

Renowned Kings of Our Country

Introduction

When you were in Grade 6, you learnt about kings like Pandukabhaya, Devanampiyatissa, Dutugemunu, Walagamba, Wasabha, Mahasen and Dhatusena who were great kings of our country during the early period of Anuradhapura kingdom. In this lesson you will learn about some of the renowned kings who made a great commitment towards the well-being of the country during the latter part of the Anuradhapura Kingdom and during the Polonnaruwa Kingdom.

- Lack of stability in ruling the country because of the internal disputes
- Destruction of large amounts of resources due to battles
- Armies from South India being called to this country by the leaders of both sides to fight in battles for gaining the ruling power
- Decline in the economy of the country due to political conflicts

King Manawamma (684 A.D. - 718 A.D.)

Manawamma is a son of King Kassapa II who came to power around 650 AD and ruled the country for nine years. It seems that Prince Manawamma was at a young age when King Kassapa II died of some disease. Thus there arose conflicts for gaining power after the death of King Kassapa II. Prince Manawamma did not get involved in these conflicts and lived in hiding for security reasons. As King Dathopatissa II who ruled the country at that time had been looking out for Prince Manawamma, the Prince fled to India.

Having fled to Pallawa Kingdom in India, Prince Manawamma became friendly with the Pallawa King named Narasinghewarman I and served under him. As the Prince supported the Pallawa king in his battles, the king was pleased with the Prince and, in gratitude for the services he rendered, the

The Political Situation of the Country before King Manawamma's Rule

King Wasabha was a ruler who belonged to the Lambakarna royal lineage. King Dhatusena was of Maurya dynasty. During most part of the Anuradhapura period, the country was ruled by kings belonging to Lambakarna and Maurya royal lineages. However, on certain occasions there arose disputes between these two royal lineages on gaining political power. About 50 years before King Manawamma came to power, there had been a political dispute between these two royal lineages. The following are some of the key features that can be seen in the field of politics of this country during that period:

King gave him an army and supported him to come to Lanka and gain power. Prince Manawamma arrived in Lanka with that army and waged battle against King Dathopatissa II. However, while they were fighting the battle, the Pallawa king in India fell ill and therefore the army that came to support Prince Manawamma returned to India. Thus the battle was stopped halfway and Prince Manawamma, too, had to go back to India for his protection. After going to India once again, Prince Manawamma had to serve the Pallawa king for about 20 years further in order to get an army for his support to achieve his goal. King Narasinghewarman II who was the Pallawa king at that time provided Prince Manawamma with an army once again. Prince Manawamma came to Lanka with that army, defeated King Haththadata who was the then ruler of Lanka and ascended throne in 684 AD. Prince Manawamma's ascending the throne is a landmark event in the history of this country.

By the time prince Manawamma ascended the throne, the political and the economic situation of the country had declined as there had been escalating internal conflicts for a period of about 50 years. As Prince Manawamma spent over 20 years in the Pallawa State, he had become middle-aged by the time he ascended the throne. However King Manawamma was able to rule the country for a long period of about 35 years. Consequently, political stability was once again restored in the country. The traditional administration structure of the country seems to have been re-established during the reign of King Manawamma. The tradition of inheriting the kingdom was started during this time. It is evident from his character that one's goal can be achieved by working

with determination and patience. After King Manawamma, his children ascended the throne consecutively. The royal lineage of King Manawamma lasted for about 300 years until the end of the Anuradhapura era.

King Sena I (833 A.D. - 853 A.D.)

King Sena I is a son of King Dappula II who belonged to Manawamma lineage. King Dappula II ruled the country for a period of about 16 years and after his death, one of his sons named Aggabodhi IX ascended the throne. His reign was limited to three years. After King Aggabodhi IX, his brother King Sena I ascended the throne in 833 AD. The reign of King Sena I lasted for 20 years. During the early part of his reign Lanka had to face Pandyan invasions. During this period, the Pandya state in South India was becoming powerful. As the Pandyan King **Sri Mara Sri Wallabha** invaded this country with a huge army, the army of King Sena I was defeated. King Sena's brother Prince Mahinda, who was the heir apparent, and Adipada Prince Kassapa fought in the battle on behalf of the King, but they were killed in the battle. With the defeat of his army, King Sena I fled to Malaya area for protection.

The Pandyan armies entered the city of Anuradhapura and plundered the whole city. Later a peace treaty was drawn up between the Pandya King and King Sena I and subsequently the rule of the country was once again handed over to King Sena I and the Pandyans returned to India. The objective of this invasion seems to have been to plunder the precious objects rather than to seize power.



Fig. 2.1
Ritigala footpath

King Sena I returned to the capital city and took measures to restore the areas that had been destroyed by the invading army. In addition to such restorations, he also put up several new constructions related to Ritigala monastery and temples like Jethawanaramaya and Abhayagiriya. As two of the King's brothers were killed in the battle against the Pandyans, Prince Udaya who was another of the King's brothers was made the heir apparent. However, after some time, Prince Udaya died of some disease and Prince Sena, the eldest son of Prince Kashyapa who was killed in the battle, was made the heir apparent and was entrusted with the administration of Ruhuna.

Prince Sena II (853 A.D. - 887 A.D.)

King Sena II was a son of the above mentioned Adipada Prince Kashyapa who was one of the brothers of King Sena I and was killed during the Pandyan invasion. After the death of King Sena I, Prince Sena II who had been the heir apparent ascended the throne. His reign lasted for about 35 years (853 A.D. – 887 A.D) and there was peace in the country during that period. As the country was politically peaceful, King Sena II was able to restore the country to its former glory and did a great service to the country enhancing development in the fields of economy and religion.

