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M.H.I.-4

Political Structures in India

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By: Anil Kumar Mishra, M.Phil (P.G. Diploma in Translation)



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of the
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QUESTION PAPER

June – 2023

(Solved)

POLITICAL STRUCTURES IN INDIA

M.H.I.-4

Time: 3 Hours]

[Maximum Marks: 100

Note: Answer any five questions. Attempt at least two questions from each section. All questions carry equal marks.

SECTION-I

Q. 1. Discuss the nature of chiefdoms that evolved in Tamilakam in the early historic period.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-1, Page No. 7, Q. No. 2.

Q. 2. Critically examine the political processes between the 6-8th centuries C.E. in the peninsular India.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-6, Page No. 37, 'Political Processes between the 6th-8th Centuries A.D.'

Q. 3. Analyse the views of recent scholars on the nature of the state under the Delhi Sultanate.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-8, Page No. 48, 'Modern Historians on the Nature of the State'.

Q. 4. What were the various mechanisms adopted by the colonial state to legitimise its role in India?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-14, Page No. 83, Q. No. 2.

Q. 5. Write short notes on the following:

(a) The Kushana state

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-3, Page No. 16, 'Nature of Kushana State'.

(b) Feudatories of post-Gupta Empire

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-4, Page No. 23, 'Rise of Feudatories and Disintegration of Gupta Empire'.

(c) Awadh

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-11, Page No. 68, 'Awadh'.

(d) Nature and pattern of the Dutch trade

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-13, Page No. 79, Q. No. 3.

SECTION-II

Q. 6. What were the salient features of the administrative system of the Mauryas?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-16, Page No. 94, 'Administration of the Mauryas'.

Q. 7. Critically examine the growth of Mansab system under the Mughals.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-21, Page No. 127, 'New Hierarchical Order/The Mansab System'.

Q. 8. Discuss the Orientalist and Evangelical understanding of the India.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-23, Page No. 142, Q. No. 1.

Q. 9. Examine the nature of land settlements introduced by the colonial state in India.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-25, Page No. 156, Q. No. 1.

Q. 10. Write short notes on the following:

(a) Sangam polity

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-17, Page No. 103, Q. No. 1.

(b) Nayaka system

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-20, Page No. 121, 'Nayaka System'.

(c) Murshid Quli Khan

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-22, Page No. 134, 'Murshid Quli Khan: Administrative Measures'.

(d) Hunter Commission, 1882

Ans. In 1882, under the leadership of Sir William Hunter, the Hunter Commission was appointed by Lord

Ripon, who was the viceroy of India at the time. The commission was established on April 3, 1882, following a request from the general council of education to Lord Ripon. Sir William Hunter was an Indian Civil Service officer and a member of the Executive Council of the Viceroy. He was born on July 15, 1840, in Glasgow, Scotland, to Andrew Galloway Hunter, a Glasgow manufacturer. He received his education at various institutions, including Glasgow University, Paris, and Bonn, where he acquired a knowledge of Sanskrit and an LL.D. He passed first in the final examination for the Indian Civil Service in 1862.

After the revolt of 1857, the administration of India was transferred to the crown, and normalizing

conditions took some time. By 1882, it was deemed necessary to evaluate the progress of education in the country and address any shortcomings. As a result, Lord Ripon appointed the Indian Education Commission on February 3, 1882, with William Hunter as the chairman. Later, the Indian Universities Act of 1904 and Lord Curzon's Educational Policy were introduced to further improve the educational system in India.

The following were the main objectives:

- Consider different aspects of education in India, paying particular attention to primary education.
- Enquire into the execution of Wood's Despatch of 1854 and suggest ways to improve outcomes of the same.

■ ■

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POLITICAL STRUCTURES

IN INDIA

EARLY STATE FORMATION



Pre-State to State

INTRODUCTION

The formation of states is not an easy process. Of course, we are indebted to the modern historians and scholars, who after a great effort have brought to light the various social backgrounds which led to the formation of states. Actually, the state is not a monolithic structure that is super-imposed from the above. Of course, the formation of state is a transitional process which achieves its aim by means of the stratification of society. There are differences between the state formation of North India and that of South India. The first state in North India emerged in the mid 1st millennium B.C. when the Aryans conquered the parts of North India and the society bearing the structured forms came out. The regions of North India evolved with the Kshatriya class as the ruling class and the peasantry as the producing groups. Hence, the stratification of the society produced kingdoms bestowed with the institutional structures. But the process of the state formation in South India lies in the differences and conflicts among the local groups. The most important and powerful among them emerged as the chieftains and finally the chiefdoms were founded. Besides, trade and commerce, socio-culture background are the pre-requisites for the formation of states. The rulers of any state must be assisted by a band of functionaries to carry out the functions of the state. For which, the state must have a proper revenue system. When the states come to be grounded with all these facilities, they can perform the functions of some well established states. In this chapter, all those functions,

apart from the essential factors of the state formation, have been discussed in detail, which makes it an interesting chapter on the formation of states in India. Further, students are also made familiar with the basic trends of state formation in South India.

