

# 1 Tracing Changes Through a Thousand Years

## Lesson at a Glance

- **Maps** are the sources through which we can trace out the historical changes and contexts.
- **Cartographers** were the skilled artists who recorded these chronological effects in Maps.
- The mode of presentation and the contexts vary through the time. The maps of 1154 CE are not the same as the maps of 1720s, e.g. one can see the maps given in NCERT Textbook on pages 1 and 2. Both the maps show the same location but with a lot of variations. Even the names of the places are spelt differently.
- Historical records are available in different languages. Differences are also traced in the use of grammar and vocabulary, change in meaning also occurred over time, e.g., the term *Hindustan* is now 'India'.
- The term *Hindustan* was first used by **Minhaj-i Siraj**, a Persian chronicler, in 13th century.
- Minhaj-i Siraj's *Hindustan* constituted the areas of Punjab, Haryana and the lands between the Ganga and Yamuna. The term was used in a political sense for lands forming the parts of the dominions of the Delhi Sultan. The south India was not included in this map.
- **Babur**, in the early 16th century, used the term *Hindustan* in order to describe the geography, the fauna and the culture of the inhabitants of the subcontinent. **Amir Khusrau** used the term *Hind* in the similar sense in the 14th century.
- With the change of time we observe that the idea of a geographical and cultural entity like 'India' did exist but the term *Hindustan* did not carry the political and national meanings which we associate with it today.
- We trace out many changes in the use of words with the change of time. For example, the word '**foreigner**' is used in the sense of one who is not an Indian, whereas it was, in the medieval period, used in the sense of one who was a part of the same village but not a part of a particular society or culture. The synonymous words for 'foreigner' in Hindi and Persian are '*pardesi*' and '*ajnabi*' respectively.

- Historians use different sources to study the past depending upon the period of their investigation. **Coins, inscriptions, architecture and textual records** are still the **basic sources**.
- During the period of 700 to 1750, we trace out a dramatic increase in the variety of textual records. Its basic reason was that paper gradually became cheaper and more widely available. It was extensively used in writing the holy texts, chronicles of rulers, letters and teachings of saints, petitions and judicial records, and for registers of accounts and taxes.
- **Manuscripts** collected from wealthy people, rulers, monasteries and temples were placed in **libraries** and **archives**. These manuscripts and documents helped the historians with several detailed information though it is difficult to use them.
- As there was no printing press in those days **scribes** used to copy down manuscripts by hand. Hence they were somewhere not very legible. Some changes in words and sentences were also made, in fact not knowingly, in the manuscripts while copying. This brought the same manuscripts copied presented differently by different scribes. It poses a serious problem to determine which the original one was.
- The authors used to revise their chronicles time to time. **Ziyouddin Barani**, a 14th century author revised his chronicle for the first time in 1356 followed by another version two years later. In fact, the two versions differed from each other but as the original one was traceless, nobody could claim for the difference.
- The period between 700 and 1750 was a **phase of transition** as a lot of developments took place. The Persian wheel in irrigation, the spinning wheel in weaving and firearms in combat were some of the examples of developments.
- The subcontinent saw the new food like potatoes, corn, chillies, tea and coffee.
- The new technologies and crops came along with the migrants who also brought other ideas with them.
- It was a period of economic, political, social and cultural changes and also of great mobility.
- People travelled to far off lands to make their fortune.
- **Rajputs**, i.e. Rajputras, one of the prominent communities were the group of warriors between the eighth and fourteenth centuries. They were the '*kshatriyas*' by caste status. They included the rulers, chieftains, soldiers and commanders serving in the armies of the different monarchs all over the subcontinent. Extreme valour

and a great sense of loyalty were the prominent qualities of this community.

