulers did not extend any exclusive patronage to any particular deity. The kings were portrayed as *avatars* or reincarnations of Shiva, Vishnu or Bodhisattva because as per the Hindu conception of royalty, a king derived his authority directly from god and that he was a *devaraja* (divine king). Jayavarman II had revived the *devraja* cult which has Indian origins. He had elaborate rituals performed by Hiranyadama, an Indian brahamana who potrayed him as a manifestation of Shiva.

Since the rulers extended their patronage to Sanskrit and brahmana priests, Sanskrit terms came to be used to define kingship. The suffix 'varman' which was used commonly by the south Indian rulers such as the Pallavas later came to be used in Southeast Asia too. The term 'varman' in Sanskrit means shield or protection. The Khmer rulers often used this suffix with the prefix containing the name of a Hindu god. For instance, Indravarman II means the one who is protected by Indra and Suryavarman II means the one who is protected by the Sun god, Surya. At Khinbha-gon near the Kalagangou village in Myanmar, a stupa was found with an inscription written in Pyu around its lower rim bearing the name Sri Prabhuvarman of the Pyu kingdom of Sri Ksetra (3rd-9th century CE).

Apart from commissioning the fashioning of statues of Hindu and Buddhist deities, grand religious structures, adoption of Indian notions of kingship, the temple inscriptions issued by the rulers too reflect their aspirations. The Shweguyi pagoda inscription in Pagan (Myanmar) was issued by King Alaungsithu (1113-1167 CE) of the Pagan kingdom (849-1300 CE). The inscription establishes a link between the ruler and Buddhism through the narration of Buddhist doctrines. It also instructs

his subjects not to transgress the teachings of the Buddha. Through such didactic inscriptions, the reigning ruler established himself as an ideal political figure who had authority over his subjects.

So far you read that there was no coercive imposition of Indian elements on Southeast Asia and that the interaction was peaceful. However, the early medieval period also saw an exception to this when the Cholas who were a well-established naval power attacked and defeated another naval power, the Srivijayas and destroyed their cities. This event should not be overlooked to understand Indian expansion and influence in Southeast Asia as it offers some interesting aspects which we will study now.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) What was the 'Indianization' theory and why was it rejected?

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2) How did Indian influences prove conducive to the process of state formation in Southeast Asia?

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9.4 CHOLA NAVAL EXPEDITION AND THE INVASION OF SRIVIJAYA

The Cholas ruled in the *Sangam* age from 300 BCE to 600 CE. In the early medieval period they were reduced to the position of a mere vassal state of the powerful Pallavas. In century 850 CE when the political authority of the Pallavas weakened, the Cholas re-emerged and the imperial Chola kingdom expanded exponentially especially under the reigns of Rajaraja Chola and his son, Rajendra Chola. Like his father, Rajendra Chola followed an expansionist policy. After completing the conquest of the whole of Sri Lanka (which was begun by Rajaraja Chola), Maldives, and Andaman and Nicobar islands, he turned his attention towards the Malay Archipelago. India was located at the centre of maritime silk route. Control over the maritime silk route was crucial in establishing their dominance. They wanted to position their economic machinery consisting of trade guilds (which became more dominant from the 9th century to mid-14th century) more favourably in international markets. These trade guilds such as the *Manigramam, Nanadesi, Valanjiyar, Ayyahole, Ainnurruvan*, etc. were very powerful and resourceful. They even lent money to the Chola rulers. So, the king was obliged to provide the trade guilds with broader economic avenues.

The Srivijaya kingdom had been hurting the Chola's commercial interests in the Malay Archipelago. With the fall of the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad, the maritime silk route was undergoing important changes. The Abbasids' ships were now replaced by the Fatimids' ships. The latter passed through the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden into the Indian Ocean and reached Indian coasts for trade and then headed to Southeast

Asia and China (where the Song dynasty was in power). But the Srivijaya rulers encouraged the sea pirates in their region to dock at the Srivijaya ports. They harassed the Tamil traders. Hence, the Hindu Shaivite Chola rulers in alliance with the Shaivite Angkor king fought against the Buddhist Srivijaya ruler and its Buddhist ally, Tambralinga. Angkor asked for military help from the Cholas against Tambralinga. The Cholas attacked the latter. The Srivijayas came to help its ally. The Chola navy was technologically more advanced. Rajendra Chola in 1025 sent a huge naval fleet against the Srivijayas and the Cholas won a decisive victory. The Srivjaya ruler was captured. The Chola invasion and the raids of the city, Srivijaya along with 12 other port cities on the Malay Peninsula, Sumatra, and the Nicobar Islands are mentioned in an inscription at a temple at Tanjavur. The incident is also recorded in one of the most significant Malay literary works, *Sejarah Malayu*.

This instance of the invasion of Sumatra by Rajendra Chola is interesting. The Srivijayas had friendly relations with the Cholas during the reign of Rajaraja I. The copper plates which are collectively called Leiden copper plates since they are now in the Leiden University (the Netherlands) show that Rajaraja Chola I issued an imperial order for the maintenance of Chudamani vihara built by another Srivijaya king, Sri Vijaya Maravijayattungavarman, at Nagapattinam. The gift of the Anaimangalam village was made to the Budhhist vihara. So what was the precise rationale behind the invasion of Srivijaya by the royal son of Rajaraja I is yet to be understood. Nilkantha Shastri in his work, *The Cholas* assumes that possibly it was due to the attempt of Srivijaya to hinder Chola's trade with the East. Alternatively it could have been because of the *digvijay* (expansionist policy) of the Cholas. Meera Abraham shows a direct relation between merchant guilds and Chola polity. The early medieval period witnessed the rise of organized merchant associations which enjoyed certain degree of autonomy. These guilds were actively engaged in the organization of trade and commercial activities. The Tamil inscriptions of Myanmar, Thailand and Indonesia and Javanese inscriptions indicate the strong presence of merchant guilds of Indian origin here. The commodities exchanged during this period from Southeast Asia included precious stones, corals, aloe wood, cloves, copper, tin and camphor and from India, they comprised of silk, spices, textiles, pearls, corals, medicinal herbs, etc. Unlike the early commercial interactions, the medieval commercial links were associated with political environment and government policies since taxes imposed on goods of trade constituted a major source of revenue to the state. As a result of the invasion, the Cholas established permanent military garrisons in Srivijaya and Angkor kingdoms to further facilitate Indian commercial interests. There was an influx and dominance of Tamil trade guilds in major trading centres in Southeast Asia. It also led to a matrimonial alliance between the Cholas and the Srivijayas as Rajendra Chola married Onang Kiu, the daughter of Vijayottungavarman.[4] The increasing presence of Tamil merchant associations and the matrimonial alliance cemented the relations between Srivijaya and the Cholas. Diplomatic missions were sent. In 1067 Dipankar or Devakala, a Chola prince and the nephew of Rajendra Chola went to the imperial court of China as a Srivijian ambassador. The prince later sat on the Chola throne as Kulothunga Chola. In 1068 during the Keddah rebellion, Virarajendra Chola helped Srivijaya in regaining back Keddah by sending a naval fleet.

[4] In Malaysia till today the princes have their names ending with Cholan or Chulan.

The imperial Cholas had thriving intercontinental trading links with the Tang and Song dynasties of China, Srivijaya of Sumatra, the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad and the Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt. Rajendra Chola successfully eliminated sea piracy in the Malay Archipelago. His navy was extremely well organized with a hierarchical ranking structure with the king as the Supreme Commander of Navy. However despite this, the Cholas were wrongly designated as Srivijaya's vassal state in the official Chinese records. The confusion might have been deliberately caused by the ambassadors of Srivijaya at the Chinese court since the Srivijayan court was divided into factions. This indicates that by this period Southeast Asian states were no longer chiefdoms but had evolved into major maritime political powers in the region. They were connected globally through flourishing networks of maritime trade and Srivijaya was keen to guard its commercial interests.

On the other hand, the Chola's successful naval expedition brought more commercial opportunities to the merchant guilds. Their activities expanded further in the region. The political marriage was not the result of any peaceful dialogue but it was the direct consequence of Chola's successful invasion which later enabled the Cholas to intervene in the politics of Srivijaya when it was engulfed in a civil war during the Keddah rebellion and helped the Srivijaya king to suppress it effectively. Though it is to be noted that despite the successful invasion, the Cholas did not establish any direct control over the kingdom but they plundered the accumulated wealth of the Srivijayas which weakened their power.

9.5 ART AND ARCHITECTURE

The Indian influence can also be attested by studying the development of artistic traditions in Southeast Asia which reflect an interchange of ideas both intra-regional and inter-regional. Certain themes were common between the two regions and we also see some local adaptations. It is to be noted that in every field of cultural activity it was the local craftsmen and artists and not Indian artisans who participated in the production process. Therefore, it was natural for them to incorporate local practices and beliefs in their artistic endeavours which were primarily religious in nature. The cultural centres of Buddhist, Hindu, and other local deities co-existed.

Many images of Hindu deities such as Vishnu, Shiva, Ganesh, Mahishasurmardini, Harihara, etc. and of Buddhist stupas and sculptures with local features have been found. The Javanese images of Ganesha were often depicted seated on a throne decorated with a row of skulls which was a complete Javanese conception. Po Nagar, the Goddess Mother of the Cham, was originally an indigenous formless goddess. But as Indian traditions reached the kingdom of Champa or Cham (in present-day Vietnam), she was transformed into Shiva's Shakti but she was not called Uma or Parvati. She was granted a new title, Bhagavati Kauthareshvari and was converted into a deity with an elaborate form. There is a hymn dedicated to her in an inscription of the king of Champa, Sriparameshvara in 1050 CE. Thus, in some instances local deities were fused with Hindu divine attributes, resulting in a modified divinity. Localization was also evident in the manner in which they adorned the idols. The extravagant Indian style, costumes and embellishments were discarded to be replaced with local materials. The rituals associated with deities were localized as well.

In Myanmar, Hinayana Buddhism was predominant but Mahayana Buddhism and Tantrism too flourished. The stupa architecture here reveals influences from varied sources viz. India, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Indonesia and China and the amalgamation of all these styles resulted in a new style and form in art and architecture which is called Myanmarese. Bronze artifacts in the late Gupta style, the Nat Hlaung Kyaung temple, the Ananda pagoda (temple) show strong influence from India. The Nat Hlaung Kyaung temple was erected for Indian merchants and brahmanas who were in the service of Anawratha, the founder of the Pagan dynasty. It houses the statues of the *dasavatara* of Vishnu. The Ananda pagoda at Bagan was built by another Pagan king, Kyansittha in 1105 CE. It is a Buddhist temple. Its many features including the *shikhara*, circumambulatory corridors, etc. were built in an old Indian temple architectural style of Bengal and Odisha.

The rulers of Champa kingdom which lasted approximately from the 2nd to 17th century in ancient Siam (Thailand) commissioned the construction of mammoth religious structures. From the 7th to 14th century many Hindu temples were constructed in the coastal plains of Champa. In 875 CE, King Indravarman II who practiced Mahayana Buddhism built a huge Budhhist monastery at Dong Duong. Siam inherited Hinduism and Buddhism from the Khmer Empire which ruled over the southern region of Siam. The Khmers built their temples (*wat*) in the Dravidian style. The most significant one was Angkorwat built by Suryavarman II in his capital city, Angkor. The reliefs on the walls of the main temple, galleries and causeways depict stories from the two major Hindu Epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. It is dedicated to Vishnu and is the largest Hindu temple. The Khmer empire, a successor state to Funan adopted the story of Kaundinya and Soma, a Naga princess to gain legitimacy for their rule. Hence, the naga figure became a dominant motif in the decorative art. A huge bronze image of the 'Reclining Vishnu' belonging to the late 11th century, now in the National Museum of Cambodia, is a splendid example of the Indian influence on Khmer art.

The Shailendra rulers[5], who ruled from central Java and Sumatra between 750 to 850 CE, were the followers of Mahayana Buddhism and commissioned the construction of some magnificent Buddhist structures. In the 9th century at Borobudur, they built an imposing stupa which is still the largest Buddhist structure in the world. It comprised of nine successive mandalas in stone, the top of which is adorned with a bell-shaped stupa, symbolizing the celestial realm. The bas-reliefs depict different events in the life of the Buddha. In response to such a mammoth Buddhist structure, the Hindu Sanjaya dynasty's[6] ruler, Rakai Pikatan began the construction of a Hindu temple at Prambanan, Central Java. The Chandi[7] Prambanan is till date Indonesia's largest Hindu temple. The Shivagrha inscription of 856 CE tells that it was built to worship Shiva. The cordial relations between the Shailendras and Palas of Bengal resulted in the production of Buddhist art and sculptures in Nalanda style at Java which in turn influenced the artistic styles of peninsular Thailand. They also contributed in the building of some important

[5] The Shailendra dynasty was originally a Hindu dynasty as Shailendra (meaning "Ruler of the Mountain") is another name for Siva.

[6] The Sanjaya dynasty was founded by Sanjaya in 732 CE.

[7] The Hindu temples in Java are called *Chandi*. The term is derived from one of the names of Goddess Durga.

structures in India. An inscription of the Pala ruler, Devpala, affirms that the king of Suvarnadvipa and Javabhumi, called Balaputradeva constructed a monastery at Nalanda for the residence of scholars from coming from Java to study at the Nalanda Mahavihara.

In this way, different Southeast Asian states absorbed the themes and myths from the Indian Epics, Buddhist and Hindu iconography, Indian style of architecture, motifs, etc. and creatively fused the borrowed components with the cultural climate of their respective regions and time, developing their own distinct styles of art and architecture which could effectively resonate with the local audiences. Thus, different states accorded different artistic treatments to the imported concepts and forms.

9.6 LITERATURE AND DRAMA

Earlier we read that the brahmana priests played a major role in state formation of many Southeast Asian kingdoms. Consequently, Sanskrit language and literature were given patronage by the kings. Numerous inscriptions were issued by rulers, often inscribed on stone pillars and sometimes on metal plates. The Sanskrit inscriptions primarily deal with political activities. It led to the expansion of the vocabulary of local languages as new terms were introduced. The arrival of Buddhism led to the introduction of Buddhist pedagogical texts. The Kawi script (Old Javanese script), used between the 8th century and 16th century across much of maritime Southeast Asia was a locally modified version of the Sanskrit writing system. Likewise, Sanskrit and Pallava scripts stimulated the growth of Old Balinese scripts. Sanskrit and Pali also became the official languages of some of the kingdoms such as Dvaravati[8], Srivijaya, etc. The languages were used in Myanmar till the 13th century. Local languages (Mon and Khmer and also Khmer script) between the 8th and 12th century used Pali and Sanskrit words and texts. Sanskrit terms were used to name their kings and places.

By the early medieval period, many Southeast Asian kingdoms and empires became familiar with several Hindu literary works such as the *Vedas*, *Puranas*, *Dharmashastras*, the grammar of Panini, six systems of Indian philosophy, etc. Yashovarman, the founder of Kamboja Empire has been compared with Panini, an ancient Indian Sanskrit grammarian and the author of the *Asthadhyayi*. The king wrote a commentary on Patanjali's *Mahabhasya*. Another ruler from this empire, Suryavarman I was also a great Sanskrit scholar accomplished in Vedic learning. The *Horashastra* (astrology), *Siddhantashastra* (astrology), *Ayurveda* (medicine) and *Gandharvavidya* (music) were pursued too. Myanmar's codes of law, *Wagaru Dhammasattha* greatly incorporated the codes prescribed in the *Manusmriti*.

The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* also left a visible impact on the culture of Southeast Asia. The main themes imported were related to the exercise of power, political relations between rulers and their subjects and the elements of supernatural

[8] Hinduism in Myanmar is believed to have reached by 350 BCE when the Pyu people came and settled there. Later the Mons came from western China and replaced the Pyu people. However, they adopted the culture of the Pyu people.The Mon kingdom ruled for several centuries and expanded their territories to a large extent and even conquered Thailand. Here they founded another kingdom called Dvaravati which was later supplanted by the kingdom of Pagan which ruled in Myanmar from the11th to 13th century.

e.g. spirits, demons, ghosts, magical weapons, etc. The *Ramayana*, the story of Rama, a legendary ideal king, his adventures and battle against Ravana, the demon king was adopted. Its characters and storyline remained the same but its locale was indigenized with the addition of many local characters. In some cases, some new elements were added. For instance, in a Lao version Ravana is a refined Lao prince. Based on the *Ramayana*, the Yama Zatdaw was introduced in Myanmar during the reign of King Anawratha. In the Yama Zatdow, through dance and drama the story of Rama is narrated. Yama is the transliteration of Rama. Accordingly, in Myanmar the *Ramayana* is known as the Yamayana. Likewise, in Thailand it is called the Ramakien and it is the country's national Epic. The *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* also inspired shadow puppet theatre of Southeast Asia such as wayang kulit and wayang golek of Java. Many scholars believe that wayang kulit later became the channel though which Indian elements were transmitted to shadow puppetry of south Thailand viz. nang talung and nang yai. This shows that as Indian traditions diffused from one centre to another they were further modified to suit the new environment.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) How do you explain the invasion of Srivijaya by the Cholas in understanding the relations between India and Southeast Asia during the early medieval period?

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2) In what ways the different states of Southeast Asia borrowed and localized Indian elements to create their own distinct cultural identities in art, architecture, literature and drama?

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Wayang Kulit
Source: Richa Singh

Wayang Golek
Source: Richa Singh

9.7 SUMMARY

The study of India's relations with Southeast Asia reveals that India and Southeast Asia during the early medieval period had commercial interactions not only with the outside world but with each other as well. Indian merchants and traders, merchant guilds and state patronage created a conducive environment which made not only the exchange of goods but also the interchange of ideas widespread. It had deep implications on the world. The contacts left a significant impact on their customs, art, architecture, ideas, society, etc. The process of dissemination of Indian traditions was gradual. Their propagation was not coercive in nature but generally peaceful. The role of Indian merchants, traders, monks and priests was important along with the rulers and the elites of Southeast Asia. The association with the Indian model enabled Southeast Asian kings to expand and reinforce the sources of political legitimacy and power and transform their chiefdoms into kingdoms and empires. Although, the initial significant impact of India's culture and religion was at the level of the ruling classes, progressively the borrowed elements merged with indigenous cultures and were localized to generate a series of distinct cultural identities of Southeast Asia.

9.8 KEY WORDS

Bodhisattva : A Bodhisattva is a person who is capable of attaining *nirvana* (salvation) but he delays his/her salvation out of compassion for those who are suffering and need guidance to be released from the effects of *karma* and *samsara* i.e., the cycle of rebirth.

Harihara : In Hinduism, the concept of composite forms of deities such as Harihara, Ardhanarishwara, etc. exist. Harihara is the fused representation of Vishnu, the preserver and Shiva, the destroyer.

State Formation : A process by which a centralized state structure in which power is vested in the leader is established.

Stupa : A stupa is a semi-hemispherical structure where the sacred remains of Buddhist saints were buried. It forms a fundamental part of Buddhist architecture. As per Buddhist sources, the relics of the Buddha were divided into eight parts and stupas were built in eight different places to preserve his relics. Since then the stupa became associated with the body of the Buddha. When a stupa is placed inside a prayer hall or a Buddhist temple, then this enclosed structure is called *chaitya*.

9.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) See Section 9.2

2) See Section 9.3

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) See Section 9.4

2) See Sections 9.5 and 9.6

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UNIT 10 AGRICULTURE, LANDLORD, PEASANTS AND TRIBALS: THE FEUDALISM DEBATE[1]

Structure

10.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will learn about:

- what is feudalism?
- main features of Indian agrarian economy which came into existence in the early medieval period which form the basis of the Indian feudalism theory;
- trade, commerce and urban decay in early medieval India and how such processes came to be related to feudalism; and
- feudalism debate in India.

[1] This Unit has been taken from EHI 03, Block 1 (Units 1 & 3) and MHI 05, Block 3 (Unit 10).

10.1 INTRODUCTION

The post Gupta centuries of 7th to the 13th are considered as constituting the early medieval period in Indian history. Fundamental changes occurred in this period in the fields of economy, society and polity. These have led scholars to conceptualise these changes in the form of feudalism theory, Segmentary state formulation and as one of integration and continuity (of processes which were unleashed in the early Historic period). In this unit we will be discussing one of these constructs that has been forwarded and is based on the changes occurring in the society, economy and polity: Feudalism. This has been a subject of a lively debate among scholars of early medieval India and the historiography generated, hence, has been very rich and nuanced.

10.2 WHAT IS FEUDALISM?[2]

Before discussing the main features of the feudalism debate in India, we need to define the term 'Feudalism'. The term Feudalism signified the changes that occurred in Western Europe between the late 8th to the 14th century. Central to these changes was the grant of land called 'fief' (a form of real property right) around which revolved the social and economic relationships of the period under study. The word feudalism is derived from the German word 'feud', which literally meant a piece of land. In pre-modern societies, before the industrial revolution, land was the chief source of wealth. Who owned this land, who worked on it and on what terms, and how much income each derived from it, was not merely an index of the economic condition of society, but also of individual wealth and status. Therefore, the relationships that governed the tilling and income from this land are crucial to understanding feudal societies. The terms on which each section of society utilized this land also governed their relationships to each other. Feudalism in this sense represents the entire complex of social, economic and political system derived from this crucial relationship. Serfdom was the basic institution that determined the mechanics of feudalism: as distinct from slavery, in which the one who worked the land was also owned by a member of the ruling landed aristocracy. The relationship with the lord, although less onerous than under slavery, was nevertheless one in which he was oppressed and his labour exploited to an extent that barely left him enough for survival. Mostly he worked with his own tools, and he had to draw his means of livelihood from the parcel of land he was tied to, not from any remuneration from the work he did on the lord's land. This remuneration was a form of labour rent for the strips of land allotted to him by the lord precisely to ensure labour for himself once slavery no longer remained viable.

Now let us discuss some of the main attributes of economy, trade and commerce that characterised the early medieval period in India. Thereafter we will see how the Indian feudalism theorists have used this evidence to postulate a particular kind of economic and social formulation, Feudalism, that they claim came into existence in this period.

[2] This section is taken from BHIC 104, Theme II, Unit 5.

10.3 AGRARIAN ECONOMY

The early medieval period in Indian history marks the growth of cultivation and organization of land relations through land grants. These grants began around the beginning of Common Era and covered practically the entire sub-continent by the end of the twelfth century. In the early medieval period agricultural expansion meant a greater and more regular use of advanced agricultural techniques, plough cultivation and irrigation technology. Institutional management of agricultural processes, control of means of production and new relations of production also played an important role in this expansion. With this expansion, new type of rural tensions also emerged. Commercial activities in agricultural and non-agricultural commodities increased.

The agrarian expansion, which began with the establishment of *brahmadeya* and *agrahara* settlements through land grants to brahmanas from the fourth century onwards acquired a uniform and universal form in subsequent centuries. The centuries between the eighth and twelfth witnessed the processes of this expansion and the culmination of an agrarian organization based on land grants to religious and secular beneficiaries, i.e. brahmanas, temples and officers of the king's government. However, there are important regional variations in this development, both due to geographical as well as ecological factors.

10.3.1 Agrarian Organization

The agrarian organization and economy were highly complex. This can be understood on the basis of intensive studies of the regional patterns of land grants and the character and role of the *brahmadeya* and non-*brahmadeya* and temple settlements. The growth and nature of land rights, interdependence among the different groups related to land and the production and distribution processes also help in a better understanding of the situation.

A *brahmadeya* represents a grant of land either in individual plots or whole villages given away to brahmanas making them landowners or land controllers. It was meant either to bring virgin land under cultivation or to integrate existing agricultural (or peasant) settlements into the new economic order dominated by a brahmana proprietor. These brahmana donees played a major role in integrating various socio-economic groups into the new order through service tenures and caste groupings under the *varna* system. For example, the growing peasantization of sudras was sought to be rationalized in the existing brahmanical social order.

The practice of land grants as *brahmadeya* was initiated by the ruling dynasties and subsequently followed by chiefs, feudatories, etc. *Brahmadeyas* facilitated agrarian expansion because they were exempted from various taxes or dues either entirely or at least in the initial stages of settlement (e.g. for 12 years). They were also endowed with ever growing privileges (*pratiharas*). The ruling families derived economic advantages in the form of the extension of the resource base, moreover by creating *brahmadeyas* they also gained ideological support for their political power.

The land donations implied more than the transfer of land rights. For example, in

many cases, along with the revenues and economic resources of the village, human resources such as peasants (cultivators), artisans and others were also transferred to the donees. There is also growing evidence of the encroachment over the rights of villagers on community lands such as lakes and ponds. Thus, the brahmanas became managers of agricultural and artisanal production in these settlements for which they organized themselves into assemblies.

From the seventh century onwards, officers of the state were also being remunerated through land grants. This is of special significance because it created another class of landlords who were not brahmanas. The gift of land to officials in charge of administrative divisions is mentioned as early as c. CE 200 (the time of Manu) but the practice picked up momentum in the post-Gupta period. Literary works dealing with Central India, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Bihar and Bengal between the tenth and twelfth centuries make frequent references to various kinds of grants to ministers, kinsmen and those who rendered military services. The *rajas*, *rajaputras ranakas, mahasamantas* etc. mentioned in Pala land charters were mostly vassals connected with land. The incidence of grants to state officials varies from one region to another. To illustrate, while we hear of about half a dozen Paramara official ranks, only a few of them are known to have received land grants. But very large territories were granted to vassals and high officers under the Chalukyas of Gujarat. The available evidences suggest that Odisha had more service grants than Assam, Bengal and Bihar taken together. Further, the right of various officials to enjoy specific and exclusive levies — irrespective of the tenure of these levies — was bound to create intermediaries with interests in the lands of the tenants.

Large scale gifts to the religious establishments, both brahmanical and non-brahmanical, find distinctive places in inscriptional evidences. These centres worked as nuclei of agricultural settlements and helped in integrating various peasant and tribal settlements through a process of acculturation. They also integrated various socio-economic groups through service tenures or remuneration through temple lands. Temple lands were leased out to tenants, who paid a higher share of the produce to the temple. Such lands were also managed either by the *sabha* of the *brahmadeya* or *mahajanas* of the *agrahara* settlements. In non-brahmana settlements temples became the central institution. Here temple lands came to be administered by the temple executive committees composed of land owning non-brahmanas, e.g. the Velalas of Tamil Nadu; the Okkalu, Kampulu, etc. of Karnataka and Andhra region. Different groups were assigned a caste and ritual status. It is in this process that people following 'impure" and "low occupations" were assigned the status of untouchables, kept out of the temple and given quarters at the fringes of the settlement. The supervision of temple lands was in the hands of brahmana and non-brahmana landed elite. The control of irrigation sources was also a major function of the local bodies dominated by landed elite groups. Thus the brahmana, the temple and higher strata of non-brahmanas as landlords, employers and holders of superior rights in land became the central feature of early medieval agrarian organization. The new landed elite also consisted of local peasant clan chiefs or heads of kinship groups and heads of families, who had *kani* rights i.e. rights of possession and supervision. In other words, several strata of intermediaries emerged between the king and the actual producer.

An important aspect relating to land grants is the nature of rights granted to the assignees. Rights conferred upon the grantees included fiscal and administrative rights. The taxes, of which land tax was the major source of revenue, theoretically payable to the king or government, came to be assigned to the donees. The reference to *pratiharas* or exemptions in the copper plate and stone inscriptions registering such grants indicate that what was theoretically payable to the king was not being completely exempted from payment but the rights were now transferred to the grantees. This was apparently based on the sanction of the *Dharmashastras* which sought to establish the royal ownership of land and hence justify such grants, creating intermediary rights in land. Although there is some evidence of a communal basis of land rights in early settlements, the development of private ownership of rights is indicated by the fact that the grantees often enjoyed rights of alienation of land. They also enjoyed other hereditary benefits in the settlements. Land gifts were often made after purchase from private individuals. Hereditary ownership seems to have developed out of such grants, both religious and secular.

10.4 RURAL TENSION

Notwithstanding agrarian expansion, the rural landscape was far from being a homogeneous scene. There was, to begin with, heterogeneous and stratified peasantry. Unlike the age old and pre-Gupta *gahapatis* we now have graded personnel associated with land : *kshetrik*, *karshaka*, *halin* and *ardhik*. Regrettably, there is hardly any indication of landownership in these terms, which seem to be referring to various categories of cultivators. The *damara* revolts in Kashmir, rebellion of the *Kaivarthas* during the reign of Ramapal in Bengal, acts of self-immolation in situations of encroachments on land in Tamil Nadu, appropriation of donated land by sudras in the Pandya territory, are indices of distrust against the new landed intermediaries. The fact that donors often looked for land where cultivation was not disputed also shows the seeds of turmoil. The possibility of the hero-stones in and around *agraharas* also has the potential of throwing light on rumblings beneath the surface in agrarian settlements.

10.5 AGRICULTURE AND THE EXCHANGE NETWORK

It is sometimes maintained that in the early medieval economic organization, which was a predominantly agrarian and self-sufficient village economy, production was mainly subsistence oriented and was not in response to the laws of the market. Hence there was little scope for economic growth. Craftsmen and artisans were attached either to villages or estates or religious establishments. Hence there was no significant role for traders and middlemen, who only procured and supplied iron tools, oil, spices, cloth, etc. to the rural folk. In other words the functioning of the market system was extremely limited. The aforesaid picture is certainly true for the period 300-800 CE. However, the subsequent 500 years witnessed a rapid increase in the number of agrarian settlements and the growth of local markets initially for local exchange. Subsequently, the need for regular exchange within a region and with other regions led to organized commerce. This in turn led to the emergence of merchant organizations, itinerant trade and partial monetization from the ninth

century. Though the relative importance of these features varied from one region to another, the increasing role of agriculture in this new economy is easily seen. Agricultural products came to be exchanged with items of long distance trade carried on by itinerant traders. This development also led to a change in the pattern of landownership towards the close of the early medieval period. Merchants and economically influential craftsmen, like weavers, invested in land i.e. purchased land or acquired land and made gifts of land. In south Karnaraka, for example, a group called the *Jagati-kottali* (community of weavers) and the community of *Telligas* (oil pressers) were active participants in agriculture.

10.6 THE CHARACTERISATION OF EARLY MEDIEVAL AGRARIAN ECONOMY

Different views have been put forward regarding the nature of the overall set up of early medieval agrarian economy. On the one hand, it is seen as a manifestation of feudal economy, while on the other it is dubbed as a peasant state and society.

The salient features of the early medieval economy which became the basis of the Feudalism theory are as follows:

1) Emergence of hierarchical landed intermediaries. Vassals and officers of state and other secular assignee had military obligations and feudal titles. Sub-infeudation (varying in different regions) by these donees to get their land cultivated led to the growth of different strata of intermediaries. It was a hierarchy of landed aristocrats, tenants, share croppers and cultivators. This hierarchy was also reflected in the power/administrative structure, where a sort of lord-vassal relationship emerged. In other words, Indian feudalism consisted in the gross unequal distribution of land and its produce.

2) Another important feature was the prevalence of forced labour. The right of extracting forced labour (*vishti*) is believed to have been exercised by the brahmana and other grantees of land. Forced labour was originally a prerogative of the king or the state. It was transferred to the grantees, petty officials, village authorities and others. In the Chola inscriptions alone, there are more than one hundred references to forced labour. Even the peasants and artisans come within the jurisdiction of *vishti*. As a result, a kind of serfdom emerged, in which agricultural labourers were reduced to the position of semi-serfs.

3) Due to the growing claims of greater rights over land by rulers and intermediaries, peasants also suffered a curtailment of their land rights. Many were reduced to the position of tenants facing ever growing threat of eviction. A number of peasants were only *ardhikas* (share croppers). The strain on the peasantry was also caused by the burden of taxation, coercion and increase in their indebtedness.

4) Surplus was extracted through various methods. Extra economic coercion was a conspicuous method. With the rise of new property relations, new mechanisms of economic subordination also evolved. The increasing burden is evident in the mentioning of more than fifty levies in the inscription of Rajaraja Chola.

5) It was relatively a closed village economy. The transfer of human resources along with land to the beneficiaries shows that in such villages the peasants, craftsmen and artisans were attached to the villages and hence were mutually dependent. Their attachment to land and to service grants ensured control over them by the beneficiaries.

In brief, a subject and immobile peasantry, functioning in relatively self-sufficient villages buttressed by *varna* restrictions, was the marked feature of the agrarian economy during the five centuries under survey.

10.7 TRADE AND COMMERCE

The nature and extent of the use of money, the functioning of the market, the role of agricultural production, and stages in the conditions of urban settlements are interrelated developments. None of these is unrelated to the system of land grants as an almost all India phenomenon between the eight to the thirteenth centuries. One may even suggest that trade and commerce too were being 'feudalised' during this period.

The collection, distribution and exchange of goods is called trade. It is a process which depends on a number of factors such as the nature and quantity of production, facilities of transport, safety and security of traders, the pattern of exchange, etc. It also involves different sections of society including traders, merchants, peasants and artisans. In a somewhat indirect manner, even political authorities have a stake in it as taxes on the articles of commerce imposed by them constitute an important source of revenue of the state.

The period from 750-1000 CE witnessed wide-spread practice of granting land not only to priests and temples but also to warrior chiefs and state officials. As already seen it led to the emergence of a hierarchy of landlord's even graded state officials such as *maha- mandaleshvara, mandalika, samanta, mahasamanta, thakkura* etc. developed interests in land. However, they were different from the actual tillers of the soil and lived on the surplus extracted from the peasants who were hardly left with anything to trade. It resulted in the growth of rural economy where local needs were being satisfied locally through the imposition of numerous restrictions on the mobility of actual producers. The relative dearth of medium of exchange, viz. metal coins only strengthened this trend.

10.7.1 Media of Exchange

India was ruled by many important dynasties between 750 and 1000 CE. These include the Gujara Pratiharas in western India, the Palas in eastern India and the Rashtrakutas in the Deccan. All had the distinction of having been served by some of the most powerful kings of the day, many of whom had very long lasting reigns. It is astonishing that their available coins are very few and in no way compare either in quantity or quality with the coins of earlier centuries. Since money plays an important role in the sale and purchase of goods, the paucity of actual coins and the absence of coin-moulds in archaeological finds leads us to believe in the shrinkage of trade during the period under survey.

Though first suggested by D.D. Kosambi, it was the publication of Professor R.S. Sharma's *Indian Feudalism* in 1965 that brought to focus the paucity of coinage in the post-Gupta times, its link with trade and commerce and consequent emergence of feudal social formation. The subject has been keenly debated over the years. There have been four major types of responses:

1) Contributions which have fully supported this view.

2) A case study of Odisha substantiates complete absence of coins between c. 600 CE and 1200 CE but argues for trade with Southeast Asia and emphasizes the role of barter in foreign trade.

3) Kashmir, on the other hand, shows emergence of copper coinage from about the eighth century CE. Extremely poor quality of this coinage has been explained in terms of the decline of trade-based economy and rise of agricultural pursuits in the valley.

4) Finally, a point of view questions not only the idea of paucity of coins but also the decline in trade. This is based on the evidence from what is described as the mid-eastern India comprising Bihar, West Bengal and the present Bangladesh during 750-1200 CE. While it is conceded that there was no coined money and that the Palas and Senas themselves did not strike coins, it is also argued that there was no dearth of media of exchange. To illustrate, it is emphasized that there was not only a long series of *Harikela* silver coinage but also cowries and more importantly *churni* (money in the form of gold/silver dust) also functioned as media of exchange.

   Well, there may have been some regional exceptions but the all-India perspective fits in the general hypothesis of Professor Sharma. Even with regard to the regional exceptions, the following questions require some attention:

   a) What was the nature and extent of such commercial activities?

   b) Were such activities capable of giving rise to stable commercialized class?

   c) Who took away the profits of this trade?

   d) Did this so called flourishing trade gave any incentive to the toiling, subject and immobile peasantry?

It is significant to note in this context that:

- The relevant sources cited in the context of the mid-eastern India, are silent about the participation of indigenous people in the maritime trade of the area.
- Even the limited trading activities were confined to the ruling elite.
- The miserable conditions of the common man are reflected in the meaning of the word *vangali* (literally, a resident of Bengal) which denoted somebody "very poor and miserable".

Similarly, those who talk about India's trade with Southeast Asia may also do well to keep in view the position of metal money in that region. Detailed study of

Cambodia, for example, shows that during the two centuries of post-Gupta times (CE 600-800) Southeast Asia failed to evolve any system of coinage and barter (largely based on paddy and only marginally on cloth) provided essentials of the Khmer economy. Even when such early medieval coin types as the Indo-Sassanian. Shri Vigraha, Shri Adivaraha, Bull and Horseman, Gadhaiya, etc. emerged in western and north western India and to some extent in the Ganga valley, they could not make much dent in the overall economy. Apart from the doubts about the period of emergence of these coins, their extremely poor quality and purchasing power also indicate the shrinkage of their actual role. Further, in relation to the rising population and expanding area of settlement, the overall volume of money circulation was negligible. Hence, we can say that the case for the relative decline of metallic money during this period is based on convincing empirical evidence. This was bound to have an impact on India's trading activities.

10.7.2 Relative Decline of Trade

Internally, the fragmentation of political authority and the dispersal of power to local chiefs, religious grantees, etc. seem to have had an adverse effect, at least in the initial centuries of the land grant economy. Many of the intermediary landlords, particularly of less productive areas, resorted to loot and plunder or excessive taxes on goods passing through their territories. This must have dampened the enthusiasm of traders and merchants. No less discouraging were the frequent wars amongst potential ruling chiefs. Though two Jain texts of the eighth century, *Samaraiccakaha* of Haribhadra Suri and the *Kuvalayamala* of Uddyotana Suri, refers to brisk trade and busy towns, it is rightly pointed out that these texts draw their material from the sources of the earlier centuries and, therefore do not reflect the true economic condition of the eighth century. As regards the decline of foreign trade with the West, it is pointed out that it had greatly diminished after the fall of the great Roman Empire in the fourth century. It was also affected adversely in the middle of the sixth century when the people of Byzantine (Eastern Roman Empire) learnt the art of making silk. India thus lost an important market which had fetched her considerable amount of gold in the early centuries of the Common Era.

The decline of foreign trade was also caused by the expansion of Arabs on the north-west frontiers of India in the seventh and eighth centuries. Their presence in the region made overland routes unsafe for Indian merchants. A story in the *Kathasaritsagara* tells us that a group of merchants going from Ujjain to Peshawar were captured by an Arab and sold off. Later, when they somehow got free, they decided to leave the north-western region forever and returned to south for trade. The fights amongst the Tibetans and Chinese during these centuries also affected the flow of goods along the routes in Central Asia. Even the western coast of India suffered dislocation and disruption of sea trade as the Arabs raided Broach and Thana in the seventh century and destroyed Valabhi an important port on the Saurashtra coast, in the eighth century. Though as we have pointed out later, the Arabs played an important part in the growth of Indian maritime trade after the tenth century; initially their sea raids had an adverse effect on the Indian commercial activity. There are some references in the contemporary literature to India's contact with Southeast Asia, but it is doubtful whether it could make up for the loss suffered on account of the decline of trade with the West.

10.7.3 Urban Settlements: Decay

This period saw the decay and desertion of many towns. It is an important symptom of commercial decline because the towns are primarily the settlements of people engaged in crafts and commerce. As trade declined and the demand for craft-goods slumped, the traders and craftsmen living in towns had to disperse to rural areas for alternative means of livelihood. Thus towns decayed and townsfolk became a part of village economy. Besides the accounts of Huien Tsang, the Puranic records too, while referring to Kali age indicate depopulation of important cities. This seems to have been the continuation of the trend already indicated by Varahamihira (5th century). The decay of important towns such as Vaishali, Pataliputra, Varanasi, etc. is evident from the archaeological excavations which reveal poverty of structure and antiquities. The pan-Indian scene is marked by desertion of urban centres or their state of decay in the period between the third and eighth centuries. Even those settlements which continued up to the eighth century, were deserted thereafter. One can mention Ropar (in Punjab), Atranjikhera and Bhita (in Uttar Pradesh), Eran (in Madhya Pradesh), Prabhas Patan (in Gujarat), Maheshwar and Paunar (in Maharashtra), and Kudavelli (in Andhra Pradesh) in this category of urban settlements. Even the medieval greatness of Kannauj (in the Farrukhabad district of Uttar Pradesh) for which several wars were fought amongst the Palas, Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas, has still to be testified by the excavator's spade.

The commercial activity during this phase of early medieval period had declined but did not disappear completely. In fact, trade in costly and luxury goods meant for the use of kings, feudal chiefs and heads of temples and monasteries continued to exist. The articles such as precious and semi-precious stones. ivory, horses, etc. formed an important part of the long distance trade, but the evidence for transactions in the goods of daily use is quite meagre in the sources belonging to this period. The only important articles mentioned in the inscriptions are salt and oil which could not be produced by every village, and thus had to be brought from outside. If the economy had not been self-sufficient, the references to trade in grains, sugar, textile, handicrafts, etc. would have been more numerous. In short the nature of commercial activity during CE 750-1000 was such which catered more to the landed intermediaries and feudal lords rather than the masses. Though there were some pockets of trade and commerce such as Pehoa (near Karnal in Haryana) and Ahar (near Bulandshahr in Uttar Pradesh) where merchants from far and wide met to transact business, they could not make any significant dent in the closed economy of the country as a whole.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) What were the main features of the Indian agrarian economy that emerged in the early medieval period?