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

OUR SOURCES PRE-STATE TO STATE
IN EARLY NORTH INDIA

The Harappan evidence, the Vedic texts, Archaeological evidences, etc. are the important sources which are available to us for the study of the transition from pre-state to state in early North India.

How Important is the Harappan Evidence?

Some scholars have expected that the Harappan culture was endowed with some kind of state like structures but in the absence of textual evidences and any clear cut idea about the nature of state which had ever existed, we cannot rely on them. Further, it is difficult to link the features of the Harappan culture with the post-Harappan culture also.

Vedic Texts: The early and later Vedic literature secure our purposes to a great extent. The Rig-Veda is the earliest form of the Vedic literature and the Yajur, Sama and Athara-veda together with the Brahmanas and the earliest sutra literature make the domain of the later Vedic literature. It is hoped these texts might have been composed between 1500-500 B.C. The four Vedas store the prayers and chants while the Brahmanas and earliest sutras make an excellent discussion on them. The myths, rituals and legends contained in them are of great help to the scholars for studying the development of the political processes in ancient India.

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Archaeology: Of course, our textual evidences are sustained by the archaeological evidences. We find several correspondences between the later Vedic texts and the painted Grey ware culture. Both of these evidences relate to the mid-Ganga valley besides having similarity in the extent of the geographical area. Several features of culture which were prevalent have similarities in the area of agriculture, pastoralism, small cattles and dub huts. Besides, these cultures were familiar with a little use of iron, too. The presence of pottery further boldens our idea about the importance of archaeological evidences and its historical relevance.

SOME PROBLEMS TO KEEP IN MIND

While studying the sources of history to analyse the formation of state, we must guard ourselves from a certain things. That means we must give importance to the factors that correlated to the different periods. If we study the emergence of the Magadha empire separately, it means we are not assisted by the sources contained in the Vedic or later Vedic literature, which are deeply concerned with political processes of the later Vedic society. Further, there are some terms in history, which went on changing its meaning in terms of the period. For instance, the *bali* in the beginning was a simple offering which later became some kind of offering made to the chief. However, in the later Vedic period the existence of *bali* was completely altered. Then, it became a kind of regular tax. Therefore, such terms have their own significance and the students must be conscious while applying them in their analysis of the historical facts.

THE EARLY VEDIC CONTEXT

From the prayers inherent in the Rig-Veda we come to know that the dominant class of the society was dependent on pastoralism specially cattle rearing for subsistence. We find that in such a society the horse had acquired a special position and the chariot drawn by horses, of course, symbolized power. Similarly, the term *gopathi* was the protector of cattles and also related to deities. In the early Vedic society, there were various terms which were bearing the essence of human contexts.

Some prayers are dedicated to the cattle raids, which might be led by the chiefs and the booty thus recovered used to be distributed in the assemblies called the *Vidatha*. It is expected that these booties might be distributed among the chiefs, his supporters and the priests as they had a powerful role in the success of the chiefs.

We find many terms to denote a particular thing in the early Vedic period such as *Agni* symbolized the fire

God and *Vispati* was the leader of the *Vis*, which was basically a social unit. It seems that the society was based on a sense of shared existence in which responsibility and resources were bore by the community as a whole. In the same fashion we find the existence of *Vispatni* which means women might have played some role of substance in the early Vedic society. Apart from this, *Raja* was related to the principal deities like *Agni*, *Indra*, *Soma* and *Varuna* whereas *Rajini* symbolized the Goddesses who are exceptional. Moreover, the divine *Raja* was equivalent to the quality of *ksatra* who was expected to be endowed with exceptional power. Besides, we also find the existence of the human *Rajas* who were praised by the *Brahmanas*. In such cases the achievements of the human *Raja* were measured on the ground of their victories in the battles and the degree of gifts which they used to make towards the priests.

THE LATER VEDIC SCENARIO

Later Vedic texts make us familiar with the complicated social and political relations and the role played by the priests and their respective rulers to regulate these social and political relations by means of grand rituals like *Rajasuya*, *Vajapeya* and *Asvamedha*.

