INDIAN GOVERNMENT
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Overview

The systems of government that evolved over the many centuries of Indian history begin with (what we believe to have been) an egalitarian hunter-gatherer society in prehistoric time. From the time of the Indus Valley Civilisation (c. 3000-1500 BCE), administrative systems oscillate between a centralised state and a federal state (based on regionalism), and some uneasy compromises between the two. The origins of the modern Indian state lie in the structures introduced by the Delhi Sultanate, refined by the Mughal Empire and finally encoded by British Rule. Although parliamentary democracy represents a leap into modernity, some of the fundamental administrative units and processes have not changed much since about 1500 CE.

Prehistory

The political system of prehistoric India is purely a matter of speculation, although some parallels can be drawn from ethnographic research on modern stone-age groups. In general, we can assume that the small number of individuals in any group (estimated between 20-60) did not require any formal system at all. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to believe that some methods of censure, resource distribution and status recognition would have existed. The important point is that these processes would have been informal and flexible.

Indus Valley Civilisation
Theocracy theory   Based on a now-discarded analogy from ancient civilisations in Mesopotamia and Egypt, it was once assumed that the IVC was a theocracy, with its centre at Mohenjo-Daro or Harappa.   A famous figure of a bearded man was put forward as 'a priest-king', and a large building in Mohenjo-Daro (the 'citadel') was widely accepted as a centre for ritual and state authority. The citadel, however, has recently been identified as a grain storage facility.

Centralisation   Nevertheless, some degree of centralised state organisation linking the wide geographic spread of the IVC is suggested by the uniformity of houses, mud-bricks, weight measures, inscribed seals, grid pattern of streets, street drainage and grain storage. Centralisation is most obvious in the sophisticated drainage system. Houses were equipped with bathing areas, latrines and sewage drains. Linked to larger mains, which eventually emptied outside the city walls, the sewers would have removed wastewater from the habitation areas and deposited fertile sludge on the surrounding agricultural fields.   On the other hand, the vast territory and rudimentary transport system would have made centralisation difficult to achieve.

Regionalism   Recent research has tended to support the opposite claim: that the IVC political system was dominated by regionalism. New evidence has led to the idea that there were six or seven regional administrative centres, each with links to villages in the hinterland. These regional centres, it is claimed, were the major cities (Mohenjo-Daro, Harappa, Lothal, Rakhighari, Kalibangan, Dholavira and Rupar), where political and commercial power was concentrated. Each centre operated like a city-state or a complex chieftaincy. Power was shared among various elite kin-groups rather than a hereditary monarchy. And power was gained through trade rather than warfare.

Indo-Aryan civilisation

Tribes   Early Indo-Aryans were organised into tribes (*jana*), with a chief (*raja*), who was advised by two different tribal councils (*sabha* and *samiti*). As Indo-Aryan populations moved ever eastward, from the rivers of the Punjab to the plains of north India, particularly the Gangetic region, these semi-nomadic pastoralists mixed with indigenous peoples, producing settled agricultural communities. Although the tribe remained the basis of Indo-Aryan society, power became dependent less on wealth and more on the ability to forge alliances. The most powerful tribes of the ancient period were the Panchala, formed from five independent tribes, and the Kuru, an amalgam of two separate tribes.

Chiefdoms   These larger, composite tribes that controlled greater territory were called *janapada*s (lit. 'foothold of a tribe'). We have the names of nearly 40 chiefdoms from early Sanskrit texts. By 800 BCE these Neolithic farming and pastoralist communities combined into yet larger political structures called *maha (*'great'*) janapada*s, or complex chiefdoms. Sixteen of these complex chiefdoms dominated north India in this period,

stretching from Taxila, in the northwest to Anga, in the far east. These include Kosala, with its capital at Ayodhya, where Rama of the *Ramayana* ruled; Magadha, with its capital at Pataliputra, later the capital of the Mauryan Empire; Kuru, with its capital at Indraprastha, whose two factions fought the war described in the *Mahabharata*.