King Sena II completed restoration work of everything that had been destroyed due to enemy invasions that had taken place during the reign of King Sena I. Construction of a hospital in Mihintale, construction of a dam named Manimekala (Minipe) across the Mahaweli and construction of a sluice for Minneriya Wewa are some of the examples for the services rendered by King Sena II for the well-being of the public in addition to the services done for the furtherance of the religion.

One of the historic events that took place during the reign of King Sena II was that he invaded the Pandya kingdom. The fact that Pandyans invaded this country and plundered the property during the reign of King Sena I must have grieved him. He must have been looking forward for an opportunity to erase the disgrace that was brought upon this country and to bring back to this country the property that had been plundered by the Pandyans. As **Prince Waragunawarman II** who was a Pandyan

prince came to this country seeking support to wage battle against the Pandya kingdom, King Sena II got the opportunity to invade the Pandyan Kingdom with the help of Prince Waragunawarman.



Fig. 2.2 Ruins of an ancient hospital in Mihintale

King Sena II sent a mighty army commanded by his able commander **General Kutthaka** to invade the Pandya territory. The Pandyans were defeated in the battle that was fought between the Pandyan army and the Lankan army. The Lankan army surrounded **Madurapura**, the capital city of the Pandya kingdom and launched an attack. The Pandyan King named **Sri Mara Sri Wallabha**, too, was killed in the attack that was launched by the Lankan army. Then the Lankan army put Prince Waragunawarman on the throne of the Pandyan Kingdom as a representative of King Sena II. After this invasion, the Lankan army returned to the country victoriously bringing with them not only the property that had been plundered by the Pandyans, but also the possessions of the Pandyans. This victory that King Sena II achieved has been recorded in several stone inscriptions. It is clear that the commander

referred to as “Kuttha Seneviradanan” in the stone inscription that was found in **Irripinniyawa** in the Anuradhapura district area is Commander Kutthaka who led the invasion to Pandyan kingdom.

Organization of the Administration System of the State

Central Administration

The system of administration by the king and a group of officials who supported the king which was in effect throughout the whole country can be considered as the central administration. The king was the head of the central administration. One king was succeeded by another according to the traditional system of inheriting the throne. During the Anuradhapura era, there were two ways in which the throne was usually inherited:

- Inheritance of the throne by the son from his father.
e.g: After King Pandukabhaya, his son Mutasiva inherited the throne.
- Inheritance of the throne by the younger brother from the elder brother.
e.g: After King Dutugemunu, his brother prince Saddhatissa inherited the throne.

Kings took particular care to give a good education to the heirs apparent to the throne in their childhood. Academic studies which included language learning and writing were done mostly under Bhikkus. Practical skills

like fencing and archery, which rulers of that time were required to possess, were learnt under experts in those fields.

There was the custom of holding a coronation when a new king has ascended the throne. Coronation of the king can be considered to be the occasion where the king legally assumes responsibility as the ruler of the country.

As the king was in the highest position of the central administration of the country, he was responsible for performing a number of tasks. The following are examples for such tasks:

- Maintaining law and order in the country
- Protecting the country from both internal and external enemy attacks
- Appointing officials that are required for the central administration as well as for regional administration
- Handling the economic activities of the country and imposing taxes
- Managing judicial affairs

There were a group of officials who supported the king in administrative affairs of the state. The sub-king (heir apparent to throne), commander of the armies, treasurer, and the chief secretary (the head who was in charge of keeping records) were prominent among them. There was a king's council consisting of such officers who supported the king. It is evident that the king's council chaired by the king had met in order to discuss important issues related to the administration of the country. In certain stone inscriptions belonging to the Anuradhapura era, it is

mentioned of a group of officials called "*adekawaru*". This is a term in Sanskrit similar in meaning to "director".

"*Asha adeka*" (Director of Horses)

– Head in charge of the Horse Division

"*Athi adika*" (Director of Elephants)

– Head in charge of the Elephant Division

The officers called *adeka* /*adika* in the examples given above can be regarded as the heads in charge of different administrative divisions or sections.

Before King Manawamma ascended the throne, some rulers had come to power during times of internal conflicts disregarding the traditional system of succession to the throne by means of inheritance. However, during the period when kings belonging to Manawamma lineage were in power, the traditional system of inheriting the throne was implemented properly. Certain kings of this era had recorded in stone inscriptions they erected that they ascended throne after attaining ranks of **Epa** (*Adipada*) and **Mapa** (*Mahadipada*) respectively. The top ranks like Epa and Mapa were awarded to the princes of the royal family. By holding such ranks those princes seem to have received some training that was necessary for the future administration of the country.

Regional Administration

During the Anuradhapura era, the country was divided into well-organized administrative units. In addition to the central administration that was implemented under the king as the head, there was a system of regional administration that was carried out under officers who acted in charge of

each area. The areas surrounding the capital city of Anuradhapura were divided into four divisions namely North, South, East and West based on the main directions. In addition to these, there also existed administrative areas called rata or **ratta**. The officers who handled the administrative affairs of these areas were called **ratladu or rataladdan**. The areas outside the capital city were divided into three parts namely, Malaya Rata, Maya Rata and Ruhuna and were ruled under separate administrative officers. The smallest administrative unit of the state was the 'village'. At the early period of the Anuradhapura era, the officers who were in charge of administration of the villages were called **Gamika**. Towards the latter half of the Anuradhapura era, those who were in charge of the administration of villages were called **Gamladdan**.

State Policies and Social Welfare

Kings of the Anuradhapura era paid particular attention to the following when implementing state policies.

- Protecting the country
- Maintaining law and order
- Enhancing economic well-being
- Taking measures to uplift religion

When kings belonging to Manawamma lineage were in power, these basic principles seem to have been implemented properly.

