

Social Science

OUR PASTS-I

TEXTBOOK IN HISTORY FOR CLASS VI



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राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक अनुसंधान और प्रशिक्षण परिषद्
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING

ISBN 81-7450-493-1

First Edition

February 2006

Phalgun 1927

Reprinted

October 2006

Kartika 1928

November 2007

Kartika 1929

January 2009

Pausa 1930

January 2010

Magha 1931

January 2011

Magha 1932

January 2012

Magha 1933

January 2013

Pausa 1934

October 2013

Kartika 1935

December 2014

Pausa 1936

February 2016

Magha 1937

December 2016

Pausa 1938

November 2017

Agrahayana 1939

January 2019

Pausa 1940

PD 485T RPS

© **National Council of Educational
Research and Training, 2006**

₹ 60.00

Printed on 80 GSM paper with NCERT
watermark

Published at the Publication Division
by the Secretary, National Council of
Educational Research and Training,
Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi 110 016
and printed at Ana Print O Grafix Pvt. Ltd.,
347-K, Udyog Kendra Extn.-II, Sector
Ecotech-III, Greater Noida- 201 306

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Cover, Layout and Illustrations
Artt Creations, New Delhi

FOREWORD

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005 recommends that children's life at school must be linked to their life outside the school. This principle marks a departure from the legacy of bookish learning which continues to shape our system and causes a gap between the school, home and community. The syllabi and textbooks developed on the basis of NCF signify an attempt to implement this basic idea. They also attempt to discourage rote learning and the maintenance of sharp boundaries between different subject areas. We hope these measures will take us significantly further in the direction of a child-centred system of education outlined in the National Policy on Education (1986).

The success of this effort depends on the steps that school principals and teachers will take to encourage children to reflect on their own learning and to pursue imaginative activities and questions. We must recognise that, given space, time and freedom, children generate new knowledge by engaging with the information passed on to them by adults. Treating the prescribed textbook as the sole basis of examination is one of the key reasons why other resources and sites of learning are ignored. Inculcating creativity and initiative is possible if we perceive and treat children as participants in learning, not as receivers of a fixed body of knowledge.

These aims imply considerable change in school routines and mode of functioning. Flexibility in the daily time-table is as necessary as rigour in implementing the annual calendar so that the required number of teaching days are actually devoted to teaching. The methods used for teaching and evaluation will also determine how effective this textbook proves to be for making children's life at school a happy experience, rather than a source of stress or boredom. Syllabus designers have tried to address the problem of curricular burden by restructuring and reorienting knowledge at different stages with greater consideration for child psychology and the time available for teaching. The textbook attempts to enhance this endeavour by giving higher priority and

(iv)

space to opportunities for contemplation and wondering, discussion in small groups, and activities requiring hands-on experience.

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) appreciates the hard work done by the textbook development committee responsible for this book. We wish to thank the Chairperson of the advisory group in Social Science, Professor Hari Vasudevan and the Chief Advisor for this book, Professor Neeladri Bhattacharya for guiding the work of this committee. Several teachers contributed to the development of this textbook; we are grateful to their principals for making this possible. We are indebted to the institutions and organisations, which have generously permitted us to draw upon their resources, material and personnel. We are especially grateful to the members of the National Monitoring Committee, appointed by the Department of Secondary and Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development under the Chairpersonship of Professor Mrinal Miri and Professor G. P. Deshpande, for their valuable time and contribution. As an organisation committed to systemic reform and continuous improvement in the quality of its products, NCERT welcomes comments and suggestions which will enable us to undertake further revision and refinement.

New Delhi
20 December 2005

Director
National Council of Educational
Research and Training

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Our National Anthem

*Jana-gana-mana adhinayaka, jaya he
Bharata-bhagya-vidhata.
Punjab-Sindh-Gujarat-Maratha
Dravida-Utkala-Banga
Vindhya-Himachala-Yamuna-Ganga
Uchchhala-jaladhi-taranga.
Tava shubha name jage,
Tava shubha asisa mage,
Gahe tava jaya gatha.
Jana-gana-mangala-dayaka jaya he
Bharata-bhagya-vidhata.
Jaya he, jaya he, jaya he,
Jaya jaya jaya, jaya he!*

Our National Anthem, composed originally in Bangla by Rabindranath Tagore, was adopted in its Hindi version by the Constituent Assembly as the national anthem of India on 24 January 1950.