Classical Period

Mauryan Empire   The long evolution in north India from tribe to chiefdom to state culminated in the establishment of the Mauryan Empire (321- 185 BCE). Its more immediate cause, however, was Alexander's invasion, which stimulated feuding rulers to join together for protection. Chandragupta, founder of the empire, took advantage of the chaos caused by both the Greek incursion in the northwest and the breakdown of smaller kingdoms elsewhere to conquer large swathes of territory, with the exception of south India. The Mauryas defeated a second Greek invasion in the northwest and eventually pushed east, extending their authority to the Bay of Bengal. At its height, the Mauryan state was an efficient bureaucracy with a large civil service. Despite its centralised administration, however, the Mauryan state could not exert control over its extensive territory. Four main provinces were controlled by local princes, while other regions were run by governors and salaried officials. The last Mauryan ruler was assassinated by one of his own generals in 185 BCE.

Post-Mauryan states   Following the break-up of the Mauryan Empire, a series of smaller but still powerful states ruled north India. The first of these was the Shungas, who retained Pataliputra as their capital and reigned from 185-78 BCE. Next came the Shakas (or Indo-Scythians), a central Asian people who migrated and fought their way into India in the first century CE. Although they controlled large tracts of territory in the north and west, they ruled for only a brief time. Another kingdom with its origins in Central Asia was the Kushana (or Kushan), which ruled Bactria and the surrounding regions (modern-day Afghanistan and Pakistan) before pushing south into India, where they ruled from about 100-250 CE. The Deccan was ruled by the Satavahanas (c. 200 BCE-230 CE), fighting off two invasions by the Shakas along the way. Less centralised than the Mauryan Empire, the Satavahana state was based on alliances with local rulers. They were also the first Indian kingdom to issue coinage with portraits of their rulers.

Gupta Empire   Most of India was once again unified in a single administration under the Gupta Empire (320- c. 550 CE). Like the Satavahanas, the Gupta rulers used alliances, in the form of dynastic marriages, and warfare to gain control over territory. Chandragupta I (r. 320-335 CE, not to be confused with Chandragupta Maurya several centuries earlier) married a princes from the Licchavi clan (in the Himalayan foothills), and his son, Samudragupta (r. 335-385 CE), extended the kingdom to the Deccan by more marriages. The empire was administered by a cadre of officials dispatched to localities to oversee an extensive system of tax-free land grants to Brahmins and merchants. This system permitted local leaders to exercise considerable authority and yet be responsible to the centre. The result was a state in which regional units and diverse communities prospered and cohered in a political whole.

Decentralisation   The Gupta state thus instituted two key features of government that characterised states throughout the medieval period and into the pre-modern period. First, states and localities existed in a balance of power. The authority of the centre was residual in that judicial and police functions were left in the hands of local rulers, guilds and associations. Second, and as a result of this decentralisation, the centre assumed more and more symbolic power and authority.

Early Postclassical Period

Harsha   Although Harsha's kingdom was exceptional in terms of the extent of territory, its administration illustrates the political regionalism of the time. As with the other kingdoms in the south and on the edges of the Gangetic heartland, territory was defined less by administration than by language and sectarian affiliations. Boundaries were fluid. Although texts continued to use the old rhetoric of a central power, new political, linguistic, religious and literary boundaries were emerging. Indeed, the formal control of Harsha's state did not extend much beyond the Gangetic plain. Instead, the kingdom was held together by using land-grants to create alliances with local elites (called *mahasamanta*), leaving conquered rulers on their thrones. Texts list six different levels of vassals in Harsha's administration. One inscribed copper-plate dated 632 CE records a gift of land to two Brahmins and lists several vassals as guarantors of the gift. Meanwhile the centre contented itself with tribute and homage.

