

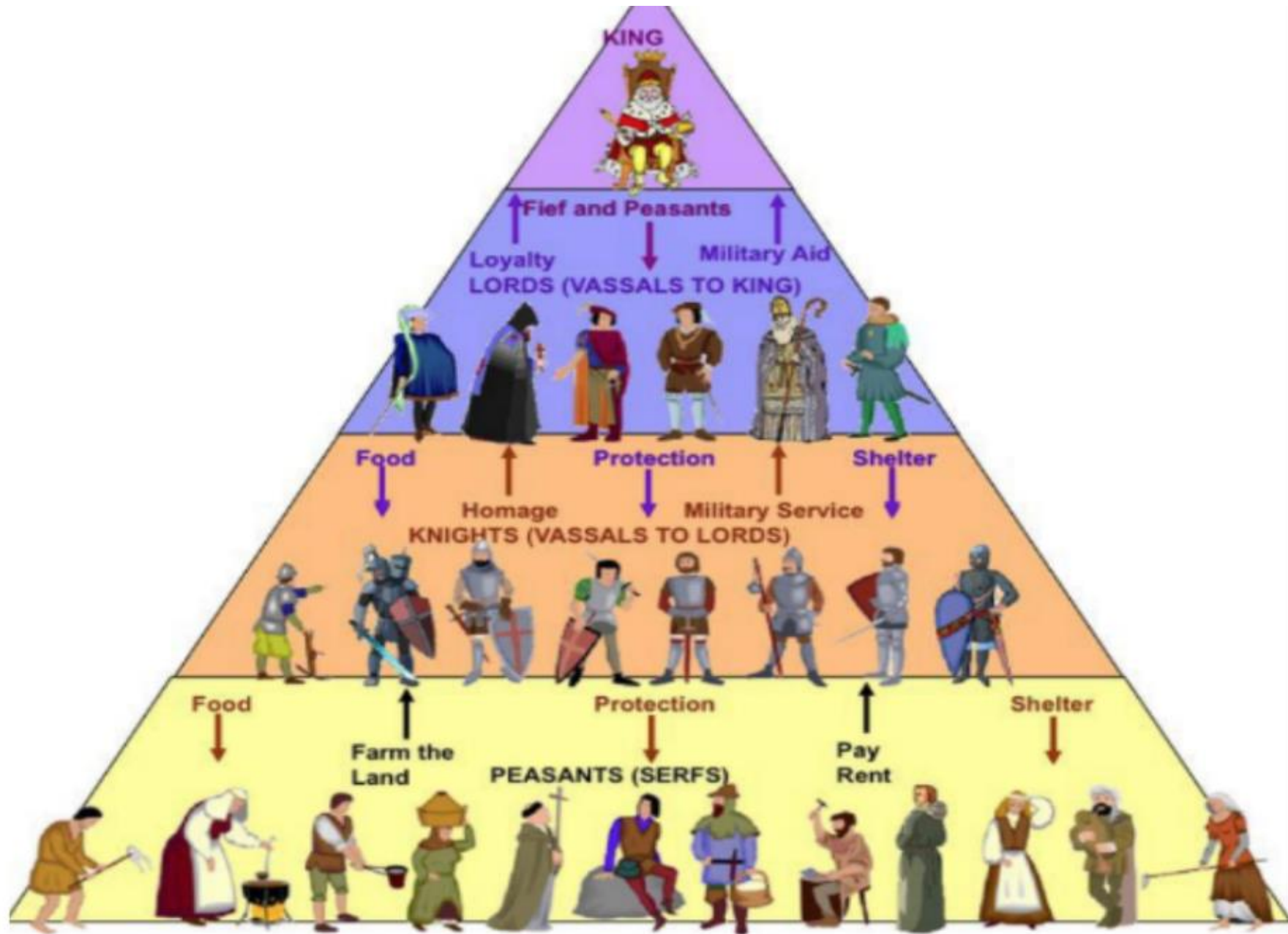
Textbook in History  
for Class XII

THEMES IN  
**INDIAN HISTORY**  
PART I

# KINGS, FARMERS AND TOWNS

This chapter is divided  
into two parts.

The chapter is based on  
the new/ latest syllabus.





