

## II. Political Structures

b) Legitimization of Kingship; Brahmanas and temples; royal genealogies and rituals.

The bases of sovereignty during this period was a mixture of the Divine Right Theory and the Contract Theory. On one hand the masses as well as the authors of the treatise on polity regarded the ruler as a partial incarnation of Vishnu. On the other hand, they also held that it was the representatives of the people who conferred sovereignty on him. So, the natural duty of the ruler was to rule in the interest of the people, while the duty of the people was to be loyal and faithful to him. Thus the basis of sovereignty was a sort of contract between the King and the people. This was the Theory of Kingship under the Nature of Political Structure during the Early Medieval Period.

The Legitimization of Kingship happens when the situation is so when the subjects or the ruled and the King or the ruler



— both the sides agree to the righteousness of ruling i.e., the rule of the government is right. When the existence of concentrated political power is held and exercised by a position of a community and that is rendered the status of being just, then only one can call it legitimate.

Kingdoms and Empire in India during the Early Medievales were built up on the belief of the divine origin of kingship. Since the ancient times when the kings, chosen by the people ascended the throne the Brahmins performed the rituals of coronation.

The feudal nature of society in the Early Medieval period ~~estimated~~ <sup>resulted</sup> in the unprecedented rise of the samantas as feudatories. There was emergence and presence of numerous layers of samantas enjoying diverse types of economic and political rights. The samantas are held to have actually controlled political affairs and this paved the way for fragmentation of sovereignty and political decentralisation. The legitimacy of kingship depended on one hand on King's control of the core area of his rule and on the



other hand on the relationship he shared with the Samantas. The ~~relationship~~ Brahmins provided the Kings with the necessary ideologies for this purpose.

The incidence of land grants by Kings to Brahmanas increased significantly during 600-1200 CE. Brahmadeyas (land gifted to Brahmanas) had a political dimension. The settlements were created by royal order, and the rights of the Brahmana donees were declared and confirmed by royal decree. Far from being symptoms of the disintegration of polities or royal disempowerment, land grants to Brahmanas were one of several integrative and legitimizing policies adopted by Kings.

From the point of view of fledging Kingdoms struggling to establish their power and legitimacy, the patronage of Brahmanas, a social group that had traditionally enjoyed a privileged socio-religious status, did not amount to inordinate loss of revenue or control. The maximum number of grants and the most lavish grants — both to Brahmanas and to ~~the~~ religious establishments — were



generally made by the most powerful dynasties and Kings. In fact increase in royal land grants higher level of control over productive resources by Kings compared to earlier periods. While royal grants to Brahmanas remained a feature ~~the~~ throughout the early medieval period, from about 10<sup>th</sup> century, there was a shift towards donations to temples.

Legitimization of Kingship also secured the King to be projected as a Kshatriya or ruling class. The Brahmins helped in establishing their Kshatriya lineage. A proper Hindu style coronation of the King was also a mean of legitimisation of Kingship. Apart from these, building of Royal Temples which signified and symbolized the power and <sup>religious</sup> identity of the respective realm. For example - the Kandamya Mahadeva temple at Khajuraho, the Rajarajeshwara temple at Tanjavore etc. Even matrimonial alliances were also seen a mean of legitimizing Kingship.



Royal patronage strengthened the economic power of a section of Brahmana community and led to the further growth of a Brahmana landed elite. Land grants strengthened the position of a section of the Brahmanas in rural areas. They backed the Brahmana's traditionally high social status by political support and ~~enormous~~ economic power, and gave him wide-ranging control over land, resources and people. Brahmanas emerged as a dominant caste in brahmadeya villages. In areas where brahmadeya villages were situated close to tribal communities, the latter were introduced to plough agriculture. Some tribal groups were absorbed into the fold of caste society; others were given the status of out-castes or untouchables.

The construction and embellishment of religious establishments was the result of patronage from diverse sources. H. H. Risley has pointed out



that early medieval kings tried to buttress their authority by extending patronage to major pilgrimage places, large scale grants to temples and the construction of imperial temples. Royal patronage was important in case of specific shrines and reflected the close relationship that kings sought to establish with certain deities and temples. An example is the Brihadishwara Temple at Tanjavur.

Osessa gives some instances of royally endowed temples. The largest temple at Bhuvaneshwar is the Lingaraja temple - According to tradition, it took three generations of Somavamshi Kings to complete the temple.

In South India, a large number of inscriptions record royal donations to temples mostly of gold, land and some of livestock and paddy.

Temple architecture can be classified into three categories - Nagara, Dravida and Vesara.



The Nagara style is associated with the land between the Himalayas and Vindhya, the Dravida style with land between the Krishna and Kaveri rivers, while the Velara style is sometimes associated with the land between <sup>the</sup> Vindhya and Krishna river.

### Royal Prasastis

The process of accumulation of political power bestowed an additional premium on the virtue of military achievements.

In the royal prasastis the passages dealing with royal conquest formed a stereotype throughout the history of a dynasty. The new Kshatriya value was well expressed by Madhavi that the highest end of royalty was the fulfilment of the desire of king for conquest and the establishment of sole political supremacy.

Reference.

Singh Puri, A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India. Delhi, 2008.