
**CHAPTER-II: SOCIO-ECONOMIC LIFE ON THE EVE OF SANGLI
STATE'S INCEPTION - SOCIAL SET UP, RELIGION
AND CASTES - THEIR INTER-RELATIONSHIPS AND
SOCIAL LIFE, ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, AND
SOURCES OF THE STATE EXCHEQUER.**

The Sangli State, a native state in the Southern Maratha Country was one of the parts of the Maratha Country under the Peshwas. The socio-economic life, therefore, on the eve of Sangli State's inception was much more similar to that of other parts of the Maratha Country. The socio-economic life on the eve of Sangli State's inception could be traced out into the five fold groups of the society.

The contemporary documents had also given an impression that there were, broadly speaking, five classes in society and they were named respectively as - 1) the members of the ruling class, 2) the intelligentsia, 3) the artisans, 4) the peasants and 5) the landless labourers. These five classes can be discussed as follows:-

1) The members of ruling class

The members of ruling class except that of the Patwardhan family, all others were known as the Desais, Sardesais, Deshpandes, Hadagondas, Sahotras, Deshchaugulas etc., and they were described as District Hereditary Officers. They were also commonly known as Deskat or Desgat Watans.¹ And this class was known as the class of Saranjams. Besides, the Sub-Saranjamdars in the Sangli State were also included in this class. They held their respective lands granted by the Maratha Government for their military service, when the

Patwardhans acquired their Jagir. The services of these sub-Saranjamdars consisted of the supply of certain number of cavalry, who had to serve about eight months in the year i.e. from Dasara festival in October till the setting in of the monsoon. The services thus rendered by them had been voluntarily commuted by all the said Saranjamdars into a money payment equal to one quarter of the sum assigned for the maintenance of cavalry. The Saranjamdars with whom this settlement was effected and the total sum that each paid in commutation of service are given below²:-

<u>No.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Amount in Rs.</u>
1	Shinde of Mhaisal	2,403
2	Shinde of Mallewadi	801
3	Chavan of Digraj	3,471
4	Ghatage of Mumtha	1,869
5	Dubbal of Dhulgaon	667-8-0
6	Olekar of Irali, Alkud and Kokale	934-8-0

The village headman like Patil, Kulkarni, Chaugula were also included in this group, among which, the Patil, the village headman was the chief hereditary officer of the village. He was the chief revenue Officer, the chief Police Magistrate and he also united in him the function of the chief Judicial Officer.³ Next to the Patil in rank came the

Kulkarni invariably a Brahmin. He was the Patil's clerk and the village recordkeeper.⁴ The Chougula was assisted the Patil in his duties and also had to take care of the Kulkarni's records.⁵

2) The intelligentsia

The intelligentsia was a heterogenous class, but all the members had one thing in common, namely that they all were educated in varying degree and were either great intellectuals, head of monasteries and educational institutions, teachers or priests officiating of various religious functions. This class included Brahmans, Saivas, Virsaivas, the Jangam Priests and teachers.

3) The artisans

This class was actually the outcome of the economic condition of the times. The various crafts and cottage industries in the country gave rise to the class of artisans. The village artisans were called as the Balutedars. They came from different caste groups and were generally twelve in numbers, namely - Mahar, Mang, Sutar, Lohar, Chambhar, Kumbhar, Nhavi, Sonar, Joshi, Parit, Gurav and Koli.⁶

They held rent-free land in the village and served in the sphere of economic and social needs of society. They

received their remuneration called baluta in kind, and a fixed amount of grain at the harvest time.⁷

Besides the Balutedars, there were as many as eighteen Alutedars, who rendered some useful services to the village community on some occasions and got grain share though lesser than the Balutedars for their services. Teli, Tamboli, Sali, Sangar, Shimpi, Mali, Gondhali, Dawrya, Bhat, Thakur, Gosavi, Jangan, Mulana, Vajentri, Ghadashi, Kalavant, Taral or Korbu, Bhoi etc., were known as Alutedars.⁸

4) The peasants

The peasants community consisted of Mirasdars and Upris. The Mirasdars were residents of the village, and had permanent proprietary right in land and could not be ejected so long as they paid their rent. The Upris, on the other hand, were tenants - at will, and generally strangers holding government land under the management of Mamlatdars. They had to pay heavier taxes and the major portion of the burden of village expenses fell on their shoulders.⁹

5) The landless labourers

The lowest class in the society was formed of the landless labourers, some of whom were required to do even the

menial work. Such, for example, were the Mahars who generally did the menial work often without any remuneration as indicated by the term rabata-Mahar.¹⁰

In this way the major five fold groups in the society played their respective roles for social cause and wellbeing of the society.