Chola Empire   The Chola kingdom (9-13th c. CE) is an even clearer example of local autonomy co-existing with imperial authority. The smallest administrative unit was the *nadu,* or locality, usually comprising several

villages. The Chola kingdom contained several hundred *nadu*s, of varying size, suggesting that they were not artificially created by the state but were pre-existing units of local government. Each *nadu* had its own council, who were responsible for land assessment and tax collection. Although not appointed by the king, the local council passed on a portion of these taxes to the king's representative at the *nadu*-level. Each *nadu* incorporated one or more *nagaram*s, which were councils of powerful merchants who collectively owned land and collected taxes from peasants working that land. On top of this local, indigenous government, the Chola rulers created an administrative unit of the *valanadu* (or 'mega-nadu'), controlled by officers appointed by the court. The largest administrative unit, with several *valanadu*s, was the *mandalam*, or 'province.'

Chola Administration   Inscriptions mention four different officers, who were involved in revenue collection, land surveying and military operations. There were two grades of administrators, and the offices tended to be hereditary. The legal system was administered through a system of royal courts acting in liaison with village courts and caste councils. In addition to land tax, with four different categories depending on fertility, there were taxes on goods in transit, houses and professions.

Late Postclassical Period

Administration   The early Delhi Sultanate adapted a Persian model of government, making it more militaristic and aristocratic. The Sultan was nominally the head of all aspects of government, although in practice he had a number of ministers who were also responsible. His second-in-command was the Wazir, who headed the finance department and acted as head of the civil service. Next in importance came the Diwan-i-ariz, who was in charge of the military and responsible for recruitment and discipline in the army. The Diwan-i-insha was the chief secretary to the sultan and in charge of all royal
correspondence. Three other ministers handled foreign affairs, religious affairs and judicial affairs. At the level of the province (*iqta*), administration was in the hands of military officers (*muqti*) and noblemen who were given land rent-free (*iqtadar*), both of whom were appointed by the Sultan. Provinces were divided into districts (*shiq*), which were sub-divided into group of villages (*paragana*).

Reforms   This basic structure was reformed by Sultan Alauddin (r. 1296-1316 CE) in order to extend central authority over his expanded territory. Following his successful defence of Delhi against two Mongol campaigns (1299, 1307-08), he conquered new territory in Gujarat and Rajasthan before driving deep into the south and taking the ancient Hindu city of Madurai in 1310. Thereafter, Alauddin undertook a massive land survey on the basis of which a standard tax was levied. Half the crop from arable land and a fixed tax on all herded animals was collected by military officers in the provinces and stored in state granaries. The net effect was to raise more revenue and to reduce the authority of local elites, who also faced new taxes on their horses, clothing and houses. Old ruling families, however, were permitted to retain their symbolic power as tributaries to Delhi. In effect, however, Delhi governed the countryside from a few garrisoned cities and plundered whenever the need arose.

Reforms Reversed   Most of these reforms were reversed by Alauddin's successor, Muhammad Tughluq (r.1324-1351 CE), who instituted a new department of agriculture dedicated to expanding arable land. He also reorganised the revenue department and demanded reports from provincial officers, showing income and expenditure. He also moved the capital (temporarily and foolishly) to the Deccan so that the centre, through its officers and its army, had more control over the provinces.

Vijayanagar kingdom   The advance of the sultanate to the south was only checked by the rise of the Vijayanagar kingdom (1336–1565 CE). The capital city (Vijayanagar, 'City of Victory') was a vast complex of temples (and mosques) that displayed wealth and ambition, but the kings gained their control by a skilful network of alliances with adjacent Hindu and minor Muslim rulers. They even improved their army by recruiting Muslim soldiers and borrowing their techniques of warfare. And when the Portuguese arrived on the west coast of India in 1498, they were quick to enter into treaty and trade arrangements.