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2) Which of the following statements are right or wrong? Mark (✓) or (×).

   i) According to R.S. Sharma there was decline of coinage during the post-Gupta period. ( )

   ii) There was abundance of coins in Odisha between 600-1200 CE. ( )

   iii) The poor quality of copper coins of Kashmir (around 8th century) can be ascribed to the decline in trade. ( )

   iv) Apart from minted money there were no media of exchange during the 8th-12th centuries. ( )

10.8 INDIAN FEUDALISM

The first assimilation of 'feudalism' in the Indian context occurred at the hands of Col. James Tod, the celebrated compiler of the annals of Rajasthan's history in the early part of the nineteenth century. For Tod, as for most European historians of his time in Europe, lord-vassal relationship constituted the core of feudalism. The lord in medieval Europe looked after the security and subsistence of his vassals and they in turn rendered military and other services to the lord. A sense of loyalty also tied the vassal to the lord in perpetuity. Tod found the institution and the pattern replicated in the Rajasthan of his day in good measure.

The term feudalism continued to figure off and on in works of history in India, often with rather vague meanings attached to it. It was with the growing Marxist influence on Indian history writing between the mid-1950s and the mid-60s that the term came to be disassociated from its moorings in lord-vassal relationship and acquired an economic meaning, or rather a meaning in the context of the evolution of Indian class structure.

D. D. Kosambi gave feudalism a significant place in the context of socio-economic history. He conceptualised the growth of feudalism in Indian history as a two-way process: from above and from below in his landmark book, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, first published in 1956. From above the feudal structure was created by the state granting land and rights to officials and brahmanas; from below many individuals and small groups rose from the village levels of power to become landlords and vassals of the kings. Kosambi in his characteristic mode, formulated the notion of feudalism in the shape of a formula rather than in a detailed empirical study. This major task was taken up by Professor R. S. Sharma in his *Indian Feudalism*, 1965. However, R. S. Sharma did not follow the Kosambian formula of feudalism from below and from above; instead, he envisioned the rise of feudalism in Indian history entirely as 'the consequence of state action, i.e. from above. It is only lately that he has turned his attention to the other phenomenon.

R. S. Sharma essentially emulated the model of the rise and decline of feudalism in Europe formulated in great detail by the Belgian historian of the 1920s and 30s, Henri Pirenne. Pirenne had displaced the dominant stereotype of European feudalism as lord-vassal relationship and substituted in its place one that had much wider and deeper range of consequences for society. He postulated that 'grand trade', i.e long distance trade in Europe across the Mediterranean had

allowed European economy, society and civilization to flourish in Antiquity until its disruption by the Arab invasions of Europe in the seventh century. Disruption of trade led to the economy's ruralisation, which made it inwards, rather than outward looking. It also resulted in what Pirenne called 'the closed estate economy'. The closed estate signified the unit of land held by the Lord (10,000 acres on an average) and cultivated by the peasant, where trade was minimal and almost everything the inhabitants of the estate required was produced within. These estates, in other words, were economically 'self-sufficient' units. The picture changed again from the eleventh century when the Crusades threw the Arabs back to the Near East; this led to the revival of trade and cities and the decline of feudalism. Pirenne thus posited an irreconcilable opposition between trade and urbanization on the one hand and feudalism on the other.

R.S. Sharma copied this model in almost every detail, often including its terminology on to the Indian historical landscape. He visualized the decline of India's long distance trade made with various parts of the world after the fall of the Guptas; urbanization also suffered in consequence, resulting in the economy's ruralisation. A scenario thus arose in which economic resources were not scarce but currency was. Since coins were not available, the state started handing out land in payment to its employees and grantees like the brahmanas. Along with land the state also gave away more and more rights over the cultivating peasants to this new class of 'intermediaries'. The increasing subjection of the peasants to the intermediaries reduced them to the level of serfs, their counterparts in medieval Europe. The rise of the class of intermediaries through the state action of giving grants to them is the crucial element in Sharma's construction of Indian feudalism. Later on in his writings, he built other edifices too upon this structure, like the growth of the class of scribes, to be consolidated into the caste of *Kayasthas*, because state grants needed to be recorded. The crucial process of land grants to intermediaries lasted until about the eleventh century when the revival of trade reopened the process of urbanization. The decline of feudalism is suggested in this revival, although R. S. Sharma does not go into this aspect in as much detail. The one element that was missing in this picture was the Indian counterpart of the Arab invasion of Europe; however, Professor B. N. S. Yadava, another eminent proponent of the Indian feudalism thesis, drew attention to the Huna invasions of India which almost coincided with the beginning of the rise of feudalism here. The oppressive feudal system in Europe had resulted in massive rebellions of the peasantry in Europe; in India R. S. Sharma looked for evidence of similar uprising but found only one example of *Kaivartas* — who were essentially boatmen in eastern Bengal but also engaged part time in cultivation — having revolted in the eleventh century.

The thesis propounded in its fully-fledged form in 1965 has had a great deal of influence on subsequent history writing on the period in India. Other scholars supported the thesis with some more details on one point or another, although practically no one explored any other aspect of the theme of feudalism, such as social or cultural aspect for long afterwards. B. N. S. Yadava and D. N. Zha stood firmly by the feudalism thesis. The theme found echoes in south Indian historiography too, with highly acclaimed historians like M.G.S. Narayanan and Noburu Karashima abiding by it. There was criticism too in some extremely learned

quarters; the most eminent among critics was D. C. Sircar. There was too a fairly clear ideological divide which characterised history writing in India in the 1960s and 70s: D. D.. Kosarnbi, R.S. Sharma, B. N. S. Yadava and D. N. Jha were firmly committed Marxists; D. C. Sircar stood on the other side of the Marxist fence. However, neither support nor opposition to the notion of feudalism opened up the notion's basic structure to further exploration until the end of the 1970s.The opening up came within the Marxist historiographical school. We shall return to it in a little while.

In 1946 one of the most renowned Marxist economists of Cambridge university, UK, Maurice Dobb, published his book, *Studies* in the *Development of Capitalism* in which he first seriously questioned the Pirennean opposition between trade and feudalism and following Engels' insights drew attention to the fact that the revival of trade in Eastern Europe had brought about the 'second serfdom', i.e., feudalism. He thus posited the view that feudalism did not decline even in Western Europe due to the revival of trade but due to the flight of the peasants to cities from excessive and increasing exploitation by the lords in the countryside. This thesis led to an international debate in the early 1950s among Marxist economists and historians. The debate was still chiefly confined to the question whether feudalism and trade were mutually incompatible. Simultaneously, in other regions of the intellectual landscape, especially in France, where an alternative paradigm of history writing, known as the ***Annales*** paradigm, was evolving, newer questions were being asked and newer dimensions of the problem being explored. Some of these questions had travelled to India as well.

10.8.1 Was There Feudalism In India?

It was thus that in 1979 a Presidential Address to the Medieval India Section of the Indian History Congress's fortieth session was entitled 'Was There Feudalism in Indian History?' Harbans Mukhia, its author, a committed practitioner of Marxist history writing, questioned the Indian feudalism thesis at the theoretical plane and then at the empirical level by comparing the medieval Indian scenario with medieval Europe. The theoretical problem was concerned with the issue whether feudalism could at all be conceived of as a universal system. If the driving force of profit maximisation had led capitalism on to ever rising scale of production and ever expanding market until it encompassed the whole world under its dominance, something we are witnessing right before our eyes, and if this was a characteristic of capitalism to thus establish a world system under the hegemony of a single system of production, logically it would be beyond the reach of any pre-capitalist system to expand itself to a world scale, i.e. to turn into a world system. For, the force of consumption rather than profit maximization drove pre-capitalist economic systems, and this limited their capacity for expansion beyond the local or the regional level. Feudalism thus could only be a regional system rather than a world system. The problem is hard to resolve by positing different variations of feudalism: the European, the Chinese, the Japanese and the Indian, etc., although this has often been attempted by historians. For, then either the definition of feudalism turns so loose as to become synonymous with every pre-capitalist system and therefore fails to demarcate feudalism from the others and is thus rendered useless; or, if the definition is precise, as it should be to

remain functional, the 'variations' become so wide as to render it useless. Indeed, even within the same region, the variations are so numerous that some of the most respected historians of medieval Europe in recent years, such as Georges Duby and Jacques Le Goff, tend to avoid the use of the term feudalism altogether; so sceptical they have become of almost any definition of feudalism**.** The empirical basis of the questioning of Indian feudalism in the 1979 Presidential Address lay in a comparison between the histories of medieval Western Europe and medieval India, pursued at three levels: the ecological conditions, the technology available and the social organization of forms of labour use in agriculture in the two regions. With this intervention, the debate was no longer confined to feudalism/ trade dichotomy which in any case had been demonstrated to be questionable in its own homeland. The empirical argument followed the perspective that the ecology of Western Europe gave it four months of sunshine in a year; all agricultural operations, from tilling the field to sowing, tending the crop, harvesting and storing therefore must be completed within this period. Besides, the technology that was used was extremely labour intensive and productivity of both land and labour was pegged at the dismal seed: yield ratio of 1:2.5 at the most. Consequently the demand for labour during the four months was intense. Even a day's labour lost would cut into production. The solution was found in tying of labour to the land, or serfdom. This generated enormous tension between the lord and the serf in the very process of production; the lord would seek to control the peasant labour more intensively; the peasant would, even while appearing to be very docile, try to steal the lord's time to cultivate his own land. The struggle, which was quiet but intense, led to technological improvement, rise in productivity to 1:4 by the twelfth century, substantial rise in population and therefore untying of labour from land, expansion of agriculture and a spurt to trade and urbanization. The process was, however, upset by the Black Death in 1348-51 which wiped out a quarter of the population leading to labour scarcity again. The lords sought to return to the old structures of tied labour; the peasants, however, who had tasted better days in the 11th and 12th centuries, flew into rebellions all over Europe especially during the 14th century. These rebellions were the work of the prosperous, rather than the poor peasants. By the end of the century, feudalism had been reduced to a debris. Indian ecology, on the other hand, was marked by almost ten months of sunshine where agricultural processes could be spread out. Because of the intense heat, followed by rainfall, the upper crust of the soil was the bed of fertility; it therefore did not require deep, labour intensive digging. The hump on the Indian bull allowed the Indian peasant to use the bull's drought power to the maximum, for it allowed the plough to be placed on the bull's shoulder; the plain back on his European counterpart would let the plough slip as he pulled it. It took centuries of technological improvement to facilitate full use of the bull's drawing power on medieval European fields. The productivity of land was also much higher in medieval India, pegged at 1:16. Besides, most Indian lands yielded two crops a year, something unheard of in Europe until the nineteenth century. The fundamental difference in conditions in India compared to Europe also made it imperative that the forms of labour use in agriculture should follow a different pattern. *Begar*, or tied labour, paid or unpaid, was seldom part of the process of production here; it was more used for non-productive purposes such as carrying the *zamindar*'s loads by the peasants on their heads or supplying milk or oil, etc. to the *zamindars* and

jagirdars on specified occasions. In other words tension between the peasant and the *zamindar* or the *jagirdar* was played out outside the process of production on the question of the quantum of revenue. We do not therefore witness the same levels of technological breakthroughs and transformation of the production processes in medieval India as we see in medieval Europe, although it must be emphasised that neither technology nor the process of agricultural production was static or unchanging in India.

The 1979 Address had characterised the medieval Indian system as one marked by free peasant economy. Free peasant was understood as distinct from the medieval European serf. Whereas the serf's labour for the purposes of agricultural production was set under the control of the lord, the labour of his Indian counterpart was under his own control; what was subject to the state's control was the amount of produce of the land in the form of revenue. A crucial difference here was that the resolution of tension over the control of labour resulted in transformation of the production system from feudal to capitalist in European agriculture from the twelfth century onwards; in India tension over revenue did not affect the production system as such and its transformation began to seep in only in the twentieth century under a different set of circumstances.

'Was There Feudalism in Indian History?' was reprinted in the pages of a British publication, *The Journal of Peasant Studies* in 1981**.** Within the next few years it had created so much interest in-international circles that in 1985 a special double issue of the journal, centred on this paper, comprising eight articles from around the world and the original author's response to the eight, was published under the title *Feudalism and Non-European Societies*, jointly edited by T. J. Byres of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University, editor of the journal, and the article's author. It was also simultaneously published as a book. The title was adopted keeping in view that the debate had spilled over the boundaries of Europe and India and had spread into China, Turkey, Arabia and Persia. The publication of the special issue, however, did not terminate the discussion; three other papers were subsequently published in the journal, the last in 1993.The discussion often came to be referred to as the 'Feudalism Debate'. A collection of concerned essays was published in New Delhi in 1999 under the title *The Feudalism Debate.*

10.9 FEUDALISM RECONSIDERED

While the debate critically examined the theoretical proposition of the universality of the concept of feudalism or otherwise, with each historian taking his own independent position on the question of Indian historical evidence, R.S. Sharma, who was chiefly under attack, reconsidered some of his earlier positions and greatly refined his thesis of Indian feudalism, even as he defended it vigorously and elegantly in a paper, 'How Feudal was Indian Feudalism?' He had been criticised for looking at the rise of feudalism in India entirely as a consequence of state action in transferring land to the intermediaries; he modified it and expanded its scope to look at feudalism as an economic formation which evolved out of economic and social crises in society, signifying in the minds of the people the beginning of the *Kaliyuga,* rather than entirely as the consequence of state action. B. N. S. Yadava also joined in with a detailed study of the notion of *Kaliyuga* in

early medieval Indian literature and suggested that this notion had the characteristics of a crisis — the context for the transition of a society from one stage to another. All this considerably enriched the argument on behalf of Indian feudalism. R.S. Sharma was also able to trace several other instances of peasant resistance than the one he had unearthed in his 1965 book. This too has lent strength to the thesis. R. S. Sharma has lately turned his attention to the ideological and cultural aspects of the feudal society; in his latest collection of essays, published under the title *Early Medieval Indian Society: A Study in Feudalisation* in 2001 in New Delhi, he has revised several of his old arguments and included some new themes such as 'The Feudal Mind', where he explores such problems as the reflection of feudal hierarchies in art and architecture, the ideas of gratitude and loyalty as ideological props of feudal society, etc. This venture of extension into the cultural sphere has been undertaken by several other historians as well who abide by the notion of feudalism. In a collection of sixteen essays, *The Feudal Order: State, Society and Ideology in Early Medieval India,* 1987and 2000, its editor D.N. Jha has taken care to include papers exploring the cultural and ideological dimensions of what he calls the feudal order, itself a comprehensive term. One of the major dimensions so explored is that of religion, especially popular religion or bhakti, both in north and south and the growth of India's regional cultures and languages. Even as most scholars have seen the rise of the bhakti cults as a popular protest against the domination of Brahmanical orthodoxy, the proponents of feudalism see these as buttresses of Brahmanical domination by virtue of the ideology of total surrender, subjection and loyalty to a deity. This surrender and loyalty could easily be transferred on to the feudal lord and master.

There have been certain differences of opinion among the historians of the Indian feudalism school too. D. N. Jha for example had found inconsistency between the locale of the evidence of the notion of *Kaliyuga* and site of the 'crisis' which the *kaliyuga* indicated: the evidence came from peninsular India, but the crisis was expected in brahmanical north. B. P. Sahu too had cast doubt on the validity of the evidence of a *kuliyuga* as indicator of a crisis; instead, he had perceived it more as a redefinition of kingship and therefore a reassertion of Brahmanical ideology rather than a crisis within it.

10.10 FEUDALISM, TRADE AND URBANISATION

However, the basic structure of the Indian feudalism thesis, i.e. antagonism between trade and urbanisation on one hand and feudalism on the other remains untouched. And that has not been without problems vis-a-vis recent trends in history writing. In European historiography itself there has been a sea change among historians on this problematic. If Henri Pirenne had posited an irresolvable dichotomy between urban/ rural, trade/feudalism and natural or self-sufficient/money economy dichotomy in the 1930s, later historians tore it to pieces by demonstrating the perfect compatibility between the one and the other. The great French historian, Marc Bloch, even titled one of his papers as 'Natural Economy vs. Money Economy: A Pseudo-Dilemma', and another French historian, Guy Bois has in a recent work traced the development of feudal economic relationships in Western Europe around the year 1000 in those very areas where trade had greatly developed. In other words, he has established a direct causal relationship between trade and

feudalism. The trade/feudalism dichotomy has thus been abandoned in the very place of its origin. The very notion of the existence of natural or self-sufficient economy has been fundamentally questioned both at the level of theory as well as empirical data almost everywhere. Clearly, even for one's daily needs at the lowest level of subsistence, some trade must take place whether for buying salt or clothes or utensils; the volume of buying things and the use of money for it rises as we go up the social ladder. Trade in some form or another is also embedded in an agricultural economy, for the nature of the soil in different regions necessitates cultivation of different crops; they must exchange their produce in order to obtain necessities of subsistence.

Empirically, several historians have had problems with the notion of decline of trade and scarcity of currency in the region and the period of Indian feudalism. D. N. Jha had criticised R. S. Sharma for relying too heavily on the absence of long distance external trade as the cause of the rise of feudalism in India. But, more substantively, trade has been demonstrated to have flourished in several regions of India long before the deadline set by feudalists for its revival around the year 1000, parallel to Europe. B. D. Chattopadhyaya has shown that to have happened at least a century earlier. More recently Ranabir Chakravarti in two books, *Trade in Early India*, 2001 and *Trade and Traders in Early Indian Society*, 2002, has brought forward ample evidence of flourishing trade in the concerned period. The monetary anaemia thesis, fundamental to the formulation of Indian feudalism, has also been put under severe strain by recent researches of B. D. Chattopadhyaya and B. N. Mukherjee. John S. Deyell too in his book, *Living without Silver*, 1990, seriously undermined the assumption of the scarcity of money. One must also keep in mind that metals like gold, silver or copper are not the only forms of money in medieval societies. Marc Bloch had shown that in medieval Europe, almost anything could perform the functions of a medium of exchange i.e., money: a certain measure of a certain kind of spice, a piece of cloth of a certain quality, a measure of a particular grain, whatever. In India too, the tradition of cowries as a medium of exchange has recently attracted the attention of historians and the fact that procuring cowries actually involved long distance trade, for the cowry shells were obtained from the far off Maldives, highlights its significance.

10.11 PROBLEMS

There are some other methodological problems too. If the period between c. 300 and c. 1100 is the life span of Indian feudalism, how is one to characterise the succeeding era, 'medieval India' as it is normally called, prior to the establishment of the colonial regime? Besides, can one leave the long stretch of time under one single head with the implicit assumption that the whole stretch was a single unit which did not witness any major mutations? Marc Bloch had, for example, classified the period of feudalism in Europe into the First Feudal Age and the Second Feudal Age, with the dividing roughly drawn across the year 1000. So sharp was the change in his view that a person from one age would have found himself an alien in the other.

The profound mutations within the structure of feudalism are by now conventional

wisdom in European historiography, even if the terms used by different historians sometimes differ. Some historians prefer 'Low and High Middle Ages' to the 'First and the Second Feudal Age.' Also, there is consensus that feudalism in Europe was succeeded by the rise and consolidation of capitalism. Colonialism was one facet of the rise of capitalism. What kind of changes can one visualise in Indian feudalism over the eight centuries of its existence? And, what was it that succeeded it after CE 1100 or so? Surely not capitalism. Adherents of feudalism have not seriously encountered these questions. D. D. Kosambi had extended feudalism to the 17th century almost as an intellectual diktat; this would only compound the problem further by extending its life by another six centuries and treating the entire stretch of nearly 1400 years as the same from one end to the other — an impossible plea for historians of today to entertain, for tracing change, over small periods, is their primary preoccupation.

The problems notwithstanding, 'The Feudalism Debate' has nevertheless traversed a long distance. The academic level of the debate has been nothing short of exhilarating; it never descended even one step below to personal animosity, something noted in a review by Susan Reynolds, herself an eminent medievalist of England, particularly lamenting such descent in academic circles in and near her own home. The debate has been most fertile because it led almost everyone to rethink one's own position and to refine it and modify aspects of it, even while defending it. In the end no conclusive answers were found; but that's in the nature of the discipline, for, it constantly seeks to renew itself through self-questioning.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) Analyze recent developments in the feudalism debate?

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2) To what extent is European model of Feudalism relevant in the Indian context?

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10.12 SUMMARY

In this Unit we discussed about how to define Feudalsim. The term was coined in Europe and characterized those changes in economy and society that came into focus from the 8th to the 14th century. In the Indian context the period from the post-Gupta period was marked by changes in the economy and society which the Indian Marxist scholars characterised as feudal. The term was borrowed from Europe and applied to India. In the economic sphere agriculture expanded as a results of the practise of land grants on a big scale. The resultant tensions among the cultivators of land marked the mutual relationships among different groups. There was widespread decline of urban centres due to fall in international trade.

Exavations at most urban settlements have provided poor remains and sometimes a sterile layer indicating desertion of settlements around this time. There was paucity of coined currency and cowries became a common medium of exchange. We also discussed the main fetaures of the debate about whether these changes in the economy and society can point to a feudal set up. The thesis came to be questioned by scholars like B.D. Chattopadhyaya, Ranabir Chakrabarti and John S. Deyell. All their opinions have been taken into consideration.

10.13 KEY WORDS

Agrahara : primarily a rent free village in the possession of brahmanas.

Ardhika : a cultivator who tills land of others and gets half the crop as his share.

Devadana : Rent free land gifted to Brahmanical temple deities. In Jain and Buddhist counterpart is *pallichandam*.

Ghanaka : oil mill

Halin : Ploughman

Karshaka : Tiller of soil

Mahajana : a sort of assembly of Brahmanas.

Oarihara : Exemption from taxes and obligations (priviledges granted to the donees of rent-free land).

Ranaka : title of feudatory ruler

Serfs : A class of tenant cultivators in Medieval Europe. They were tied to the land they tilled. In return they rendered labour on the lord's land or paid a share of their produce, besides several other 'obligations' owed to the lord.

Shrotriya : Brahmana, learned in the *Vedas*.

Tellika : oil man.

10.14 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) See the following sections: 10.3, 10.3.1, 10.4, 10.5

2) i) ✓ ii) × iii) ✓ iv) ×

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) See the Sections 10.8, 10.8.1, 10.9 and 10.10

2) See Sub-section 10.8.1 and Section 10.10.

10.15 SUGGESTED READINGS

Chakrabarti, Ranabir (2002). *Trade and Traders in Early Indian Society*. New Delhi: Manohar.

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UNIT 11 CASTES, GENDER AND PROFESSIONS[1]

Structure

11.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will learn about:

- various literary and archaeological sources for the reconstruction of the social history of this period;

[1] This Unit has been taken from BHIC 132, Unit 14.

- the distinctive features of the social life of the period;
- various social groups and interrelations among them;
- the elements of change and continuity in the social structure and gender relations during the period;
- the role of different agencies or factors in social transformation; and
- the emerging trends in economy, polity and culture corresponding to social transformations.

11.1 INTRODUCTION

The time period from *c*. 700 to 1200 CE is termed as "early medieval" in Indian history. The early medieval period sets in with the decline of the Gupta Empire in northern India and ends with the coming of political Islam in India. The nature of early medieval society, economy and polity has been a debatable issue among historians.

The background to social transformations is provided by certain economic and political developments. Pervasive land-grants across the sub-continent arguably became the root cause for all political, economic and socio-cultural developments. The Brahmanical social ideal of the four-fold *varna* order gave way to a more complex, heterogeneous and regionally varied *jati* (caste) system. While the construct of the four-fold *varna* system continued to persist in the *Dharmashastra*s – the Brahmanical normative texts – it never remained the same in this period as it was perceived earlier. The *varna* system worked at a theoretical level in the Brahmanical discourse on society, while the *jati* (caste) system provided the functional aspect of society. In other words, the *varna* system got incorporated into the caste system. Sometimes, even the terms *varna* and *jati* were used interchangeably particularly for the brahmana *varna*.

The caste identity emerged dominant from the early medieval period onwards. The changing nature of social structure provided avenues for both upward and downward social mobility. The social transformation in the early medieval period was also portrayed as the coming of *kaliyuga* or *kali* age crisis, expansion of class distinctions and hierarchies and subjugation of women. The notion of *kali* age itself represents a great departure from the Vedic traditions.

This Unit aims to not only provide a comprehensive account of social structure, but also include women and gender relations in the social history of the period.

11.2 SOURCES

Sanskrit became the language of politics and literature. By the end of the period, the emergent vernacular languages started challenging the domination of Sanskrit in literary production. Various kinds of literary works were produced. These included religious texts, poetry and drama (*kavya-nataka*), philosophical texts, technical treatises on mathematics, grammar, medicine, music, architecture, lexicography, etc. The proliferation of regional states also led to the production of royal biographies such as Banabhatta's *Harshacharita*, Sandhyakaranandin's *Ramacharita*, Padmagupta's *Navasahasankacharita*, Bilhana's *Vikraman-*

kadevacharita, Hemachandra's *Kumarapalacharita* and anonymously authored *Prithvirajavijaya*, Chand Bardai's *Prithvirajaraso*, etc. Kalhana also wrote *Rajatatrangini* – the earliest known historical chronicle in India – about the rulers and dynasties of Kashmir. The composition and compilation of *Puranas* continued throughout the early medieval period. While the *Bhagavata Purana*, the *Brahmavaivarta Purana* and *Kalika Purana* were authored, some older *Puranas* were added to and some *Upapuranas* were composed. Some *Dharmasutras* were also compiled such as *Chaturvimshatimata*, Lakshmidhara's *Krityakalpataru* and Devanabhatta's *Smritichandrika*. Jimutavahana also wrote an influential work on law called *Vyavaharamatrika* and a digest called *Dayabhaga*. Commentaries on *Smritis* and *Mimansa* texts provided fresh interpretations in accordance with time and space, thereby factoring in the changing social milieu of the period.

Besides Sanskrit, in other languages too, the flowering of literature took place. Some Jaina texts were written in *Maharashtri* Prakrit. One can also trace the influence of Apabhramsha on Jaina texts. In south India, hagiographies of *Alvar* and *Nyanmar* saints were composed in Tamil. Royal houses from south like Rashtrakutas, Hoyasalas and Chalukyas also patronized literature including some Kannada works. Besides these texts, *Lekhapaddhati*, a collection of model forms of legal and other documents from Gujarat; *Krishiparashara*, a treatise on agriculture from Bengal; *Dharmakatha*, a collection of Jaina folk tales; and Mahaviracharya's *Ganitasarasangraha* and Bhaskaracharya's *Lilavati* on mathematics also offer important historical information.

Chinese and Arab travelers' accounts are also an important source of information for the period. Xuan-Zang and Yijing from China visited India, while Arab travelers such as Sulaiman, Al-Masudi, Abu Zaid, Al-Biduri, Ibn Haukal, Al Biruni, Muhammad Ufi and Ibn Batuta left rich accounts on India.

Besides the large number of literary sources, inscriptions from the period constitute a major source of information for the reconstruction of social history. Land-grants given to temples, priests and officials contain largest amount of historical data of the period though the meagre archaeological and numismatic data have yet to prove their usefulness for the period.

11.3 DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

It was the national movement that brought the "question of women" to a central position. The socio-religious movements fought for the cause of women and many of the pre-colonial practices like *Sati* (widow-immolation), celibate widowhood, prohibition of widow remarriage, polygamy and child-marriage came under attack. Many Indian reformists and, later, nationalist-minded historians ventured into the ancient texts to study the position of women. Earlier studies were generally concerned with examining the social position of women with reference to certain select parameters such as their right to property, education and participation in assemblies, as well as their role and position in relation to their male relatives within the limited context of family. Earlier studies on women also primarily drew upon Brahmanical texts, ignoring their in-built gender bias. As a consequence of this selective reading and interpretation of sources, the nationalist history-writing generally projected a high social position of women in ancient India. Representative

of such tendency is the highly influential work, *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization* by A.S. Altekar who took the same conventional position as earlier historians such as R. C. Dutt. They glorified Indian womanhood to reject imperialist writings and always remained selective in their approaches. Later, the Altekarian paradigm was challenged by almost all feminist historians who called it very limited and biased. For instance, Uma Chakaravarti, in her article, '*Beyond the Altekarian Pardigm: Towards a New Understanding of Gender Relations in Early Indian History'*, stressed on the urgent need to move forward and rewrite history that does justice to women. Since then, a large numbers of books and articles have been published on the status of women and gender relations by feminists and other historians.

As far as social classes are concerned, the nationalist history-writing generally ignored the study of such social institutions as caste, slavery and untouchability. However, some Marxist historians such as D. D. Kosambi and R. S. Sharma produced excellent works on sudras, untouchables, slavery and caste system. But they were more focused on the material conditions and disabilities of lower castes and the nature of their socio-economic relations with the higher *varn*as, rather than the broader dynamics of inter- and intra-class/caste relations. Marxist histories also characterized the early medieval period as one of *kali*-age social crisis; decline of trade, coinage and urban centers; increased ruralisation of settlements; feudalisation of social, political and economic relations; decentralization and parcellization of political authority and, most importantly, the emergence of an exploitative 'feudal order'. The Marxist view was later challenged by other historians such as Herman Kulke and B. D. Chattopadhyaya using new interpretive models such as the segmentary or integrative state model to study the developments in this period. These historians used the same set of sources but reached different conclusions and enhanced our understanding of the period. However, keeping in mind the vastness of sources at disposal, very few works were produced on the social dimensions of early medieval India.

11.4 SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Early medieval period witnessed great transformations in the society with the proliferation of castes and sub-castes and their social mobility. This made the social situation more complex and fluid than before. On the one hand, the social transformations marked a significant departure from the simplistic ideal of a rigid social order, i.e. the four-fold *varna* system, advocated by the Brahmanical texts. On the other hand, the Brahmanical texts themselves captured the represented deflections from their ideal in the form of a social crisis known as *kali yuga*. In the Brahmanical discourse, the *kali-yuga* was projected as the polar opposite (in terms of social decline) of the other three preceding *yuga*s — *Sat*, *treta* and *dvapara*. Descriptions of the *kali* age appear in the Epics and *Puranas* from about 3rd century CE onward and are also echoed in some early medieval texts and inscriptions. The *kali* age crisis not only represents a strong expression of the dissatisfaction of the authors of Brahmanical texts with the perceived deviation from Brahmanical social norms, but also comments on the changing social situation in the early medieval period.

On the one hand, the Brahmanical scheme of *varnashrama-dharma* (the ideal division of society into *varnas*) and individual's life into *ashramas* (stages) continued to be reiterated in the early medieval texts such as the *Smritis*, commentaries (*Tika*, *Bhashya*, *Vritti*) on the *Dharmashastras*, compilations (*samgraha*) or digests (*nibandha*) of extracts from the *Dharmashastras* and *Puranas*. But, on the other hand, they also made significant departures in highlighting contemporary social changes. They offered fresh interpretations, modifications and occasionally substitutions in the light of changing social milieu of the early medieval period. Many of the early medieval texts created a binary between the brahmana or *dvija* (twice-born) and all non-brahmanas or *a-dvijas* (not twice-born). Here, the sudras stand for all non-brahmanas. This scheme of binary division was noticeable in Bengal and Tamil-speaking areas. Interestingly, this binary division omits the presence of two significant social groups: the kshatriyas and the vaishyas. Like the texts before, the early medieval Brahmanical texts also explained the proliferation of castes in terms of the concept of *varna-samkara* that denoted marriages between *varna*s. The result was *mishra jati*s (mixed castes), in other words the multiplicity of mixed castes (*mishra jati*s) and thereby, an expansion of caste hierarchy. In the inter-*varna* marraiges, *anuloma* (hypergamy) and *pratiloma* (hypogamy) were conceived as causing *varnasamkara* (admixture of *varna*s). While both were not approved, the offspring of *anuloma* was put above that of *pratiloma* in the *varna* hierarchy. Nothing remained 'pure' when it came to caste level. The Brahmanical *varna-jati* system adopted various social groups within it, but also excluded many by placing them outside it. Several indigenous tribes, frontier people, foreign migrants, occupational groups and religious sects were incorporated into the *varna-jati* order, while others were ostracized as *malechhas*. However, the inclusion, exclusion and ranking of groups within the *varna-jati* scheme were never consistent and uniform in all texts. This suggests a considerably fluid and regionally variegated social stratification and thereby explains the differences in Brahmanical perceptions on the constituent groups of the *varna-jati* system.

11.5 THE NEW SOCIAL ORDER

The period witnessed great transformations in every aspect of society. Early medieval processes led to transformations from *varna* to *jati*s. The proliferation of *jati*s became a distinctive feature of the society. The society moved beyond the two fold classification of *dvija* and *a-dvija*. Combinations and permutations within the *varna* order started the process of proliferation of *mishra jati*s or mixed castes. This is well attested by various sources including *Rajatarangini*, the twelfth-century chronicle from Kashmir. *Jati* created hierarchies at various levels. Three categories were created: *uttamasamkara*, *madhyamasamkara* and *adhamasamkara*. The *jati* system transformed simple sedentary societies into more complex endogamous groups. Occupational, indigenous and non-indigenous groups were incorporated at various levels within the *jati* system. Proliferation of *gotras* also continued in the period along with caste and reached up to 500 by the fourteenth century CE.

11.5.1 Brahmanas

The brahmanas did not constitute a monolithic or homogenous group. They were

subdivided into several *gotra*s, *pravara*s, *vamsha*s, *paksha*s, *anvaya*s, *gana*s, *gami*s, etc. Inscriptions use various descriptors such as *shrotiya, acharya*, *purohita*, *pandita*, *maharaja pandita*, *pathaka*, *tripathi*, *dvivedin*, *trivedin*, *chaturvedin*, *dikshita*, *yajnika*, *shukla, agnihotrin*, *avasathika*, *avasthin*. They also indicate that their identity varied according to their distinct territorial origins, ancestry or lineage, school of Vedic learning and priestly functions, etc. Notwithstanding these differences, their *varna* identity remained intact. The proliferation of brahmana sub-castes also led to a monumental increase in the number of *gotras* in the early medieval period. North-south binary led to the creation of two different set of brahmanas associated with their regions: the *pancha-gauda*s (the northern group) and the *pancha-dravida*s (the southern group). Their territorial affiliations were narrowed down to important learning centers that they belonged to and even up to their native villages. For instance, in Bengal and Mithila, the brahmanas were divided into number of sub-castes on the basis of their *gami*s and *mula*s.

They continued to occupy the upper echelons of the early medieval society through their power over land, ritual and scriptures. The proliferation of regional states also served the purpose of brahmanas. In the struggle for power and legitimation, the brahmanas received patronage from the emergent ruling families in return for creating concocted genealogies linking them to Epic and *Puranic* heroes and deities, and performing grand sacrifices for them. At the political level, the brahmanas emerged as ideologues and legitimizers of political power. They were granted land with fiscal, administrative and judicial rights. Such land grants were made not only individually but also collectively or institutionally. The brahmanas and their religious establishments such as temples or *matha*s emerged as the largest beneficiaries of land grants. The proliferation of polities accelerated land-grant donations to new areas and created a distinct class of landowners (*Brahmanagraharin*s), who were neither feudatories nor agriculturists in the sense that they enjoyed land and revenue from it, without tilling it, without paying taxes or tributes to the ruler. In other words, they became feudal lords minus the feudal responsibilities.

From the early medieval period onwards the brahmanas got incorporated into the rural society or agrarian community. They emerged as the major landholding community or rural landed aristocracy in the early medieval period. They empowered themselves through land grants, migrations, administration of Brahmanical temples and monasteries and connection with the ruling elites. They acted as agents of transformation of diverse societies of the subcontinent. In this period they penetrated deep into the rural society via land grants and migrations. Study of land grants indicates that the brahmanas appeared as donees in most of the cases. They were represented in both *agrahara* and non-*agrahara* settlements and helped in agrarian expansion. They were not only instrumental in setting up new settlements but also introduced class and caste society to the new settlements. Whether they cultivated land themselves or not cannot be ascertained but it is certain that they became part of the peasant household. They emerged as landed magnates and wielded their authority in nexus with other social groups like *mahattama*s, *kutumbins*, *kayastha*s, etc. This led to a further rise in their power based on rituals, scriptures and land. On the other hand, the ruling elites also reclaimed their authority in rural areas through brahmanas, and led to further subinfeudation of rural society. The proliferation of regional polities also helped

them in enhancing their status not only through land-grants but also by conferring extensive privileges, covering a vast range of resource and rights. Both of them legitimized each other in the process. With command over vast resources and labour, the brahmanas cemented their position in the rural society. Migratory networks, kinship relations, academic credentials, royal connections — all amplified the magnitude of their domination. The period also witnessed the emergence of Brahmanical religious centers or complexes across the subcontinent. The expansion of Brahmanism in rural areas enhanced the importance of priestly class in extravagant rituals, *vrata* and *prayaschitta*s. Apart from land-grants, they also received *dakshina* and *dana* in return for their services to common people.

Decline in the Vedic sacrificial rituals opened new avenues for the brahmanas. Land grants, migrations, state-formation and agrarian expansion made a conducive environment for the brahmanas to pursue non-religious occupations such as agriculture, trade, administrative and military services, etc. There are numerous examples in the epigraphic and literary sources of brahmanas following a variety of occupations. Ksemendra's *Dashavataracharita* (11th century CE) disapprovingly describes some brahmanas as following the degrading occupations of artisans, dancers, sellers of wine, clarified butter, salt, etc.; and others as becoming 'degraded' for giving up their religious duties. This, however, does not signify that they left their priestly vocation altogether. Proliferation in devotional cults, pilgrimages, worships, vows, penances and recitation of *Purana*s continued to supply them with a good source of income. They acquired considerable property and prestige on account of their relation with the ruling elites, feudatories, land-grants and other kinds of gifts.

The brahmanas not only adopted agriculture which was the primary occupation of vaishya-sudras, but also took up various non-traditional professions including trade. Charudatta, the hero of the play *Mrichchhakatika*, is a merchant by profession and a 'pious' brahmana. It cannot be generalized that all members of the priestly class enjoyed material prosperity; some of them resorted to lower works as well. With the development of *jajmani* system the brahmanas also became immobile and remained attached to local social groups who provided patronage in lieu of services offered by the brahmanas. Brahmanical texts do not attest the provision of brahmana's services to certain mixed castes. Those who served were declared degraded or *patita,* equal to the status of the mixed castes they served. Al-beruni also mentions a degraded brahmana called *Maga* or *Shakadvipi* brahmanas of Iranian origin.

Sheer occupational diversity and clear gradation of status emerged. For example there were raja-brahmanas, ksatra-brahmanas, vaishya-brahmanas and even sudra-brahmanas, indicating downward and upward social mobility. A section of brahmanas moved from the status of landed aristocracy and acquired territorial powers and became the ruling elite, now claiming to belong to the kshatriya status. The combination of *brahma-kshatra* was not an open status so they dropped the brahmana status altogether and purely claimed kshatriya origins. The emerging ruling families of Rajasthan, viz. Cahamanas, Pratiharas, and Guhilas, first claimed descent from the union of two *varna*s because of their brahmana origins but took the role of kshatriyas alone once they established themselves.

Thus, we see that the brahmana's position became more complex and fluid in the early medieval period owing to proliferation of numerous sub-castes of brahmanas.

11.5.2 Ruling Class

The proliferation of regional polities or ruling houses led to many social transformations. New clan-based social groups emerged who were called "*Rajputras* or *Rajputs*" in the early medieval period. They claimed kshatriya status. Early medieval works like *Kumarapalacarita*, *Varnaratnakara*, *Rajatarangini*, etc mention thirty-six clans of Rajputs. But the list of 36 clans varies from text to text. While some clans like Cahamanas and Pratiharas occurred regularly in the list.

The origin of Rajput is a much debated topic; still it is difficult to conclude whether they were foreign immigrants or indigenous tribes or older kshatriyas/brahmanas or ranked feudatories. From the 8th century onwards many such groups emerged in western and central India and captured political space. Later on the same process repeated itself in other parts of the Indian subcontinent. Many new lineages acquired political status through the process of 'Rajputization'. The process of Rajputization started from the 7-8th century CE and reached its climax in 12th century CE. The Rajputs enhanced their power and status through the creation of origin myths, marriage alliances, support of brahmanas, sectarian bhakti cults etc. Many new clans of Rajputs emerged and many major clans got subdivided into minor clans. B.D.Chattopadhyaya explains the origin of Rajputs with regard to the early medieval processes such as colonization of new regions through land grants, expansion of agriculture, extension of village economy, proliferation of castes etc. The Medas reached the Rajput status from a tribal background. Foreign immigrants like the Hunas too got incorporated into the Rajput status. The upward mobility led many groups to compete for Rajput or a kshatriya status.

Land grants also led to the emergence of new classes. Feudal lords or nobles emerged as a separate class. The *Aprajitaprchcha* of Bhatta Bhuvanadeva (12th century) provides eight categories of feudal vassals constituting a structured hierarchy including *mahamandaleshvara*, *mandalika*, *mahasamanta*, *samanta* and *laghusamanta*. It recommends that the emperor or *samrata*, who holds the title of *maharajadhiraja parameshvara*, should have four *mandaleshvara*s, 12 *mandalika*s, 16 *mahasamanta*s, 32 *samanta*s, 160 *laghusamanta*s, and 400 *chaturasika*s in his court. The *rajputra*s were placed below these categories. It cannot be ascertained clearly whether these feudal lords held kshatriya or Rajput status. But it is obvious that initially the Rajputs were placed at the lower order of feudal hierarchy. Another contemporary text *Manasara* indicates that irrespective of *varna*s two military posts in feudal hierarchy — *praharaka* and *astragrahin*, were open to all the *varnas*. Despite being lower in rank, the *astragrahin* was entitled to possess 500 horses, 5000 elephants, 50000 soldiers, 5000 women and one queen.