WHY STUDY HISTORY?

This year, in Class VI, you will read history. It is part of a bigger group of subjects known as Social Science. Social Science helps us understand the working of our social world. It tells us about geography, the way the economy works, and the manner in which social and political life is organised. Most parts of Social Science other than history tell you about the world in the present. History will help you understand how this present evolved. It will tell you about the past of the present.

When we live in a society, we become used to the world around us. We begin to take that world for granted. We forget that life was not always the way we see it. Can you, for instance, imagine a life without fire? Can you think of what it is to live in a society where the cultivation of crops was unknown? Or, what it was to live at a time when roads and railways did not exist, and yet people travelled long distances? History can take us into these pasts.

History in this sense is an adventure. It is a journey across time and space. It transports us into another world, another age, in which people lived differently. Their economy and society, their beliefs and faiths, their clothes and food, their settlements and buildings, their arts and crafts – everything was different. History can open doors into such worlds.

You may shrug your shoulders and say “Why should we bother about pasts that are no longer with us, pasts that have gone by?”

But history is not just about the past. It is about the present. The society we live in has been fashioned by those who came before us. The joys and sorrows of their daily lives, their attempt to grapple with the problems of their time, their discoveries and inventions, slowly transformed human societies. These changes were often so gradual, so seemingly small, that their impact was not noticed by people at that time. Only later, when we return to the past, when we study history, can we begin to see how these changes happened, and we can observe their long-term effect. By reading history we can understand how the modern world has emerged over long centuries of development.

The book that you will study this year will take you back to our ancient pasts. Over the next two years you will continue your journey through the history of subsequent periods.

In this book you will read not just about the kings and queens who lived in ancient India, and about their conquests and policies. You will learn about hunters and peasants, crafts people and traders. You will see how fire came to be used, and iron tools were discovered; how wheat and rice began to be cultivated, and villages and towns developed. You will read about pilgrims and saints, buildings and paintings, religions and beliefs. You will find out that history is not only about great men. It is also about the lives and activities of ordinary women, men and children. History is not only about political events, it is about everything that happens in society.

The book will also help you understand how historians come to know about the past. Somewhat like detectives, historians follow clues and traces left by people who lived in the past. Everything that survives from earlier times – stone tools, traces of plants, bones, written material and pictures, ornaments and implements, inscriptions and coins, buildings and sculpture, pots and pans — can tell us something about the past. Historians and archaeologists study these sources and try and understand them. In this book, you will see many of these sources and find out how historians study these.

But studying history can help us understand more than the past. It enables us to develop important skills and qualities. When we try and enter another world, we have to learn how to do this — to understand people whose lives were different. As we do this, we open up our minds and break out of our small present-day worlds. We begin to see how other people may think and act. This can become a learning experience that enriches us in many different ways.

So, before you shrug your shoulders, ask yourself one question: Do I want to know who I am? Do I want to understand how this society works? Do I want to understand the world in which I live? If you do, then you will need to know how our societies have evolved. And how our pasts have shaped the present.

Neeladri Bhattacharya

CHIEF ADVISOR

HISTORY

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book has been in the making for several months. The team that developed this book included school teachers, subject experts from colleges and universities, and NCERT faculty. All the members of the team have worked to write the text, select visuals and design exercises. We have had long and intense discussions on all these aspects.

We have greatly benefited from the insightful and incisive comments and suggestions offered by young readers — Apoorv Avram, Mallika Visvanathan and Meera Visvanathan. We have tried to incorporate the comments and suggestions offered by all those who read drafts of the book as it took shape. We would like to thank in particular the members of the National Monitoring Committee who offered detailed suggestions. We are also grateful to Professor Romila Thapar, Uma Chakravarti, Jairus Banaji, Upinder Singh, C. N. Subrahmaniam of *Eklavya*, and Mary John for reading and offering critical comments on drafts. Professor B.D. Chattopadhyaya, Professor Kunal Chakrabarti, Vijaya Ramaswamy, Professor S.R. Walimbe and Naina Dayal advised us on specific sections. Professor Narayani Gupta provided constant support.

