



ਜਗਤ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵ
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JAGAT GURU NANAK DEV

PUNJAB STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY, PATIALA

(Established by Act No. 19 of 2019 of the Legislature of State of Punjab)

BACHELOR OF ARTS

CORE COURSE (CC): HISTORY

SEMESTER I

BAB31103T

HISTORY OF INDIA: INDUS CIVILIZATION TO
c.1200 CE

Head Quarter: C/28, The Lower Mall, Patiala-147001

WEBSITE: www.psou.ac.in

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COURSE COORDINATOR AND EDITOR

DR. PARAMPREET KAUR
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR IN HISTORY
JGND PSOU, PATIALA

LIST OF CONSULTANTS/ CONTRIBUTORS

S.No	Name
1.	Dr. Ashish Kumar



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PREFACE

Jagat Guru Nanak Dev Punjab State Open University, Patiala was established in December 2019 by Act 19 of the Legislature of State of Punjab. It is the first and only Open University of the State, entrusted with the responsibility of making higher education accessible to all, especially to those sections of society who do not have the means, time or opportunity to pursue regular education.

In keeping with the nature of an Open University, this University provides a flexible education system to suit every need. The time given to complete a programme is double the duration of a regular mode programme. Well-designed study material has been prepared in consultation with experts in their respective fields.

The University offers programmes which have been designed to provide relevant, skill-based and employability-enhancing education. The study material provided in this booklet is self-instructional, with self-assessment exercises, and recommendations for further readings. The syllabus has been divided in sections, and provided as units for simplification.

The University has a network of 99 Learner Support Centres/Study Centres, to enable students to make use of reading facilities, and for curriculum-based counselling and practicals. We, at the University, welcome you to be a part of this institution of knowledge.

Dean Academic Affairs



BACHELOR OF ARTS CORE COURSE (CC): HISTORY

SEMESTER I

(BAB31103T) HISTORY OF INDIA: INDUS CIVILIZATION TO c. 1200 CE

MAX. MARKS: 100
EXTLMARKS:70
INT MARKS:30
PASS PER:40%
Total Credits: 6

Objective

The aim of the paper is to introduce the students to the main developments in the history of India from the time of Indus Civilization to c. 1200. The focus is not only political events but an overview of polity, economy and society to create an understanding of the life in ancient times. This would serve as the foundation for the study of ancient Indian History.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PAPER SETTER/EXAMINER:

1. The syllabus prescribed should be strictly adhered to.
2. The question paper will consist of three sections: A, B, and C. Sections A and B will have four questions each from the respective sections of the syllabus and will carry 10 marks each. The candidates will attempt two questions from each section.
3. Section C will have fifteen short answer questions covering the entire syllabus. Each question will carry 3 marks. Candidates will attempt any 10 questions from this section.
4. The examiner shall give a clear instruction to the candidates to attempt questions only at one place and only once. Second or subsequent attempts, unless the earlier ones have been crossed out, shall not be evaluated.
5. The duration of each paper will be three hours.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE CANDIDATES:

Candidates are required to attempt any two questions each from the sections A, and B of the question paper, and any ten short answer questions from Section C. They have to attempt questions only at one place and only once. Second or subsequent attempts, unless the earlier ones have been crossed out, shall not be evaluated.

SECTION- A

- Unit 1 Sources for the Study of Ancient Indian History: Archaeology, Numismatics, Epigraphic, Literary
- Unit 2 Indus Civilization: Extent, Town Planning, Economic Activity, Decline
- Unit 3 The Vedic Age: Economy, Society, Culture
- Unit 4 Political Conflict in the Sixteen Great States, Rise of Magadha
- Unit 5 The Mauryan Empire: Extent, Administration, Economy, Society

SECTION -B

- Unit 6 The Guptas: Extent of Empire, Administration, Economy, Society
- Unit 7 Kingdoms in the Deccan and South: Chalukyas, Pallavas, Cholas
- Unit 8 Religious Developments: Jainism, Buddhism, Puranic Hinduism, Vaishnavism, Shaivism
- Unit 9 Art and Architecture: Temple Architecture, Sculpture- Mathura and Gandhara, Painting
- Unit 10 India c. 1200: An Overview

Suggested Readings

- D.N. Jha, *Ancient India in Historical Outline*, Manohar, Delhi, 1998.
- Ranbir Chakravarti, *Exploring Early India*, MacMillan, New Delhi, 2010.
- Romila Thapar, *Early India from the Beginning to AD 1300*, Penguin, 2002.
- Upinder Singh, *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India from the Stone Age to 12th Century*, Pearson, 2012.



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BACHELOR OF ARTS
CORE COURSE (CC): HISTORY

SEMESTER I

COURSE (BAB31103T): HISTORY OF INDIA: INDUS CIVILIZATION TO c. 1200 CE

COURSE COORDINATOR AND EDITOR: Ms. PARAMPREET KAUR

SECTION A

SR. NO.	UNIT NAME
UNIT 1	SOURCES FOR THE STUDY OF ANCIENT INDIAN HISTORY: ARCHAEOLOGY, NUMISMATICS, EPIGRAPHIC, LITERARY
UNIT 2	INDUS CIVILIZATION: EXTENT, TOWN PLANNING, ECONOMIC ACTIVITY, DECLINE
UNIT 3	THE VEDIC AGE: ECONOMY, SOCIETY, CULTURE
UNIT 4	POLITICAL CONFLICT IN THE SIXTEEN GREAT STATES, RISE OF MAGADHA
UNIT 5	THE MAURYAN EMPIRE: EXTENT, ADMINISTRATION, ECONOMY, SOCIETY

SECTION B

UNIT 6	THE GUPTAS: EXTENT OF EMPIRE, ADMINISTRATION, ECONOMY, SOCIETY
UNIT 7	KINGDOMS IN THE DECCAN AND SOUTH: CHALUKYAS, PALLAVAS, CHOLAS
UNIT 8	RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENTS: JAINISM, BUDDHISM, PURANIC HINDUISM, VAISHNAVISM, SHAIIVISM
UNIT 9	ART AND ARCHITECTURE: TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE, SCULPTURE- MATHURA AND GANDHARA PAINTING
UNIT 10	INDIA c. 1200: AN OVERVIEW

BACHELOR OF ARTS

SEMESTER I

COURSE: HISTORY OF INDIA: INDUS CIVIZATION TO c. 1200 CE

UNIT 1: SOURCES FOR THE STUDY OF ANCIENT INDIAN HISTORY: ARCHAEOLOGY, NUMISMATICS, EPIGRAPHIC, LITERARY

STRUCTURE

1.0 Learning Objectives

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Archaeological Sources

1.3 Numismatic Sources

1.4 Epigraphic Sources

1.4.1 Check Your Progress I

1.5 Literary Sources

1.5.1 Hindu Literature

1.5.2 Buddhism Literature

1.5.3 Jain Literature

1.5.4 Secular Literature

1.5.5 Check Your Progress II

1.6 Summary

1.7 Suggested Readings

1.8 Questions for Practice

1.8.1 Long Answer Questions

1.8.2 Short Answer Questions

1.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the nature of archaeological sources.
- Acquire information about the numismatic evidences.
- Gain knowledge regarding the epigraphic sources.
- Understand the nature of different types of literary sources.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Students, why studying history is important? What is the use of history? Some of you would have asked yourself these questions. Studying history is important because it provides you the knowledge about India's past. History is an attempt to know the ways our ancestors lived and overcame different types of difficulties. Knowledge of India's history will help you in understanding better what is happening in the India of today. History teaches you the story of your country, which had started many thousand years ago. By studying history, you will come to know about the kings, merchants, religious personalities and the people, who have made the story of your country possible. The society you live is shaped by the past developments in your country and studying history is one of the ways to know these past developments. The past of our country is very long and it goes back to several thousand years. About this long past of India information is collected from the variety of sources, which our ancestors have left behind. The story of India's past is reconstructed by using the available evidences and a historian uses variety of sources to write the history of ancient India. The sources such as archaeological, numismatic, epigraphic and literary provide valuable information about ancient Indian society, economy, polity and culture to historians, who discover, arrange and refine these sources to give a historical sense to them. Sources do not speak themselves; rather, a historian critically analyses the sources and then interprets the sources to write the history of India's past. Unlike today, neither printing nor paper was known to ancient Indians, who have used dried palm leaves, the bark of the birch tree and plates of copper, and in some cases, large rocks, pillars, stone walls or terracotta tablets for writing. There was also a time, when people were not even aware of writing and about that period the information is provided by the objects which they have left behind, as, for instance, their weapons, ceramics and tools. The sources that help a historian in writing history of India include archaeological, numismatic, epigraphic and literary sources.