The Brahmana and the Raja: Of course, the *varna* system dominated the scene of the later Vedic society. We find an ideal relationship among the three upper *varnas* of the later Vedic society. However, the relation between the *Brahmanas* and the *Rajas/Kshatriyas* was marked by a sense of tension as well as competition. Their main conflicts lie in the areas of rituals where the *Brahmanas* had declared themselves the specialists of performing these rituals. And the *Kshatriyas* were the patrons of these rituals and had some different ideas about them. Actually, it was a question of sharing resources between the *Rajas* and the *Brahmanas* who valued wealth and had no limit to their greed. But when the *Kshatriyas* were the patrons of these rituals, it was a pertinent question of social status for them. But, of course, relation between them developed smoothly as both of them needed each other to complete their existence. The *Rajas* used to perform the *Rajasuya* rituals with the help of *Brahmanas*. By this ritual the rule of the *Rajas* was legitimized and his position was, thus, enhanced in the society. For their act of performing these rituals, the *Brahmanas* used to receive immense grants from the *Kshatriyas*. Hence, these rituals worked as a device to transform the *Kshatriya* into the ruler.

What Happened to the Vis?: The *Vis*, of course, symbolized the entire community. But when the sacrificer was transformed into the *Raja* of the *Vis*

through the major rituals like Rajasuya and the Ashwamedha. The Vis was also identified as a particular category which was absolutely different from the Brahmanas and the Kshatriyas. Then, the vis became a soft target of exploitation for the Rajas. They were considered to be supportive as well as subordinate to the Raja. Besides, the Rajas were entitled to appropriate the resources generated by the Vis. For the rituals also constructed and presented the relationships between the Vis and the Rajas. This is how the existence of the Vaisyas came into being. However, it had the other side also. In the early Vedic society the Vis had some share in the booty which they lost in the later Vedic period. After this, sometimes, they preferred to leave the area of the Rajas and settle in the other area. We have several historical evidences with regard to their migration in the later Vedic society.

Complex Rituals and their Implications: The Rajasuya, Asvamedha and Vajapeya are the complex rituals which have elaborately been discussed in the later Vedic texts. The Asvamedha was the horse sacrifice ritual in which a horse with a band of guards was allowed to move over a year. During this period rituals were continued at the sacrificial place. Of course, these rituals were quite extended and always involved lots of resources which might have been either received as gifts or by show of force.

These rituals were mainly performed with the objective of showing power. The remarkable point contained in the Vajapeya was that the chariot race was pre-destined to be ended in the victory of the Rajas/Kshatriyas. Besides, these victories were connected with the divine power which the Raja was expected to earn. Hence, the rituals were the devices to show the power of the Kshatriya and at the same time, earning the subordination of the Vaisyas leaving the Brahmanas.

There is no denying the fact that these rituals might have negative effects on the subjects as they involved the wastage of resources unnecessarily. Besides, there were several Kshatriyas who were not in favour of conducting such rituals. Moreover, these rituals were aimed at achieving the subordination of the social categories, which was objected from the different groups of the society. Therefore, the other devices of earning legitimacy took birth in the society.

The 'Jewels' of the Realm: The 'Jewels' of the Rajas were also known as the ratnins. They were the very important functionaries, who were responsible for carrying out the functions of the Rajas. For instance, the caretaker of the sacrificial horse in the Asvamedha

was always chosen from these ratnins. Besides, the purohita or the gramani also formed the ratnins of the Rajas. The charioteer or suta, the ratnins, who helped the Rajas in the battles and used to praise their achievements. Moreover, Senani, the leader of the army and the sangrahir, responsible for gathering resources were also constituted the body of the ratnins, so called the jewels of the realm. Apart from them, there were several other ratnins endowed with the various functions and who lost their importance in the later vedic society. They were the bhagadugha, the aksavapa, the govikartr and the palagala who helped the Rajas in their respective ways.

EARLY HISTORICAL TAMIL POLITY AS DESCRIBED IN SANGAM LITERATURE

Sangam literature is concerned with the corpus of ancient Tamil heroic poems composed during the early historic period of South India popularly known as the Sangam Age. The composers of these heroic poems have constructed the Sangam polity on the ground of political ideas which they have expressed in those poems. According to them, Ceras, Colas and Pandyas who have been given special treatment in these poems were the ruling lines of South Indian polity and they represented the monarchical concepts of polity.

The Ceras: The South-western part of Tamilakam was ruled over by the Ceras. The Ceras regions were predominated by the heavy presence of hills and forests which are given the special treatment in the Sangam literature.

The Ceras were the great performers of velvi, which were the Vedic sacrifices and they worshipped Korravai, the war Goddess and Murugan. In the heroic poems they have been compared with the Vedic Gods such as Surya, Agni, Marut, the Pancabhutas, the constellations and the navagrahas. Of course, it shows a degree of influence related to the Vedic brahmanic as well as the Buddhist culture.