Religion and castes - their inter-relationship

Next to the five fold groups in the society, religion played an important role in the life of the people of Maratha Country and even in the life of the Sangli state. Religion deeply influenced the social behaviour of the various classes in the society. The Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Lingayat were the main religions on the eve of Sangli State's inception although majority belonged to the Hindus. The details of such religions can be found as follows:

Hindus

Majority of the people in the Sangli state were the Hindus, who represented by different castes. The castes among the Hindus were depended on birth and also determined men's social status. The Hindu caste system can be studied as follows:

The Hindu caste system

The Census Report of 1901 A.D., of the Kolhapur and Southern Maratha Country States mentioned various castes and sub-castes among Hindus in the Sangli state. These castes were classified under the following heads:-

Brahmins

In the four caste system or the Chaturvarnya system of the Hindus, the Brahmin Caste stood at the top of the caste system and in order of their high position in the society, next to the Brahmins stood in the descending scale, the Kshatriyas or the Marathas, the Vaishas and the Shudras.

The Brahmins as in other parts of Maharashtra were divided into castes and subcastes among themselves. In the Sangli State the main folks of the Brahmins were known as -

- 1) Gaud Saraswat, 2) Kanoji, 3) Telgu, 4) Chitpavan,
- 5) Deshastha, 6) Madhyandin, 7) Govardhan, 8) Karhade,
- 9) Trigul and 10) Savashe.

In addition to the Brahmins in the Sangli State, the Kayastha Prabhus enjoyed a high position in the society and other than the Brahmins were held as superiors.

The Marathas

Generally the Marathas in Maharashtra as well as in the Sangli State were regarded as the Kshatriyas and were held from the top in the second rank of the Hindu society. However, from the earliest times of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, they were not regarded as the Kshatriyas, but as Shudras. And it was because of that the Hindu Vedokta ceremony that was to be performed at the coronation ceremony of Shivaji Maharaj was not acceptable to the Brahmins in Maharashtra. As a result Shivaji Maharaj, therefore, brought one Brahmin, the famous Gagabhat from Kashi to perform that ceremony at his coronation ceremony.

Thus, the social conditions prevailed in Maharashtra, were existed there in the Sangli State, as it was a State of the Brahmin ruler. But inspite of the fact, the Marathas occupied a second position next to the Brahmins in the Hindu society. The Maratha Caste, although was and is known in Maharashtra, was not one united caste but was divided into many castes under one name of the Maratha caste and again divided into subcastes. The main castes of the Marathas that were there in the Sangli State were named as¹¹ - 1) Kulin Marathas, 2) Kunabi Marathas, and 3) Kadu (bitter) or Akarnashe (bastards) or Shinde.

Interdining and intercaste marriages among the Marathas were strictly prohibited and only the marriages within castes were lawful and acceptable to all. So far the interdining system was concerned, the Marathas followed the Brahminical traditions and practised the same principles as the Brahmins did.

The Vaishyas

The Vaishyas were the main trading community in the Sangli State. It virtually controlled agriculture and other business in the state. The main castes included in this group were such as Vanis, Kunabis etc.

The Shudras

The Shudras or the lowest castes among the Hindus were numerous in number and had many names and professions. As Sangli State was extended to the lands of the Karnataka region, the castes of that part were also in the Sangli State. The main castes, however were known as - the Sutar or Carpenter, the Lohar or Blacksmith, Sonar or Goldsmith, the Barbar (Nhavi), the Kumbhar (Potters), the Parit (Washerman), the Kolis (Water carriers), the Gurava, the Teli (Oil presser), Mali, Shimpi, Dhanagars etc. Besides, there were also the castes like Mahar, Mang, Chambhar, Dhor, Bhangi etc. included in this group. They were called as Antyajas or untouchables. Though the

untouchables or Antyajjas were included in Hindu Society as Hindus, they were treated as ex-communicated. In general they were placed under this head of the Shudras.