1.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOURCES

As a branch of history, archaeology studies the human society through the analysis of past material remains found in surface surveys or in excavations. People of ancient societies have left behind variety of objects, tools, monuments and so forth, and these material remains are used by historians to know about ancient Indian societies. The human beings use variety of objects and build diverse structures for different purposes. Owing of their being durable in nature, these objects and the remains of ancient buildings have survived till now and based on their study, scholars attempt to recreate an image of India's ancient past.

The building remains, for instance, houses, palaces, forts, temples, and monasteries etc., help us to understand the nature of ancient settlements. The presence of forts and palaces suggests an urban character of a settlement and in a same way, remains of religious monuments help us in understanding the religious activities and beliefs of ancient Indians. As you all know, the written records of the Harappan civilization have not been deciphered so far. Yet we know much about the Harappan cities, trade, agriculture, religion and technology due to the discovery of archaeological evidences related to this civilization. In fact, the entire history of the

Harappan civilization till now is mainly based on the archaeological evidences. The building remains (e.g., great bath at Mohenjodaro, granaries at Harappa and dockyard at Lothal) have thrown valuable light on the urban character of the Harappan cities. The terracotta images of mother-goddesses and phallic emblems found in excavations of Harappan cities suggest the popularity of fertility cults in Harappan society. The burial sites of various pre-and-proto historical cultures suggests the prevalence of a religious beliefs in afterlife. Some of the key features of an urban centre, for instance, streets, shops, drains and fortification, are found in excavation of Kaushambi, Rajghat (ancient Varanasi), Ujjain, Pataliputra, Eran and Taxila and it shows their urban character. Sacred buildings of different types indicate their different religious affiliations. The *Stupas* (funerary structure) whereas belonged to Buddhism, temples in general had been associated with Hinduism and Jainism. The earliest remains of the *Stupas* (e.g., Bodh Gaya in Bihar, Sanchi and Bharhut *Stupa* in Madhya Pradesh) belong to *circa* third century BCE, the Hindu temples (e.g., Bhitargaon, Bhitari and Deogarh all in Uttar Pradesh) began to appear in the fourth-fifth century CE. In early medieval period, various regional styles of temple architecture (e.g., Nagara, Dravida and Vesara) developed in different parts of India. Some of the ancient monuments in the form of temples in south India and rock-cut Buddhist monasteries, for instance, at Ajanta are still standing; but much of the material remains of ancient past are still laying underneath earth's surface and archaeological excavations are needed to bring these into light.

In the stone age, the human beings resided in the natural caves and in the form of rock-paintings, the traces of these early humans have survived for instance at Bhimbetaka (Madhya Pradesh). In the historical period, the rock-cut caves began to be constructed for religious communities. The archaeological remains of the rock-cut caves that are found in Barabara and Nagarjuni hills (in Bihar) shows their first appearance in the Mauryan period. King Ashoka and his grandson Dasaratha are mentioned to have donated these rock-cut caves to Ajivika ascetics. In subsequent centuries, several rock cut caves were donated to Buddhist or Jain monks in Karle, Bhanja, Nasik, Kanheri, Junar, Udaigiri and several other places by royal patrons or rich merchants. The rock cut caves of Ajanta are of special mentioning here due to beautiful wall paintings and these rock-cut caves are dated to the period from *circa* 100 BCE to 700 CE. Most of the paintings at Ajanta caves are based on the Jataka stories and depict the various events of Buddha's life.

At both rock-cut caves and structural buildings (e.g., stupas, temples, etc.) remains of ancient sculptures are found. Though the sculptures, for instance, Priest King are found from the Harappan period, they systematically began to be produced in the Mauryan period, when stone became an important medium of artistic expression. In fact, the reign of the Mauryan king Ashoka marks a break between earlier traditions (except Harappan), in which wood was the chief medium of artistic expression, and subsequent tradition, when stone became the medium of artistic works. Following the Mauryan period, stone became the chief medium of artistic expression across India with the patronage coming from various affluent sections of the society. Excavations at Mathura suggest the beginning of idol worship associated with Buddhism, Jainism and Brahmanism from about 200 BCE onwards. On the basis of various differences in the style and form of sculptures, art historians have identified three different schools of sculptural art, viz., Gandhara school and Mathura school. With the emergence of the Hindu temples during the Gupta period, stone sculptures were integrated in the temple

architecture. The sculptures that are found at Hindu temples are based on the mythical as well as historical characters, and these images of divine have been the visual form of human imagination in stone or rock. The sculptural art is important for the study of art-architectural as well as socio-religious developments in Indian society.

Like us, the ancient Indians used variety of pottery types in their everyday lives. The pottery has been one of the important inventions of human being for the purpose of storing, cooking and transportation of goods. In the beginning, pottery was handmade and crude. But after the discovery of potter's wheel, well-proportioned wheel thrown, sun dried or baked in fire pottery began to be manufactured in large quantity. In the excavations of ancient settlements remains of different types of pottery are identified and some of the important ancient pottery types are, viz., the Red pottery, the Ochre Pottery, the Painted Grey Ware (PGW) and the Northern Black Pottery Ware (NBPW). Mostly dishes and bowls of the PGW are found from sites like Atranjikhhera and Hastinapur along with rice, wheat and other cereals. On the other hand, the NBPW, which was a deluxe pottery, are found in urban context and therefore, this pottery type is associated with the second urbanization. About 450BCE, NBPW sites have been found with a greater concentration in the eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. While the NBPW was in use as a deluxe pottery, the Red Ware was used for daily purposes like cooking and storing. Besides ceramics, various types of tools, weapons, and craft objects, jewellery, etc., also are found in archaeological excavations. The presence or absence of these objects in archaeological sites helps the scholars to assess the nature of the settlement under study. For instance, the absence of iron objects in the excavated sites of the Harappan civilization shows the absence of any knowledge regarding iron technology in the Harappan society. Instead of the iron technology, the Harappans were aware of copper smelting and bronze making, and this is the reason why the Harappan civilization is called the Bronze age civilization.

1.3 NUMISMATIC SOURCES

The numismatic study refers to the study of metallic currency that was in use under different dynasties and in different regions of India. In ancient India, people used metallic currency of different types in a same way as we use it as a medium of exchange for buying commodities in market. It is noticeable that not every piece of coin was used as a metallic currency; rather, coins backed by a legitimate issuing authority were accepted by the people for market transactions. Coins are of definite size, shape, and weight standard, and carry marks of authentication in the form of images, symbols, legends and dates on its surface. That side of the coins which carries main message is known as 'obverse' and the other side of it is called 'reverse'. The coins are helpful in establishing genealogies and chronologies of different ruling houses because they usually carry names and images of rulers and deities. The use of metal currency in India was started by about fifth century BCE onwards. The earliest coins in circulation were punch-marked coins (called *panas* or *karshapanas*), and these coins were struck at the weight standard of 32 *ratis* or 57.6 grains. These coins were possibly issued by individuals, group of merchants, city administrations and also by the kings. The punch-marked coins carry various marks/symbols without any name. Most of them were silver coins but copper and bronze coins are also discovered. The punch-marked coins were minted by cutting

pieces from the metal sheets of silver, bronze and copper at a fixed weight standard (i.e., 32 *ratis*). But this technique was increasingly discontinued, when the mould-casting or die-striking technique was introduced in India by the Indo-Greeks. The Indo-Greek rulers were the earliest, who issued coins with the images of rulers, deities and names. This practice continued under the Shaka, the Kushana and the Gupta rulers in subsequent centuries. It has been suggested by scholars that the gold coins were used for higher transactions, while copper and silver coins in day-to-day transactions for necessities. The coins carrying legends (writings) also throw lights on the languages (Sanskrit, Prakrit, Greek) and scripts (Brahmi, Kharoshthi) that have been in use in ancient India. The Brahmi whereas was popular in mainland India, Kharoshthi was mainly used in the north-western India.