# PRINCEP AND PIYADASSI

- In 1930s James Prinsep, an officer in the the East Company mint of the India
- Company, deciphered Brahmi and khrothi, two scripts used in the earliest inscriptions and coins
- Most of these mentioned a king referred to as Piyadassi - meaning "pleasant to behold referred to as king Ashoka
- Scholars began to shift their focus to the context of political history, investigating
- whether there were Connections between political changes and economic and Social developments.







# THE EARLIEST STATES

## THE SIXTEEN MAHAJANPADAS

- Sixth century BCE is regarded as a major turning point in early Indian History, it is an era associated with early
- states, cities, the growing use of iron, the development of coinage, etc.
- It also witnessed the growth of diverse systems of thought, including Buddhism and Jainism
- Buddhist and Jaina texts mentioned the most important mahajanapadas
- Mahajanapadas were ruled by kings, some known as ganas or sanghas
- Both and Mahavira the Buddha belonged to such ganas .For example In the case of the Vajji Sangha, the rajas probably controlled resources Such as land collectively.
- Each mahajanpadas had a capital city, which was often fortified. These mahajanpadas were Anga, kashi, kosala, Vajji, Malla, Chedi, vatsa, kuru, Panchala, Matsya, Surasena, Asvaka, Avanti, Gandhra, kamboja, and Magadha
- Brahmanas began composing Sanskrit texts known the Dharmasutras, laid down norms for rulers, who were ideally expected to be kshatriyas
- Rulers were advised to collect taxes and tribute from cultivators, traders and artisans



# FIRST AMONGST THE SIXTEEN:

- Magadha Between the sixth and the fourth centuries BCE, Magadha (Bihar) became the most
- powerful mahajanapada. Some features of Magadha were:
- Magadha was a region where agriculture was especially productive
- Besides, iron mines (in present day, Jharkhand) were accessible and provided resources for tools and weapons
- In Magadha, the Ganga and its tributaries provided a means of cheap and convenient communication
- Buddhist and Jaina writers who wrote about Magadha
- Some of the best known kings of Magadha such as Bimbisara, Ajatasattu and Mahapadma Nanda
- Initially, Rajagaha was the capital of Magadha. It was a fortified settlement, located amongst hills
- In late fourth century BCE, the capital was shifted to Patliputra, present day Patna commanding routes of communication along the Ganga.



# AN EARLY EMPIRE

## FINDING OUT ABOUT THE MAURYAS.

- There are variety of the history of the sources to reconstruct Maurayan Empire include archaeological finds
- specially sculpture, contemporary works, Such as Megasthenes (a Greek the account of ambassador to the court of Chandragupta Maurya which survives in Fragments.
- Another source that is often used is the Arthashastra, parts of which were probably Composed by Kautilya or (Chanakya minister of Chandragupta)
- Mauryas are mentioned in later Buddhist, Jaina and Puranic literature, as in Sanskrit literary works The
- inscriptions on rocks and of Ashoka (C.272/268-231 BCE) pillars often regarded are as amongst the most valuable Sources.
- Ashoka was the first ruler who inscribed his message to his subjects officially
- Ashoka understood to be dhamma Included respect towards generosity, etc.



# ADMINISTRATING THE EMPIRE

- ❖ Five major political centres in the empire are the capital Pataliputra and the provincial centres Taxila, Ujjayini, Tosali and Suvarnagiri, all are mentioned in Ashokan inscriptions
- ❖ In Ashokan inscriptions same message engraved everywhere province for instances, North West Frontier of Pakistan, to Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Uttarakhand in India.
- ❖ Administrative Control was strongest in areas as Taxila and Ujjayini.
- ❖ Being Situated on important long distance trade routes Suvarnagiri was possibly important tapping for the gold mines of karnatka.





- ❖ Megasthenes mentions a Committee with Six Subcommittees for coordinating military activity.
- ✓ One looked after the navy,
- ✓ the second managed transport and provisions,
- ✓ the third was responsible for foot soldiers,
- ✓ fourth for horses, and the
- ✓ the fifth for chariots
- ✓ Sixth for elephants.
- ❖ The activities of the second subcommittee were rather varied- procuring food for soldiers and fodder for animals, etc.



