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New Empires
and Kingdoms

Lesson at a Glance

- A **Prashasti** is a Sanskrit word which means 'in praise of'. Although composition of prashastis was not a new thing, it became popular only from the time of the Guptas.
- In Samudragupta's *prashasti* the poet described the king as equal to the gods.
- Most *prashastis* also mention the ancestors of the ruler. For example, there is one prashasti that mentions Samudragupta's great grandfather, grandfather, father and mother.
- **Chandragupta**, Samudragupta's father, was the first ruler of the Gupta dynasty who adopted the grand title of maharaj-adhiraj. This title was also used by Samudragupta.
- **Harshavardhana** ruled Thanesar about 1400 years ago. He also began to rule over **Kanauj** after this brother-in-law was killed.
- In the beginning of his rule he remained successful but finally his success did not last long.
- The **Pallavas** and **Chalukyas** were important ruling dynasties in South India.
- **Pulakeshin II** was the famous Chalukya ruler. His court poet Ravikirti composed poems in his praise. It was Pulakeshin II who checked the advance of Harsha.
- Land revenue remained important for the rulers.
- A new kind of army developed. Kings maintained a well-organised army with elephants, chariots, cavalry and foot-soldiers along with military leaders.
- Local assemblies which included the Sabha (an assembly of brahmin land owners) were there. **Ur** was a village assembly that existed in areas where the land owners were not brahmins. **Nagaram** was an organisation of merchants.
- The condition of ordinary people was not good.
- Untouchables were not treated well.

■ TEXTBOOK QUESTIONS SOLVED ■

Let's Recall

Q. 1. State whether true or false:

- Harishena composed a prashasti in praise of Gautamiputra Shri Satakarni.*
- The rulers of Aryavarta brought tribute for Samudragupta.*
- There were twelve rulers in Dakshinapatha.*
- Taxila and Madurai are important centres under the control of the Gupta rulers.*
- Aihole was the capital of the Pallavas.*
- The local assemblies functioned for several centuries in South India.*

Ans. (a) False, (b) True, (c) True, (d) False, (e) False, (f) True.

Q. 2. Mention three authors who wrote about Harshavardhana.

Ans. The three authors were—Banabhatta, Xuan Zang and Harshavardhana himself.

Q. 3. What changes do you find in the army at this time?

Ans. The kings or the rulers maintained a well-organised permanent army. It included elephants, chariots, cavalry and foot soldiers.

- They kept military leaders who provided them with troops whenever they needed them.
- Regular salaries were not paid to these military leaders. Instead, they were given grants of land. They collected revenue from the land and used this to maintain soldiers and horse and provide equipment for warfare.
- These military leaders were known as *Samantas*. Whenever they found the ruler weak or inefficient they took advantage of the situation and became independent.

Q. 4. What were the new administrative arrangements during this period?

Ans. New administrative arrangements came into existence during this period. Although the village remained the basic unit of administration, some new developments emerged. Kings adopted several steps to get the support of powerful and influential persons.

- Some important administrative posts were now hereditary. This means that sons succeeded fathers to these posts. For example, the poet Harishena got the post of *maha-danda-nayaka* or chief judicial officer from his father.
- Sometimes, one person handled the responsibility of many offices. For example, Harishena was not only a *maha-danda-nayaka*, but also a *kumar-amatya*, meaning an important minister and a *Sandhi-Vigrahika*, meaning a minister of war and peace.
- Some influential persons like *nagara-shreshthi* or chief banker or merchant of the city, the *Sartharaha* or leader of the merchant caravans, the *prathamakulika* or the chief craftsman and the head of the *kayasthas* or scribes had a say in the local administration.

Let's Discuss

Q. 5. What do you think Arvind would have to do if he was acting as Samudragupta?

Ans. Arvind would have to do the following if he was acting as Samudragupta:

- He had to march solemnly in splendid robes, to twirl his moustaches and wield the silver-paper wrapped sword with gusto.
- He had to sit on a royal throne and play a veena and recite poetry.
- He had to be victorious in several battles like a great warrior.

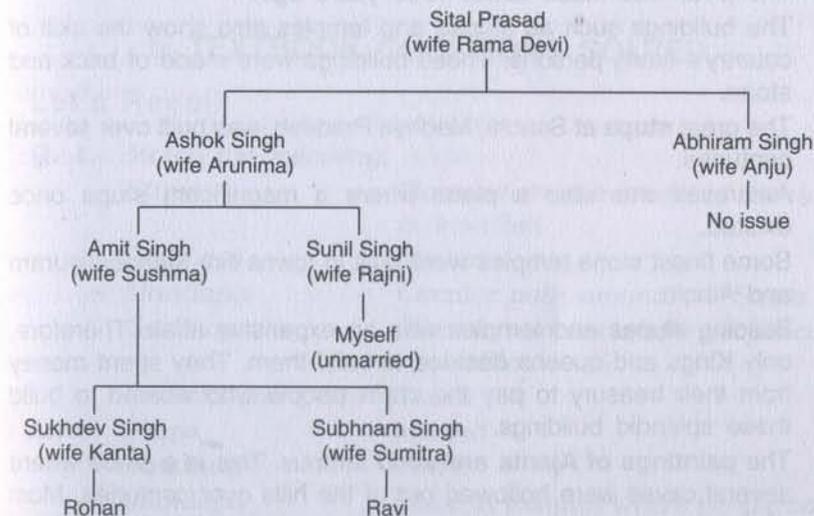
Q. 6. Do you think ordinary people would have read and understood the *prashastis*? Give reasons for your answer.

Ans. I don't think ordinary people would have read and understood the *prashastis*. *Prashastis* were written in Sanskrit, which was not a language of common people. Common people were generally illiterate and it was difficult for them to read and understand Sanskrit.

Let's Do

Q. 7. If you had to make a genealogy for yourself, who are the people you would include in it? How many generations would you like to show? Make a chart and fill it.

Ans. If I had to make a genealogy for myself, I would like to include three generations. I will start from my great grandfather who had two sons. Out of two one was issueless and the next one i.e. my grandfather had two sons. One my father and the other my uncle. My father has only one son i.e. myself. My uncle has two sons. As my uncle's son are now married, they have their children. Hence, I will include in my genealogy all three persons. My genealogy can be presented in this way.



Q. 8. How do you think wars affect the lives of ordinary people today?

Ans. Wars are the most disastrous event in our life. Usually they are fought between two nations or collectively among different group of nations. The main intention behind such wars is not at all in the interest of the common people. They are the worst victims of the wars. A large number of them are killed for none of their faults. They lose their life and wars leave behind nothing but cries and widows and orphans. All the resources are ruined. Development works are hampered. And it takes a long time to recover from the destruction caused by wars. People are also overburdened with new taxes, new loads of work to create new world again.