The coins provide valuable information about the ancient economies, rulers and trade patterns. A considerable number of Roman gold and silver coins are found in different parts of peninsular India and it throws light on the flourishing Indo-Roman trade in the early centuries of the Common Era. The involvement of the early Indians in maritime trade is further indicated by the depiction of ships on the Satavahana coins. Some scholars believe that the presence of coins whereas shows economic prosperity, the absence of these refers to an economic crisis in ancient India. In addition, the debasement of coins is also taken as an evidence of a financial crisis in the state or a general economic decline. However, not all scholars agree with this proposition. Because, the minting of coins or debasement of coins depends on the availability of precious metal. In a situation, where the supply of precious metal was reduced or restricted, the rulers would have alloyed or debased their coins in a response to an increased demand, due to the expanding volume of economic activities, for metallic currency. Several rulers are only known from their coins. In fact, most of the Indo-Greek rulers are known to us mainly from their coins. Except numismatic evidences, we do not have much information, for instance, about the Mitra and the Naga rulers of ancient India. Without numismatic evidences our knowledge about the Gupta king named Ramagupta, who ruled between Samudragupta and Chandragupta II, would have been very restricted. Coins help in ascertaining the character of ancient polities. For instance, the coins of the oligarchies (e.g., Malavas, Arjunayanas, Yaudhyeas, and so forth) usually carry the expression, *gana* that throws light on their non-monarchical character. The images of the Greek, Iranian and Hindu deities and Buddha are identified on the Kushana coins and it suggest the presence of people of diverse cultural-religious backgrounds in their empire. The expression *dinara* that is used by the Guptas for their gold coins was actually derived from the Roman term, *denarius*. The Gupta rulers have issued coins to commemorate important events of their lives. For instance, Chandragupta I issued coins, depicting him along with his queen Kumaradevi, to commemorate his marriage. In a same way, 'lion slayer type' coins of Chandragupta II exhibit the Gupta ruler's conquest of western India.

1.4 EPIGRAPHIC SOURCES

The earliest inscriptions were issued by the Mauryan rulers in ancient India, and the king Ashoka is known to have issued several royal edicts in his lifetime. These inscriptions were written on stone pillars and rock surfaces across the Indian subcontinent in the Brahmi script in mainland India and the Kharoshthi script as well as the Greek script in north-western India.

Ashokan inscriptions were written down in Prakrit script in mainland India and in the Greek or the Aramaic script in north-western India. Not only his inscriptions throw light on the important events of his life and his activities, but also the regional variation in the use of script and languages. The Ashokan inscriptions have been used to write the history of Mauryas with precise dates and chronology of events. Following the Mauryan period, large number of inscriptions belonging to the period from *circa* 200 BCE to 400 CE were issued by people of diverse backgrounds. Not only rulers but merchants, artisans, monks and nuns began to record their donative acts in the form of inscriptions. A large number of such inscriptions have been collected from the Buddhist sites, for instance, Sanchi, Bhahrut, Mathura, Nasik, and Karle. From about the fourth century CE, several royal houses (e.g., the Guptas, the Vakatakas, the Rashtrakutas, the Chalukayas, the Pallavas and the Cholas among others) began issuing their inscriptions. Their inscriptions are found on copper plates, stone surfaces, and temple walls. From these inscriptions information about dynastic genealogies has been gleaned. These inscriptions also shed light upon various military, religious, monetary and donative acts of different rulers, ministers and queens. The inscriptions that belong to the category of *prashasti* (eulogies) are an important source to know about the military achievements of the ancient rulers. For instance, the Allahabad stone pillar inscription narrates the military exploits of the Gupta King Samudragupta. The inscriptions also help in the study of political structures, administration, and revenue system of the ancient kingdoms.

The inscriptions are written in various languages like Sanskrit, Prakrit, Tamil and Telugu etc. Between the fourth and the sixth century CE, Sanskrit was the language of the royal inscriptions; but in the post-Gupta period, several regional languages began to be used for writing inscriptions. Tamil became the important language under the Pallava rulers in South India and several bilingual Sanskrit-Tamil inscriptions of the Pallava rulers began to be issued from the seventh century CE onwards. Likewise, the Kannada language appeared in inscriptions in the sixth-seventh century CE onwards and the Telegu language in the sixth century CE onwards. As far as the dates are concerned, scholars have identified several eras, for instance, the Vikram *samvat* (starting in 57-58 BCE), the Shaka *samvat* (starting in 78 CE), the Kalachuri-Chedi era (starting in 248 CE) and the Gupta era (starting in 319 CE) in the inscriptions of different rulers. The inscriptions therefore appear to be an attempt on the part of the rulers and other people to record specific events/activities on durable material. The inscriptions provide information about the issuing authority, purpose and act of writing. Unlike manuscripts, inscriptions are recorded on much durable materials, and they provide information about what people were actually doing in a specific place and time. The geographical spread of inscriptions helps in assessing the boundaries of the related ruler. For instance, the spread of the Ashokan inscriptions have been used to demarcate the boundaries of the Mauryan empire in the third century BCE. Here it is noticeable that not all inscriptions that would have been issued by any king of ancient India are usually discovered and the discovery of an inscription therefore depends more on chance. The inscriptions written on moveable material, for example, copper plates could have been shifted away from their original place. But inscriptions do have limitations. Sometime confusion is created, when the rulers of same name are mentioned in inscriptions. Or if a name is skipped from the genealogy section of the inscription, then it creates confusion. For instance, the name of the Gupta king Ramagupta is not included in the

genealogy of the Gupta rulers in their inscriptions, but the numismatic evidences show his presence.

1.4.1 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS I

1. Define the archaeological sources?

2. Write a note on the NBPW?

3. Comment on the *karshapanas*?

4. Who issued the earliest inscriptions in ancient India?

5. What is *Prashasti*?

1.5 LITERARY SOURCES

The literary sources that are used by scholars are of both religious and secular nature; they are composed in diverse languages (Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, Tamil, Greek, Latin, Chinese, etc.) and several scripts (Brahmi, Kharoshthi, etc), which makes their study a specialized craft requiring proper training and consistent practice. The literary sources not only inform us about the ancient society, economy, polity and culture, but it also sometime provides information about their authors and the audience. As the ancient texts have been composed by different authors at different times, they show a variation in their authors approach to their contemporary society. For instance, the texts of the Hindus, Buddhists and Jains display stark differences in their approach to human life as well as divinities. Historians therefore critically analyse the literature, its authorship, date, and perspective before using it for writing the history of ancient India.

1.5.1 HINDU LITERATURE

In Brahmanical tradition, the literature is broadly divided into two groups: *shruti* meaning heard and *smriti* meaning remembered. In *shruti* category comes four Vedas. These are the *Rigveda*, the *Samaveda*, the *Yajurveda* and the *Atharvaveda* besides the Brahmana texts, the *Aranyakas* and the *Upanishads*. It was believed that these were heard by the sages while meditating or were revealed by the gods to them. In this way, according to traditions, the *shruti* literature was not created by human beings rather descended upon them. On the other hand, texts like Vedanga, Puranas, Epics and *Dharmashastras* come under the category of *smriti*. The term *Veda* is derived from the root *vid* literally meaning 'to know.' Hence, it means knowledge or wisdom. The Vedic literature belongs to the period from about 1500 to 600 BCE.

It comprises of mainly the four *Vedas*, the *Brahmana* texts (different from brahmana *varna*), the *Aranyaka* texts and the *Upanishads*.

