



## 29

## TOWARDS THE FORMATION OF THE STATE

The state is a term we often take for granted. What exactly do we mean by it? Usually, we associate the state with certain forms of government. These could be monarchies or republics, or in some instances, oligarchies. i.e. the rule of few. These distinctions rest on the way power, i.e. the ability to influence and control the lives of people, is either concentrated in the hands of a few or shared amongst many.

Those who control states, whom we identify as rulers, regulate political relations, and function through a variety of institutions. These include administrative services, used for a range of functions such as revenue collection, the army, and judiciary. Rulers also try to convince people that the form of government that they head is ideal. In other words, they try to legitimize the existence of the state.

States have developed over a long period of time, and in different ways. In this lesson we will explore some of the earliest trends in the subcontinent.



### OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson you will be able to:

- distinguish between chiefdoms and kingdoms;
- explain the feature of early kingdoms and
- understand how some of these early kingdoms became powerful states.

### 29.1 THE BACKGROUND

In earlier lessons you may have studied about the Harappan civilization. This was a very well-developed civilization, with large cities, where people produced a wide variety of things. Some scholars have suggested that there must have been a state organization in the Harappan civilization. This is very likely, but we do not have the evidence to figure out what kind of state this was, and we do not have details about administrative institutions.

#### (i) Chiefdoms in Early Vedic Literature

You have read about the Rigveda in earlier lessons (lesson 4). The Rigveda was probably composed between 1800-1000 BC. This is a collection of hymns addressed to various gods, in particular to Agni, Indra and Soma. Generally, the hymns were



composed by members of priestly families. They were usually chanted when sacrifices were performed, and were used to invite the gods to the rituals. Most of the hymns were composed in north – west India, in the region drained by the Indus and its tributaries.

The hymns also contain other information. They include lists of things for which people prayed. And they occasionally give us the names of chiefs or important men of those times.

Do the hymns provide us the information about the political processes? Well, the answer is a qualified yes. The hymns do not provide us with direct information about political events (except in some rare instances). At the same time, the contents of the hymns can be analyzed to understand how political relations were organized.

### (ii) **Rajas with a difference**

Generally, when we use the term raja we have an idea that this is a man who lives in a palace, has a large number of servants under his command, is extremely rich, is the head of a large army, and has a court. And we usually think of rajas passing down their power to their sons. Preferably the eldest son. Yet, the term raja did not always have this meaning.

In the Rigveda, the term raja is used as an adjective for a number of gods. It is also occasionally used to describe powerful men. These men did not control a vast army or a large administrative system. Their main source of power was probably derived from leadership in warfare. Let us see why battles were fought, and what happened after that.

#### **29.1.4 Battles**

You may remember that the Rigveda indicates that people at that time were primarily farmers. So we find that some battles were fought to acquire pasture land. Usually, the best pasture lands were along rivers. Battles were also fought for water for both people and animals, to capture cattle and land, especially for pasture, and for growing hardy crops that ripened quickly, such as barley. Besides, battles were fought to capture women.

Most men took part in these wars. There was no regular army, but there were assemblies where people met and discussed matters of war and peace. They also choose leaders, brave and skillful warriors. Sometimes, they performed special sacrifices and prayed to the gods for success in battle.

What happened if the raja led his people to victory? Lands that were won or water sources to which access was gained were probably held and used in common. Other things, such as cattle and women, were probably distributed amongst the raja's supporters. Some of these were given to priests, who performed sacrifices both to pray for the victory of the raja as well as to thank the gods for supporting their ruler when he was victorious.

Who did they fight with? The Rigveda contains the names of a number of tribes. These include the Purus, Yadus, Bharatas, Anus, and Druhus. Sometime these tribes united with one another, but they also fought with one another. Sometimes, these people, who called themselves Aryas, fought with others, whom they called Dasas or Dasyus.

We find two terms being used for the common people. One is the word jana, which is often used in Hindi and other languages even today. The other is the term vis. Usually,

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the raja is referred to as the raja of a jana or a vis. In other words, the raja was not regarded as the raja of a kingdom or a fixed territory, but of a group of people.

As we have seen, these rajas are not quite like those we are familiar with. They have often been regarded as chiefs rather than kings, and the realm over which they exercised control has been defined as a chiefdom rather than as a kingdom.

- Chiefs are usually chosen by the people, either directly or indirectly, whereas kings are hereditary.
- Chiefs usually do not have any permanent administrative mechanism to support them: they depend on the support of kinsfolk and other followers. While kings may also depend on their relatives for support, they have additionally, an administrative system to depend on.
- Chiefs do not collect regular taxes: instead, they often depend on gifts that may be brought in by their followings. Kings may receive gifts, but their major source of revenue is usually derived from tax collection.
- Chiefs do not maintain standing armies: they depend on militia, i.e. people who are called upon to fight as and when necessary, and who are not paid regular salaries. Kings may continue to recruit people as militia, but usually also maintain standing armies.
- Generally, chiefs interact with people in assemblies, where people can express their opinions on important matters. Kings also participate in assemblies, but these tend to be more formal occasions.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 29.1**

1. The Rigveda was probably composed between \_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_ B.C.
2. The hymns do not provide us with direct information about \_\_\_\_\_ events.
3. Usually the best pastures lands are along \_\_\_\_\_ .
4. The people who called themselves as Aryas, fought with others, whom they called \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.

**29.2 THE EARLIEST KINGDOMS: JANAPADAS**

Between about 1000 BC and 500 BC, certain important developments took place in north India. We now find a growth in the number of settlements, often associated with the Painted Grey Ware culture about which you have learnt in lesson five. Amongst other things, settled agriculture became more important, there was a growth in population, and iron was increasingly used to make tools and weapons.

We also have a very elaborate set of texts, which we refer to as the later Vedic literature. These texts deal with rituals, explaining them, analyzing them, and describing how they were to be performed incidentally, they suggest that a new form of political organization that is often referred as the janapada was now becoming more important.

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As is obvious, the term janapada was derived from the word jana, which, as we have seen, referred to people. In fact, janapada means where the jana places its feet and settles down. The land was now named after them. For example, the land where the Kurus settled down was known as Kuru janapada.

Another distinctive feature of the janapadas was that the population living in these territories was often classified according to varna, the four fold social classification about which you learnt in lesson four.

**29.3 NEW WAYS OF BECOMING OF RAJA**

The leader or chief of the janapada continued to be called a raja. But there were important ways in which this raja was different from that of the jana. To start with, we have indications that in some cases at least, the position of the raja was now hereditary. In other words, sons inherited or could legitimately claim the kingdom of their fathers.

Secondly, we now find mention of elaborate rituals, of which the rajasuya and the asvamedha are the most well known. These were long, sometimes lasting for more than a year. Only specially trained priests could perform them. The priests who composed and compiled Vedic literature now stated that whoever was capable of performing these elaborate rituals would be recognized as king.

Many people were expected to take part in such sacrifices. These included the raja. This was major occasion for declaring his power. His family, especially his wives and sons, had to help him in the sacrifices. His other supporters, including the chariot driver, family priest, (purohita), head of the army, messengers also joined in. The common people, the vis or vaishya, were expected to bring gifts for the raja, which provided much of the wealth needed to perform the sacrifice. Neighbouring rajas were often invited to watch the spectacle. And of course priests conducted the entire ritual.

Could shudras take part in the rituals? Sometimes they were given small roles in the rituals, but very often they were excluded from them. Even those who participated could only play their own parts. For example, the vaishya could not act as priest, nor could the raja's wife take his place.

What did these rituals entail? In the case of the asvamedha or the horse sacrifice, the sacrificial horse was let loose to wander for a year, accompanied by a group of armed men. All those who allowed the horse to pass through tacitly acknowledged the authority of the owner of the horse.

When the horse was brought back, it was sacrificed in an elaborate ritual. Large numbers of people, including other rulers, priests, and common people, were invited to participate in and/or witness the event. There was feasting and story-telling as well. In other words, this was an enormous, expensive ceremony.

Any aspiring ruler who wanted to perform such a ritual had to be both powerful and wealthy. The priests were rewarded with large sacrificial fees or daksina. These could include horses, cattle, gold and silver objects, chariots, cloths, and slave men and women, amongst other things. Thus, by performing the ritual successfully, the raja was able to make a public announcement, as well as a display of this power.

Many of these rituals included an abhiseka. This meant a sprinkling of the ruler with purified, holy water. Usually, the first sprinkling was done by the priest, though others, such as the vaishya and the ruler's relatives, could also participate in the process.



As you can see, there was now no question of popular assembly choosing a raja. A man could become a raja if he was born into a ruling family, or try to become one if he had adequate military and material resources.

#### **29.4 THE BEGINNINGS OF AN ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM**

One of the rituals frequently described in later Vedic text is the rajasuya. If you are familiar with the story of the Mahabharat, you may remember that the rajasuya was an important sacrifice that was performed by Udhisthira in order to claim the throne.

As part of the rajasuya, there is mention of a ritual known as *ratninam havimsi*. This is a ritual in which the raja was expected to make offerings in the homes of important people, referred to as ratnins, (literally those who possessed jewels). These important people included the wives of the ruler, the leader of the army, the chief priest, the charioteer, and some other, including messengers and those who collected or received gifts on behalf of the ruler.

There is no mention of regular salaries being paid to these “officials.” However, given their functions, we can suggest that some of them perhaps formed the nucleus from which later administrative system developed.

#### **29.5 RESOURCES FOR THE RAJA**

Although the raja who rules over the janapada was in many ways different from the raja as described in the Rigveda, he shared certain features with him as well. We find that even during this period, the main ways in which the raja could acquire resources was through battle, and through gifts.

These gifts, often referred to as bali, could be demanded on ritual occasions. For examples, if the raja was performing an *asvamedha*, he could demand resources from his people. While the term “gift” suggests a voluntary offering. People could be persuaded and perhaps even forced to make gifts.

We find that the texts use certain new analogies to describe the relationship between the raja and his people. The raja is described as the cater, or the deer and the people as the food or the fodder. This does suggest that people were occasionally exploited even though regular taxes were not demanded.

At the same time, people may have made offering to the raja in order to win his support, and to ensure that he was both able and willing to protect them from other rulers.

Another similarity between the raja of the Rigveda and the raja of the later Vedic tradition was the dependence on a militia for armed support. Can you think about why the ruler may not have been able to maintain a standing army?

#### **29.6 MAHAJANAPADAS**

By about 500 BC, some janapadas became more powerful than the others and were now known as mahajanapadas. Buddhist and Jaina text provide us with lists of 16 mahajanapadas. The more important amongst these, as well as their capital cities, are shown on the map. (please see table no. 5.1 in Book 1 p 67 and map on 68)

For janapadas were particularly important. These were those of Kosala, Avanti, Vajji, and Magadha. Of these, ultimately Magadha became the most powerful janapada. The Mauryan empire, the first known empire in the history of the subcontinent, had its centre in Magadha.

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The mahajanapadas differed from the janapadas in a ways. Let us look at some of these differences.

**29.7 FORTIFIED CITIES**

Almost all the mahajanapads had a capital city. Unlike the settlements in the janapadas many of these were fortified. This means that huge walls of wood, brick or stone were build around them.

We have some idea of the people who lived in these cities. These included the rulers and their supporters, and other such as craftsmen, merchants, traders, and small shop keepers. Some of the people who lived in such cities were wealthy men and women. Many of the cities that we know today developed during this period. These include cities like Mathura, Varanasi, Vaishali and Pataliputra. These cities were sustained by developments in agriculture, where, with the use of the iron tools, it now became possible to produce more food.

Forts were probably built because some of the people who lived in cities were afraid of attacks and needed protection. It is also likely that some rulers wanted to show how rich and powerful they were building really large, tall, impressive walls around their cities.

Building such huge walls required a great deal of planning. Thousands, if not lakh of bricks of stone had to be prepared. This in turn meant enormous labour, provided, possible, by thousands of men, women and children. And of course, money had to be found to pay for all of this.

**29.8 NEW ARMIES**

By about 330 BC, we have evidence to suggest that the armies in some of these mahajanapadas were organized differently. This was the time when Alexander, a ruler of Macadonia, to the north of Greece, decided to embark on an expedition to conquer the world. As may be expected, he did not conquer the world. However, he conquered part of Egypt, West Asia and came to the Indian subcontinent, reaching up to the banks of the Beas.

When he wanted to move further eastwards, his soldiers refused. They were scared as they had heard that the rulers of India had vast armies of foot soldiers, chariots and elephants.

These armies were very different from the ones mentioned earlier. Soldiers in the new army were paid regular salaries and maintained by the king throughout the year. We also find elephants being used on a large scale. If we remember that elephants are difficult to capture, tame and train, it becomes evident that now armies have become far more elaborate and well organized than before. And maintaining such large armies would have required far more resources than what was needed for the simple armies of the janapadas.

We learn from Buddhist texts that the rulers of Magadha build up on the best armies. They used elephants found in the forests within the state. They also used iron from the mines within their kingdom. This provided the army with strong weapons.

