

FORMATION OF DYNASTIES

(400 AD to 1200 AD)

You must have heard about many kings and royal families. Have you ever thought about how one becomes a king? If a particular family proclaims that they will rule over the rest of the people would the people agree to it? Discuss this in your class. Everybody should give his/her opinion. Let us, then, read this chapter.

In the period between AD 300 and 1200, kings had emerged in almost all parts of India. Kings now ruled regions that had never known kings before. What led to the emergence of kings everywhere? And how did they emerge? Let us look at this question more closely.

Building a Kingdom Through Conquest

Some areas were inhabited by tribes like the Shabara, Abhira, Bhilla, etc. They lived by hunting and gathering in the forests and also grew a little crop and tended small flocks. Warriors armed with more advanced weapons attacked these tribes, who were forced to flee. As a result, that area came under the sway of the warriors. They invited farmers and traders from other regions to settle in these areas. In this way, kingdoms emerged in some areas.

Let us look at one such example from Rajasthan. An inscription of 861 AD from Ghatiyala near Jodhpur says that king Kakkuka of the Pratihara dynasty evicted the Abhiras, the inhabitants of that area and established villages and markets there. He invited traders and farmers from distant lands to come and settle in that area. Later he started a new kingdom of the Pratihara dynasty in that area.

- *The tribes used to and for their livelihood.*
- *King Kakkuka the Abhiras and invited and to settle.*

Kingdoms were emerging through other processes as well.

Rich and Influential Families

Almost every region of the country had seen the expansion of agriculture and the growth of densely populated villages. Every region had a few particularly rich and influential families. It is possible that in the beginning, these families were big in size and also farmed large tracts of cultivable land.

Such families may have exercised a lot of influence in the area around them. They may have extended a lot of help to other people in times of need. The people might also have approached them with their disputes and problems.

Many such families installed new irrigation facilities in their areas to expand agriculture. They dug wells, step wells, canals and tanks with their own funds. They cleared jungles and prepared fields on new lands. They settled new villages in which people from elsewhere were persuaded to come and settle down. People who settled in the new villages lived under the influence of the rich families.

Many people worked as labourers on the fields of these powerful families. Many were kept as servants to attend to their needs.

It is quite possible that these families may also have used force and intimidated the



Fig. 1 Emergence of rich and powerful families

ordinary people around them so that they obeyed their dictates.

Gradually, the position of some of these powerful families became strong in every region. It is possible that the ordinary people adopted a practice of bringing periodic gifts to please the influential families.

- *Underline two factors that contributed to the power of the rich families.*
- *Underline two aspects of the impact of such rich families on other people.*

Rich and Powerful Families Aspire to Become Ruling Clans

Possibly, with the passage of time, the influential families of every region began to ask themselves, “Why should we not become the rulers of this area? Why can’t our clan also become a ruling dynasty like the Mauryas or the Guptas? Why don’t we rule over this region, carry on the administration and make people pay us taxes regularly? In this way, we can increase our riches and our power.”

However, there was an obstacle before them. People don’t accept anyone as their king easily. Why would they accept a family from

amongst themselves as a ruling dynasty? At many places, there was no tradition of kings. That is why when someone tried to emerge as a king in such a situation, he had to go out of his way to convince people to accept his superiority and authority.

Powerful families wanted to

The problem they faced was that

Genealogies

To convince people, they began saying that they belonged to the lineage of great sages, gods or kings. In this period, kings from almost every region of India were making such genealogies. Read below an example of this. This is from the Jabalpur region and is about the Kalchuri family which was in the process of becoming a ruling dynasty. The Kalchuris introduced their lineage in this manner:

“Right at the beginning there was Vishnu. From his navel emerged Brahma. From Brahma sage Atri was born. From Atri was born the Moon. From the Moon was born Mercury (Budh). From him was born king Pruravas. In the family of Pruravas, Bharata was born. In king Bharata’s lineage was the Haihaya clan. The Haihaya clan produced king Arjuna. In Arjuna’s lineage was

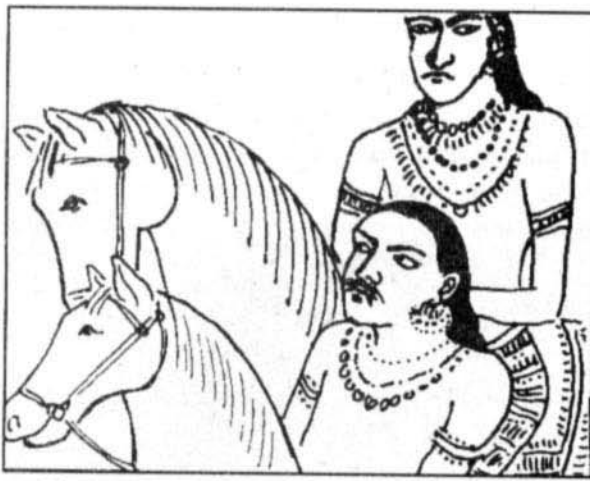


Fig. 2 The rich and powerful wished to be kings

born Kokhala. Kokhala started the Kalchuri dynasty".

