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➤ INTRODUCTION

In the Medieval period there was social, economic and political changes which led to the emergence of new social groups. It witnessed the development of new technologies and introduction of new ideas. There were several regional Kingdoms established by the people who came from other parts of the world.

Let us begin our study from 700 AD as it was soon after the death of King Harsha in 647 AD, his vast kingdom began to disintegrate.

➤ THE EMERGENCE OF NEW DYNASTIES

By the seventh century there were big landlords or warrior chiefs in different regions of the subcontinent. Existing kings often acknowledged them as their subordinates or samantas. They were expected to bring gifts for their kings or overlords, be present at their courts and provide them with military support. As samantas gained power and wealth, they declared themselves to be maha-samanta, maha-mandaleshvara (the great lord of a "circle" or region) and so on. Sometimes they asserted their independence from their overlords.

One such instance was that of the Rashtrakutas in the deccan. Initially they were subordinate to the Chalukyas of Karnataka. In the mid-eighth century, Dantidurga, a Rashtrakuta chief, overthrew his Chalukya overlord and performed a ritual called hiranya-garbha (literally, the golden womb). When this ritual was performed with the help of Brahmanas, it was thought to lead to the "rebirth" of the sacrifice as a kshatriya, even if he was not one by birth.

In other cases, men from enterprising families used their military skills to carve out kingdoms. For instance, the Kadamba Mayurasharma and the Gurjara Pratihara Harichandra were Brahmanas who gave up their traditional professions and took to arms, successfully establishing kingdoms in Karnataka and Rajasthan respectively.

➤ THE EMERGENCE OF NEW DYANASTIES

During this period a number of powerful regional kingdoms arose in North India, Deccan and South India. These kingdoms wanted to build a big empire hence they fought with each other continuously in order to have control over the neighboring territories. In the course of time, the northern and western India were taken by the Rajputs. The Palas were powerful in the eastern India. The western India and the upper Gangetic valley was dominated by the Gurjara-Pratiharas . The Rashtrakutas controlled the Deccan and also territories in North and south India. The **Chalukyas** also spread their power in the Deccan Region.

Among the Rajput kingdom **Chahamanas** or the **Chauhans** were very prominent. In the South, the **Cholas** were the most powerful kingdom and were known for the administration and agriculture development. Other than the Cholas **the Pandyas** and **the Cheras** also ruled over South India.

➤ ADMINISTRATION IN THE KINGDOMS

- (a) (i) Many of these new kings adopted high-sounding titles such as maharaja-adhiraja great king, overlord of kings), tribhuvana-chakravartin (lord of the three worlds) and so on. However, in spite of such claims, they often shared power with their samantas as well as with associations of peasants, traders and Brahmanas.
- (ii) In each of these states, resource were obtained from the producers – that is, peasants, cattle-keeper, artisans- who were often persuaded or compelled to surrender part of what they produced. Sometimes these were claimed as "rent" due to a lord who asserted that he owned the land. Revenue was also collected from traders.
- (iii) These resources were used to finance the king's establishment, as well as for the construction of temples and forts. They were also used to fight wars, which were in turns expected to lead to the acquisition of wealth in the form of plunder, and access to land as well as trade routes.
- (iv) The functionaries for collecting revenue were generally recruited from influential families, and positions were often hereditary. This was true about the army as well. In many cases, close relatives of the king held these positions.
- (b) **Prashastis and Land Grants**
- (i) Prashastis contain details that may not be literally true. But they tell us how rulers wanted to depict themselves – as valiant, victorious warriors, for example. These were composed by learned Brahmanas, who occasionally helped in the administration.
- (ii) Kings often rewarded Brahmanas by grants of land. These were recorded on copper plates, which were given to those who received the land. Unusual for the twelfth century was a long Sanskrit poem containing the history of kings who ruled over Kashmir. It was composed by an author named Kalhana. He used a variety of sources, including inscriptions, documents, eyewitness accounts and earlier histories, to write his account. Unlike the writers of prashatis, he was often critical about rulers and their policies.
- (c) **Warfare for Wealth**
- (i) Each of these ruling dynasties was based in a specific region. At the same time, they tried to control other areas. One particularly prized area was the city of Kanauj in the Ganga valley. For centuries, rulers belonging to the Gurjara-Pratihara, Rashtrakuta and Pala dynasties fought for control over Kanauj. Because there were three "parties" in this longdrawn conflict, historians often describe it as the 'tripartite struggle'.
- (ii) Rulers also tried to demonstrate their power and resources by building large temples. So, when they attacked one another's kingdoms, they often chose to target temples, which were sometimes extremely rich.
- (iii) One of the best known of such rulers is **Sultan** Mahmud of Ghazni, Afghanistan. He ruled from 997 to 1030, and extended control over parts of Central Asia, Iran and the north-western part of the subcontinent. He raided the subcontinent almost every year – his targets were wealthy temples, including that of Somnath, Gujarat. Much of the wealth Mahmud carried away was used to create a splendid capital city at Ghazni.