Early Modern Period

Administration   While the Mughal Empire retained many of the reforms introduced by their predecessors, they did make the administrative structure both more complex and more efficient. At the top, just below the royal court at Delhi (and briefly Fatehpur Sikri) was the province (*suba*), which was a unit invented by the Mughals. The province was ruled by a governor or (*subadar*), who had an administrative structure that replicated that in Delhi, with the full complement of staff and departments. The number of provinces varied from 12 under Akbar to 22 under Aurangzeb, and the size also varied: Bengal and Delhi were separate

provinces. A province was divided into 'districts', (a term invented by the British years later) called *sarkar*s. A district itself was made up of many *paragana*s, which in turn were comprised of village clusters. The *paragana*s were later, under British rule, reorganised and renamed as taluks, a unit of administration and taxation still used in present-day India.

Akbar's reforms   Akbar (r.1556-1605 CE) wisely retained land revenue as the basis of his government, but he also introduced reforms. First, he initiated an agrarian survey to identify types of land, crop prices and yields in order to calculate taxes. All land was divided into two categories: *khalisa* and *jagir*. Revenue from the first went to the imperial treasury, and that from the second was assigned to Muslim noblemen/landholders (*jagirdar*s) in lieu of a salary. With this *jagir* system Akbar replaced the *iqta* system of the Delhi Sultanate. Second, he required taxes to be paid in cash, and he set about regulating the minting and currency system to enable payment in silver coins. More fundamentally, he created the *mansabdari* system (borrowed from Persia), with 33 different grades of administrative cadre. At the top were the officers (*mansabdars*), who were paid a salary directly from the centre in return for service to the centre. These officers could be posted anywhere in the empire, a practice that discouraged the development of patrimonies that had plagued earlier governments. However, the tax was actually collected by intermediaries, *zamindars*, who became a class of landed gentry. Akbar's treasury was full, but the *zamindar*s enjoyed a large degree of local autonomy. In sum, the new *mansabdari* and cash-salary system—rational, transparent and immune from local loyalties—were the keystones of the Mughal state.

Judiciary   The centralised and efficient nature of the Mughal government is illustrated by its judicial system. It consisted of a set of three courts on each of four levels: the imperial courts in Delhi; the provincial (*suba*) courts; the district (*sarkar*) courts; and the sub-district *(paragana)* courts. All these courts were presided over by judges (*qazi)* of differing grades of competence, and each court had its own jurisdiction. At the imperial level, for example, the emperor's court heard cases on appeal as well as criminal and civil cases of first instance. A second court heard cases concerning revenue, and a third specialised in military cases.

19th Century

Administration   British India was divided into provinces (earlier known as presidencies) and independent (or princely) states. Provinces, such as Bengal, Madras, Bombay, Northwest and Central, covered about 60% of British India and were under direct rule. The princely states, which numbered in the hundreds, were under indirect rule, which meant that the Indian ruler remained on his throne, with his retinue and symbols of power, and retained control over internal affairs. The external affairs of the princely states were in the hands of the British government in Calcutta. And in practice, even domestic matters were subject to (often substantial) British influence in the figure of the British Resident. The provinces were run by a Governor (Lt. Governor or Chief Commissioner), who was advised by a council. Within each province, districts were governed by a Collector (or Commissioner), who usually held executive, legislative and judicial powers. Each district was then sub-divided into *taluk*s (an administrative unit borrowed from the Mughals) for purposes of revenue collection.

Reforms   Major reforms followed in the wake of the revolt in1857-58. The British Crown in London became a third tier of government, with a Secretary of State for India and a council of advisors. In Calcutta, the Governor-General (later Viceroy) was now answerable to the Secretary of State, although he and his executive council still held primary responsibility for legislation. In the 1860s, the council in Calcutta became a cabinet and was enlarged to include 12 members serving two-year terms. Half of these members were British officers who oversaw a department, such as revenue, military and finance. The other members were British nationals living in India and Indians. In the provinces, legislative powers (which had been taken away in the 1830s) were restored. And in the 1890s, rules for provincial legislatures were changed to include Indian representation.