In early medieval period some of *vanij* castes or merchants and artisans were also conferred with feudal titles indicating military and administrative ranks. These administrative ranks enhanced the social status of the holders. Titles like *thakur*, *raut* and *nayaka* were not only conferred on kshatriyas or Rajputs but also *kayasthas* or members of other castes. The adoption of new titles like *rajputra*, *rajakula* or

ranaka was not only limited to Rajput clans but were also open to a few outsiders. These titles were entirely different from feudal titles like *samanta*, *mahasamanta*, *laghusamanta*, etc.

In the formative phase all major Rajput clans like Pratiharas, Guhilas and Cahamanas were feudatories of established dynasties. Gradually, they not only changed their political status by declaring sovereign power but also claimed respectable social ancestry by tacing their origins to Kshatriyas of the mythical past. In the 11-12th centuries CE the proliferation of Rajput clans was the result of a comprehensive social phenomenon what is called rajputization. This included the formation of sub-clans or minor clans which emerged from within the main clans. Doda, a sub-clan of the Paramaras; the Pipadia and Mangalaya, sub-clans of the Guhilas; the Devada, Mohila and Soni, sub-clans of the Cahamanas; and the Dadhicha, a sub-clan of the Rathors, were formed in the course of time. Many factors contributed towards this sub-clan formation such as direct segmentation, localism, matrimonial alliances.

Divergent social groups, like for instance the sudras, got incorporated into the new socio-political fold of *rajputras.* That's why the *Brihad Dharmapurana* regarded *rajputras* as a mixed caste and *sudra-kamalakara* equates the Rajputs with *ugra*, a mixed caste born of the union of a kshatriya man and a sudra woman. Arab traveler Ibn Khurdadba's accounts (10th century CE) reveal two types of kshatriyas: *sat-kshatriyas* and *asat-kshatriyas*. This binary division between pure and other kshatriya became an important feature of 12thcentuty CE, attested by many texts and inscriptions. This was meant to segregate superior clans from other impure ones.

11.5.3 Vaishyas

Vaishya *varna* also underwent transformation during the early medieval period. Proliferation of castes led to the inclusion of multiple professions within the vaishya *varna*. Vaishyas became synonymous with *vanij* or merchant during this period. Expansion of agriculture and conspicuous association of sudras with agriculture forced the vaishyas to give up their traditional duties assigned by *Sruti* literature. Proliferation of crafts and various kinds of artisanal occupations led to the expansion of *vanij* category. They were now dealing in gems, pearls, corals, metals, woven clothes, perfumes and condiments. By the early medieval period the *vanij* was a more dominant identity that vaishya *varna*. Some of the wealthy *vanij* families from western India started patronizing religio-cultural activities. The 9th century Siyadoni inscription shows how a salt-dealer or *nemaka-vanija*, whose father was also *nemaka-vanija,* made several donations to religious establishments and identified himself as belonging to the *nemaka-jati*.

11.5.4 Sudras

The *Vishnudharmamottara Purana* (8th century CE) refers to the origin of thousands of mixed castes. Chinese traveler Xuanzang also refers to numerous castes. A number of low or inferior *sudra jati*s or mixed castes proliferated. The emergence of such a large group was neither uniform nor static. *Brahmavaivarta Purana* dated between 10th to 15th century CE from Bengal registered 17 *sat-sudra jati*s and various *asat-sudra jati*s, with *patita* and *adhama* titles implying

their impure or untouchable status. The *Brihad Dharma Purana* from 12-13th century Bengal recorded 36 mixed castes or mixed Sudras. It further divided them into 22 *uttama*, 12 *madhyama* and 9 *adhama* or *antyaja* categories. It seems 36 emerged a stereotype figure in early medieval time particularly in connection with class and castes.

11.5.5 The Untouchables

The untouchables were called the fifth *varna*. Certain groups were placed at the bottom of social hierarchy. As a result they faced severe socio-cultural discrimination in the *varna-jati* order. *Chandala, Magadha* and *Paulkasa* are first mentioned as early as the sixth century BCE. They were treated differently. Around 200 CE the notion of untouchability took a definite shape in the early *Dharmasutras*, *Arthashastra* and *Manusmriti*. *Chandala* became a synonym for untouchables. They were looked down upon by the Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jaina orders. Along with *Chandala*, *Shvapaka* and *Antayavasayin* became part of polluted social classes. They were also assigned lowly or impure occupations such as those of cremators, refuse-cleaners and executioners.

The practice of untouchability intensified in the early medieval period. The Brahmanical law books like *Visnusmriti* and *Katyayanasmriti* use the word '*asprishya*' for the first time. More groups were added to the list but *Chandala* and *Shvapaka* continued to be treated as untouchables. They were also distinguished from sudras. Chinese traveler Fa-hsien also attests to the complete social, occupational and physical segregation of *Chandala*s. The same treatment was given by Buddhist and Jaina texts. In 12th century untouchability reached its peak. With the expansion of Brahmanical society to new areas, various occupational groups and tribes were incorporated into the untouchable fold. Notion of ritual purity and impurity sharpened more and these became transmittable even through sight, shadow, touch, water and food. The *Chandala*s were the worst hit. Some groups like *Charmakara, Rajaka, Buruda, Nata, Chakri, Dhvaji, Shaundika*, hunters, fishermen, butchers, executioners and scavengers were assigned low status owing to their occupations. Beef-eaters or *gavasanah* were for the first time made untouchable. Several aboriginal tribes such as *Bhilla*s, *Kaivarta*s, *Meda*s and *Kolika*s were also made untouchables because of their refusal to accept the Brahmanical order. *Kaivarta* and *Nishada* were not registered as untouchables in all the Brahmanical texts. Some agricultural castes were also labeled as untouchables due to their opposition to the Brahmanical system. Attempts were also made to create a hierarchy among untouchables on the basis of the degree of untouchability associated with different groups. Sometimes sudras were also identified as untouchables particularly *asat-sudra*s. In nutshell, untouchability was used as a weapon to exclude certain groups and to suppress the voice of dissent. But all untouchables were not excluded from society. Some early medieval Brahmanical texts provide certain exceptions. The *Smrityarthasara* permits the untouchables to enter temples. *Atrismriti* and Devanna Bhatta's *Smritichandrika* allow mixing with untouchables on several occasions such as in festivals, battles and religious processions; during calamities and invasions of the country and villages. *Rajatarangini* refers to *Dombas* and *Chandalas* as playing prominent role in court politics.

11.5.6 The New Groups: The *Kayasthas* and the *Vaidyas*

The emergence of *Kayastha* as a community of scribes is another important social development of the period. Proliferation of land grants created a class of document writers or keepers of record. They were known variously as *kayastha, karana, karanika, adhikr, pushtapalaka, chitragupta, lekhaka, divira, dharmalekhin, aksaracana, akshapatalika and akshapataladhikrta*. All of these can be grouped in the category of *kayastha*. Initially literate persons from upper *varna*s were appointed as *Kayastha*; later on, writing documents became an open profession. When the profession became hereditary it took the shape of a caste where members practiced class endogamy and marriage exogamy. *Kayastha*'s *varna* association cannot be established exactly because of their association with both *dvija*s and *advija*s or sudras.

Brahmanical normative texts declared *Ambastha*s or *Vaidya*s or physicians as sudras and barred the *dvijas* from taking their profession. Despite the ban, many groups adopted the profession and became physicians by defying normative texts. As usual the practice became hereditary and the profession turned into a caste. When brahmanas themselves started practicing the profession, the prejudice against the profession declined significantly. The composition of treatises in medicine, botany and veterinary science also uplifted the spirit of the profession and the caste.

11.6 TRIBES

Land grants made in the interiors made the state society to come face to face with the tribes inhabiting these spaces. The various forest tribes and those who were outside the brahmanical four fold division were subjugated and gradually incorporated into the Brahmanical fold by assigning them a low status. Many tribes were peasantized. The process was not peaceful in many ways. The tribal cults and deities were appropriated by the brahmanas and sometimed the tribal cult was elevated to the status of a royal cult as was the case with the cult of Jagannatha in early medieval Odisha. There are instances when some tribes were assigned a high status, for example as a brahmana or kshatriya. At other times they were assigned a low status such as sudra or even untouchables. Brahmanised tribal groups such as *Abhira* brahmanas, *Ambastha* brahmanas and *Boya* brahmanas are some best examples. *Boyas* who were a prominent tribal community in the Nellore-Guntur region of Deccan, turned into *brahmana*s and emerged as a prominent local power of the Deccan.

11.7 SLAVES

Slavery existed since early Vedic period but slaves were never incorporated into production-related activities and remained confined to so-called impure household tasks such as sweeping, removing human excreta and rendering personal services to the master. Slaves were never a homogenous class. The *Arthashastra* enumerates five types of slaves; the *Manusmriti*, seven types and the *Naradasmriti*, fifteen types. There were distinctions among slaves based on their birth, purchase, mortgage, gift, inheritance, voluntary enslavement, capture in war, indebtedness,

etc. The slaves or *dasas* were distinct from hired servants. *Shudraka*'s *Mrichchhakatika* provides a vivid picture of slaves. Slaves were items of sale and purchase. The terms like *dasaputra,* meaning the son of slave, and *dasaputri* meaning the daughter a of slave, were used as abusive terms. *Lekhapaddhati*, a 13th century text, provides in detail the manifold duties of a female slave in the household and fields and even permits sending them overseas. Slaves totally depended on their masters for their livelihood. They did not have any kind of proprietary rights. They were physically abused. The *Lekhapaddhati* refers to a female slave being tortured and driven to commit suicide. But their emancipation was possible. *Naradasmriti* provides elaborate provisions for it.

Slavery existed in south India since the late *Sangam* period. In south India, slaves were considered as private property. Inscriptions record that both male and female slaves were sold to temples where females were employed as 'temple-women'. Slaves were also transferable as a part of dowry in marriages. In some cases slavery was voluntary where depressed families offered themselves to temples.

11.8 *MLECHHAS*

The concept was not new; it was introduced much before early medieval period. It was generally used for those people who did not accept the values, ideas or norms of the Brahmanical society. It was primarily used for foreigners and indigenous tribes. The framework was used to safeguard Brahmanical social system and to create a dichotomy between the cultured and barbarians or *Mlechhas.* The notion was not fixed but varied across time and space. The *Mlechha* groups were heterogeneous in nature. In early medieval period, large numbers of tribes were incorporated into the expanding Brahmanical society. However some of them resisted Brahmanical social order or the expanding state society. They were assigned a low status and were called as *Mlechhas.* Several early medieval texts speak about *Mlechhas* such as *Brhad Dharma Purana, Varnaratnakara* etc. In these literatures some tribes like *Bhillas, Pulinds* and *Sabaras* of Vindhyan valley were depicted as anti-social. *Rajatarangini* also represents some of *Mlechha* chiefs of Astor, Skanda and Gilgit region as backward and outside the pale of Kashmiri culture.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) Which of the following statements is true or false:

   a) Brahmanas emerged as rural landed magnates in the early medieval period. ( )

   b) *Kayasthas* and *vaidyas* emerged as new castes in early medieval India. ( )

   c) Slaves were also engaged in production work. ( )

   d) Tribes were mostly incorporated as either sudras or untouchables. ( )

   e) The status of *mlechha* declined in early medieval time. ( )

2) Discuss the status of untouchables in the early medieval period.

3) Discuss the changing status of sudras in the early medieval period.

11.9 GENDER RELATIONS

With the expansion of agrarian economy during the early medieval period, landed property emerged as the most valuable form of wealth. The new emerging states or regional polities wielded much power and exercised superior land rights over every kind of land. Extensive land grants were made at regional and sub-regional level, leading to the expansion of state society. Brahmanas ventured into new areas and accumulated vast land holdings. The above mentioned socio economic political and cultural developments made gender relations more complex in the early medieval period.

Gender relations can easily be studied by studying women's position in the patriarchal society with regard to her property rights, marriages, widowhood, sati system, education and their role in politics or administration.

11.9.1 Property Rights of Women

Brahmanical law books recognized woman's right to inherit property in the absence of a male heir. Women's right to property reduced the possibilities of its seizure by state. Jimutavahana's *Dayabhaga* (12th century CE) and Vijnaneshvara's *Mitakshara* (11th century CE) also recognized the widow's right to inherit. Inscriptions of king Kumarapala of Gujarat dated 1150 CE prescribes widow's right to inherit her husband's landed property. Another from Achchalpuram, Tamil Nadu, of Rajaditya Chola II talks about *sabha* or assembly's decision of a *brahmadeya* village to permit a widow to inherit the lands and other properties of her husband.

The earlier rights of women in the form of *stridhana* expanded in the early medieval period. The early medieval commentaries and digests amplify the scope of *stridhana*. *Mitakshara* interprets it as property belonging to the women. But the definition is not uniform in all texts. Some texts like *Dayabhaga* and *Smritichandrika* acknowledged the limited scope of *stridhana.* Initially *stridhana* was largely limited to movable wealth. However women did not have absolute ownership rights to dispose the property through sale, mortgage or gift. Women were given only right to possess. Family had superior rights over immovable property.

Early medieval inscriptions also indicate that few of the queens and wives of feudatories became fief-holder in the lifetime of their partners. Some of them donated their fiefs to temples and brahmanas to gain religions merit. Some of them contributed towards religious architecture undertook construction, repair and renovation of temple and tanks. This shows that upper class women had considerable rights and resources at their disposal. The practice was very common among the Chola queens and princesses, indicating that they might have enjoyed personal allowance or personal property. Temple dancing girls or *tevaratiyal* were also assigned shares in temple land, revenue and taxes. They had landholding rights in the temple land. Women's landholding rights varied according to their social status. *Rajatarangini* also mentions many women donors and builders in Kashmir including female rulers (Sugandha, Didda and Suryamati); queens (Ratnadevi) and some non-royal woman (e.g., Sussala, Chinta, Valga, and Sambavati).

While women had limited control over resources, men had undisputed rights over land and other resources and controlled it through family, fief and state system. Brahmanical normative laws also serve the cause of male domination over women's rights. The concept of gender equality was almost invisible. The Kashmir story is exceptional in case where both men and women defied the traditionally recognized roles and undertook same projects of donation, building and construction.

11.9.2 Marriage and Divorce

Women's position in comparison to their men folk within and outside the household also indicate their gender relations. In the earlier period *anuloma* marriages were encouraged and *pratiloma* marriage were strongly disfavored. Both these marriages resulted in the inter-mixing of *varna*s. In the same way marriage of *dvija* or *dvijati* men with lower category girls was disqualified in the early medieval period. Some texts allowed the union but only for sexual gratification. *Smritichandrika* allowed such unions and framed rules of inheritance for their offspring. In the case of *anuloma* marriage, the offspring was granted a lower status and not the same social status as that of their parents. In case of *pratiloma* marriage, irrespective of their *varna-jati* status, offspring was given a sudra status or less than that. But marriage rules were not fixed and it was more fluid than it was projected.

Early medieval texts increasingly lowered the marriageable age of girls. The same was not applicable to men. Pre-puberty marriages were made common. Al-beruni observed the same thing among Hindus and that normal age for a brahmana bride was 12 years. Early marriage made girls more vulnerable to patriarchal domination. But the practice of pre-puberty marriage was not universally followed across the all classes and strata of population. In south India as well, pre-puberty marriages and bride price (dowry) became the norm. A girl's birth was not welcomed in the family. Discrimination against the girl child was sharper in upper classes than in lower classes. Re-marriage was made next to impossible or was permitted only in exceptional circumstances.

11.9.3 Widowhood and *Niyoga*

Brahma Purana allows remarriage of a child widow or one abandoned or abducted. *Medhatithi*, a commentary on *Manusmriti*, and others disapprove widow remarriage. *Lekhapaddhati* reveals that divorce was very common among the lower sections of society while rules for divorce were not enshrined in the Brahmanical texts. Thus, upper-caste men exercised strong control over their women through the institution of marriage and prohibition of divorce.

The Brahmanical literature also disfavoured the earlier practice of *niyoga* and the views remained divided on the issue of paternity of the child born out of *niyoga*. Some ascribed paternity to the biological father and some to both. The practice became deeply problematic during the early medieval period and it seems that women increasingly lost their control over their reproductive capacity. Further, *niyoga*, especially of a woman with her younger brother-in-law, challenged the gender hierarchy on the one hand the kinship hierarchy on the other. Under such circumstances, along with the complex inheritance laws, the practice of *niyoga* was increasingly discarded in the early medieval period.

The plight of widows worsened in the early medieval period. More restrictions were added to widowhood in the early medieval texts. They prescribed the tonsure of head of widows along with austere, ascetic and celibate lifestyle. They also put restrictions on diet, attire and self-adornment. In south India, under Brahmanical influence situation worsened after 7th century CE. The tonsure of head was an early Tamil practice, later adopted in north India.

11.9.4 *Sati* (Widow-Burning)

Sati became a pronounced practice in the early medieval India. It was mainly confined to upper strata of society more particularly to ruling and military elite. The practice was a product of patriarchal society where women and her sexuality were considered a threat to the society. Physical death through immolation was considered easy than prolonged or permanent widowhood. The practice was also valorized as an act of courage and expression of fidelity. In northern India, practice of *sati* was more popular in the north-west, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. The Brahmanical texts had divergent opinions on the issue. *Medhatithi* disapproves of the practice. But *sati* was practiced in numerous cases. Non-canonical texts and epigraphic data also attest this practice. *Rajatarangini* also records several instances of *sati* in the royal families of Kashmir. Here, not only royal women but also near relatives, concubines, ministers, servants and nurses burnt themselves on the funeral pyre of the masters.

Bana also talks about the practice in *Harshacharita*. *Sati* memorial stones from western Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan and, *Satisatta* plaques from Ahichchhatra also attest the practice. The practice was glorified everywhere in India, but it remained more a status symbol than a common custom for all communities. Like hero stones, the sati stones became the a symbol of women's valour.

11.9.5 Women's Education

Women were not considered fit for formal education. *Mitakshara* explains that since women are like sudra, who had no right to *upanayana* ritual. Thus they were debarred from entering into educational life. Asahaha, 8th century commentator on *Naradasmriti*, justify women's dependency on the ground that they lacked proper education and well developed understanding. Though, against textual traditions, elite women had some access to education and military training. Lower caste women were allowed traditional training in their caste based professions. There are some stray references to Sanskrit poetesses. Eminent poet of 9thcentury, Rajashekhara refers to some poetesses, such as Shilabhattarika, Vijjika, Prabhudevi, Vikatanitamba and Subhadra. He says that 'like men, women can also be poets'. The poet Dhanadeva also mentions some poetesses such as Morika and Marula who were adept in writing poetry, achieved education, won debates and attained proficiency in erudite speech. However, we do not get a single *kavya* written by any woman; even the verses attributed to them are limited in number (about 140 verses ascribed to 33 poetesses). The authorship of these verses could not be determined easily, since they are not part of any specific *kavya*. The woman's position in society can be understood through the study of *natya* literature. In *natya* literature, even the high-class women had the right to use Sanskrit in speech. In *Mrichchhakatika*, as an exception, *ganika*Vasantasena speaks in Sanskrit, while

other high-class women speak in other dialects than Sanskrit. In *Shringaramanjarikatha*, Bhasa describes *ganika* Shringaramanjari as the epitome of learning and culture. The gendered Sanskrit literature of early medieval period shows a very marginal position of literate women.

11.9.6 Some Exceptions

The political domain remained essentially masculine, but women worked in different capacities which marked a specific feature of gender relation in the early medieval period. Thes Brahmanical literature favoured males and denied women public roles of authority. *Rajtarangini* however reveals the best examples of female rulership in the early medieval period. The text not only highlights the women sovereign rulers but also of women's agency behind the throne. The texts provides the reign of three female rulers of Kashmir (Yashovati, Sugandha and Didda of Gonda, Utpala and Yashakara dynasties respectively) in opposition to 104 male rulers. Besides the rulers, a large number of women also participated actively in court politics in different capacities as queen, princesses, low caste wives, concubines and servant girls. Besides these royal women, courtesans, temple dancers, wives and mother of *damaras* and widows were also depicted as playing important roles in court politics. Besides politics, some royal and non-royal women were also shown patronizing religious buildings and other activities. However, the nature of society and state remained patriarchal in nature. The power these royal women exercised essentially remained subject to patriarchal norms. Elsewhere, Vijayamahadevi became the ruler after her husband's death during the reign of Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi. Divabbarasi also ruled in lieu of her minor son for the Kadambas of Vanavasi in Karnataka. We also get some references from Bhaumakaras of Odisha and Kakatiyas of Warangal (Andhra Pradesh) where women became rulers. Besides being rulers, some of the royal women were appointed as governors, administrators, village chieftain, counselor etc. Cross-cousin marriages and matrimonial alliances among royal families also allowed women to use their maternal connections politically and socially even after marriage. Nevertheless, women's participation in power politics did not remain uniform in the early medieval times.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) Which of the following statement is true or false:

   a) *Dayabhaga* and *Mitaksara* recognized the widow's right to inherit. ( )

   b) Temple dancing girls were not assigned shares in temple land, revenue and taxes. ( )

   c) Brahmanical literature favoured *Niyoga* in the early medieval period. ( )

   d) Women were considered fit to take formal education. ( )

   e) Female ruler Didda belonged to Yashakara dynasty. ( )

2) Discuss the status of widows for the period.

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3) Discuss the roles of royal and non-royal women in politics and administrations.

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11.10 SUMMARY

The study of social structure and gender relations in the early medieval period point to the transformative nature of polity and society. Social norms were fluid. A hierarchy emerged in rights and statuses. Land grants strengthened the position of the brahmanas and they emerged powerful in this period. Various sub-castes emerged within the brahmana *varna*. The early medieval period also witnessed the rise of new ruling classes through the process of Rajputization. Rajputs were not a homogeneous group but divided into numerous clans. Vaishyas were not just confined to agriculture but played an important role in trade and commerce. Many new *vanij* castes emerged. There was an improvement in the status of sudras. Due to the expansion of agriculture in new areas the class of peasants expanded and many sudras took to agriculture. The condition of untouchables worsened in this period. Certain new castes like the *kayasthas*, *vaidyas* emerged and these groups cut across various *varnas*. Remote areas were brought under the state society, leading to the subjugation of indigenous tribes or their incorporation into the Brahmanical order. The dissent groups were suppressed by assigning them a sudra or untouchable status. The condition of women worsened in this period. Though lawgivers recognized a woman's right to property in the absence of a male heir. The notion of *sridhana* also expanded in this period. The marriageable age of girls was lowered to pre-puberty. Lawgivers did not formulate the law for divorce. *Anuloma* marriages were encouraged, and *pratiloma* marriages were disfavoured. More restrictions were put on widows, and widow burning or *sati* became rampant. Brahmanical literature disfavored *Niyoga*. Women were not considered fit for formal education. Some upper-class women had greater control or access to resources, and they also played significant roles in politics or administration. However, these were exceptions which cannot be used to produce a generalized picture of women's status.

11.11 KEY WORDS

Dvija : literally meaning 'twice born'; those entitled to perform *upanayana* (sacred thread) ceremony.

Gotra : the clan system of brahmanas later applicable on non-brahmanas as well.

Anuloma : marriage between higher *varna* male and lower *varna* female.

Pratiloma : reversal of *Anuloma*. Marriage between lower *varna* male and higher *varna* female.

Patriarchy : A social system where men exercise domination over women.

Agrahara : land or village gifted by a king.

Niyoga : an ancient tradition in which a woman is allowed to have sex with her deceased husband's brother.

11.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) a) True, b) True, c) False, d) True, e) True.

2) See Sub-Section 11.5.5

3) See Sub-Section 11.5.4

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) a) True, b) False, c) False, d) False and e) True.

2) See Sub-Sections11.9.3 and 11.9.4

3) See Sub-Section 11.9.6

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UNIT 12 TRADE, TRADE ROUTES AND MARITIME TRADE[1]

Structure

12.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will learn about:

- the theory of urban decline in the early medieval period;
- arguments and data on urbanization that belie a picture of urban decay;
- trade and trade routes in north and south India; and
- long-distance maritime linkages between India and ports overseas.

12.1 INTRODUCTION

The extensive Gupta Empire and the proliferation of monarchical states in many new areas in north India in the early medieval period was based on a strong agrarian

[1] This Unit has been taken from MHI 05, Block 3, Units 14 and 15.

base. In fact the immense spread of agrarian economy during the period from CE 300 to 1300 has led to an impression that the economy was greatly ruralised; the non-agrarian sector of the economy, on the other hand, underwent a decline from CE 600-1000. It is after CE 1000 that crafts, commerce and urban centres seem to have revived again. This perception has generated a considerable scholarly controversy.

In this Unit we will be looking at the arguments which have been offered in favour of the thesis on the decline in trade and commerce in the early medieval period in India. We will also see how the data that has emerged on trade, trade routes and extensive maritime commercial linkages proves the above contention as a fallacy. In the following pages substantial information is provided on trade and coastal links both in north and south India.

12.2 SOURCES

The period under survey was marked by many shifts from the previous period. This is also indicated by new types of source materials and documents which themselves were a witness to changing conditions. The most important source material for the study of this period is the huge number of inscriptions. Most inscriptions after the fourth century belonged to the category of copper plates (*tamrasasana/tamrapatta*). These copper plates recorded transfer of revenue-free landed property by royal orders to different kinds of donees. Though this practice probably appeared first in the Deccan around second century CE, the practice of issuing land grants became fully established from the fourth century onwards and assumed an all-India proportion after CE 600. Most of the copper plates record the creation of revenue-free grant of land to a brahmana, a group of brahmanas or a religious institution (a Buddhist monastery, a Brahmanical temple or a *matha* or a Jaina establishment). Such grants of land to religious donees (recipients of endowments) were known as *agraharas*.

Being official records of grants of land, the copper plates are invaluable for understanding the rural economy, especially for understanding the process of the transfer of landed property, rural settlement patterns, crops, irrigation projects, peasants and agrarian revenue demands etc. However, on some occasions the grant may also throw light on important merchants and craftsmen whose presence as important witnesses to the pious act of donation of land was recorded.

Merchants also figure in copper plate grants as a group or as an assembly on certain auspicious days when the merchants decided to voluntarily offer some cesses on the commodities they dealt in in favour of a deity or temple. In such grants not only merchants but also various types of commodities naturally appear. These inscriptions also inform us about various types of market places from some of which tolls and customs (*sulka*) were collected, thereby indicating the revenue bearing potential of trade. Also known are inscriptions recording individual donations by merchants, either in favour of a deity or for some works of public benefactions.

Information on trade and urban centres is available from voluminous legal or theoretical treatises (*sastras/Dharmasastras*). Theoretical treatises (S*mritis*) by

Vishnu, *Vasishtha*, *Brihaspati* and *Narada* will be useful for our purpose. Commentaries on these texts (e.g. the commentaries on the *Manusmriti* and *Yajnavalkyasmriti*) also offer some data on this subject. Relevant data can be gleaned from technical treatises like the famous lexicon, *Amarakosa* by Amarasimha (fifth-sixth centuries CE), the *Abhidhanachintamani* and the *Desinamamala* by Hemachandra (eleventh-twelfth century) and the *Lekhapaddhati*. Some impressions of commercial activities are available in the vast creative literature, e.g. the works of Kalidasa, the *Mricchakatikam* of Sudraka, the *Dasakumaracarita* of Dandin and various types of Jain texts. It is important to take note of the fact that two well-known Jaina texts *Jagaducarita* and *Vastupalamahatmyam* were biographies of two premier merchants of early medieval Gujarat.

Non-indigenous textual materials are of particular importance as source materials for the history of trade, especially the external trade of India. The Chinese accounts of Fa-hsien (early fifth century AD), Huien Tsang (first half of the 7th century), I-tsing (late seventh century) and Chau ju Kua (AD 1225) are invaluable sources for the understanding of trade in India. Arabic and Persian texts on geography and travel (those by Sulaiman (CE 851), ibn Khordadbih (CE 882), al Masudi (CE 915), Buzurg ibn Shahriyar (CE 995), the anonymous author of Hudud al Alam (CE 982), Al Biruni (CE 973-1048), and Al Idrisi (CE 1162) are replete with information on Indian commodities and India's trade linkages with West Asia, though these accounts are occasionally stereotyped as many of the Arab authors did not visit India. To this may be added the late sixth century CE accounts of the Syrian Christian monk Cosmas Indicopleustes and the famous descriptions of India by the Venetian traveller Marco Polo (late thirteenth century). An unusual type of source is the letters of medieval Jewish traders, who regularly traded between the west coast of India and the Red Sea. Though the main point of their contacts was the Karnataka and Malabar coasts, these unique business letters, recording the impressions of the actual participants in long-distance trade, furnish significant data on trade in the Gujarat coast.

In sharp contrast to the wealth of field archaeological data for the period from 600 BCE to CE 300, the subsequent period of one millennium has yielded only handful of excavated and explored materials. Unlike the early historical settlements, the early medieval ones have not been systematically explored and excavated and therefore the field archaeological data on trade and urbanization is quite inadequate. The Gupta rulers are credited with the issuance of superb gold coins and also silver coins. The gold coinage of the Gupta Emperors was imitated by a number of smaller powers in the seventh century CE. But coins of precious metal (gold and silver) became fewer in the early medieval times than those of the preceding centuries. Minting of quality coins was limited to a handful number of places in north India; it is after CE 1000 that the issuing of precious coinage once again revived. Numismatic sources thus offer lesser data than that furnished by early historical coins. This itself has been interpreted by some scholars as a prime indication of dwindling commerce, especially foreign trade of India during the 600-1000 CE period. The evidence of coins found in some parts of India during the early medieval times will be discussed in the relevant sections.

12.3 TRADE, MARKET PLACES AND URBAN CENTRES CE 650-1300

Studies of these six centuries and a half have in recent years generated significant debates among historians. The period in question began to attract the attention of historians since the mid-thirties of the twentieth century, though initially scholars showed a distinct preference for dynastic history. Politically, north India and the whole of the subcontinent abounded in monarchical powers. But unlike the powers of the pre-600 CE none of the powers exercised paramount position over either north India, the Deccan or the far south. The political scene is featured by the prevalence of a number of regional powers of great strength and many local powers. Another notable character of the politico-administrative set up is the presence of numerous feudatories or *samantas* of various grades and ranking. The political scenario is much more complex than that of the previous centuries.

All these rulers issued numerous land grants which provide the main source of information not only for the political life but also for social, economic and cultural history.

12.4 DEBATES ON URBAN DECAY:ARGUMENTS FOR DECLINE

As we have pointed out earlier, land grants understandably contain extremely valuable data on early medieval rural society and economy. But the very nature and purpose of these grants leave little scope for recording activities of craftsmen and merchants in urban centres. Information on the non-agrarian sector of the economy in copper plates is relatively scarce. This is in sharp contrast to the donative records and administrative documents prior to CE 600 where merchants, craftsmen, various professional groups were prominently mentioned often in the context of non-rural settlements. A number of scholars have argued that the change in the mode of documents and documentation is in fact an indicator of the change in the social and economic life. The huge number of land grants, according to them, implies a strong ruralisation of the economy after CE 600/650. In such a changing material milieu the relevance of craftsmen, merchants and urban centres appear to have lessened. It has been argued that the decline in India's flourishing and brisk commerce with the Roman Empire after the fourth century adversely affected India's commercial economy. The period from CE 600-1000 did not witness India's meaningful participation in long-distance trade, and as a result there was little impetus to commodity crafts production and their exchange in an international network. It is implied therefore that India's long distance trade revived after CE 1000 mainly because of the growth in the trade with the expanding Arab commercial network.

The data from epigraphic materials has been supplemented by information from literary texts, especially the *Puranas*. A close perusal of the major *Puranas*, which appear to have taken their present shape by around $4^{th}/5^{th}$ century CE, has led many scholars to conclude that the Puranic descriptions imply sharp changes in social, economic and political situations. These scholars perceive major crises in

the socio-economic and political set up after the fifth century. Attention has been drawn to Puranic descriptions of the impoverished conditions of merchants in the *Kaliyuga*, the worst of the Ages in the traditional scheme of four Ages in Indian thought. The merchants, according to the *Brihannaradiya Purana*, would be reduced to the position of servants (*karmopajivin*) and rice-husker (*tandulakarin*) in the *Kali* age.

Only a handful of merchants are explicitly mentioned in the inscriptions of north India during the period from CE 600 to 1000. Tamralipta, the premier port not only of Bengal, but also of the entire land-locked Ganga valley, eclipsed in the eighth century, mainly on account of the siltation of the river on which it stood. The last known epigraphic reference to Tamralipta is found in an eighth century inscription from the Hazaribagh region in Bihar. The port of Barbaricum in the delta of the river Indus did not enjoy any economic prominence in the early medieval times. The port of Daibul in the same region began to come to limelight as an international port after tenth century. Similarly, the premier port in Gujarat, namely Barygaza or Broach, was past its former glory. The fading out of these three ports could have adversely affected the long-distance maritime trade of north India. All these have been taken to demonstrate the gradual decline of trade and commerce in the early medieval north India.

The above portrayal of dwindling trade in the early medieval period has been further driven home by the paucity of coins of precious metals. Three outstanding regional powers of early medieval times, namely the Palas and the Senas of Bengal and Bihar (*c*. CE 750- 1200) and the Rashtrakutas of the Deccan (*c*. CE 754- 974) did not issue any coins. Another major power, the Gurjara-Pratiharas of Kannauj and western India, struck silver coins but of doubtful weight standard and metallic purity. Such coins would have been unsuitable as reliable metallic medium of exchange in the long-distance trade because of their questionable intrinsic value which did not match their face value. A notable exception to this declining monetary situation is seen in the issue of quality coins by the Shahi rulers of Punjab and north-western India. It has been pointed out that the territory under the Shahi rulers of north-western India had not yielded any copper plates. Thus some scholars would like to underline that money economy and land-grant economy were mutually incompatible.

In many copper plate grants from the Ganga valley and especially from Bengal, coin terms like *purana*, *dharana*, and *dramma* occur occasionally. Though these coin terms were known, no actual specimen of such coins has been discovered from the realms of the Palas and the Senas. On the other hand large number of copper plates often mention *kapardakas* or cowries. The expression *kapardaka-purana* also figures in these copper plates. The latter term does not point to a particular type of coin, but refers to a *purana* or a silver coin in terms of its equivalence to cowry-shells. The traditional arithmetical tables of early medieval eastern India indicates that the ratio of a silver coin to a cowry-shell stood at 1:1280. In other words 1280 cowries were equivalent to one silver coin. The wide use of the expression *kapardaka-purana* in early medieval inscriptions, hitherto unknown before eighth century, may suggest that cowry-shells had become the principal medium of exchange. These seem to have replaced the metallic currency which lost its relevance on account of its questionable intrinsic value. Excavations

at Colgong near Bhagalpur in eastern Bihar have yielded large number of cowries, thereby providing the material proof of their regular circulation as a medium of exchange.

It has been pointed out that cowries could have been only a poor and inadequate substitute for metallic money. The transportation of a huge bulk of cowry-shells would have created more problems than advantages; in other words, cowry-shells are viewed as unsuitable for long-distance commerce. These could be at the best useful for local level trade and were 'restrictive of long-distance trade'. Thus the widespread prevalence of cowry-shells as notional currency is interpreted as a further evidence of the decline of long-distance trade.

The perception of a 'monetary anaemia' afflicting the erstwhile vibrant commercial economy is strongly present in many historical researches. Dwindling trade and the relative absence of metallic money were not conducive to the large scale production of commodities for exchange related purposes. The result was not only immense dependence on agriculture, but also of a self-sufficient village economy. All the needs of the villages are suggested to have been met in villages which left little urge for the movement of commodities from outside. The relative lack of trade thus brought into existence self-sufficient villages which were closed and stagnant.

The lack of coined money could have posed serious problems for rulers to pay salaries to their officers. Under such circumstances, the ruler had to take recourse to assigning land to his officers in lieu of cash. This gave rise to the practice of issuing secular land grants, in addition to grants of lands to religious persons and institutions. The assignment of service or secular land grants further impoverished the royal exchequer and corroded the central authority. The adverse effects of languishing commerce and 'monetary anaemia' were not thus limited to economic life, but paved the way for a decentralised polity and parcellised sovereignty.

In course of time these powerful functionaries who were the donees of grants not only amassed enormous wealth from the areas assigned to them, but became locally very powerful. This further undermined the authority of the ruler, the apex political authority. In other words, the ruler gradually suffered considerable loss of his economic and political prerogatives at the cost of these feudatories and vassals.

The conditions in economy and polity resulted in the genesis and consolidation of feudalism in India in the early medieval period. As the economy, characterised as feudal, was steeped in ruralism and gave little scope to trade, it is supposed to have been hardly conducive to urban growth. In marked contrast to the wealth of archaeological data on urban centres of early historical period, excavated and explored information about early medieval cities is much poorer. Many of the former urban centres have yielded evidence of their decaying material milieu, haphazard layout and utilization of re-used bricks in this period. These are interpreted as clear signs of de-urbanization over greater parts of the subcontinent, including north India, during the CE 600-1000 phase. A Prakrit text mentions that urban centres turned into villages (*nayarani gamabhuayani hohinti*). It has been argued that the decline in India's commerce played a crucial role in urban decay. Analyses of the copper plates of the Palas, Senas and the Pratiharas point to lesser references to terms like *nagara* and *pura*. Copper plates are replete with references

to *jayaskandhavaras* or victorious army camps. Such *jayaskandhavaras* began to act as politico-military headquarters. It has been inferred that urban centres as areas for exchange and crafts production gradually faded away and were replaced by military and political headquarters.

Early medieval north India witnessed the rise of many centres of pilgrimage (*tirtha*) which as sacred centres sometime assumed urban proportions. The historians of Indian feudalism argue that as urban centres lost their relevance as trading zones, they became religious centres which undermined their role as centres of production/ manufacture of commodities and exchange. Three areas showed typical symptoms of a feudal economy: Bengal under the Palas and the Senas, the Gurjara-Pratihara kingdom in the Ganga-Yamuna doab, and the Rashtrakuta domains in the Deccan.

12.5 DEBATES ON URBAN DECAY:ARGUMENTS AGAINST

The above portrayal of a declining commercial and urban economy in north India during the early medieval period, however, has not gone uncontested. Many scholars have pointed out factual inaccuracies in the formulation of the feudalism theory. Attempts have been made by using various sources, including epigraphic materials, to show that trade did not alarmingly decline and that there was no major de-urbanisation over an extensive area. It is beyond any doubt that the practice of land grants, often issued with reference to lands lying in the uncultivated, unsettled forest or fallow tracts, paved the way for unprecedented rural expansion. But does the proliferation of agrarian settlements necessarily imply consolidation of self-sufficient and closed villages? Two essential and indispensable requirements of human life, namely salt and iron, were not available locally. If these items were to be procured from non-local sources, then serious doubts can be raised about the perception of the self-sufficiency and closed nature of early medieval villages.

In the following sections considerable information is provided about trade, trade routes and maritime linkages both of north and south India which attest to the fact that not all trade declined in the early medieval India. Some ports, trading centres and routes were witness to the flourishing trade and commerce in this period. In fact many centres rose to prominence in this period despite the fact that many others eclipsed. Thus the theory of complete decay and desertion does not hold water.

12.6 PORTS AND TRADE ROUTES IN NORTH INDIA

Bengal, located in the Ganga delta and watered by many rivers, had several riverine ports facilitating inland riverine communications. Early medieval copper plates from Bengal often mention small boat stations (*nau-danda, nau-bandha*) as landmarks in rural spaces which had innumerable streams and rivulets (*srotasvini, ganginika*), canals, and channels. Of course the most important riverine route was along the Ganga or Bhagirathi on which plied many vessels (*sa khalu Bhagirathipathapravartmana-nauvata*). From the late seventh century onwards, the eastern part of the delta began to have riverine ports. One such port was Devaparvata (modern Mainamati-Lalmai, Bangladesh) which according to the

copper plates (from seventh to early tenth century) was located on the river Kshiroda on which plied many boats. Another copper plate of *c.* CE 971, found from Sabhar (close to Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh) records an unusual place-name: Vangasagara-sambhandariyaka. Sabhar is located on the river Vamsi and functions as a small inland riverine port. The term sambhandariyaka may be taken to mean a place offering adequate or proper facilities (*samyak*) for storage of goods (*bhandara*). The very name Sabhar is suggested to have been derived from the word, *sambhara*, meaning a stock of commodities. There is a strong likelihood that at Sabhar or ancient Sambhara stood a *sambhandariyaka*. This warehousing facility at Sabhar may bring it close to *putabhedanas* of earlier times. References to mercantile activities figure in various types of literary texts. The *knivalayamala* of Girasenasuri (*c*. 8th century) offers a lively account of an assembly of merchants (*vanikmeli*) who congregated at the well-known port town of Surparaka. Though the account is probably based on earlier memories, the interesting point is the exchange of the experiences of merchants among themselves. The same port also appears in the *Jatakamala* of Aryasura (*c.* 7th/8th century). At Surparaka, according to this text, lived the Buddha in one of his previous births as a master mariner, conversant with the art of bringing in (*aharana*) and taking out (*apaharana*) ships. These leave an impression of continuity and not cessation of commerce, and is contrary to the notion that commerce was on decline in the wake of feudal social formation.