- **Marathas, Sikhs, Jats, Ahoms and Kayasthas** (a caste of scribes and secretaries) were the other prominent classes of people.
- This period witnessed a gradual clearing of forests and extension of agriculture. It caused changes in people's '**habitat**' which forced many of the forest-dwellers to migrate.
- Some others adopted tilling the land and became peasants and soon became part of large complex societies. They were also put under tax cover as per their status which gave rise to many **jatis** i.e. sub-castes.
- The divisions of sub-castes were made on the basis of their backgrounds and occupations. Ranks were variable as per the change in power, influence and resources controlled by members of the *jati*. This status of the same *jati* varied from area to area.
- *Jatis* had their own system of ruling. They framed rules and regulations in order to manage their own people. An assembly of elders called **Jati Panchayat** was responsible for enforcing the regulations.
- *Jatis* were bound to follow the rules of their villages. Villages constituted only one small unit of a state and were governed by a **chieftain**.
- The subcontinent was divided into several regions which were ruled by empires of different dynasties. By 700 several regions developed their distinct geographical dimensions and their own cultural characteristics.
- During the period of 700 and 1750 (the thousand years of history that we are exploring here) there were significant developments in religious traditions.
- The changes were seen in the people's beliefs. Hinduism saw a great many changes which included the worship of new deities the construction of temples by royalty and growing dominance of **Brahmanas** and the priests.
- For their knowledge of Sanskrit texts Brahmanas earned great respect in society. The new rulers were their patrons.
- The most significant development of the period was the rise of the idea of **bhakti** which also paved the rise of many new religions in the subcontinent.
- The teachings of the holy **Quran** was brought to India in the seventh century by the migrants.

- **Quran** is the most prominent holy book of the Muslims which delineates the idea of one God, Allah and His love, bounty and mercy for those who believe in Him.
- Islam and the **Ulema**—the learned theologians and jurists were patronized by many rulers.
- Like Hinduism, Islam was also interpreted in many ways and the followers of Islam were divided in two sub-sects—**Shias** and **Sunnis**.
- For historians time reflects changes in social and economic organization, in the persistence and transformation of ideas and beliefs. Hence for the historians it becomes convenient to study time by dividing it into segments—**periods**—that possess shared characteristics.
- In the middle of the nineteenth century the history of India was divided into three periods —**Hindu, Muslim, and British**. It was done so because there was no significant historical development other than religion.
- This **periodisation** is followed by some of the historians even today.

### ■ TEXTBOOK QUESTIONS SOLVED ■

#### Let's Recall

**Q. 1.** Who was considered a 'foreigner' in the past?

**Ans.** The term 'foreigner' is used in the sense of a person who is not an Indian. In the medieval period it was applied to any stranger who appeared, say in a given village, someone who was not a part of that society or culture. In this sense a forest-dweller was a foreigner for a city-dweller. But two peasants living in the same village were not foreigners to each other, even though they may have had different religious or caste backgrounds.

**Q. 2.** State whether true or false:

- (a) We do not find inscriptions for the period after 700.
- (b) The Marathas asserted their political importance during this period.
- (c) Forest-dwellers were sometimes pushed out of their lands with the spread of agricultural settlements.
- (d) Sultan Ghiyasuddin Balban controlled Assam, Manipur and Kashmir.

**Ans.** (a) False; (b) False; (c) True; (d) False

**Q. 3.** Fill in the blanks:

- (a) Archives are places where ..... are kept.  
 (b) ..... was a fourteenth-century chronicler.  
 (c) ....., ....., ..... and ..... were some of the crops introduced into the subcontinent during this period.

**Ans.** (a) Manuscripts  
 (b) Ziyauddin Barani  
 (c) Potatoes, corn, chillies, tea, coffee.

**Q. 4.** List some of the technological changes associated with this period.

**Ans.** Some notable technological changes associated with this period were:

- (i) The use of Persian wheel in irrigation;  
 (ii) The use of spinning wheel in weaving;  
 (iii) The use of firearms in combat.

**Q. 5.** What were some of the major religious developments during this period?

**Ans.** Some of the major significant religious developments occurred in Hinduism. The worship of new deities, the construction of temples by royalty and growing importance of Brahmanas, the priests, as dominant groups in society were the new changes. Brahmanas' importance grew due to their knowledge of Sanskrit language. They were patronized by the Emperors. The idea of *bhakti* emerged among people. The merchants and migrants brought with them the teachings of *Quran*, the holy book of Muslims.