Protecting the Country

The king's army and its commander, and the heads of the divisional administrative units supported the king in protecting the

country. During the early period of the Anuradhapura era, the king's army consisted of the fourfold forces (*Chaturangani sena*) namely, elephants, cavalry (horses), chariots and infantrymen (eth, as, riya, pabala). Even during the period when Manawamma lineage was in power, the kings had very powerful armies and there seem to have been in those armies some troops consisting of soldiers from South India, too, who had been deployed on the basis of paying salaries.

When Lankan kings designed cities, they were concerned about the protection of those cities. From the very inception, Anuradhapura city had been built following security precautions like constructing outer walls and gateways.

Building fortresses and stationing guards were also done as a security precaution in resisting internal or external enemy attacks.

Maintaining Law and Order

There seem to have been a very effective legal system in the country during the Anuradhapura period. A number of stone inscriptions which mentioned of such laws and rules related to the reigns of kings of Manawamma lineage had been found. The legal system consisted of several types of laws including:

- laws related to the possession of land;
- laws related to trade;
- laws related to agriculture and taxation;
- and
- criminal laws

The stone inscription in **Wewelketiya** which belongs to the 10th century AD is a very important source which has records of laws and regulations that were in effect at that time. This inscription records details of many laws and rules related to the administration of villages (*dasagam*) and settling of criminal cases. Copies of this stone inscription have been found from several places which makes it evident that action had been taken by the rulers to enlighten people on the laws and regulations in effect in the state.

In the latter part of the Anuradhapura era, the kings and the top officials had granted certain persons and organizations special powers and privileges and action was taken to inform the public of them through records made on “*anthani kanu*”. “*Anthani kanu*” are a type of stone inscriptions which contain records of royal grants.

Economic Well-being

The state policy of ancient Lanka was to maintain a righteous rule that enhanced the economic well-being of the country. The kings of Anuradhapura era had a very keen interest in constructing tanks and irrigation systems as such constructions were essential for the well-being of the public.

In administrative affairs and in taxation, the king had to act following the ‘**unwritten law**’. ‘**Unwritten law**’ is the accepted policy that was adopted by the predecessors of the king. It is evident that following the ‘**unwritten law**’ had been so important because some of the kings had recorded in stone inscriptions that they had not acted contravening the ‘**unwritten law**’.

There is evidence which shows that there had been a very effective financial management policy during the reign of the kings of Manawamma lineage. The Mihintale **tablet inscription** of King Mihindu IV (952 – 972 AD) is a very important record of the system of financial management that existed at that time. This inscription includes records about the internal administration of the Mihintale Temple and the customs and formalities that the Bhikkus had to follow. According to the inscription, details of the income that the temple receives each day should be entered in a register. Similarly, details of the amounts that had to be spent on the day-to-day needs of the temple, too, should be entered in the **Panghchika book** (*passbook*) and after getting the signature of the relevant officers, the passbook should be kept in the sealed box.



Fig. 2.3 Tablet inscription of Mihindu IV in Mihintale

At the end of each month, the expenses incurred during the month should be brought to a separate notebook and daily records should be removed. At the end of a period of 12 months, details of each of those expenses should be entered in the secretary’s book and it should be read before the Bhikkus and their approval should be obtained.

Accordingly, it seems that records of income and expenditure of the temple were kept on a daily and monthly basis and an annual income and expenditure report was prepared at the end of each year.

Kings of the Anuradhapura era took particular interest in ensuring social well-being, too. It is evident from the following examples:

- King Buddhadasa appointed one doctor for every ten village and established dispensaries.
- King Upatissa I established hospitals and alms halls for the blind and the sick.
- King Udaya I established hospitals in Polonnaruwa and Padaviya and offered lands for generating income required for the maintenance of those hospitals.
- King Kassapa V constructed hospitals in Anuradhapura to treat patients suffering from epidemic diseases and established dispensaries in the city.

Religious Upliftment

It is a prominent feature of the history of this country that almost all the kings who ruled the country after Buddhism had been introduced to the country acted for the betterment of Buddhism. As Bhikkus acted as advisors to the government, there was an intense relationship between the king and the religion. Therefore the kings took every possible action including the construction of temples, offering of lands to generate income for the maintenance of temples and

establishing Pirivenas for the promotion of education of Bhikkus for the betterment of Buddhism.

Political Trends of the Region and the Foreign Policy

Towards the end of the Anuradhapura period, the political situation in South India became a causal factor that affected the political affairs of this country. Therefore it is important to briefly analyse the political situation that existed in South India at that time.

There were three South Indian kingdoms which exerted a direct effect on Lanka.

Pallawa State

The Pallawa kingdom was located to the North of the land of the Chola kingdom in South India. **Kanchipuram** was the capital of Pallawa kingdom. It was the Pallawas who established an enormous imperial power for the first time in South India. By the 7th century AD, the Pallawas had established a very firm power which lasted till about the 9th century AD.

