

Chapter – 9: New Empires and Kingdoms

- Arvind – school student – supposed to play king – expected – splendid robes, big moustaches, swords – he was told – sit and play *veena* – recite poetry

Prashastis and What They Tell Us

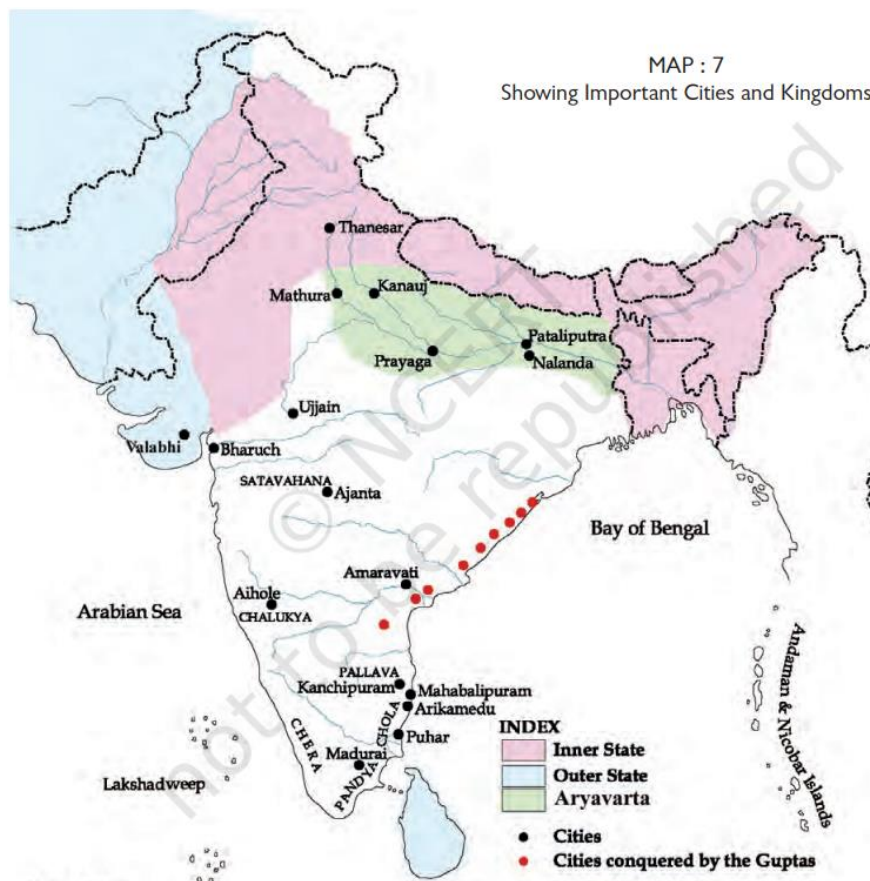
- Arvind – supposed to play Samudragupta – famous ruler of Guptas dynasty
- Long inscription – inscribed on Ashokan pillar, Allahabad – describe Samudragupta
- Composed as *Kavya* – by Harishena – poet and minister at court of Samudragupta
- This inscription – special kind – *prashastis* – Sanskrit word meaning ‘in praise of’
- *Prashastis* – prepared for rulers from chapter 8 – Gautamiputra Shri Satakarni – became more popular during Guptas dynasty

Samudragupta’s prashasti

- Poet praised the king – glowing terms –
 - As a warrior
 - As a king – winning in battle – learned – best poet
 - Equal to gods
- Look at map – area – shaded in green – series of red dots along the east coast – some areas – marked in blue and purple
- Map – based on information from *prashasti* – Harishena – described – 4 kinds of rulers and Samudragupta’s policies towards them –
 - Rulers of *Aryavarta* –
 - Area in green
 - 9 rulers – uprooted – kingdoms – taken under Samudragupta’s Empire
 - Rulers of *Dakshinapatha* –
 - 12 rulers – some capitals – red dots
 - These rulers – surrendered – after defeat from Samudragupta – he allowed them to rule again
 - Inner circle – neighboring states – Assam, coastal Bengal, Nepal, lots of *gana sangha* – marked in purple
 - Followed his rule, brought gifts for him, attended his court
 - Rulers – outlying areas – marked in blue
 - Perhaps – descendants of Kushanas, Shakas – rulers of Sri Lanka
 - These rulers – submitted to Samudragupta – offered daughters in marriage
- Prayaga (Allahabad), Ujjain, Pataliputra (Patna) – imp. centres – Gupta rulers
- Composed in long sentences – one example –

Samudragupta – the warrior

- Whose body was most charming, covered with plenteous beauty of the marks of hundreds of scars caused by battle-axes, arrows, spikes, spears, barbed darts, swords, iron clubs, javelins, barbed arrows, long arrows and many other weapons



Genealogies

- Most *prashastis* – mention ancestors of ruler
- This one mentions – Samudragupta’s great grandfather, grandfather, father and mother
- His mother – Kumara devi – belonged to Lichchavi *gana* – father – Chandragupta – 1st ruler of Gupta dynasty – adopted title – *maharaj-adhiraja* – Samudragupta – also used this title
- Great grandfather and grandfather – mentioned as *maha-rajas* – family – gradually rose to importance
- Samudragupta – features in genealogies of later rulers – his son – Chandragupta II
- About him – known from inscriptions and coins – led expedition to western India – conquered last Shakas ruler
- It was believed – his court – full of learned men