- (iv) Sultan Mahmud was also interested in finding out more about the people he conquered, and entrusted a scholar named al-Biruni to write an account of the subcontinent. This Arabic work known as the Kitab al-Hind, remains an important source for historians. He consulted Sanskrit scholars to prepare this account.
- (v) Other kings who engaged in warfare included the Chahamanas, later known as the Chauhans, who ruled over the region around Delhi and Ajmer. They attempted to expand their control to the west and the east, where they were opposed by the Chalukyas of Gujarat and the Gahadavalas of western Uttar Pradesh. The best-known Chahamana ruler was Prithviraja III (1168-1192), who defeated an Afghan ruler named Sultan Muhammad Ghori in 1191; but lost to him the very next year, in 1192.

➤ KINGDOMS IN INDIA

- (a) (i) **The Gurjara Pratiharas of Kanauj** : The Pratihara, kingdom lasted for about 2 centuries. In 836 A.D., the ruler Raja Bhoj established a powerful empire with Kannauj as its capital. He was a great warrior. He also took great interest in literature and patronized learned men. He was a devotee of God Vishnu. This empire received a shattering blow in 916 A.D, when its ruler was defeated by the Rashtrakutas of the Deccan. The famous rulers of this period were **Raja Bhoj**, and **Mahendrapala. Nagabhata I** was the founder of the dynasty. They had trade relations with Central Asia. The successors were weak and could not protect their kingdom. A result, **Mahmud Ghazni** invaded and defeated the last ruler of Pratihara.

The Tripartite struggle

Kanauj was the main centre of all political developments in Northern India during the period of King Harshavardhana since it was accessible by the rivers Ganga and Yamuna. Its location enabled easy trade relations. Kanauj was rich in soil and attracted the neighbouring dynasties. Hence, there was a long battle between the Gurjaras, the Rashtrakutas and the Palas to control the Ganga valley in general and Kanauj in particular. This struggle is known as the tripartite struggle by the historians.

- (ii) **The Rise of Rajputs**

The term **Rajput** has originated from the Sanskrit word, **Rajputra** which means the 'Son of a king'. The tripartite struggle led to the rise of number of kingdoms throughout North and Central India. Many were courageous and brave and claimed the descent from the sun (**Suryavanshis**), some others traced their origin to lunar clan of the Pandavas (**Chandravanshis**). Among these clans, Chauhans emerged as the most powerful.

- (iii) **The Rathors or Gaharwar of Kanauj** : after the decline of Pratihars, Kanauj was occupied by another Rajput clan known as Rathors. They ruled over Kanauj from 1090 to 1192 A.d. The last ruler of this dynasty was jai chand.

- (iv) **The Chauhans of Ajmer and Delhi** : they established their kingdom in the 8th century A.D. The last and the most powerful ruler of this kingdom was Prithviraj Chauhan. He defeated Mohammad Ghori in the first battle of Tarain (harayana) on 191 A.D. The deeds of bravery of Prithviraj in this battle have been described by poet Chandbardai in his epic poem 'Prithviraj Raso'.

In 1192, Mohammad Ghori again marched to Delhi. In this second battle fought at Tarain (about 125 km off Delhi), Prithviraj was defeated. This was the beginning of India's conquest by foreigners. There are many legends about Prithviraj's romantic marriage with Sanyogita, daughter of Jai Chand.

The Chauhans founded the city of Ajaymerh, which is now called Ajmer.

- (v) **The Pawars or Paramars of Malwa** : In the region of Malwa, the Pawars built their kingdom after the ruins of Pratiharas. Their capital was Dhara near Indore. Raja Bhoj (1018 – 1068 A.D.) was the famous ruler of this dynasty. He himself was a reputed author and a poet. He wrote several books on astronomy, poetry and grammar. His stories have been collected in a number of books, which are still read with great interest. He built the beautiful Bhojpur lake and more than 100 temples. The last ruler of this dynasty was defeated by Alla-ud-din Khalji.