The oldest Veda is *Rigveda* belonging to the period from about 1500 to 1000 BCE. It contains ten *mandalas* or books comprising 1,028 hymns. Rest of the three *Vedas* (*Sama*, *Yajur*, and *Atharva*) belong to the period from about 1000 to 600 BCE. In the sixth century BCE was written a text named *Nirukta* by Yaska on the etymology of the words in the *Rigveda*. The *Samaveda* comprises of 1,810 hymns and these hymns are meant to be sung during rituals. The *Yajurveda* is different from the *Samaveda* because it mainly deals with rituals that were performed at different sacrifices. On the other hand, the *Atharvaveda*, besides comprising hymns, also contains magical charms and spells to ward off diseases or ill-fate, to gain material success and to subdue the enemies. The *Saunakiya/Sh Shaunaka* recension of the *Atharvaveda* comprises 731 hymns divided into 20 books. The *Brahmanas* (different from brahmana *varna*) explain the origin and meaning of various hymns of *Samhitas* (or *Vedas*). On the other hand, the *Aranyakas* (forest books) provide interpretations of the symbolic and philosophical meanings of sacrificial rituals. They comprise knowledge of the mysteries of spirit and rituals. It was believed that this knowledge could only be conveyed in the isolation of forests. The nature of *Upanishads* is entirely different from the *Brahmanas* and the *Aranyakas*. The term *Upanishad* is derived from *upa-ni-sad*, i.e., to sit down near someone. It refers to a knowledge conveyed from one person to another secretly. The *Upanishads* are 108 in number, and some of these are: *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, *Kaushitaki Upanishad*, *Tattiriya Upanishad*, *Chandogya Upanishad*, *Kena Upanishad* and several others. They mainly contain philosophical discourses revolving around the concepts of *atman* (self) and *brahma/brahmana* (Supreme Being).

The supplementary texts called *Vedangas* literally meaning ‘limbs of *Vedas*’ were composed between the sixth century BCE and the second century BCE. The *Vedangas* helped in the proper recitation and understanding of the four *Vedas*. The number of *Vedangas* is six: i) *Siksha* (pronunciation), ii) *Kalpa* (ritual), iii) *Vyakarana* (grammar), iv) *Nirukta* (etymology), v) *Chhanda* (meter), and vi) *Jyotisha* (astrology). The *Kalpa-sutra* comprises *Dharmasutras*, which are legal treatises providing rules and regulations for the functioning of ancient Indian society. The term *Dharma* is derived from the root *dhri* meaning ‘to maintain or support or sustain,’ and it refers to a group of legal treatises mainly comprising: *Dharmasutras*, *Smritis*, *Tikas* and *Nibandhas*. In the category of *Dharmasutras* are included compositions of *Apastamba*, *Baudhayana*, *Gautama* and *Vasishtha* and these were composed between *circa* the fifth century BCE and the second century BCE. The *Dharmashastras* including the *Manu-smriti*, the *Yajnavalkya-smriti*, the *Narada-smriti*, the *Katyayana-smriti* and the *Brihaspati-smriti* were composed in the first half of first millennium CE. They provide information about royal functions, administration, various ministers, judicial machinery and so forth. Both the *Dharmasutras* and the *Dharmashastras* provided the rule and regulation for the functioning of the ancient Indian society.

The *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* were composed by the Gupta period and they reflect on the religious and cultural beliefs of ancient Indians. The *Mahabharata* of *Vyasa* comprised about 100,000 verses and therefore, it is also known as the *Shatasahasri Samhita*. This epic narrates the adventures and life of *Kaurava* and *Pandava* brothers of *Hastinapura*. In a similar way, the *Ramayana* of *Valmiki* comprises about 24,000 verses. The focus of the

Ramayana is the life and adventures of the Ayodhya prince, Rama, his wife Sita and brother Lakshmana. Both the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* are associated with different incarnations of the Hindu god Vishnu and therefore, these epics are considered holy by the Hindu community in India. The cities for instance, Hastinapura, Kurukshetra, Mathura and Indraprastha (Delhi) that are frequently mentioned in the *Mahabharata* are located in the Indo-Ganga divide region. The cities for instance, Ayodhya and Mithila that are mentioned in the *Ramayana* are located in the mid-Ganga valley area. Therefore, the geographical focus of the *Mahabharata* whereas is in the Indo-Ganga divide, the *Ramayana*'s core geography is the mid-Ganga valley.

The nature of the Puranas is different from the Hindu epics and they too are considered holy in India. The Puranas are more like a store-house of traditions, legends, myths, dogmas, rituals, moral codes and religious and philosophical principles. The term Purana means 'old' and there are eighteen chief Puranas, viz., *Matsya*, *Vishnu*, *Markandeya*, *Bhagavata*, *Brahmanda*, *Bhavisya*, *Agni*, *Narada*, *Garuda*, *Padma*, *Varaha*, *Kurma*, *Linga*, *Shiva*, *Skanda*, *Brahmavaivarta*, *Vamana* and *Brahma*. Originally, the Puranas were a part of a long oral tradition before their final compilation by the sixth century CE. However, additions and modification continued in the Puranas in subsequent centuries. The Puranas deals with range of themes like grammar, geography, genealogy, astrology, polity and also shed some light on society, economy, religion, *tirthas* and legal matters. From historical point of view genealogical section of the Puranas provide lists of mythical as well as real ruling houses, for instance, the Nandas, the Mauryas, the Indo-Greeks, the Shakas, the Kushanas and the Satavahanas, up to the Gupta period. From a geographical point of view the Puranas were centred in the Ganga Valley, western and northern India with almost no reference to the South.

1.5.2 BUDDHIST LITERATURE

The Buddhist literature can be grouped into canonical and non-canonical categories. The canonical literature comprises those compositions that provide rule and regulations for the functioning of the Buddhist monasteries; Buddhist monks and nuns; and Buddhist lay worshipers. In addition, basic principles of the sect are included in the canonical literature. The three Buddhist canons written in Pali (commonly known as *Tripitaka* meaning three baskets) are: the *Vinaya Pitaka*, the *Sutta Pitaka* and the *Abhidhamma Pitaka*. The *Vinaya Pitaka* is a collection of rules and regulations for monks and nuns. The *Sutta Pitaka* contains the teachings of Buddha and his close companions. And the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* is a work on Buddhist philosophy. Contrary to these, the non-canonical literature comprises, for instance, the Sri Lankan histories (e.g., the *Mahavamsa* and the *Dipavamsa*), the Jataka tales, biographies of Mahatma Buddha (e.g., *Buddhacarita* of Asvaghosa, circa 200 CE, and *Lalitavistara*, circa 100-200 CE) and so forth. The Sri Lankan histories revolve around Buddha's life, Buddhist councils, accounts related to the Mauryan King Ashoka and several Sri-Lankan rulers. On the other hand, the Jataka tales narrate the stories relating to the previous births of Mahatma Buddha. From the Jataka tales, historians get to know about the social and economic life of the ancient people. The compilation of the Jataka tales possibly had taken place sometime between circa third century BCE and the second century CE.

1.5.3 JAIN LITERATURE

Like the Buddhist literature, Jain literature is grouped into canonical and non-canonical categories. The sacred literature of Jains is written in Ardha-Magadhi (a form of Prakrit) and the canonical literature is generally called, the *Siddhanta* or *Agama*. The canonical literature provides information about the rules and regulations for the conduct of Jain monks, the Jain doctrines and philosophy, and stories of Jain ascetics and merchants. It also consists of valuable information about social and cultural life of ancient India. The exegetical literature (e.g., the *Niryukti*, the *Bhasa/Bhasya*, the *Curni* and the *Tika*) aims to help the teachers to explain and interpret the Jain canons to students or lay worshippers. The non-canonical literature consists of several Epics, Puranas (Svetambaras call them *Charitas*) and story literature. The Jains have their own version of the *Ramayana* which is known as the *Paumacaria* (circa fourth century CE). They also have their own Puranas, e.g., the *Padma-charita* or the *Padma-Purana*, the *Maha-Purana* and the *Harivamsa-Purana*. The *Harivamsa-Purana* (circa eighth century CE) provides a Jain version of the stories of Pandavas, Kauravas, Krishna, Balarama and others. Jainism also has a rich story writing tradition. The texts like *Vasudevahindi* (circa sixth century CE), the *Samaracchakaha* (circa eighth century CE), and the *Kuvalayamala* (circa eighth century CE) are few of the best example of Jain story literature. The story literature throws valuable light on ancient Indian society, culture and economy from a Jain perspective.