We are also grateful to the Director General, Archaeological Survey of India, Surendra Kaul, Director General, Centre for Cultural Resources and Training, New Delhi, Purnima Mehta and the staff of the Photo Archives, American Institute of Indian Studies, Gurgaon, Haryana, K.P. Rao, University of Hyderabad, and Bharati Jagannathan for providing photographs of inscriptions, coins, monuments, sculpture, painting, including illustrations of archaeological and historical sites and artefacts, such as pottery, tools and associated finds. We would like to thank Geetanjali Surendran and the members of the National Manuscript Mission, New Delhi for photographs of manuscripts. Catherine Jarrige kindly granted us permission to reproduce the sketches of Mehrgarh. We would also like to thank those who provided us with pictures of children — Umesh Matta of UNICEF, New Delhi, R.C. Das of CIET, NCERT, and Springdales School, New Delhi.

The maps in the book have been drawn by K. Varghese of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, and Shyam Narain Lal, Department of History, Jammu University. Subhadra Sengupta copyedited and proofread the manuscript. Animesh Roy and Ritu Topa of Art Creations, New Delhi, designed and typeset the book. We would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation of their efforts.

While every effort has been made to acknowledge the source of illustrations, we apologise for any omissions that may have inadvertently taken place.

We look forward to more feedback on the book, and hope to improve on it in future editions.

Special thanks are due to Savita Sinha, *Professor and Head, DESSH, NCERT* for her support during the development of this book.

Thanks are due to Shveta Uppal, *Chief Editor, NCERT* and Vandana R. Singh, *Consultant Editor* for going through the manuscript and suggesting relevant changes.

The Council also gratefully acknowledges the contributions of Arvind Sharma, *DTP Operator*; during the preparation of the book and Incharge *DTP Cell*, Bijnan Sutar in shaping this book. The efforts of the Publication Department, NCERT are also highly appreciated.

CONTENTS



Foreword	<i>iii</i>
Why Study History?	<i>vii</i>
1. WHAT, WHERE, HOW AND WHEN?	1
2. FROM HUNTING-GATHERING TO GROWING FOOD	11
3. IN THE EARLIEST CITIES	24
4. WHAT BOOKS AND BURIALS TELL US	35
5. KINGDOMS, KINGS AND AN EARLY REPUBLIC	46
6. NEW QUESTIONS AND IDEAS	57
7. ASHOKA, THE EMPEROR WHO GAVE UP WAR	67
8. VITAL VILLAGES, THRIVING TOWNS	79
9. TRADERS, KINGS AND PILGRIMS	91
10. NEW EMPIRES AND KINGDOMS	103
11. BUILDINGS, PAINTINGS AND BOOKS	114



IN THIS BOOK

LOOK OUT FOR THESE

Definitions

Source

Additional
information

Elsewhere

KEYWORDS

SOME IMPORTANT
DATES

Imagine

Let's recall

Let's discuss

Let's do

- You will find that each chapter is *introduced* by a young girl or a boy.
- Each chapter is divided into sections. Read, discuss and understand each section before proceeding to the next.
- Some chapters contain *definitions*.
- Many chapters contain a portion from a *source*, clues from which historians write history. Read these carefully, and discuss the questions they contain.
- Many of our sources are visual. Each *illustration* has a story to tell.
- You will also find *maps*. Look at these and try to locate the places mentioned in the lessons.
- Many chapters contain boxes with interesting, *additional information*.
- All chapters end with a section titled *Elsewhere*. This tells you about something that was happening in another part of the world.
- At the end of each chapter, you will find a list of *keywords*. These are to remind you of important ideas/themes introduced in the lesson.
- You will also find some *dates* listed at the end of each chapter.
- In each chapter there are *intext questions and activities* that are highlighted. Spend some time discussing these as you go along.
- And there is a small section titled *Imagine*. This is your chance to go back into the past and figure out what life would have been like.
- You will also find three kinds of activities listed at the end of each chapter — *Let's recall*, *Let's discuss* and *Let's do*.

So, you will find that there is a lot to read, see, think about and do. We do hope you enjoy it.