

relative of the original owner. Nor does a king, minister, or learned Brahmana become legal owner of property simply due to long-term possession. According to both the Narada Smriti and Brihaspati Smriti, if property has been enjoyed by three generations and has passed into the fourth, legal title becomes unnecessary and it cannot be taken away.

- However, these texts contain statements to the effect that long-term possession does not give a person legal rights over property. The Yajnavalkya and Brihaspati Smritis distinguish between mere possession of land and legal title. According to the Brihaspati Smritis and Narada Smriti, mere possession does not create proprietary rights; legal title is necessary to validate possession. The latter text (Narada Smriti) lays down rules about illegal possession, and states that a person who cannot produce evidence of legal title to property has to be considered as their, even if he enjoyed possession for a hundred years.

### **Types of land, land measures, and land tenure prevalent in ancient India**

Texts and inscriptions give details about types of land, land tenure, and land measures.

#### **Type of land**

- The **Amarakosha** lists 12 types of land—
  - urvara (fertile),
  - ushara (barren),
  - maru (desert),
  - aprahata (fallow),
  - shadvala (grassy),
  - pankila (muddy),
  - jalaprayamanupam (wet),
  - kachcha (adjacent to water),
  - sharkara (full of pebbles and pieces of limestone),
  - sharkavati (sandy),
  - nadimatrika (watered by a river), and
  - devamatrika (watered by rain).
- **In inscriptions,**
  - kshetra is used for a field, especially a cultivated field.
  - Khila means untilled land or cultivable wasteland.
  - Aprahata too means cultivable wasteland.
  - Aprada refers to unsettled land.
  - Vastu was habitat land.
  - There is also mention of pasture land.
- Several inscriptions, e.g., the Gunaigarh grant of Vainyagupta, and the Damodarpur, Paharpur, and Baigram copper plates refer to potential donees applying for wasteland.

#### **Land measures**