A well-equipped army, led by ambitious rulers, meant that the ruler of Magadha could soon overcome most other rulers, and expand control over neighbouring areas. In





some cases, the rulers tried to acquire control over routes of communication, both overland and along rivers. In other cases, they tried to acquire control over land, especially over fertile agricultural land, as this was an important means of acquiring more resources.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 29.2**

Fill in the Blanks

1. Almost all the Mahajanapadas had a \_\_\_\_\_ city.
2. Building such huge walls required a great deal of \_\_\_\_\_.
3. These cities were sustained by development in agriculture, where with the use of iron tools it now became possible to \_\_\_\_\_ more \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Alexander conquered part of Egypt, West Asia, came to the Indian subcontinent, reaching up to the banks of the \_\_\_\_\_.

**29.9 REGULAR TAXES**

As the rulers of the mahajanapadas were building huge forts maintaining big armies, they needed a regular supply of money. So collecting taxes became very important.

- Taxes on crops were the most important. This was because most people were farmers. They often depended on the ruler for protection of their land and crops. Usually, the tax fixed at  $\frac{1}{6}$ <sup>th</sup> of what was produced on the land. This tax was known as bhaga.
- There were taxes on craft as well. These were usually in the form of labour. So, for example, a weaver or a smith had to work for a day every month for the government. Herders were also expected to pay taxes.
- There were also taxes on goods that were bought and sold, through trade.

And of course the king needed many officials to collect taxes and more money to pay their salaries.

Some taxes were collected in the form of goods, such as grain, and cattle, or things produced by craftsmen. Sometimes taxes were collected in cash. In fact, some of the earlier coins belong to this period.

**29.10 MAGADHA AND ITS RULERS**

Magadha became the most important mahajanapada in about two hundred years. This was partly because of the Magadhan army (see above).

Besides, Magadha was surrounded by rivers, included the Ganga and Son. This was important for transport, water supplies and fertile land.

Magadha had two very powerful rulers, Bimbisara and his son Ajatashatrum who use all possible means to overcome their rivals and conquer other janapadas. Sometimes, they entered into marriage alliances with neighbouring rulers. In other instances, they led armies into and actually conquered neighbouring states.



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Mahapadma Nanda was another important ruler of Magadha. He extended his control up to the northwest part of the subcontinent. It is likely that Alexander's soldiers had heard about his vast army.

We do not hear of the rulers of Magadha performing large-scale sacrifices. Can you think of any reasons why they would not have performed these elaborate rituals?

### 29.11 GANA SANGHAS

While many mahajanapada were ruled by individual rajas, some were under a different form of government, and were known as gana sanghas. Here there were not one, but many rulers. Interestingly, sometimes even when thousands of men ruled together, each one was known as a raja.

These rajas performed rituals together. These rituals were not like the Vedic sacrifices. They also met in assemblies, and decided what had to be done and how, through discussion and debate. For examples, if they were attacked by enemy, they met in their assembly to discuss what should be done to meet the threat. And instead of standing armies, we find that the rajas all joined together, with their followers, to form an army as and when required.

All the land of the gana sanghas was owned by all the rajas together (jointly). They usually got slaves and labourers known as **dasa karmakaras** to cultivate the land. These men and women were given some food, clothing and shelter, but everything else they produced was taken by the rajas and their relatives.

Some of the most well known gana sanghas were those of the Mallas and the Vajjis. The Vajji gana sangha was regarded as a mahajanapada, with famous city of Vaishali as its capital. Both the Buddha and Mahavira belonged to gana sanghas. Some of the most vivid descriptions of life in the gana sanghas can be found in Buddhist books.

So, as you can see, not all mahajanapadas had an identical form of government.



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 29.3

- Which was the most powerful janapadas?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Which means of transports and communication were used to acquire control routes by the armies of Magadha?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- How much tax of the agricultural produce was taken by the ruler?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Name any two powerful rulers of Magadha.  
\_\_\_\_\_



**WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT**

The formation of the state can be traced to Early Vedic Period where the chiefdoms gradually gave way to formation of kingdom as a result of battle for pasture land.

The battles fought used a range from fight among tribes or a group of tribes fighting against other group tribes. The early kingdom called as Janapadas gradually gave way to Mahajanapads characterized by stone walled fojet, large number of servants, huge armies. There were different ways in which the raja or chief was different from the common people called janas.

Gradually the position of the raja became hereditary. He had a large army which required huge expenses to maintain it. These were met through taxes on crops, taxes on craft and goods.

An interesting concept was that of Gana Sanghas meaning rule of many rulers, each called a raja. These rajas performed rituals together. They met in assemblies and decided what had to be done? The land of the gana samaghas was owned by all the rajas jointly.

**TERMINAL EXERCISES**

1. What is Rigveda?
2. Why were the battles fought?
3. Distinguish between 'a chiefdon' and a 'kingdom'?
4. Name any four tribes as described in Rigveda?
5. Explain the new ways of becoming a raja?
6. Explain why collecting taxes was important?

**ANSWER TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****29.1**

1. 1800-1000 B.C.
2. Political.
3. Rivers.
4. Dasas of Dasuyu

**29.2**

1. Capital
2. Planning
3. Produce, food
4. Beas

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**Notes****29.3**

1. Magadha
2. Overland and along rivers
3. 1/6
4. Bambishara, Ajatsharu and ahapadma Nanda (any two)

**HINTS FOR TERMINAL EXERCISES**

1. Refer 29.1.2
2. Refer 29.1.4
3. Refer 29.1.4 Rest five points.
4. Refer 29.1.4 para 4.
5. Refer 29.3.
6. Refer 29.5.



## EARLY STATES

In the history of ancient India we may come across many forms of society ranging from urban civilization of Indus Valley to the Classical Age of Gupta Dynasty. During this period we see a hierarchy of centralized and decentralized governments, some of which were highly organized in their political structure and government while others were merely weakened by internal problems and division of power.



### OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- explain as to how the state system developed in early India;
- distinguish between various kinds of states and
- understand how most powerful states emerged.

### 30.1 BACKGROUND

In the beginning human society had the belief that all human beings are equal and should have same rights, as it was basically a tribal society. Emergence of idea of state was a result of conflicts over control of resources and development of a differentiated economy or the society arranged itself at separate levels. Development of a class based society was an essential pre- requisite for changing the state system. Growth of population and development of sedentary life were the other factors.

### 30.2 GROWTH OF IDEA OF KINGSHIP

The archeological evidences uncovered a strong centralized authority in Harappa. In the Vedic monarchies, the clan -chief became the king and was gradually invested with a status i.e equal to being god. Buddhist and Jaina thought ignored the idea of divinity and assumed instead that, in the original state of nature, all needs were effortlessly provided but that slowly a decline set in and man became evil, developing desires, which led to the notions of private property and of family and finally to immoral behaviour. In this condition of chaos, the people gathered together and decided to elect one among them (the *mahasammata*, or “great elect”) in whom they would invest authority to maintain law and order. Thus, gradually the institution of the state came into being. Later theories retained the element of a contract between the ruler and the people. Brahmanic sources held that the gods appointed the ruler and that a



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contract of dues was concluded between the ruler and the people. Also prevalent was the theory of *matsyanyaya*, which proposes that in periods of chaos, when there is no ruler, the strong devour the weak, just as in periods of drought, big fish eat little fish. Thus, the need for a ruler was viewed as absolute. The existence of the state was primarily dependent on two factors: *danda* (authority) and *dharma* (in its sense of the social order i.e., the preservation of the caste structure). The *Artha-sastra*, moreover, refers to the seven limbs (*saptanga*) of the state as the king, administration, territory, to capital, treasury, forceful authority, and allies. However, the importance of the political notion of the state gradually began to fade, partly because of a decline of the political tradition of the republics and the proportional dominance of the monarchical system, in which loyalty was directed to the king. The emergence of the Mauryan Empire strengthened the political notion of monarchy. The second factor was that the *dharma*, in the sense of the social order, demanded a far greater loyalty than did the rather blurred idea of the state. The king's duty was to protect *dharma*, and, as long as the social order remained intact, anarchy would not prevail. Loyalty to the social order, which was a fundamental aspect of Indian civilization, largely accounts for the impressive continuity of the major social institutions over many centuries. However, it also shifted loyalty from the political notion of the state, which might otherwise have permitted more frequent empires and a greater political consciousness. After the decline of the Mauryas, the re-emergence of an empire was to take many centuries.

### 30.3 INDUS AND VEDIC POLITICAL / OR GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS: PRE-STATE TO STATE

The urban civilization of Indus Valley suggests a complex planning that undertook the region and the people lived up to the standard of the time. Despite a growing body of archaeological evidence, the social and political structures of the Indus "state" remain objects of guess work. The remarkable uniformity of weights and measures throughout the Indus lands, as well as the development of such presumably civic works as the great granaries, implies a strong degree of political and administrative control over a wide area.

The Aryans are said to have entered India through the fabled Khyber Pass, around 1500 BC and gave rise to another civilization in Indian history, the Vedic period. The Aryans were divided into tribes, which had settled in different regions of northwestern India. Tribal chieftainship gradually became hereditary, though the chief usually operated with the help of advice from either a committee or the entire tribe. Tribal chiefs bearing the title Raja or king were at first little more than war-lords, and their principal duty was protection of their tribes. The power of the king positioned with the higher authority of the priests. Vedic kingship was the natural outcome of the conditions surrounding the Aryans. A king was the leader of the people in the war of attacking action and defense. He is called the "Protector of the people". A study of the Rigveda shows that the king was no longer merely a leader of a primitive tribe, but occupied a position of preeminence among the people. The protection of the people was the sacred duty of the king. In return, he expected and received loyal obedience from his subjects in the sense of a tribute to the king.

The Aryan tribes failed to unite against non-Aryans due to lack of strong political foundation and the unstable nature due to their internal caste system. The weak character of the empire came from the rigid caste system that divided people and

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created unstable feelings among them. These were some of the reasons due to which the Vedic empire was far less organized than the Indus Valley Civilization.

To begin with, during Vedic age there existed political units like *jana* which later became *janapada* – *mahajanapada*. A *jana* was a region where lived the people of the tribe. These tribes were named after a particular chieftain. Later, with the extension of territory, there was a change in the nature of political organization.

Statecraft art of government evolved as a new system of government following the Vedic period. The solidarity of the tribal state and the political power of best warriors gave rise to a new style of kingship. It aimed at the creation of more professional armies and more dependent upon the king. The statecraft aimed at acquisition of territories rich in natural resources and tax-paying peasants rather than booty or territory for tribal expansion.

**30.4 MAHAJANPADAS**

The centuries before the establishment of the Mauryan Empire – the period which was the development of the Kosala and Magadha kingdoms – were a period of relatively rapid social and economic change. We find the breaking into small pieces of tribal polities, the development of the caste model and the move to the rice lands of the Eastern Gangetic Valley. In times of the disintegration of old social ties, during the establishment of new ways of being in social and political relationships, we find idea based on great change. The emergence of Buddhism and Jainism was a result of this upheaval. From their original settlements in the Punjab region, the Aryans gradually began to penetrate eastward, clearing dense forests and establishing “tribal” settlements along the Ganga and Yamuna (Jamuna) plains between 1500 and ca. 800 B.C. By around 500 B.C., most of northern India was inhabited and had been brought under cultivation, facilitating the increasing knowledge of the use of iron implements, including ox-drawn ploughs, and spurred by the growing population that provided voluntary and forced labor. As river based and inland trade flourished, many towns along the Ganga became centers of trade, culture, and luxurious living. Increasing population and surplus production provided the bases for the emergence of independent states with fluid territorial boundaries over which disputes frequently arose.

The basic administrative system headed by tribal chieftains was transformed by a number of regional republics or hereditary monarchies that devised ways to appropriate revenue and to conscript labor for expanding the areas of settlement and agriculture farther east and south, beyond the Narmada River. These emergent states collected revenue through officials, maintained armies, and built new cities and highways. By 600 B.C., sixteen such territorial powers stretched across the North India plains from modern-day Afghanistan to Bangladesh. The right of a king to his throne, no matter how it was gained, was usually made lawful through elaborate sacrifice rituals and genealogies i.e history of members of a family from past to present concocted by priests who ascribed to the king divine or superhuman origins. In the texts we find references to the emergence of sixteen mahajanapadas. Important among them were Magadha, Kosala, Kasi, Avanti, Vaishali, Lichhavi, etc. Mahajanapadas were of two kinds, as discussed below :

**(i) Monarchical Mahajanapadas**

First, there existed monarchical types, where the king or chieftain was the head of the territory. In this type, the Vedic ceremonies and brahmanas were given much



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importance. The kings performed vedic sacrifices in these regions. For instance, Kosala belonged to the category of monarchical mahajanapada. Prasenajit, the king of Kosala was known to have performed several sacrifices.

**(ii) Republican Mahajanpadas**

The second type among mahajanapadas was republican or oligarchic which differed from the monarchical states. In this second category, the king was selected from the group of people called rajas. There is reference to assemblies called *sabha* where the members used to have discussions regarding a particular matter, then the item was put to vote.

In one such assembly there is reference to the existence of 7707 rajas who represented the class of *rajanyas* who owned land that was cultivated by *dasa*, *karmakaras* or labourers. The rajas were known for their ability to fight. In this category, Vedic sacrifices were not given much importance and the brahmanas were given number two social status after the kshatriyas. The main source for the study of these mahajanapadas is the Buddhist texts.