Indian Civil Service (ICS)   After 1857-58, administrative officers in India came from the ICS, a newly-created branch of the civil service in Britain. The ICS recruited and trained officers, who were then sent to govern British India. Some were engineers, some were doctors and some were judges, but the most important were the political officers. For their first posting they were sent to a district as an assistant to the Collector and then often spent their whole lives in India, climbing up an administrative hierarchy with many rungs. At first, this elite cadre was recruited almost entirely from an 'old-boy' network among the upper-class in Britain. After examinations were introduced in the 1870s, the social base widened. In the 1880s were Indians permitted to join this club and assist in the governance of their own country.

Collaboration   Although British rule rested on economic power and military strength, British India was built on local collaboration. Rajas ceded sovereignty in return for a pension; landed groups turned over tax revenues while the District Collector protected their rights; peasants and marginalised groups became soldiers in the British army; merchants and traders sold goods to foreign entrepreneurs. Without local cooperation, the British Raj would not have been possible. Consider the fact that by the end of the century, a country of about 230 million people was governed by about 1,000 officers (95% of whom were British). It was not uncommon for a rural district the size of three English counties to be run by a 25-year-old British officer, a younger fellow countryman and three Indian clerks.

Early 20th Century

Administration   At the beginning of the twentieth century, the government of British India, based in Calcutta, consisted of a governor-general and his Executive Council of 10-16 members, a few of whom were Indian. In the provinces, a governor held considerable authority, subject to an advisory council.   However, none of these office-holders was elected, and real power lay with the government in London, who appointed and recalled the governor-general and governors. In the course of the next fifty years, this structure would be amended again and again, until Indians elected by Indians gained control of their government.

Morley-Minto Reforms   Under pressure from growing nationalist sentiment, the government in London passed the Indian Councils Act 1909, which recommended the changes known as the Morley-Minto reforms. These reforms increased 'native' participation in the advisory councils in Calcutta and the provinces. More radical was the fact that some Indians would be elected, rather than appointed. Indians were also permitted to discuss budgetary matters for the first time, and other Indian institutions (universities, district committees and landlord groups) were empowered to suggest laws. A controversial element of these reforms was the concession to Muslims for a certain number of seats in provincial legislatures to be reserved for them. This created 'communal' representation, which would bedevil the politics of India until Independence in 1947.

Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms   The growing clamour for independence, plus the blow to the empire delivered by WWI, softened British resistance to self-government and resulted in the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms. These reforms, which were announced in the Government of India Act 1919, promised that Britain would promote the 'the gradual development of free institutions in India with a view to ultimate self-government.' In order to achieve this, greater powers were conceded to legislative councils at both the central and provincial levels. The changes for the province were the more fundamental and initiated a system called 'dyarchy,' or 'dual rule.' Each provincial legislative council would have two sections. One section would consist of councillors, or ministers, appointed as before by London, who were responsible for 'hard-core' departments, such as finance, army, home affairs and law. The other section would consist of Indian ministers chosen by the governor from the elected members of the council. These Indian ministers would oversee the 'nation-building' departments, such as agriculture, education and public works.

Government of India Act 1935   The political change initiated by these reforms culminated in the Government of India Act 1935, which laid down the basis for Indian independence. Now the provincial legislatures were given real autonomy, more seats would be elected and dyarchy was abolished—all ministers would now be chosen from the Indian members who had been elected to the legislature. Provincial governors would still be appointed, but they were to accept recommendations from Indian ministers, except in cases where legislation would threaten civil disturbance or the rights of minorities. At the level of central government, the act called for a 'Federation of India', comprised of British provinces and princely states. It also introduced dyarchy at the federal level, with some departments given to Indian ministers and others to British ministers. The central legislature was granted more seats (including some reserved for women, Anglo-Indians and Indian Christians), and the franchise was extended. In addition, Burma was separated from India and given its own colonial government. As a half-way house between colonialism and nationalism, the 1935 act was unwieldy and satisfied no one. However, this complex machinery was put in place for the provincial elections in 1937, a sort of dress rehearsal for democracy, which resulted in a resounding and unpredicted victory for Congress.