1.5.4 SECULAR LITERATURE

Besides the religious literature, the ancient Indians have composed variety of secular texts. In the category of the secular literature, the grammatical texts (e.g., Panini's *Ashtadhyayi*, Patanjali's *Mahabhashya* and Katyayana's *Varttikas*), Sanskrit lexicon (Amarasimha's *Amarkosha*), treatise on dramaturgy (Bharata's *Natyasastra*), urban arts (Vatsayayana's *Kamasutra*), drama/poetry (e.g., compositions of Kalidasa, Sudraka, Dandin, Vishakhadatta and so forth), and biographies (e.g., Banabhatta's *Harshcharita*) are included. Among the important treatises on political economy are placed the texts, for instance, the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya and the *Kamandakiya Nitisara*. The *Brihatsamhita* by Varahamihira (the sixth century CE) deals with astrology and astronomy besides providing information about society and economy of northern India in the Gupta period. The text named *Krisiparasara* is amongst the earliest compositions on agriculture.

The writings of the foreign travellers of India also provide valuable information about ancient India from non-indigenous perspective. One of the most important Greek text on the Mauryan Indian was called *Indika* and it was authored by a Greek ambassador Megasthenes in the court of Chandragupta Maurya. Megasthenes provides a first-hand account of the ancient Indian society and polity. The writings of the Greco-Roman authors, for instance, Diodorus, Strabo, Pliny the Elder, *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* of an anonymous Greek traveller, Claudius Ptolemy and Cosmos Indicopleustes also provide valuable information about maritime trade, trading ports, trading commodities and patterns of trade in the Indian Ocean. In addition to the Greco-Roman sources, the travel accounts of the Chinese Buddhist pilgrims (e.g., Fa- Xian in India, 399-414 CE and Xuan Zang in India, 629-641 CE) inform us about the various Buddhist sites in ancient India. Fa- Xian whereas visited India during the reign of the

Gupta ruler Chandragupta-II, Xuan Zang's travel to India happened at a time, when the Pushyabhuti king Harshavardhana ruled entire north India.

The information about South India is provided by the Sangam literature, which was composed between circa second century BCE and the third century CE. This literature is divided into two groups: *Melkannakku* or 18 major narrative texts and *Kilkanakku* or 8 minor didactic works. According to the Tamil legends, the Sangam literature was composed in three assemblies (two in Madurai and one in Kapatapuram) that took place under the Pandya kings patronage. Bardic in nature, the Sangam literature throws valuable light on the Chera, the Chola and the Pandya polities of Southern India. The major themes of the Sangam literature are love (*akam*) and war (*puram*) revolving around the heroic exploits of (either Chola or Chera or Pandya) individuals. The famous Tamil text, the *Tirukkural* is a philosophical work, while the *Tolkappiyam* deals with the Tamil grammar. Tamil epics, the *Silappadikaram* 'the Song of the Anklet' of a Jain monk Ilango Adigal and the *Manimekalai* 'the Jewel Belt' of a Buddhist monk named Sattanar were compiled by the sixth century CE and they revolved around the lives of a merchant son, Kovalan, his wife Kannagi, a courtesan named Madhavi and a daughter of Kovalan and Madhavi, named *Manimekalai*. These Tamil epics shed light on the position of women and the life of elites in Kaveripattanam, Madurai and other cities in south India.

1.5.5 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS II

1. Write the names of four Vedas.

2. Write a note on the *Vedangas*?

3. Write a note on the Puranas?

4. Explain the term, *Tripitaka*?

5. Comment on the Sangam literature.

1.6 SUMMARY

Students, the history writing is a craft and a historian gains expertise in this craft only after a long and intense training. The sources that are used by historians to write history have their limitations due to their different natures. The archaeological remains of past societies help historians in understanding the day-to-day life of people, but they do not provide much information about the abstract philosophies and thinking processes of ancient Indians. The numismatic evidences are valuable source for the study of ancient economies and inform us about their issuers and their circulation. Yet they cannot be used to write the history of, for

instance, ancient Indian's artistic taste, food habits, political processes and liturgical practices. In a same way, inscriptions are useful for the study of specific historical moments associated with individuals, communities and dynasties. But the inscriptions fail to throw much light on the art and architecture. The literary sources whereas provide valuable information about society, economy, polity and culture of ancient India, but they often carry their author's biases. In spite of having their limitations, the sources (archaeological and literary), if studied together, can be used to develop a wholistic understanding of ancient societies. The available sources therefore are used by historians critically and also in relation to each-other for writing India's ancient history.

1.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

R. S. Sharma, *India's Ancient Past*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Romila Thapar, *The Penguin History of Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2002.

Upinder Singh, *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India: From the Stone Age to the 12th Century*. Delhi: Pearson-Longman, 2009.

A.L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India (A survey of the history and culture of the Indian sub-continent before the coming of the Muslims)*, London: Picador an imprint of Pan Macmillan Ltd., 2004.

1.8 QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE

1.8.1 LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. What are the sources for the study of ancient Indian history? Write an essay.
1. Discuss the importance of archaeological sources in the study of ancient Indian history?
2. Highlight the main characteristics of the numismatic sources.
3. Write an essay on the epigraphic sources.
4. Assess the importance of literary sources in the study of ancient Indian history.

1.8.2 SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Write a short note on Upanishads?
2. What do you know about Puranas?
3. Write few sentences on punch marked coins?
4. Comment on Ashokan inscriptions.
5. Write a short note on Ramyana?
6. Who was Kautilya? Name his famous book.
7. Mention four points of historical importance of the Mahabharata.
8. What is the importance of coins as historical sources?

BACHELOR OF ARTS

SEMESTER I

COURSE: HISTORY OF INDIA: INDUS CIVILIZATION TO c. 1200 CE

UNIT 2: INDUS CIVILIZATION: EXTENT, TOWN PLANNING, ECONOMIC ACTIVITY, DECLINE

STRUCTURE

2.0 Learning Objectives

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Extent of the Civilization

2.3 Town Planning

2.3.1 Check Your Progress I

2.4 Economic Activity

2.4.1 Agriculture

2.4.2 Animal Husbandry

2.4.3 Trade and Commerce

2.4.4 Craft and Industry

2.5 Decline of the Indus Civilization

2.5.1 Check Your Progress II

2.6 Summary

2.7 Suggested Readings

2.8 Questions for Practice

2.8.1 Long Answer Questions

2.8.2 Short Answer Questions

2.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the nature of the Indus civilization.
- Acquire information about the town planning.
- Gain knowledge regarding the economic activities.
- Acquire information about the decline of the civilization.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Students, some of the earliest cities in India were founded on the banks of river Indus and its tributaries in the third millennium BCE and therefore, the urban culture with which these cities had been associated is named as the Indus civilization. Another name that is suggested for this civilization is the Indus-Sarasvati civilization because several sites of this civilization are also found in the now-dry river valley of the Ghaggar-Hakra (usually identified with the Rigvedic Sarasvati river). But the identification of the Ghaggar-Hakra with the Rigvedic Sarasvati is not accepted by all the scholars, who prefer to use either the name Indus civilization or the Harappan civilization for this first urban culture of India. Since number of sites associated with this civilization are also found in regions away from the Indus valley and the Ghaggar-Hakra valley, scholars often use the name Harappan civilization because this civilization was first discovered at the modern site of Harappa that is situated in the province of West Punjab in Pakistan. The naming of civilization after the site where it is first identified has been an academic convention; however, the use of the name Harappan civilization does not mean that all the sites of this civilization are identical to Harappa. Since the Indus people lacked the knowledge of iron technology and have mainly used copper and bronze implements, this civilization is also known as the Bronze age civilization. Our knowledge of this civilization is entirely based on the archaeological evidences because the script of the Indus people has not been deciphered so far.

