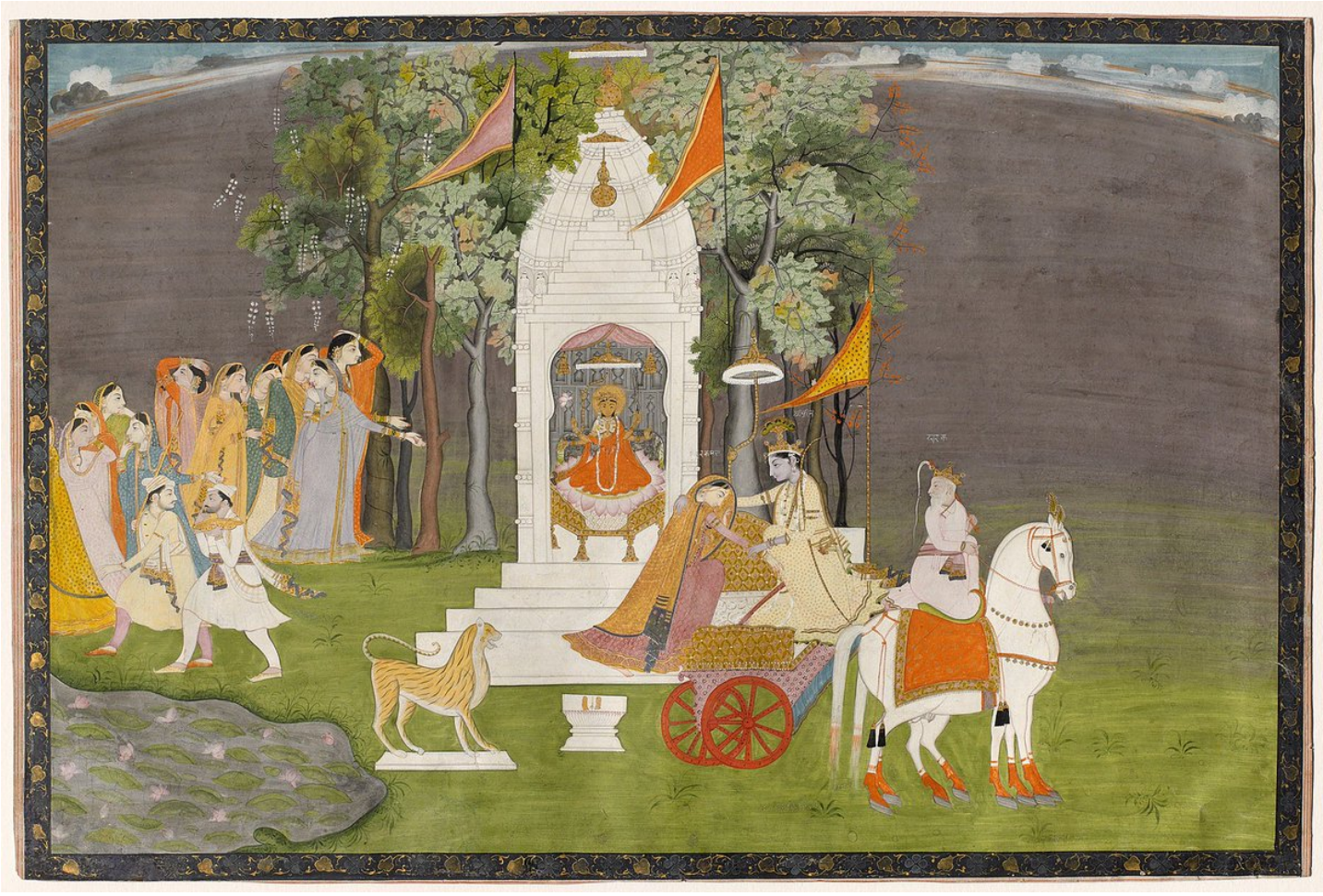
Twitter Thread by Savitri Mumukshu - ████████ ████████



Savitri Mumukshu - ████████ ████████
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1/n

One of the forgotten traditions of ancient India is the breeding & training of expert dogs for hunting & tracking. It has been a warrior tradition for thousands of years. One of the earliest mentions is in the Ramayana, where Bharata is presented with a group of hunting dogs



2/n

Such royal hounds were bred by his grandfather & are described as huge dogs with fang like spears & the strength & courage of tigers. They come from the Kaikeya country (R 2:64:21). This pastime of hunting with a pack of expertly trained hounds was called Shvaganika.