# HOW IMPORTANT WAS THE EMPIRE?

- ❖ Mauryan Empire was regarded as a major Landmark, One of was Ashoka. the most significant ruler Mauryan Empire founded by Chandragupta Maurya (321 BC-298 BC) with the "help of Chanakya (kautilya)
- ❖ This empire was Spread almost very long from 324 BC-185 for 150 years, which is not the vast span of time in the history of subcontinent
- ❖ Many historians found the message on Ashokan inscriptions very different of most other rulers, suggesting was from that that Ashok was more powerful and industrious.



# NEW NOTIONS OF KINGSHIP CHIEFS AND KINGS IN THE SOUTH

- ❖ Many new kingdoms that emerged in the Deccan and further South, including the chiefdoms of the Cholas, Cheras and Pandyas in Tamilkarn, proved to be Stable and prosperous
- ❖ Variety of sources tell us about these States Such Tamil Sangam Texts poems
- ❖ Many chiefs and kings, including the Satavahanas and who ruled over parts of western and central India (C 2nd century - 2 century CE)
- ❖ The Shakas, people of central Asian origin who established kingdoms in the north west and western parts of the subcontinent



# DIVINE KINGS

- ❖ Any kings claimed high status and considered themselves as god like
- ❖ For instance kushanas (C. 1st century BCE - 1st century CE), who ruled over vast kingdom extending from Central Asia to northwest India
- ❖ Colossal statues of kushana rulers have been found installed In a shrine at Mat near Mathura (U.P.) and in Afghanistan as well
- ❖ Some kushana rulers also adopted the title devaputra, or "Son of god" inspired by Chinese Sons rulers who called themselves son of heaven
- ❖ Gupta rulers histories could be reconstructed from literature, coins and inscriptions most important prashastis

Prashastis, composed in praise of kings in particular and patrons by poets

## Who were Samantas?

Men who maintained themselves through local resources including control over land. They offered homage and provided military support to rulers. Powerful Samantas could become kings also.

## Did you know?

Prayaga Prashasti (also known as the Allahabad Pillar inscription)  
Composed in Sanskrit by Hari Shena, the court poet of Samudragupta







# A CHANGING COUNTRYSIDE POPULAR PERCEPTIONS KINGS

- ❖ Subjects thinking about their rulers Contained in anthologies such as the Jatakas, and the Panchatantra.
- ❖ The Jataks were written in Pali around the middle of the first millennium CE
- ❖ One Story known as the Gandatindu Jataka indicates the relationship between a king. and his subjects, especially the rural population "Could often be Strained.
- ❖ This strain was due to demanding high taxes and peasants particularly found such. demands oppressive



# STRATEGIES FOR INCREASING PRODUCTION

- ❖ Different Strategies were adopted for increasing production.
- ❖ One such strategy was the shift to plough agriculture, which spread in fertile alluvial" river valleys such as those of the Ganga and the kaveri from 6th century
- ❖ The iron tipped plough share was used to turn the alluvial soils in areas with high rainfall
- ❖ Introduction of transplantation increased production of paddy while the iron ploughshare led to a growth in agricultural productivity
- ❖ Another strategy adopted to increase agriculture production was the use of irrigation through wells and tanks canals, etc.



# DIFFERENCES IN RURAL SOCIETY

- ❖ Technologies often led to an increase in production, the benefits were very uneven, resultant unto different categories
- ❖ The large landholders, as well as the village headman emerged as powerful figures and often exercised control over other cultivators.
- ❖ Early Tamil Literature (the Sangam texts) also mentions different categories the villages of people in large landowners ploughmen or uzharwar and Slaves or Adimai Vellalar

## GAHAPATI

Gahapati term was often used in Pali texts to designate the second and third categories



# LAND GRANTS AND NEW ELITES

- ❖ We find grants of Land being made, many of which were recorded in inscriptions. Some of these inscriptions were not on stone but most were on Copper
- ❖ Inscriptions were in various languages such as in Sanskrit, Tamil or Telugu



# PRABHAVATI GUPTA , DAUGHTER OF CHANDRAGUPTA II

- ❖ Inscription indicates that she had access to land, which she then granted. However, according to Sanskrit texts, Women not supposed to have access to resources Such as land
- ❖ Inscription also gives us rural populations. an idea about land and There were regional variations in the sizes of land donated ranging from small plots to vast stretches of uncultivated the rights given to donees
- ❖ Historians has been debated among themselves on the issue why these grants why were these grants made
- ❖ **Here we have two reasons**
  - (a) Some feel that land grants were part of a strategy adopted by ruling lineages to extend agriculture to new areas.
  - (b) Other feel land grants were indicative of weakening political power, as kings were losing Control over their Samantas