- (vi) **The Chandelas of Bundelkhand** : The kingdom was situated between rivers Narmada and Jamuna. The temples of Khajuraho were built by the Chandelas. Its capital was Mahoba. The Chandelas lost their power in 1203 when Qutb-ud-din Aibak brought them under his control.
- (vii) **The Sisodias of Mewar** : Mewar was one of the most important kingdoms of Rajputs. Its capital was Chittor. The fort of Chittor was captured by Ala-ud-din Khalji. Some years later another Rajput chief, Hamir, took it back and established the rule of chief, Hamir took it back and established the rule of Sisodias. Maharana Kumbha, Maharana Sangram Singh and Maharana Pratap were some of the famous and powerful rulers of Mewar.
- (viii) **The Palas** : The Pala rulers established an extensive empire in north India (Bengal and Bihar) that lasted for about 400 years. Dharampala (770 – 810 A.D.) was the most important ruler. He was a courageous commander and a skilled diplomat. The Palas were great patrons of Buddhism and therefore encouraged Buddhist learning, literature and fine arts. The University of Vikramshila was established with their support. This university attracted students even from foreign lands.
- The first ruler of this dynasty was **Gopala**. The other prominent rulers were the **Devabala** and the **Dharamapala** who strengthened the kingdom and encouraged trade with south-west Asia. The dynasty collapsed in the 12th century and was succeeded by the rulers of Sena dynasty.
- (ix) **The Senas** : After the Palas, the Senas succeeded in establishing an empire. The greatest ruler of this dynasty was Vijaysena (1095 – 1158 A.D.). He brought about peace and prosperity in Bengal. The last king Laksmansena was defeated by Bakhtiyar Khalji, a Turkish general.
- (x) **The Rashtrakutas of the Deccan** : The Rashtrakutas ruled for about four centuries i.e., from the beginning of the 7th century to 10th century A.D. Local self government played an important role in the villages. They were devotees of Shiva and Vishnu. The rock – cut shrines at Ellora and Elephanta belong to this period. They were very powerful in the deccan region which falls between the north of Krishna river and the Tungabhadra river. They gave patronage to Shaivism, Jainism and Vaishnavism. The famous rules were Dantidurga & Krishna I.
- (xi) **The Pallavas** : Pallavas ruled the South India during the period 6th century and 9th century AD. Their capital city was **Kanchi**. Pallavas were great patrons of art and architecture. Mahendravarman and Narasimhavarman were the most powerful rulers. The shore Temple at Mahabalipuram and the Kailasanath temple at Kanchi were constructed by the Pallavas.
- (xii) **The Pandyas**
- The Venetian traveller Marco Polo has left an account of the **Pandiyam kingdom**. The kingdom was to the south of the Cholas and in the region around Madurai which was also the capital of the kingdom and was known as a centre of learning.

➤ THE CHOLAS

The Cholas established their empire in south India with Tanjore as their capital.

From Uraiyur to Thanjavur

How did the Cholas rise to power ? A minor chiefly family known as the Muttaraiyar held power in the Kaveri delta. They were subordinate to the Pallava kings of Kanchipuram. Vijayalaya, who belonged to the ancient chiefly family of the Cholas from Uraiyur, captured the delta from the Muttaraiyar in the middle of the ninth century. He built the town of Thanjavur and a temple for goddess Nishumbhasudini there.

The successors of Vijayalaya conquered neighbouring regions and the kingdom grew in size and power. The Pandyan and the Pallava territories to the south and north were made part of this kingdom. Rajaraja I, considered the most powerful Chola ruler, became king in 985 and expanded control over most of these areas. Rajaraja's son, Rajendra I continued his policies and even raided the Ganga valley, Sri Lanka and countries of Southeast Asia, developing a navy for these expeditions.

Rajaraja Chola I (985-1016) built a strong navy. He led naval expedition to Ceylon and Maldiv islands. Rajendra Chola I (1016-1044 AD) took the title of **Gangaikonda Cholan**. He built a new capital called **Gangaikonda Cholapuram**, the conquerer of Ganga.

- ❖ **Parantaka I** : He expanded the empire and took the title of **Maduraikonda**, the capturer of Madurai.
- ♣ **Rajaraja I** : he suppressed the Cheras and expanded his kingdom. The most famous Brihadeshwara Temple at Tanjore was built by him in the 11th century which was dedicated to Lord Shiva. Most of the temples were of the Dravidian style.

Splendid Temples And Bronze Sculpture

The big temples of Thanjavur and Gangaikonda Cholapuram, built by Rajaraja and Rajendra, are architectural and sculptural marvels.

Chola temples often became the nuclei of settlements which grew around them. These were centers of craft production. Temples were also endowed with land by rulers as well as by others. The produce of this land went into maintaining all the specialists who worked at the temple and very often lived near it – priests, garland makers, cooks, sweepers, musicians, dancers, etc. In other words, temples were not only places of worship; they were the hub of economic, social and cultural life as well.