In general it was viewed that the Hindu society and social life was quite as watertight compartments and there was no sense of harmony and unity. In fact, there prevailed among the Hindus the atmosphere of hatred and animosity against each other's caste.

Islam

Next to the Hindus, the Muslims were there in good numbers and occupied a respectable position in the society. Majority of the Muslims were under the three family names, viz., Saiyads, Pathans, and Shekhs. There were few families who styled as Moghals. Many were known by the occupation they followed such as Atars, Nalbands, Maniyars, Bagvans, Bhangi, Kalavant, Khatic, Pinjari etc. Most of them were originally Hindus, and after embracing Islam, took the names Shekh or Pathan or Sayad from the religious or military leaders under whom they served.¹²

Jainism

In the Sangli State, Jainism, the ancient religion of India existed from early times. The Jain traditions and the way

of worship remained rather in the manner as the Hindus, although their main worship went to Mahavira, the 24th Tirthankar of the Jains. They also observed the casteism and did not follow the way of social equality as Vardhaman Mahavira preached them. They had among themselves, some watertight divisions in the name of various sections and they run as follows with different names¹³ as -

- 1) Begar, 2) Chaturth, 3) Gujar, 4) Kasar, 5) Marwadi,
- 6) Pancham, 7) Shetwal, 8) Shrawak, 9) Usavala, 10) Vani,
- 11) Vishasharmali.

Lingayat

Lingayat was a sect devoted to the worship of Shiva and its members formed a caste of their own. Basava the founder of the sect, preached equality and denied the priestly authority of the Brahmins. However the sect of Lingayat never followed their master so far as the principle of social equality was concerned.

Lingayats were cultivators. But more than cultivation they were successful businessmen forming the commercial population of the society. They were divided into three classes, termed Silwant, Puncham and Tirulee. Their Gooroos, or priests are termed Jungam. They derived their appellation from wearing

the Ling an absence symbol of Mahadev. They did not eat what had been cooked by a Brahmina, and they differed in their religious tenets, denying the doctrine of metempsychosis, they were also deficient in some domestic observances rigidly practised by other Hindus.¹⁴

The castes among Lingayat in the Sangli state were as following¹⁵ - 1. Laman, 2. Adivani, 3. Ambi, 4. Banagar, 5. Chambhar, 6. Dhor, 7. Dhul Pavad, 8. Gavali, 9. Gurava, 10. Jangam, 11. Koli, 12. Koshti, 13. Kudvakal, 14. Kumbhar, 15. Kurvin Shetti, 16. Lohar, 17. Mali, 18. Naglik, 19. Nhavi, 20. Sali Pancham, 21. Pancham, 22. Parit, 23. Raddi, 24. Sadar, 25. Silvant, 26. Shimpi, 27. Sutar, 28. Teli etc.

Religions and castes conflicts

Encroachment upon the caste rules and regulation and upon old traditions and superstitions, upon the rights and perquisites of different castes and sub-castes at times excited hostility and led the conflict. Under the caste system those who adopted themselves to the habits, interests, attitudes and culture patterns of other castes generated clashes between castes and sub-castes.

Under the Peshwa rule and so also on the eve of Sangli State's inception, these conflicts, it appeared, became quite

sharp. The causes of religious and caste conflicts were like that of pride of caste, greed for Watan, interference in other's profession¹⁶ etc.

Some examples of Religious and caste's conflicts

The behaviour of the Jingar and Sonar from Mangalwedha taluka was against the decree issued by Jagadguru, the Chief Hindu Priest, in Prabhu's matter, that the former should not wear sacred thread around the neck and the latter should not perform the Brahmakarma. The orders of the Hindu priest thus became matters of conflict. Therefore an inquiry was set about to file their case.¹⁷ So also the Fakir, Mulani and Mujawar from Mangalwedha opposed the baluta of Kulkarni.¹⁸

Another example was stated by Chintamanrao Appasaheb-I, the first ruler of the Sangli State himself. He wrote in his diary dated 12th Nov. 1848 that, when his Karbhari received the news from Karvir, that four or five persons from Brahmin community of Sangli drank wine and ate meat of hen in the house of Muslim woman, called Kalavatin, he caught those persons. They were insulted and expelled from the caste.¹⁹

Social Life

The important features of social life on the eve of

Sangli state's inception can be studied under the following heads -

Language

Marathi was the main language of the people from Northern talukas and Kannada was another main language of the people from Southern talukas of the state. Many people from Shahapur and Terdal taluka spoke impure Marathi and impure Kanari. The minority people spoke Hindustani, Gujarati, Marwadi, Tamil and Tailangi languages.²⁰

Houses

The houses of the common people were simple and tile and mud constructions made to accommodate the family. The floors were applied cowdung almost every week and on the day of festivals. The interior of the houses were badly ventilated and poorly lighted.