The vast plains of north India were well frequented by several overland routes of communication, some of them gaining particular prominence in the early medieval times. Thus Chia-tan (785-805) informs us about a route which ran from Kamarupa to Magadha by touching Pundravardhana (north Bengal) and Kajanigla (near the Rajmahal Hills). A number of overland routes connected Kanyakubja with different parts of India, as al Biruni reported. One such route ran from Kanyakubja to Gangasagara (at the confluence of the Ganga with the sea) through Ayodhya, Varanasi, Pataliputra and Monghyr. Another route starting from Kanyakubja connected Prayaga (Prayagraj, earlier Allahabad), then through the Rewa region of Madhya Pradesh reached Odisha and from there extended as far south as Kanchipuram (near Chennai). The Ganga-Yamuna doab was well connected with western India, according to al Biruni. Thus Mathura maintained an overland linkage with Ujjayini and Bayana (Rajasthan) and from both the places it was possible to reach the well-known port of Somnath in Kathiawad.

In the twelfth and early thirteenth century copper plates of some Sena kings one notes a new kind of settlement, named *caturaka*. The term *caturaka* is not encountered in the Bengal inscriptions prior to the twelfth century. It means literally a place which stood at the convergence of four roads. The *caturaka* was not a village, but it was also not a large urban market area. One such *caturaka* was known as Betadda-caturaka on the river Ganga (*purve Jahnavisima*). This is identified as Betore in Howrah district, West Bengal which came into considerable prominence in the sixteenth century as an inland riverine port connecting the Ganga with the famous port of Saptagrama on the river Sarasvati. The beginning of the role of Betore as a riverine port may thus go back to the twelfth century. These inland port towns in the Ganga delta occupied a position intermediate between the rural hinterland and large urban centres and played a role more or

less similar to that of the early medieval *mandapikas* of northern and western India. The above sources thus belie the image of a slump in trade in north India.

Indirect evidence of commerce can also be gleaned from the list of various revenue-collecting officers available in the copper plates. Thus the references to the *hattapati* (officer in charge of *hattas*), *saulkika* (officer in charge of collection of *sulka* or tolls and customs), *tarika* (officer in charge of collection of *tara* or ferry dues), *gamagamika* (officer looking after ingress and egress), *nauvata* and *arddha-nauvata* (senior and junior officers supervising movements of mercantile fleet) cannot but highlight movements of merchants and commodities in north India. This also implies the existence of some routes of communications, especially the overland communication in north India. In the first half of the ninth century Viradharadeva undertook a journey from Nagarahara (Jelalabad, Afghanistan) to Sambodhi (Bodhgaya, Bihar). The inscription which records this also describes Viradharadeva's delight at the sight of many of his country-men at Bodhgaya. This amply demonstrates the regularity and frequency of travel along this extensive overland communication route. This overland route must have been particularly significant for the import of quality war-horses from the north-western borderland of India into the Ganga valley. It is therefore not surprising that the Pala inscriptions tell us about the eagerness of the Pala kings to procure horses from the northern quarters. This is also corroborated by the *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* of Minhaj-us Siraj who impresses upon us the regular arrival of Arab horse dealers in Nudia (the capital of the Sena king, Lakshmanasena, *c.* CE 1179-1199). Bengal's linkages with the north-eastern frontier areas and Kamarupa in particular are amply borne out by inscriptions, Minhaj's accounts and Marco Polo's travels (*c.* CE 1254- 1324). Gujarat under the Chaulukya rulers experienced considerable improvements in overland connections. Anahilapura, the premier city of the Chalukya kingdom (Patan), was well connected with Munjapura, Jhunjhuvada, Viramgam, Wadhwan, Saela, Vanthali. On the other hand it was also linked up with Varanasi, Prayaga and Dhara (in Central India). Important ports of Gujarat, like, Stambhapura or Cambay and Somanatha, maintained effective communications with inland towns, especially those in the Malwa plataeu. Tamralipta, the premier port in the east till the eighth century, was visited by merchants from Ayodhya. In CE 1024 the Cola king Rajendra's daring raid from coastal Andhra on Vangala-desa in Bengal clearly indicates the overland linkages of Bengal with Odisha and from then onwards to Andhra. In the far north-west, Multan in the Punjab rose to considerable prominence as a major centre of trade which was connected with the Ganga plains and also with the north-western borderland of the subcontinent. Multan looms large in the Arab accounts as a major trade centre.

12.7 MARITIME LONG DISTANCE TRADE (NORTH INDIA)

The above data and arguments do not suggest a slump in trade in north India during the early medieval period. A careful perusal of available information may not also suggest languishing trade of north India with areas overseas. For this purpose, the Arabic and Persian texts provide us with significant information. It is surprising that the proponents of Indian feudal formation have generally neglected

these sources for the understanding of the long-distance trade of India.

The rise and spread of Islam in West Asia, parts of Africa and in the Mediterranean region right up to Spain proved to be conducive to commercial movement. Islam is characterised by a distinct orientation to trade and urbanism. The establishment and consolidation of the Abbasid Caliphate in the eighth century facilitated overland communication between West Asia and Central Asia, China and South Asia. But more spectacular developments are noticeable in the maritime commerce. The Abbasid Caliphate was instrumental in increasing the importance of the Persian Gulf (Darya-i-Akhzar) with Siraf as the premier port in the northern part of the Gulf. The foundation of the Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt (Misr) in CE 969 led to a major change in maritime commerce. It resulted in the rise of the Red Sea as the principal sea-corridor of western Indian Ocean, facilitating thereby sea-borne trade with India and also the Mediterranean regions.

The long-distance maritime trade in the Indian Ocean had its western termini either at Siraf or at Alexandria in Egypt and the eastern termini in maritime Southeast Asia and also the coast of China. These maritime movements across the Indian Ocean, guided and shaped by the predictable alterations of the monsoon wind system, had to include India which stood at the centre of the Indian Ocean. The very designation of this maritime space as al Bahr al Hind (the Sea or Ocean of India) strongly underlines the familiarity of Arabic-speaking merchants and travellers with the Indian ports and harbours. Two segments of the Bahr al Hind were well known to the Arab authors: *Bahr Larvi* (Lar=Lata or southern Gujarat; the sea of Gujarat, i.e. the Arabian Sea) and *Bahr Harkal* (the sea of Harikela; Harikela stood for the south-eastern part of Bangladesh; thus *Bahr Harkal* denotes the Bay of Bengal). We may recall that in a copper plate of CE 971 the Bay of Bengal has already been mentioned as Vangasagara.

Though ports are numerically more in the Deccan and the far south of India, a number of ports are known in north India too from the Arabic and Persian texts. It is true that these texts speak of greater volume and regularity of trade in the post-1000 CE phase, but there are clear indications of India's maritime trade even before CE 1000.

Accounts of the first Arab invasion of Sindh in eighth century in the *Chachnama* and the accounts of an Arabic Historian al Baladhuri (d. *c.* 892 CE) demonstrate the importance of the port of Daybul, located in the Indus delta. Already by this time, Daybul was noted for its maritime contacts with Sri Lanka. The ruins of this early medieval port have been unearthed at the site of Banbhore in Pakistan. The prominence of Daybul continues in the accounts of Arab writers of the ninth-twelfth centuries. In the western sea-board of northern India it is, however, the Gujarat coast that stole the limelight. Though Broach, called Baruz in the Arab accounts, had faded away, a great port came into commercial prominence, viz. Sristambhapura/ Sristambhatirtha or modern Cambay. It figures repeatedly in the Arabic accounts of Sulaiman (*c*. CE 851), ibn Khurdadbih (*c*. CE 882), al Masudi (CE 915), Buzurg ibn Shahriyar (CE 955), the anonymous author of the *Hudud al Alam* (CE 982), al Biruni (CE 1034), al Idrisi (CE 1162), Chau-ju-kua (CE 1225), Marco Polo (CE 1295) and Ibn Battutta (early fourteenth century). It maintained contacts with both the Persian Gulf ports like Siraf and Hormuz and Aden at the

mouth of the Red Sea. Two early medieval Sanskrit texts, the *Vastupalamahatmyam* and the *Jagaducarita*, speak highly of this port as the centre of activities of two premier Gujarati merchants, Vastupala and Jagadu (twelfth/thirteenth century). Cambay, certainly an outstanding port, was ably supported by several smaller ports which could have acted as feeder ports to the principal port of Cambay. These were Somanatha (figuring prominently in a Sanskrit-Arabic bilingual inscription of CE 1264), al Dyb (Diu, mentioned in a twelfth century Jewish trade letter) and Ghogha. The close contacts between Hormuz (in Sanskrit texts called *Ardrapura*) and Cambay, Somanatha and Ghogha are well documented in epigraphic and literary sources. Ghogha is specifically mentioned as a point of arrival for ships from Hormuz (*hurmujivahana*). The port of Cambay was also well linked with a number of ports in the Konkan coast like, Thana, Sanjan and Chaul all of which are mentioned in the Arabic accounts. These ports in Gujarat and the neighbouring north Konkan coast also appear in Indian textual sources and in inscriptions, generally labelled as *velakulas* or ports.

Attention now may be turned to the ports on the Bengal coast, the major outlet for the land-locked Ganga valley to the sea. It is true that nothing is heard about the active role of the great port of Tamralipta after the eighth century CE. One, however, cannot also miss that as early as in the first half of the seventh century Huien Tsang was impressed with the sea-borne connections of Samatata (eastern extreme of the Ganga delta) with certain areas in Southeast Asia. This was happening when Tamralipta was at its glorious best. That Samatata-Harikela region was emerging as a major point of contact with maritime links with Southeast Asia in late seventh century will be evident from the accounts of I-tsing (CE 675-95 in India). The Arab accounts, from the mid-ninth century to early fourteenth century, speak very highly of a port in the kingdom of DHM (pronounced as Dhaum, i.e. Pala king Dharmapala), thereby locating it in the Bengal delta. This port is Samandar. The name is probably derived from the term *samudra* or sea. Ibn Battutta knew it by the name Sudkawan. It was located at the mouth of a river and close to it was an island, which according to al Idrisi (CE 1162) was full of merchants from diverse countries. Idrisi also informs us that the port was located close to a creek or inlet (*khawar*) which facilitated ingress and egress of vessels. Ibn Battutta undertook a journey from Sudkawan far up in the north to Habang which is identified with Habiganj in Bangladesh. He undertook a riverine journey, sailing along the Blue river. This river is generally identified with Meghna. The various literary accounts about Samandar/Sudkawan have led to its identification with a port located near modern Chittagong (Chattagram). In fact, the area had come to be known as *navachattamandala* in two vase inscriptions, respectively of the eighth and the tenth centuries. The decline and loss of Tamralipta seems to have been considerably compensated with the rise of this new port in the eastern-most part of the delta. Samandar, according to the Arabic texts maintained commercial linkages with Serendib (Sri Lanka), Uranshin (Odisha), Ganja (Kanchipuram in Coromandel). Ibn Battutta, though belonging to a later period, speaks of the voyages between Sudkawan and the Maldives. We are not sure about Sudkawan's connections with Southeast Asia. But it is well known from a copper plate from Nalanda that the king of Java, Balaputradeva, requested the reigning Pala king, Devapala (CE 802-37) to grant five villages to the Nalanda monastery; the request of the Javanese king was duly honoured. This is a clear signal of the regular

cultural and maritime contacts between Bengal and Southeast Asia. Such cultural contacts appear to have been situated amidst frequent commercial contacts between the two areas. The significant point is that the Arab authors speak of the availability of fine quality textiles, Qamaruni aloe wood, rhinoceros horns and swords at the port of Samandar which was probably shipping these items. Qamaruni aloe wood, standing second only to the aloe wood of Multan, was not a local product of Bengal or Samandar itself. It was brought from Kamarupa along the river to Samandar. The rhinoceros horn too appears to have reached Samandar from north-eastern parts of India. The sword was probably a manufactured item from Anga (eastern Bihar) which was famous for the making of this weapon. Textiles were in all probability local products of Bengal which earned sustained fame for the production of finest quality cotton textiles. The port of Samandar, therefore, commanded an extensive hinterland. As we have earlier pointed out, smaller and inland riverine ports in the Ganga delta (for instance, Devaparvata and Vangasagarasambhandariyaka) are likely to have provided crucial linkages between the premier port in the Bengal delta and the interior. There is little to dispute the presence of brisk long-distance maritime trade in the early medieval Bengal. It is difficult to subscribe to the perception of a languishing long-distance trade in early medieval Bengal.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) Analyze the role of inscriptions and coinage in assessing the development of trade and commerce during AD 300-1300.

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2) Discuss the debates among the historians over the issue of urban decay. In your opinion which argument stands out more convincing and why?

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12.8 TRADE ROUTES IN SOUTH INDIA

Regions like Pudukkottai and Ramanathapuram , Salem and Coimbatore lay on ancient trade routes linking Karnataka and Kerala with Tamil Nadu and further south to the Mannar gulf leading to Sri Lanka. Their commercial importance dates from the *Sangam* age, marked by the distribution of early Tamil Brahmi inscriptions and Roman coin hoards apart from Punch-marked coins. They continued well into the medieval times and facilitated the movement of trade from the western coast to the eastern coast. The emergence of coastal towns such as Tiruppalaivanam, Mayilappur, Mamallapuram and further south the southern ports of Kaverippumpattinam, Nagappattinam (on the Chola coast), Tondi, Kayal and other towns on the Pandya coast would also indicate a coastal route. Tondi

(Tittandatanapuram) was an important coastal town where several merchant groups like the Anjuvannam, Manigramam and Samanta Pandasalis entered into an agreement for the levy of certain taxes for endowments to the local temple. The Kamudi and Piranmalai inscriptions of the 13th-14th centuries refer to 18 *pattinams*, 32 *valarpurams* and 64 *kadigaittavalams*, all of which indicate the rise of several towns, representing coastal towns, fairs and market towns of different degrees of importance in the trading network of south India. In the Kongu region, in which Mudikondacolapuram was a major trade centre, several towns south and north of the Kaveri emerged with the increasing movement of merchants, who made grants to local temples. Perur was a considerably important and large town where merchants with the title *Chakravarti* exercised great influence.

12.9 MARITIME LINKAGES OF SOUTH INDIA

Foreign trade received a set-back especially after the decline of maritime trade in the early historical period. Conventional narratives refer to trade routes (overland and riverine), commercial centres, professional bodies of merchants but much less is known about coastal networks, which seem to be rarer.

There was regular coastal traffic along the entire littoral; particularly the Konkan and Malaya region emerged into prominence during this period. Let us discuss the coastal trade and maritime links of the different regions of the south.

12.9.1 Karnataka

Trans-oceanic contacts were on the increase and ports like Bhatkal, Basrur, Barakur, Karwar, Honavar, Kasargod, Kumbala, Mangalore, Sirur, Sadasivagad, Malpe, Ankola, Mirjan developed on the Konkan and Kanara coasts. Honavar was one of the major ports. There was regular coastal traffic and periodical long distance traffic for the unloading and collection of goods at the coastal towns brought into bigger ports like Honavar. Kasargod was of greater importance for Muslim merchants. Mangalore was the biggest town for Arab travellers.

Arab writers refer to articles of export such as rice, pepper, silk, coconut, bananas, teak, aloe, amber, bamboo, camphor, cardamom, cloves, mango, sulphur and myrobalan. Marco Polo lists the imports such as copper, brocades of gold, silk, and drugs. Horses, elephants, pearls, cloth, musk, and sandal from Gandhara, Turushka, Simhala, Chola, Magadha, and Maleyala were other important items of trade, if one were to take the inscriptions of the itinerant traders into consideration. Commodities like teak, coconut, spices (pepper and ginger) and textiles are found in one of the most impressive lists in an inscription of CE 1204 from Belgaum, which witnessed a major convergence of many types of merchants in north Karnataka. Items of trade also included regular consumer goods like paddy, rice, black pepper, asafoetida, green ginger, turmeric, betel leaves, areca nuts, coconuts, palm leaves, grass, sugarcane, coarse sugar, plantains and myrobalan. It is not clear which of these were transported by coastal crafts. The coastal network for trade in both agrarian products and manufactured ones apart from luxuries was brisk and impressive.

12.9.2 The Konkan Coastal Trade and Voyages

The Konkan coast, former Aparanta i.e., the Maharashtra coast (north and south Konkan) and its importance was known to classical sources. However, the inter-linkages between the ports of northern and southern Konkan are not clearly known in the early period. The term Konkana becomes more prominent only in the early medieval period. Kamkam in the Arabian texts is invariably equated with the kingdom of Balhara i.e., the Rashtrakutas. The distinction between north Konkan and Tulwan (Dabhole to Goa–Juwah Sindapur) was not known in the 4th and 5th centuries CE. From the Badami Chalukya period (6th-8th centuries CE) interest in controlling certain parts of this coast increased especially after the conquest of Lata (south coastal Gujrat) by the Chalukyas. Henceforth coastal linkages between the northern Konkan coast and the Gujarat Kathiawad coasts developed and coastal voyages became regular.

The early medieval period witnessed the emergence of more and newer ports in the Konkan littorals than in the early historical period. A great number of ports on the Konkan coast appear from the 9th century CE which are mentioned in the Arabic and Persian sources. Kolhapur is known from the Jewish letters of merchants as an important business centre. A number of harbours from north to south are mentioned such as Samyana/Sindan (=Sanjan in Thana district), Sristhanaka (Thana), Cemuliya/ Saimur (Chaul in Kolaba district), Nagapura (Nagav in Kolaba district), Balipattana (Kharepatan in Ratnagiri district), Gopakapattana/ Gove (Goa), Chandrapura/ Sindapur (Chandore to the south of Goa). Sindapur is prominently referred to in the Arab sources. Gove of the Kadambas was an important port and capital. Arab accounts such as those of Sulaiman and Ibn Khurdadbeh (9th century) give interesting facts about the trading network connecting Konkan and Malabar with Cambay (Kanbaya), corroborated by the Persian geographical text *Hudud al Alam* (CE 982). Surparaka i.e. Sopara near Mumbai was also known to foreign accounts. The long coastal voyages from Konkan through Malabar to Sri Lanka established links with the interior trading and craft centres. Hence the Silaharas, the most formidable power on the Maharashtra coast, tried to establish close control over the whole Konkan coast. Till the 11th century CE the ports of north Konkan were more important, but from the 11th century the situation changed with the southern Konkan ports also becoming prominent, particularly Balipattana mentioned in the epigraphic records of the Silaharas (present Kharepatan in the Ratnagiri district). Coastal voyages between Balipattana and the area around Goa connected Chandrapura and Cemuliya (Chaul) to Balipattana. Balipattana was the point of convergence of vessels near Goa and those from the north of Balipattana. Tolls on vessels at Balipattana yielded considerable revenue. Exemptions were given to encourage commercial links with the two important harbours of north and south sectors. The development of coastal trade in the northern sector of the Konkan littorals, with Balipattana in a more prominent position, appears to have resulted because of the gradual spread of agrarian settlements, diversification of crops, proliferation of crafts and growth of commerce in Karnataka during the early medieval times. Sindapur, which had close connection with Goa, is known from the navigational manual of Arabian navigator Ahmed ibn Majid (the celebrated *muallim* of the 15th century). Under local Kadamba rulers Gopakapattana, Gopapura and Gove (Goa) emerged as the

most important ports. References to pilgrimages from Goa (by Kadamba rulers) to Kolhapur, Somanatha, on the Kathiawad coast (1038 and 1125) i.e. from south Konkan to the Kathiawad coast (Saurashtra) via Thana in the 11th century, to Arab Muslim merchants rescuing a Kadamba ruler from shipwreck and becoming even administrative heads in Goa point to its importance. The term *Nauvittaka* interchangeable with the Arab *nakhuda* (master of the ship) evidently refers to a ship owning merchant. A *mijigiti* (*masjid*) built by him was maintained by tolls at Goa from vessels from Gurjjara, Saurashtra, Lata, Konkan, etc. Linkages between Manjrur, a leading port in the northern part of Malabar and Kathiawad and voyages through Konkan coast to Gujarat, are attested by the Cairo Geniza records of Jewish merchants, which prove the role of Jewish traders in the trade with Aden. Tinbu a ship owner (*nakhuda*) is known from a Jewish letter of CE 1145.

Ships plying between Aden and India had to encounter piracy on the Konkan coast. Tinbu's shipping business spanned from Manjrur to Thana along the Konkan littorals. Early Indian merchants also participated in shipping enterprises but the data is meagre. The *Nakhuda* Mahruz Jacob brought a letter to his brother-in-law in CE 1145 from Manjrur, referring to the coastal voyage from Manjrur to Thana. Kanbaya (Cambay) also formed a significant part of this coastal network and linkages with Mangalore and other ports in the Malabar littorals. References also to Mulaybaar and to Kollam indicate that the voyages from Somanath in Kathiawad assumed considerable regularity from 11th century onwards. The early medieval sources are silent about the types of vessels which were known to the *Periplus* such as *Trappaga* and *Kottyamba*, which correspond to the references in the Jain text *Angavijja* (4th century CE). *Trapyaka* and *Kottimba* were coastal crafts, which must have plied from Cemuliya and Chandrapura to Balipattana. The picture about the coastal crafts is hazy, textual and epigraphic references being meagre. Visual representations on *Viragals* or hero stones in the context of battles and in the caves in Borivli, near Mumbai, show some varieties of crafts made of planks sewn together. They may also have been used in the battles between the Silaharas and Kadambas of the 12th century. Smaller boats carrying soldiers and large ones carrying passengers and cargo are referred to in the Jewish letters.

Epigraphic data is available on a community of ship owning merchants in early medieval Konkan. The *Mahamatya* was a high ranking officer, and under the Silaharas an officer called Vasaida was also a *nauvittaka* (The Arab sources refer to the *nakhuda*). They combined commercial and administrative roles. The monetary scenario does not seem to correspond to the information on brisk trade due to the relative lack of metal pieces from mid-8th century to the end of the 10th century CE. While the Rashtrakutas had no definite dynastic coinage, the Arabic *drammas* must have been in use. The Silaharas issued the *gadhiya* paisa type i.e., silver coins. Gold coins appear from the 11th century (under the Kalachuris, Kadambas and western Chalukyas). There seems to have been unhindered movement of merchants and merchandise along the coast despite risks and uncertainties. Unlike the spirit of adventure involved in long distance trade, the journeys along the coast were relatively more sedate and safer. There was continuity in this traffic, although shifts and alterations even within the overall sedate nature of commerce in the Konkan coast, led to the emergence of newer ports like Balipattana. Sanjan under the Rashtrakutas was a well-known port in north Konkan. Linkages between the Malabar littorals, Konkan and Saurashtra were unbroken

from the early historic to the early medieval and well into the early modern times.

12.9.3 Andhra Pradesh

The 11th-12th centuries represent a period of moderate long distance trade activities in Andhra. For this it is claimed that the political atmosphere was not conducive. But internal trade was prevalent on a limited scale. Merchants often acted as bankers, for example Chanda Bhima Poti *setti* acted as a banker to Velanati Kulottunga Coda Gonkaraju (1157). Capitals of subordinate chiefs and chieftains such as Vengi, Gudimetta, Nadendla, Dharanikota and Nellore attracted merchants. Among the temples fostering trade were the five *aramas* (Bhimapura, Gudipudi, Palakonalu, Draksharama and Amaravati) as also Mallesvara at Bezwada and Mahasena at Chebrolu which were centres of pilgrimage. Pilgrimage centres included the more famous Simhachalam, Bapatla, Ghantasala, Srisailam, Ahobalam and Tirupati. In the 11th-12th centuries towns grew around such temples. The Lords of Penugonda, Tamil merchants and merchant organizations in Andhra including the 500, Manigramam, Anjuvannam (Mallam inscription) were fairly active. However, a spectacular growth under the Kakatiya king Ganapatideva (1199-1261) opened a new epoch in the trade of Andhra by encouraging sea- borne trade and by renovating the port of Motupalli, Guntur district and by issuing an *abhaya sasana* for all foreign merchants. This led to freedom from oppressive taxation and from piracy. Fixed duties on articles of trade such as sandal, camphor, pearls, ivory, silk, thread, coral and spices enabled regular movement of goods and merchants. The means of communication were also improved. Marco Polo refers to this port as Mutfili. The Motupalli inscription (Guntur district) of CE 1244 records both the imports and exports of this town. The general prosperity of the *Vaisya* community from this period is reflected in the *Vaishya Purana*. Penugonda and 17 other towns constituted the original habitat of *Vaishyas* of 714 *gotras*, each with a *nakaram* with a *nakarasvami* at its head. Komatis, the traders, on whom stories abound in the *Vaishya Purana*, are an important group mentioned also in some inscriptions from Ghantasala. Studies on the economy, society and polity in Telingana during the 11th-14th centuries have increasingly shown that Telingana was a major region of trade potential under the Kakatiyas, in whose period this relatively dry and lake irrigated region was consciously developed through agrarian expansion and organised trade. Later it was this process which enhanced the importance of Andhra as a whole in the interregional and long distance trade networks, due to the royal policy of encouragement and patronage.

12.9.4 Kerala

Kerala developed contacts with the west and foreign traders like the Jews, Christians and Arabs were given trading towns (i.e. centres with major trading activities given to them for settlement and trade) under royal charters. Other coastal towns emerged such as Kolikkodu, Kollam etc. which became *entrepots* of south Asian trade. The Anjuvannam was a trading organization more often met with on the Kerala and Kanara coast in the 9th-10th centuries and even later; the Hanzamana of the 15th16th century inscriptions in South Kanara probably representing the Anjuvannam of the early medieval times. The location of such trading groups and of Arab horse dealers from the Malaiyala region enhanced the importance of the coastal towns in Karnataka and Kerala, as also the presence of the Ayyavole referred

to in an inscription of Sultan Battery (15th-16th centuries) near Kozhikode.

12.9.5 Tamil Nadu

From the mid-twelfth century onwards there are definite indications of increased participation in foreign trade judging from the overseas imports in south India in the late 13th and 14th centuries CE. The Chinese trade missions to south India under the Yuan dynasty underline the importance of south India and its overseas trade in the Chola and post- Chola periods. Changes in the commodities of maritime trade from luxuries to necessities such as dyes, cotton yarn, textiles, processed iron, pepper, and horses become more prominent in Ayyavole inscriptions. How these goods came to south India for trans-shipment and who the shippers were, are not known. The guild inscriptions suggest that they sent their agents quite far abroad and established trading stations (e.g. Takua Pa – Manigramam [in Malaya peniusula]) and Pagan – Ayyavole (in Burma, Myanmar. The first indicates the place and the second represents the guild.).

Merchants had access to kings and the Chola invasions of Sri Lanka involved such interactions. The external policy of the Cholas was designed to favour the expansion of overseas trade interests from which both the Chola ruler and the merchants derived benefit. These expeditions were not for plunder and loot but trade figured as an important factor in framing of the Chola policy and the Chola rulers had links with the merchant community for mutual benefit. In northern Sri Lanka Chola inscriptions are found from Mantai to Trincomallee, Polonnaruva being the main centre. Chola occupation of northern Sri Lanka may have been a hurdle in the links of Sri Lanka with Southeast Asia, especially the Sinhalese links with Java and Bali. Sri Lanka was rich in precious stones such as rubies, topaz and sapphire. Arab works like *Akhbar al-Sin wa'l-Hind*, a collection of travel stories, and that of Ibn Khurdadabih refer also to pepper, perfumes, musk, diamonds and precious stones, aloes, gold and pearls, some of them like aromatics being imported to Sri Lanka. The Gulf of Mannar rich in pearls and Mantai (Mahatitta) in northwest Sri Lanka was the point of ingress for the Cholas, the latter being one of the great emporiums of the early medieval period comparable to Siraf on the Persian gulf. Pepper was highly priced in China and in the west and the demand had grown in the 13th century.

The Chola and Southeast Asia trade links are attested to by the Nagappattinam records of the early 11th century and Kamboja's gifts to Chola kings and the Chola missions to China (CE 1077). Rajendra's expedition to Southeast Asia was a coastal voyage to Kadaram or Srivijaya. Chola raids were meant to "protect Indian commercial interests from interference by Srivijaya". Like the Sung emperors of China or the rulers of Srivijaya in Southeast Asia, the Cholas both solicited and sought to foster foreign trade and to establish trading rights for the Tamil speaking merchants in those areas. The Srivijaya inscription of Canton, if it has been interpreted correctly, gives an unusual inside look at the sub-surface diplomacy that preceded the commercial moves of the Cholas at Canton. (It records a donation on behalf of Kulottunga I, to the Taoist monastery in Canton). By CE 1088 the Ayyavole guild was established near Barus in Sumatra. The Chola rulers were personally interested in sharing the profits of maritime trade. Inscriptions from Piranmalai (latter half of the 13th century), Koilpatti (Trichy district, 1305),

Tiruvarankyuricchi, same district, record the imports and exports. The goods mentioned in them include areca nuts, pepper, myrobalans, iron, cotton, thick cloth, thread, wax, yak's tail, camphor oil, civet, horses, elephants, camels?, aloeswood, sandalwood. In the Sung maritime trade the main commodities were cloves, frankincense, dried galingale, abaca cloth, umbrellas, swords, bottle-gourd, edible date, medicinal rhubarb, slaves, peafowl, benzoin, putchuk, margosa bark, melons, gardenia flowers, coconut, cardamom, lacquer ware and a host of other things. Common commodities in the Chinese and south Indian lists are identifiable. Sandalwood and camphor were two articles of great demand in the Indian Ocean trade. Aromatics were also an important item as there was constant demand for expendable, sacred items. Frankincense was the only item coming from West Asia, while the bulk of the aromatics came from Southeast Asia. The Ayyavole inscriptions mention a vast range of commodities exported from the Pandya kingdom. The Kayalpattinam and Tittandatanapuram (Tondi) inscriptions of 14th century on the east (Pandya) coast of Tamil Nadu refer to the trading organizations and stockists of goods, such as the *Manigramam* and *Samanta pandasalis*. In Andhra the Chintapalle inscription (Guntur district) of the Chagi chief and the Motupalli inscription (CE 1184) of Ganapati Deva refer to the same regional inflow and outflow of goods of maritime trade. The ramifications of this trade covered a wide spectrum of regions and commodities from China through Southeast Asian countries, Sri Lanka and south India to the West Asian regions. Further, the Gujarat coast, which linked most of the Indian trade with West Asia, had regular sea traffic connecting it with Hormuz and other Central Asian regions and north China. South Indian merchandise also used this important channel for its trade. Marco Polo refers to the importance of this trade to China in pepper, precious stones and pearls. Malabar, the Pandya region, sent envoys to China (1283 and 1284) and envoys from China reached Kollam (CE 1279), a major port on the west coast. The overseas commerce primarily that of West Asia and Egypt (Cairo) and China, was mainly from the west coast with Kollam as the major port. The Geniza documents and Jewish letters contain impressive evidence of the links with the Mediterranean regions- Italy, Sicily, Morocco and Lebanon (Syria). The Egyptian corporate association called the *Karimi* dealt in pepper and spices. By the 13th century they obtained their eastern commodities from Indian traders of Gujarat and south India during the Chola, Pandya and Kakatiya periods and also from the island of Sinhala. The Sung and later Yuan rulers of China encouraged this trade. The Indian subcontinent drew in gold, silver and copper in payment for many of its exports. In China payment in kind was advocated. The Geniza documents show that Jewish merchants trading with south India had to make payment in gold to offset their unfavourable trade balances. Spices to Egypt led to a constant flow of gold to India from Europe and Egypt (the Venetian sequins of the Vijayanagar period). But the horse trade was a major currency drain and this aspect of the outflow of gold from, especially in the post- Chola period, is an aspect of economy which needs more intensive study.

The commodities handled by *Ayyavole* and *Manigramam* thus include a wide variety of goods such as textiles, iron, aloeswood, (Agaru- Aghil), areca nuts and betel nuts, bedellium, camphor, civet, cotton and cotton fabric. Spinning and weaving technology were hence consciously developed and Southeast Asia became a major market for Indian textiles. The brisk trade in cotton is known from the

Chineses accounts (Patula-14th century). Textiles were also a major export to the western markets. Horses were always imported from Turushka, Kamboja and Yavana countries, although the rearing of horses was not understood in south India. The Motupalli inscription (Meera Abraham, p.170) refers to many items. Iron and steel wootz was exported from many parts of south India. Indian steel out of which the famous Damascus sword was made was one of the most important exports from India as seen in the Geniza records. Musk, myrobaln, pearls, pepper, putchuk, rose water, sandalwood, wax and honey and silk — varieties were also traded in, while Chinese silk was imported into Chola and Pandya countries.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) Discuss the maritime linkages forged between Indian ports and those overseas in the early medieval south India.

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2. Write a short note on the trade routes in south India which became important in the early medieval period.

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12.10 SUMMARY

There is a long drawn debate among the scholars whether there was urban decay or there existed considerable growth during the Gupta and the post-Gupta periods. Those favouring the theory of urban decay argue that the decline of trade with the Roman Empire, and the Huna inroads adversely affected the trading activities in India. The period saw sharp decline of the growth of urban centres; there was also near absence of metallic money (gold and silver). Instead the usage of cowrie shells increased indicating the decline of long distance trade as cowries could only largely be used for smaller transactions. Thus they emphasized that there was an emphatic decline in the long distance trade. Instead land grants increased manifold. The emergence of a self-sufficient village economy ultimately created the conditions for the rise of feudalism in India. However, those who contradict the argument insist that the picture presented was too gloomy. They emphasize that neither the market places disappeared altogether nor was there a slump in trade in north India. Rather the rise of Islam paved the way for brisk commercial activities in the region. In south India agrarian expansion gave rise to a new phase of urbanization. There was regular coastal traffic along the entire littoral; particularly the Konkan and Malaya region emerged into prominence in this period.

12.11 KEY WORDS

Abbasid Caliphate : In CE 750, the Umayya Caliphs were replaced by the Abbasid. In CE 762 they moved the capital from Damascus to Syria to the new city of Baghdad in Iraq. The Abbasids ruled all over Western Asia and north Africa from CE 750 until about 1000, when they began to weaken. At first north Africa broke away and formed the independent kingdom under the Fatimids. In CE 1258 the Abbasid dynasty ended.

Ayyavole : A powerful merchant guild of early medieval south India.

Fatimid Caliphate : The Fatimids ruled over north Africa, Egypt and Palestine from the 10th to 12th Century CE. The Fatimids claimed to be the descendants of Fatima, the daughter of Prophet Muhammad, and wife of Ali, the fourth Caliph and first Shia Imam. The ultimate goal of the Fatimids was to replace the Abbasid Caliphate of Baghdad with their own when Caliph Ubayd Allah proclaimed himself Caliph at Cairo in 909 in opposition to the Sunni Caliph of Baghdad. They established a new sea route to Asia via the Red Sea, instead of the earlier more frequented route via the Persian Gulf.

Gurjara-Pratihara : The dynasty was founded by Nagabhata I in the 8th century. The kingdom reached at its peak under king Bhoja (836-90) and Mahendrapala (890-910). It had its capital at Kannauj. The dynasty was weakened by repeated attacks of the Rashtrakutas in the 10th century and its power completely broken when Mahmud Ghazni sacked Kannauj in 1018 CE.

Huna : They were nomadic and pastoral people from Central Asia. They were Mongolian in appearance. They enjoyed military superiority due to their rapid horse power. The Hunas appear in history in 3 century BCE when the Great Wall of China was erected to exclude them from China. The Huna kingdom was centered in modern Hungary. Attila (CE 434-453) was their most powerful king. Huna's rule extended from the Rhine across the north of the Black Sea as far as the Caspian Sea. The Guptas also fell prey to the Huna inroads in CE 480. They overran the whole of north India. They succeeded for a brief period of 30 years to establish their kingdom in Malwa around CE 500 under the leadership of Toramana. His son and successor Mihirkula conquered north India but was soon driven into Kashmir by Yashodharman where he died in about CE 542.

Malay Peninsula	:	It is what is today called Peninsular Malaysia and Ocean of adjacent islands of Southeast Asia including the east coast of Sumatra, the coast of Borneo, and smaller islands that lie between these areas. It lies between the Andaman Sea of the Indian Ocean and the start of Malacca on the west and the Gulf of Thailand and the South China Sea on the east. The northern part of the Peninsula forms a part of Thailand; the southern part constitutes west Malaysia, the Malayan part of Malaysia.
Manigramam	:	A powerful merchant guild of early medieval south India.
Sasanid Empire (226-651 CE)	:	They established an empire roughly within the frontiers achieved by the Achaemenids, with the capital Ctesiphon. The dynasty was founded by the king Ardashir I who was the vassal of Parthian ruler. Shapur I (241-272) inflicted crushing defeats on Romans twice; later he also attacked the Kushanas and occupied Peshawar, the capital of Kushanas. The last Sassanid ruler was Yazdgard III (632-636). The Arabs took Ctesiphon and in 651, the last Sassanian king died as a fugitive.
Western Kshatrapa Rulers	:	A Saka ruling house ruled over western India and Malwa.

12.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) See Section 12.2.

2) See Sections 12.4 and 12.5.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) See Section 12.9 and its Sub-sections.

2) See Section 12.8.

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UNIT 13 MERCHANT GUILDS AND URBANIZATION IN NORTH INDIA AND SOUTH INDIA[1]

Structure

13.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will learn about:

- the existence and emergence of urban centres in the period between 600 CE and 1000 CE;
- in what ways was the urbanization of the early medieval period different from the Second Urbanization of the Ganga valley;

[1] This Unit has been taken from MHI 05, Block 3, Units 14 and 15.

- the emergence of urbanization in north India and south India; and
- merchant guilds of north India and south India.

13.1 INTRODUCTION

The early medieval period differed from the early historical period in crucial aspects. There was widespread practice of granting land in the early medieval period. Trade supposedly declined with a marked paucity of metallic currency. Many urban centres which have been subjected to limited excavations have yielded poor remains or sometimes a sterile layer indicating that many urban centres were deserted in this period. When compared to the Kushana levels, the post-Gupta levels in various excavations have given evidence of mediocre remains like the reuse of earlier structures and the use of brick bats. It is in the context of this widespread decay and decline of urban centres that any discussion on urbanization in the early medieval period has to be situated. Many critics of urban decay and the associated feudalism school have pointed out the existence, emergence and continuity of urban features in this period. In this Unit, we will be studying those features of urbanization which point to the flourishing commercial ethos and urban milieu of settlements in the early medieval India.

13.2 THIRD URBANIZATION

We have already studied the fact that the post-Gupta period was marked by increasing practise of land grants. Scholars believe that this feature led to ruralisation of the economy and brought an end to the Second Urbanization in Indian history. The associated features were widespread urban decay and decline of urban centres. Cities are believed to have disappeared on a pan-India scale between 300 -1000 CE. This decay was the result of the decline in the long distance trade. The resultant socio-economic changes have been understood as comprising of a feudal mode of production. However scholars have pointed out inconsistencies and contradictions in the feudalism formulation. While it is true that urban decay was marked by desertion of urban settlements in the early medieval period, it is equally certain that many other sites continued to exist and flourish. All these aspects have already been dealt with in the previous Unit. What is relevant to consider in the present Unit is that urban features appeared even in the pre-1000 CE period in many parts of India. Many urban centres with trading links, streets, houses of merchants, market places, monumental temples, artisanal quarters etc. emerged on the scene. The point which is noteworthy is that these urban centres differed from their early historical counterparts in the fact that they were deeply rooted in their rural contexts. Unlike the Second Urbanization (c. 600 BCE-300 CE) in the subcontinent which had its epicentre in the Ganga valley which acted as a platform for the development of secondary urban centres, the early medieval period did not have any such epicentre generating urban impulses to disparate regions. Various features like land grants- spurred agrarian expansion, generation of resources for local and supra-local groups; resource mobilization; participation of religious functionaries; holding of fairs; brisk temple building activities; trading in luxury and exotic items, provided the space for the coming together of ruling groups and merchant bodies along with local notables in settlements. These features

combined together led to the emergence of urban centres which by their distinctiveness are situated by Chattopadhyaya in the Third phase of urbanization in Indian history.

Now let us begin by analysing those aspects which became the part of Third Urbanization. We will be discussing the different types of urban centres, trade, trade routes, merchants, commercial ethos, guilds, markets, shops etc. to get a wholesome picture of urbanization in the early medieval period.

13.3 URBANIZATION IN NORTH INDIA

In-depth studies of land grants reveal that market places were not entirely absent in the inscriptions of pre-1000 CE days. Inscriptions and textual sources speak of the presence of various types of market places, some of them hitherto unknown prior to CE 600. Thus the term *hatta* or *hattika* frequently occurs in the inscriptions of north India. *Hatta/hattika* generally signifies a rural level small centre of exchange. The term survives in the modern word *haat*, widely known in Bengal and Bihar. Such rural market centres are periodic in nature as transactions do not take place every day, but only on fixed days.