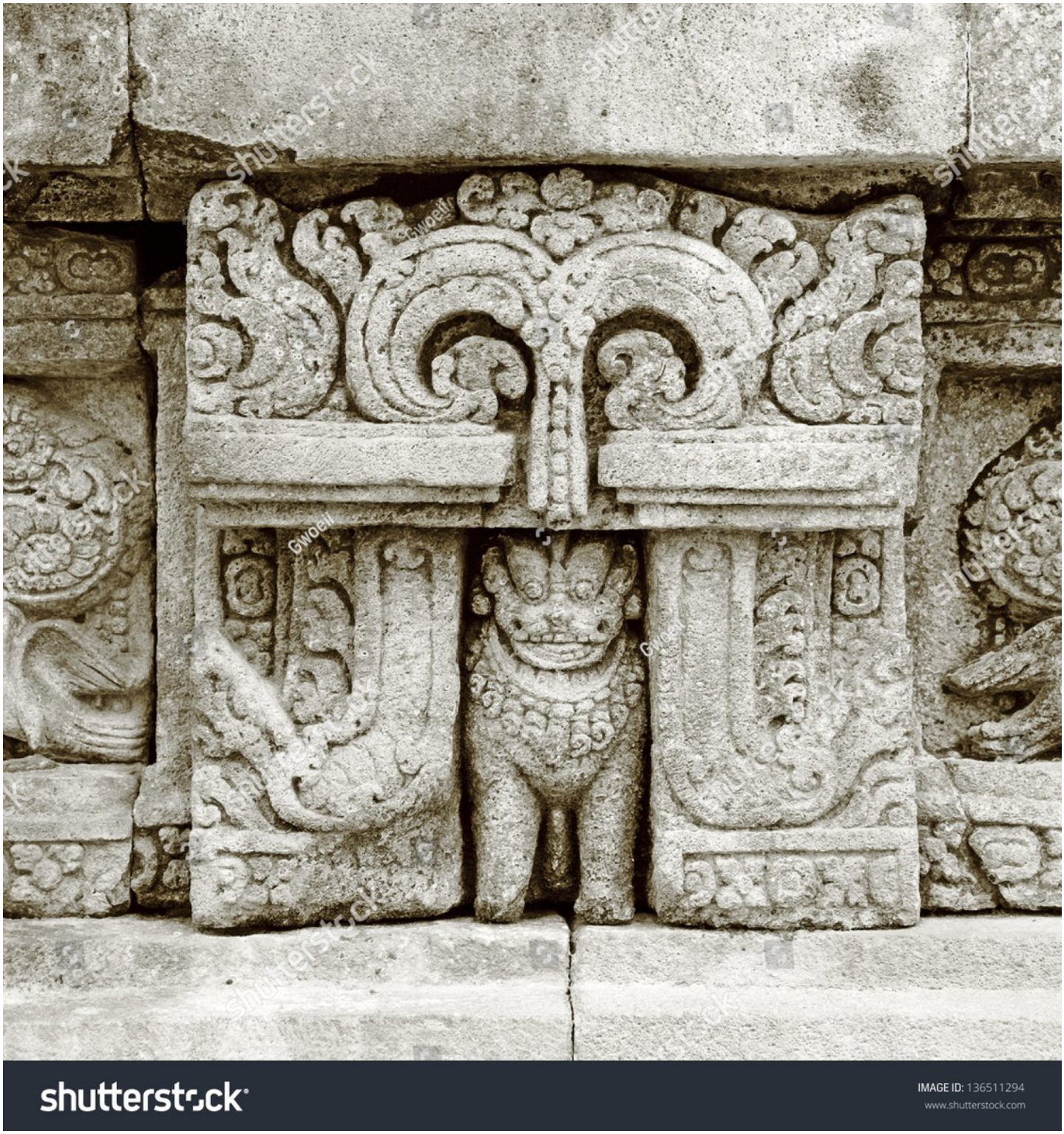


3/n

Shvaganika was a favorite pastime of Kshatriyas. In the Mahabharata, a hunting party of Kauravas & Pandavas is accompanied by a dog & its keeper. (Mbh 1,123,15) The practice is also mentioned by Panini (Panini 4:4:11) & Kalidasa also refers to it in his poetry.

4/n

Some of these hounds had beautiful golden leashes and collars studded with gems. The Arthashastra prescribes a fine of 54 Panas for the theft or killing of such dogs & other pets. (Arthashasta 4:10:2) It also refers to special houses or kennels for dogs.



5/n

According to Chanakya, The Superintendent of Pasture lands must have among his helpers, hunters with packs of expertly trained hunting dogs. (Arthashastra 2:34:9) In Brihat Samhita, Varahamihira devotes an entire chapter to the predictive abilities of such dogs

6/n

The qualities of a good hunting dog who brings good fortune to its owner are also elaborated. Rudradeva's Syainikashastra also gives accounts of hunting with a pack of hounds. The Macalas dogs of Vidarbha were so fierce that they could kill tigers (Jaiminiya Brahmana).



7/n
In the Bhallatiyajataka, an account describes the king going to hunt “with a well-trained pack of clever pedigree hounds”. It also describes royal kennels for these treasured dogs. Murals in Ajanta (Cave XVII) feature such dogs as well.

8/n
One of the murals tell a story from the Mriga Jataka about a queen who wants a golden deer. In a scene referred to as “The Return of the King”, the king sets out and captures a golden deer and returns with it in his chariot. Men with dogs on leashes follow the chariot.



9/n
Another story is from the Sutasoma Jataka, about Sudasa, the king of Varanasi, who sets out on a hunt with a pack of dogs. They look distinctive – brown-coloured, short-eared, round-headed, with short tails & are held by leashes.