Amongst the crafts associated with temples the making of bronze images was the most distinctive. Chola bronze images are considered amongst the finest in the world. While most images were of deities, sometimes images were made of devotees as well.

Agriculture and Irrigation

Many of the achievements of the Cholas were made possible through, new developments in agriculture. The river Kaveri branches off into several small channels before emptying into the Bay of Bengal. These channels overflow frequently, depositing fertile soil on their banks. Water from the channels also provides the necessary moisture for agriculture, particularly the cultivation of rice.

Although agriculture had developed earlier in other parts of Tamil Nadu, it was only from the fifth or sixth century that this area was opened up for large-scale cultivation. Forests had to be cleared in some regions; land had to be levelled in other areas. In the delta region embankments had to be built to prevent flooding and canals had to be constructed carry water to the fields. In many areas two crops were grown in a year.

In many cases it was necessary to water crops artificially. A variety of methods were used for irrigation. In some areas wells were dug. In other places huge tanks were constructed to collect rainwater. Remember that irrigation works require planning – organizing labour and resources, maintaining these works and deciding on how water is to be shared. Most of the new rulers, as well as people living in villages, took an active interest in these activities.

The Chola Administration

The Chola administration was well-organised. The king was the head and was assisted by ministers and they had a very efficient armed force consisting of cavalry, infantry, elephants and a good **navy**. The empire was divided into **Mandalams** and **Valanadus** (provinces and districts) consisting of many villages.

How was the administration organized ? Settlements of peasants, known as **ur**, became prosperous with the spread of irrigation agriculture. Groups of such villages formed larger units called **nadu**. The village council and the nadu performed several administrative functions including dispensing justice and collecting taxes.

Rich peasants of the Vellala caste exercised considerable control over the affairs of the nadu under the supervision of the central Chola government. The Chola kings gave some rich landowners titles like **muvendavelan** (a velan or peasant serving three kings), **araiyar** (chief), etc. as markers of respect and entrusted them with important offices of the state at the centre.

We have seen that Brahmanas often received land grants or **brahmadeya**. As a result, a large number Brahmana settlements emerged in the Kaveri valley as in other parts of the South India.

Each brahmadeya was looked after by an assembly or sabha of prominent Brahmana landholders. These assemblies worked very efficiently. Their decisions were recorded in detail in inscriptions, often on the stone walls of temples. Associations of traders known as anagrams also occasionally performed administrative functions in towns.

Inscriptions from Uttaramerur in Chingleput district, Tamil Nadu, provide details of the way in which the sabha was organized. The sabha has separate committees to look after irrigation works, gardens, temples, etc. Names of those eligible to be members of these committees were written on small tickets of palm leaf; these tickets were put into an earthenware pot, from which a young boy was asked to take out the tickets one by one for each committee.

The Chola Literature

Many literary and religious works were translated from Sanskrit into Tamil, Telugu and Kannada. **Kamban** the great writer of this period translated the **Ramayana** in Tamil. The **Mahabharata** was translated into **Telugu**. **Pampa**, **Ponna** and **Ranna** were the three jewels of Kannada literature.

➤ THE TURKISH INVASION

The Rajputs were caught unaware by the **Turks** and **Afghans** who invaded India towards the end of the 10th century AD. The Turks along with Afghans came into India through passes in the mountains of north west.

Mahmud of Ghazni

The son of Sabuktgin by name Mahmud Ghazni attacked India several times between 1010 AD and 1026 AD. He captured Kangra, Mathura, Kanauj, Thanesar, Gwalior and Somnath. He attacked the Somnath Temple seventeen times and took away the gold and the idol.

Muhammad Ghori

Muhammad Ghori became the Governor of the province of Ghazni. He was a general in the Ghori's dynasty. He conquered Multan, Peshawar and Lahore. He fought with Prithviraj in the **Second Battle of Tarain** and defeated him in 1192 AD. He established the Muslim rule in India.

➤ CAUSES OF THE DEFEAT OF THE INDIAN RULERS

The research shows that the Turks did not have superior weapons but their horses were fast and the archers were too quick. On the other hand the elephants of the Indian rulers were very slow. The Muslim rulers were both efficient and good commanders.

The Turks were well-trained. The Indian rulers were not united and did not have a common plan of action. Al-Beruni, who came to India as a traveller, has given a report about the society and his observations. He wrote a book on India called the **Tarikh-i-Hind**. However, the invasion had its impact on the society. It led to intermingling of culture and tradition, and it also paved way for the spread of the Islamic culture.