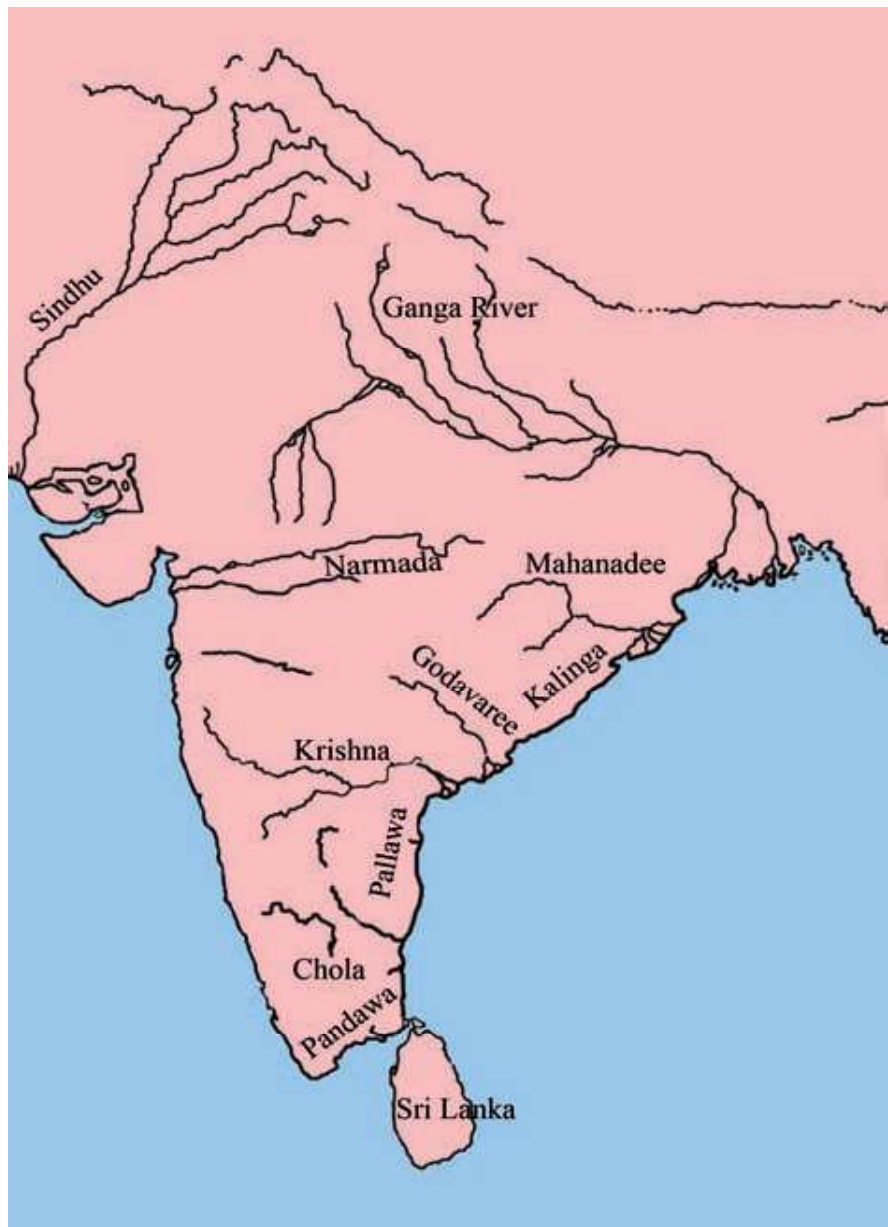
Pandya State

Pandya state was located very close to Lanka along the eastern coast of South India. The Pandya state had been growing very powerful since the latter part of the 6th century AD and its effect was exerted on Lanka, too. **Madurapura** was the capital of the Pandyan kingdom.

Chola State

Chola state lied to the north of Pandya Kingdom close to the eastern coast of South India. The Cholas made **Thanjavur** (formerly Tanjore) their capital and, on certain occasions, launched invasions against the Pandyan kingdom, too. In the 9th and 10th centuries AD, the Cholas established a mighty state and gained imperial power. It was consequent to the invasions that were launched by the Chola kings named Raja Raja and Rajendra that the Anuradhapura kingdom collapsed.

In coping with this political situation that prevailed in South India, the Lankan kings united with the Pallavas against the Pandyans and with the Pandyans against the Cholas. When other Indian states like Rashtrakuta evolved, Lankan kings acted in unison with those states in order to prevent invasions. However much had the Lankan kings been strategic, several South Indian invasions were



Map 2.1 South Indian kingdoms close to Sri Lanka

launched against Lanka towards the end of the Anuradhapura period because of the competition that existed between the Indian states and because of their efforts at expanding their power.

Although Anuradhapura Kingdom had achieved prosperity under the kings of Manawamma lineage, by the time of the rule of King Mihindu V (982 – 1029 AD), the central administration had gone weaker and internal conflicts had intensified. By that time, South Indian armies that had been brought to this country from time to time had been deployed in the city of Anuradhapura. Since the economy of the country had declined, the king had no means of paying salaries to those armies. Therefore the South Indian army surrounded the king's palace. Then King Mihindu V fled to Ruhuna for protection. The news of this weak political situation reached

India and the Chola emperor named Raja Raja invaded this country. The Cholas who entered the country captured many areas including Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa in Rajarata. Then they made Polonnaruwa their capital and ruled the Rajarata areas as a part of the Chola empire.

Thus the Anuradhapura Kingdom, which had set the foundation for a proud and prosperous civilization for a period of about 14 centuries collapsed in 1017 AD. It was King Vijayabahu I who freed from the Chola rule a large part of the Rajarata area which had been under Chola rule for about 53 years and restored the pride of the Lankans.



Activity

Make a question booklet on the Manawamma royal lineage.

King Vijayabahu the Great (1055 A.D. – 1110 A.D.)