Election of 1945   The 1935 act served as framework for governing India until Independence in 1947. Although that legislation had foreseen a 'federation of India' governed by an expanded central legislature of 372 elected members, the princely states refused to agree to this plan. As a result, the general election in December 1945 (the last before Independence) covered only 102 seats. Congress again won a majority, and Nehru was installed as leader of an interim government in New Delhi. However, the Muslim League won in all the reserved Muslim constituencies and consolidated its political power. Partition became a certainty.

1950 Constitution   The Constitution of 1950, based largely on the Government of India Act 1935, established a British-style parliamentary system with a strong centre. Nehru's wish that the constitution be drawn up by a popularly elected assembly was thwarted by Vallabhbhai Patel, who argued for a far less representative body chosen by a limited electorate. This explains why major proposed changes to the 1935 scheme were not passed, such as having provincial (later state) governors elected rather than appointed by the centre. Indeed, the constitution reaffirmed that the government in New Delhi was empowered to replace state governments whenever it wished. The 1947-48 war with Pakistan over Kashmir, concurrent with the drafting of the Constitution, undoubtedly influenced these provisions. The 270-page document also guaranteed freedom of speech, religion and association, plus rights to property, education and the preservation of minority cultures. In this civil rights agenda, Nehru was opposed by Patel but supported by B. R. Ambedkar, the champion of Untouchables/Dalits . But even the combined support of Nehru and Ambedkar was unable to prevent Patel and his conservative allies from retaining colonial-era Hindu and Muslim law codes, instead of more generic human rights. Those rights, it was feared, would lead to demands from low castes and women, which would destabilise the country. Ambedkar resigned from the constitutional assembly in protest, while Nehru decided to achieve reforms through legislation rather than the Constitution.

Administration   The government of India is divided into executive, legislative and judicial branches. In reality, however, power lies in the legislative branch, with parliament and its ministers. The legislative branch has two houses: the Lok Sabha (People's Assembly) and the Rajya Sabha (Royal Assembly). Members of the Lok Sabha, commonly called MPs, are popularly elected from 552 constituencies in the 29 states, plus 20 MPs from seven Union Territories and 2 MPs from the Anglo-Indian community (the latter are nominated by the President and not elected). As in the UK, the Lok Sabha makes laws, which the Rajya Sabha can amend. The Prime Minister is elected from the Lok Sabha and choses his or her cabinet of ministers. The President, increasingly a ceremonial role, appoints justices to the Supreme Court and the high courts, as well as state governors. The 245 members of the Rajya Sabha are elected by the state and territorial legislatures, although the President can appoint 12 members, drawn broadly from the arts and business. The Supreme Court in New Delhi has appellate and advisory jurisdictions, as well as original jurisdiction in any case between states or between a state and the central government. Each state has a high court, and each district within a state has a district court. The administrative structure of each state government resembles that of the central government.

Accession   The strong central government built into the Constitution was a mechanism intended to neutralise the threat of fragmentation latent within an independent India. The day after Independence, the government of India only controlled less than half of the territory and about two-thirds of its population; the princely states had the rest. Most of these 562 princely states acceded to the union immediately, but some of the most powerful needed persuasion. Two of these were Kashmir (Muslim-majority population ruled by a Hindu) and Hyderabad (Hindu-majority population ruled by a Muslim). Military threats in 1948 persuaded Hyderabad, while Kashmir joined the same year after Delhi agreed to send troops to repel an invasion from Pakistan. Travancore and Cochin, a large state in the south, acceded in 1949, followed in the same year by the equally important Rajputana princely states. In the end, all the princely states were integrated into the fourteen provinces that comprised the Union. Goa, once a Portuguese colony, was annexed in 1961 and became a state in 1989.