**(iii) Conflict between Monarchical Mahajanpadas and Republican Mahajanpadas**

The Vriji confederacy (union of several states) near the foot of Himalayas was a powerful oligarchy, which challenged the supremacy of some monarchical states. Monarchical states like Magadha and Lichhavi were in a great state of difficult choice as they were not able to extend their territories. Among the mahajanapadas, there emerged conflict for power and supremacy. Magadha had an ambitious king called Ajatasatru, who decided to conquer the neighboring regions. Due to warfare and marriage alliances he was able to conquer Kosala and Kasi.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 30.1**

**Correct and rewrite the following sentences:**

1. In the beginning human society was basically not a tribal society?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. The emergence of the Ashoka the great strengthened the political nation of monarchy?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. The Aryan tribes united against non – Aryans due to lack of strong political foundation?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. In an assembly these were 7077/7707 rajas who represented the class of rajanyas?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**30.5 RISE OF MAGADHA AND MAURYAS**

Thus among monarchical states Magadha emerged as an important power. However, he had to fight for many years against Lichhavis. Ajatasatru sent his minister to sow



**Notes**

differences among the tribes of Vriji confederacy. Due to this effort, ultimately Ajatasatru obtained success against Lichhavi which became part of Magadha empire.

This region controlled the northern trade route called *uttarapatha*, while the southern route called *dakshinapatha* was under the control of Magadha. Due to these conquests, Magadha was able to manage economic resources like fertile river valleys and iron ore mines which provided the necessary supply of materials for the production of different goods. As a result it was in Magadha that we find the beginning of signs of state formation.

The Mauryan Empire, ruled by the Mauryan dynasty, was the largest and most powerful political and military empire of ancient India. Originating from the kingdom of Magadha in the Indo-Gangetic plains of modern Bihar and Bengal and with its capital city of Pataliputra (near modern Patna), the Empire was founded in 322 BC by Chandragupta Maurya, who had overthrown the Nanda Dynasty and begun expanding his power across central and western India. The Empire was expanded into India's central and southern regions by Emperor Bindusara, but it excluded a small portion of unexplored tribal and forested regions near Kalinga.

Following the conquest of Kalinga in a major war, Ashoka the Great ended the military expansion of the empire. The kingdoms of Pandya and Cheras in southern India thus preserved their independence, accepting the supremacy of the Mauryan emperor. The Mauryan Empire was perhaps the greatest empire to rule the Indian subcontinent until the arrival of the British. Its decline began fifty years after Ashoka's rule ended, and it dissolved in 185 BC with the foundation of the Sunga Dynasty in Magadha.

**30.6 THE MAURYAN STATE**

Chandragupta's minister Kautilya Chanakya wrote the *Arthashastra*, one of the greatest treatises on economics, politics, foreign affairs, administration, military arts, war, and religion ever produced in the East. Archaeologically, the period of Mauryan rule in South Asia falls into the era of Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW). The *Arthashastra* and the Edicts of Ashoka are primary sources of written records of the Mauryan times. The *Lion Capital of Asoka* at Sarnath, is the emblem of India.

The Mauryan Empire consisted of a great variety of political formations and ecological zones: it contained forest peoples and nomads, chieftaincies and oligarchies like the *gana-sangha* confederacies of chiefs. It contained smaller kingdoms with a range of administrative structures not necessarily similar to that in Magadha. Different parts of the empire like the core, the metropolis and the peripheries were administered in different ways. Thus there did not exist a uniform method of administration in the whole of Mauryan Empire. While the core and the metropolis were directly administered by the state; the periphery region was given more autonomy as more importance was given to the collection of taxes and tributes from these regions. The administrative network consisted of an upper bureaucracy recruited from the upper castes and receiving handsome salaries. There was no central method of recruitment and local persons appear to have been appointed in areas distant from the metropolitan state.

During the rule of Ashoka the Mauryan Empire was organized formally into five parts. Magadha and some adjacent mahajanapadas were under direct administration. There is evidence from the reports of Megasthenes, a Greek ambassador, and from the *Arthashastra*, of relatively centralized administration in the centre part.



### 30.7 THE MAURYAN BUREAUCRACY

The Empire was divided into four provinces, with the royal capital at Pataliputra. From Ashokan edicts, the names of the four provincial capitals are Tosali (in the east), Ujjain (in the west), Suvarnagiri (in the south), and Taxila (in the north). The head of the provincial administration was the *Kumara* (royal prince), who governed the provinces as king's representative. The *kumara* was assisted by *mahamatyas* and council of ministers. This organizational structure was reflected at the imperial level with the Emperor and his *Mantriparishad* (Council of Ministers). The bureaucracy was not required to restructure conquered areas to conform to a uniform pattern but to ensure the flow of revenue. At the peak period of the empire, mention is made of a group of officers, basically concerned with revenue administration, who appear to have been centrally appointed and who were required to tour the areas under their jurisdiction and enquire into the well-being of the subjects. Irrigation was considerably decentralized, frequently in small-scale systems drawing water from rivers, pools, wells, springs and artificial ponds called tanks. More elaborate reservoirs and river banks were built with local resources, though the empire assisted irrigation works in newly settled lands. Evidence suggests that irrigation works were locally controlled.

The Mauryans appear to have had interest in gaining revenue from trade. They did not, here, either, however, take an active role in the regulation of trade. This is indicated by the fact that they appear not to have issued metallic money of a distinctive kind. The modest punch-marked coins which have been found may very well have been issued by guilds or other local bodies. The state attempted to maintain control over individual traders and guilds, inspecting their identity, their merchandise and their profits. The sale of goods at the place of production was not permitted, presumably because sale in markets was more accessible to revenue collectors. The state collected a series of taxes at various points in the production of goods from raw materials to commodities. Special officers were appointed to ensure standards and prevent fraud as well as to intercept trade in those items which the state had a monopoly such as, weapons, armor, metals, and gems. Commodity production was therefore an independent enterprise geared to a market and trade was a major revenue resource for the state.

Historians theorize that the organization of the empire was in line with the extensive bureaucracy described by Kautilya in the *Arthashastra*: a sophisticated civil service governed everything from municipal hygiene to international trade. The expansion and defence of the empire was made possible by what appears to have been the largest standing army of its time. According to Megasthenes, the emperor wielded a military of 600,000 infantry, 30,000 cavalry, and 9,000 war elephants. A vast espionage system collected intelligence for both internal and external security purposes. Having renounced offensive warfare and expansionism, Ashoka nevertheless continued to maintain this large army, to protect the Empire and instill stability and peace across West and South Asia.

### 30.8 POST MAURYAN STATES

Post Mauryan polity was marked by the arrival of central Asian conquerors i.e. the Indo-Greeks, the Sakas, the Parthians and the Kushanas. They imposed their rule on native princes which paved the way for development of an organization based on relationship of a master and servant. The central Asians strengthened the idea of



divine origin of kingship. The Kushana kings called themselves as sons of God. The central Asians also introduced the *Satrap* system and military governorship.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 30.2**

**Answer the following questions:**

1. Who wrote Arth – Shastra?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. In the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> century what for the name Kumar stood for?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Who was Megasthenes?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Give name of four provincial capitals of the Mauryan era?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What was the strength of the empire's military as per Megasthenes?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**30.9 EXPANSION OF THE GUPTA STATE**

The greatest empire in the fourth century AD was the Gupta Empire, which ushered in the golden age of Indian history. This empire lasted for more than two centuries. It covered a large part of the Indian subcontinent, but its administration was more decentralized than that of the Mauryas, but more centralized than Sungas. The theory of the divinity of kings became more popular during the Gupta period. Alternately waging war and entering into matrimonial alliances with the smaller kingdoms in its neighborhood, the empire's boundaries kept fluctuating with each ruler. The Gupta realm, although less extensive than that of the Mauryas, did encompass the northern half and central parts of the subcontinent. The Gupta period also has been called an Imperial Age, but the administrative centralization so characteristic of an imperial system is less apparent than during the Mauryan period. The Guptas tended to allow kings to remain as serving in a slave like manner; unlike the Mauryas, they did not consolidate every kingdom into a single administrative unit. This would be the model for later Mughal rule and British rule built off of the Mughal paradigm.

The Guptas, a comparatively unknown family, came from either Magadha or eastern Uttar Pradesh. The third king, Chandra Gupta I (Chandragupta I), took the title of *maharajadhiraja*. He married a Lichhavi princess- an event celebrated in a series of gold coins. It has been suggested that, if the Guptas ruled in Prayaga (modern Allahabad in eastern Uttar Pradesh), the marriage alliance may have added Magadha to their domain. The Gupta era began in 320 BC. Chandra Gupta appointed his son Samudra Gupta to succeed him about 330 BC, according to a long eulogy to Samudra Gupta inscribed on a pillar at Allahabad. The coins of an obscure prince, Kacha, suggest that there may have been contenders for the throne. Samudra Gupta's campaigns took him in various directions and resulted in many conquests. Among those he rendered were willing to do what others want. They belonged to the rulers of Aryavarta, various forest chiefs, the northern oligarchies, and border States in the



east, in addition to Nepal. More distant domains brought within Samudra Gupta's orbit were regarded as subordinate; these comprised the "king of kings" of the northwest, the Sakas, the Murundas, and the inhabitants of "all the islands", including Sinhala (Sri Lanka), all of which are listed in the inscription at Allahabad. The Ganges Valley and central India were the areas under direct administrative control. Samudra Gupta was succeeded about 380 BC by his son Chandra Gupta II, though there is some evidence that there may have been an intermediate ruler Ram Gupta. Chandra Gupta II's major campaign was against the Saka rulers of Ujjain, the success of which was celebrated in a series of silver coins. Gupta territory adjoining the northern Deccan was secured through a marriage alliance with the Vakataka dynasty, the successors of the Satavahanas in the area. Although Chandra Gupta II took the title of Vikramaditya (Sun of Valour), his reign is associated more with cultural and intellectual achievements than with military campaigns. His Chinese contemporary, Fa-hsien, a Buddhist monk, traveled in India and left an account of his impressions.

### 30.10 NATURE OF THE GUPTA STATE

From the reign of Chandragupta I onwards the Guptas took the title of *Maharajadhiraj* as is known from inscriptions are *Paramarajadhiraja*, *Rajadhirajashri*, *Rajarajadhiraja*. In the Allahabad pillar inscription, Samudragupta is regarded as God living on earth. In the historical accounts he is referred to as Kuber, Indra etc. Hereditary succession was established in this period though the emperor chose the heir apparent. Several powers conquered by the Guptas were allowed to function independently. They were subjugated conquered but not incorporated in the empire. These feudatories (servant like) paid tribute to the Guptas but at times some of them did not mention Guptas as their suzerain (controller of records) in their official records. The practice of land grants and also grants of villages under the Satvahanas continued under the Guptas. These grants carried with them administrative rights which led to the decentralization of administrative authority. Rights of subinfeudation (ownership) were given to the land donees (grant receivers). In central and western India, the villagers were also subjected to forced labour called *Visti* (forced labour) was applied to all classes of subjects.

### 30.11 THE GUPTA ADMINISTRATION

Administratively, the Gupta state was divided into provinces called *desa* or *bhukti*, and these in turn into smaller units, the *pradesa* or *visaya*. The provinces were governed by *kumaramatyas*, high imperial (royal) officers or members of the royal family. The shift to smaller area of power of authority is evident from the composition of the municipal board (*adhisthana-adhikarana*), which consisted of the guild president (*nagarsresthin*), the chief merchant (*sarthavaha*), and representatives of the artisans and of the scribes. During this period the term *samanta*, which originally meant neighbour, was beginning to be applied to intermediaries who had been given grants of land or to conquered feudatory rulers. There was also a noticeable tendency for some of the higher administrative offices to become hereditary. The lack of firm control over conquered areas led to their resuming independence. The repeated military action that this necessitated may have strained the kingdom's resources. The Gupta monarchs maintained a standing army. The use of cavalry and horse archery became important in the army. Special attention was paid to the safety of the border areas. Land tax and excise duties were collected. The judicial system was developed and several law books were written. For the first time Civil and Criminal Laws were differentiated.



Notes

**30.12 POST GUPTA INDIAN POLITY**

The system of governance under Harshavardhan and successive dynasties of Palas, Pratiharas, Rashtrakutas and Chalukyas was centred on the personality of the king which was hereditary post. System of vassalage was very much prevalent and frequent wars among the kings and their vassals made the political situation fluid. The states consisted of areas administered directly by the rulers and the areas ruled by the vassal chiefs who were autonomous governing themselves in their internal affairs. The vassals had a general obligation of loyalty, paying a fixed tribute and supplying a quota of troops to the overlord. The government was becoming “feudalized”.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 30.3**

Fill in the Blanks:

1. The greatest empire in the 4<sup>th</sup> century was the \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The third King \_\_\_\_\_ took the title of \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The successor to Samudra Gupta was \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Fa-hsien \_\_\_\_\_ contemporary was a \_\_\_\_\_ monk traveled in India and left an account of his impression.

**30.13 THE CHOLA STATE IN SOUTH INDIA**

The Cholas were by far the most important dynasty in the subcontinent at this time, although their activities mainly affected the peninsula and Southeast Asia. The nucleus of Chola power during the reign of Vijayalaya in the late ninth century was Thanjavur, from which the Cholas spread northward, annexing in the tenth century what remained of Pallava territory. To the south they came up against the Pandyas. Chola history can be reconstructed in considerable detail because of the vast number of lengthy inscriptions issued not only by the royal family but also by temple authorities, village councils, and trade guilds. Parantaka I (907–953) laid the foundation of the kingdom. He took the northern boundary up to Nellore (Andhra Pradesh), where his advance was stopped by a defeat at the hands of the Rashtrakuta king Krishna III. Parantaka was more successful in the south, where he defeated both the Pandyas and the Gangas. He also launched an abortive attack on Sri Lanka. For thirty years after his death, there was a series of overlapping reigns that did not strengthen the Chola position. There then followed two outstanding rulers who rapidly reinstated Chola power and ensured the kingdom its supremacy. These were Rajaraja I and Rajendra.