King Vijayabahu I alias Vijayabahu the Great is one of the great rulers of the Lankan history. Before King Vijayabahu I ascended the throne, he had been called Keerthi alias Kiththi in his childhood. The prince's father was Maha Sami Moggallana and his mother was Lokitha Devi. Some of the important sources that can be used for studying about King Vijayabahu I are:

- the Mahavamsa,
- the copper plate of Panakaduwa, and
- Ambagamuwa stone inscription

In 1017 AD, King Rajendra I, who was the

ruler of the Chola empire of South India, invaded Lanka and took King Mihindu V to Chola state holding him a captive. From that time onwards Rajarata was ruled by Chola rulers until 1070 AD. During that period the Cholas were looking for the heir apparent to the throne as they had wanted to kill him. The Cholas made efforts on several occasions to find Prince Kassapa (Vickramabahu), the son of King Mihindu V, and to kill him, but all their efforts failed.

Meanwhile, King Mihindu V died in 1029 AD while he was in the Chola state. After that, the Lankans launched an anti-Chola movement based in Ruhunu Rata. During this period, the Cholas were acting tactically to prevent the establishment of a political power against them in Ruhuna. The following are some of the tactics employed by the Cholas:

- entering Ruhuna from Polonnaruwa from time to time and destroying property
- killing the heirs to the throne of Ruhuna

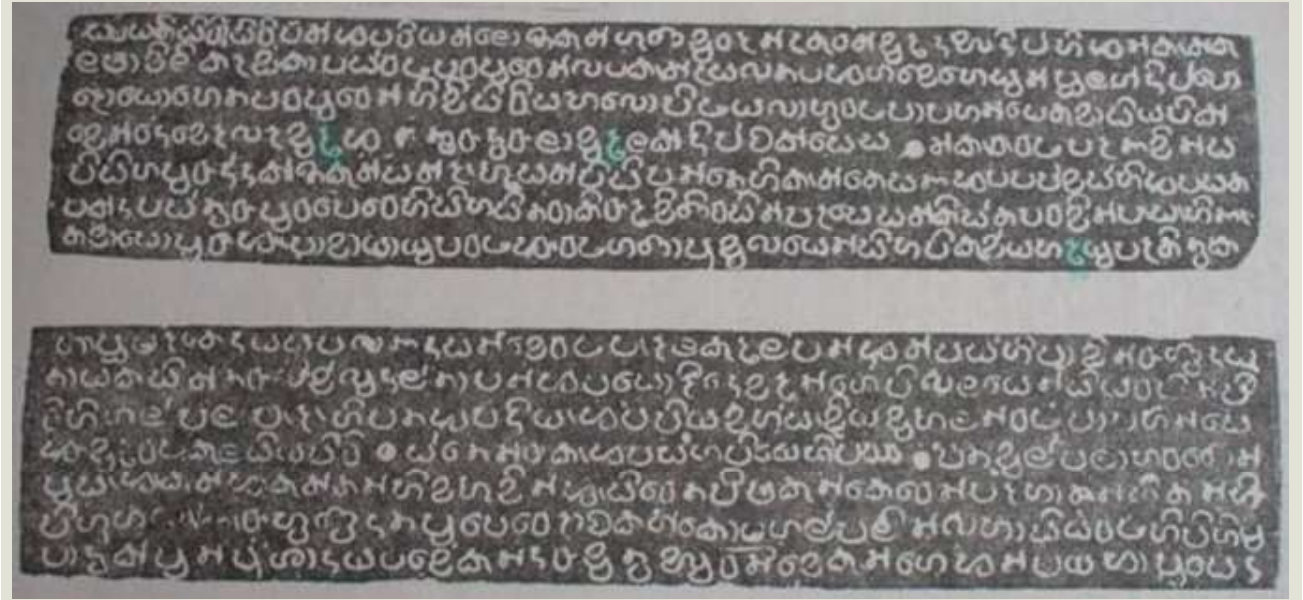
It seems that the Cholas tried to destabilize Ruhuna politically through such acts. Before King Vijayabahu came to power in Ruhuna, there had been no unity even among the rulers of Ruhuna. The Cholas took advantage of that situation, too.

Vijayabahu's ascending the throne in Ruhuna

There was a noble who had helped King Vijayabahu from the king's childhood. This noble was called Sithnaru Bim Budalna of Ruhuna alias Buddharaja. Buddharaja

provided protection to the royal family including Prince Keerthi's family, led battles against the enemies and gave Prince Keerthi immense help to come to power in Ruhuna. Panakaduwa copper-plate records information about the services provided by General Buddharaja. When the character of King Vijayabahu I is analysed, it is clear that he had acted from his childhood with the strong determination of saving the country from enemies.

Panakaduwa Copper Plate



This plate was found from a paddy field located in the Panakaduwa village of the Morawak Korale in the Southern Province. This plate records details of the king's life from his childhood. It has been recorded in this charter that he had to suffer a lot of hardships in his childhood. He had lived amidst lots of sufferings and had not even got enough food to eat. A general named Buddharaja alias Budalna of Sithnaru Bim provided protection to the prince and parents of the prince. He was a chief of the people of Ruhuna at that time. This plate records about a number of royal grants offered to Budalna.

In order to reach this goal, Prince Kiththi first had to get into fight in order to become the king of Ruhuna. In the fight that took place against Keshadhathu Kashyapa, the then ruler of Ruhuna, Buddharaja and his troop helped Prince Kiththi immensely. Keshadhathu Kashyapa was defeated in these battles and Prince Kiththi came to the throne of Ruhuna as King Vijayabahu I in 1055 AD making Kataragama his ruling centre.



Fig. 2.4 The ruins of the royal palace built by King Vijayabahu in Anuradhapura

Liberating Lanka from Chola Rule

Even before the lapse of a considerable period of time after King Vijayabahu I had come to power in Ruhuna, the Cholas invaded Ruhuna. The objective of the Cholas was to destroy the king's army before the king could stabilize power. However, as the king had come to know of the Chola's plan, he fled to Malaya area (the hill country) and the Cholas could not achieve their objective. The Cholas plundered Ruhuna and went back to Polonnaruwa. Having returned to Ruhuna, King Vijayabahu started stabilizing his political power and established friendly relationships with Burma in order to obtain foreign aid that is needed for his future battle. It is reported that the people of Rajarata area got the news that a patriotic battle was being organized in Ruhuna under King Vijayabahu and therefore they stopped paying taxes to the Cholas and started to rebel against the Cholas.