- Which Gods were the Kalchuri's relating themselves to?
- To which sages?
- To which kings?

In the same way, many such families who were trying to become ruling dynasties began associating themselves with either the descendants of the Moon (*Chandravanshi*) like the Pandavas or the descendants of the Sun (*Suryavanshi*) like Rama or the descendants of Yadu (*Yaduvanshi*) like Krishna. Some families also claimed that they had emerged from the fire pit of the sage Vashishtha.

- Why did the rich and important families feel the need to have famous lineages?
- In your view, what impression did they want to create on the ordinary people by their genealogies?

Most probably these powerful families wanted to convince people that they belonged to famous and great clans. They must have realised that this was necessary if people had to accept them as kings. This would generate fear and respect in the minds of ordinary people. Making an impact on the minds of people must have been important. Otherwise all the new

ruling dynasties would not have made such genealogies.

- Powerful families began claiming relationships with the famous clans because

The Settling of Brahmins

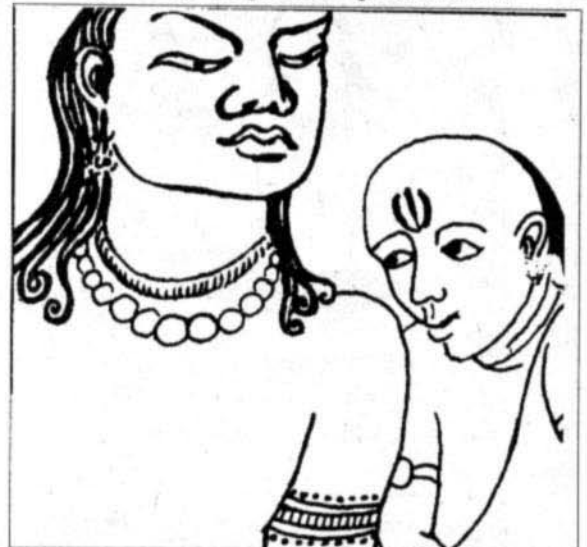
Nevertheless, impressive things about one's family could not have been said without some backing. People accept such statements only when other respectable and established persons support them. So the kings elicited the support of the brahmins in their efforts.

The brahmins enjoyed great prestige. They were well versed in the field of knowledge and religion. Since they hailed from the Gangetic valley, where kingdoms and states had first emerged, they had long experience in matters related to the functioning of kingdoms.

The newly emerging kings summoned prestigious brahmins from far-off places and asked them to settle in their states. They conferred honours on these brahmins in their courts. Lands and villages were gifted to them to enable them to settle down.

Whenever a king made a gift to the brahmins, the entire matter was inscribed on copper plates for the sake of record and evidence. These gifts were normally of two

Fig. 3 Kings sought the help of brahmins



types- sometimes the brahmins were gifted land and conferred full ownership over it. Sometimes they were given just the rights over the revenues of the villages. In effect, the revenue payable by the villagers to the king, was gifted away by the king to the brahmins. In this way, many brahmins were settled in different parts of the country.

The Brahmins Co-operate with the Kings

The brahmins prepared the family histories or genealogies of the kings. If a brahmin said that a king was the descendant of such and such sage or god, the people were greatly impressed.

Brahmins also helped the kings in conducting large *yagnas*. Many kings of those times performed ancient *yagnas* like the Ashwamedha and Rajasuya with the help of the brahmins. You may remember that such *yagnas* were mainly done in ancient times when the small *janapadas* were developing. These

were revived by the brahmins in this period.

These *yagnas* must have had a great impact on the minds of the people and the influence and dominance of the kings must have increased due to these ceremonies.

• *Fill in the blanks:*

- *Brahmins enjoyed a lot of esteem because 1. 2.*
- *Brahmins helped the kings in and*
- *Brahmins received two types of gifts. In the first, they became the owners of and in the second they used to get the entire of a village due to the king.*

Fig. 4 The anointment of a king



Charans (Bards)

In some areas *Charans* (bards) also played an important role in establishing respect towards the newly emerging kings. *Charans*, too, used to maintain genealogies of different dynasties. They were folk singers who used to sing songs in local dialects in praise of kings and their ancestors. The kings, in turn, honoured them by gifting lands, etc. to them.