Vikram Samvat

- Era started in 58 BCE – associated with Gupta dynasty – Chandragupta II
- He founded it – marking his victory over Shakas – assumed the title - Vikramaditya

Harshavardhana and the Harshcharita

- Learn about Gupta rulers – inscriptions and coins – some kings – learn from their biographies
- One such ruler – Harshavardhana – 1400 years ago
- Court poet – Banabhatta – wrote biography – *Harshcharita* – Sanskrit
- This biography – genealogy of Harsha
- Xuan Zang – spent time at Harsha’s court – wrote a lot about it
- Harsha – not the eldest son – became king of Thanesar after father and elder brother died

- Brother-in-law – ruler of Kanauj – killed by ruler of Bengal
- Harsha – took over Kanauj – fought against ruler of Bengal
- Successful in the east – conquered – Magadha and Bengal too – not successful – anywhere else
- Tried to cross Narmada – into Deccan – stopped by Pulakeshin II – belonged to Chalukya dynasty

The Pallavas, Chalukyas and Pulakeshin's prashasti

- This period – Pallavas, Chalukyas – most imp. ruling dynasties in South India
- Kingdom of Pallavas – Kanchipuram (capital) to Kaveri delta
- Kingdom of Chalukyas – centered at Raichur Doab – between Krishna and Tungabhadra rivers
- Aihole – capital of Chalukyas – imp. trading centre – developed as – religious centre – lots of temples
- Pallavas and Chalukyas – frequently raided each other's kingdoms – especially capital cities – bigger towns
- Best known Chalukya ruler – Pulakeshin II – learn about him from *prashasti* – composed by court poet – Ravikirti
- This prashasti – traced 4 generations of Pulakeshin II – father to son – he received kingdom from his uncle
- According to Ravikirti – he led expeditions along west and east coasts – stopped Harsha
- Interesting play of words – Harsha means happiness – poet says – after defeat – Harsha was not Harsha
- Pulakeshin – attacked Pallava king – took shelter in Kanchipuram
- Pallavas, Chalukyas – gave way to new rulers – Rashtrakuta, Chola dynasty

How were These Kingdoms Administered?

- Earlier kings – land revenue – imp. – villages – basic unit of administration
- Some new developments – kings – adopted various steps – win support of powerful men – economically or socially or political or military strength
 - Imp. administrative posts – hereditary – father to son
 - Harishena – *maha-danda-nayaka* (chief judicial officer) – like his father
 - Same person – many offices
 - Harishena –
 - *maha-danda-nayaka* – *kumar-amatya* (imp. minister) – *sandhi-vigrahika* (minister of war and peace)
 - imp. men – took part in local administration
 - *nagara-shreshthi* (chief banker)
 - *sarthavaha* (leader of merchant caravans)
 - *prathama-kulika* (chief craftsman)
 - head of *Kayasthas*
- These policies – effective – sooner or later – these men – set up independent kingdoms

A New Kind of Army

- Like earlier rulers – these kings – maintained organized armies – elephants, chariots, cavalry (horse riders), foot soldiers

- Some military leaders – provided troops to kings – whenever needed – no regular salaries – received grants (gifts) of lands
- They collected land revenue – used it to strengthen army – known as *samantas*
- Weak ruler – *samantas* – became more independent

Assemblies in the Southern Kingdoms

- Inscriptions of Pallavas – mention local assemblies – included *sabha* – assembly of *brahmin* landowners
- This assembly – sub-committees – looked after – irrigation, agriculture, roads, temples, etc
- *Ur* – village assembly – areas – landowners – not *brahmins*
- *Nagaram* – organization of merchants (traders)
- These assemblies – controlled by rich, powerful landowners and merchants – functioned for centuries

Ordinary People in the Kingdoms

- Glimpse of ordinary people's lives – from plays and some other things
- Kalidasa – known for plays – depicting life in king's court
- Imp. feature – king and most *brahmins* – Sanskrit speaking – women and other men – Prakrit speaking
- Most famous play – *Abhijnana Shakuntalam* – love story – king Dushyanta and young woman Shakuntala
- Chinese pilgrim – Fa Xian – noticed plight (problems) of untouchables
 - Expected to live on the outskirts (outer part)
 - Such a man – enters city – strike a piece of wood – everyone knows – avoid touching him
- Interesting description – plight of poor fisherman

A fisherman finds a ring

- Fisherman – found precious ring – king gifted to Shakuntala – accidentally swallowed by fish
- He went to palace – return it – gatekeepers – accused him of theft – chief police officer – very rude
- King – very happy – rewarded him
- Gatekeepers and police officer – decided to take part of reward

The king's army

- King – travelled with lots of equipment
- Along with weapons – items of daily use – pots, pans, furniture, food, animals, spices, etc
- Huge army – accompanied by musicians playing – drums, horns, trumpets
- Villagers – provided hospitality (looking after guests) – provided gifts – curds, ghee, flowers – fodder for animals
- Villagers – also tried to meet king – place their complaints
- Army – left trail of destruction
- Elephants – broken down huts in villages
- Oxen – ran away – because of tumult (loud noise)