Regionalism   Despite the relative success of accession, the authority of the central government remains undercut by the political regionalism that has fragmented the country. In particular, the 15 or so major language communities (each more than 5 million speakers) became the basis for powerful regional parties who demanded more autonomy and in some cases threatened to secede from the Union. This was the 'balkanisation' that Nehru and his allies had tried to avert with a strong centralised state. Nehru did, however, accept the validity of language defining an administrative unit, and he oversaw a process of dividing the large provinces into small states. In 1956, for example, the province of Madras was cut up into four linguistic states: Madras (later Tamil Nadu) for Tamil, Mysore (later Karnataka) for Kannada, Andhra Pradesh (later split into Telangana and Andhra) for Telugu, and Kerala for Malayalam. In 1960, the province of Bombay was split into Maharashtra for Marathi and Gujarat for Gujarati.   More recently, several more new states have been carved out of existing ones, this time based more on ethnicity than language. In the northeast, however, several separatist movements and armed insurgencies remain active.

Bharatiya Janata Party   The rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party ('The People of India Party'), or the BJP, is revelatory of the recent political history of India. Congress, with Gandhi's charisma and Nehru's skill, held the country together during the crucial decades that followed Independence. The post-war consensus, however,

broke down in the 1980s (coincidental with the end of the Cold War). The command economy with its Soviet-style five-year plans and state-owned utilities, as well as the colonial-era political system with its opaque bureaucracy and patrician elite, were not fit for purpose. Congress lost its spell, and a new populism filled the vacuum. Rejecting the secularism of the westernised Nehru dynasty, the BJP and its allied organisations tapped into the Hindu nationalism that had been there all along. India was now a 'Hindu nation' that celebrated its ancient history and religion. L.K. Advani, leader of the BJP in 1989 elections, toured the country dressed as the mythic hero Rama riding in a (jeep decorated as a) chariot. It is not coincidental that in the previous year (1988) tens of millions of Indians had watched 78 hour-long episodes of the TV adaptation of the Ramayana. Nor is it surprising that a few years later, in 1992, BJP supporters destroyed a 16th century mosque that had been built over a Hindu temple. Anti-Muslim riots ensued all over India, leaving thousands dead.

Discussion/questions

1. The evidence for a centralised state in the Indus Valley civilisation is mixed. Analyse the evidence (such as bricks, weights, seals and drainage) to build an argument that uses comparative data from at least one other world civilisation (preferably from the same time period). In conclusion, explain why the issue of state organisation is important not only for an understanding of the Indus Valley civilisation but for later Indian history, as well.

2. Early Indo-Aryans were organised into tribes (*jana*) and later developed chiefdoms (*janapada*), which in turn grew into complex chiefdoms (*mahajanapada*). What are the standard definitions of these political systems: tribe, chiefdom and complex chiefdom? And how does a complex chiefdom differ from a 'state'?

3. During the Gupta Empire, the images of rulers were depicted on coins in various scenes, killing animals, playing an instrument and performing the horse-sacrifice. What influence did this imagery play in promoting the cult of the ruler?

4. A broad process of regionalism features in political and cultural spheres during this period. In general, it involved the gradual strengthening of local autonomy over a centralised state. While this process is widespread in world history, the Indian variant was primarily driven by language. Look at the rise of regional languages (and scripts) in this period, and then compare that with the fragmentation of newly-Independent India into linguistic states in the 1950s and 1960s.

5. The rapid spread of Muslim rule across north India and the Deccan is often explained as the result of superior warfare skills and technology. What role can also be ascribed to the hierarchical command structure of the Delhi Sultanate?

6. Analyse the Nehru dynasty in the context of both modern Indian history and world history. First describe its significance for India. Did it provide stability or create undemocratic domination? Then assess the Nehru dynasty in comparison with family dynasties elsewhere in 20th century world history. Was it, for instance, a repetition of the father-son succession in the Mughal Empire?

Reading

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