The houses of rich people had got better architectural design and were built with bricks or stones mixed with lime.²¹ Those houses were known as big Wadas that is large houses with big walls and no provision for windows.

Dress

Hindus' dress were like the Hindus elsewhere in Maratha

country. The males' upper garments were known as uparne, sela, sadara, pairan, barabandi, Kudta, Kopari, Kabja, angarkha, servani and dagala. The head-dress used were known as pagote, pagdi, mundase, rumal, pataka or sapha according to taste and means in various colours.

A Hindu woman's dress was the full Maratha sadi or lugade of nine yards and a short-sleeved Choli, blouse reaching to the waist covering both the back and chest, the ends being tied in front.²²

Ornaments

Both men and women were using various kinds of ornaments. The precious ornaments with its value in rupees found in the contemporary records bore various names and are mentioned below:²³

<u>Name of ornament</u>	<u>Value in Rs.</u>
1) Pearl <u>Kantha</u>	4,500
2) <u>Sirpech</u>	3,000
3) <u>Jegahibes</u>	600
4) <u>Moti-mal</u> (neck ornament)	500

The names of few other ornaments found in Sangli Daftar were such as Sirale, Tanvad, Bhikbali,²⁴ etc.

Rich ladies in villages used gold ornaments in the neck and ornaments used for the feet were always of silver. The poor people used even less costly ornaments made of silver, copper, brass, stone and glass beads.

Food

Brahmans, Jains and Lingayats and such Marathas as had taken a vow to eschew animal food, were ordinarily vegetarians. All other Hindu communities took meat or fish occasionally. The Brahmin people had for their staple food poli, bhat (boiled rice), varana (boiled split pulse), tup (ghee) gul, bhaji (vegetables)²⁵ pickles and jam of various fruits.

All agriculturists, artisans and pastoral classes had the fare consists of jovar or bajri, rice and wheat, on certain occasions, vegetables, split pulse and alan or zunka. Besides grains, pulses, fruits, spices, oil, curds and butter, they occasionally ate meat and other flesh.

To offer an animal to a deity and then take its flesh as prasad was common enough. We came to know such practice in one of the documents of Sangli Daftar as it was the "killing of ~~S~~he-Buff., in the fair of village deity."²⁶

We learn from the record that Sardar Parashuram Bhau Patwardhan was in the habit of tea drinking and he had asked for

tea leaves and tea pots.²⁷

Both men and women were in the habit of chewing 'pan' i.e., betel leaves and nuts.

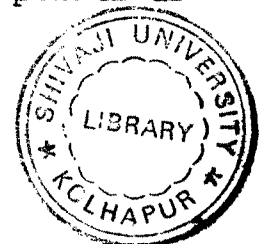
Social customs and usages

The main social customs and usages among Hindu people were as following:

- 1) Birth customs including the ceremony of birth, naming the child and birth anniversary.
- 2) Marriage customs - Marriages among the Hindus were held as sacred ceremony and according to them marriages were fixed in the heaven. However inspite of that understanding the practice of early marriage, polygamy, dowry, forced marriages and no marriages of widows were observed and followed in all parts of this stage. However among the low caste people remarriages were found common.

Religious beliefs and practices

Religion was the most dominating factor governing the minds of people of the period of our study. Brahmins occupied a very high position in the social, religious and political



life of the 18th century society.

The religious beliefs and practices of the people were as follows:

Worship of Gram Devata - In every village of the State, there was a shrine of a deity called Gram-devata. The village deity was regarded as a power helping in time of trouble and a power more intimately concerned with the happiness and prosperity of the villages. The chief village deities were, Hanuman, Mhasoba, Vetal, Narsoba, Pir, Satvai, Mariai²⁸ etc. which were periodically worshipped and propitiated.