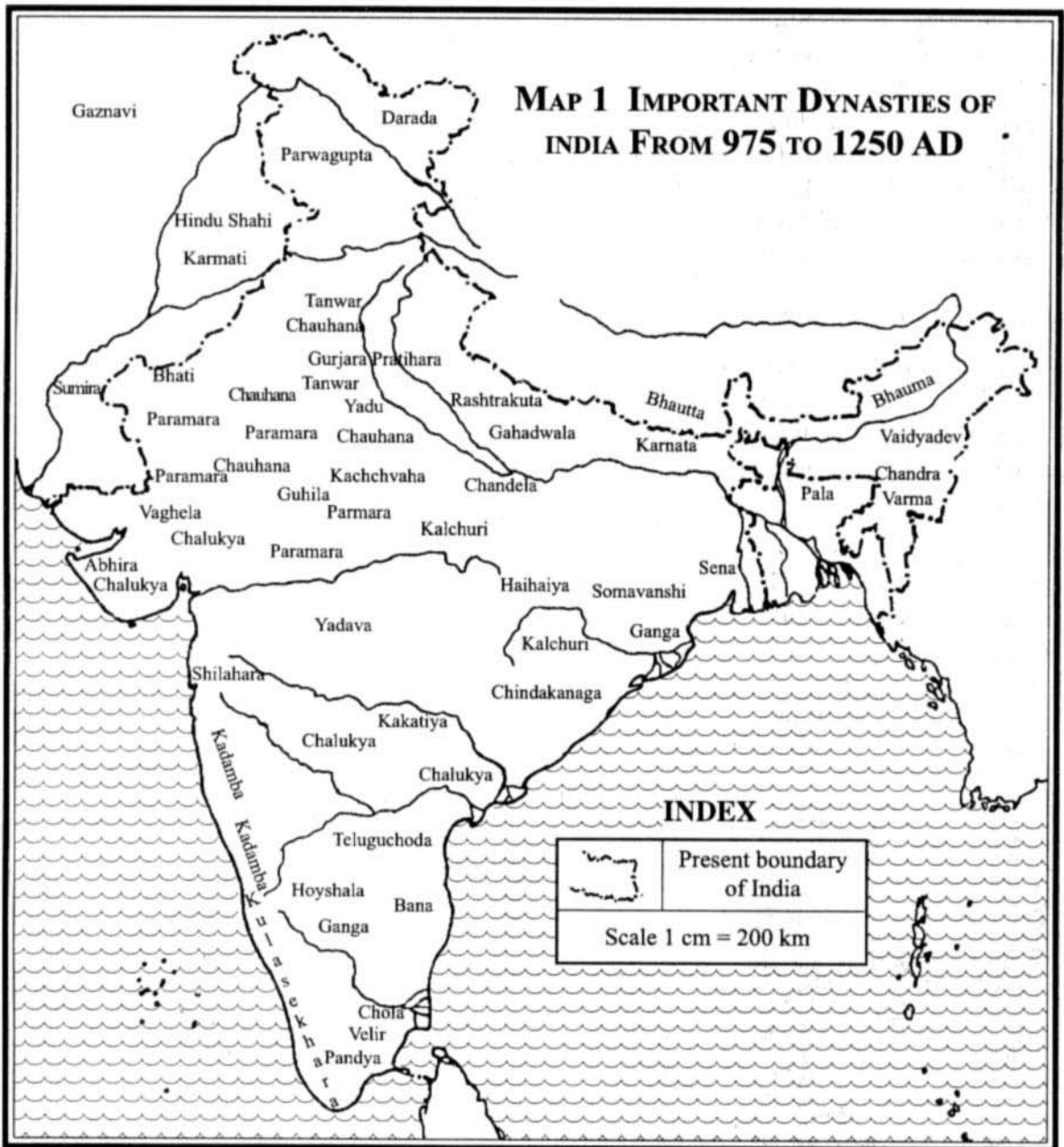
- *List one similarity and one difference between the brahmins and the charans.*

Army

Apart from making all the seefforts to bring the people under their influence, the powerful families also took care to build up their own armies. They acquired weapons, horses, elephants and soldiers. Now, if anyone dared to oppose them, force could be used to ensure obedience.