Many epigraphic descriptions of *hatta* also speak of the availability of the drinking-water (*prapa*) and resting places (*arama*), feeding houses (*sattra*) close to the *hatta*. In some inscriptions of the Palas, the terms *hattavara* is encountered. It would probably denote a *hatta* more important or larger than an ordinary one. A case in point is probably Devapaladevahatta. It stood close to the famous monastery and University of Nalanda. The *hatta* was named after Devapala (c. CE 810-850), the famous Pala ruler and it is likely that it was larger and more prominent than a simple rural level market place. The *hatta* at Tattanandapura (Ahar, Bulandshahr district, Uttar Pradesh) was situated within a large urban trading area. The mention of a *hattamarga* or a street leading to a market place is found in another inscription from Tattanandapura. There is a reference to horse fair (*ghotaka-yatra*) at the early medieval Prthudaka (modern Pehoa, Karnal district, Haryana) which took place in the ninth century. The term *yatra* stands for a fair which is once again periodic in nature.

It is almost entirely from north Indian inscriptions that one comes across a new type of market place from the eighth-ninth centuries. This is *mandapika*, literally meaning a covered area. The term in question can easily be equated with *mandis* of modern times in the Ganga-Yamuna *doab*, upper Ganga valley and western India. These *mandis* are larger than rural level *haats*, but smaller than markets in large urban areas. One of the earliest references to a *mandi* is seen in the Baijnath Prasasti (8^{th} /9^{th} century) in the Kangra region in Himachal Pradesh. At Kiragrama (modern Kangra) there was a *mandapika* where three merchants belonging to a family of merchants donated a cash of 6 drammas (silver coins) out of the daily collection in favour of a temple at Baijnath. The *mandapika* at Naddula (modern Nadol) demands our special attention. Inscriptions from Nadol show that Naddula was initially a village, in fact one village in a cluster of twelve villages (*dvadasagramiya Naddulagrama*). Naddula subsequently emerged as a *mandapika* where considerable trade took place mainly in grains and other agricultural products. Naddula then began to be called a *nagara* or city and ultimately became

the political centre of the Cahamanas of Nadol. Naddula was obviously functioning as a nodal point where surplus agricultural products from surrounding villages were brought. This paved the way for the establishment of a *mandapika* at Naddula. These factors were instrumental in the remarkable transformation of Naddula from a village to an urban centre and finally to an apex political centre of local power in early medieval Rajasthan. That these *mandapikas* were well connected by trade routes and available transport systems is demonstrated by epigraphic records. Thus in CE 1114 commodities were brought to the *mandapika* at Mangalapura (modern Mangrol, Gujarat) by oxen (*vrsa*), asses (*gardabha*), and camels (*ushtra*).

Many *mandapikas* were known as *sulkamandapikas*, i.e. tolls and customs were levied both in cash and kind at the *mandapika*. The levy of tolls is a clear proof of the commercial transactions at the *mandapika*. The *mandapikas* witnessed transactions in grains, many daily necessity commodities (probably as bulk items), and costlier items like spices and animals like horses and elephants. Some of the *mandapikas*, for instance those at Siyadoni and Bilhari, were designated as *pattanamandapika*. The term may suggest either a *mandapika* in an urban area or a *mandapika* which had assumed an urban proportion. The *Lekhapaddhati*, an early medieval text from Gujarat, uses the term *mahamandapika*. The use of the prefix *maha* clearly demonstrates that at least some *mandapikas* became much larger than their counterparts. These *mandapikas* seem to have maintained crucial trading linkages both with their respective rural hinterland and also with larger urban areas.

Market places evidently had shops which were known as *vithis* and *apanas*. At Siyadoni some shops were described as hereditarily owned by some merchants (*pitrpitamahoparjita*), some others were owned or built by merchants themselves (*svoparjita*). The mention of shops owned hereditarily by traders-possibly for three generations-suggests the brisk commercial activities in such shopping establishments over a long period. These shops were evidently meant for retail trade.

Early medieval copper plates from Bengal often mention small boat stations (*nau-danda, nau-bandha*) as landmarks in rural spaces which have innumerable streams and rivulets (*srotasvini, ganginika*), canals, and channels. Of course the most important riverine route was along the Ganga or Bhagirathi on which plied many vessels (*sa khalu Bhagirathipathapravartmana-nauvata*). From the late seventh century onwards, the eastern part of the delta began to have riverine ports. One such port was Devaparvata (modern Mainamati-Lalmai, Bangladesh) which according to copper plates (from seventh to early tenth century) stood by the river Kshiroda on which plied many boats.

The vast plains of north India were well frequented by several overland routes of communication, some of them gaining particular prominence in the early medieval times. Thus Chia-tan (785-805) informs us about a route which ran from Kamarupa to Magadha by touching Pundravardhana (north Bengal) and Kajanigla (near the Rajmahal Hills). A number of overland routes connected Kanyakubja with different parts of India, as al Biruni reported. One such route ran from Kanyakubja to Gangasagara (at the confluence of the Ganga with the sea) through Ayodhya, Varanasi, Pataliputra and Monghyr. Another route starting from Kanyakubja

connected Prayaga (Prayagraj, earlier Allahabad), then through the Rewa region of Madhya Pradesh reached Odisha and from there extended as far south as Kanchipuram (near Chennai).

13.3.1 Merchant Community

Our sources also underline the diversities of merchants. While older terms like *vanik*, *sarthavaha* and *sresthi* continued, there appeared new types of merchants. At the famous *mandapika* of Siyadoni we note the active presence of a salt-dealer (*nemakavanij*), whose father too was a salt-dealer. He was prosperous enough to have provided considerable patronage to a number of temples in Siyadoni. An insightful probe into early medieval inscriptions from Rajasthan highlights the growing importance of a number of local merchant lineages, e.g. *Dhusara, Dharkata, Uesavala/ Oisavala* (later day *Oswals*), *Srimali* and *Pragvata*. Merchant-donors often highlighted their genealogy at the time of making donations with a view to underlining that they belonged to a status-group and were not upstarts. A particular type of merchants began to figure in inscriptions from Gujarat after CE 1000. They are called *nauvittakas*, not encountered hitherto before. The term indicates a merchant who derived their wealth (*vitta*) from ships (*nau*); in other words, it denotes a ship-owning merchant. The term has a close correspondence to the Persian/Arabic word, *nakhuda*, i.e. *khuda* or lord of *nau* (ship).

13.3.2 Metallic Money

The data and arguments presented above on merchants, market places, commodities, ports and routes of communication do not portray the image of languishing trade, including long-distance commerce, in the early medieval north India. It will be logical here to look into the problem of the relative lack of metallic currency in the early medieval India. The wide prevalence of cowry-shells in eastern India, especially Bengal, does not necessarily indicate that transactions were conducted within a restricted commercial circuit. Cowry-shells are not locally available in Bengal. Arab accounts of 12th , 13th , 14th centuries and the descriptions of Ma huan (early sixteenth century) amply demonstrate that cowry-shells reached Bengal from far away Maldives. These were brought in shiploads from Maldives to Bengal. The latter exported rice to Maldives. Cowry-shells cannot be therefore restrictive of long-distance trade, as these were well integrated into the overseas trade in the Indian Ocean. The cowry-shells were shipped as bulk items and functioned as small exchange and ballast in the Indian Ocean maritime economy.

While the Palas and the Senas of Bengal are not known to have struck coins, this does not, however, prove the non-minting of coins in Bengal. Sustained researches for the last three decades very effectively demonstrate that in the south-eastern parts of Bengal (the Samatata-Harikela zone) excellent silver coinages were continuously minted from the eighth to the thirteenth centuries. This demands a close scrutiny.

The last gold coinage of ancient Bengal cannot be pushed beyond late seventh century. These were imitations of Gupta gold coins of *suvarna* standard, but heavily debased. However, from the eighth century onwards high quality silver coins began to be struck, generally weighing 8 grams. The obverse of these pieces has the figure of a recumbent bull and the legend *Harikela*; the reverse has a tripartite

symbol. Palaeographical analysis of the script of the legend *Harikela* suggests that these inscribed coins belonged to the eighth century. More or less at the same time also appeared similar silver coins with the legend *Pattikera* inscribed on the obverse side. The silver pieces of *Pattikera* were influenced by the minting tradition of the *Harikela* silver coinage. Silver coins of high quality (with silver content as high as 90%) continued to be minted in Harikela after the eighth century, but with some significant changes.

The Harikela coins, being akin to *puranas* of the Pala-Sena records, could also be easily exchanged with and converted into cowry-shells. The monetary scenario in south-eastern Bengal fits in well with the information on brisk trade through the port of Samandar. The above statements negate the widely held perception that Bengal had little precious coinage in the early medieval times and therefore experienced a sharp slump in its trade.

It is significant that there are several early medieval coin hoards in northern India, especially in the Ganga-Yamuna doab area, which till early eleventh century was dominated by the Gurjara-Pratiharas. Recent analysis of coin hoards, mostly containing *dramma* pieces, 'demonstrates that the volume of coinage in circulation in North India c. AD 600-1000, was comparable to that of the Kushana, Sultanate and Mughal period, and clearly superior to that of the preceding Gupta and the succeeding Rajput periods'. No shortage of currency in the Gurjara-Pratihara kingdom (late eighth to late tenth century) is visible. Thus neither in eastern India, dominated by the Palas and Senas, nor in the Gurjara-Pratihara realm, there are valid empirical grounds to uphold the conclusion that early medieval north India experienced a 'monetary anaemia' and languishing trade in the early middle ages, especially c. CE 600-1000.

13.4 URBANIZATION IN SOUTH INDIA

The early medieval economy of south India was predominantly agrarian, with an initial phase of agrarian expansion (6th- 9th centuries CE). It has been suggested that this was brought about by the practice of land grants, in which the Brahmadeya and the temple as the two major forces of integration, were the foci of rural organisation. At the same time, the need for exchange points and increase in commercial activities led to some of the *Brahmadeyas* and temple centres to expand their economic role thereby incorporating trade, craft and commercial activities and creating urban space for all such newly emerging economic groups. Political and/or administrative centres were also the foci of urban activities and attracted heterogeneous population, both as consumers of commercial goods and as users of money, i.e. coins which were royal issues and also possibly the currency of the merchant guilds, although the latter is not clearly or directly attested to in inscriptional records. This was the Second urbanization for the south Indian regions.

The phase of urbanization with which we are concerned here was of a different nature, and was *sui generis*, consequent upon the development of an agrarian order developing between the 6th to the 9th centuries CE, i.e. the first phase of the early medieval period. This process, which was spread over the whole peninsula, was, however, not uniform in all the south Indian regions. The Deccan i.e. Karnataka and the Andhra regions differed considerably in the nature of agrarian

organization, although the land grant system was a widespread institutional means for the extension of agriculture and agrarian organization. These regions do not have continuous plains except in the delta regions of the Krishna and Godavari and in some pockets of the interior river valleys. Agricultural activities were more intensive in the delta regions, while large parts of the plateau and hilly areas remained predominantly pastoral and/or agro-pastoral and dependent on hunting activities. The early medieval urbanization in the Tamil region was a re-urbanization brought about by agrarian expansion and organization of peasant micro-regions like the *nadu*, with the emergence of the *nagaram* or market for the peasant region. It manifested itself in a new set of urban centres between the 8th and 12th centuries, representing an intelligible sequence of change, by providing an agrarian base and large surpluses to be channelled into trade. The proliferation of such market centres together with the movement of larger trade organizations like the *Ayyavole* led to the emergence of urban centres and inter regional trade networks and communication.

13.4.1 Market Centres, Trade Networks and Itinerant Trade

Early medieval urbanization shows a phenomenal increase and proliferation of urban centres of relatively modest dimensions. These are the market centres, trade centres (fairs–*Santa/Santai*) which were primarily nodal points of exchange network. The range of interaction of such centres varied from small agrarian hinterlands to regional commercial hinterlands and to inter-regional contexts and contexts beyond the borders of India. However, by and large the early medieval urban centres were far more rooted in their regional contexts than the early historical urban centres. The need for marketing facilities and development of local exchange brought into existence market centres, which were points of exchange for a specific region or small agrarian hinterlands. This is best illustrated by the *nagaram* of south India, substantial evidence of which comes from Tamil Nadu and to a limited extent from Karnataka (*nakhara*) and Andhra region (*nagaramu*). It served as the market for the *nadu* (K.R.Hall, 1980) or *kurram*, a peasant region of Tamil Nadu. Some of them emerged due to the exchange needs of the *nadu*. A fairly large number of such centres were founded by the ruling families or were established with royal sanction, as for example under the Cholas. They were named after the rulers, a feature common to all regions in south India, with the suffix *pura* or *pattana*. However not all such *nagarams* were commercially of equal significance. *Nagarams* located on important trade routes and at the points of intersection by itinerant traders developed into large towns, both in terms of their size and volume of trade and commerce. They were ultimately brought into a network of intra-regional and inter-regional trade as well as overseas trade through the itinerant merchant organizations and through royal ports and royal interests in and the policy of fostering long distance trade. Such a development occurred more or less uniformly throughout peninsular India from the 10th century CE when south India was drawn into the wider South Asian trade, which was revived in the 10th century and in which all the countries of South Asia, China and the Arab countries came to be involved. Between the 10th and 12th centuries CE South Asian trade provided the impetus for the development of commodity production and exchange, growth of towns, both interior and coastal. The *nagarams* of the Tamil region linked the ports with political and administrative centres, which were consumer points and

with the craft centres in the interior. The movement of the itinerant traders played a major role in this network. Major craft centres which developed in response to inter-regional trade were textile and weaving centres in all the three culture regions of south India–Karnataka, Andhra and Tamil Nadu. Some of the craft and commercial centres of the early historic period survived till the early medieval period and were brought into the processes of re- urbanization which linked them with the new socio-economic institutions of the period.

13.4.2 Craft Production

Areas of craft production are difficult to locate. However, traditional textile and weaving centres have continued down to modern times (Chingleput, Coimbatore, Madurai, Salem, Tanjavur, Tirichirappalli and Tirunelveli districts). Weaving as an industry was systematically promoted by the rulers of south India from pre-Chola times. Special care was bestowed under the Cholas on old weaving centres and encouragement given to settlement of weavers in new areas. There were many cotton producing areas near which weaving centres appeared. But Kancipuram as the major centre received special attention from the Cholas. Madurai was equally important. Eventually Kanci came to represent the venue of the *Mahanadu* or corporate organization of the weavers, which controlled the production and marketing of cloth and its trade. Craft production was more intensive in the Kongu region, where 12th –14th century inscriptions indicate large-scale artisan (*Kammalar*) activity and participation in important civic duties, receiving special privileges. As interdependent economic groups the trading organizations and artisanal groups acknowledged their mutual benefits where the traders along with other local elite were seen as conferring special privileges on the artisans and giving special asylum to them.

13.5 REGIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Different levels of urban centres developed in south India. However, these varied from region to region in their function and importance as also their relationship to larger exchange networks.

13.5.1 Deccan-Karnataka

In Karnataka the *nagarams* served different functions as points of exchange in trading networks and as regular markets for agrarian/peasant regions. However, the uniform feature in all such *nagarams* (*nakharas*) is that they either had or acquired a basic agricultural hinterland (through grants to the local temples) for the non-producing urban/craft/trade groups living in such centres. Markets in these centres were controlled by traders headed by a chief merchant called *pattanasvami*, the lord of the town.

In Karnataka, the steady increase in towns from the 7th to the 12th centuries shows a proliferation of commercial centres with a concentration of such centres in north west Karnataka, Konkan coast and the commercial districts of Bijapur, Dharwar, Belgaum and Shimoga . In the trade with the west i.e., Arabia, Persian Gulf and beyond, the west coast of peninsular India played a consistently dominant role even from the early historical period. Several ports such as Thana in Maharashtra;

Goa; and Bhatkal, Karwar, Honavar and Mangalore in Karnataka developed during the revival of long distance trade between the 10th and 12th centuries, with evidence of coastal shipping and ocean navigation.

The use of money on a large scale in commercial transactions was generally on the increase throughout south India during this period, particularly in the Deccan and Andhra regions. Epigraphy being the major source of information, most studies have relied entirely on inscriptions for categorising and locating the types of towns which emerged in various regions. In Karnataka, the terms used for towns of different types are *rajadhani*, *nelevidu* and *pattana* or *nagara*. While *nelevidu* was usually the headquarters of a local/provincial ruler, *pattana* or *nagara* refer to commercial towns.

Transport and communication were facilitated through construction of roads in north-west Karnataka, where Terdal (Bijapur district), Lokkigundi and Belgaum emerged as important trade centres. Highways and Trunk roads came up linking Karnataka, Andhra and Tamil Nadu and earlier trade routes survived well into early medieval times. On the northern and southern banks of the Kaveri, in its middle reaches (Kongu region) arose a number of exchange points between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu such as Talakkad (near Mysore) and Mudikondan (Thiruvarur district). Wider trade networks also existed between Karnataka, Andhra and Tamil regions. The presence of Kannada, Tamil and Telugu merchants is well attested in several towns such as Belgaum (Karnataka), Peruru (Nalgonda district, Andhra Pradesh) and the coastal towns of Visakhapatnam and Ghantasala in Andhra. The Andhra coast concentrated on the Southeast Asian trade with Motupalli, Visakhapatnam and Ghantasala acting as major outlets. Market towns of inter-regional importance are represented by places like Nellore, Draksharama, Tripurantakam and Anumakonda in Andhra Pradesh.

No regular banking and credit were followed for money lending did not find much favour with people. Deposits were made usually with the temples and the interest was utilised for worship. Thus the temple's role in commercial activities was significant. Interest was invariably in kind, particularly paddy, although money interest was not unknown.

The marketing services were provided by the merchants and vendors in weekly fairs held by the *pattanasvamis* and others as an act of dharma. Among the shops the privileged ones were the *manyadangadi* and temple shops or *devarangadi*. Others like the *karadangadi*, *angadimane* or *malige* represent the wholesalers. Commerce, inter-regional and intra-regional, and pilgrimage added to the proliferation of towns and trade centres and at the apex of the urban hierarchy stood the *rajadhani pattanas* like Kalyani and Dvarasamudra. Arasiyakere and Balligave were commercial centres which also served as administrative centres. Notable among the inland towns were Paithan, Ter or Tagara, Kalyana, Nandgad, Valaipatna, Pandiyur, Kuduregundi (Hassan district). Vaijayanatipura, Puligere, Mudubidire and others.

13.5.2 The Andhra Region

Exchange networks developed in Andhra from the early historical times mainly due to the opening up of the peninsula to the north Indian trading circuits. Both

inland and maritime trade, particularly long distance trade with the western and Southeast Asian regions stimulated the growth of commerce and urban activities. The early medieval urban processes in Andhra were *sui generis* and were brought about by the agrarian expansion of the period comparable to other regions of south India. Craft production and development of towns and cities, including ports, were thus built into the general socio-economic transformations of the period. The demand for luxury goods in addition to regular consumption of daily requirements led to the development of industries such as metal industry. Mining for gold, iron, copper, brass and diamonds was done in several parts of the Deccan, while zinc and tin probably came from Southeast Asia. Much of the information on the metal crafts comes from the 10th century onwards and more particularly during the Kakatiya period (11th-14th centuries CE). The Kakatiya inscriptions refer to the *Pancalohala Beharamu*, a community named after the metal trade. Apart from the royal families as the main promoters of these crafts, the temples were recipients of gifts of jewellery and ornaments for the deities.

The second major industry of the Andhra region was the production of oil, *gingelly* being the most common among the oil seeds. Production of sugar and *jaggery* was also an important craft well attested in inscriptions. Later date epigraphic records confirm the development of these crafts and by the Vijayanagara period they attained significant proportions. Textile industry was, however, the foremost in medieval Andhra with its substantial black soil (e.g. Guntur district) cotton producing areas occurring in the whole region. The best and delicate fabrics of Andhra were known to Marco Polo and other medieval travellers. Other manufactures included salt production, etc.

The Kakatiya period is marked by greater intensity of urban processes and hence several towns emerged with the suffixes *puri, nagaram and pattana*. It was not the mere presence of crafts and trade but also mainly the presence of guilds that marked the towns. Such centres of manufacture and exchange are often mentioned only in the 15th and 16th century literature. Categories like temple towns, royal towns or political centres can be identified where the most common economic activity related to manufacture and exchange. They were also centres of surplus appropriation. The temple's wealth and economic activities involved different professional groups, the temple representing the spatial context for urban growth, especially those in big pilgrim centres. In political centres the concentration of wealth, accumulation of surplus and its redistribution to different functionaries of the state created urban space. Prior to the 11th century, however, craft and trade remained localised. Hanumakondapura, the political seat of the early Kakatiyas, became a big commercial centre due to its strategic location. From the 10th –11th centuries, under the Chalukyas of Kalyani and later under the Kakatiyas, royal incentive led to the growth of such centres.

13.5.3 Kerala

Kerala developed contacts with the west and foreign traders like the Jews, Christians and Arabs were given trading towns (i.e. centres with major trading activities given to them for settlement and trade) under royal charters. Other coastal towns emerged such as Kolikkodu, Kollam etc. which became *entrepots* of South Asian trade. The *Anjuvannam* was a trading organization more often met with on

the Kerala and Kanara coast in the 9th-10th centuries and even later, the *Hanzamana* of the 15th-16th century inscriptions in South Kanara probably representing the *Anjuvannam* of the early medieval times. The location of such trading groups and of Arab horse dealers from the Malaiyala region enhanced the importance of the coastal towns in Karnataka and Kerala, as also the presence of the *Ayyavole* referred to in an inscription of Sultan Battery (15th-16th centuries) near Kozhikode.

13.5.4 The Tamil Region

It is in the Tamil region that the processes of the development of early medieval economy, particularly trading activities and urban development, are best illustrated in the rich epigraphic records of the Pallava-Pandya and Chola periods. Starting with the systematic development of an agrarian order through institutions like the *brahmadeya* and the temple during the 6th-9th centuries, the emergence of the *nagaram* as a marketing centre for the peasant regions called the *nadu* met the exchange needs of the *nadu* as a peasant region, which not only assisted in the exchange system of the *nadu* but also acted as a meeting point for the inter -*nadu*– exchange and inter-regional exchange. Subsequently it also enabled the movement of goods in long distance trade carried on by itinerant trading organizations. It was a gradual expansion of a trading network for which the Tamil region provides the most significant evidence in different phases. Though not all such *nagarams* became major urban centres, many of them located on trade routes and distribution points intersecting with the itinerant trade of the *Tisai Ayirattu Ainnurruvar* (*Nanadesi, Valanjiyar* and *Ayyavole*), *Manigramam* and *Anjuvannam,* evolved into big towns and cities apart from the capitals and ports of the ruling families. All these centres came to be linked through a large exchange network into a web of commercial activity with the West Asian and South Asian (Sri Lanka) and Southeast Asian regions, where the inscriptions of the itinerant trading organizations appear from the 11th century CE. The urban centres which developed as a result of increasing non-agricultural or craft production and trade had the *brahmadeyas* and temples, apart from royal centres, as their focus and arose in nodal points.

The ports like Mamallapuram, Kaverippumpattinam, Nagappattinam were royal ports conspicuously promoted by royal patrons, where evidence of long distance trade is marked by the presence of foreign agents (e.g. from China at Nagappattinam) and royal functionaries interacting with each other. The exchange of embassies with China by the Chola rulers and the abolition of tolls (*Sungam*), building of religious institutions like the Buddhist *vihara* at Nagappattinam were acts of deliberate royal policy for promoting trade. The Chola royal expeditions to Southeast Asia, especially Srivijaya also were aimed at creating facilities for the south Indian traders, whose presence in these regions and as far as China was commercially significant. The rural-urban continuum (i.e. without the town-country dichotomy but with a gradual transformation towards urban forms and activities) is best illustrated by urban processes in the Tamil region where the economic activities of the *brahmadeya* and temple centres, marked urban growth in the core regions with the emergence of clusters of *brahmadeyas* and temple centres. Some of them were administrative centres and hence political processes and/or commercial importance also added to the urban character of these centres.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) Analyze the role of inscriptions and coinage in assessing the emergence of urbanization in the period between 300-1000 CE.

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2) With reference to any two regions of south India discuss the main features of urbanization in the period between 600-1200 CE.

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13.6 GUILDS[2]

What was a merchant guild? How did it function? What were the benefits which accrued to its members? These are important questions to be answered. Well the guilds were voluntary associations of merchants dealing in the same type of commodity such as grains, textiles, betel leaves, horses, perfumes, etc. They were formed by both local as well as itinerant merchants. The association of local merchants having permanent residence in town was more permanent in nature than the association of itinerant merchants which was formed only for a specific journey and was terminated at the end of each venture. The guilds framed their own rules and regulations regarding the membership and the code of conduct. They fixed the prices of their goods and could even decide that specific commodity was not to be sold on a particular day by its members. They could refuse to trade on a particular day by its members. They could refuse to trade in a particular area if they found the local authorities hostile or uncooperative. The guild merchants also acted as the custodians of religious interests. The inscriptions refer to numerous instances when they collectively agreed to pay an additional tax on the sale and purchase of their goods for the maintenance of temples or temple functions. The guild normally worked under the leadership of a chief who was elected by its members. He performed the functions of a magistrate in deciding the economic affairs of the guild. He could punish, condemn or even expel those members who violated the guild rules. One of his main duties was to deal directly with the King, and settle the market tolls and taxes on behalf of his fellow merchants. The growth of corporate activity enabled the guild chiefs to consolidate their power and position in society, and many of them acted as the representative of their members on the local administrative councils. A member of the guild worked under a strict code of discipline and was also robbed of some initiative or action but still he enjoyed numerous benefits. He received full backing of the guild in all his economic

[2] This small section on 'Guilds' has been taken from EHI 03, Block 1, Unit 4.

activities and was, thus, saved from the harassment by local officials. Unlike a hawker or vendor, he had greater credibility in the market. Thus, in spite of the fact that guild chiefs tended to be rude and authoritative at times, the merchants found guilds an important means of seeking physical and economic protections.

13.6.1 Guilds of North India

The digests and commentaries of the period refer to the corporate body of merchants by various terms, such as *naigama*, *shreni*, *samuha*, *sartha*, *samgha*, etc. The *naigama* is described as an association of caravan merchants of different castes who travelled together for the purpose of carrying on trade with other countries. *Shreni*, according to Medhatithi, was a group of people following the same profession such as that of traders, moneylenders, artisans, etc. though some authors considered it to be a group of artisans alone. The *Lekhapaddhati* indicates that a special department called the *Shreni-karana* was constituted by the kings of western India to look after the activities of the guilds of merchants and artisans in their region. Another text *Manasollasa* reveals that many merchant guilds maintained their own troops (*shrenibala*) for personal safety. Inscriptions too refer to the corporate activity of merchants. An inscription from western India refers to *vanika-mandala* which was probably a guild of local merchants.

13.6.2 The Trading Organizations (Guilds) of South India

The trading or merchant community was generally known as the *Balanjas*, who claimed to be the protectors of the *Vira Balanja Dharma* (*banaju, banajiga, Vaniga*, etc.) or code of conduct and traded in the south Indian regions and beyond in the eastern countries such as Burma, Malaysia and Sumatra. In Karnataka the 500 *Svamis of Ayyavole* originating in Aihole in the 8th century CE, moved into other areas and by the 10th century appear in the Tamil region on the main trade routes. They acquired an elaborate ring of epithets like *Ubhaya Nanadesi*, *Mummaridandas Ainnurruvar*, *Svamigalu Pekkndru*, *Nanadesi Pekkndru* (and *Gavares*). Their activities increased by the 12th century CE (Belgaum inscription of CE 1134), their presence in many *nagaras* and *gramas* attested by their inscriptions in Bijapur, Belgaum and Dharwar districts. Even after the 12th century i.e., from the 13th century (Kakatiya period) to the fall of the Vijayanagara Empire their inscriptions are found in the Deccan and Andhra regions but with lesser visibility due to changes in the nature of trade and other entrants into the South Asian trading network. A graphic picture of their activities is found in the inscription of Belgaum, CE 1184, travelling by land and water, penetrating into many regions with their articles of trade like superior elephants, well bred horses, large sapphires, crystals, pearls, rubies, diamonds, lapis lazuli, onyx, topaz, carbuncles, coral, emeralds, *karkketana*, and various articles of lesser value. Apart from hawking and peddling, they also had also extensive dealings in foreign trade.

The *Mahanadu* of merchants often met in the mandapas of temples. It is not easy to comprehend the nature of relationship among the different merchant guilds. Nor is it clear as to whether a hierarchy of such organizations evolved during the early medieval times. The *Ayyavole 500* with their *Virasasanas* seem to be the most important of these organizations and could well have been at the apex of the itinerant trading bodies. That these merchants moved in groups of trading caravans (*Satu* in Telugu and *Sattu* in Tamil) is also referred to by Ferishta (c. 1560-1620)

and Ibn Battuta (d.1377). The inter-regional movement of goods was controlled by these organizations and we find the *Ayyavole 500* in south Karnataka calling themselves the *Southern Ayyavole* and the *Tisai Ayirattu Ainnurruvar* moving into the Andhra region regularly from the 11th century.

The Chinese trade missions to south India under the Yuan dynasty underline the importance of south India and its overseas trade in the Chola and post- Chola periods. Changes in the commodities of maritime trade from luxuries to necessities such as dyes, cotton yarn, textiles, processed iron, pepper, and horses become more prominent in *Ayyavole* inscriptions. How these goods came to south India for trans-shipment and who the shippers were, are not known. The guild inscriptions suggest that they sent their agents quite far abroad and established trading stations (e.g. Takua Pa-*Manigramam* (in Malaya peninsula) and Pagan – *Ayyavole* (in Burma, Myanmar. The first indicates the place and the second represents the guild.). Merchants had access to kings and the Chola invasions of Sri Lanka involved such interactions. The external policy of the Cholas was designed to favour the expansion of overseas trade interests from which both the Chola ruler and the merchants derived benefit. These expeditions were not for plunder and loot but trade figured as an important factor in framing of the Chola policy and the Chola rulers had links with the merchant community for mutual benefit.

The Chola occupation of northern Sri Lanka may have been a hurdle in the links of Sri Lanka with Southeast Asia, especially the Sinhalese links with Java and Bali. Sri Lanka was rich in precious stones such as rubies, topaz and sapphire. Arab works like *Akhbar al-Sinwa'l-Hind*, a collection of travel stories, and that of Ibn Khurdadabih refer also to pepper, perfumes, musk, diamonds and precious stones, aloes, gold and pearls, some of them like aromatics being imported to Sri Lanka. The Gulf of Mannar rich in pearls and Mantai (Mahatitta) in northwest Sri Lanka was the point of ingress for the Cholas, the latter being one of the great emporiums of the early medieval period comparable to Siraf on the Persian gulf.

Pepper was highly priced in China and in the west and the demand had grown in the 13th century. The Chola and Southeast Asia trade links are attested to by the Nagappattinam records of the early 11th century and Kamboja's gifts to Chola kings and the Chola missions to China (CE 1077). Rajendra's expedition to Southeast Asia was a coastal voyage to Kadaram or Srivijaya. Chola raids were meant to "protect Indian commercial interests from interference by Srivijaya". Like the Sung emperors of China or the rulers of Srivijaya in Southeast Asia, the Cholas both solicited and sought to foster foreign trade and to establish trading rights for the Tamil speaking merchants in those areas.

By CE 1088 the *Ayyavole* guild was established near Barus in Sumatra. The Chola rulers were personally interested in sharing the profits of maritime trade. The goods mentioned in them include areca nuts, pepper, myrobalans, iron, cotton, thick cloth, thread, wax, yak's tail, camphor oil, civet, horses, elephants, camels?, aloes wood, sandalwood. In the Sung maritime trade the main commodities were cloves, frankincense, dried galingale, abaca cloth, umbrellas, swords, bottle-gourd, edible date, medicinal rhubarb, slaves, peafowl, benzoin, putchuk, margosa bark, melons, gardenia flowers, coconut, cardamom, lacquer ware and a host of other things. Sandalwood and camphor were two articles of great demand in the Indian Ocean trade. Aromatics were also an important item as there was constant demand

for expendable, sacred items. Frankincense was the only item coming from West Asia, while the bulk of the aromatics came from Southeast Asia. The *Ayyavole* inscriptions mention a vast range of commodities exported from the Pandya kingdom.

The ramifications of this trade covered a wide spectrum of regions and commodities from China through Southeast Asian countries, Sri Lanka and south India to the West Asian regions. Further, the Gujarat coast, which linked most of the Indian trade with West Asia, had regular sea traffic connecting it with Hormuz and other central Asian regions and north China. South Indian merchandise also used this important channel for its trade. Marco Polo refers to the importance of this trade to China in pepper, precious stones and pearls. Ma'bar, the Pandya region, sent envoys to China (1283 and 1284) and envoys from China reached Kollam (CE 1279), a major port on the west coast. The overseas commerce primarily that of West Asia and Egypt (Cairo) and China, was mainly from the west coast with Kollam as the major port. The Geniza documents and Jewish letters contain impressive evidence of the links with the Mediterranean regions- Italy, Sicily, Morocco and Lebanon (Syria). The Egyptian corporate association called the Karimi dealt in pepper and spices. By the 13th century they obtained their eastern commodities from Indian traders of Gujarat and south India during the Chola, Pandya and Kakatiya periods and also from the island of Sinhala. The Sung and later Yuan rulers of China encouraged this trade. The Indian subcontinent drew in gold, silver and copper in payment for many of its exports. In China payment in kind was advocated. The Geniza documents show that Jewish merchants trading with south India had to make payment in gold to offset their unfavourable trade balances. Spices to Egypt led to a constant flow of gold to India from Europe and Egypt (the Venetian sequins of the Vijayanagar period). But the horse trade was a major currency drain and this aspect of the outflow of gold from, especially in the post- Chola period, is an aspect of economy which needs more intensive study. The commodities handled by *Ayyavole* and *Manigramam* thus include a wide variety of goods such as textiles, iron, aloes wood, (*Agaru- Aghil*), areca nuts and betel nuts, bdellium, camphor, civet, cotton and cotton fabric. Spinning and weaving technology were hence consciously developed and Southeast Asia became a major market for Indian textiles. The brisk trade in cotton is known from the Chineses accounts (Patula-14th century). Textiles were also a major export to the western markets. Horses were always imported from Turushka, Kamboja and Yavana countries, although the rearing of horses was not understood in south India.

Iron and steel wootz was exported from many parts of south India. Indian steel out of which the famous Damascus sword was made was one of the most important exports from India as seen in the Geniza records. Musk, myrobalan, pearls, pepper, putchuk, rose water, sandalwood, wax and honey and silk- varieties were also traded in, while Chinese silk was imported into Chola and Pandya countries.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) Analyze the growth of urbanization in south India.

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2) Epigraphy was the main source of information to study the process of urbanization in south India. Comment.

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3) Discuss the role of merchant guilds in the growth of craft, trade, and urbanization.

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13.7 SUMMARY

Agrarian expansion and general reliance on agrarian sector was the chief feature of the early medieval economy. Urban centres after the Guptas saw a new life infused into them. The revival of trade, rise of new markets, dispersal of political authority and consolidation of economic power by the religious functionaries had given rise to numerous towns and cities in different regions of the Indian subcontinent. Different kinds of urban centres like *pura, nagaram, mandapika, hatta*, *pattinam* emerged. These were instrumental in giving rise to a new phase of urbanization in early medieval India. Tamil Nadu particularly experienced 're-urbanization' through the growth of *nadus*, *nagarams* and organization with wide networks such as *Ayyavole*. As compared to early historical urban centres, during this phase, urban centres developed deeper roots within the regions. Presence of increased number of guilds suggests the 'diversification of production activities'. There was regular coastal traffic along the entire littoral. The Konkan and Malaya region emerged into prominence during this period. At local levels, local bodies like *nagarams* in Tamil Nadu and *nagaramu* in Andhra region were active in organising the trade. Merchants involved in brisk trading activities throughout the period used to move in trading groups (*caravans*).

13.8 KEY WORDS

Cairo Geniza Records : Archive of ancient Jewish manuscripts found in synagogue of Fostat-Cairo. In the 1890s the material was removed to Bodleian Library, Oxford University, London.

Composite Artisan Community : It followed different crafts but were organized into a large crafts community by the 14th century CE. Hence, wielded considerable influence.

Kongu Region : Region of ancient Tamil Nadu in south India. It comprises of the present Coimbatore, Erode, Salem, Karur and a part of Dindigul districts of Tamil Nadu.

Malay Peninsula : It is what is today Peninsular Malaysia and Ocean of adjacent islands of Southeast Asia including the east coast of Sumatra, the coast of Borneo, and smaller islands that lie between these areas. It lies between the Andaman Sea of the Indian Ocean and the start of Malacca on the west and the Gulf of Thailand and the South China Sea on the east. The northern part of the Peninsula forms a part of Thailand; the southern part constitutes west Malaysia, the Malayan part of Malaysia

Sui Generis : Self-generated or the processes originated and developed on their own and not due to outside influence.

Virasasanas : Inscriptions of guilds that begin with a *prasasti* describing their brave and heroic deeds as itinerant traders, who were also good fighters.

13.9 ANSWERS TO CHEK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) See Section 13.3 and 13.4 including its Sub-sections.

2) See Section 13.5.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) See Sections 13.4 and 13.5.

2) See Sections 13.4 and 13.5.

3) See Section 13.6 and its Sub-sections.

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UNIT 14 DEVELOPMENTS IN RELIGION [1]

Structure

14.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will learn about:

- the religious geography of the landscape;
- the emergence and the integration with the political milieu, the role of the temple;
- the socio-religious movements based on the ideology of bhakti mainly from the ninth to the twelfth century;
- development of religion and ideas of bhakti in south India from fourth to the sixth century; and
- the popular devotional movements from seventh to the eleventh century.

14.1 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit we would be looking at religion in the context of early medieval society. We will be discussing religious geography of the landscape. Subsequently

[1] This Unit has been taken from MHI 06, Block 4, Unit 15 and Block 6, Unit 22

the issue of the emergence and the integration with the political milieu will be taken up. We will also discuss the role of the temple and later will draw some conclusions based on the discussions. Certain socio-religious movements will also be studied.

14.2 GEOGRAPHIES OF RELIGION

Buddhism and Islam became most prominent along routes of trade and migration that ran from one end of Asia to the other. In the sixth century, Buddhists received most of the patronage available in Afghanistan, the upper Indus basin, and Himalayan regions from Kashmir to Nepal. They then moved eastward across Central Asia and established themselves firmly in Tibet, China, and Japan. After the eighth century, the eastward and southern migrations by Arabs and Turks from West and Central Asia forced a shift in the pattern of religious patronage towards Islam. Nevertheless Buddhist monks had a permanent base in Sri Lanka, and from the eighth century onwards, they received state patronage in Burma. This pattern changed as Islam advanced through trade and the earlier religious patronage now shifted in favour of Islam. Buddhism receded in the background. In fact this kind of scenario can be visualised elsewhere as well. For instance in Bengal in the east. Vijayasena (1095- 1158) defeated the Palas, pushed Sena armies west across Bengal and northern Bihar, patronized Vishnu worship, and paved way for a patronage of Vaishnavism in the Sena domains. The last Sena *raja*, Laksmanasena, patronized the most famous Bengali Vaishnava poet, Jayadeva, who wrote the widely influential devotional poem, *Gitagovinda.* The Sena ruler's patronage to Vaishanvism came to an end in the 13th century as the political patronage shifted again. This shift was towards Islam in the eastern regions of Bengal, where the Senas had earlier uprooted Buddhists; while Vaishnavism received support from merchants, landowners, and local rulers in the western regions.

The Kathmandu valley was a Buddhist stronghold ruled by Hindu kings. Kingdoms around Kathmandu became a melting pot for Hindus from the south and Buddhists from the north.

In the western plains — in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Malwa, and Bundelkhand — medieval dynasties of Kalacuris, Chalukyas, Paramaras, and Candelas patronized Jainas, who were prominent among the merchants. One Chalukya king is said to have become a Jaina. Jaina temple worship and Hindu-Jain marriages became common.

In the peninsula, medieval worshippers of Siva and Vishnu displaced Buddhism and Jainism from cultural prominence they enjoyed in early medieval times, especially in Madurai and Kanchipuram. Pockets of Jainism remained, however, and all along the peninsular coast, most prominently in Kerala, kings patronized diverse merchant communities, including Jains, Zoroastrians, Muslims, Christians, and Jews. Arab Muslim settlements received patronage from non-Muslim rulers all along the peninsular coast, as they did across the Palk Straight in Sri Lanka.

14.3 INTEGRATION AS A PROCESS

In the far south, in the land of *Dakshinapatha*, from the eighth century onwards,

Bhakti movement centred around Shiva and Vishnu worship spread as a reaction to the orthodox brahmanical religion. This was manifested in the new tradition of devotional (bhakti) worship that valued emotion above knowledge, discipline, and ritual; by composing vernacular verse in Tamil, not Sanskrit; by promoting women saints and mass participation in deity worship; by giving devotees a direct relation to god independent of Brahmanical mediation; by making low caste status respectable in the eyes of god; and by creating pilgrimage places rooted in local traditions. Devotionalism made divine frenzy and passion for a god a high virtue, and by the tenth century, these energies had been turned against religious competitors. Several texts indicate massacres of Buddhists and Jains. Under Chola kings, worshippers of Shiva (Shaivites) prospered at the expense of Vishnu worshippers (Vaishnava), triggering conflicts among sectarian forces.