Rajaraja (985–1014) began establishing power with attacks against the Pandyas and Illamandalam (Sri Lanka). Northern Sri Lanka became a province of the Chola kingdom. A campaign against the Gangas and Calukyas extended the Chola boundary north to the Tungabhadra River. On the eastern coast the Cholas battled with the Calukyas for the possession of Vengi. A marriage alliance gave the Cholas an authoritative position, but Vengi remained a bone of contention. A naval campaign led to the conquest of the Maldives Islands, the Malabar Coast, and northern Sri Lanka, all of which were essential to the Chola control over trade with Southeast Asia and with





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Arabia and East Africa. These were the transit areas, ports of call for the Arab traders and ships to Southeast Asia and China, which were the source of the valuable spices sold at a high profit to Europe.

Rajaraja I's son Rajendra participated in his father's government from 1012, succeeded him two years later, and ruled until 1044. To the north he annexed the Raichur Doab and moved into Manyakheta in the heart of Chalukya territory. A revolt against Mahinda V of Sri Lanka gave Rajendra the excuse to conquer southern Sri Lanka as well. In 1021–22 the now-famous northern campaign was launched. The Chola army campaigned along the east coast as far as Bengal and then north to the Ganges River- almost the exact reverse of Samudra Gupta's campaign to Kanchipuram in the 4th century AD. The most spectacular campaign, however, was a naval campaign against the Srivijaya kingdom in Southeast Asia in 1025. The reason for the assault on Srivijaya and neighbouring areas appears to have been the interference with Indian shipping and mercantile interests seeking direct trading connections with South China. The Chola victory reinstated these connections, and throughout the eleventh century Chola trading missions visited China.

### 30.14 EVOLUTION OF CHOLA ADMINISTRATION

The Chola State during the imperial period (850-1200) was marked for its uniqueness and innovativeness. Cholas were the first dynasty who tried to bring the entire South India under a common rule and to a great extent succeeded in their efforts. Although the form and protocols of that government cannot be compared to a contemporary form of government, the history of the Chola Empire belongs to a happy age in our history, when in spite of much that appears to us as primitive, great things were achieved by the government and the people.

The king was the supreme commander and a benevolent dictator. His share in the administration consisted of issuing oral commands to responsible officers when representations were made to him. Such orders were recorded in great detail in the inscriptions, usually on the walls of temples. A special type of official, names *Tirumandira Olai Nayagam* who recorded the oral orders immediately on palm leaf manuscripts were responsible for the accurate.

There is no definite evidence of the existence of a council of ministers or of other officers connected to the central government, though the names of individual ministers are found in the inscriptions. A powerful bureaucracy assisted the king in the tasks of administration and in executing his orders. Due to the lack of a legislature or a legislative system in the modern sense, the fairness of king's orders dependent on the goodness of the man and in his belief in *Dharma* – sense of fairness and justice. The ancient society did not expect anything more than general security from the government. Even matters of disputes went to the officers of the court only as the last resort.

The Chola bureaucracy did not differ much from its contemporaries i.e others operating during the same tune. However, what distinguished it was its highly organized nature. A careful balance between central control and local independence was maintained and non-interference in local government was sacrosanct (very important). There was a definite hierarchy of the bureaucracy and the tenure of the officials simply dependent on the 'Crown's pleasure'. The officials held various titles such as *Marayan* and *Adigarigal*. Seniority between the same cadre was indicated by qualifying title such as *Perundanam* and *Sirutanam*. One of the important officers were the Revenue officials responsible for the receipts and expenditures of the government.





## Notes

Every village was a self governing unit. A number of such villages constituted a *Korram* or *nadu* or *Kottam* in different parts of the country. *Taniyur* was a large village big enough to be a *Kurram* by itself. A number of *Kurrams* constituted a *Valanadu*. Several *Valanadus* made up one *Mandalam*, a province. At the height of the Chola Empire there were eight or nine of these provinces including Sri Lanka. These divisions and names underwent constant changes throughout the Chola period. An inscription of the eighth century BC at Uttaramerur temple describes the constitution of the local council, eligibility and disqualifications for the candidates, the method selection, their duties and delimits their power. It appears that the administration of a common village *Ur* or *Oor* was different from that of a village gifted to brahmins.

The activities of the officials of the bureaucracy were under constant audit and scrutiny. We have an example of such reports in an inscription from the reign of Uththama Chola which gives us the details of the carelessness and neglect of some officials in the delay of recording a particular grant. As a result a dispute arose between contending parties as to who should benefit from the grant. The officials involved were punished. As the head of the civil administration, the king himself occasionally toured the country and carried out inquests into the local administration. An extensive survey was done around 1089 by the Chola king Kulottunga, recording the extents of lands and their assessment, boundaries of villages and the common rights inside the village, including the communal pastures. Revenue officials were responsible for the tax collection. The Chola government was very mindful of the need for the fair and accurate collection of tax to run the state machinery. The revenue records were not manuals of extortion (taking money unwillingly), but carefully maintained records of land rights, based on complete enquired and accurate surveys, and were kept up-to-date by regular surveys. The duties of revenue officials included many other spheres of responsibilities. They also regulated receipts and expenditures of temples. They were also seen to purchase land on behalf of village assemblies. They attested and certified important documents drawn up by local government agencies such as village councils. They were also shown to act as magistrates. Besides the tax collected by the central government, several local bodies enjoyed the privilege of collecting tolls and other imposts charges.

Justice was mostly a local matter in the Chola Empire, where minor disputes were settled at the village level. The punishments for minor crimes were in the form of fines or a direction for the offender to donate to some charitable endowment (body or institution). Even crimes such as manslaughter or murder were punished by fines. Crimes of the state such as treason were heard and decided by the king himself and the typical punishment in such cases was either execution or confiscation of property. Capital punishment was uncommon even in the cases of first-degree murder. Only one solitary instance of capital punishment is found in all the records available so far. Village assemblies exercised large powers in deciding local disputes. Small committees called *Nyayattar* heard matters that did not come under the jurisdiction of the voluntary village committees. The punishments in most cases were in the form of donations to the temples or other endowments. The convicted person would remit their fines at a place called *Darmaasana*. There is not much information available on the judicial procedures or court records. There was no distinction between civil and criminal offences. Sometimes civil disputes were allowed to drag on until time offered the solution. Crimes such as theft, adultery and forgery were considered serious offences. In most cases the punishment was in the order of the


**Notes**

offender having to maintain a perpetual lamp at a temple. Even murder was punished with a fine. In one instance a man had stabbed an army commander. Rajendra Chola II ordered the culprit to endow 96 sheep for a lamp at a neighbouring temple.


**INTEXT QUESTIONS 30.4**

Tick (✓) the correct answer.

1. The nucleus of Chola power during the reign of Vijayavada in the century was Thanjavur. (8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>)  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Rajaraja I's son Rajendra participated in his father's government from (1012, 1102, 2101)  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. An inscription of the \_\_\_\_\_ century B.C. at Uttaramerur temple describes the constitutions of the local council. (6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>)  
\_\_\_\_\_


**WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT**

In the beginning human society had the belief that all humans being are equal and should have same rights, as it was basically a tribal society. Development of a class based society was an essential pre-requisite for changing the state system.

In the vedic monarchies, the clan-chief became the king and was gradually invested with a status i.e. equal to being god. The existence of the state was primarily dependent on two factors: danda (authority) and dharma. The emergence of the mauryan empire strengthened the political notion of monarchy, however, the decline of the Mauryas, the re-emergence of an empire was to take many centuries.

The Aryans are said to have entered India through the fabled Khyber Pass, about 1500 BC and gave rise to another civilization in Indian history – the vedic period. The Aryans were divided into tribes, which had settled in different regions of north-western India. Tribal chiefs bearing the title Raja or king were at first little more than war-lords and their principal duty was protection of their tribes. The king was called the obedience from his subjects in the guise of a tribute to the king.

Following the conquest of Kalinga in a major war, Ashoka the Great ended the military expansion of the empire. The Mauryan empire was perhaps the greatest empire to rule the Indian subcontinent. Chandragupta's minister Kautilya wrote the Arthashastra, one of the greatest treatises on economics, politics, foreign affairs, administration, military arts, and religion ever produced in the East.

The greatest empire in the fourth century AD was the Gupta Empire which referred to the golden age of Indian history. The empire lasted more than two centuries.

In the lesson you have also learnt about the bureaucratic systems of Mauryas, administration of the Gupta dynasty as well as the evolution of Chola administration. The



activities of the officials of the Chola bureaucracy or administration were under constant audit and security. Revenue officials were responsible for the tax collection.

**TERMINAL EXERCISES**

1. What is meant by kingship? How did the idea of kingship grow?
2. Distinguish between Mahajanpadas and Monarchical Mahajanpadas?
3. Describe the rise of Magadha and Mauryas?
4. How did the Gupta state expand?
5. Assess the evolution of Chola administration?

**ANSWER TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****30.1**

1. In the beginning human society was basically a tribal society.
2. The emergence of the Maurya strengthened the political notion of monarchy.
3. The Aryan tribes failed to unite non – Aryans due to lack of strong political foundation.
4. In an assembly there were more 7707 Rajas who represented the class of Rajanyas.

**30.2**

1. Kautilya
2. Royal Princes
3. A greek ambassador visited India
4. a) Toysali    b) Ujjain    c) Suvarna giri and    d) Tamila
5. 6,00,000 infantry ; 30,000 cavalry and 9000 elephants

**30.3**

1. Gupta Empire
2. Chander gupta I, Maharaja–dhiraj
3. Chander gupta II
4. Chinese , Bhuddist

**HINTS FOR TERMINAL EXERCISES**

1. See para 30.2 and 30.3
2. See para 30.4
3. See para 30.5
4. See para 30.9
5. See para 30.14



## THE MEDIEVAL STATE

In this study material the discussion is on the emergence, nature and expansion of states which emerged in medieval India. The two major state formations discussed here are Delhi Sultanate and Mughal Empire. The medieval rulers basically came from outside India thus they had to influence as well as learn from native political structures. Medieval state may be characterized as a polity headed by a strong ruler, supported by hierarchically organized administrative machinery and legitimized by the authority of religion. The army, bureaucracy by blood and land revenue remained the basic elements of the state. But each ruler had to balance the competing groups for power sharing.



### OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- analyse the evolution of state in medieval India;
- recall the nature of medieval state and
- explain the institutions of medieval state.

### 31.1 THE BACKGROUND

Since the decline of the Gupta state the Indian polity saw decentralization and rise of various regional states. Transition from early to medieval period saw tripartite struggle among the three regional powers- Palas of Bengal, Pratiharas of northern India and Rashtrakutas of Peninsular India. Very soon northern India saw the emergence of Rajput small kings aspiring to become kingdoms. But the arrival of the Turks from north western direction saw emergence of new process of an extended medieval state.

### 31.2 DELHI SULTANATE

#### **Ilbari Turks**

In the thirteenth century, a new kind of dynastic domain emerged in North India. The Delhi Sultanate had its origin in victories by Muhammad Ghauri, who sacked Ghazni in 1151, and then expelled Ghaznavids to Punjab, in 1157. Muhammad Ghauri marched



## Notes

into the Indus basin to uproot the Ghaznavids in 1186. On the way, his armies conquered Multan (1175), Sind (1182), Peshawar and Lahore (1186). In 1190, he occupied Bhatinda, which triggered battles with the Rajput King Prithviraj Chauhan, whom he finally defeated in 1192. Having broken the Rajput hold on western routes to the Ganga basin, the Ghaurid armies marched eastward until Bakhtyar Khalji finally defeated Laksmanasena in Bengal, in 1200. Muhammad Ghauri died in 1206. His trusted Mamluk (ex-slave) general, Qutb-ud-din-Aibak, governor of Delhi, then declared an independent rule. This dynasty of Ilbari Turks was the first in a series that became collectively known as the Delhi Sultanate. Later Ghaurid and Ghaznavid efforts to bring Delhi back into their fold were finally defeated by the Delhi Sultan Iltutmish in 1211–1236. Iltutmish must be regarded as the real consolidator of the Turkish conquests in north India. He gave the new state capital, Delhi, a monarchical form of government and governing class. He introduced Iqta—grant of revenue from a territory in lieu of salary. He maintained a central army and introduced coins of Tanka (silver) and Jital (copper). The famous Qutub Minar was completed during his reign. Iltutmish nominated his daughter Raziya (Raziyyat-ud-Din) to be his successor. Still, the new state had enough internal momentum to survive severe factional disputes during the 10 years following Iltutmish's death, when four of Iltutmish's children or grandchildren were in turn raised to the throne and deposed. This momentum was maintained largely through the efforts of Iltutmish's personal slaves, who came to be known as the Forty (Chihilgan), a political faction whose membership was characterized by talent and by loyalty to the family of Iltutmish. The political situation had changed by 1246, when Ghiyas-ud-din Balban, a junior member of the Forty, had gained enough power to attain a controlling position within the administration of the newest sultan, Nasir-ud-din Mahmud (reigned 1246–66). Balban, acting first as na'ib (deputy) to the sultan and later as Sultan (reigned 1266–87), was the most important political figure of his time. Balban stressed the special position of Sultan as 'Shadow of God' (*Zill-al-Allah*) on earth. Balban emphasized courtly splendour, decorum and etiquette. He also believed in severe setting example punishments even to the nobles. Balban's immediate successors, however, were unable to manage either the administration or the intergroup conflicts between the old Turkish nobility and the new forces, led by the Khaljis; after a struggle between the two factions, Jalal-ud-din Firuz Khalji assumed the sultanate in 1290.