2.2 EXTENT OF THE CIVILIZATION

The discovery of the Indus civilization was first announced in the year 1924 by John Marshall, who had been the Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India. Besides Marshall, two Indian archaeologists namely Dayanand Sahani and Rakhhal Das Bannerji have been associated with the discovery of this civilization. It was Dayanand Sahani, who started excavating Harappa in 1920 and Rakhhal Das Bannerji first excavated Mohenjodaro in 1921. Based on the archaeological findings at Harappa and Mohenjodaro, John Marshall announced the discovery of the Indus civilization. Subsequently, many more sites were discovered and excavated. According to one estimate, the total number of Indus sites now is about 1022. Out of 1022, 406 sites are in Pakistan and 616 in India. Some of the well excavated and studied Harappan sites are, Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Sutkagendor (in Pakistan), Kot Diji and Chanhudaro (in Sind), Ropar (in Panjab), Lothal and Dholavira (in Gujarat), Rakhigarhi and Banawali (in Haryana), Kalibangan (in Rajasthan) and so forth. However, only 97 sites out of more than one thousand have been excavated extensively so far. From geographical point of view, the Indus sites are spread over modern Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Pakistan and North Western India (Panjab, Haryana, Parts of Gujarat, and western Uttar Pradesh). The total area covered by this civilization ranged between 680,000 to 800,000 square km. This civilization roughly covers an entire area between Jammu in the north to Narmada estuary in the south and from Sutkagendor on the Makran coast of Pakistan in the west to the Alamgirpur in the Saharanpur district of Uttar Pradesh in the east. One isolated site at Shortughai is found in Afghanistan of this civilization.

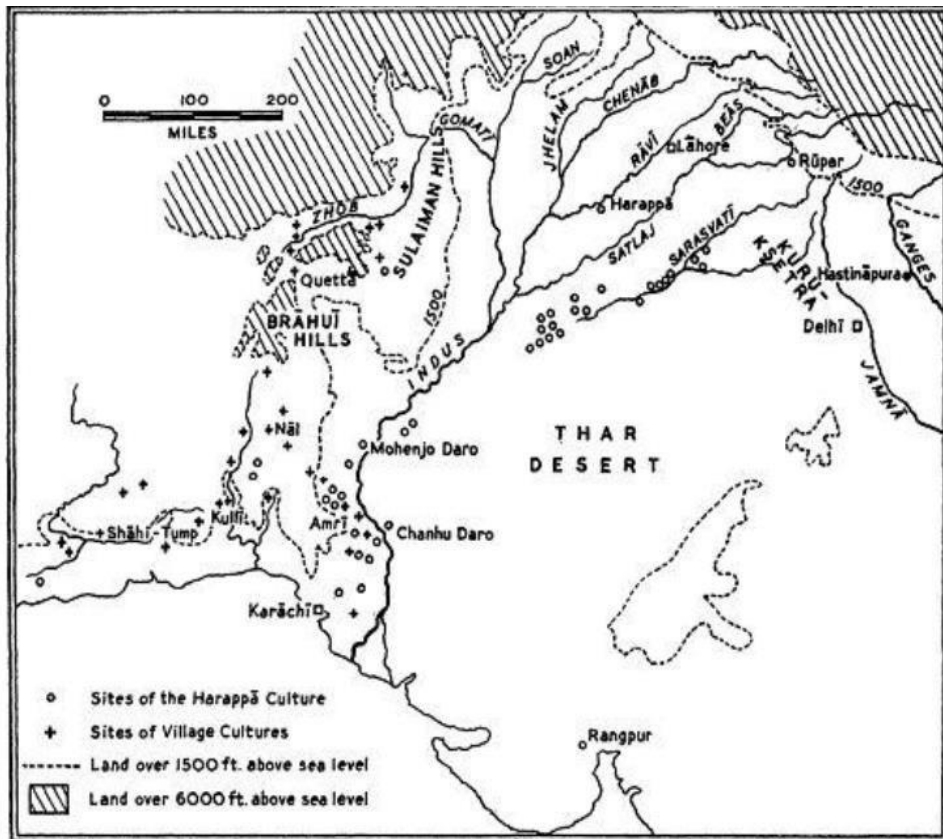
Scholars have different views on the origin of the Indus civilization. Some scholars, for instance, E. J. H. Mackay, D. H. Gordon and S. N. Kramer trace the origin of this civilization from the migration of people from Sumer (southern Mesopotamia) to the Indus valley. It is argued that these people from Mesopotamia brought the idea of civilization and founded urban settlements in the river valley of the Indus. Not differently, but Mortimer Wheeler argued that the idea of civilization diffused from West Asia and it reached the Indus valley, where it gave birth to an urban civilization. This theory is rejected by Indian scholars on the basis of many characteristic differences between the Mesopotamian and the Indus civilization in terms of town planning, script and material culture. Recent studies, therefore trace the origin of the Harappan civilization from the local farming communities of Baluchistan which first emerged in the seventh millennium BCE. These farming communities prepared the ground for the emergence of several regional cultures that predated the rise of Indus cities. In India, Amalananda Ghosh identified close similarities between pre-Harappan Sothi culture of Rajasthan and the mature Harappan culture. On the other side of the border, a Pakistani archaeologist M. R. Mughal established a connection between the pre Harappan Kot Diji culture and the mature Harappan phase. Studies of both, Ghosh and Mughal thus showed the emergence of the Indus civilization from the early Harappan cultures.

Now scholars invariably accept that the Kot Diji culture (in a vast region comprising parts of Panjab and northern Sind), the Sothi-Siswah Culture (in the area comprising northern Rajasthan, Haryana and parts of Panjab), and the Amri-Nal Culture (located in Baluchistan, Central and Southern Sind) provided a firm base on which the foundations of the mature Harappan culture were laid. Based on the archaeological evidences, different cultural phases of the Indus civilization are identified and these are: first, the Early Harappan period that is dated to *circa* 3200 BCE- 2600 BCE. Second, the Mature Harappan period that is dated to circa 2600 BCE- 1900 BCE, and third, the Late Harappan period that followed the Mature phase is dated a period between circa 1900 BCE- 1300 BCE. The early phase was a formative phase of this civilization and the late phase emerged after the decline of the urban lifestyle. From our perspective, therefore, the mature phase is the focus of discussion; it is because the mature phase represents the highest stage of the Indus civilization, when in true sense the Indus people had developed a cosmopolitan attitude; they lived an urban life, learnt writing, perfected various crafts, and indeed formed a common culture.

2.3 TOWN PLANNING

How the Indus cities were built? What was their lay-out? Our answers to these questions are based on the excavations of Mohenjodaro and Harappa. Both the cities have been horizontally excavated over the period of several decades. But after partition, Mohenjodaro and Harappan went to Pakistan and in India scholars, therefore, shifted their focus on the sites like Dholavira, Lothal, Kalibangan and Rakhigarhi to understand the urban planning of the Indus cities. The Indus cities of Mohenjodaro, Harappa and Kalibangan had been well planned and they were divided into two sections – citadel or upper town and lower town. However, the city named Dholavira is the only city that is divided into three sections, viz., citadel, middle town and lower town. Possibly, the citadel was occupied by the ruling class and the common people lived in the middle or lower towns. These cities were surrounded by fortification walls, and citadel

of Harappa for instance was surrounded by a thick mud-brick wall, with massive towers and gateways, and the structures inside were raised on one or more higher platforms. The houses were built on higher platform to protect these from flood water. The houses made of burnt or sun-backed bricks followed the grid system. Roads were broad and cut across one another almost at right angles. The city thus, was divided into several blocks. The roads were connected to lanes and on the both sides of the lanes were situated the houses of Indus people.