The Chola Emperor in India who heard that the Lankans are organizing themselves against his rule in Lanka sent additional troops to support the Chola ruler in Polonnaruwa. The Cholas who grew stronger in this manner once again invaded Ruhuna. However, in the battle against King Vijayabahu, the Cholas were defeated. King Vijayabahu, who took advantage of the opportunity, went to Polonnaruwa with his army and captured Polonnaruwa. Then the Chola Emperor sent more troops from India to aid the Chola ruler in Polonnaruwa and subsequently fights broke out again in Rajarata between King Vijayabahu and the Cholas. King Vijayabahu was defeated in this battle and he withdrew to **Wakirigala** in the Kegalle District for protection.

The King then gradually built up his army, went to Maha Naga Kula area in the Hambantota District and got ready for the final battle. Later King Vijayabahu invaded Polonnaruwa in 1070 AD employing maximum force and also sent an army to Mahathiththa to launch attack in case the Chola armies arrived from India. King Vijayabahu won the battle that was fought in Rajarata. With the invasion of Polonnaruwa by King Vijayabahu in 1070 AD, the Chola rule that existed for about 70 years thus collapsed. Fighting against the mighty Chola empire of India and liberating Lanka from Chola rule is a great service rendered by King Vijayabahu.

Reign of King Vijayabahu

King Vijayabahu ruled Lanka for a period of about 40 years starting from 1070 AD. During this period a united and peaceful Sri Lanka was created once again under the capital city

of Polonnaruwa. Thus the first king of the Polonnaruwa era was King Vijayabahu I. The following are some of the services rendered by him apart from what has been mentioned above:

- re-establishing the positions of *Epa* and *Mapa* and restoring the traditional system of administration
- renovating the irrigation systems and promoting economic development
- constructing a royal palace in Anuradhapura (Fig.2.4)

King Vijayabahu's Foreign Policy

Preventing any Chola invasion that could possibly be launched in future and establishing trade relationships with neighbouring countries were the key features of King Vijayabahu's foreign policy. In order to prevent future Chola invasions, he established relationships with the other states of India which were against the Cholas. He gave his sister Princess Miththa in marriage to a Pandya prince and built up friendly relationships with the Pandya Kingdom.

He married a princess named Thilokasundari of Kalinga ancestry and became friendly with the Kalinga state.

He also became friendly with the Western Chalukya dynasty by exchanging missions and by sending gifts. Moreover, he also took measures to build up relationships with

Burma with a view to working towards the economic and religious well-being of Lanka.

Services of King Vijayabahu towards the upliftment of religion;

- obtaining Bhikkus from Burma and restoration of *Upasampada* higher ordination in Lanka
- establishment of a three-storey *Dalada Mandiraya* (a building which houses the Sacred Tooth Relic) in Polonnaruwa
- renovation of the access road to Sri Pada and offering lands to Sri Pada temple
- renovation of temples and stupas in Anuradhapura and Ruhuna

Lessons that can be learnt from the life of King Vijayabahu

Vijayabahu I, who had an exemplary character, was a king who rendered an invaluable service to the country overcoming various challenges he had to face from his childhood. Panakaduwa copper plate records how Vijayabahu I escaped from his enemies who came in search of him everywhere he went and how he spent his childhood in the forest living on coarse food. His honesty is evident from the fact that, even after becoming king, he has recorded in his own words how he suffered hardships during his childhood. After becoming King, Vijayabahu I granted various privileges to Buddharaja who helped him from his childhood which shows that he had the valuable quality of being grateful to those who helped him. On several occasions he had to suffer defeat in

the battles he fought against the Cholas, but he was not discouraged by those defeats and got ready to wage battle against the Cholas after identifying and overcoming his own weaknesses. The incredible perseverance displayed by King Vijayabahu I is a good example even for the present-day society. As far as the character of the king is concerned, it is clear that he had strong confidence in his capability to protect the country. Even after ascending the throne, he paid particular attention to the ways of preventing foreign invasions. The great qualities of King Vijayabahu I had been recorded elaborately in the Ambagamuwa stone inscription.

The meaning of the terms mentioned in the Ambagamuwa stone inscription regarding the great qualities of king Vijayabahu is as follows.

For Triple Gem	- veneration
For teachers	- care
For virtuous people	- honour
For scholars	- prosperity
For relatives	- patronage
For friends	- friendship
For enemies	- defeat
For all beings	- compassion
For council	- wisdom
For self	- completeness



Activity

Fill in the following double entry journal with the information in the lesson on King Vijayabahu.

Challenges faced	How he overcame these challenges (answers of the students)
Childhood	
Capturing the power in Ruhuna	
Constructing Polonnaruwa as a new capital city	

King Parakramabahu the Great (1153 A.D. – 1186 A.D.)

Parakramabahu the Great was a king who succeeded in uniting the Lanka that had been divided and in rendering an invaluable service towards the development of the country.

The political solidarity that King Vijayabahu I had built up declined after the death of the King. There occurred a conflict between those who were friendly with the Kalinga dynasty and those who were friendly with the Pandya dynasty regarding the inheritance of the throne after the death of the king. Because of this conflict, none of the rulers could stabilize power. As a result of this, the country was divided into three parts namely,

Polonnaruwa, Dakkhina Deshaya (Southern country) and Ruhuna and three separate ruling centres were established. It was in such a background that Prince Parakramabahu was born.