### The Khaljis

The Khaljis were not recognized by the older nobility as coming from pure Turkish stock (although they were Turks), and their rise to power was aided by impatient outsiders, some of them Indian-born Muslims, who might expect to enhance their positions if the hold of the followers of Balban and the Forty were broken. To some extent, then, the Khalji power seizure was a move toward the recognition of a shifting balance of power, believed to be the result of both to the developments outside the territory of the Delhi Sultanate, in Central Asia and Iran, and to the changes that followed the establishment of Turkish rule in northern India. Under the Khaljis external policy of conquest and internal methods of absolute control were followed through military expeditions and regulations. The Khaljis used their Afghan descent to win the loyalties of the discontented nobles, who felt that they had been neglected by the earlier sultans. Jalaluddin Khalji (1290 AD – 1296 AD) tried to mitigate some of the harsh aspects of Balban's rule. He was the first ruler



## Notes

to put forward the view that the state should be based on the willing support of the governed and that since the majority of Indians were Hindus, the state cannot be truly Islamic.

In 1296 he was assassinated by his ambitious nephew and successor, Ala-ud-Din Khalji. During the reign of Ala-ud-din Khalji (1296–1316), the sultanate briefly assumed the status of an empire. In order to achieve his goals of centralization and expansion, Ala-ud-din needed money, loyal and reasonably obeying nobility, and an efficient army under his personal control. He had earlier, in 1292, partly solved the problem of money when he conducted a lucrative raid into Bhilsa in central India. Using that success to build his position and a fresh army, he led a brilliant and unauthorized raid on the fabulously wealthy Devagiri (modern Daulatabad), the capital of the Yadavas, in the Deccan early in 1296. The wealth of Devagiri not only financed his usurpation but provided a good foundation of his state-building plans. Centralization and heavy agrarian taxation were the principal features of Ala-ud-din's rule. The magnitude and mechanism of agrarian taxation enabled the sultan to achieve two important objectives: (1) to ensure supplies at low prices to grain carriers, and (2) to fill the state granaries with a buffer stock, which, linked with his famous price regulations, came as a solution to the critical financial problem of maintaining a large standing army. Within five years after Ala-ud-din's death (1316), the Khaljis lost their power. The succession dispute resulted in the murder of Malik Kafur by the palace guards and in the blinding of Ala-ud-din's six-year-old son by Qutb-ud-din Mubarak shah, the Sultan's third son, who assumed the sultanate (1316–20). He was murdered by his favourite general, a Hindu convert named Khusraw Khan. Opposition to Khusraw's rule arose immediately, led by Ghazi Malik, the warden of the western marches at Deopapur, and Khusraw was defeated and slain after four months.

### The Tughluqs

Ghazi Malik, who ascended the throne as Ghiyas-ud-din Tughluq (reigned 1320–25), had distinguished himself prior to his accession by his successful defense of the frontier against the Mongols. The Tughluqs also wished to rule the whole of India. Ghiyasuddin's (1320–1325) campaign to Warangal, Orissa and Bengal were directed towards this end. He built the city Tughlaqabad near Delhi. While returning from the Bengal campaign, the Sultan was killed when a wooden shelter collapsed on him at Afghanpur, near Delhi. The reign (1325–51) of Muhammad bin Tughlaq marked both the high point of the sultanate and the beginning of its decline. The period from 1296 to 1335 can be seen as one of nearly continuous centralization and expansion. In fourteenth century chronicle of Firuz Shah Tughluq's reign in Delhi, contemporary historian Ziauddin Barani said that, "history is the knowledge of the annals i.e. the historical records and traditions of prophets, caliphs, sultans, and great men of religion and government." The Tughlaq dynasty ended soon after the Timur's invasion but sultanage survived, though it was merely a shadow of its former self. Timur's nominee captured Delhi and was proclaimed the new sultan and the first of Sayyid Dynasty (1414 AD – 1451 AD), which was to rule the earlier half of the fifteenth century. Their rule was short-lived and confined to a radius of some 200 miles around Delhi. They kept the machinery going until a more capable dynasty, the Lodhis, took over. The Lodhis were of pure Afghan origin, and brought an eclipse to the Turkish nobility.





## INTEXT QUESTIONS 31.1

Correct the following sentences and rewrite:

1. Muhammad Ghauri marched into the Indus basin to uproot the Ghaznavids in 1168.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Ghauri's armies conquered Multan in 1157, Sind in 1128 and Parkawas and Lahore in 1168.  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Iltumish must be regarded as the real consolidator of the Turkish Conquests in South India.  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. After a struggle between the two factions Jalal-ud-din Firoz Khalji assumed the sultanate in 1209.  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. In 1269 Jalaluddin Khalji was assassinated by his ambitious nephew and successor, Ala-ud-Din Khalji.  
\_\_\_\_\_

Notes



## 31.3 THE MUGHALS

In 1526, Babur from Central Asia established Mughal dynasty in India. Babur claimed descend from both Timur and Genghis Khan. His conquest of Delhi and Ganga basin was before the final step in the rise of warrior power in South Asia. The greatest sultans in South Asia were Mughal emperors who (though part Turk through Babur and Timur) adopted Persian imperial culture and took the Persian title *Padshah* to lift themselves symbolically above Turks, Afghans, and all other sultans. Babur was a Chagatai Turk who fled patrimonial lands near Samarkand to escape Uzbek armies. He followed opportunity into the Ganga basin, where he used Uzbek-style fast-horse tightly packed together cavalry equipped with muskets and canon to sweep away the opposition. In 1526, he had conquered sultans from Punjab to Bengal. But opposition survived. Thirteen years later, an Afghan soldier who had fought for the Lodis and for Babur, and who styled himself Sher Shah to demonstrate his Persian education (at Jaunpur), declared a new dynasty in Bengal and Bihar. Sher Shah's armies then beat Babur's son, Humayun, back to Afghanistan, where Humayun raised his own son, Akbar, in exile. The Sur dynasty did not survive the Shah's death, though its lasting accomplishments included administrative innovations and a trunk road from Bengal to Punjab. Soon after Sher Shah died, Humayun conquered Delhi, in 1555. He died there by accident. His thirteen year old son, Akbar, then ascended his throne under his regent, Bairam Khan. Akbar was crowned in 1556, as Bairam Khan conquered strategic fortress cities at Lahore, Delhi, Agra, and Jaunpur. Bairam Khan had also conquered Malwa and Rajasthan before he was ousted as regent and assassinated. Akbar ruled for fifty years (1556- 1605). He continued to conquer to the end.



His armies surpassed all before in their size, funding, leadership, technology, and success. At his death, his domains stretched from Kabul, Kashmir, and Punjab to Gujarat, Bengal, and Assam; and they were still increasing in the south and up into mountains on all sides. His mantle was passed to his son, Jahangir (1605–1627) then to his grandson, Shah Jahan (1627–1658), and to his great-grandson, Aurangzeb (1658–1707), whose death was followed by imperial fragmentation. Though the dynasty survived until 1858, when it was dethroned by the British. The Mughal Empire at its peak commanded resources unprecedented in Indian history and covered almost the entire subcontinent. From 1556 to 1707, during the hey-day of its fabulous wealth and glory, the Mughal Empire was a fairly efficient and centralized organization, with a vast complex of personnel, money, and information dedicated to the service of the emperor and his nobility.

Much of the empire's expansion during this period was attributable to India's growing commercial and cultural contact with the outside world. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries brought the establishment and expansion of European and non-European trading organizations in the subcontinent, principally for the procurement of Indian goods in demand abroad, Indian regions drew close to each other by means of a dense overland and coastal trading network. Significantly increasing the internal surplus of precious metals. With expanded connections to the wider world came also new ideologies and technologies to challenge and enrich the imperial edifice. The empire itself, however, was a purely Indian historical experience. Mughal culture blended Perso-Islamic and regional Indian elements into a distinctive but variegated whole. Although by the early eighteenth century, the regions had begun to reassert their independent positions, the Mughal period outlasted imperial central authority. The imperial centre, in fact, came to be controlled by the direction of the Mughal Empire over its first 200 years (1526–1748) thus provides a fascinating illustration of pre-modern state building in the Indian subcontinent.

### 31.4 NATURE OF MEDIEVAL STATE

What did it mean to be a Sultan? In the *Quran* this Arabic word represents a man with spiritual power. Mahmud of Ghazni was the first man to be styled "Sultan" by contemporaries, which indicates his success in cultivating admirers. The title seems to have been popular first among Turks. Seljuq dynasties in Western and Central Asia were the first to use this title of 'Sultan' routinely, and later, Ottoman Turks made it famous in Europe. When the Caliph began conferring the title, it spread quickly among Muslim rulers and changed along the way. The Sultans of Delhi acknowledged the sovereignty of Caliph of Baghdad and considered their kingdom as a part of *Dar-ul-Islam* of which the Caliph was the juridical head. India under the Mughal emperors was governed under the Muslim law *Sharia*. Even so neither under the Sultans of Delhi nor under the Mughal Emperors did the state conform absolutely to Islamic ordinances since it had to adapt itself to the realities and often may not be the correct one. The Turkish and Afghan rulers of India had to treat the Hindus, who formed the vast majority of the population, with consideration and toleration. In fields relating to religion, property and several other non-religious affairs, the non-Muslim population was allowed full freedom to have their cases tried by their own communal courts. The land revenue system under the Sultan and the ceremonies and the procedure at the royal court bear the unmistakable evidence of Indian tradition. The question arises that whether the medieval Indian state was government by priest? In formal sense



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the medieval state under the Muslim rule was definitely a theocracy, since it had all its essential elements- the sovereignty of God and government by the direction of the God through priests in accordance with divine laws. The Sultans of Delhi considered themselves as deputies or assistants of the Caliph who was God's representation. Sher Shah and Islam Shah assumed the title of Caliph and the Mughal Emperors, from Akbar to Aurangzeb, adopted titles like 'Shadow of God', and 'Agent of God on earth'. The sovereignty of God was unquestioned. The supremacy of the Sharia was always acknowledged, though Akbar added to the Sharia the state laws. However, these rulers did not allow the Muslim divines to dictate the policies of the state.

Basically, defense, law and order and collection of revenue were the primary concerns of the Sultanate of Delhi. In other matters, it generally followed a policy of non interference, as the welfare of the people was not the primary concern of the sultans. Toleration under the Sultans was the exception rather than the rule. Thus, while claiming to be Islamic the state of Delhi Sultanate was militaristic and aristocratic in character. In contrast the Mughal Empire stood on altogether different ground. Toleration and kindness were the guiding principles of Akbar's government. Akbar considered his subjects as his children and hence held himself responsible for their welfare. The state as conceived by Abul Fazl and established by Akbar was not confined to any particular class and was based on the principle of 'peace with all' (*Sulh-i-Kul*). But in spite of Akbar's enlightened policy and its circumstantial continuation by Jahangir and Shah Jahan, the Mughal rule had limited scope in its function. In spite of imparting charities and kind Monarchs the Mughal state was not a welfare state. Extraction of the land revenue and defense were its main functions. The form of government was a Monarchy which in spite of being hereditary could not develop a well defined law of succession. Theoretically, the king was the fountainhead of all branches of the government but weak persona of the ruler could provide the opportunity to the nobility and the *ulema* to exercise effective check on the royal power.



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 31.2

Fill in the Blanks

1. Babur claimed descend from both \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
2. After Sher Shah Suri died, Humayun Conquered Delhi in \_\_\_\_\_.
3. From 1556 to \_\_\_\_\_, during the hey-day of its fabulous wealth and glory the Mughal Empire was a \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ organization.
4. India under the \_\_\_\_\_ empire was governed under Muslim law \_\_\_\_\_.

### 31.5 THE KINGSHIP

Whatever his title, a monarch was a man of personal greatness, not only as an army commander but as a spiritual and moral being. A man of civilization, his wars were civilizing, by definition, though what this meant varied and changed. A Sultan's grandeur emerged from the work of people around him. Putting halos on Muslim monarchs was a job for poets, scholars (*imams and ulema*), architects, chroniclers,



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biographers, spiritual guides (*sufis*), and Friday prayer leaders at the *Jama Masjid*, the great congregational mosque essential in any domain. Skilled service providers and cultural activists competed for the honors to glorify sultans, and in doing so the Sultan's personality thus emerged in context. Experts and allies around him shaped his opinions, policies, and priorities. He cultivated people to secure his success; and his power depended on their power. Thus the social institution of a monarch's power extended well beyond the throne. Early Sultans like Mahmud of Ghazni relied entirely on kin and close ethnic allies. As the political landscape became more complex, more complex personalities developed and under the Mughals assumed epic proportions. The Sultan's body, speech, piety, personal habits, hobbies, family. Household, ancestors, wives, son, and in-laws formed the inner core of his public identity; they appeared in public gossip, art, lore, song, and chronicle.