Sites of the Harappa Culture¹

The most remarkable feature of town planning of Mohenjodaro is uniform houses, which were rectangular in plan and have been of varying sizes. Generally, rooms were arranged around a courtyard in the houses that had a single entrance and separate bathing cells. Remains of double stories houses, possibly occupied by the affluent people, are also discovered at Mohenjodaro. In the Indus cities, houses had systematic drainages and these drainages were laid out throughout the city. Each house had its waste running out, sometimes through terracotta pipes fitted together, into cess-pit. These cess-pits were linked to the drains running alongside the road. In Mohenjodaro, which was situated on the bank of river Indus, a rectangular tank, measuring 12x 7 meters in length and width, while it was 2.4 meters deep, is found and it is named as the Great Bath. This water tank had staircases on opposite sides for entering into it and evidences of several rooms adjoining the bath, on the north and east are also discovered by archaeologists in excavations. It is suggested that this Great Bath was associated with ritual

¹ A.L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India*, Vol.I, New York: The Macmillan Co.,1954, p.45

bathing. Remains of granaries are found in Mohenjodaro and Harappa, which shows that agriculture produce was shifted from countryside to the cities and stored in the granaries. About 2,000-3,000 houses are identified in Mohenjodaro and most of these houses had water-wells. On the other hand, each house in Harappa was built with a latrine connected to the street drains. In the lower town of Harappa, various workshops of shell-cutting, bead making and copper smelting were located. The elaborate arrangements for drinking and bathing water in the Harappan cities exhibit a high sense of personal hygiene among the city dwellers.

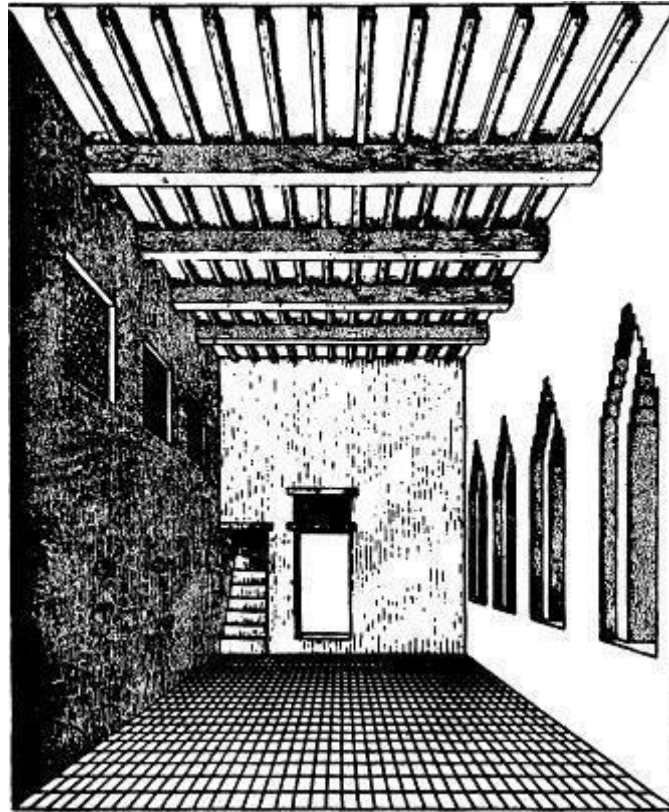


The Great Bath, Mohenjodaro²

Dholavira was another important Indus city, which is located in the Rann of Kachchh (Gujarat). Unlike other Harappan cities, it had citadel, middle city and a lower town and each section had been surrounded by a massive wall, made of stones, with gateways. A large open area in the middle of settlement was possibly for public ceremonies. The most important finding from Dholavira is a long inscription in Indus script which was originally put on the castle gateway. To fulfil the demand of water in the city, dams had possibly been built across two local streams (Manhar, and Mandasar) to channelize their water into reservoirs. Several large, deep-water cisterns and reservoirs are found located in the citadel and lower town for the storage of rainwater. Like Dholavira, Kalibangan was situated on the dried-up bank of the Ghaggar (in Rajasthan). Kalibangan came into existence in the early Harappan period and it was rebuilt during the Mature Harappan phase. From Kalibangan, remains citadel and lower downs are found and several fire-alters that possibly had been used for the performance of sacrificial rituals are reported from here. Lothal is located in the coastal flats of the Gulf of Cambay beside a tributary of Sabarmati in Gujarat is identified as a dockyard. The commercial character of this town is evident from several workshops of bead-makers, shell-cutters, and metalworkers which had been present in Lothal. The same is evident from the discovery of a Persian Gulf (Sumerian) seal here, and it clearly shows the commercial relations of Lothal with the cultures

² A.L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India*, Vol.I, New York: The Macmillan Co.,1954, p.71.

of West Asia. Lothal was surrounded by a thick mud wall and several fire-alters are found here in excavation.



Interior of a House of the Harappā Culture³

2.3.1 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS I

1. Comment on the extent of the Indus civilization?

2. Who was Rakhal Das Bannerji?

3. Comment on the layout of Dholavira?

4. Write a note on the Great Bath?

5. Which Harappan cities have yielded remains of granaries?

³ A.L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India*, Vol.I, New York: The Macmillan Co.,1954, p.51.

2.4 ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

The construction of massive cities of Mohenjodaro, Harappa and several others, was made possible by the flourishing economy of the Indus civilization. A strong agrarian base enabled the urban dwellers of Indus cities to indulge in variety of commercial and craft activities. Based on the archaeological evidences, scholars have identified several possible professions that had been pursued by the Indus people. The Indus people appears to have been involved in hunting, pastoralism, agriculture, artisanal works and inter-and-intra regional trade. Yet, the agriculture seems to have formed the backbone of the Indus economy.

2.4.1 AGRICULTURE

The Indus civilization was spread over geo-ecologically diverse regions which comprised river valleys, arid zones, coastal areas, plateau and hilly terrains. Such a diverse geo-ecological setting impacted the agricultural practices. The Indus peasants cultivated both *rabi* (winter crops, for instance, wheat, barley, chickpea, field-pea, lentils, linseed, Mustard) and *kharif* (summer crops, for instance, bajra, ragi, jowar, sesame, cotton). Since, rice remains are reported only from two sites, viz., Lothal and Rangpur, wheat and barley appear to have been staple food grains. Even though, the earliest evidences of cotton cultivation are found from the Neolithic site of Mehargarh, its cultivation continued in subsequent periods as it appears from the finding of a piece of cotton cloth from Mohenjodaro. The textile production based on cotton cultivation was one of the important craft activities in the Indus civilization.

The Indus peasants used wooden ploughs, hoes and digging sticks for cultivation. The prevalence of plough agriculture is firmly established by the evidences of furrows and ploughed fields from the early Harappan phase of Kalibangan. Likewise, remains of a ploughed field have been recovered from the Indus settlement at Shortughai in the North-eastern Afghanistan. The same is further reinforced by the discovery of terracotta models of ploughs at Banawali (in Haryana) and Jawaiwala (in Bahawalpur, Pakistan). As far as the irrigation is concerned, a regional variation is evident from the available archaeological evidences. The bunds or embankments of mud or stone, similar to present day *gabarbands* in Baluchistan, seems to have been built to divert river water in some areas. The remains of a well and associated drains at Allahdino of the period of the Indus civilization are found near Karachi and they possibly were in use for irrigating the low-lying fields. Scholars have found remains of a canal that was built by the Indus people near Shortughai; this canal drew water from the Kokcha River. In a similar manner, evidence of a stone-block dam that collected run-off water from hills for irrigation is discovered in upper Hub valley bordering north-western Sind. In the Indus plains possibly, flood water was used for irrigation.

2.4.2 ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

The Indus people were aware of a vast range of domesticated and wild animals. Amongst the domesticated animals, sheep, goat, cattle, buffalo, pig, camel, cat, dog and ass are included. But the most important domesticated animals were humped cattle, remains of which are found across the Indus civilization. The bones of buffalo, sheep and goat are discovered in considerable quantity and these animals in general would either have been used for food in the

form of meat and milk or as draught animals. Sheep was reared most likely for extracting wool. Remains of the wild varieties of sheep, goat, deer, possibly ass, and pig are also reported. Even though bones of elephants and camel are found but rarely. Bones of camel are reported from Kalibangan and in a same way, bones of Indian rhinoceros are discovered at Amri. Although elephant, rhinoceros and tiger are depicted on the Indus seals, but their remains of their bones are discovered rarely in excavations. Wild animals such as sambar deer, the spotted deer, and hog deer and many varieties of tortoise were hunted by the Indus people for food. Remains of fish bones are reported and the discovery of marine catfish remains at Harappa suggests that the dried sea fish would have been traded as far upstream as Harappa from the Makran coast. The Indus people were aware of peacocks, rabbits, pigeons, monkeys, ducks and wild fowl and this fact is well established from paintings on pottery and their representations in terracotta figurines.