Fig. 2.5 Dedigama Kotawehera

Prince Parakramabahu's father was Manabharana, who was a son of Princess Miththa. He can be considered as Manabharana I. Prince Parakramabahu's mother was Princess Rathnawali. Prince Parakramabahu was born while Manabharana I was living in Dedigama area as the ruler of Dakkhina Deshaya. Kota Vehera or Suthigara Chetiya in Dedigama had been constructed at the place where prince Parakramabahu was born.

When Prince Parakramabahu was still a child, his father died. Therefore he went to his stepfather, Kithsirimegha with his mother and he was brought up there. As Prince Parakramabahu was an heir to the throne, his stepfather took particular interest in giving him a good education. The Prince, too, had a keen interest in learning academic subjects like language, archery and handling

elephants.

The stepfather of prince Parakramabahu, Kithsirimegha was the ruler of Dakkhina Deshaya. Prince Parakramabahu came to power in that area after the death of Kithsiri Megha, his stepfather who gained power after the death of his father, Manabharana. He built a new city named Parakramapura in Dakkhina Deshaya. That area is presently called **Panduwas Nuwara** and the ruins of the buildings that had been constructed at that time can be seen in that area even today. Prince Parakramabahu was a ruler who was full of determination and, while he was ruling Dakkhina Deshaya, he launched a campaign to enhance the economic development of that area. He adopted the motto which said, "not a single drop of water that falls from the sky should be allowed to flow into the sea without making some use of it by the people". While Prince Parakramabahu was ruling Dakkhina Deshaya, Gajabahu II, who was the son of Wickramabahu who ruled in Polonnaruwa, came to power in Polonnaruwa after the death of Wickramabahu. Similarly, after the death of Sirimallabha who ruled in Ruhuna, his son Manabharana II came to power in Ruhuna. In this backdrop, there took place several battles between Parakramabahu I, Gajabahu II and Manabharana II to gain power in Polonnaruwa. However, Parakramabahu I and Gajabahu II later entered into an agreement against Manabharana II. According to this agreement, one should ascend the throne after the other.



Fig. 2.6 Royal palace of King Parakramabahu

A copy of this agreement had been recorded in the stone inscription that was found from the Sangamu Viharaya in the Kurunegala District. It is called the **Sangamu Vihara inscription**.

Even after the Parakramabahu – Gajabahu agreement had been reached, Manabharana did not give up his struggle. After the death of Gajabahu, Manabharana II went into battle against Parakramabahu. Manabharana II was defeated in these battles and therefore he fled to Ruhuna. Accordingly, Parakramabahu was able to establish power in Polonnaruwa. After some time, Manabharana II died when he was in Ruhuna, but his mother **Queen Sugala** gave leadership to his army and led the battle against Parakramabahu. However, Queen Sugala was in possession of the Sacred Tooth Relic, which was considered to be the symbol of the inheritance of the throne of this country at that time, and also of the Bowl Relic. Keeping those sacred objects in her possession, Queen Sugala fought the battle continuously, but Parakramabahu was able to defeat Queen Sugala by launching a well-planned attack.



Fig. 2.7 The Royal council of King Parakramabahu I

King Parakramabahu was able to take the Tooth Relic and the Bowl Relic into his possession. Thus, a united and prosperous Lanka was established once again in 1153 under the rule of King Parakramabahu.

Economic Development Activities

It was during the period when King Parakramabahu was the ruler of Dakkhina Deshaya that he first started implementing economic development activities. The water of Deduru Oya was diverted by constructing dams in several places in order to supply water for agricultural activities. Chronicles record of three such places namely, **Kottha Baddha, Sukara Nijjara and Donadakkhitha**. In addition to them, enlarging small tanks and renovation of many more tanks were among the other development activities that were implemented by the king.

The marshy lands lying between the *Kalu Ganga* and the *Benthara Ganga* in the *Pasdun Korale* were developed by making the water in those marshy lands flow out.

After King Parakramabahu had come to power in Polonnaruwa, he rendered an invaluable service towards the development of agriculture. Parakrama Samudraya in Polonnaruwa is one of the greatest of the irrigation schemes implemented by him. Parakrama Samudraya was constructed by merging the two tanks named Thopa Wewa and Dumbutulu Wewa. The Mahavamsa records that 3910 irrigations and 163 tanks were constructed during the reign of King Parakramabahu. In addition to them, dams, canals and minor tanks, too, were constructed. In Nainathiv epigraph, it's mentioned how king Parakramabahu taxed the ships.



Fig. 2.8
The standing statue of the Buddha
at Gal Viharaya, Polonnaruwa

Religious Activities

King Parakramabahu the Great rendered an invaluable service towards the upliftment of religion, too.

He conciliated between the three sects of the Sanghas and united the Sangha Sasana (Buddhist dispensation). He also pioneered in establishing the *Polonnaru Kathikawatha* (an agreement between monks and the king). This agreement has been recorded in a stone inscription in Uththararamaya (Gal Viharaya) in Polonnaruwa. *Pothgul Viharaya*, *Kiri Vehera* in Polonnaruwa and *Pabalu Vehera* are some of the temples built by King Parakramabahu. He also renovated the temples and stupas in Anuradhapura.

The Foreign Policy of King Parakramabahu the Great

King Parakramabahu maintained foreign relationships with Burma and South India. The trade relationships and the relationships on religion that existed between Lanka and Burma (Ramanghngha Land) continued for a long time, but those relationships began to deteriorate during this period because of certain activities of **King Alawunsithu** who was the King of Burma at that time.