### Let's Understand

**Q. 6.** In what ways has the meaning of the term 'Hindustan' changed over the centuries?

**Ans.** It has been observed that language and its interpretation change with the change of time. The term 'Hindustan' was used for the first time by Minhaj-i Siraj, a thirteenth century Persian chronicler. He, with this term, meant the areas of Punjab, Haryana and the lands between the Ganga and Yamuna. It was used in a political sense for lands constituting a part of the dominions of the Delhi Sultan. Though the term shifted with the extent of the

Sultanate but it never included south India. Later in the sixteenth century, Babur, while using this term, meant the geography, the fauna and the culture of the inhabitants of the subcontinent. A fourteenth-century poet Amir Khusrau also used the term 'Hind' almost in the same sense. The remarkable point is that while the idea of geographical and cultural entity like 'India' did exist, the term 'Hindustan' did not carry the political and national meanings that we associate with it today.

**Q. 7.** How were the affairs of *jatis* regulated?

**Ans.** *Jatis* were the sub-castes which were grouped on the basis of economic and social status. They were ranked as per their backgrounds and their occupations. Ranks were not fixed permanently. They varied as per the power, influence and resources controlled by members of the *jatis*. Hence the status of the same *jati* could vary from area to area. *Jatis* had their own system of ruling. They framed their own rules and regulations for managing the conduct of their members. An assembly of elders was responsible for enforcing these regulations. This assembly of elders was called *jati panchayat*. But *jatis* were also required to abide by the rules of their villages.

**Q. 8.** What does the term pan-regional empire mean?

**Ans.** The term 'pan-regional' was used in the sense of the areas of empires spanning diverge regions. The dynasties like Cholas, Khaljis, Tughluqs and Mughals extended their empires pan-regional. Though, not all these empires were equally stable or successful. But pan-regional rule altered the character of the regions. Most of the regions across the subcontinent were left with the legacies of the big and small states that had ruled over them. The emergence of many distinct and shared traditions in governance the economy elite cultures and languages were some of the prominent factors that took place as a result of pan-regional rules.

### Let's Discuss

**Q. 9.** What are the difficulties historians face in using manuscripts?

**Ans.** Manuscripts in early days were handwritten. Writers used palm leaves as paper for writing manuscripts. The

historians used to copy down those manuscripts. Different historians presented their version in their own way as many of the words or sentences were beyond their understanding. So they copied what they understood. Later it was difficult to recognize which one was the original manuscript. Historians interpreted the facts as per the manuscripts which they got. Hence we find a number of facts with different illustrations in history.

**Q. 10.** *How do the historians divide the past into periods? Do they face any problems in doing so?*

**Ans.** Time is not just passing of hours, days or years for historians. Instead it is the reflection of social, economic, cultural and religious changes that occur through the ages. Division of past into large segments—periods—make it easy to study time for historians. British historians, in the middle of the nineteenth century, divided time into three periods—Hindu, Muslim and British. This division was made on the basis of the fact that no significant change other than the religion of the rulers could occur during these periods. But as a matter of fact this division ignored the rich diversity of the subcontinent. Few historians take this periodisation even today while most of them take the economic and social factors into account in order to characterize the major elements of different moments of the past. The history of the past thousand years has seen considerable changes. As a result the sixteenth century was not the same as the eighteenth century or the eighth or eleventh centuries. Hence it is very difficult for the historians to describe the entire period as one historical unit.

**Q. 11.** *Compare either Map 1 or Map 2 with the present-day map of the subcontinent listing as many similarities and differences as you can find.*

**Ans.** Map 1 and Map 2 given in the NCERT Textbook represent two different times. Map 1 was made in 1154 CE by al-Idrisi, an Arab geographer. This section is a detail of the Indian subcontinent from his larger map of the world. Map 2 was made by a French cartographer in 1720. Both maps are quite different from each other, even though they represent the same area. In Map 1 we find south India at the place where we would expect to find north

India and Sri Lanka is the island at the top. The place names are in Arabic. Some familiar places like Kanauj in Uttar Pradesh have been spelt as Qanauj. In comparison to this Map 2 was made nearly 600 later after Map 1. By that time information about the subcontinent had changed a lot. This map appears to be more familiar to us. The coastal areas, particularly, are more detailed.

**Q. 12.** *Find out where records are kept in your village or city. Who writes these records? Is there an archive? Who manages it? What kinds of documents are stored there? Who are the people who use it?*

**Ans.** In our village, records are kept in the Panchayat office. Gram Sevak who is a government employee writes these records. There is no archive in our village. Sarpanch manages it. The documents stored there include the record of the land of the village, data of births and deaths, the number of public properties, data of health centres, etc. Villagers use these records. The certificates are issued to the villagers on the basis of these records.