Besides Hindu people worshipped the most popular common deities like Bhavani Devi of Tulajapur, Khandoba of Jejuri, Vitthal of Pandharpur, Mahalaxmi of Kolhapur, Jotiba, Bhairoba etc.

In addition to such prayers and worships Anusthans - performance of certain ceremonies in propitiation of God, Abhishekha - that is pouring water on the idol of God, Shantikarma - a ceremony for the removal or prevention of calamities and troubles were practised regularly and sacrifices of various kinds were offered to Gods and Dakshinas were distributed freely to the Brahmins.

Illness and the Divine Means - As the medical science was not

sufficiently advanced many cures were effected through divine means like Mantriks, Tantrika, Japa, Tapa, vows, Anusthanas, Tula, Shata rudra, Dana, Homa, Shanti, etc. for example -

"When Laxmibai, mother of Chintamanrao Appasaheb-I, became ill, she was given medical treatment and also done away with Divine means in order to cure her. But it was of no use. At last it was decided to perform a Anusthan to Narsinha Saraswati at Narsinhawadi".²⁹

Pilgrimage to Kashi - Kashi was as it is today the holy place of the Hindus. It was believed that visit to Kashi was a visit to the gateway of Moksa. Therefore a Hindu longed to visit Kashi at least once in his life. It was, therefore, Saraswatibai, the wife of Gopalrao Patwardhan, went on pilgrimage to Kashi in Oct. 1783 A.D. The accompanied people with her were 400 to 500 in numbers from Sangli, Kurundwad, Ganeshwadi, Haripur, Tasgaon, Ichalkaranji, Jamkhindi, Terdal, Manoli, Nargund, Ramdurg etc.³⁰

Besides all such religious forms and life, people lived under the life of superstitions. In the contemporary records examples of the practice of vows,³¹ Muhurta (lucky or unlucky day),³² beliefs in omen and prognotics,³³ Ghost³⁴ etc. were mentioned and narrated in detail.

Economic Conditions

The economic conditions on the eve of Sangli state's inception were described under the following heads -

1. Agricultural community

Agriculture was the backbone of the life of the majority people. The condition of the cultivators during the period was very depressing. The uncertainty of rains, constant warfare, lack of credit facilities, burden of taxation and many such other factors contributed to the backwardness of the agriculture. The contemporary records in the 'Sangli Daftar' gave information of the state of unrest as follows³⁵ -

- i) The people of Ainapur were fled away due to the military disturbance of Laxmibai Shinde.
- ii) The villages like Soni, Bhose, Mundewadi, etc. received damages due to the military plunder.
- iii) The disturbance as well as damages of all types were caused by the Chhatrapati of Kolhapur to the villages like Bedag, Sawalwadi, Wadi, Kvathe Piran, Kvathe-Ekand, Dhulgaon, Gourgaon, Digranj, Palus, Budhagaon, Danoli, Kvathe Mahankal, Shirgopi, Dudhondi, Itanali, Gavan, Nagrare, Khanderajuri, Malgaon, Erandoli etc.

In addition to these hardships, irregular rains and famines made the people poor and dependent. Naturally, the State's income remained limited for all the times.

2. Trading and Commercial community

The trade and commerce was mainly in the hands of Lingayat Vanis and Jains. But at Shahapur, Shenavi, Brahmin, some Marathas and at Sangli Brahmin, Gujarathi, Marwadi, Vani, Marathas, Muslims were included in this group. The trade and commerce was started from Diwali to Aksayatriya and the sale of cotton was completed on Akshayatriya. Generally, the small traders went from village to village towards the cultivators. They paid money to them, before or after the harvest and purchased the grains and other crops, they sent it to the nearest bazar, where the good prices should come.³⁶

Weekly bazars

For grain grocers, dealers in various articles, retail dealers in grocery, pedlars, cloth sellers, metals, wood, tobacco, cotton and cattles etc. there were the days of weekly bazars in all the talukas of the state³⁷ and all the people in the state were benefitted by those weekly bazars. And animals like camels, bulls, buffaloes, horses etc. were used for means of communication,³⁸ and goods were carried on their backs to

bazar places.

3. Industrial community

Due to the caste system the industries were decentralised in the villages, and village industries existed in all the villages as in other parts of Maharashtra.