Bhakti devotionalism and sectarian competition challenged the Brahmanical proponents of traditional orthodox religion as it attracted more patronage from ruling dynasties. To cultivate a popular following, many rulers in the south supported Vaishnava (*Alvar*) and Shaivities (*Nayanar*) bhakti poets. The most celebrated Hindu intellectual of the early medieval age, Shankaracharya (788-820), made his name during his short life by developing a Sanskrit high-culture rendition of Tamil devotional poetry, by reconciling Shaivism and Vaishnavism through a non-dualist *advaita* philosophy that drew on the Upanishads and incorporated elements from Buddhism, and by travelling from Kerala to Kashmir and back again to establish monastic centres. Shankara helped to absorb and normalize popular devotionalism in elite brahman high culture.

A powerful regional sect of Virashaivism attracted royal patronage and many adherents from merchant communities and became regionally dominant in northern Karnataka, where Lingayats remain predominant till today. Similarly in the Deccan the worship of Viththala at Pandharpur can be ascribed to a rise of a new polity and its support to a new cult that later legitimized the rule of the new elite.

Popular devotionalism attracted thousands of passionate believers to temples and pilgrimage sites. This made public patronage increasingly complex because sects could provide decisive military and financial support to dynastic contenders. Thus the rise of the sects and the consolidation of the new polities went hand in hand.

14.4 TEMPLE AND ITS ROLE

The temple as a ritual and architectural complex emerged in its glory in the later Gupta period. Its elaboration and spread from the sixth to the fourteenth century provide a legacy for us to study from Mahaballipuram to Khajuraho. Local cults were woven into Puranic traditions and temple rituals as local communities came under royal authority. We come across a number of inscriptions referring to temples and the grants given there along with the rituals performed. Gifts by kings, landed elites, merchants and others to brahmanas and temples increased the spiritual stature of the donor. Rising bhakti devotionalism enhanced the virtue, volume, and commercial value of pilgrimage, as it increased temple donations and investments. Donations became increasingly popular as a means and marker of social mobility as temples became commercial centres, landowners, employers,

and manufacturing centres. Increasing participation in temple rituals made them more effective sites for social ranking, as temple honours were distributed according to rank and all worshippers were positioned in ranked proximity to the deity. Rulers came first. Rich donors came in the order of the value of their temple endowments. Popular bhakti movements made sovereign gods ever more central in everyday social life, even for the poorest people who did all the hardest manual labour but were prohibited from even setting foot in the temple, whose exclusion marked them as the people of the lowest social rank. Some powerful bhakti saints came from the lowest of the low, whose devotion was so strong that gods came out of temples to return their love.

Thousands of brahmanas were granted rights to hitherto uncultivated land. The Rashtrakutas gave a gift of 8,000 measures of land to 1000 brahmanas, and 4000 measures to a single brahmana. In such contexts a non-brahmana power was aiming to enhance its status and that of its local allies. In other cases, brahmanas were appointed as the local representatives of the state authorities in what are described as *agrahara* villages where brahmanas presided over small peasants, who in Bihar were mostly landless sharecroppers or bonded labourers. These *agrahara* villages were typically small villages or satellites of bigger villages that included members of several castes and bigger land-holders. In Bihar, such *agrahara* villages proliferated and it is quite likely that in such *agraharas* oppressive social relations and some of the most egregious patterns of caste-centered discrimination and exploitation may have developed.

But these developments took time to spread elsewhere in India, first spreading to Bengal and eastern UP, and very gradually elsewhere in India. However, this pattern was not necessarily replicated in identical form throughout India and some parts of India virtually escaped this trend. In *agrahara* villages in other parts of India, brahmanas did take on the role of local administrators and tax collectors, but the status of the small peasantry was not always as miserable as in Bihar. The degree of exploitation and oppression appears to be related to the extent of alienation from land-ownership.

Even at the peak of influence of Christianity and Islam, India's brahmanas were never quite able to impose any comparable sort of rigid uniformity in the practice of Hinduism on a national (let alone, international) scale. In some localities, the lower castes did without the brahmanas entirely while elsewhere, especially in the south, or in Central India and Odisha — brahmanas often felt obliged to give due deference to dissenting and heterodox cults, and incorporated their belief systems into mainstream Hinduism.

In Andhra, folk religions played a powerful role in mediating Brahmanical influences, and a vibrant example of the deep penetration of folk influences in popular religion is to be seen in the sculpted array of folkloric panels in the temple of Srisailam (sponsored by the Vijayanagar rulers in the 14th-15th Century.). In neighbouring Karnataka, the bhakti ideals and Jain influences put their stamp on prevailing religious practices. Religion in India thus developed in a much more organic fashion than is commonly realized, and it was never completely divorced from popular inputs. Both male and female deities drew followers, and while goddesses were sometimes displayed in demonic warrior roles, gods were

sometimes displayed with feminine qualities. In the Yogini temples, all the deities were women and although today, there are only a handful of surviving Yogini temples, (mostly in Odisha and Madhya Pradesh) it is not unlikely that many more may have been in existence.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) Write a note on geographies of religion.

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2) Did the temple play any role in shaping of religion in early medieval India?

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14.5 SOCIO-RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

In this section various socio-religious movements that were inspired by the idea of bhakti will be discussed. Although bhakti has a general meaning, derived from the root word, bhaj in Sanskrit, implying, 'partaking (of god), participation, and loving devotion to a personal god', there are variations in interpreting bhakti that forms the basis of several devotional communities. There will also be a discussion of the historical context in which these movements were situated, the developments within the context and their individual reposes to them.

14.5.1 Development of Bhakti in *Sangam* Texts

The religious developments in south India in the medieval period can be traced to the trends in religion from the fourth to the sixth century. The information for this period is obtained from the texts which are largely called the *Sangam* texts. The concept of the sacred was expressed in terms like *katavul* and *ananku*, both probably implying the divine form to be worshipped and *kantu* and *potiyil* (a pillared hall), probably a prototype of a temple implying sacred space. The term *koyil* signified the house of a chief and not a temple, which was a later development. However, by the end of the fourth century, a systematic development of the divine took place with the association of religion with the *tinai* tradition in the famous grammatical treatise, the *Tolkappiyam.* The notion of *tinai* comprised of five eco-zones, each with a distinct populace, subsistence pattern and a divine form. They were:

1) *Mullai,* a collective term for the pastoral tracts, inhabited by the *maravars* (warriors) and the *itaiyar* (pastoralists) was the divine locale for Mayon.

2) *Kurinji,* a general term for the hilly eco-zone comprising of *vetar* and *kuravar* (the hunters) with shifting cultivation as the main occupation. The people here worshipped Murukan as the god.

3) *Marutam* was the wetland between the river valleys, and a focus of agrarian activities by the *ulavar* (agriculturists). Ventan was the god of *marutam.*

4) *Neytal* implied the area around the sea, populated by *paratavars* (the fishing community). Varunan was the god of the *neytal.*

5) *Palai* representing dry arid zones with the hunting-gathering tribes who worshipped the female divine form, Korravai.

Of all the *Sangam* deities, Murukan followed by Mayon have maximum textual references. Both Murukan and Mayon were associated with a specific form of worship, *veriyatu* and *kuravai* respectively, which were emotionally charged ritual dances involving the participation of all the men and women. Literally meaning the one who symbolizes youth and beauty, Murukan was worshipped in threshing grounds, forests, market places, trees, battle grounds and so on, indicating a strong degree of localization. By third century, Mayon was associated with northern Krishna cult/ Vaishnavism, though adapted to the southern milieu. For instance, the texts equated Mayon with Krishna and river Yamuna, one of the important locales of Krishna episodes with Tolunai. Mayon was also the royal symbol of the two ruling lineages in this period, viz., the Pandyas of Madurai in the southern part and Tondaiman of Kanchi on the northern part of the ancient Tamil region. Further, the *Sangam* texts referred to a sophisticated place of worship of Mayon, which was the temple at Vehka in Kanchi. However, after the fifth century, new religious ideas were expressed in the late *Sangam* (or post *Sangam*) texts, viz.; the *Cilappadikaram, Kalittokai, Paripatal* and *Tirumurukarruppatai*. These texts depicted the influence of the northern Epics (i.e. the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata).* The deities localized in the *tinai* framework were transformed into universal transcendental (i.e. abstract and not localized) godheads due to this influence. Murukan was fused with Skanda, the Aryan god of war. Mal/Mayon was identified with Vishnu. Ventan and Varuna of the *marutam* and *neytal tinai* were gradually marginalized and in the subsequent period do not find any mention. Korravai, the goddess of the *palai* was important but the process of her absorption in the Shaiva pantheon as Durga, the consort of Shiva already began. The interaction between the *Sangam* and *Puranic* elements introduced various themes from the *Puranic* myths. The various heroic deeds of Skanda now identified with Murukan. By the sixth century, Mayon with his incarnation myths was the god, cowherd hero and the lover of the *gopis* (cowherdesses) and once again emerged as the royal symbol of the Pandya and the Pallavas.

The *Paripatal* and the *Tirumurukarruppatai* articulated for the first time a new devotional milieu. The notion of a personal devotion, i.e. bhakti to the transcendental God appeared in the poems dedicated to Murukan and Mayon in these texts. The characteristics of the bhakti as expressed in these texts were:

1) The devotion to the god was expressed in Tamil, thus providing for the first time an alternative to Sanskrit as the religious language.

2) This idea of devotion was not yet a personalized experience that characterised the later bhakti. The references in the texts were objective and impersonal, as if concerning the second person.

3) The idea of bhakti became the basis for introducing the temple for the first time. The deity was situated in the temple symbolizing the presence of god

on this earth amongst the people to remove their sorrows. However, the temple had not emerged as the institution of formal worship. Hence, the ideas about the temple evolved that became central to the various socio-religious movements from seventh century. The temple was now referred to as the *koyil*.

4) The temple situation also marked out a sacred geography for the first time. This sacred geography comprised of various places of worship of one god, in this case, Mayon and Murukan. This also provided a network for future religious interaction. For instance, the *Cilappadikaram* and the *Paripatal* referred to temples of Mayon worship at Vehka (Kanchi), Tirumaliruncholai (near Madurai), Atakamatam (the Golden Hall in the Cera region), Puhar (Manivannan), Turutti (future Srirangam) and Vengadam (future Tirupati). The *Tirumurukarruppatai*, on the other hand, presented a sacred geography of the Murukan temples at Parankunram (Madurai), Tiruvavinankuti (Palani), Tiruverakam (Swamimalai), Palamutircholai (Tiruchchendur), Cenkotu and Erakam. Therefore, this new religiosity of the fifth-sixth centuries adapted and integrated the Sanskritic culture to the Tamil one. Although the *Sangam* texts refer to other religious traditions, viz., Jainism and Buddhism flourishing in the urban centers with the merchants as the main followers, the *Puranic*-Tamil paradigm provided the basic structural framework for the development of the communities.

14.5.2 Popular Devotional Movements: the Bhakti of the *Nayanars* and *Alvars* (CE 600-1000)

From the seventh to ninth century, bhakti evolved as a personalized religious attitude that focused on intense devotion to a single god, Shiva or Vishnu. This theistic belief was expressed in the hymns of the early Shaiva and Vaishnava saints, the *Nayanars* and *Alvars* respectively. According to respective community tradition, *Shaivite Nayanars* also known as *Samayacharyas* are sixty three in number, including a woman saint Karaikkal Ammaiyar and the *Vaishnava Alvars* are twelve, including a woman saint, Andal. Collectively known as the *Tevaram* and the *Nalayira Divya Prabandham,* these hymnal corpuses inspired the philosophy of the Shaiva and Vaishnava religious communities in the medieval period. Several meanings are attributed to the *Tevaram* .It has been generally accepted that *tev* is from *devagrha,* i.e., house of the god and *varam* is a song addressed to a deity, hence *tevaram.*

Although the *Nayanars* and *Alvars* were contemporaries, there were differences in the ways in which they conceptualized the sacred. Characterized by intense emotional devotion and strong desire of mystical union with the god, the hymns emerged as the first concrete expression of religious sectarianism in Tamil. In both sets of hymnal compositions, the *Nayanars* and the *Alvars* condemned each other and attempted to demonstrate through various accounts that their respective gods were superior to the other. The hymns elaborated upon certain ideas, which had never evolved earlier. These ideas became the basis for the future religious developments of both the communities. These ideas were:

1) A highly personalized religious attitude that focused on an individual's relationship with the god.

2) The hymns projected a *strong sense of community*. It is obvious that the *Nayanars* and *Alvars* were addressing primarily a group of devotees and attempting to impress upon them through ideas of devotion.

3) The image of a community was associated with the attitude of the hymnists towards the *caste hierarchy*. The hymns of these early saints reflected hostility towards the ritual dominance of the Vedic brahmanas, i.e., the *Chaturvedins*. These *Chaturvedins,* by virtue of their high status in the caste hierarchy had monopolized the worship. The saints criticized this monopoly and strongly advocated that everybody, irrespective of their caste and economic status should have an equal access to the divine. The non- Brahmanical background of the hymnists generated dissent against the notion of domination by the brahmanas. For instance, some *Alvars* and *Nayanars* were Vellalas (primarily a peasant caste), low caste minstrels, the chieftains of the tribal clans and so on. However, some of these saints were brahmanas and their dissent against caste hierarchy reflected the presence of a hierarchy amongst the brahmanas themselves.

4) However, it was not a total rejection of the caste system. It is only in the hymns of Tirunavukkaracar, (popularly known as Appar) the Shaiva saint one can read a direct rejection of caste. (Champakalakshmi, 1993, p.145). Rather an alternative to the caste hierarchy was provided in the concept of a community of *bhaktas*. In order to be a part of this community of the *bhaktas,* the most important criteria was devotion to god and caste was secondary. Therefore caste status was never given up. The hymns restated that the devotion to Shiva and Vishnu was much superior to the Vedic recitations and a *Chaturvedin* was inferior to a low caste devotee of Shiva or Vishnu.

5) The *notion of pilgrimage* further contributed to the sense of belonging to a community. The hymns of the *Nayanars* referred to two hundred and seventy four Shaiva sites. All but six are located in the Tamil region. These six are, Srisailam in Andhra, Gokarna in Karnataka and Kedara, Indranila, Gaurikunda and Kailasha in the Himalayas in north India. The Alvars mapped more than ninety odd places, though the traditional Vaishnava holy places are one hundred and eight, which was a later development. In this case, the greater majority are in the Tamil region and the rest are in Kerala, southern Andhra, Karnataka and north India, in places like Mathura, Badrinath, Ayodhya, Naimisharanya, Dwarka and so on.

14.5.3 Shankaracharya and Advaita Philosophy (CE 788-820)

While the *Nayanars* and *Alvars* represented popular devotional movements with a broad socio-cultural base, there was a growth of another religious tradition called the *Smartas* in the eighth century, under Shankaracharya, the famous *advaita* philosopher. The *Smarta* tradition was primarily based upon inquiry and speculation of the philosophy of the *Vedas* and *Upanishads* and was therefore, highly intellectual with a limited social base confined mostly to the Vedic brahmanas. However, the ideas of *advaita* were influential in shaping the ideas of post-eleventh century philosophies of Shaiva Siddhantas and Vaishnava saints like Ramanuja and Madhvacharya. The various biographies of Shankaracharya illustrate that

Shankara was a Nambudri brahmana from Kaladi which is in North Travancore region of Kerala. He lost his father at an early age and became an ascetic or a *sanyasin.* Shankara travelled all over India, participating and winning in numerous debates on *Vedantic* philosophy and propagated his ideas. According to the biographies, he reorganized the ascetic order of the *sanyasins,* perhaps influenced by the Buddhist *Sangha* or the monastic orders and founded a number of *mathas* for the study and propagation of his doctrines. Shankara wrote several works and commentaries on the *Vedanta-sutras, Bhagavad Gita* and the *Upanishads,* all in Sanskrit. His major contribution was the commentary on Badrayana's *Brahmasutra,* which was a significant attempt to systematize the various strands of the *Upanishadic* thoughts. He acquired numerous disciples who carried on the *Smarta* tradition. Thus, Shankara's philosophy was highly intellectual and religious organization was essentially ascetic.

In south India, the term *Smarta* means not only the worship of the five gods, but also following Shankara's philosophy of the *Vedanta.* According to Nilakantha Shastri, the *Smarta* religion evolved a religious opinion and practice that reconciled the Shaiva and Vaishnava sectarianism as seen in the hymns of the *Nayanars* and *Alvars*. The religious practice is based on the principle of *Panchayatana puja*, i.e. the worship of five shrines, viz., Shiva, Vishnu, Shakti (mother-goddess), Surya and Ganesha. This worship is done at home with the help of symbols representing the deities. (K.A.Nilakana Sastri, 1963, *Development of Religion in South India.* Madras: Orient Longmans, p.61). Shankara's philosophy had its roots in *Vedanta* or *Upanishads* and represented a brahmanical/ Sanskritic alternative to Buddhism. According to him, both Shiva and Vishnu signified the supreme *Brahman* or the universal soul. He systematically developed the monistic tendency of the *Upanishads*, emphasizing that the unqualified Brahma is *Nirguna* Brahma. Brahma is one and eternal beyond the duality of subject and object. Shankara in his *Advaitic* philosophy of non-dualism explained that god (*ishvara*), the individual soul (*jiva*) and the world (*jagat)* are mere illusions due to the principle of *maya*. True liberation or *moksha* can only be attained through *jnana*, i.e. knowledge. Therefore, Shankara advocated renunciation of worldly life and adoption of ascetic mode of living. He also stated that the devotion to god and the observance of the *varnashramdharma* (that is the rules of the caste system) as described in the scriptures were important for acquiring competency for the study of the *Vedanta.* As has been stated earlier, the philosophy of Shankara's *advaita* influenced later *Vaishnava* and *Shaiva Siddhanta* philosophy after the eleventh century and emerged as an important theological basis for the respective communities. (Konduri Sarojini Devi (1990). *Religion in Vijayanagar Empire.* New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, pp.58-59).

14.6 CONSOLIDATION OF THE RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS: CE 1000-1300

With the consolidation of the Cholas in the tenth century, the centre of political activities shifted from Tondainadu (with Kanchipuram as the capital) to Cholanadu with the capital at Tanjavur. The Pandyas continued to rule from Madurai and provided a formidable opposition to the Cholas. Both the Cholas and the Pandyas continued with the Pallava system of utilizing the *brahmadeyas,* and temples for

political integration. Both the *brahmadeyas* and temples due to their overarching ideological framework of the *varna-jati* paradigm integrated various sections of the society. However, it was the temple that emerged as an important institution of integration in three ways:

1) The ritual of gift giving to the deities in the temples created a network of political alliances. The kings gifted to the temples that in turn were recirculated and often sold in the society in the form of ritual goods, for instance the *prasadam* (food offering), generating economic transactions. The local chiefs also made gifts to the king or donated to the temples in the name of the king and received titles and honours that enabled them to become the members of the royal alliance network. Thus, this ritual of gift giving created loyalties and alliances for political purposes and imparted political stability to the medieval south Indian states. However, one cannot ignore the notion of religious merit, which was an important aspect of ritual gift giving.

2) The temple further provided the 'ideological apparatus' for the medieval south Indian states, bringing together the religion of various social groups. The political dynasties realized that the bhakti cults of Shaivism and Vaishnavism with their broad-based ideologies would be effective in integrating the society and consolidate the political network. Hence, the popular socio-religious movements with elements of protest now influenced the political ideology of power and dominance. (R. Chamapakalakshmi, 1996). Consequently, the hymns which were full of poetic descriptions of power and strength of various forms of Shiva and Vishnu became the source of inspiration for the construction of several canonical temples with elaborate iconography. The various cosmic and heroic representations of the *Puranic* deities in the temple iconography were related to the image of a monarch and his absolute power.

3) The temples also provided the avenue for the rulers, especially the Cholas to 'divinise' themselves. The Cholas constructed images of their rulers and members of the royal family and consecrated them by situating the images in the temples. Apart from this, the construction of monumental temples became a part of the royal project. Several such imperial temples were named after the Chola rulers who sponsored them. The Brihadesvara temple at Tanjore constructed by Rajaraja the Great (CE 985-1014) in CE 1003 illustrates this trend. Huge temple complexes with elaborate architecture, a pantheon with multiple divinities represented a continuous process of integration of different sections of the society in a hierarchical manner. At the top of the hierarchy was the royal family, followed by the ritually pure brahmana priests performing worship. Below them were the administrative elites, dominant agrarian and mercantile groups involved in temple administration and finally at the bottom were the lower categories of agricultural worker, craftsmen and menials in the temple service/(R. Champakalakshmi (1995), p. 309.) By the end of the eleventh century, there was a gradual marginalization of the *brahmadeyas* due to their exhaustion as an institution of integration. Consequently, the temples further emerged as important organizations that had an impact on the religious communities. The Pandya and the Chola records of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries cite several instances of the *brahmadeyas* being converted into non-brahmana villages or being donated as *devadanam* to the temples.

14.7 SOCIO-RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS: THE ROLE OF THE *ACHARYAS*

In the absence of any challenge from the heterodox sects viz., the Jainas and the Buddhists, the religious communities focused on the expansion of their resource base by competing for patronage from the royalty and the local chieftains. The *acharyas* or the ideologues and theologians organized the ideas of the *Nayanars* and *Alvars*. This was done primarily in three ways:

a) The *acharyas* evolved a textual tradition that comprised of certain kind of texts like the commentaries, the hagiographies and temple texts such as the *Agamas*. In all these texts, the ideology of the religious communities was articulated.

b) The *acharyas* consolidated the community by creating an institutional framework. This comprised of strengthening their base in the temples by gaining access to various privileges, for instance, the right to performing the rituals. Another institutional innovation was the emergence of the *mathas,* which were probably an influence of the Smarta tradition.

c) The notion of pilgrimage expressed in various sites in the hymns of the *Nayanars* and *Alvars* was elaborated upon by fostering the local, regional and pan-Indian network. In this way, a collective consciousness of the community was highlighted.

14.8 VIRASHAIVISM

Virashaivism, literally meaning heroic Shaivism was based on intense and unconditional devotion to Shiva. This socio-religious movement was influenced by the bhakti of the Tamil *Nayanars*, who were also regarded as the spiritual guides of the Virashaiva teachers. Virashaivism is also considered to be 'a reformist schism of the Kalamukha sect in Kartnataka.'(Champakalakshmi, 1996, p.159).The founder of the movement was supposed to be Basava, a minister in the court of the Kalachuri king, Bijjala of Kalyana in north Karnataka in the twelfth century (CE 1160). Bijjala and Basava were said to have had numerous differences. However, with the establishment of Yadava control in the Deccan, especially in northern Karnataka and the Hoysala regimes in southern Karnataka, Virashaivas received considerable royal patronage. The growth of trade in Karnataka provided the support from the merchants and the artisan communities, especially the *Banajigas*. This movement was hostile to Jainism and remained so after the twelfth century and was chiefly responsible for the decline of Jainism in Karnataka.

According to the Virshaiva tradition, the community had an ancient origin, when the five ascetics sprang up from the five heads of Shiva and founded the five mathas. They were Kedarnatha in the Himalayas, Srisailam in Kurnool district in Andhra Pradesh, Balehalli in west Mysore, Ujjaini in Bellary and Benares. According to Nilakantha Sastri (p. 64) evidences show that these ascetics were contemporaries of Basava in the twelfth century. Since they rejected most of the Brahmanical practices and institutional organizations like the temples, they created their own priesthood, the *jangamas.* The *jangama* was the *guru* or spiritual guide

and commanded veneration in the community. He was identified with Shiva himself. The *jangamas* were both householders and celibates and were based in the Virashaiva *mathas*. The Virashaivas rejected the worship of fixed large stone *lingas (Sthavara linga*) in the temples. Temple and temple building was condemned as an activity of the rich. It was a static symbol, as against the body, especially the moving body, wandering from place to place. Hence, it was a denunciation of the stable establishment. The saints came from diverse non-brahmanical background. The Virashaiva saints were considered as *Nirguna bhaktas*, relating personally to the infinite absolute, who may bear the name of Shiva, but did not have any attributes or mythology. The scriptures of the Virashaivas comprised of the *vachanas,* which were exclusively in Kannada. A *vachana* is a religious lyric in Kannada, literally meaning, 'saying things said' (A.K.Ramanujan, (1973). *Speaking of Siva*. Baltimore: Penguin Books).

From the tenth to the twelfth century, there were prolific *vachana* compositions of the Virashaiva saints like, Dasimayya, Basav, Allama and Mahadeviyakka. None of them were brahmanas. The saints had an antipathy towards the Sanskrtic tradition and scriptures. This is reflected in the *vachanas* of Basava and other Virashaiva saints. The Virashaivas right from the beginning had a broad social base, where the followers came from different castes and class. Their practices brought them into conflict with other Shaiva religious traditions. Their social practice advocated the remarriage of the widows, no restrictions on menstruating women, inter-caste dining, no ritual purification for the family of the deceased and they buried their dead.

Simultaneous with the development of Virashaivism was the growth and expansion of another movement of similar beliefs. This was the Aradhya Shaiva movement in Andhra (Cuddapah and Kurnool district mainly) and Kannada region (Mysore). It was started by Mallikarjuna Pandita Aradhya, who was a contemporary of Basava in the twelfth century. Aradhya is a Sanskrit word meaning adorable. The followers were mostly brahmanas. They wore the sacred thread along with the *linga* around their neck. They adopted the Virashaiva forms of worship but did not interdine with other Lingayats and intermarried with the Smartas.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) Discuss the development of Bhakti in *Sangam* texts.

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2) To what extent were the socio-religious movements a protest against the contemporary social structure?

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14.9 SUMMARY

In this unit we looked at the overall perspective on thereligion in the context of early medieval society. We traced the development of religion and ideas of bhakti in south India from fourth to the sixth century. We studied the popular devotional movements from seventh to the eleventh century. The twelfth century represented a crucial phase in the evolution and construction of the religious communities and their respective consciousness. A stiff competition for acquiring the devotees set in. The theological orientation of the communities was aimed at incorporating the non-brahmanical elements thereby broadening the social base of their respective community organization. The Shaiva and the Vaishnava traditions drew legitimacy from their respective hymnal tradition and projected a broad base. Amidst such an intense religious development, sectarian rivalries became common, especially in the context of competitive control over the patronage of economically and politically diverse powerful social groups. This was further reflected in the subsequent period, with the migration and the establishment of the Vijayanagara Empire in the fourteenth century.

14.10 KEY WORDS

Agrahara : Land or village gifted by king to brahmanas in the Deccan region

Alvars : The Vaishnava saint-poets of early medieval south India

Brahmadeya : Land gifted to brahmanas, generally by kings in south India

Celestial Ancestries : This is the practice of tracing geneologies of kings and queens to mythical forms of planets, sun and the moon.

Popular Devotionalism : Here we mean the faith and love of ordinary people towards god which developed as forms of Bhakti cults in various parts of the country.

Linga : A phallic emblem of the god Shiva.

Matha : Monastery.

Nayanars : The Shaiva saint-poets of early medieval India.

Tevaram : A collection of hymns, part of the canon of south Indian Shaiva bhakti.

Tirumurai : The canon of south Indian Shaiva bhakti.

Tiruttondar-Tokai : A work by Sundarar, which lists 62 *Nayanmar* saints.

14.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) See Section 14.2

2) See Section 14.4

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) See Sub-section 14.5.1

2) See Sub-section 14.5.2

14.12 SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 15 EDUCATION, INTELLECTUAL TRADITIONS, INTERACTIONS AND PHILOSOPHY[1]

Structure

15.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will learn about:

- how different regions in the early medieval period such as Kashmir, Bengal, *Tamilaham*, etc. were experiencing the growth of cults and sub-cults of Hinduism and heterodoxical sects;
- the rise of Vajrayana Buddhism during the Pala rule in Bengal, Tamil Bhakti traditions in south India and Shaivism in Kashmir;
- how the elements of Shaktism were absorbed into other cults and practices;
- in what ways *Tamilaham* was transformed from its tinai tribal traditions into Shaiva and Vaishna Bhakti traditions;
- how the philosophy of Shankaracharya and Vaishnava *acharyas* linked the Vedanta philosophy with Puranic Hinduism which led to the revival of Hinduism; and
- how different educational institutions in numerous regions helped in the dissemination of the philosophy of various religious traditions.

15.1 INTRODUCTION

The systems of thought and philosophical reflection in ancient India mainly revolved around the various problems of cosmology (the nature of the universe), metaphysics (the nature of reality), logic, epistemology, ethics, etc. During the

[1] Dr. Richa Singh, Ph.D from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

ancient period, the six schools of philosophy or *shadarshana* came into existence which included *Samkhya*, *Yoga*, *Nyaya*, *Vaisheshika*, *Purva Mimamsa* and *Uttara Mimamsa*. *Uttara Mimamsa* is also commonly known as *Vedanta*. *Vedanta* is a generic term and there are different schools in *Vedanta* itself. Systems of thought or *darshanas* were derived through constant debates and dialogue, through commentaries on primary texts. They aimed at the realization of *moksha* or salvation. Consequently, this gave rise to a plethora of different schools, beliefs and practices. The two broad classifications that emerged in Indian thought were orthodox and heterodox schools. The orthodox school based their philosophy on the Vedic literature while the heterodox school (Buddhism, Jainism, Charvakas, Ajivikas, etc.) rejected the authority of the *Vedas*.

By the early medieval period the Shramanic religions (Buddhism and Jainism) on the one hand and Hinduism on the other began to incorporate diverse traditions and philosophical systems. The three main sects of Hinduism were: Vaishnavism, Shaivism and Shaktism and within these sects, there emerged many sub-sects. The bhakti tradition in *Tamilaham* helped in the expansion of the Vaishnava and Shaiva traditions. The *acharyas* of this time helped in bringing a clear connection between *Vedanta* and Puranic traditions and in reviving Hinduism. The notion of *dasavatara* (ten incarnations of Vishnu) became fairly standardized. Indigenous and tribal gods and goddesses were assimilated into the Hindu pantheon. Educational institutions and literary works which were produced owing to these religious developments also aided in the propagation of the philosophy and practices of Hinduism.

15.2 RELIGIOUS LEARNING AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Since ancient times, India had been a centre of learning. It attracted travellers and pilgrims of different climates and regions. Conversely monks and scholars from India travelled to different places to spread their teachings. Trade was another agency through which the dissemination of knowledge procured by the Indian intellectuals took place. Education was predominantly religious by nature. In the early medieval south India*, agraharas, brahmapuris, ghatikas* became the main centres of brahmanical learning. Land grants gave an impetus to brahmanical learning. Such grants made either to a single brahmana or to a number of brahmana families were called *brahmadeyas*. *Ghatikas* were the institutions of higher education and also centres of intellectual discourses and disputations. The *agrahara* was an allotment of a village or town or a number of villages by the king or noble family to brahmanas for their sustenance. Temples too were emerging as provider of several facilities including education. *Mathas* were often attached to temples. Shankaracharya set up many *mathas*. In such educational centres, *Mahajanas* (brahmana teachers) were responsible for delivering *shatkarmas* or six fold duties. The curricula were planned as per the needs of the students and the orientation of the institutions.

Buddhists and Jainas had monastic institutions and the medium of imparting education was Sanskrit. The exchange of ideas, discussions and dialogue between different schools was facilitated by monastic institutions. *Vedanta* philosophy came

to the forefront. In the Tamil region, Jaina monasteries were called *palli* which means to *lie-down*. The Jaina monks as they grew old and approached the twilight of their life, retired to caves where they spent their time till their death in imparting education to people. Some inscriptions show that in the Kazhugumalai *palli* there were about fifteen female teachers and nuns teaching between the 8th and 12th century CE. Probably, the concept of school and education came to this region from early Tamil Jainas. At Cuddalore there was the Pataliputra monastery of Jainas. The *Mattavilasa Prahasana*, a Sanskrit play written by the Pallava king, Mahendravarman I (571-630 CE), talks of the Buddhist friars and nuns and of a rich Budhhist monastery near Kanchi. When in 642 CE Huien Tsang visited Kanchipuram, he observed that there were about 100 *sangaharamas* or Buddhist monasteries and 10,000 Buddhist priests who were involved in the study of Mahayana Buddhism. Dharmapala (530-561 CE) was a Buddhist scholar of Kanchipuram who later became the head of the Nalanda University.

We also have some major universities which became prominent centres of intellectual activities during this time. Both religious and secular learning was encouraged. Vallabhi University was founded around 600 CE in modern Gujarat by the Maitraka dynasty. Nalanda Mahavihara, established by Kumaragupta I (415-455 CE), housed a great library called *Dharmaganja*. Some eminent personalities associated with it were Aryabhata, Huien Tsang, I-tsing, Santarakhsita (founder of *Yogachara Madhyamika* philosophy), Nagarjuna (founded *Madhyamika* school of Mahayana Buddhism), Atisa Dipankar, etc. At Nalanda University, a wide range of subjects such as the *Vedas*, *yogashastra*, the art of war, fine arts, politics, astronomy, mathematics and medicine were taught. It was one of the oldest universities in the world. Odantapuri *mahavihara* was built by Gopala I (750-770 CE), the founder of the Pala dynasty of Bengal. Another Pala ruler named Dharmapala (783-820 CE) established Vikramashila *mahavihara*. The most important subject taught here was Vajrayana Buddhism. It maintained contacts with Tibet and scholars from Tibet came to study here. In the 12th century, it is believed that there were about 3,000 scholars studying here. Many manuscripts were written in Sanskrit and also translated into Tibetan. Atisha Dipankar (980-1054), a Buddhist in the Pala kingdom was an *adhyaksha* (head of the university) here. He also founded Somapur *Mahavihara* in modern Bangladesh. Taranath, a Tibetan Buddhist scholar Dharmapala built 50 religious institutions. Later in the late 12th century the mahaviharas of Nalanda, Odantapuri and Vikramshila were destroyed by Bakhtiyar Khilji, a military commander of Qutubuddin Aibak.

To spread their teachings, scholars visited modern Nepal, Tibet, Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia and China through trade routes. Vajrabodhi (671-741 CE) before visiting China, stayed at Srivijaya for a period of five months while Atisha Dipankara as per Tibetan sources stayed there for 12 years. He returned in 1025 CE and then in 1040 CE he went to Tibet via Nepal where he converted Padmaprabha, the son of the ruler of Nepal, Anantakirti, into Buddhism. Padmasambhav (Rimpoche) who taught at Nalanda went to Tibet in 747 CE on the invitation of its king, Thi-srong-detsan where he introduced Tantric Buddhism.

Kashmir too became an important centre of learning during the early medieval period. An eminent scholar during the reign of Avantivarman (855-883 CE) who founded the Utpala dynasty was Anandavardhana who wrote *Dhyanalok* in

Sanskrit. He is credited to have revived Sanskrit learning in Kashmir. The works of Kshemendra (990-1070), a Sanskrit poet include didactic texts, devotional works, poetics and satires (e.g. The Courtesan's Keeper). He introduced the concept of *auchitya* in poetry i.e. the use of *guna*, *rasa*, *alankara*, *pada*, in a poem in their rightful place. He mentions 27 different types of *auchitya*.

Shaivism became popular during this time in Kashmir. *Shivasutrani*, composed by a sage called Vasugupta (875-925) describes the nature of human consciousness and guides towards the realization of the true characteristics of Shiva within our own selves. Kshemaraja (975-1025), a disciple of *Abhinavagupta* wrote a Sanskrit commentary on it and further elaborates the methodologies prescribed by Vasugupta towards achieving *moksha* or salvation. *Spandakarika* describes the nature of *spanda*, the first vibration or the explosive sensation which was a precursor to the creation both in the cosmos and in the human body. *Pratyabhinjnahrdyam* explains the essence of *prayabhijna* or the knowledge of pure perception. Somananda founded the *Pratyabhijna* school. The concept is described in his work *Sivadrishti* which was later developed by his son, Utpaladeva. Abhinavagupta integrated it with other schools of Shaivism in Kashmir. His work also informs about the existing schools of philosophy in India in those times which shows that there were intellectual interactions among scholars and philosophers from different regions and they were aware of the current intellectual trends.

Trika Shaivism of Kashmir incorporated *tantra* traditions. Several texts on *tantra* and Shaivism were written. *Vigyan Bhairav Tantra* is an important work which deals with 112 ways of meditation which is believed to have been prescribed by Shiva to Parvati. *Tantraloka* by Abhinavagupta is one of the most popular works which elucidates all the 64 *tantra* traditions of *tantragama* and several concepts relating to the creation of *lingas*, *mandalas*, *mudras*, etc.

Likewise, the bhakti tradition and the *Vedanta* philosophy of medieval *acharyas* led to the production of a corpus of religious literary works. The hymns of *Nayanars* and *Alvars* were collected and compiled into texts. Shankaracharya, Ramanujacharya and Madhavacharya wrote commentaries such as on the *Brahmasutra* of Badarayana. Temple texts called *Agamas* were composed from c. 5th-15th centuries CE which became popular among the adherents of the certain branches of Shaivism such as Kashmir Shaivism, etc. They deal with various aspects of temple construction and worship of temple deities. Such literary works gave an impetus to the growth of Hinduism.

15.3 SECULAR LEARNING

Apart from religious learning, encouragement was given to secular leaning as well. Mathematics and astronomy were the regular disciplines which were taught at the elementary and higher levels. However, this was also the time when practical knowledge of an artisan, a metallurgist or pharmacist was not taught in the classrooms. But theoretical knowledge was imparted. Some important mathematician-astronomers of the time were Mahaviracharya, Shridhara, Aryabhata II, Shripati and Bhaskaracharya (Bhaskara II). Mahaviracharya (c. 800-870) was a Jain mathematician during the reign of the Rashtrakuta king, Amoghavarsha Nrupatunga (814-878). In Jainism, mathematics and physics

formed a part of the four *anuyogas.* Their aim was to explain Jaina Metaphysics and to provide an aid to attaining liberation of the soul. Mahaviracharya further developed the concepts propounded by Aryabhata and Brahmagupta. Earlier astrology and mathematics were treated as the same subject. Mahaviracharya identified the two as different branches of study. He wrote the *Ganitasara Sangraha*. Bhaskaracharya II (1114-1185 CE) or Bhaskara II was one of the most significant mathematicians of the early medieval period. His major work, *Siddhanta Shiromani* consists of four volumes viz. *Lilavati* (dealing with arithmetic and measurement), *Bijaganitadhyaya* (algebra), *Ganitadhyaya* (astronomy) and *Goladhyaya* (astronomy). In his work *Surya Sidhhanta* he puts forward the concept of *akrsta shakti* (law of gravity) i.e. the earth's gravitational force. Much earlier Aryabhatta was the first one to expound the concept of zero and the heliocentric theory in the *Aryabhatiyam*. He rejected the popular belief that the earth is *achala* (immovable). He maintained that the earth is spherical in shape and rotates on its axis and orbits the sun. He calculated the circumference of the earth, the distance between the earth and the moon and gave the scientific explanation for solar and lunar eclipses. His findings were further developed by other Indian mathematicians such as Brahmagupta, Bhaskara I, Maharviracharya, etc. and also by the Arabs.

Brahmagupta defined zero as a number integer. Integer arithmetic was adopted by the Arabs in the 9th century. Al Khwarizmi[2], father of algebra wrote *kitab al-hisab al-hindi* ('Book of Indian computation') and *kitab al-jam'wa'l-tafriq al-hisab al-hindi* ('Addition and subtraction in Indian arithmetic') . He introduced Hindu-Arabic numerals to the West with the decimal system which in time replaced the Roman numerals. The Arabs made their own contributions to the knowledge they received. The Arab mathematicians such as al-Khwarizmi and al-Uqlidisi (920-980 CE) unlike Indian mathematicians did not consider zero as a number but an empty place-holder. Through the Arab world Indian and Arabic knowledge was transmitted to North Africa and Europe. In North Africa, Leonardo Pisano (Fibonacci) of Pisa (1170-1250 CE) obtained a mastery over them and documented the mathematical traditions of India in his book, *Liber Abaci*. Thus, this was also the period when significant developments were made in the fields of mathematics, astrology, etc. The observations and findings in these fields based on earlier findings and their diffusion led to further developments in these fields.

15.4 BHAKTI TRADITIONS IN SOUTH INDIA

The term bhakti means devotion to a personal god. The concept is very old and can be traced back to the *Rigvedic* times. References to it have been found in the *Katha*, *Mundaka* and *Shvetashvatar Upanishads*, in the *Bhakti sutras* such as the *Narada* and *Sandilya Bhakti Sutras*, the *Bhagavata Purana* etc. But during its long history, its meaning changed according to the context it found itself in. It was not confined to a particular sect in Hinduism. Western scholars of the 19th century identified bhakti with Vaishnavism entirely. Their theory along with the subsequent writings described bhakti as a devotee's complete devotion to his/her *saguna* deity and emphasized on the ever-existent duality between them. But as the bhakti movement reached north India later in the medieval period, personalities

[2] The words algebra and algorithm are derived from Al-Khwarizmi.

like Kabir and Nanak speak of *nirguna bhakti* which was focused on the impersonal and *nirguna Brahman* (the Ultimate Reality). So, the concept acquired a wider meaning. But before we understand the advent of Tamil bhakti tradition, let us first briefly look at the scenario existing prior to its arrival.