### 31.6 THE ROYAL COURT

A daily dramatization of the Sultan's public self occurred in his court. At his public *darbar*, where he received guests, ambassadors, supplicants, allies, and payers of taxes and tribute. The institution of the *darbar* evolved over time. Its early Central Asian home was a regal tent on the battlefield; in later centuries, it acquired architectural grandeur, as at the Mughal fort-cities in Fatehpur Sikri, Agra, and Delhi, whose *darbar* halls are massive stages for the emperor's performance of power. Many *darbars* incorporated Hindu and Muslim traditions of display and drama. We have a detailed rendering of *darbar* scenes in eighteenth century paintings that now accompany the seventeenth century *padshahanama*, the chronicle or the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan. These illustrations show hanging rugs that recall the *darbar's* nomadic heritage, and each and every person depicted in the paintings had a specific rank at court and relation to the emperor. The *darbar* became a place for dramatizing in public all the personal identities that were being defined in relation to sultans. To dramatize all the various personalities of power that comprised his domain, a sultan, took his *darbar* wherever he went. A *darbar* spent considerable time on the move, especially in battle. The ruler's traveling court became an enduring cultural phenomenon; and in later centuries, touring administrators, tax collectors, and politicians effectively became touring sultans of modern times.

### 31.7 PERSONA OF THE KING

A Sultan's retinue (a group of retainers in attendance), regalia privileges & a king and family symbolized his greatness. Sultans were sticklers for public etiquette and limited protocol, lest subordinates exceed their station. The sultan had to have the biggest, richest, most elaborate, extravagant, valuable things visible on his person, to dramatize his ascendancy constantly. Vijayanagar Rayas styled themselves "Lords of the Eastern and Western Oceans" by adorning their bodies with precious commodities from overseas trade, specifically, perfumes and precious things like Chinese porcelain. The Sultan's home was a larger version of his own body and dramatized his power to accumulate, command, control, and define wealth, value and taste. The grandiose habits of consumption of the great influencer became an enduring fact of political life in South Asia.

Significant features of a Sultan's persona emerged in publicly visible domestic dramas, above all, marriage. Weddings were great events of political life because marriage was the most secure method of political alliance. In the *padshahnama*, warfare and weddings are depicted by the artists most elaborately. Even the Mughal

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Empire was at bade a family affair. In the inner secret deep inside area of the palace, family members vied for influence and engaged in the secret plans that often culminated in wars of succession, in which relatives killed one another, as they did in the epic Mahabharata. At home, the Sultan's honour rested on the stainless virtue of his mother, wives, daughters, and sisters. Separated from public view women of the palace lived behind a curtain, *pardah*; and women in seclusion, *pardahnasheen*, became the sultan's own virtue. Practices of female seclusion spread among elites who modeled themselves on sultans, Hindus and Muslims alike, at all levels of society.

### 31.8 THE NOBILITY

The sultans looked different titles that indicate ethnic origins and cultural affiliations in addition to marking personal status. Every Sultan sought to form and organize a group of nobles which would be personally loyal to him. Thus not only the Turkan-i- Chihalgani (Group of Forty nobles) tried to capture all privileges and power but groups having personal loyalty to Sultans like Qutbis (loyal to Qutub-ud- din Aibak), Shamsis (loyal to shams-ud-din Iltutmish), Balbanis and Alai amirs remained dominant throughout this period. Almost all the high nobles, including the famous Forty in the thirteenth century, were of Central Asian origin; many of them were slaves purchased from the Central Asian bazaars. The same phenomenon also led to the destabilization of the core of the Turkish Mamluks. With the Mongol plunder of Central Asia and eastern Iran, many more members of the political and religious elite of these regions were thrown into north India, where they were admitted into various levels of the military and administrative cadre by the Delhi Sultans. Ala-ud-din was one of the first rulers to deliberately expand political participation within the sultanate government. Not only did he partly open the gates to power for the non-Turkish Muslim nobility-some of whom were even converted Hindus within the political world he viewed as legitimate. Both Ala-ud-din and his son married into the families of important Hindu rulers, and several such rulers were received at court and treated with respect. Under the Tughluq, the non-Muslim Indians rose to high and extremely responsible officers, including the governorships of provinces. Muhammad bin Tughluq was the first Muslim ruler to planned efforts to induct Hindus into administration.

Within the first three decades of Akbar's reign, the imperial person of the highest class has grown enormously. As the Central Asian nobles had generally been nurtured on the Turko – Mongol tradition of sharing power with the royalty – an arrangement not in tune with Akbar's ambition of structuring the Mughal Centralism around himself – the emperor's principal goal was to reduce their strength and influence. The emperor encouraged new elements to join his service, and Iranians came to form an important block of the Mughal nobility. Akbar also looked for new men of Indian background. Indian Afghans, being the principal opponents of the Mughals, were obviously to be kept at a distance; but the Sayyids of Baraha, the Bukhari Sayyids, and the Kambus among the Indian Muslims were specially favoured for high military and civil positions. More significant was the recruitment of Hindu Rajput leaders into the Mughal nobility. This was a major step, even if not completely new in Indo – Islamic history, leading to a standard pattern of relationship between the Mughal autocracy and local cruel rulers.

### 31.9 OFFICES AND HIERARCHICAL STRUCTURE

Neither the government of the Delhi Sultanate nor that of the Mughal Empire was slave like. Both the governments were organized bureaucracy with regular gradation of departments and officers. No officers, either civil or military, was hereditary and





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thus the officers were appointed, transferred and dismissed by the Monarch at his will and were accountable to him only. Under the Sultanate immediately after Sultan the office of *Wazir* was there to supervise all affairs of the government. The Mughals called their Prime Minister as *Wakil*, later on synonymous with wazir or diwan. The Sultans established the *Diwan-i-Arz* (the Military Department) Headed by *Ariz-i-Mumalik* while under the Mughals *Mir Bakshi* was in-charge of army and general administration of royal establishment. In Sultanate religious affairs and charity were looked after by *Diwan-i-Risalat* headed by *Sadr-us-Sudur* (chief sadr). As far as the officer was concerned Mughals continued with the same title. Both the regimes combined the office of Chief Qazi (Chief Justice) with that of sadr. In Sultanate *Mushrif-i-Mamalik* (Accountant General), *Mushaufi-i-Mamalik* (Auditor General), *Diwan-i-Insha* (State Correspondence Department) headed by *Dabir-i-Khas* and *Barid-i-Mumalik* (Head of the Intelligence Department) were some important offices and departments.

### 31.10 PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION

Under the Sultanate muqtis or walis were in-charge of the provinces. Provinces also had a *Sahib-i-diwan* assisted by mutasarrifs and karkuns to control income and expenditure in the end of the thirteenth century Shiqq emerged as an administrative division later known as Sarkar as well. For justice courts of the Qazi and the Sadr functioned in the provinces. The Mughal empire was divided into 15 provinces—Allahabad, Agra, Avadh, Ajmer, Ahmadabad, Bihar, Bengal, Delhi, Kabul, Lahore, Multan, Malka, Qhandesh, Berar, and Ahmadnagar. Kashmir and Qandahar were districts of the province of Kabul, Sindh, then known as Thatta, was a district in the province of Multan. Orissa formed a part of Bengal. The provinces were not of uniform area or income. There were in each province a governor, a dewan (revenue and finance officer), a bakhshi (military commander), a sadr (religious administrator), and qazi (judge) and agents who supplied information to the central government. Separation of powers among the various officials (in particular, between the governor and the diwan) was a significant operating principal in imperial administration. The Mughal provinces were also divided into districts (sarkars). Each district had a faujdar (a military officer whose duties roughly corresponded to those of a collector); a qazi, a bitikchi (head clerk); and a khazanedar (treasurer). Justice was administered by a hierarchy of courts rising from village panchayat to the pargana, sarkar and provincial courts (under the Qazi, Amir-i-Dad and Mir Adl) and finally to the chief sadr cum qazi and ultimately the emperor himself. Both under Sultanate and Mughal, the Kotwal was the enforcer of law at the local level.

### 31.11 IQTA, JAGIR AND MANSAB

Iqta under the Sultanate and Jagir under the Mughals were developed as the officers for the collection of revenue which Iqtadars or jagirdars realized on behalf of the state with a view to obtain their salary. But their judicial preview over hand depended on the pleasure of the emperor. The muqtis or iqta holders were required to furnish military assistance to the Sultans in times of need, apart from maintaining law and order and collecting the revenue from their iqta. These revenue assignments were generally non-hereditary and transferable. Similarly, the Mansab system was based upon the organization of the public services of the Mughal Empire. It was neither hereditary nor hierarchical. Mansab means literally a rank or a position which was fixed according to



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the personal merit and status (zat) of the officer and the contingent (sawar) he maintained. Generally, the mansabdars were assigned a territory known as a jagir, whose estimated revenue (Jama) was equal to the pay due for both their zat and sawar mansabs, though some mansabdars were also paid in cash from the imperial treasury.

**31.12 TAXATION**

The system of taxation in Sultanate comprised taxes like Kharaj (varied from one sixth to one third of the gross produce), Jaziya (levied upon adult non-Muslim males with independent means of maintenance in lieu of military service), Zakat (a tax raised from well-to-do Muslims for the purpose of charity), Khams or Ghanimah (the booty taken in war) and other transit and octroi duties along with natural resources were the main sources of income. The chaudhurs, muqqadams and khuts were the village revenue collector functioning under the amils, shiqdars and provincial muqtis. Khalisa land revenue was reserved for the Sultan's treasury only. The Mughals improved upon this system particularly in the area of land revenue. The system of measurement zabt introduced by Sher Shah Suri was adopted and improved by Akbar. Ultimately, Ain-i-Dahsala the final method of revenue settlement was based upon the average annual yield of the previous ten years from a particular field. The Gaz-i-Ilahi, a new yard for land measurement brought uniformity in the land survey. Productivity of the land, nature of the crop, prices, and irrigation facilities were the other major factors deciding the cash value of the revenue demand of the government. Option of paying land tax could be done through various systems. Ownership of the land always belonged to the cultivator.

**31.13 ARMY**

Both the Sultanate and the Mughal state were dependent on army whose main strength was the cavalry. Ariz-i-Mumalik under the Sultans and Mir Bakshi under the Mughal Emperors were the officers in-charge but the ruler himself commanded all the armed forces. Balban was the first one to recruit a regular standing army, this system was further strengthened by Ala-ud-din-Khalji who introduced the branding system (Dagh) of the horses. The royal cavalry in Delhi Sultanate was called Hasham-i-Qalb or Afwaj-i-Qalb. Hasham-i-Atraj was the cavalry posted at provincial level. This army was organized on the basis of decimal system. Mughal army was organized on the basis of mansab system, described above. Ahadis were the royal troopers directly under the command of the emperor. The artillery had developed rapidly in India after the advent of Babur. Apart from siege i.e. the process of surrounding and attacking a fortified place there were heavy guns mounted on forts. The infantry, though numerous, consisted of both fighting and non-fighting classes. The fighting men were mainly matchlock men, called banduqchis. By the time of Akbar, matchlock contingent was also included in the infantry. Both Sultans of Delhi and Mughals used elephants on the battle fields. Navy always remained a weak point of the Indian rulers.

**31.14 CURRENCY SYSTEM**

The standard coin under the Sultans from Iltutmish onwards was the silver tanka weighing 175 grains. The currency system was, however, bimetallic, there being parallel coin in copper, the basic unit of which was the jital. In the fourteenth century, 48 or 50 jitals were held equal in worth to tanka. The Sultans issued bullion coins as



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well, and gold issues have also survived. The Lodis, who never minted silver, issued a heavy bullion coin 145 grains called bahloli. Sher Shah Suri established a bimetallic system by issuing a rupee of silver and making the tanka a purely copper coin. The Mughals from Akbar onwards continued the same system: their rupee weighed 178 grains (180 under Aurangzeb), and the alloy in these never rose above 4 per cent. In copper they minted dams of 323 grains each, these being originally the half tanka of Sher Shah. In the last years of Akbar, a rupee fetched 40 dams, and this became subsequently the paper value of the rupee. In fact, the copper price of the rupee declined throughout the seventeenth century. The Mughals also issued gold coins, known as mohur or ashrafi, but these were not normally used in the market. The Mughal coinage was of great metallic purity and uniformity. The minting was 'free' in the sense that any one could take bullion to the mint and get in coined at a small charge.



## INTEXT QUESTIONS 31.3

Fill in the blanks with appropriate word from the bracket

1. The emperor encouraged new elements to join his service, and \_\_\_\_\_ came to form an important block of the Mughal normality. (Afganian, Irarian, Turkish)
2. Under this Sultanate immediately after Sultan the office of \_\_\_\_\_ was there to supervise all affairst of the government. (chief sadas, chief Justice, Wazil)
3. \_\_\_\_\_ under the Mughals was developed as the office for the collection of revenue who realized on behalf of the state. (Mansab, Sadr, Jagir)
4. The standard coin under the Sultan from Itlutmish onwards was the silver tanka weighing \_\_\_\_\_ grains. (175, 200, 225)

Thus the growth of the medieval state was an ever growing process along with conquests and consolidations. In the art of the governance certain central Asian institutions were introduced but at the same time previous practices were not substantially disturbed. As far as organization of the administration and ruling class were concerned, it was not a monolithic structure. Each monarch as a single source of power had to establish a balance between varying compositions and interest groups to ensure the durability and stability of his dynasty. But the set of beliefs of a composite culture was always taken care of.



## WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

With the decline of the Gupta state, the Indian polity saw decentralization and rise of various regional states. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, a new kind of domain emerged in North India. The Delhi Sultanate had its origin in victories by Mohammad Ghauri, who sacked Ghazni in 1151, Ghazni's armies conquered Multan, Sind, Peshawar and Lahore. Later Itlutmish was regarded as the real consolidator of the Turkish conquests in North India.

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The political situation had changed by 1246 when Ghiyas-ud-din gained enough power and acted first as naib (duty) to the Sultan and later as Sultan (1266–87) was the most important political figure of his time. In 1296 he was assassinated by his ambitious nephew and successor, Ala-ud-Din Khalji. During his reign (1296–1316) the sultanate briefly assumed the status of an empire. However, within five years after Ala-ud-din's death the khaljis lost their power.

Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq (1320–25) and Mohammad bin Tughlaq marked the high point of the sultanate and wished to rule the whole of India. It was the period of continuous centralization and expansion.

In 1526, Babur from central Asia established Mughal dynasty in India. His conquests of Delhi, Ganga basin and later from Punjab to Bengal entitled him to take the persian title of padshah. His son Humayun lost to Sher Shah and retreated to Afghanistan. After Sher Shah's death Humayun conquered Delhi in 1555 and died by accident. His 13year old son Akbar ascended the throne and under the guidance of his regent Bairam Khan conquered the strategic fortress cities of Lahore, Agra and Jaunpur. Akbar ruled from, 1556-1605. His domain stretched from Kabul, Kashmir, Punjab to Gujrat, Bengal and Assam. His successors Jahangir (1605–1627) and grandson Shah-Jahan (1627–1658) and great grand –son Aurangzeb (1658-1707). The Mughal Empire was at its peak, commanded resources unprecedented in Indian history.

The 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries brought the establishment and expansion of European and non-European trading organization in the sub continent, principally for the procurement of Indian goods in demand abroad.

In this lesson you have also learnt about nature of medieval state, kingship, royal court and nobility. Besides you have acquired information about provincial administration, the process of taxation, medieval army and the currency system.

**TERMINAL QUESTIONS**

1. Briefly describe the role of Muhammad Ghauri
2. Mention the principal features of the era of Balbans and Khalji's.
3. "The reign of Muhammad bin Tughlaq marked both the high point of the Sultanate and the beginning of its decline". Comment.
4. Assess the rule of the Mughals during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.
5. Examine the nature of Medieval state.
6. What is meant by persona of the King?
7. Write a brief note on provincial administration.

**ANSWER TO INTEXT QUESTIONS**

- 31.1** 1. 1186  
2. 1175, 1182 and 1186



**Notes**

3. North India.

4. 1290

5. 1296

**31.2.** Fill in the blanks:

1. Timur, Genghis khan

2. 1555

3. 1707, efficient, Centralised

4. Mughal, Sharia

**31.3.** Fill in the blanks with appropriate words from the brackets ( ):

1. Iranian

2. Wazir

3. Jagir

4. 175

**HINTS TO TERMINAL QUESTIONS**

1. See para 31.2

2. See para 31.2

3. See para 31.2

4. See para 31.3

5. See para 31.4

6. See para 31.5

7. See para 31.10



## 32

## COLONIAL STATE

When Britain assumed the sovereignty of India i.e. the supreme power, the imperial-colonial relationship had to be established through or explanation of British rule over India proving the local Indian rules as incompetent or backward in order to curb their legal authority. The political authority of the colonial state gathered upon many instruments for preserving and enforcing its power which was a pre-condition for the formulation of the colonial policy. It is important to know that how the rule over people was legitimized and how was the power of the colonial state made visible to the common people subjected to foreign rule.



### OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you would be able to:

- understand the meaning and nature of the colonial state;
- recall the colonial objectives in India;
- identify the instruments of colonial control and
- explore the symbols and effects of the colonial rule

### 32.1 THE BACKGROUND

The Mughal Empire declined in the first half of the eighteenth century. The political vacuum was filled by the rise of regional states like Bengal, Hyderabad, Awadh, Punjab and Maratha Kingdom. But these regional powers could not provide political stability resulting into a shameless chance for the British East India Company to establish a territorial empire in India. Now a set of institutions and regulations were required to govern India through colonial machinery.

#### (i) Meaning of Colonial State

Prior to the British conquest, relations between regional people and the sovereign power had never been defined wholly by religion. A web of economic and social relationship had survived periods of imperial consolidation, crisis and collapse, to bind the subcontinent into a loosely layered framework of interdependence. Despite a long history of creatively accommodating multiple levels of supreme powers, the renegotiation of the terms for sharing power in an independent India saw the special opportunity of a rigid and massive conception of territorial sovereignty based on a



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singular and gathering together idea of the 'nation'. The colonial state means the assumption of sovereignty (legally independent power to govern and control) of a country by a foreign political entity. The colonial state has to design a theory of sovereignty in the special context of the imperial-colonial relationship. This is done through a two way process (1) process of legitimization of the colonial state i.e. justification of the legal existence of a foreign entity, which automatically leads to the second process i.e. (2) the subversion of delegitimization of pre-colonial indigenous political authority.

**(ii) Nature of Colonial State**

The British consolidated their Colonial regime in India according to their ideas of what a colonial state could be and a modern state with some modern characteristics emerged. As in a modern state, the colonial government had a monopoly of force, a centralized administration for tax – collection, a centralized legal system, a professional staff of administrators and bureaucrats, and clearly defined territorial boundaries. British colonial administrators aimed for a rule based on law, administered according to regulations. At the lowest levels, however, where policy implementation took place, the ties of caste, clan and kinship and patron-client relations played major roles in how the colonial state affected local society. After Independence in 1947, the new nation built its government on institutions inherited from the colonial, with all of their strengths and their weaknesses.

**(iii) Colonial Objectives in India**

In the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century a British royal or imperial ideology emerged in which the British, as the wealthiest and most progressive nation in the world, had a duty to help rest of the world to prosper and improve. The rule of law would create the conditions for civilized living and the creation of wealth. In India the governing ideology was:

1. Indians were not capable of governing themselves.
2. Britain had the duty to supply good government which would be based on the rule of law, without interfering in or attempting to manage Indian economy and society.

The main responsibilities of imperial government were seen as:

- a) Collecting land revenue and b) Execution of legal administration.

The type of revenue settlement which the East India Company made, varied according to the prevailing ideology of how to create wealth in India, according to the Company's security needs and according to experience which the Company gained as new areas came under its control.

The colonial state was working with two aims (1) the complete subordination of the Indian colony to needs of British metropolis and (2) economic exploitation of the Indian colony or the appropriation of the colonies economic surplus by the British metropolis. But the nature of the imperial interests in Indian did not remain the same through-out and it changed according to the requirements of the Mother country and in interest of the different social group in Britain. During the first stage of British rule in India till 1813, British interests lay mainly in (i) the East India Company's monopoly of trade with India, and the elimination of other European competitors, (ii) the control over financial resources, through taxation.

Both these objectives could be fulfilled without having to disturb the existing institutions and administrative apparatus. British rulers at this stage were not very different from that of traditional rulers, interested mainly in receiving agricultural surplus.




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No attempt was, therefore, made to create a uniform administrative structure or even to renovate the old one at this stage. No basic changes were introduced in the judicial system and administration. Whatever little changes were made in the field of administration were only made at the top of the revenue collection and were linked to the objective of smooth revenue collection. A modern judicial system or uniform administrative structure for India was not seen as necessary at this stage, since it was not considered relevant for the fulfillment of British objective during the first stage of British rule in India.

This scenario changed considerably after 1813. The British economy and society were going through a major transformation, caused mainly by the Industrial revolution. The commercial trading corporations were now giving way to industrial ownership which had become the dominant force in the British society. The East India Company was gradually losing its monopoly over Indian trade. The British interests in India no longer represented the interests of the Company but of the industrial capitalist class. The interest of the British industrialists lay in using India as (a) a market for their manufactured industrial goods, (b) a source of raw material like (jute, cotton etc.) for their industries and food grains, opium etc. for export.

All this required much greater penetration into the India economy and society and control over India trade not only with British but with other countries also. India was now expected to play a new role. It was perhaps not possible to perform the new role with the traditional administrative institutions. They had to be changed and transformed to suit the new requirements. Thus started the process of transforming Indian administration. Similarly, the entire legal structure had to be overhauled to promote modern business, create a market economy, free commercial relations and to regulate the various economic transactions smoothly with the help of modern laws.

British interests were of several kinds. At first the main purpose was to achieve a monopolistic trading position. Later, it was felt that a regime of free trade would make India a major market for British goods and a source of raw materials, but British capitalists who invest in India, or who sold banking or shipping service there, continued effectively to enjoy controlling or dominating privileges. India also provided interesting and lucrative employment for a sizeable portion of the British upper middle class, and the remittances they sent home made an appreciable contribution to Britain's balance of payment and capacity to save. Finally, control of India was a key element in the world power structure, in terms of geography, logistics and military manpower. The British were not averse to India economic development if it increased their markets but refused to help in areas where they felt there was conflict with their own economic interests or political security. Hence, they refused to give protection to the Indian textile industry until its main competitor became Japan rather than Manchester, and they did almost nothing to further technical education. They introduced some British concepts of property, but did not push them too far when they met interests.


**INTEXT QUESTIONS 32.1**

Fill in the blanks:

1. The Mughal Empire declined in the first half of the \_\_\_\_\_ century.
2. During the 1<sup>st</sup> stage of British rule in India till \_\_\_\_\_ British interests lay mainly in the East India Company's monopoly of trade with India.



3. The British economy and society were going through a major transformation, caused mainly by the \_\_\_\_\_ revolution.
4. The interests of the British industrialist lay in using India as a market for their \_\_\_\_\_ goods.



*Fig. 32.1 Writers Building*

### 32.2 FORMS OF LEGITIMACY

As you know, immediately before the British rule the Indian sovereignty was lying with the Mughal dynasty. Till the early nineteenth century the British did not interfere with the symbols of kingship of the Mughal dynasty. By 1835 Persian remained the official language and name of the Mughal emperors kept on appearing on coins. The highest gun salute was reserved for the Mughal dynasty only till 1837. Withdrawal of these symbols of sovereignty was a symbolic act on the part of the British East India Company signifying that it had captured the sovereignty of India. The Prior Presence of the British in the presidency capitals and then in chosen inland locations, meant that the institutions which were to be the shorthand symbols of the empire would also be built in this order. Thus the island of Mumbai and some villages of the Hooghly delta became the grand capitals of the company's Bombay Presidency, and then the Indian empire. The advanced, sophisticated heartland of the Mughal Empire became the provincial interior. The re-inscription of centre and periphery was done with the tools of a new architecture. New institutions marked a new power. Buildings were the most corporeal or physical, material, and impressive forms of the new institutions. What was visible in the capital city, say, in Bombay, was exactly what the provincial town lacked in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The Company (itself a servant of British crown, running its affair through an Imperial charter) wanted to make the Indian emperor a subordinate. The terminology of sub-

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ordination included 'paramountcy', 'Protection', 'subsidiary alliance', 'indirect rule', 'collaboration', drawn mainly from British experience in India. By the beginning of the nineteenth century 'protection' arrangements were established through a series of treaties between the Company and various Indian Princely States. Governor General Lord Wellesely prepared a system which came to be known as Subsidiary Alliance System. This system enlisted in quick succession Hyderabad (1798), the Maratha Peshwa (1802), the Bhonsle of Nagpur the Scindia of Gualior (1803), Jaipur (1803), the Gaekwads of Baroda (1805), Travancore (1805), Cochin (1807), Kota (1817), Jodhpur (1818), Bikaner (1828). The essence of the system was the assurance of the British protection which the native state paid for by or more of the following means (a) cost of maintaining a contingent of Company's troop in cash, (b) cession of the part of the state's territory to the Company, (c) partial or complete demilitarization i.e. doing away with armed force of the state, (d) restriction on relation with other political powers and warfare without the Company's approval, (e) acceptance of the Company's Resident at the court to offer advice and instructions.

Once the subjection was achieved through coercion, state practices had to be made visible to all the subjects. The practices adopted for visibility of the colonial state were like the trial of the last Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar in his own palace in 1858 or the Delhi Durbar of 1877 when Indian subordination to the British sovereign was publicly enacted. The symbolic cultural construction of the colonial state for the common masses was done through the remote agencies of the state and everyday experiences- the daroga and constabulary; the patel, the amin, the patwari and the quanungo, in the Collector's cutchery; the new court of law where unknown people wearing black gowns, speaking an unknown language (English) taking decisions in favour of the powerful, the massive colonial monuments making colonial power visible in the cities, the occasional sights of soldiers coming out of the cantonments on flag march and ultimately the sight of the native social superior bowing and bending to members of the white race were few symbols making images of the colonial rule in the Indian mindset.