Dynasties Emerge in Different Places

When a rich and important family succeeded in bringing 50-100 villages under its control, using these methods, it proclaimed itself a ruling dynasty. The head of the family took over the title of king. The king, his family



Based upon Survey of India Outline map printed in 1979. The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of 12 nautical miles measured from the appropriate baseline.
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and followers began to lord over the villages and towns in their control. They imposed regular taxes on the people.

In a following chapter you will learn about how these kings and their family members administered their kingdom.

Some dynasties succeeded in bringing a large number of villages under their control. Some ruled over 100 villages, while others ruled over even larger areas. Kings of large areas took the title of Maharaja.

Whether big or small, every region witnessed the emergence of kingdoms and ruling dynasties. You can see the result of this process in Map 1. This map shows almost all the ruling dynasties of India between AD 975 and AD 1250. You can see that there were many small and big ruling dynasties in every region of India.

• *How many kingdoms are shown in Map 1? (Number them as you count along).*

Read the names of the dynasties. Some of them might appear familiar to you. Many of our acquaintances may bear these names.

- *Can you locate some common family names on the map?*

Changed Situation

You must be sensing the change in the situation compared to the times of Ajatashatru and Ashoka. In the times of Ajatashatru, only

north India had kingdoms. There were no kingdoms in the south.

By AD 1250 every region of India had its own kingdom. This change can be seen easily if you compare the maps on page no.168 and page no.187.

- *Discuss with your teacher the relationship between expansion of agriculture and the emergence of kingdoms in various parts of India.*

MORE ON THE HISTORY OF THE BRAHMINS

Over the years, brahmins settled down in almost all parts of India. This was facilitated by the liberal land grants. You would recall that in the beginning, brahmins were with the aryan tribes, mainly in the Indo-gangetic plains.

Infact, the brahmins looked down upon all the other regions of India as the land of sin. They believed that except for the Gangetic plains no other place was fit for the settlement of brahmins. If any brahmin visited these regions, he had to do penance for this sin.

However, between AD 400 and 1200 when they received invitations from kings from all parts of India, they left the Indo-gangetic plains and settled down in all the far-off regions. They went to settle in those places which they had once considered the 'land of sin' and accepted land, villages, wealth and prestige.

There may be many descendants of these brahmin families in our midst. Make enquiries about the history of brahmin families around you.

We once asked an acquaintance of ours about how and when his family came to live near Hoshangabad. This was Dubeji of a village near Hoshangabad. He told us that it happened a long time ago. At that time there were no brahmins in this region. The Gond and Korku tribes inhabited this region. Then the king sent for the brahmins from the region of Uttar Pradesh. On receiving the invitation of the king, Dubeji's ancestors migrated to this area. The king gave them land to settle down.

Dubeji did not have any records to show all these events, but if you try, you may even find a copper plate inscription!



Fig. 5 Kings invited brahmins to settle in their kingdoms and granted them villages

Evidence from the past....

Here is an example of a copper plate inscription recording a land grant to a brahmin.

This was found in Gujarat at a place called Alina. It was issued in the year AD 766.

"Paramabhataraka Maharajadhiraja Paramamaheshwara Shiladitya Dhruvabhata has given away a village named Mahilabali in gift. This village is in the Upalhet Pathak and is being gifted to a brahmin called Bhatta Akhandalamitra of Anandapura, so that he may perform the sacrificial rituals of Bali, Charu, Vaishnavadeva, Agnihotra and Atithi Sathkara. This gift confers all rights on him. He has the right to take revenue from the cultivators of the village, to extract forced labour from them, to collect fines from the criminals, to collect taxes such as bhag, bhog, kara, hiranya etc. No government official shall have anything to do with this village. As long as the sun and the moon shine in the sky, Akhandalamitra and his descendants shall enjoy this village... This gift inscription is being recorded in the month of jyeshtha, on the fifth day of the shuklapaksha..."

EXERCISE

1. What kind of families became powerful in different regions of India? Write 3-4 sentences about them.
2. What claims did the powerful families make to prove the greatness and superiority of their lineage? Whose help did they take in this effort?
3. Why did the kings invite the brahmins to their kingdoms?
4. What kind of gifts did the kings give to brahmins to make them settle in their kingdoms?
5. a) Outline three strategies adopted by the powerful families to become ruling dynasties.
b) Can a powerful family of your area adopt these strategies and become a ruling dynasty today?
6. The kings of this period also built several large temples and gave liberal grants to them. The details of these grants were inscribed on the walls of the temples along with lavish praise of the kings. Why do you think the kings built these temples and put up the inscriptions?