10/n
4300 years ago, Indian sailors of the Sarasvati Sindhu civilization may also have carried such dogs across oceans. A study done in Adelaide, at the Australian Centre for Ancient DNA, has linked ancient Indian canine visitors to the dingoes of Australia.



11/n

Other ancient travel accounts tell us that these expertly trained Indian dogs were so widely valued that many other countries sought them as prized possessions. They were particularly valued for their ferocity for military operations & served as formidable aides in battles

12/n

During the reign of Artaxerxes I, the king of Persia (465-425 BCE), four revenue-free villages were allotted to the Assyrian governor exclusively for the purpose of maintaining and breeding hunting dogs received from India. They were given a special diet & luxurious kennels.



13/n

When Alexander the Great came to India (326 BCE) , King Sopeithes of Gandhara, gifted him 150 hunting dogs as a sign of brokering peace. To demonstrate the ferocity of these dogs, two of them were set loose with a lion. One of the dogs suffered a badly injured leg.

14/n

Yet it still held onto the lion. Alexander watched the display of tenacity with complete awe. In his book Indica, the Greek writer, Ctesias (415-397 BCE), talks about an Indian tribe called Kynomologol that kept many large, ferocious dogs to protect them from wild animals.



15/n

Many distinctive breeds of native Indian dogs carry the genes of these amazing expert hounds from ancient times. From the Rampur & Mahratta Greyhound, Pariah, Bully Kuttas to the Mahidant mastiffs, these indigenous breeds deserve to be conserved & saved from extinction.



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