In many heroic poems the Ceras are mentioned as holding the supreme power over the other monarches in the region. The chief Valluvan was a Cera subordinate and was responsible for the military assistance as the heroic poem states about him. The other chiefs who were the Cera subordinates are also specially given a room in the Sangam poems. Moreover, the separate collection of poems which have been annexed to the Sangam poems show the Cera lineage. According to these poems, the Ceras were only a line of chieftains, who are highly praised in the heroic poems which come in the unit of ten lines. Further, these units are our best sources to

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know about the structure of political power, sources of legitimacy and nature of authority which the Ceras had preferred. In these heroic poems we also find references to the existence of the army of the classical-four-fold division and with the support of this army, the Ceras had conquered many rulers and made them accept their sovereignty. It might be possible that these poems would have been composed in praise of the Ventar, the chiefly lineage and so, they could be accepted as the mere expression of reality. Apart from this, these poems also make us familiar with the welfare works the Ceras started in their region.

The Colas: In the heroic poems the Cola is addressed as 'Kavira Kilavon' The cola ruled over the land located in the Kaveri delta which was famous for paddy and sugarcane. We find that some poems have been composed in praise of chiefs, enati Tirukkuttuvan, enati, Tirukkili and enati Tirukkannam. Certainly, these enatis had served the Cola in various ways. Besides, we come to know that Pannam and Aruvantai were the Cola subordinates and responsible for the Cola military assistance. During the Cola rule, the Ventar who played the role of a revenue collector as the ventar was involved in collecting paddy from the people. Moreover, some poems are also dedicated to the exploits of warriors during the Cola. In these poems the Cola rulers are highly praised.

The Pandyas: The pandyas ruled over the regions which were rich in pastoral and coastal fields. In the poems, they have been referred as the rulers of possessing excellent resources. We come to know from the relevant sources that Nakan and Nampi were the Pandya subordinates and they provided the Pandyas with the military help whenever they needed it. Moreover, the Pandya rulers had a high regard for their subjects. There were some Pandya rulers like Maran Valuti who was famous for his might and valour. Who had even challenged the North Indian kings once. Of course, he was one of the important Pandya rulers beside Mutukutumi Peruvaluti.

The Political Structures: Historical Perspectives: The historians of old generation have opined that the Ceras, Colas and Pandyas endowed with some kind of centralized political structure on the basis of the epics, puranas and the Arthasastra as they have been expressed in the poems. These historians have constructed the form of central and provincial administration bearing a high sense of typical monarchy. Ministers, the Council of officials, standing army of fourfold divisions, delimited territory, periodic taxations and officialdom were the

essential parts of the political structures during their reign. N. Subrahmanian has also favoured the existence of such a political machinery during the reign of the Ceras, Colas and Pandyas. In the literature of the period we find the existence of the councils such as Sabha, aimperukuzhu and enpewerayam which consisted of the representatives of the people, the priests, the physicians, the astrologers, army chiefs, envoys or ambassadors, ministers and spies. However, in the absence of any authentic historical evidences the modern scholars have shifted their ideas from them as they show patriotic sentiments and a sense of regional pride.

PRE-STATE SITUATION IN SOUTH INDIA

In the conventional writing of history the ruling class like the Ceras, Colas and Pandyas have been assigned the status of dynasties and kingly rule. However, the modern scholars have concentrated on their nature of chiefdoms as their knowledge is based on the socio-economics and political condition of the period which is conducive to the pre-state, formation. Hunting rearing animals, agriculture and craft production were the main forms of subsistence found in the social and political processes of Tamilakam. Further, primitive agriculture and animal keeping were under the deep influence of political regulation. The Tamil heroic poems throw sufficient light on the subsistence pattern, socio-cultural ideas and institutions found in the regions where the Ceras, Colas and Pandyas had established their dominance. Besides, people were linked with one another by means of formal and informal device of exchange and predatory relations. Of course, the people in their region lived in group settlements called Ur. The Ur. was considered to be the basic unit of production and its development was based on the technologies available to the locality. The economy and society were non-stratified and the political science was guided and controlled by the chiefdoms of various sizes which presented an ideal condition of State formation.

CHIEFDOMS OF TAMILAKAM

We come to know about the knowledge of the chiefdoms of Tamilakam from the Tamil heroic poems. The Ashokan edicts of 3rd century B.C. have also described the Ceras, Colas and Pandyas as the chief chiefdoms of South India. The heroic poems describe the different levels of power prevalent among the chiefdoms, and they are known as the Killar, Velir and Ventar. Actually, these three levels of power symbolize the three systems of power sharing among the chiefdoms of Tamilakam.