During the early historic period, *Tamilaham* or *Tamilakam* (the ancient Tamil region) had tribal polities and traditions, associated with five different physiographic divisions of the region called *tinai*. Each *tinai* had their own major deities, rituals and cultic practices. For instance, Murugan (god of war and victory) was the chief deity of the people inhabiting *kurunji* (hills) *tinai* and Korravai (the goddess of war) was the patron deity of *palai* (drylands) *tinai*. The inhabitants of the *tinais* were aware of the Vedic and Brahmanic rituals along with those of the Shramanas but the local traditions enjoyed prominence.

From the 3rd-6th century, the region was undergoing a very important shift. With the arrival of the Kalabhras, Shramanic and Brahmanic traditions started to gain importance. It is during this transitional phase that the five different *tinais* were interlinked. Local deities of *tinais* came to be identified with *Puranic* deities. Korravai was worshipped as Durga. In the classical or *Sangam* age, *Sangam* literature primarily dealt with secular themes: *akam* (on intimate emotions of love) and *puram* (on war and heroism). During the post-*Sangam* age, there was a reworking of the Classical themes especially those referring to the concept of *viraha. Viraha* denoted separation among lovers. The devotee in the bhakti tradition felt the agony of separation from his god. Puranic deities and myths were localized through bhakti saints who travelled from one place to another, singing hymns. Temple construction on a large scale helped in the institutionalization of the *bhakti* tradition. Bhakti songs were composed and sung by Tamil saint-poets who either belonged to the Vaishnava or Shaiva sect. The Vaishnav bhakti saints were 12 in number and were called *Alvars* whereas the 63 Shaiva saints were known as *Nayanars*. All *bhakti* hymns of the *Nayanar* saints were compiled in the twelve books which are collectively called *Tirumurai*. Nathmuni (823-951) collected 4,000 hymns of *Alvar* saints and compiled the *Nalayira Divyaprabhandam* which is also called *Dravida Veda* or the fifth *Veda*. The saints prescribed the singing of devotional songs in order to attain salvation. These hymns are still sung in the temples of south India.

The bhakti saints preached the philosophy of complete surrender to one's personal god. The god takes care of his devotees. His *karuna* (compassion), *kripa* (mercy) and divine intervention will extricate his devotee from this mundane world. The *bhakti* saints view themselves as the dust of their respective deities. Sundarar, one of the four great *Nayanar* saints[3] in his hymns calls himself as '*van tontar*' i.e. a zealous devotee of Shiva and also as Lord's friend as he offers his devotion as friendship to Shiva. This concept of *sakhabhava* is expressed in the *Bhaktisutra* of Narada and the *Bhagvata Purana*. But this friendship is extraordinary. He calls Shiva sometimes as a madman and sometimes addresses him as a *pittan* (meaning great grandfather). He also calls himself as *atiyarkkum atiyen* (the slave of the slaves or the servant of the servants). He considers other saints as servants and

[3] Appar, Sundarar, Sambandarar and Makikkavasagar are known as the four great Tamil Shaivite saint-poets.

views himself as their servants. Vishnuchittan considers Vishnu to be his child. He composed songs to ward off the evil eye and protect the deity. So, he was regarded as the eldest of all *Alvars* and even elder to Vishnu and from *Vishnuchittan*, he became *Periyalvar* or the Elder *Alvar*.

On the other hand, the notion of bridal mysticism was utilized by some bhakti saints to express their bhakti. Nammalvar whose devotional hymns are called *Tiruvaymoli*, complied by another *Alvar* named Madhurakavi, imagined himself as a woman deeply in love with Krishna who had abandoned him. The hymns of Andal, the only *Alvar* woman saint and the adopted daughter of Periyalvar too reflects this concept. In her compositions, erotic elements are very strong where she expresses her longing to be wedded to Vishnu and her unabashed desire for physical union with her deity, punctuated by her anguish and frustration. The devotional songs of these bhakti saints speak of separation and suffering. This theme is very noticeable in the *Alvar* bhakti hymns and very restricted in the songs of the *Nayanars*. However, in the Tamil bhakti traditions some extreme form of devotion, exhibiting violence by inflicting self-injury or by injuring someone else is also evident. Satti Nayanar cut off the tongue of anyone who spoke ill of Shiva or his devotees. The hunter Kannappa plucked out his eyes to offer to Shiva.

Therefore, the bhakti hymns are principally about the doctrine of self-surrender. This concept later led to a serious theological dispute over "grace versus karma" in the 18th and 19th century between the two sub-sects of Sri Vaishnavism (a branch of Vaishnavism): *tenkalai* and *vatakali* schools. The *tenkalai* school through the analogy of the cat i.e., *marjarayaya* emphasizes that god saves the soul in the manner a mother cat carries her kitten to a safe place. One's *karma* is not of much relevance as the soul is fully passive. It is the grace of god and not a person's action that saves him. The *vatakalai* school affirms that god saves the soul in the way a mother monkey carries her baby monkey and just as the baby monkey makes the effort to hang on to the mother, the soul too needs to work for the salvation and thus, they believe in the *markatanyaya*.

Thus, we see that according to the Tamil bhakti traditions there are different ways to approach one's personal deity who can be imagined as a great grandfather, a son, a beloved, or a friend (*tolan*), etc. The relationship between a deity and his devotee is intimate and very personal. The emphasis is on the individual relation of a devotee to his/her deity. A *bhakta* is denoted by terms like *tontar* (meaning "servant" in Tamil) or *atiyan* ("slave"). The path of a *van tontar* (hard servant) who led the life of asceticism and renunciation, who sacrificed his family, children and himself, cannot be followed by common people. The path of a *men tontar* or a soft servant was more feasible for others to follow who lived within the society but was detached from social matters. He was only preoccupied with his relationship with his deity and with other *bhaktas*. Before becoming a *bhakta*, he or she renounced all social privileges. Manikkavasagar, who was a minister at the court of the Pandyan ruler, Varagunavarman II (*c*. 862-885 CE) in Madurai, gave up all his worldly ambitions.

The bhakti hymns also reveal interreligious dialogue. By the early medieval period, only Buddhism and Jainism remained as the dominant representatives of the heterodox sect. There were different schools of philosophy and religious cults

coming up. And they were fiercely vying for state patronage, inflaming the animosity especially between the heterodox and orthodox traditions. The bhakti saints talk of Buddhism and Jainism with genuine hatred. The hymns of Appar who had been a Jaina himself before converting to Shaivism exhibited anit-Jaina sentiments. Sundarar in his hymns regards Jainas as dirty. The compositions of Manikkavasagar are replete with harsh condemnation of the heterodox sects. The contempt and hostility were not obvious only in the hymns of the saints but rulers too were beginning to fiercely extend their patronage. Mahendravarma I as a Jaina was hostile to Appar but as he was converted to Shaivism by Appar, his hostility was directed at the heterodox sects. He wrote a satire, the *Mattavilasa Prahasana* on the heterodox sects (Buddhism and Jainsim) and the heretic sects: Kapalika and Pashupata.

Hence, the anti-Shramana sentiments reflect the antagonism between the Brahmanic tradition and Shramanic religions which were sharpening by this time. In Buddhism and Jainism it was emphasized that *nirvana* or salvation, the Final, was achievable through total denial and renunciation. But the bhakti traditions stress that it is through the means of complete surrender, devotion and worship of one's personal god that one can achieve salvation. The purely intellectual ethical conceptions of Jainism could not attract the attention of the masses to whom those concepts along with the excesses of Jaina asceticism seemed too abstract. The attitude of Buddhists and Jainas became strongly antisocial in the Tamil society, stressing that the world was full of misery and desire and that even the charms of childhood, womanhood and motherhood were lost. Conversely, Tamil bhakti saints extolled motherhood and womanhood in their hymns. Nammalvar considered the best way of expressing his devotion to god is by visualizing himself as a lady friend of Krishna. Although, the *Periya Puranam* says that the *Nayanar* saint Karaikkal Ammaiyar renounced her femininity so that she could be completely devoted to worshipping Shiva.

However, Buddhism relatively maintained its underlying unity of ideas, beliefs and practices which made it more unified as a religion. The different schools of philosophy in Buddhism gradually evolved their own systems of metaphysics and carved out a separate path of development while those who continued to be *astika*, believing in the authority of the *Vedas* and the *Upanishadic* concept of *Atman* or *Brahman*, chose to form their own distinct sectarian beliefs and systems of philosophy. To check the influence of Buddhism, Jainism or such *nastika* elements as they were called, it was important to ideologically unify all separate identities within the *astika* fold. Thus, the medieval *acharyas* began reviving and reorganizing Hinduism during this time. You will read about them in the following section.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) What were the contributions of various religions during the early medieval period in the growth of educational institutions and literary works?

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2) How was *Tamilaham* transformed with the advent of the bhakti tradition?

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15.5 SHANKARACHARYA AND THE VAISHNAVA *ACHARYAS*

In this section, you will read about the different schools of *Vedanta* which came into existence during the early medieval period. Through their *Vedantic* philosophy, they weaved various traditions of Hinduism together. All schools of *Vedanta* speak of the goal of an individual's life which is to realize the Ultimate Reality. But they all differ on how to realize the end goal. Shankaracharya (788-820 CE) propounded the philosophy of *Advaita Vedanta* (non-dualism). His commentaries on *Upanishads*, *Brahmasutra* and *Bhagvada Gita* are important in comprehending the concept of *advaita*. He emphasizes that *Brahman* is the Ultimate Reality and it is the one and only reality. Knowing *Brahman* is not an intellectual process but knowing *Brahman* is to become *Brahman*. It cannot be perceived through senses or described by words. It is *Nirguna Brahman*. It is *Sat-Chit-Anand* (Pure Existence-Pure Consciousness-Pure Bliss). It is not the cause or the creator of the universe. He identifies *Atman* (soul) with ultimate pure consciousness, pure spirit in all beings, just as *Brahman* and therefore, *Brahman* and *Atman* are the same eternal realities. Both are of the same essence and there is no duality. The world is not real but a relative reality, created by *Maya* (illusion) which is the creative force, inherent in *Brahman*. To gain *moksha* or liberation of the soul, one needs to dispel *avidya* (absence of knowledge and erroneous knowledge) and Maya with the power of *avarna* (the power of veiling) and the power of *vikshepa* which makes a person to identify himself/ herself with the body, mind and intellect. It is then the duality of the *Self* and *Brahman* disappears. In contrast to Shankaracharya's *advaita* philosophy, Ramanuja (1017-1137 CE) developed *vishishtadvaita* philosophy. According to him, *Brahman* and *Atman* are not exactly the same realities. *Atman* is part of *Brahman* but the *Atman* retains its separate identity even after *moksha*.

Though Shankaracharya conceived *Brahman* as *nirguna*, yet he composed *stotra* (poetry) dedicated to *saguna Brahman* mentioned in the *Puranas*. He also wrote on *tantra*. In this way, he linked Vedic Hinduism (as his philosophy was based on Vedic knowledge) to Puranic tradition. He also established four major *mathas*. He distinguished between Buddhism and Hinduism on the basis of the concept of *Atman*. Buddhism asserts that there is no *Atman* whereas Hinduism believes in *Atman* and *Brahman* and it is to address this issue i.e., how *Atman* can realize *Brahman*, Sahankaracharya and other medieval *acharyas* developed their respective theories. It is believed that all these attempts to revive and integrate various cults and traditions within Hinduism led to the decline in the popularity of Buddhism.

The Vaishnava *acharyas* further popularized the Tamil *Alvar Bhakti* tradition.

Ramanuja became Andal's elder brother as he fulfilled the vow which Andal had taken. It was during the time of Ramanuja that the hagiography of the *Alvar* saint-poets was completed and their hymns became a part of the Vedic form of worship. Each *Alvar* saint was revered as an incarnation of some aspect of Vishnu. Periyalvar was considered to be the incarnation of Garuda, Vishnu's *vahana* (mount). Andal came to be venerated as the incarnation of Bhudevi or Bhumidevi. Her birthplace, Srivilliputhur is known to worship Vishnu as Andal's consort, not Lakshmi's. Later, after the conquest of the Andhra region, the Vijaynagar ruler, Krishnadeva Raya wrote *Amuktamalyada* in Telugu on Vishnu and Andal. The title of the epic poem which means the 'giver of one's own garland' underlines her devotion to Vishnu as she would wear the garland before offering it to Vishnu. Hence, Ramanuja who was a Sri Vaishnava, combined Vaishnava theology and popular worship of Vishnu with the *Vedanta* philosophy. Like Ramanuja, other Vaishnava *acharyas* such as Nimbarakacharya, Madhavacharya and Vallabhacharya too contributed to the Vaishnava cult and bhakti tradition and connected the Puranic elements with the Vedic knowledge.

15.6 SHAKTI CULT AND THE INCOPRPORATION OF THE FEMALE PRINCIPLE

The roots of the Shakti cult go back to the Indus Valley civilization where the worship of the Mother Goddess was prevalent in both symbolic and iconographic forms. The genesis of Shaktism has no link with ancient Brahmanism since it pre-dates the Vedic period and is different in essence from Vaishnavism and Shaivism. In the Vedic religion, the female principle had no prominent position unlike male deities. The female deities were accorded a subordinate role and the goddesses were few in number. Gradually, Shaktism incorporated the philosophy of the Brahmanical tradition, but at the same time, it maintained some of its characteristics and shaped the philosophy of other cults and practices. The *Devi Mahatmya*, *Devi Bhagvata Purana*, *Kalika Purana*, *Tripura Upanishad* and *Shakta Upanishad* are considered some important sources on Shaktism.

With the emergence of Mahayana Buddhism, a new meaning was given to the concept of *bodhisattva*. In Theravada Buddhism, a *bodhisattva* is a person on the way to Enlightenment while in the Mahayana tradition, he or she is an enlightened being but postpones his/her *nirvana* (salvation) so as to help all other beings in attaining buddhahood and *nirvana* from *dukha* (suffering) and *samsara* (the cycle of death and rebirth). With this conception, the *shakti* elements too became important in Buddhism. For instance, the feminine counterpart of Avalokiteshvara (the *bodhisattva* of infinite compassion and mercy) is Goddess Tara who is the personification of knowledge. She is also called Prajnaparamita. Manjushri, the personification of wisdom too has either Lakshmi or Saraswati or both as his consort(s).

Around 6th or 7th century CE Vajrayana Buddhism which means "the Thunderbolt Vehicle" was founded. It became popular in eastern India and was codified under the Pala rulers. It is also known as Tantric Buddhism because of the presence of tantric[4] components in it. In Hinayana, the path to *nirvana* is by gradual loss of

[4] The adherents of the *Tantric* tradition worshipped with the aid of *tantric* mandalas, *mantras*, rituals, etc. The elements of this tradition were seen in Hinduism and Buddhism.

individuality through the means of self-discipline and meditation. In Mahayana, heavenly Buddhas and *bodhisattvas* help the followers to attain *nirvana* whereas Vajrayana offers its followers a faster and more effective path to Enlightenment by maintaining that *nirvana* can be attained by obtaining magical power, *vajra*. Like Mahayana Buddhism, Vajrayana too puts emphasis on the role of the *bodhisattvas* and further expands the *bodhisattva* pantheon. Female deities creep in and the principal ones were Tara and Chakreshvari. The feminine divinities became associated with the Buddhas and *bodhisattvas* as their consorts or *shakti*. *Pisacis* (demons), *yoginis* (sorceresses) and *matangis* (outcaste women) were considered as the lesser female deities.

Vajrayana rapidly grew into an intricate philosophical and ritual system, comprising of *mantras* (mystic syllables), *mandalas* (ritualistic circles), *yantras* (magical diagrams), *dharanis* (spells), etc. Sexual symbolism and union became a part of its religious rites. In Vajrayana gods are approached through goddesses who should be compelled, rather than persuaded and that is why, elaborate rituals were prescribed and the need for religious teachers arose for teaching the philosophical and ritual traditions. Vajrayana reached Tibet and became very popular there. In Tibet, a guru is called *lama*. The famous Sadaksara, "Om mani padme hum" (Hail the Jewel in the Lotus) is the great mantra of Tibetan Vajrayana which has sexual and mystical connotations i.e., the union between the Buddha and his *shakti* or between Avalokiteshvara and Tara. In Vajrayana, it is believed that the world is created because of the union of the two principles: the male and female.

Shakti theology conceives the Goddess as the Ultimate Reality. She is regarded as the supreme godhead. She is represented by many female divinities and all of them are the manifestations of one supreme goddess. She is seen as the representative of the dynamic energy. She is the creative principle of existence. Without the female principle, there is no creation. Shaktism does not entail non-acceptance of the male. The male energy is incapable without the union with the female creative energy. Shiva without Shakti is *shava* (a corpse). The male and female are considered as interdependent and inseparable realities. This philosophy is well represented by the iconography of Ardhanarishvara in Shaivism where the image of Shiva is depicted as half woman. The female half is interpreted as '*Prakriti'* (a primal creative or natural force). The male half is identified with '*Purusha'*, the spiritual essence of reality which causes *prakriti* to evolve into several forms. The image is recognized as a form of Shiva, not the goddess. Gods are endowed with their *shakti* and so, they have a female form. However there is no goddess who has a male form. The fusion in the imagery of Ardhanarishvara neither alludes to the concept of the consort (as seen in the iconography of Uma-Maheshvara) nor to the concept of gender equality.

Shaivism incorporated Shaktism through the mythology associated with Shakti *pitha*. The Epic and Puranic traditions speak of the self-immolation of Sati, Shiva's consort and her dismembered limbs falling in different parts of India which came to be recognized as 51 Shakti *pithas*. This is significant from the perspective of how it encouraged the expansion of sacred geography connected to Shaktism. Gradually, the benevolent as well as fierce aspects (e.g. Durga, Mahishasurmardini, etc.) of the Shakti cult were absorbed into Shaivism.

The elements of Shaktism became visible in Vaishnavism too. From the early Gupta period, the female principle in Vaishnavism was represented through the icons of Lakshmi and Shri as consorts of Vishnu. In the Tamil region, Andal, an *Alvar* woman saint who expressed her sexuality brazenly through her bhakti hymns dedicated to Vishnu, is believed to be married to Vishnu. In Srivilliputhur Andal temple, she is worshipped as the consort of Vishnu. The concept of bridal mysticism reflective in her bhakti songs was later employed to present Radha as the divine companion of Krishna. Jainism too succumbed to the influence of the Shakti cult but to a much lesser extent. The concept of Shaktism though incorporated as the female creative principle was accorded a supplementary role. Goddesses became a medium through which gods could be approached. In Shaivism the notion of feminine principle was comparatively more pronounced than Vaishnavism.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) Write a note on the philosophy of Shankaracharya.

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2) Explain how the concept of female creative principle affected other religious cults and sects during the early medieval period?

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15.7 SUMMARY

This period witnessed a great multiplicity of religious sectarian and philosophical traditions. The issues of esoteric ideological differences and the race to obtain state patronage, etc. created frictions especially in the *Tamilaham* region. Bhakti tradition helped in localizing Puranic myths and assimilating local deities of various *tinais*. The *acharyas* associated their *Vedanta* philosophy with Puranic deities and made Hinduism more appealing to the masses which effectively helped in the integration of various cults and practices and in the revival and expansion of Hinduism. This, in turn, led to decline in the popularity of the heterodox sects.

15.8 KEY WORDS

Nirguna : In Hinduism, the Ultimate Reality is conceived as the *Brahman*. There are two schools of thought, *Nirguna* and *Saguna* which explain the concept of *Brahman*. *Nirgunas* believe that the *Brahman* has no form or shape and no qualities.

Puranic Hinduism : Puranic Hinduism deals with the concept of *Trimurti*

(three principal deities) viz. Brahma (the Creator), Vishnu (the Preserver) and Shiva (the Destroyer). Devotion is an integral part of it.

Saguna : *Sangunas* believe that *Brahman* has a form and qualities and is represented by several gods and goddesses.

15.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) See Section 15.2

2) See Section 15.4

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) See Section 15.5

2) See Section 15.6

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UNIT 16 LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE[1]

Structure

16.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will learn about:

- the decadence that had crept into the quality of Sanskrit works produced during the period under review;
- development of some notable Sanskrit works in the following categories: *Kavya*, Law books, Scientific treatises and religious works;
- the factors responsible for the growth of regional languages and literature in north India; and
- development of languages and literature in south India.

16.1 INTRODUCTION

From the point of view of literature, the period between 750-1206 CE is considered as one of the most productive and creative periods of Indian history. Several literary works were composed under the patronage of royal courts. Like the earlier period,

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Sanskrit continued to be important in literature. It was the preferred language of court poets. At the same time, the practice of composing texts in vernacular languages gained momentum. While texts in Tamil language are known since 300 BCE, for the first time, literary compositions in regional languages of Kannada and Telegu appeared. Thus, Sheldon Pollock (2006) has considered this to be a transformative phase, a time when Sanskrit's dominant literary position was challenged by vernacular languages.

Another important point about the literature of this period is that we are more certain about the dates of the poets, and their patrons. In the earlier period a lot was in the realm of speculation. For instance, we really don't know much about the life of Kalidasa or Bhasa, their dates, and the royal courts they were patronized by. But in this period there is greater certainty with regard to important poets, their works, and also their patrons.

16.2 SANSKRIT LITERATURE

The Sanskrit texts of this period can be divided into literature, scientific treatises, law books, and religious texts. The law books and religious texts composed in this period still have an influence on modern Hindu society. The language employed in these compositions enjoyed an elite status as it was primarily associated with the courts. This use of Sanskrit, according to Daud Ali (2014), can be traced back to the Gupta and post-Gupta period (350-750 CE) when it emerged as the lingua-franca of a common political culture. A similar position continued in the courts of Rashtrakutas, Gurjara-Prathihars, Palas, Cholas, Western Chalukyas, Paramaras, and Candellas. These rulers patronized court poets, and also sometimes authored great works themselves.

It is generally believed that the loss of official patronage caused the decline of Sanskrit literature during the Sultanate period. While it is true that Persian replaced Sanskrit as the official language, there was no quantitative decline in the production of Sanskrit literary works as such. The period is remarkable for the immense production of literary works in different branches of Sanskrit literature such as poetical narrative (*Kavya*), religion and philosophy, grammar, drama, stories, medicine, astronomy, commentaries and digests on the Law books *(Dharmasastras)* and other classical Sanskrit works. Nor was the loss of official patronage to Sanskrit absent for there were many kings who patronized Sanskrit poets — especially in south India and Rajasthan. While Sanskrit works continued to be produced in large number, there seems to be a marked decline in the quality of these works. This decline had set in before the establishment of the Sultanate and became more pronounced during the Sultanate period. There was not much originality in most of the Sanskrit works that appeared during this period. Much of the Sanskrit writing was wearisomely repetitive, artificial and forced. Sanskrit works on religious themes were often characterised by metaphysical speculations. Biographical works were mainly in the form of heroic ballads which contained hagiographical details and stories of romance. Sanskrit lost the patronage of the new Persian speaking ruling class but the Sultanate did not interfere with the independent production of Sanskrit literary works. In fact, the introduction of paper during the Sultanate period gave impetus to the literary activity of

reproduction and dissemination of already existing Sanskrit texts such as the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata***.**

South India, Bengal, and western India played the leading role in the production of Sanskrit literary works. The Vijaynagara kings patronised Sanskrit poets. The Jain scholars in western India also contributed to the growth of Sanskrit literature. The most famous Jain scholars of Sanskrit literature in western India was Hemachandra Suri who belonged to the 12th century. Mithila in northern Bihar developed into yet another centre of Sanskrit. Later, towards the end of the Sultanate period and during the Mughal period, the Chaitanya movement in Bengal and Odisha contributed to the production of Sanskrit works in several fields like drama, *champu* (a mixed form of verse and prose), grammar, etc.

16.2.1 *Kavya* Literature

A major part of literature that was composed in this period was *kavya* literature or ornate poetry. This poetry is marked by the use of several similies, artificially constituted metres, rare words, compound words having more than one meaning (Winternitz 2015). The usage of this form is visible in the various *charitas* (biographies), and *natikas* (dramas). *Charita* is a form of biography which has a king or minister as the protagonist. Unlike modern-day biographies, they may cover the entire life span of a ruler, or might focus on particular events of his reign. As a result, these may contain important clues on past events, but they are not written as critical historical writing. Very often *charita* literature might also contain eulogies glorifying the ruler, and also his genealogy, linking the family to glorious dynasties of the past. Hence, these legitimized the rule of the ruler in whose honour the *charita* was composed (Thapar 2013).

A classic example of *charita* literature is *Harshacharita* composed by the court poet Banabhatta. It gives us details of his patron king Harshavardhana's genealogy and childhood, with special focus on the events which led him to become the ruler of Kannauj (Thapar, 2013). The other important *charitas* are: Bilhana's *Vikramakadevacharita* composed under Vikramaditya VI of the Chalukyas of Kalayani; Padmagupta's *Navasahasankacarita* composed in the Paramara court; and, *Ramacharita* by Sandhyakaranandin in the court of Palas. Sandhyakaranandin's work is a unique kind of *charita* literature which employs a dual narrative, describing the achievements of Pala king Ramapala within the larger narrative of the Epic story of *Ramayana*. The poet discusses the recovery of Varendri region from the Kaivartas by king Ramapala. The Kaivartas had rebelled against the Palas. In doing so, he equates Varendri with Sita, and Ramapala with Rama. Another *charita* work is found in Gujarat, where Hemachandra composed *Kumarapalacharita*, a biography of Kumarapala, the ruler of Anahilawada. The purpose of this work, in addition to praising the ruler, is also to illustrate the rules of grammar. The work is bilingual in nature, being composed in both Sanskrit and Prakrit (Singh, 2008).

Another significant form of Sanskrit literature in this period is *natika*s or dramas. These dramas were generally based on characters from *Puranas*, or scenes from the Epics. King Harshavardhana is credited with authoring three dramas: *Ratnavali*, *Priyadarshika* and *Nagananda* (Winternitz, 2005, p. 54). The first two have a similar plot. Ratnavali is a story of Udayan, the king of Vatsa (also a hero of

another Sanskrit *Natika* by Bhasa) who falls in love with Ratnavali, a princess disguised as a maid servant. The plot of the second *natika*, *Priyandarshika*, is also very similar, but the play is known for introducing a new literary device, 'play within play.' The third drama, *Nagananda* (Joy of Naga), is story of a *Bodhisattva* Jimutavahana. The play combines Hindu and Buddhist elements. Harsha's court poet Banabhatta wrote the play *Kadambari* which presents a complex plot dealing with the lives of lovers going through two incarnations.

The most famous playwright of the period was Bhavabhuti who lived at the court of Yasovarman of Kannauj. His fame rests on his work *Malatimadhava* (Drama of Malati and Madhava), and two *Ramayana* based dramas – *Mahaviracharita* and *Uttararamacharita*. He is particularly known for his use of language, and is the most famous poet after Kalidasa. His patron King Yasovarman is also credited with the authoring of the drama, *Ramabhyudaya*. Further, he also patronized a Prakrit poet Vakpatiraja who wrote *Gaudavaha*, discussing the war campaigns of his patron.

The next prominent dramatist was Rajashekhara who lived at the Prathihara court under ruler Mahendrapala. He was a master of both Sanskrit and Prakrit and employed great proverbs in his prose. Two of his Sanskrit dramas –*Balaramayana*, and *Balabharata* – are based on the Epics *Ramanyana* and *Mahabharata* respectively. He is best known for *Karpuramanjari*, a comedy written in Prakrit.

During the 11th -12th centuries some of the most famous poets were from Kashmir. The poet Bilhana has been mentioned above. Other than him, Kshemendra wrote abridged versions of *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana*, religious poems, didactic texts on poetry, prosody and politics; Somadeva created a compendium of Indian fables, *Kathasaritasagara,*; Mankkha, under King Jayasimha wrote an epic *Srikanthacharita*, which deals with the legends of Siva; and in 1148 CE, poet Kalhana composed *Rajatarangini*. *Rajatarangini* is considered an important masterpiece, being a true historical chronicle of Kashmir.

Other plays which are traditionally held in highly esteem are: *Anargharaghava* by poet Murari (1050-1135 CE), It is a retelling of the *Ramayana*; *Unmattaraghava* by Bhaskarabhatta, which enacts the scene of Rama and his anguish after the capture of Sita. While most of the dramas mainly drew inspiration from the *Ramayana*, some poets also based their work on the *Mahabharata*. Thus, the king poet of Kerala Kulashekharavarman wrote *Tapatisamvarana* and *Subhadradhananjaya*. Besides this there are few dramas which dramatize the life of the ideal and truthful king Harishchandra: *Chandakaushika* written by poet Kshemishavara, and *Satyaharishchandra* by Ramachandra (12th century) (Winternitz, 2005, p. 279).

There are few dramas which are based on the life of Chauhan ruler Prithiviraja and Gupta ruler Chandragupta II. *Prthivirajaraso* written by Chand Bardai, and *Prithvirajavijaya* written by an unknown author discusses the victory of king Prithviraja over Muhammad Ghori in the first Battle of Tarain.

16.2.2 Law Works

In law works, there was hardly any new *smriti* which was written in this period; instead the focus was on writing commentaries on the existing important *smritis*. Thus, we know of at least three commentaries on *Manusmriti*: *Manubhashya* by Medatithi (9th century CE), *Manutika* by Govindaraja (11th/12th century CE) and

Manvartha Muktavali by Kulluka Bhatta; and two on *Yajnyavalkya Smriti*: *Mitakshara* by Vijnaneshvara (11th-12th centuries) , and *Yajnyavalkya Dharmasastra Nibhandha* by Aparaka (12th century) (Jois, 2004, p. 37). The *Mitakshara* commentary is an influential work on law, and even today many of the Hindu laws are based on this work.

Other significant work is *Dayabhagha* written in Bengal by Jimtuavahana. It mainly deals with matters like partition of property, and inheritance. It greatly differs from *Mitaskhara* which ordains that the sons have the right to property at birth, whereas *Dayabhagha* gives this right only after the death of the father. This property laws enumerated in this text are still followed in Bengal.

Two other important texts that deal with law are *Lakshmidhara Kritya Kalpataru* (12th century), and Devanabhatta's *Smritichandrika*.

16.2.3 Scientific Works

Several works dealing with various branches of knowledge also emerged from the royal courts. In the 9th century, at the court of the Rashtrakuta ruler Amoghavarsha, a Jain author Mahaviracharya wrote *Ganitasarasangraha* dealing with Arithmetic. The text is known for attempting to solve issues like the measurements of depths and shadows. Another significant text on mathematics is a 12th century work *Lilavati Bhaskaracharya*.

King Bhulokamalla Someshvara, a 12th century Western Chaulukya king, wrote *Manasollasa* or *Abhilashitarthacintakamalla*, an encyclopedia dealing with several topics like politics, army, astrology, jewels, food, and others. It is a huge work consisting of 8000 *granthas*. Another ruler who is known to be prolific writer is king Bhoja (1010–1055 CE). Texts on several different topics are attributed to him: *Samaranganasutradhara,* a treatise on architecture; *Shringaraprakasha* and *Saravasvatikanthabharana*, a treatise on *kavya* literature; a treatise on medicine, *Rajamarathanda*. In total, around 84 texts are attributed to him (Vishnulok & Srivastava, 2009).

Mention must be made of two more texts: *Aparajitapriccha* and *Krishiparashara*. *Aparajitapriccha* authored by Bhuvanadeva deals mostly with architecture in south India. *Krishiparashara*, is a text written in Bengal discussing various aspects of agriculture: the seasons, technology and crops. The text is written by an unknown writer, possibly a brahmana author, pointing to the their increasing involvement in agriculture as they became recipients of land grants.

16.2.4 Religious Works

Puranic literature is a rich repository for understanding Hindu rituals. They generally deal with five topics: the creation of world, its destruction, genealogies of gods and sages, the reigns of 14 Manus, and finally the history of the rulers of solar and lunar dynasties (Flood, 2014). The bulk of this literature was composed during the Gupta time. However, some of the *Puranas* were also composed in the post-Gupta period such as *Bhagavata Purana*, (10th century), *Brahmavaivrata Purana* (10th to 16th century), and *Kalika Purna* (10/11th century). These discuss topics like pilgrimage, religious vows or *vratas*, *dharma*, and others thus lending us an insight into the main religious practices of the time.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1. How did Sanskrit fare in the early medieval period? Discuss any two categories of Sanskrit literature.

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2. Write a note on Scientific works composed in this period.

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16.3 REGIONAL LANGUAGES

One of the important features of the literary history of this period is the development of literature in regional languages in various parts of India. Regional languages which grew rapidly during this period in northern India included Hindi, Punjabi, Bengali, Assamese, Odiya, Marathi and Gujarati. Each one of these languages originated from a corresponding Indo-Aryan Prakrit in its *apabhramsa* stage. This origin can be traced back to the seventh-eighth centuries. The three south Indian languages — Tamil, Kannada and Telugu — have a longer literary history than that of the north Indian regional languages. The literary history of the Tamil language goes back to the beginning of the Common Era. Kannada and Telegu also have older literary traditions than the north 1ndian regional languages. Malayalam is the youngest among the south Indian languages and it was not before the fourteenth century that it developed as an independent literary form.

16.3.1 Social Background of the Development of Regional Languages

Important factors which contributed to the development of the literature in the regional languages during the early medieval period are as follows :

i) During the post-Gupta period, the growth of 'feudal' society, economy and polity led to the emergence of regional entities and cultures roughly from the seventh-eighth centuries. One consequence of the growth of regionalism was the emergence of the earliest forms of the regional languages from the *Apabhramsa*.

ii) As has been mentioned above, the decline in the quality of Sanskrit literature had set in much before the establishment of the Delhi sultanate. Much of the Sanskrit literature which appeared from the 10^{th}-11^{th} centuries lacked spontaneity and did not appeal to the masses. Its appeal was confined to a very small Brahmanic circle. The replacement of Sanskrit by Persian as the official language during the Sultanate period further intensified the process of the decline of the Sanskrit literature. Once it lost the official patronage it had enjoyed at the centre, many kingdoms during the Sultanate period

promoted the use of regional languages since Persian was an unfamiliar language in many parts of the country. Regional languages were used, in addition to Sanskrit, for administrative purpose in many kingdoms even during the pre-Turkish period. In the territories under the rule of the Sultans of Delhi, there are references to Hindi knowing revenue officials at the local level.

iii) The Turkish conquest of northern India during the 13th century led to the end of the Rajput-brahmana alliance and consequently the influence of the brahmanas diminished in the society. Once the upper caste domination diminished, the supremacy of Sanskrit received a setback, and regional languages which were spoken at the popular level, came to the fore.

iv) The growth of non Brahmanical and non-conformist *Nathpanthi* movement and later that of various bhakti movements-both conformist and radical monotheistic — played an important role in the rapid growth of regional literature. We have already discussed the historical background of these movements earlier. Before the rise of the *Nathpanthi*, much of the literature of their predecessors — the Buddhist *siddhas*-was written in regional languages including Hindi. The *Nathpanthi* movement, which was the first beneficiary of the diminished influence of Brahmanism and which reached its culmination during the 13th and 14th centuries, promoted the cause of regional popular languages. The growth of the bhakti movements in north India from 15th century onwards played the most crucial role in the development of the regional languages and contributed to the rapid development of a great corpus of literature in these languages. The bhakti saints composed their verses in the languages understood by the people who were attracted towards them. They made use of popular idioms, popular legends and folk tales. The bhakti movements contributed to the growth of popular regional languages in yet another way. The bhakti saints, in particular those who belonged to the conventional stream of the bhakti movement translated or adapted the Epics, *Puranas* and the *Bhagavad Gita* from Sanskrit into regional languages in order to make their contents accessible to the people. In this way, the bhakti poets popularized *bhakti* episodes drawn from various Sanskrit texts. The contents of these texts were not only translated in the languages in which people could understand them but they were also presented in simple terms before the people.

16.3.2 Hindi

What is today known as Hindi developed in various forms in the medieval period. The dialects of Hindi included Brajbhasha, Awadhi, Rajasthani, Maithili, Bhojpuri, Malwi, etc. In our period the literature of Hindi language developed in these dialects. In addition to these dialects, a mixed form of Hindi, known as *Khari Boli* (originally meaning a rough, crude and raw speech) was also developing.

Scholars have placed the origin of the Hindi language between 7th and 10th centuries — it was in this period that Hindi was evolving out of *Apabhramsa***.** The period between 7th-8th centuries and 14th century (before the rise of the bhakti poetry) is characterised as *'Veergatha Kala'* (age of Heroic Poetry) by scholars. Another name used for describing this period is *Adi Kala* (early period). Much poetry of this period was composed by bards who were patronised by various Rajput rulers.

The bards glorified such virtues of their patrons as chivalry and bravery. They also highlighted the element of romance in their poetical narratives. In its essence, this literature symbolises the values and attitudes of the Rajput ruling classes. The bards who composed this literature were not concerned with the aspirations of the common people. Most of the bardic poetical narratives was composed in the Rajasthani dialect of Hindi. The most famous of them is the *Prithviraja Raso* which is attributed to Chand Bardai, the court ministerial of Prithviraja; the most famous rajput ruler. Other heroic poetical narratives included *Visaldeva Raso*, *Hammir Raso*, *Khumana Raso* etc. The authenticity of most of these *raso* narratives in their existing forms is open to grave doubts and it seems that their contents were expanded during the later centuries. Thus for instance, it is only the nucleus of the *Prithviraja Raso* which was written during this period (12th century), and interpolations were made later in the original draft. Not all the Hindi literature of the period between 7th-8th centuries and 14th century belonged to the genre of bardic poetry. The Buddhist *siddhas* and later the *Nathpanthi yogis* composed religious poetry in an archaic form of Hindi. In western India, the Jaina scholars also composed religious poetry in Rajasthani highlighting various aspects of religious and social life of the people. The contribution of Amir Khusrau to Persian literature was monumental. But he also composed poems in mixed form of Hindi which ultimately developed into *Khari Boli* or *Hindustani*. He called this language *Hindavi*. Some of his Hindi verses are found in his *Khaliq Bari* which is often ascribed to him but was most probably written much later.

16.3.3 Tamil

The early part of early medieval period was mainly a continuation of the literary movement inspired by Bhakti which had emerged in the sixth century CE. The origin of this literary culture may be traced back to the sixth century when under the patronage of the two dynasties — Pallavas and Pandyas — the poets composed hymns dedicated to either Shiva or Vishnu. The Shaiva poets were known as *Nayanars* and Vaishnava poets were known as *Alvars*. Their hymns represented a significant phase in the development of Tamil language, as these were composed in the middle Tamil as opposed to the classical Tamil of the *Sangam* period. A major portion of these hymns were composed between the seventh and ninth centuries. While new hymns continued to be composed in the subsequent centuries, there were also attempts to create a compendium or a collection of these hymns. The first such compendium was compiled by suntarar (780-830 CE) who collected the poems of 62 *Nayanars*. Besides he also authored several new hymns which were added to the compendium in the 11th century by Nampi Antar Nampi (1080-1100 CE) (Zvelebil, 1974, p. 91) The Vaishnava canon '*Nalayirativya- prapantam'* (lit. means The Four Thousand Divine Work) was compiled later in the 10th century by Natamuni. It is a collection of 4000 hymns composed by 14 poets, of which 12 were *Alvars*.

From the ninth century onwards, under the patronage of Cholas, we see new trends in Tamil literature. At the court, two new genres of panegyric literature –*parani* and *ula* – were introduced. *Parani* mainly deals with military campaigns; the first one was authored by Jayamgonda, a poet at the court of Kulottunga Chola. He authored *Kalingattuparani*, which discusses his campaign to Kalinga. The text not only gives detailed understanding of war tactics of the time, but also comments on the times of peace and the dangers and terror of war (Zvelebil, 1968, p. 14).

The second genre of literature '*ula'* was introduced by poet Ottukutar, a court poet of three Chola monarchs — Vikrama Chola, Kulotunga II and Rajaraja II. The term means 'procession'. It was reworking of the idea of the procession of the deity in which the latter is replaced by the reigning king (Dehejia, 2009, p. 59). The literature is an attempt to glorify the ruler during peaceful times, and it shows the king moving around the city completely free of troubles, foreign or domestic. The literature is divided into two parts: the first part introduces the king, discusses his ancestry, his achievements and his court; and in the second part there is a discussion of his tour of the city, and how warmly he is received by the people (Venkatasubramanian, 2010, p. 35) . The three works authored by Ottukutar are *Vikram-Chola Ula*, *Kulotunga Chola Ula*, and *Rajaraja Chola Ula*.

The most famous Chola poet was Kampan who is known for his composition of Tamil *Ramayana*. He lived during the reign of Kulottunga III (1178-1217 CE). He was honoured as *kavichakravarti*. His *Ramayana* is known as *Rama-avatharam* and is still known among the masses. However, his work is not a simple translation of *Ramayana*, but also has reinterpretation of some parts. His language is considered brilliant, being marked with expressive language and musicality of verse (Zvelebil, 1968, p. 13).

A significant Jaina contribution to the Tamil literature was *Jivakachintamani* by a Jain ascetic Tiruttakkadevar. The poet lived in Madurai. The epic is also known as *Mananul* or Book of Marriages. Its plot revolves around the story of Prince Jivaka who realises the futility of worldly pleasures, and adopts the Jaina road of renunciation (Ramaswamy, 2017, p. 178). It is important because it for the first time introduced Sanskrit *kavya* literature style to Tamil (Mukherjee, 1998, p. 151). It further inspired poets like Kampan. Another important Chola poet was Sekkizhar who wrote a haigiography of 63 *Nayanars*, '*Periyapuranam*.' Besides these great works, Tamil literature was also enriched by some translations of Sanskrit texts like Nala and Damayanti episodes from *Mahabharata* called *Nalavenba* by Pugalendi, a contemporary of Kampan. In the 14th century, there was a composition of abridged edition of the *Mahabharata* by poet Villipuththuurar.