Therefore King Parakramabahu planned to invade Burma in 1164 AD. He sent a naval force led by **Commander Nagaragiri Kiththi** for this purpose. The Lankan force succeeded in invading Burma and achieving victory. Commander Nagaragiri Kiththi who led the force to victory was awarded with villages

and lands by the king. This has been recorded in the **Devanagala stone inscription**.

King Parakramabahu intervened in a battle that took place regarding the throne of the Pandya kingdom in India. A prince named **Kulasekara** fought against Parakrama Pandya who was the ruler of the Pandya kingdom at that time. As King Parakrama Pandya sought King Parakramabahu's support, King Parakramabahu took action to send to India an army led by the two commanders named **Lankapura and Jagath Vijaya**.



Activity

Conduct a question - answer session using information in the lesson on King Parakramabahu the Great.

King Nishshankamalla (1187 A.D. – 1196 A.D.)

Among the kings who ruled in Polonnaruwa after King Parakramabahu the Great, King Nishshankamalla is significant. As King Parakramabahu did not have children, a king named Vijayabahu II ascended the throne after King Parakramabahu. It is said that King Vijayabahu II was a son of King Parakramabahu's sister. During the reign of King Vijayabahu II, Nissankamalla was the sub-king. King Vijayabahu II could stay in power only for a period of one year. He was killed by one named Mahinda who became king. On the fifth day after Mahinda had become king, he was killed by the sub-king Nishshankamalla who then became king.

Thus King Nishshankamalla ascended the throne in a state of political turmoil.



Fig. 2.9 The Royal Council of King Nishshankamalla

Challenges king Nishshankamalla confronted

1. Being a descendant of Kalinga dynasty who was born in a foreign country

King Nishshankamalla was the son of a king named Jayagopa who lived in the Kalinga State (Kalingu Deshaya) of India. His mother was named Queen Parvathi. Accordingly, he is a descendant of Kalinga dynasty. He used to mention of it quite often. Hence Polonnaruwa was also called Kalingapura. The Kalinga kings who had ruled Lanka before king Nishshankamalla, had been princes born in Lanka, but king Nishshankamalla was born in the Kalinga state itself in India.

His foreign origin was one of the serious challenges he faced.

2. Keeping the able commanders of King Parakramabahu under control

3. Preventing the people of Pandya dynasty becoming dominant

4. Maintaining his power in Ruhuna

King Nishshankamalla travelled throughout the country in order to win the hearts of people in addressing those challenges. He established lengthy stone inscriptions giving advice to people and displayed his greatness as king. Dambulla temple and Sri Pada temple are examples for the places he visited. Moreover, he implemented a lot of activities to improve the welfare of the citizens. The king and the other members of his family got on to one container of the scale while various objects were put on the other container to equal their weight and gave those objects as alms to the poor (*thulahara dana*).

Apart from such challenges, there also were groups including princes who were heirs to the throne and local commanders who had risen to power among those who acted against the king. King Nishshankamalla had to face various challenges of this nature, but he managed to remain in the throne for a period of nine years overcoming all those challenges. During this period, his power spread all over the country. This is evident from the details he had recorded in his stone inscriptions.



Fig 2.10 How seats had been arranged in the Nishshanka Raja Sabha Mandapaya (King's Royal Council Hall) by carving the name of an officer on a stone pillar.

It is inscribed on this stone pillar that (*raju*)
sinhasanaye wedahunkala seneviradunta
sthanayai

King Nishshankamalla had acted gaining the confidence of people. He travelled throughout the country implementing various activities to promote the well-being of the people. He distributed among the citizens a lot of goods and wealth including thulahara alms (goods equal in weight to that of a person). He dispelled people's fears of robbers and enemies and cared for the poor. The king had recorded these things in the stone inscriptions he erected. Stone inscriptions in Hetadageya in Polonnaruwa, Dambulla rock inscription and the inscription in Waduruppe are three of the examples for such inscriptions.

Granting tax concessions was another policy that was adopted by King Nishshankamalla to improve the well-being of the citizens. He went on to repeal some of the taxes that had been levied by his predecessors and also to grant tax concessions.

Several of the buildings of religious importance that can be seen at different sites in Polonnaruwa were built by King Nishshankamalla. He constructed a *Dalada Mandiraya* (a building to house the Tooth Relic) to deposit the Sacred Tooth Relic. It is known as Hetadageya. In addition to that, *Rankoth Vehera*, *Watadageya* and *Nishshankalatha Mandapaya* are some of the buildings constructed by him.

The building known as *Nishshanka Raja Sabha Mandapaya* (King's Royal Council) in Polonnaruwa, too, is considered to have been built by him. Meetings of the King's Council had been held there. It is a special feature of this building that the places where each of the officers should be seated have been marked by carving their names on the stone pillars of that building.



Activity

Write an essay on King Nishshankamalla.

Summary

1. Rulers of Lambhakarna and Maurya dynasties reigned most part of the Anuradhapura era. There were conflicts for power between these two dynasties.
2. Manawamma dynasty was an important royal lineage in Sri Lanka. Political stability was attained under King Manawamma of this lineage after 50 years.
3. Lanka had been attacked by Pandayas during the rule of king Sena I.
4. King Sena II invaded the Pandaya state.
5. Administrative activities were methodical during the Anuradhapura kingdom.
6. Three South Indian states influenced Lanka.
7. Cholas who captured the northern part of Sri Lanka, ruled that area making Polonnaruwa their capital.
8. King Vijayabahu I freed the country from Cholas.
9. A united and prosperous Sri Lanka was created under King Parakramabahu I.
10. King Nishshankamalla was another great ruler who came to power after King Parakramabahu I.