

Chapter – 5: Kingdoms, Kings, and An Early Republic

How Some Men Became Rulers

- Choosing leaders – voting – common – nowadays – around 100 years ago
- 3000 years ago – some men – perform sacrifice – become *rajas*
- *Ashvamedha* – horse sacrifice – ritual – horse set to wander (roam) freely by *raja's* men
- Horse – wandered into another territory –
 - Other *rajas* – stopped the horse – fight with the owner *raja*
 - Other *rajas* – let it pass – they accepted owner *raja* is stronger – invited to sacrifice
- Sacrifice – performed by – priests – specially trained – received gifts
- *Raja* – performing sacrifice – most powerful – others – brought gifts
- *Raja* – central figure – special seat – throne or tiger skin
- Charioteer – companion in battlefield – chanted tales – relatives – wives and sons – perform smaller rituals
- Other *rajas* – spectators – sit and watch
- Priests performed rituals – sprinkle – sacred water on king
- Ordinary people – *vish* or *Vaishya* – also brought gifts
- Some people – regarded as *shudras* – excluded

Varnas

- 4 social categories –
 - Brahmins – study and teach *vedas*, perform sacrifice, receive gifts
 - Kshatriyas – fight battles, protect people
 - Vaishyas – farmers, herders, traders
 - Shudras – serve other 3 groups

Janapadas

- *Rajas* – perform big sacrifice – *rajas* of *janapadas* – instead of *janas*
- *Janapadas* – land where *jana* (people) set its foot (settled down)
- Archeologists – excavated – number of settlements – Purana Qila, Delhi – Hastinapura, Meerut – Atranjikhhera, Etah – found – people lived in huts – kept cattle and other animals – grew rice, wheat, barley, pulses, sugarcane, sesame, mustard
- They made earthen pots – some – grey colour – others – red
- Special type of pottery – painted grey ware – painted designs – simple lines, geometric patterns

Mahajanpadas

- 2500 years ago – some *janapadas* – more important than others
- Most *mahajanpadas* – capital city, fortified – huge walls – wood, brick, stone
- Forts – built because – people afraid of attacks – needed protection
- Some rulers – show-off wealth – large, tall, impressive walls
- Land and people – inside fort – controlled more easily
- Building these forts – lots of planning, resources, labour

- New *rajas* – maintained armies – paid regular salaries – some payments – punch marked coins

Taxes

- Rulers – *mahajanpadas* – built forts and maintained armies – needed resources
- Instead of depending on gifts – collected regular *taxes*
 - Tax on crops
 - Tax on craftspersons
 - Tax on herders – animals and animal produce
 - Tax on goods (trade)
 - Tax on hunters and gatherers – forest produce

Changes in Agriculture

- 2 major changes
 - Growing use of iron plough – easier turning of soil – more grain produced
 - Transplanting paddy – instead of spreading seed – saplings grown and planted in fields – increased production – more plants survived

A Closer Look

- **Magadha**
 - 2300 years ago – became most imp. *mahajanpada*
 - Many rivers flowed here – Son, Ganga – imp. for – transport, water supplies, making land fertile
 - Some parts – forested –
 - Elephants – trained for army
 - Forests – wood for building houses, carts, chariots
 - Iron ore mines – strong tools and weapons
 - 2 powerful rulers – Bimbisara, Ajatasattu – conquer other *janapadas* – any way possible
 - Another ruler – Mahapadma Nanda – extended rule – north-west subcontinent
 - Rajgriha (Rajgir), Bihar – capital of Magadha – later shifted to Patliputra (Patna)
 - 2300 years ago – Alexander – Macedonia, Europe – wanted to conquer world
 - Conquered Parts of Egypt, Asia – reached Indian subcontinent – near river Beas
 - His soldiers refused to cross the river over to India – feared Indian rulers and their huge armies
- **Vajji**
 - Capital – Vaishali (Bihar) – another form of government – *gana* or *sangha*
 - Here – not one BUT many rulers – each *raja* – performed rituals together
 - Also held assemblies – decided – what and how to do
 - If attacked by an army – meet and discuss – how to handle enemy
 - Women, *dasas* (slaves), *kammakaras* (workers) – not allowed to participate