**32.3 BEGINNING OF THE COLONIAL CONTROL**

During the Initial phase of colonial control, indigenous civil administrator was continued with. This arrangement worked reasonably well before the conquest of Bengal, but was inefficient as a way of remunerating the officials of a substantial territorial Empire because (a) too much of the profit went into private hands rather than the Company's coffers, and (b) an over greedy short-term policy was damaging to the productive capacity of the economy and likely to drive the local population to revolt, both of which were against the Company's longer-term interests. Clive had operated a 'dual' system, i.e. Company power and a puppet Nawab. Warren Hastings displaced the Nawab and took over direct administration, but retained Indian officials.

**32.4 BELIEF IDEOLOGY AND IDEOLOGUES OF COLONIALISM**

There was a strong streak of Benthamite radicalism in the East India Company administration. James Mill became a senior company official in 1819 after writing a monumental history of India which showed a strong contempt for Indian institutions. From 1831 to 1836 he was the Chief Executive Officer of the East India Company and his son John Stuart Mill worked for the Company from 1823 to 1858. Malthus was professor of economics at Haileybury, and the teaching there for future company officials was strongly influenced by Utilitarianism. Bentham himself was also



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consulted on the reform of Indian institutions. The Utilitarians deliberately used India to try out experiments and ideas (e.g. competitive entry for the civil service) which they would have liked to apply in England. The Utilitarians were strong supporters of laissez-faire and hated any kind of state interference to promote economic development. Thus, they tended to rely on market forces to deal with famine problems, they did nothing to stimulate agriculture or protect industry. This laissez-faire tradition was more deeply embedded in the Indian civil service than in the England itself, and persisted very strongly until the late 1920s. The administration was efficient and non corrupt, but the state apparatus was of a watchdog character with few development spending was for the military, justice, police and jails, and less than 3 per cent for agriculture. One of the most significant things the British did to Westernize India was to introduce a modified version of English education. Macaulay's 1835 Minute on Education had a decisive impact on British educational policy and is a classic example of a Western rationalist approach to Indian civilization. Before the British took over, the Court language of the Mughals was Persian and the Muslim population used Urdu, a mixture of Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit. Higher education was largely religious and stressed knowledge of Arabic and Sanskrit. The Company had given some financial support to a Calcutta Madrasa (1718) and a Sanskrit college at Benares (1792), Warren Hastings, as governor general from 1782 to 1795 had himself learned Sanskrit and Persian, and several other Company officials were oriental scholars. One of them, Sir William Jones, had translated a great mass of Sanskrit literature and had founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1785.

But Macaulay was strongly opposed to this orientalism, "I believe that the present system tends, not to accelerate the progress of truth, but to delay the natural death of expiring errors. We are a Board for wasting public money, for printing books which are less value than the paper in which they are printed was while it was blank; for giving artificial encouragement to absurd history, absurd metaphysics, absurd physics, absurd theology ... But I have no knowledge of either Sanskrit or Arabic ... But I have done what I could to form a correct estimate of their value ... Who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabic ... all the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in the Sanskrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgements used at preparatory schools in England".

For these reasons Macaulay had no hesitation in deciding in favour of English education, but it was not to be for the masses, "It is impossible for us, with our limited means to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in mind. To that class we may leave it to refine the local dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western name, and to render them by degrees, fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population".



## INTEXT QUESTIONS 32.2

Tick out ( ) whichever is correct:

1. By \_\_\_\_\_ Persian remained the official symbol of the Mughal dynasty. (1831, 1833, 1835)



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2. What was visible in the capital city, say, in Bombay was exactly what the provincial town lacked in the second half of the \_\_\_\_\_ century. (17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>)
3. James Mill became a senior Company official in \_\_\_\_\_ after writing a monumental history of India (1719, 1819, 1919)
4. Sir William Jones, had translated a great mass of Sanskrit literature and had founded the Asiatic society in \_\_\_\_\_ (1785, 1835, 1885)

### 32.5 THE COLONIAL APPARATUS

In 1785, Cornwallis created a professional cadre of Company servants who had generous salaries, had no private trading or production interests in India, enjoyed the prospect of regular promotion and were entitled to pensions. All high-level posts were reserved for the British, and Indians were excluded. Cornwallis appointed British judges, and established British officials as revenue collectors and magistrates in each district of Bengal. From 1806 the Company trained its young recruits in Haileybury College near London. Appointments were still organized on a system of patronage, but after 1833 the Company selected amongst its nominated candidates by competitive examination. After 1853, selection was entirely on merit and the examination was thrown open to any British candidate. The examination system was influenced by the Chinese model, which had worked well for 2,000 years and had a similar emphasis on classical learning and literary competence. The Indian civil service (i) was very highly paid; (ii) it enjoyed political power which no bureaucrat could have had in England.

In 1829 the system was strengthened by establishing districts throughout British India small enough to be effectively controlled by an individual British official who henceforth exercised a completely autocratic power, acting as revenue collector, judge and chief of police (functions which had been separate under the Mughal administration). This arrangement later became the cornerstone of imperial administration throughout the British Empire. As the civil service was ultimately subject to the control of the British parliament, and the British community in India was subject to close mutual surveillance, the administration was virtually incorruptible.



Fig. 32.2 steam Engine

The army of the Company was a local mercenary force with 20,000- 30,000 British officers and troops. It was by far the most modern and efficient army in Asia. After the Mutiny in 1857, the size of the British contingent was raised to a third of the total





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strength and all officers were British until the 1920s when a very small number of Indians were recruited. Normally, the total strength of the army was about 200,000. This army was very much smaller than those of Mughal India, but had better training and equipment, and the railway network (which was constructed partly for military reasons) gave it greater mobility, better logistics and intelligence.

The higher ranks of the administration remained almost entirely British until the 1920s when the Indian Civil Services Examinations began to be held in India as well as England. In addition, there was a whole hierarchy of separate bureaucracies in which the higher rank were British, i.e. the revenue, justice, police, education, medical, public works, engineering, postal and railway services as well as provincial civil services. India thus offered highly-paid careers to an appreciable portion of the British middle and upper classes (particularly for its peripheral members from Scotland and Ireland).

From the 1820s to the 1850s the British demonstrated a strong urge to change Indian social institutions, and to westernize India. They stamped out infant killing and ritual burning of widows (sati). They abolished slavery and eliminated dacoits (religious thugs) from the highways. They legalized the remarriage of widows and allowed Hindu converts to Christianity to lay claim to their share of joint family property. They took steps to introduce a penal code (the code was actually introduced in 1861) based in British law, which helped inculcate some ideas of equality. Under the new law, Brahmin and Sudra were liable to the same punishment for the same offence. Thus rule of law and equality before law were the new norms.

Until 1857 it was possible to entertain the view that the British may eventually destroy traditional Indian society and westernize the country. But activist Westernizing policies and the attempt to extend British rule by taking over native states rulers had left no heirs provokes sections of both the Hindu and Muslim communities into rebellion in the Mutiny of 1857. Although the Mutiny was successfully put down with substantial help from loyal Indian troops including the recently conquered Sikhs, British policy towards Indian institutions and society became much more conservative. The Crown took over direct responsibility and the East India Company was disbanded. The Indian Civil Service attracted fewer people with innovating ideas than had the East India Company and was more closely controlled from London.

The British forged an alliance with the remaining native princes and stopped taking over new territory. Until the end of their rule about a quarter of the Indian population remained in quasi autonomous native states. These had official British residents but were fairly free in internal policy, and the effort of westernization came to a standstill.

The education system which developed was a very pale reflection of that in the United Kingdom. Three universities were set up in 1857 in Calcutta, Madras and Bombay, but they were merely examining bodies and did no teaching. Higher education was carried out in affiliated colleges which gave a two-year B.A. course with heavy emphasis on rote learning and examinations. Drop-out ratios were always very high. They did little to promote analytic capacity or independent thinking and produced a group of graduates with a half-baked knowledge of English, but sufficiently westernized to be alienated from their own culture. It was not until the 1920s that Indian universities provided teaching facilities and then only for M.A. student. Furthermore, Indian education was of a predominantly literacy character and the provision for technical training was much less than in any European country. Education for



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girls was almost totally ignored throughout the nineteenth century. Because higher education was in English, there was no official effort to translate western literature into the local nor was there any standardization of Indian scripts whose variety is a major barrier to multi-lingualism amongst educated Indians.

Primary education was not taken very seriously as government obligation and was financed largely by the weak local authorities. As a result, the great mass of the population had no access to education and, at independence in 1947, 88 per cent were illiterate. Progress was accelerated from the 1930s onwards, but at independence only a fifth of children were receiving any primary schooling. Education could have played a major role in encouraging social mobility, eliminating religious superstition, increasing productivity, and uplifting the status of women. In stead it was used to turn tiny elite into imitation Englishmen and somewhat bigger group into government clerks.

**32.6 CHANGES UNDER COLONIAL STATE**

The main changes which the British made in Indian society were at the top. They replaced the wasteful warlord nobility by a bureaucratic-military establishment, carefully designed by practical technocrats, which was very efficient in maintaining law and order. The greater efficiency of government permitted a great reduction in the fiscal burden, and a biggest share of the national product was available for landlords, capitalists and the new professional classes. Some of this upper class income was sent off to the United Kingdom, but the bulk was spent in India. However, the pattern of consumption changed as the new upper class no longer kept harems and palaces, nor did they wear fine muslins and well decorated swords. This caused some painful readjustments in the traditional handicraft sector. Government itself carried out productive investment in railways and irrigation and as a result there was a growth in both agricultural and industrial output. The new elite established a western life-style using the English language and English schools. New towns and urban amenities were created with segregated suburbs and housing for them. Their habits were copied by the new professional elite of lawyers, doctors, teachers, journalists and businessmen. Within this group, old caste barriers were eased and social mobility increased. As far as the mass of the population were concerned, colonial rule brought few significant changes. The British educational effort was very limited. There were no major changes in village society, in the caste system, the position of untouchables, the joint family system, or in the production techniques in agriculture. British impact on economic and social development was, therefore, limited. Total output and population increased substantially but the gain in per capita output was small or negligible.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 32.3**

Fill in the Blanks:

1. All high level posts were reserved for the British and Indians were \_\_\_\_\_.
2. As the civil service was ultimately subject to the control of the British \_\_\_\_\_, and the British community in India was subject to close mutual surveillance, the administration was \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The British army was very much \_\_\_\_\_ than those of Mughal India, but had better training and \_\_\_\_\_.


**Notes**

4. The \_\_\_\_\_ took over direct responsibility and the East India Company was \_\_\_\_\_.

The British state in India developed its own ethos. The British did not intermarry or eat with the lower (native) classes. The state was maintained not just through the conquests and alliances but also through the development of new institutions which symbolically made the sahibs distinct from the natives. The small creole class of Anglo-Indian were outcasts unable to integrate into Indian or local British society. The British kept to their clubs and bungalows in special suburbs known as cantonments and civil lines. They maintained the Mughal tradition of official pomp, large residences, and a large number of servants. The elite with its classical education and contempt for business were quite happy establishing law order, and keeping 'barbarians' at bay on the frontier of the raj. They developed their own brand of self-righteous arrogance, considering themselves suppliers not of popular but of good government. For them the word 'British' lost its geographic association and became a nickname signifying moral decency to govern the colony of India.


**WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT**

The Mughal Empire declined in the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the eighteenth Century. The British efforts, through the East India Company to establish a territorial empire in India. The colonial state means the assumption of sovereignty of a country by regime in India according to their ideas of what a colonial state could be. In a modern state, the colonial governments had a monopoly of force, a central administrative and clearly defined territorial boundaries.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, British royal or imperial ideology emerged in which the British, as the wealthiest and progressive nation in the world, had a duty to help the rest of the world to prosper and improve. The main responsibilities of imperial government were run as collecting level revenue and execution of legal administration.

Once the subjection was achieved through coercion, state practices had to be made visible to all the subjects. During the initial phase of colonial control, indigenous civil administration was continued with.

In 1785, Cornwallis created a professional code of Company servants. All high leave parts were removed for the British and Indian were enclosed. Their army of the Company was local mercenary force with 20,00-30,000 British officers and troops.

The high rank of the administration remained almost entirely British until the 1920s when the India Civil Service Examinations started to change Indian social institutions and to westernize India. They stopped out import killing, ritual burning of widows (sati), legalized the remarriage of widows and allowed Hindu converts to Christianity. Besides three universities were set up in 1857 in Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay.

The British kept to their clubs and bungalows in special suburbs known as cantonments and civil lines. However, there were no major changes in village society, in caste system, the position of untouchables, the joint family system or in the production techniques in agriculture.

**TERMINAL QUESTIONS**

1. Describe the meaning and nature of the colonial state.
2. What was the ideology and ideologue of colonialism?
3. Highlight the Colonial Appartus.
4. Mention the changes under Colonial state.

**ANSWER TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****32.1**

1. Eighteenth
2. 1813
3. Industrial
4. Manufactured

**32.2**

1. 1835
2. 19<sup>th</sup>
3. 1819
4. 1785

**32.3**

1. Excluded
2. Parliament, non corrupt
3. Smaller, equipment
4. Crown, disbanded

**HINTS FOR TERMINAL QUESTIONS**

1. See Para 32.1
2. See Para 32.4
3. See Para 32.5
4. See Para 32.6

**Notes**