The village population was dependent for its need on the artisans, manufacturers and labours in the respective villages and their needs were fulfilled by the village artisans.

The artisans

Carpenter, blacksmith, goldsmith, brick layers, tailor, coppersmith (Tambat), substantial brickmaker, stone-cutter, shoe-maker, potter, weaver, arrow-maker, rope-maker, oilman, blanket-weaver, fishermen, dyer, Bamboo-worker, Jinger, carpet weaver, perfumist, weaver of coarse cotton etc. were the artisans.³⁹ All of them carried out the productions of the need and interest of the village or as per the order, they received from any party or the State.

The manufacturers

Lime makers, charcoal-makers, blanket maker, oil men, silk-fringe, and tessel makers, saddlers, carpet-makers, glass bangle makers, copper-smith, ink-makers, spinners of

cotton thread, cloth-weaver etc. were the manufacturers,⁴⁰ and they produced goods of their respective trade to fulfil the demands of the village and surrounding people.

The labours

Landless persons and poor cultivators were worked as labours. Their life was very hard and they could get no regular work, specially in the times of rain. And lack of work made them to live the life of starvation.

The money lenders

The Sahukar i.e., bankers were from Brahmin, Gujarathi, Marwadi, Lingayat Vani, Jain, Rajput, Muslim⁴¹ etc. and they lent money to the needy, as well as to the State. They dominated the society and received honour and high place in the society.

Professional Classes

The government servants, soldiers, teachers, doctors, or vaidya, tailors, barbers, artists, astronomers, astrologers, jugglers, the rope dancer, musicians, dancers, magicians, gardeners, drummers, singing and dancing women, fishermen, prostitutes, mason, stone workers, polishers of tools and weapons, brick-makers, music performers etc.,⁴² had their

respective classes of their different professions and received honour in the society according to the status of their castes. In addition to all these professionals the socio-economic position and occupation of selected castes among Hindus were shown in the following table⁴³:

Socio-economic position or grade 1	Caste 2	Traditional occupations 3
Advanced	Brahmin-Deshastha	Vedapathan
..	.. Karade	..
..	.. Konkanastha	..
..	.. Goud-Sarasvata	..
..	Kayasth Prabhu	--
..	Sonar	Goldsmith
Intermediate	Dhanagar	Sheeprearing
..	Koli	Fishing
..	Koravi	Basket making
..	Koshti	Weaving
..	Kumbhar	Pots and tile making
..	Lingayat	Trade
..	Lohar	Iron making
..	Mali	Gardening
..	Maratha	Military, dominant and agriculture

contd.

1	2	3
Intermediate	Nhavi	Shaving
..	Parit	Washing clothes
..	Sali	Weaving
..	Shimpi	Tailoring
..	Sutar	Wood work
..	Teli	Oil-pressing
Backward	Berad	Farming
..	Laman	Carrier
..	Ramoshi	Watchmen
..	Vaddars	Stone cutters
Depressed	Bhangi	Scavenging
..	Dhors	Tanning
..	Chambhar	Shoe-making
..	Mahars	Village servant
..	Mangs	Village servants and farmers

Sources of the State Exchequer

Following were the sources of the State Exchequer shown as the income items in the balance-sheet of the Sangli State in the year 1883-84 A.D., and even prior to that there was

little change. Hence to understand the economic life on the eve of Sangli State's inception, the income items of 1883-84 mentioned in the Gazetteer are considered as the items of income and they were in order of their sequence as:

1. Interest on promissory notes,
2. Land Revenue,
3. Sayar Revenue,
4. Excise,
5. Abkari,
6. Stamps,
7. Registration,
8. Law and Justice,
9. Jails,
10. Paga,
11. Education,
12. Imarat Karkhana,
13. Forest,
14. Miscellaneous,
15. Other income and additional income.

It was thus on the eve of Sangli State's inception that the socio-economic life and conditions were prevailed in the Sangli State. The review of all such information brings us to conclude that the socio-economic life in the Sangli State was just as the life that prevailed in other parts of Maharashtra. Exception comes only to some parts where natural calamities prevailed and lands were damaged in the military operations. The state of affairs, then in other walks of life were the same. But rigidity of social life was much more harsh and that might be due to the fact that the State was ruled by the Brahmin rulers.

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