# TOWNS AND TRADE NEW CITIES

- ❖ From C Sixth century BCE, urban centres started to emerge, many of them were capital of Mahajanapadas
- ❖ Major towns were located along routes of communication
- ❖ Some such as Pataliputra were on riverine routes
- ❖ Others, such as Ujjayini were along land routes and yet others Such as Puhar, were near the coast



# URBAN POPULATIONS:

- ❖ Elites and Craft persons In Second century BCE, we find short votive inscriptions in a no of cities mention the name of the donor and sometimes occupation as well Sometimes, Quilds or shrenis, organisations of
- ❖ Craft producers and merchants are mentioned as well.

## VOTIVE

Votive inscriptions record gifts made to religious Institutions.



# TRADE IN THE SUBCONTINENT

- ❖ From 6th century, land and beyond and river routes Criss Crossed the Subcontinent and extended un Various directions Overland into Central Asia and beyond and overseas, from ports that dotted the coastline extending across the Arabian Sea to East and North Africa and West Asia and through the Bay Of Bengal to Southeast Asia and China
- ❖ Those who transversed these routes included peddlers who probably travelled on foot, merchants, seafarers whose venture were risky but highly profitable
- ❖ Goods Such as grain, cloth. species, salt, metal ore, timber, medicine were all transported across the Arabian Sea to the Mediterranean



# COINS AND KINGS

- ❖ Exchanges were facilitated by the introduction of coinage Punch marked Coins made of silver and copper (C.6th century onwards) were minted and use The first coins to bear images of rulers were issued by Indo-Greeks.
- ❖ The first gold coins were issued in 1st century CE by the Kushanas
- ❖ These identical in weight with those issued by contemporary Roman emperors and the Parthian rulers of Iran
- ❖ The widespread use of gold coins indicates the enormous value of transactions that were taking place.

## Indo-Greek Coins



## Coins of the Kushans





# Coins during Gupta Empire





- ❖ Archaeologists have unearthed Several thousand of coins were issued by Yaudhiyas of Punjab and Haryana.
- ❖ Some were of the most spectacular gold coins issued by the remarkable for Gupta rulers, their purity.
- ❖ From 6th century CE onwards finds of gold Coins taper off. This may be due to these reasons
  - a) Some suggest that with the collapse of Western Roman Empire long distance trade declined, and this affected the prosperity of states
  - b) Other argue that new towns and network of trade started emerging around this time.



# BACK TO BASICS

## HOW ARE INSCRIPTIONS DECIPHERED?

- **Deciphering Brahmi**
- Most Scripts used to write modern Indian languages derived from Brahmi, the Script used in most Ashokan inscriptions. European Scholars aided by Indian pandits in deciphering Brahmi.
- Only after decades of painstaking investigation by several epigraphists that James Prinsep was able to decipher Asokan Brahmi in 1838.
- **How Kharosthi was read ?**
- Finds of Indo- Greeks kings coin who ruled over the area have facilitated matters.
- These coins contain the names of kings written in Greek and Kharosthi Scripts European Scholars who could read the former Compared the letters. For instance, the symbol for "A" could be found in both scripts For writing names such as Apollodotus.
- With Prinsep identifying the language of Kharosthi Inscriptions became possible to read longer inscriptions as well.



# HISTORICAL EVIDENCE FROM INSCRIPTIONS

- ❖ Historians first examine all inscriptions find that they match In terms of content, style, language and palaeography, hence concluded that they were issued by some rulers




# THE LIMITATION OF INSCRIPTIONAL EVIDENCE

- ❖ Sometimes, there are technical limitations; letters are very faintly engraved and thus reconstructions are uncertain. Inscriptions may be damaged or letters missing.
- ❖ It is not always easy to be sure about the exact meaning of the words used in inscriptions.
- ❖ Although several thousand inscriptions have been discovered, not all have been deciphered. Another perhaps more fundamental problem is that not everything that we may consider politically or economically significant was necessarily recorded in inscriptions.



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