16.3.4 Kannada

The initial impetus to the development of Kannada literature came from the courts of Rashtrakutas and their feudatories. Although the usage of Kannada in inscriptions is known since the fifth century, there is some proof that the oldest surviving texts come to us from the early medieval period. The first important Kannada work '*Kavirajamarga'* (Royal Road of Poets) was written in the ninth century at the court of the Rashtrakuta ruler Amoghavarsha (814-878 CE). While its authorship is traditionally attributed to the king, some scholars believe that it was mainly authored by his court poet Srivijaya. This text, consisting of 527 stanzas and three chapters, largely deals with the rules of Kannada grammar and poetics. It is considered as Sanskrit *kavya*; scholars note the influence of Dandin's *Kavyadarsha* and *Bhamaha Kavyalankara*. There is discussion of rules of mixing Kannada and Sanskrit, the combination of sounds and others. It was intended as a guide for the poets in Kannada, making it a landmark work in the development of Kannada *kavya*.

The new literary movement strengthened further in the next century with the emergence of three great poets – Pampa, Ponna and Ranna who are celebrated as

the three gems of Kannada literature. The three poets mainly wrote on themes of Jainism and *Mahabharata*. The first one, Pampa, was a court poet of Arikesari II of Vemulavada, a feudatory of the Rasthrakutas. He is known for two important works – *Adipurana* and *Pampa-Bharata*. The first work, *Adipurana*, is based on the life of the first Jaina *tirthankara*. It is highly regarded for its literary style. The second work *Pampa-Bharata*, also known as *Vikramarjuna Viajaya*, is a major reinterpretation of the epic *Mahabharata*. Instead of five Pandavas, the main hero of the story is Arjuna and it ends with him being crowned as the king of Hastinapur. The story however also aimed at glorifying his patron who is identified as being equivalent of Arjun. The second poet Ponna, was at the court of Rasthrakuta ruler Krishnaraja (939-968 CE). He was a bilingual poet who wrote beautifully in both Sanskrit and Kannada, thus earning for himself a title of *Ubhaya-Kavi-Chakravarti* (Imperial poet in both the languages). Being a Jaina convert, his work centred on Jaina themes. *Shanti Purana* is his most famous composition. It is based on the life of the sixteenth Jain *tirthankara*, Shantinath. His other important work is an acrostic poem *Jinaksharamale* praising the Jinas.

The third important poet Ranna is associated with the court of Western Chalukyas. Although, he was initially patronized by a minister of contemporary Ganga Chavunda Raya, he soon became the court poet of the ruler, Tailapa (973-997 CE) and his successor Satyasraya (997-1008 CE). His chief texts are *Ajithpurana*, based on the life of the second *tirthankara*; *Sahasya Bhima Vijaya* or *Gadha-Yudha* is based on the life of Bhima; the text equates king Tailapa with him.

Other important works were by Chavunda Raya who authored a history of twenty-four *tirthankaras Trishashti-lakshana Maha-Purana*, also known as *Chavundararaya Purana*. Nagavarma I authored *Chhandombuddhi* (ocean of Prosody) which is a discussion of Kannada prosody. Besides this, he also translated Bana's *Kadambari* into Kannada. The literary movement halted in the 11th century due to the war with Cholas. But it revived in the next century.

A reinterpretation of the *Ramayana* from Jaina viewpoint was authored by Nagachandra in the 12th century. However, a great impetus came from *Virashiavas*, a Shaiva sect founded by Basava who rejected the authority of the brahmanas. His sect was open to everyone irrespective of caste background. They introduced a new kind of prose literature *Vachanas* or sentences which were composed by people of diverse backgrounds. These were composed in a simple language which did not require any special learning. They mainly deal with religious issues like the futility of religious rites, wealth, and book education. Instead they extolled people to live simple lives, affirming faith in Shiva. They were composed by people of diverse backgrounds, and it included few woman writers too.

16.3.5 Telegu

The usage of Telegu in inscriptions goes as back the 6th century, but the first literary texts were composed in the early medieval period. The oldest work in Telegu literature is a translation of the *Adi* and *Sabha parvas* of the *Mahabharata* by poet Nannaya. It dates back to the 11th century CE. In the subsequent centuries, there were further translations of the *Mahabharata*. Two poets Tikkana (1220-1300 CE) and Yerrapragada (1280-1350 CE) respectively translated *Virata-parva* and *Vana-parva*. These works laid the foundation of Telegu literature, and the three

poets are highly regarded as *kavitraya*. The other great Epic of *Ramayana* was translated in the 13th century by Kona Buddharaja. Thus, some of the oldest works in Telegu literature are translations of the great Sanskrit works.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) Discuss the social background of the rise of regional languages.

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2) Discuss the origin and growth of any two languages of south India.

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16.4 SUMMARY

In this Unit we have traced the growth of language and literature during the early medieval period. The decline in the quality of Sanskrit works produced in this period has been emphasized. The Unit takes into account the growth of regional languages and literature. Many other languages such as Bengali, Urdu, Punjabi, Assamese, Odiya, Gujarati also flourished but their time period is beyond the purview of this Unit.

16.5 KEY WORDS

Prosody : Rhythm stress, intonation of a language.

Allegorical : Style of writing in which the characters and events extoll virtues.

Hagiographic : A biographical account which is full of praise for the subject it deals with.

16.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) See Section 16.2 and its Sub-sections.

2) See Sub-section 16.2.3

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) See Sub-section 16.3.1

2) See Sub-sections from 16.3.2 to16.3.5

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UNIT 17 SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT[1]

Structure

17.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will learn about:

- the achievements that took place in the fields of mathematics, astronomy, chemistry and medical sciences in the early medieval period;
- the vigorous translation activity which marked the inter-borrowing between the Arab world and India;
- changes in technology; and
- the growing importance of the Arid Zone in the medieval period which impacted the ways sedentary societies and nomadic lands intersected.

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17.1 INTRODUCTION

Many achievements took place in the field of science and technology in the early medieval India. The beginning of Muslim rule in India changed the learning traditions. The indigenous learning traditions slowly eclipsed and its place was taken by the *Maktabs* and *Madrasas*. However texts continued to be composed indigenously. Texts in mathematics, astronomy, chemistry and medical sciences enlivened the learning atmosphere. Many Indian texts were translated into Arabic. In this Unit we will be looking at the achievements that were attained in the fields of mathematics, astronomy etc. We will also examine the changes in technology that the Muslim rule initiated.

How did the environment of South Asia map out in the medieval period will be a subject of study in the latter part of the Unit. South Asia became a part of the larger Arid Zone which encapsulated the regions of Central Asia, Middle East, North Africa. There was complementarity between the nomadic lifeways and sedentary agricultural societies in this Arid Zone. The dry regions were apt for the breeding of horses, oxen, sheep, goat and dromedaries. These were in high demand by the agriculturally rich societies. Some polities that emerged in the medieval period depended on the good horses from Arabia and the dromedaries were excellent means of transport. Stronger war-horses, dromedaries, and cattle tremendously enhanced the existing capacity for warfare, trade, and expansion of agriculture. By fully exploiting these resources, new warrior states emerged at the interface of jungle and arable land.

17.2 SCIENCE AND LEARNING IN THE EARLY MEDIEVAL PERIOD

With the coming of the Muslim rule in India, the indigenous classical learning traditions received a setback. In the Arab countries, the pattern of education was characterized by *Maktabs* and *Madrasas*. These institutions came to be established in India as well and royal patronage was extended to them. While locals who were specialists in various branches of learning were made to head these institutions, learned men from Arabia, Persia and Central Asia were also invited to take charge of the *Madrasas*. Muslim rulers reformed the curriculum of primary schools. Subjects like Arithmetic, Mensuration, Geometry, Astronomy, Accountability, Public Administration and Agriculture were taught as part of primary education. A new kind of learning emerged which was a synthesis between the traditional Indian scientific culture and the prevalent medieval approach to science. Large workshops called *karkhanas* were maintained to supply provision, stores and equipment to the royal households and government departments. The *karkhanas* were functioning not only as manufacturing agencies, but also as centres for technical and vocational training to people. Many artisans and craftsmen were trained by the *karkhanas* in different branches and later these people set up their own independent *karkhanas*.

17.2.1 Mathematics

As was the case in the earlier period, in this period too many achievements took

place in the field of mathematics. The various works produced in Mathematics were *Ganitakaumudi*, *Bijaganitavatamsa* by Narsimha Daivajna; *Lilavati Karamdipika*, *Suddhantadipika*, *Lilavati Vyakhya* by Gangadhara of Gujarat. These works gave rules for trigonometrical terms such as sine, cosine, tangent and cotangent. Another text, *Tantrasamgraha*, by Nilakantha Somasutvan contained rules of trigonometrical functions. A commentary on *Lilavati* called *Buddhivilasini* by Ganesa Daivajna contained a number of illustrations. Krishna of the Valhalla family brought out *Navankura* on the *Bijaganit* of Bhaskara-II and elaboration of the rules of indeterminate equations of the first and second orders. Nilakantha Jyotirvida compiled *Tajik*, introducing a large number of Persian technical terms.

17.2.2 Influence on Arabic Sciences

The Arabs right from the time of Abbasid Caliphate translated a number of books on astronomy, mathematics and medicine from Sanskrit into Arabic. Indian scientific knowledge had a deep impact on Muslim scientists. The scientific cooperation between India and the Arabs initiated a fruitful phase in science and learning. The Arabs were not only interested in Greek learning but also looked up to Hindu sciences for meeting their growing interest in knowledge acquisition. Caliph al-Mansur (753-774 CE) initiated the translation of *Brahma-siddantha* into Arabic. He wanted the scientists to prepare a work based on this text which would serve as a foundation for computing the motions of the planets. This was done by Ibrahim al-Fazari and Yaqub Ibn Tariq in cooperation with Hindu *pundits* in 750 CE and the book was called *Al-Zij ala Sini al- Arab*, or *Sindhand al-Kabir*.

Through such translations Indian numerals were transmitted from India to Baghdad. Al-Fazari with the help of Hindu *pandits* translated Brahmagupta's *Khandakhadyaka* and called it by the Arabic name *Arkand*. Both of these works exercised profound influence on the development of astronomy in the Islamic world. The Arabs learned astronomy from Brahmagupta (7th century CE) earlier than Alexandrian scientist Ptolemy.

In mathematics too, Arabs learnt from Hindu systems. Arabic word for numbers is *Hindsah*, which means 'from India'. In fact what we call today Arabic numerals, were in fact Indian numbers. Arab scientists in Iraq, Mahummad Musa al-Khawrizmi (CE 9th century) used the new numbers to develop algebra. The English word algorithm is derived from his name.

Some of the noteworthy translated works were: works on logic and magic were translated by Ibn Nadim in the tenth century as *Kitab al Fihrist*; Ibn al-Muqaffa translated *Pancatantra* into Arabic as *Kalila wa Dimna*; parts of *Mahabharata* were rendered into Arabic by Ali Jabali, in CE 1026; a large number of Sanskrit medical, pharmacological and toxicological texts were translated into Arabic under the patronage of Khalid Barmaki, the vizier of Caliph al- Mansur. Indian medical text *Susrata Samhita* was translated under Caliph Harun al-Rashid (786-809 CE).

Many Arabs travelled to India to procure medicines and get information on Indian customs. This knowledge was encapsulated in various accounts. Yaqoob Kindii's account (873 CE) is one such account. Ali Ibn Hyusayn Masudi (956 CE) visited India and wrote about Hindu beliefs, their history from legends, and complimented them on their achievements in their sciences as the 'cleverest among the dark

people'. Baghdad's book seller Ibn al-Nadim, al-Biruni, al-Ashari, Shahrastani and many other writers wrote on Indian religions and sciences. Al-Nubakhti's *Kitab al-ara-I wal adnya-I Madhahib al-Hind* mentioned by Masudi was perhaps the earliest study of Hindu sects. Sulayman was a merchant who visited India in 851 CE. He was appreciative of the Hindus' proficiency in medicine, astronomy and philosophy. Hindu astronomers took from the Muslims a number of technical terms, the Muslim calculation of longitudes and latitudes, and various other items of calendar, *Zij*.

Abu Rehan al-Biruni (d.1053) was the first scientist of Islam who made a deep study of Hindu sciences. He has been described as the founder of Indology. He became so proficient in Sanskrit that Hindu scholars gave him the title of *Vidya-sagar* (ocean of knowledge). In his *Tahqiq-al-Hind*, he described India's cultural, scientific, social and religious history. Due to the military incursions of Mahmud of Ghazna in India, Hindu scholars had moved to remote religious centers. In this charged atmosphere Biruni imposed upon himself the strict discipline of scientific objectivity. He tried to explain Hindu doctrines without any bias, avoiding any kind of polemics. Biruni's approach to Hindu sciences was comparative, making analogies between Greek and Hindu civilizations. His comparison of two civilizations led him to the conclusion that Hindus could not bring sciences to classical perfection, and that scientific theories of the Hindus are in a state of utter confusion, devoid of any logical order, and always mixed up with the silly notions of the crowd. He was the first to introduce the study of *Bhagavad Gita* to the Muslim world, and the first Muslim to study the *Puranas* and to translate Patanjali and *Samkhya* into Arabic. In considerable detail he outlined the principles of Hindu astronomy, geography, mathematics and medicine. Biruni translated a Sanskrit book *Batakal*, as *Batanjal*. From this work he extracted a great deal which he made use of in his magnum opus *Qanun Mas'udi*, a 1500 page work on mathematics, geometry and astronomy. All that the sages of India have said about numbers, ages, and eras (*tawarikh*), has been exactly given by Abu Rehan in his translation of the *Batakal* (Sathpathy, not dated).

17.2.3 Astronomy

During the early medieval period a host of astronomer scientists flourished in India. These were Govindasvamin, Sankaranarayana, Aryabhata II, Sripati, and Satananda. From their works one can know about the flourishing state of mathematics and astronomy in India during this period

Govindasvamin (CE 800-850) wrote a commentary on the *Mahabhaskanya*. He mastered the Aryabhatian system. He was at the court of King Ravivarman of Kerala. He also wrote *Govindakrti* which was an original work on astronomy and mathematics. His disciple Sankaranarayana's (825-900 CE) commentary on the *Laghubhaskariya* is also noteworthy. He was appointed as the chief astronomer at the court of Ravivarman of the Chera dynasty of Kerala. **Aryabhata II** (CE 950) wrote a work called *Mahasiddhanta*. It is a compendious work based largely on orthodox views, showing some originality in the treatment of indeterminate equations.

Sripati (CE 999) wrote works which included (i) *Dhikoti*, a Karana work on the *Aryabhatiya*, (ii) a fuller astronomical work entitled *Siddhanta Ukhara*, and (iii) a mathematical treatise, *Ganitatilaka*. He is credited with the discovery of the

moon's second inequality. ***Satananda*** (eleventh century CE) hailed from Puri in Odisha and wrote a Karana work called *Bhasvati*, more or less in the style of the *Surya-siddhanta*. This work enjoyed great popularity among the astronomers and almanac-makers of the eastern region.

Despite a few original works, this period witnessed by and large the production of a number of commentaries and secondary works. It would, however, be unrealistic to characterize this period as one of commentaries only. This type of literature started appearing from the eighth or ninth century, if not earlier. The prolific writing by the commentators are the following:

- Utpala specialized on Varahmihira and wrote commentaries on his works;
- Prthudakasvamin (860 CE) wrote commentaries on Brahmagupta;
- Aryabhattan scholar Suryadeva Yajvan (1191-1250 CE) wrote commentaries on Manjula's *Laghumanasa*, Bhaskara I and Aryabhata;
- Suryadeva, an astrologer of repute, wrote commentaries on Varahmihira and Sripati's *Karmapaddhati*.

17.2.4 Astrolabe in India

The use of astrolabe (astronomical instrument) in India is credited to the Arabs. This instrument was brought to India by the Muslim astronomers. It was a Greek invention. Ptolemy was familiar with it and he wrote a tract on stereographic projection which was translated into Arabic in the tenth century and from Arabic into Latin in the twelfth. The Arab astronomers popularized the use of astrolabe from the ninth century CE. Thus al-Fazari (CE 800), one of the earliest Muslim astronomers, wrote a tract on the subject. Other notable early astronomers of Arab culture areas who wrote important tracts on the astrolabe include Abu'l-Ma'shar, Umar al-Balkhi, Ali ibn Isa of Baghdad, al Farghani (CE 830), al-Biruni (973-1048), al-Majriti of Cordova (CE 1000), al-Zarkali (CE 1029), and Nasir al Din al-Tusi (1201-74). Al-Biruni's two tracts on the instrument, 'Comprehensive Study on Possible Methods for the Construction of the Astrolabe' and 'The Book of Instructions in the Elements of the Art of Astrology', attained great popularity and are available in translations in European languages.

The astrolabe can help in the calculation of time during day and night, find positions of the sun and stars, solve problems of heights and distances, make other computations, and, above all, teach the elements of astronomy with its plates and various graduations.

17.2.5 Chemistry

Though Alchemy was known in the Vedic period, its practical application became popular during the Tantric phase. Various Tantric treatises dealt with the methods for the transmutation of base metals into gold. The *Rasaratnakara*, attributed to the famous Buddhist alchemist Nagarjuna, contains descriptions of alchemical processes and preparations of many mercurial compounds. It gives an account of many chemical processes like the extraction of zinc, mercury, and copper, and the preparation of crystalline red sulphide of mercury (*svarnasindura* or *makaradhvaja*). This medicament is still used in indigenous system of medicine.

The treatise also describes more than two dozen varieties of apparatuses (*yaniras*) for carrying out various physico-chemical processes like distillation, sublimation, extraction, calcinations, digestion, evaporation, filtration, fumigation, fusion, pulverization, heating by steam and by sand, and the preparation of many metallic compounds.

The *Rasarnava* or *Devishastra* (twelfth century), a *Tantra* of the Saiva cult dealing with alchemy and chemistry, gives a description of the colours imparted to flames by various metallic compounds like those of copper, tin, lead, and iron. A variety of minerals and ores, the extraction of copper from pyrites and zinc from calamine, the distillation of alum (possibly giving rise to sulphuric acid), and the purification of mercury by distillation are described in this Tantric text. The alchemical ideas and treatises of India spread to China and Tibet. The *Dhatuvada* (eighth-ninth century), a Tantric text in Sanskrit, found translated in the Tanjur division of Tibetan literature, gives an account of the deposition of copper on iron from a copper salt solution and the preparations of amalgams of copper and of white lead. The *Sarvekararasayana*, another Tantric text in Sanskrit of the same time explains the process of making cuprous sulphide. The preparation of antimony by heating a mixture of stibnite and iron is mentioned in the *Rasendracudamani* (thirteenth century). This shows that the process was known in India much earlier than its discovery in Europe by Basil Valentine (1604). The preparations of calomel and of oil of vitriol (sulphuric acid) from alum, the use of alum as a mordant for dyes, and the extraction of zinc from calamine are described in the *Rasaprakasa-sudhakara* (thirteenth century) (Satpathy, not dated).

The ideas of the alchemists about the possibility of transmuting base metals into gold gradually lost their charm because of repeated failure of experiments. But the numerous preparations of mercury, iron, copper, and other metals obtained in the process came to be used in medicine. As a result, the compilation of a number of medical treatises dealing with the use of metallic preparations were composed. One such work, the Buddhist treatise *Rasaratna-samuccaya*, contains a vast mass of the then existing chemical information but very little that is new and of intrinsic value. It talks about the treatment of mercury, minerals, metals, gems, liquefaction, incineration, construction of apparatuses, purification of metals, and extraction of essences (active principles). Unlike what happened in Europe, alchemy in India failed to develop into a rational, scientific chemistry. As a result, it gradually became extinct.

There is plenty of evidence on the application of chemical knowledge and processes in the medieval period, particularly relating to metallurgy and metal-working, gunpowder, salt peter, mineral acids, alum, paper, ink, soap, and cosmetics. Heavy guns and cannons made of copper, bronze, and brass were used by the Mughal emperors. Instances of working with wrought iron on a large scale by means of forging and hammering are provided by the following: the iron pillar at Dhar (fourteenth century); the pillar in Mount Abu (fourteenth century); the large iron beams at Konarak and in the temples of Puri (twelfth century); and the big iron guns and cannons of the Mughal period as found at Bijapur, Hyderabad, and Murshidabad. Records of the preparation of steel swords at various places in India arc found in the *Juktikalpataru* (eleventh century) and *Sarngadhara-padabali* (fourteenth century).

The tinning of copper vessels gained currency in India from the medieval period, possibly after the arrival of the Muslims. An alloy made of copper, lead, and tin, or of copper, lead, and zinc known as *bidery* (from Bider, a town in Andhra Pradesh), produced during this period, was used to make vases, basins, cups, etc. which were then inlaid with gold and silver. These products were made largely in Hyderabad, Bengal, and north-west India. Enamelling on gold and silver ornaments in different colours with metallic oxides mixed with soda-lead glass was known all over India.

Paper-making was introduced in India from China through Nepal in about CE1000 and became a flourishing industry during the Mughal and Peshwa periods. The raw materials used were mainly worn-out clothes, old tents, barks of certain shrubs and trees, and similar substances. These were beaten into a pulp in a lime-lined water reservoir and then made into paper sheets with the help of moulds. The preparation of cosmetics and perfumes was known from the sixth century CE. A detailed description of several aromatic ingredients for the preparation of cosmetics and perfumes, and the technical processes and recipes for the preparation of different perfumed products are given in the *Gandhasara*, which was composed around CE 1000 on the basis of earlier texts dating from CE 500 to 1000.

Thus Chemistry in India was developed empirically in India. It occupied itself, more or less, with the collection of accidentally discovered facts associated with various practical arts like ceramics, metallurgy, metal working, and medicinal preparations without any recognition of the chemical principles or nature of the chemical changes involved in their pursuit. The result was that the thoughts and ideas could not germinate into scientific laws and theories based on experimental observations and verifications (Satpathy, not dated). Likewise, the mechanical skill displayed in the pursuit of practical arts could not develop into technology in the absence of guidance and suggestions from scientific knowledge. Chemistry was dominated more by seeing and believing than by thinking and knowing. After the age of Nagarjuna, Indian treatises provide very little new chemical information, though quite a large number of commentaries and compilations were composed till the end of the sixteenth century. Nevertheless, India's achievements in the use of minerals, metallurgical techniques, processing of chemicals of everyday use, extraction of metals from their ores, and craftsmanship in the manufacture of certain metal products, which required mastery of some chemical processes, were quite remarkable. Some of the technical skills exhibited by ancient Indian chemists and metallurgists were indeed noteworthy.

17.2.6 Medical Science

It was during the medieval period that Indian medicinal science dominated earlier by Ayurveda, witnessed several changes. New medical practices such as Unani were brought in India by the Arabs. The Arabian influence brought changes in medical practice, primacy and pharmacology. Muslim practitioners were known by their designation *Hakim* or *Tabib*. *Hakim* means a scientist or a learned man while *Tabib* means a physician. The *Jarah* was a surgeon, surgery was called *Ilmey Jarahat*. Most of the medical and scientific books were written in Arabic and Persian. Islamic medicine in India was founded on books of two Persian physicians, namely Zakariya Razi and Hakim ibn Sena. During the rule of Tegin

(1098-1127) a scholar from Khawrazm Hakim Zainuddin Ibrahim Ismail wrote a book on medicine called *Zakhirah Khawazim*. This compendium asserted great influence in India from 12th to the 15th century. The book defined medicine, described the diagnosis of an illness, reasons for illness, fevers, types of poisons and constitution of human body. He also wrote another book *Aghraz al-Tibb* which was also very popular among the local practitioners of medicine. His *Tibbey Yadgar* was an extensive pharmacopeia in 14 chapters.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) What were the achievements in the fields of mathematics and astronomy in the early medieval period?

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2) How did various translations of Indian texts into Arabic influence Arabic sciences?

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3) What is an Astrolabe? Describe its significance in astronomy.

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17.3 TECHNOLOGY

There has never been any human settlement which did not use some kind of technique or craft for its survival. In fact, the history of technology is no less important than political or economic studies. Technology is an inseparable part of the material culture of a society One thing that is important to note is that by and large the tools, devices and implements were made of wood and earth, while iron was employed only when most necessary. Ropes, leather and bamboo, too, were used when the need arose. That is why they were inexpensive.

Let us look at some technological features of the early medieval period.

17.3.1 Irrigation Technology

Early Indian agriculture depended on irrigation and natural rain. A lot of primary source of information as well as secondary data inform us a great deal about the irrigation technology in early medieval India. Irrigation may broadly be categorized into two i.e. natural irrigation and artificial irrigation. Natural irrigation is through monsoon rains, which feed river bodies and become a good source of irrigation.

Even otherwise, sprinkling of water over agricultural fields during rain is a great irrigational tool. Artificial irrigation is through human efforts like digging up of wells, canals, hydraulic engineering efforts etc. Digging of wells and tanks has been propagated in India as a charitable work of merit. Due to unpredictable natural means of irrigation, agricultural expansion and the consequent evolution of human civilization has been critically related to the availability of sufficient hydraulic resources. Hence, it is not surprising that during the medieval period of Indian history maximum attention was paid towards the adequate usage of hydraulic devices.

17.3.2 Textual Reference

Aparajitapriccha, a twelfth century work, seems to be the earliest text to devote a full chapter to the discussion of step wells, wells, ponds etc. The early medieval text *Brihatkalpasutrabhashya* shows a remarkable awareness of the variability of hydraulic devices and hence we find a multiplicity of storage systems and irrigation mechanisms in different regions. The region of Lata (southern Gujarat) depended entirely on rain, Sindhu (lower Indus valley and the Indus delta) relied on rivers, the Dravida country (far south India) was the land of reservoirs, and in Uttarapatha (generally north India) wells figured most prominently. Since the failure of rains was a common occurrence, dependence on artificial means of irrigation like wells, tanks and storage reservoirs was acute. Even al-beruni attests to the uneven rainfall patterns in India.

In Kashmir, the most outstanding irrigational project entailing inventive engineering skill belongs to king Avantivarman of Kashmir. His minister Suyya dammed the river Vitasta (Jhelum) to save Kashmir from the destructive floods of the Mahapadma Lake. Suyya deepened the bed of the Vitasta at its two ends, cleaned the river bed at its bottom after constructing a temporary stone dam at all threatened points and built protective stone embankments for seven *yojanas* along the river bank. Thus, he was able to shift the junction of the Vitasta and the Sindhu from the old to its existing position. On the land raised from water he founded many villages protected by circular dykes and constructed extensive projects. His works generated widespread prosperity, such that it was commented upon by Kalhana. Another king of Kashmir, Lalitaditya Muktapida reclaimed many hitherto water-logged areas by making an arrangement at Laksadhara for conducting the water of Vitasta and by constructing a series of water-wheels, distributing it to various villages. Besides, king Harsha is credited with the excavation of the big Pampa Lake, identified by Stein with the modern Pampasar.

Rajasthan received less rainfall than Gujarat. Here inscriptions from the 11th century onwards refer to the employment of irrigation technology which made possible the production of diverse crops in this arid zone. The Chalukyas of Gujarat also initiated many irrigational works. It seems that even the first king of the dynasty, Mularaja I paid due attention to the system of irrigation. Sridhara in his *prashasti* claims that one of his ancestors was appointed by Mularaja I (CE 941-996) to dig *vapis*, wells and tanks. A long list of tanks, *vapis*, reservoirs, lakes, wells were constructed by the kings and queens of Rajasthan. Some of these exhibit their great technological skill. For example Jayasimha Siddharja (CE 1099-1144) is credited with the construction of a large number of tanks and *vapis*. He constructed

a large reservoir called Sahasralinga Lake at his capital. Archaeology confirms the high engineering skill employed in this irrigational project. The lake received water from the river Saraswati with which it was connected by a 300 ft. long channel. Excavations have brought to light the stone sluices through which water was conducted to the lake. Further, during the reign of Bhimadeva II (CE 1178-1242) an attempt was made to extend irrigational facilities to north-west Saurashtra and Kutch. Not only kings but also feudal lords and merchants showed great concern towards constructing vapis and providing other irrigational facilities. In fact construction of water devices in arid zones was deemed as a meritorious act.

However, there are also some instances of large scale or supra-local irrigation projects. *Lekhapaddhati* mentions the *varigriha karana* (official in charge of irrigation). It suggests that there was a department of irrigation and state took interest in irrigation works (satpathy, not dated).

As regards the technical devices used to raise water from wells there is a lot of evidence available. *Desinamamala* refers to such terms as *agatti*, *unkaddi* and *dhenka* which mean a contrivance for drawing water in which a horizontal beam with a bucket hung on the one end functioning as a see saw on a vertical post. This contrivance was operated probably by foot and could be used on wells and tanks where water was not deep. Bana refers to the irrigation of paddy fields through *ghati*. Merutunga also notices the use of water-wheels for irrigating the fields. By describing the rotation of water-wheel, he states-the empty buckets became full and the full buckets empty. (Satpathy, not dated) Inscriptions of southern Rajasthan especially from the regions of Jodhpur, Udaipur, Banswara, Sanchor and Sirohi repeatedly refer to irrigation with the help of *arahatta* or *araghatta* and *dhimada* or *dhiku*. The technical nature of *araghatta*, generally translated as a Persian wheel, is a matter of controversy. The essential part of the *araghatta* was the *ghatiyantra* or the device with pitchers, usually mounted on the wheel, but not attached to its rim. The *ghatiyantra* as an irrigational device is therefore often held as a pot-garland. The *Upamitibhavaprapanchakatha* of Siddharshi (CE 906) presents the most elaborate account of the device. The *araghatta*, according to the text, seems to have drawn water from a reservoir which in turn received its water from irrigation well. The text highlights the spokes (*arakas*) of wheel which was a revolving apparatus though it does not refer to any gearing mechanism enabling the conversion of the horizontal rotary motion into a vertical rotary motion. The latter feature which became visible from the fourteenth century onwards, represented the typical Persian wheel or the *saqia*. The prevalence of *araghatta* as a hydraulic machine is best demonstrated by an eleventh century panel from Mandsor (Pali district, Rajasthan) (Satpathy, not dated).

17.3.3 South India

One may recall here once again the recognition of the regional variations in the hydraulic resources and projects in the vast subcontinent in the early medieval text, *Brhatkalpabhasyasutra*, the text in question impressed upon the importance of tanks in the Dravida country, that is, the far south India, lying to the south of the river Krishna. The earliest Tamil poetry, the *Sangam* anthology, informs us of the five ecological divisions in ancient *Tamilakam*. These were *neidal* (agricultural tract), *marudam* (coastal area), *kurinji* (forested mountainous area), *mullai* (pastoral

zone), and *palai* (dry and arid tract). Until the fifth century CE settlements in *Tamilakam* were mostly situated in the coastal and agricultural tracts. It is only during the post-600 CE period that permanent agrarian settlements spread outside the *neidal* and the *marudam* eco-zones. This became largely possible with the expansion of agriculture by issuing a large number of land grants. The expansion of agriculture is inseparably intertwined with the enlargement of the irrigated area. As the far south does not possess many rivers of perennial nature, the spread of irrigation agriculture in that region largely depended on tank irrigation. Though this was, in many cases, an initiative of the village community, there are known instances of support for tank irrigation at the rulers' level. A few illustrations on this point will be in order. The Pallavas and the Cholas are particularly noted for excavating tanks of impressive size. Royal inscriptions describing the construction of these tanks inform us about the sluices which were meant for regulating and distributing the water from the tanks to cultivated fields. The Tiryaneri tank had 23 sluices, while the Viraneri tank had as many as 74 sluices. Several sluices figure in the description of the Cholaganga tank in the Tiruvalangadu copper plate of Rajendra Chola. These channels, according to the inscriptions, were connected to irrigation channels. These sluices were dressed in granite slabs. The existence of many sluices, possibly of an impressive size, in the tanks, speaks of the large size of the tanks themselves and the substantial area irrigated by them (Satpathy, not dated).

17.4 ENVIRONMENT

One encounters, broadly speaking two different ways of life in the Indian subcontinent: the one predominantly pastoral-nomadic, the other mainly sedentary-agrarian. The expansion of the sedentary-agrarian frontier accelerated in the medieval period with the increasing practise of grants of land in hitherto unchartered territory. The brahmana donees under various polities helped the peasants to bring wasteland under cultivation and with artificial means of irrigation, they ensured agrarian surplus and prosperity in the countryside. However juxtaposed with these agrarian swathes of land, the arid landscapes too were present with their own dynamics. They were a witness to numerous cattle fights and skirmishes over pastures as many hero-stones in the Deccan and south India indicate. Bringing to mind the apparent bifurcation between the two realms: the settlement or *janapada* or the forest or *aranya*, in the early period, the complementarity between the riverine wet agricultural regions and arid landscapes similarly point to close interaction and symbiosis.

Presented below are some observations, based on the work done by Jos Gommens on how the dynamic and fluid environments of South Asia within the larger context of Central Asia, Africa and the Middle East articulated its spatial and temporal dimensions in the pre-modern era.

17.4.1 Medieval South Asia

Much of the Indian subcontinent in the medieval period and even earlier was characterised by large, sometimes, uninterrupted expanse of wet agricultural lands. Wastelands were brought under the plough and forests were cleared for cultivation.

The fertile river valleys of the Ganges, Godavari, Krishna generated surplus which laid the foundation for the emergence of states. This was an exclusively sedentary domain and the incursions of nomads of Central Asia and the Middle East were only a few instances. Such inroads underlined the clash between the nomadic frontier and the agricultural society. Despite being predominantly a sedentary agricultural economy, the Indian subcontinent was also home to nomadic tribes, some of which lived on the margins of the settled society and others who were more closely integrated with the sedentary village life.

Gommans maintains that from the medieval period, the Indian subcontinent became a part of the larger Arid Zone which stretched from drier zones of Eurasia, extending from the Atlantic coast of northern Africa to the eastern and southern extremes of the Indian subcontinent. In this vast terrain the predominantly nomadic lifeways of Eurasia and the Middle East slowly transform into the more sedentary agricultural moist environment of the Indian subcontinent. Arabain, Persian and Turkish nomadic elements in the form of horse-warriors from Khurasan and Transoxania entered the Indian subcontinent from the northwest frontier region.

Most of the early medieval polities centred in the Kaveri delta in the south and the Ganges in the north benefitted from the fertile river valleys. However, these rich agrarian lands did not form an unbroken chain through the whole of the subcontinent, The arid regions of Sindh and Rajasthan in the west, with an extension southwards across the Thar desert, the dry western Deccan plateau extending into the Rayalseema region located in the midst of the Tungabhadra and Krishna and the Mysore plateau in the southwest formed a part of the Arid Zone which as mentioned earlier interlinked Central Asia, the Middle East with the Indian subcontinent.

The Arid Zone, due to the growth of nutritious grasses but uncertain subsistence possibilities, was just right for stock breeding. The people here bred horses, oxen and dromedaries. Apart from grasses and forest scrub, the stalk and leaf of dry millet, one of the major crops of the Arid Zone, served as excellent supplementary fodder. Hence, stockbreeding in South Asia took root in the scarcity ridden drier regions.

It was in the medieval period that the Arid Zone reached its full maturity as the conductor of people, animals, goods and ideas. “From this time onwards, South Asia witnessed breathtaking changes that involved large-scale migration of mostly Muslim and Telugu warrior groups and the emergence of previously marginal tribal groups, such as the Yadavas in the Deccan and the Kallars and Maravars in southeast India. Migrating warriors, pastoralists, and cultivators carried their various divinities with them into new territories, thereby helping to build complex interregional networks of devotion and pilgrimage” (Gommans, 2012). This was the time when temples emerged as major redistributive centres across the landscape. Extremely mobile traders and sectarian priests helped in the integration of far flung settlements into a closely knit economy and society.

The spread of Islam enabled the people of the Arid Zone to extend their control over sedentary societies. The scale and pace of human activities increased. Not only that but the animals being raised in the Arid Zone like the sheep, goat, oxen, horses and camels also came to play an important role in the developments taking place in this region.

17.4.2 Horses, Oxen and Dromedaries

From the second millennium CE, the role of horses, dromedaries and oxen greatly increased. The best war horses originated from Central Asia and Iran. The lack of nutritious fodder grasses in South Asia limited the possibilities for horse breeding. During this time the importance of war horses multiplied many fold. The successful campaigns of Muslim armies of Ghaznavids, Ghorids, and Khalijs proved the might of mobile warfare, especially of well-trained archers on horseback. In the initial period most of the horse warriors were from Iran and Central Asia. Their military and equine expertise helped them in being hired by the Indian armies. These were called as Muslims or Turks (*Turushka*). Mounted on horses they came to be known as *Asvapatis* (lords of horses) or *irauttars* (horsemen). The cavalry techniques of the Muslims were copied by the Rajputs, Marathas and the Nayakas and accounted for their military success. "At about this time, horses emerged in religious cults of warrior heroes, such as Khandhoba or Lord Aiyanar, and in other martial traditions of mobile pastoralists... . All this suggests the enormous impact of the mounted warrior on both politics and ritual in South Asia" (Gommans, 2012).

With the invention of the north Arabian saddle and the integration of the camel breeding nomads in the settled society, the dromedary became one of the most important means of transport in the Middle East. Certain developments marked this phase. A new hybrid called *bhuktis* were bred which were more resistant to the cold and harsh conditions and linked the Central Asian region with the Middle East. Besides this the one humped camel was developed as a new breed well adapted to the colder climate of Iran and southern Central Asia. In South Asia, one humped camel became quite numerous from the 1000 CE onwards.

While good quality horses and dromedaries were available only outside South Asia, especially along the Steppes and deserts of Central Asia and the Middle East, the Ox was largely South Asian. The Oxen were bred in the drier climates of South Asia. While some of the breeds like those from Gujarat and Mysore were exemplary, most were mixed breeds. One category of cattle was the village one which was mostly unattended and grazed freely at local commons of wasteland and fallow lands. Though this constituted the bulk of the cattle and was the main source of dairy products, it was ill suited to the needs of agriculture and long distance transport. The other kind was that which was bred by professional pastoralists, both nomadic and sedentary. Selective breeding and access to open pastures led to the breeding of a select and higher quality of cattle. This breed of cattle were in high demand by the agriculturalists and travelling traders.

The ox played an important role in the expansion of agriculture throughout the Arid Zone from the twelfth century onwards. It also provided manure, raised the water from the village wells, trod out the cut crop on the threshing floor, and transported the produce to the local market. The black cotton soils of Karnataka and Deccan could not be ploughed by the ill-bred oxen. Only the good breed of oxen bred by professional pastoralists could help in the reclamation of land for agricultural purposes. Thus the spread of oxen, dromedaries and war horses led to the increase in the potential for agriculture, transport and warfare.

Burton Stein maintains that early medieval states in the Indian subcontinent were located in interstitial political zones which underlined the growing importance of the dry zones of the uplands in state formation. From the twelfth century, following the spread of war-horses, dromedaries and oxen, the inner frontier of the Arid Zone through the agency of merchants, pastoralists and warriors not only brought its surrounding territories of South Asia together but also made them part of the wider habitats of Turko-Persia.

The Delhi frontier is an example of the historical significance of the Arid Zone. The continued centrality of Delhi as the *dar al-sultanat* of Hindustan hinged on its own peripheral location at the junction of the unsettled areas to its west and the more stable territories to its east. The dilemma was that the rule of the Delhi rulers belonged to the settled order of sedentary society, through their actual power derived from the arid wastes (Gommans, 2012).

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) What were the different kinds of hydraulic devices in use in the early medieval Period?

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2) Describe the characteristics of the Arid Zone as observed by Jo Gommans.

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17.5 SUMMARY

In this Unit you learnt about the achievements that took place in the fields of mathematics, astronomy, medicine, chemistry etc. Most of the indigenous works were commentaries, however. New types of learning institutions emerged. The Arabs brought with them their own learning traditions. As a result of the fusion between Arabic learning traditions and Indic, a synthesis between the two enlivened the learning atmosphere. A large number of Indian texts were translated into Arabic. In the field of technology, many advanced in agriculture were marked by the construction of water devices and tanks with many sluices. The whole of South Asia became a part of the Arid Zone which extended from Central Asia, the Middle East to the extremities of South Asia. In this zone broadly speaking nomadic frontiers clashed with agricultural zones for dominance. However there was complementarity between the two also. The animals being bred in the dry lands were used by the agricultural societies and facilitated trade, agriculture and transport.

17.6 KEY WORDS

Dromedary : an Arabian camel, especially one of a light and swift breed trained for riding or racing.

Arid : Hot and dry regions where rainfall is scarce.

Madrasa : A college for Islamic instruction.

Maktab : an Islamic elementary school.

17.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) See Sub-sections 17.2.1 and 17.2.3

2) See Sub-section 17.2.2

3) See Sub-section 17.2.4

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) See Sub-section 17.3.1,17.3.2 and 17.3.3

2) See Sub-section 17.4.1 and 17.4.2

17.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

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