2.4.3 TRADE AND COMMERCE

The most distinctive feature the Indus civilization was its urban culture, which thrived on the resources made available by the trade that took place at various levels. Based on the available evidences, the Indus people appears to have been trading at three different levels. First, local village-town trade; second, long distance trade within the territory of the Indus civilization; and third, trade and commerce with other regions and foreign cultures. The Indus people used two wheeled carts for transportation. Based on the toy models found from different Harappan sites, it appears that three forms of vehicles were in use. First, and most common, was a two-wheel cart with a broad frame; it could have been used for goods transport. Second was a four-wheel cart with a spoon like wooden frame protecting the occupant-driver. And third seems to have been a light cart or chariot, of which we have bronze models from Harappa and Chanhudaro. Since, the wheels in all these models are spokeless, it is speculated that the Indus people mainly used the solid wheels. In addition to wheel carts, pack animals such as ox, donkey, goat, and sheep were also employed by them to carry merchandises. Camel seems to have come in use towards the end of the mature phase of the Indus civilization. Several Indus cities had been located on or near riverbanks, and therefore, the riverine transportation would have also been functional. The same is also evident from the depiction of boats on the Indus seals, and terracotta models of boats that are found at Harappa and Lothal. In addition to land routes, coastal routes connecting Gujarat (Lothal, Dholavira) to Sutkagendor in Makran coast were in use.

One of the most significant evidence of the exchange between villages and towns is the granaries that are found at Harappa and Mohenjodaro. It seems that the state officials maintained some sort of an administrative mechanism to collect grain by way of tax levied on villages attached to the two towns, and then this grain was shifted to cities, where it was stored in granaries for future consumption. At Mohenjodaro whereas the granary is within the Citadel area, at Harappa it is just outside the Citadel well away from the Lower Town. It is speculated that the grain stored in these granaries was probably meant for distribution within the Citadels, where the ruling class and Indus elites resided. For the ordinary inhabitants of the Indus cities the grain and other food items would have been brought by merchants or grain-carriers to the markets in cities.

Besides grain and food items, raw materials (e.g., precious stones, seashells, etc.) were also traded and these raw materials were brought to urban craft centres from different areas. Evidences of seashell working are discovered at Balakot, Dholavira, Nageshwar and Lothal, where the raw material appears to have been brought from coastal areas. Similarly, agate and cornelian were cut into beads at Lothal (near Cambay), Kuntsi (in Saurashtra) and Chanhu Daro (in Sind) and the raw material for making beads was procured from the famous Ratanpur mines that had been located just south of the Narmada River near Bharuch. Shortughai in Afghanistan was the source of lapis lazuli, while jade was brought from Turkmenistan to the craft centres of the Indus cities. Khetri mines, in Rajasthan and Oman peninsula (i.e., Magan) had been the source of copper. In a same way, tin was procured from Ferghana and also eastern Kazakistan (in Central Asia) for metalworking at the Indus craft centers.

The Indus merchants traded with the people of west Asia through both sea routes and land routes. At that time, the ships sailed along the coast and their movement depended upon the regular supplies from ports situated at intermediate stages in their voyage. It means that the ships were always in a close proximity to coast, where at regular intervals ports had been built to provide supplies and any necessary aid to the sailors. The same is quite evident from the remains of port-towns, for instance, Sotkakoh and the fortified settlement of Sutkagendor, which are reported from Makran coast (in Baluchistan). The flourishing trade between the Indus and the Mesopotamian civilization is evident from the discovery of the Indus artifacts such as pottery, beads, ivory-items, etc., at different sites in the Oman peninsula. Here it is noticeable that the term Magan is used in the Mesopotamian records either for Oman Peninsula or Makran coast. The Indus ships first reached the Oman Peninsula and then entered into the Persian Gulf, where the Islands of Bahrain (mentioned as Dilmun or Tilmun in the Mesopotamian records) were located. Here several seals of the local shape but with the Indus characters are found, which suggests the presence of a settlement of Indus traders and their indulgence in local trade. From several Mesopotamian sites, for instance, Ur, Kish, Lagash, and Nippur, artifacts of the Indus origin are reported. In a same way, remains of Mesopotamian vessels are found at Mohenjodaro. Evidently, the Indus people not only exported goods to West Asia, but also imported commodities from there. In the Mesopotamian records the Indus valley is called as Meluhha, from where commodities such as ivory, inlay-work, gold, silver, copper, ebony, tortoise-shell, carnelian, hard wood, animals, such as monkey, dogs, cats, birds, and slaves were imported to west Asia.

The Indus traders regularly visited West Asian cities for commercial purposes. Professional translators of the Meluhha language were present in the Mesopotamian cities and they carried their own seals. They played an important role in the trade between the Indus civilization and West Asia by establishing a smooth communication between the speakers of different languages. The point is further supported by the documents from Ur, which inform us about the presence of Meluhha people in Southern Iraq in about 2100/2000 BCE. An Akkadian seal (dated to *circa* 2300/2200 BCE) describes its owner as “Silusu, Meluhha Interpreter”= Silusu, who was the interpreter of Meluhha language. Like West Asia, Harappan artifacts, such as ivory products, metal objects, perforated ware, silver seal, beads, etc., are also reported from central Asia. Presence of one isolated trading outpost, Shortughai in Afghanistan suggest a possible trade relation between the Indus traders and the people of central Asia.



Bull with Cult-object



Humped Bull



Horned God with Animals



Worship of a Tree-goddess



Hero Grappling with Tigers



Fight between Horned Man (Tree-god?) and Horned Tiger

Seals of the Harappa Culture⁴

2.4.4 CRAFT AND INDUSTRY

The Indus people used variety of metal objects ranging from utensils, carpentry tools, jewelry, seals and so forth in their daily lives. They alloyed copper with tin, arsenic or nickel in order to obtain bronze, which is more malleable and strong metal. Owing of their knowledge of metallurgy, they manufactured, for instance, razors, vessels, spears, knives, axes, swords, arrow-heads, spear-heads, fishhooks, mirrors, rings, bangles, nails, needles, and chisels. Copper was smelted in brick-lined pits, and wax-and-clay mold seems to have been used to cast either whole or parts of copper and bronze artifacts. In excavations, remains of copper furnaces are reported from Harappa and copper workshops from Lothal. Jewelry of gold, silver and semi-precious stone are also discovered. Since copper tools would have been expensive due to the scarcity of natural copper-ores, most of the ordinary people probably used the stone tools/artifacts.

Among the consumer goods industries, one of the most important had been the potter's craft. Indus pottery is wheel-made, thick-walled, plain, baked red, and designed for various utilitarian purposes. Indus pottery served a variety of purposes, for instance, storage jars, cooking utensils, dishes and bowls, containers, strainers and so forth. The cups, bowls,

⁴ A.L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India*, Vol.I, New York: The Macmillan Co.,1954, p.90.

and jars of various shapes, some with lids, and others with pronounced rims are discovered. The use of terracotta-water pipes for house drains is particularly noticeable. A large number of terracotta figurines of women, men, animals, carts and other items were either used as toys or for some ritual purpose. From Mohenjodaro, Harappa, Nausharo, and Chanhu Daro are reported remains of pottery kilns. Much skill was also developed for manufacturing steatite seals, which were usually small and square. Seals with a holed boss on the back enabled these to be carried by a thread. Besides steatite seals, silver seals with unicorn motif are discovered at Mohenjodaro, and likewise, some copper seals are found at Lothal. These seals carried variety of motifs such as elephants, tiger, antelope, crocodile, hare, humped bull, buffalo, rhinoceros, and one-horned mythical animal, unicorn. Composite motifs (for instance, human+ plant+ animals) are also reported. The seals that mainly belonged to the elite of the Indus state and mercantile groups, carry the bulk of the writing that survives from the Indus civilization. These seals appear to have represented a claim to status and property of their issuers.

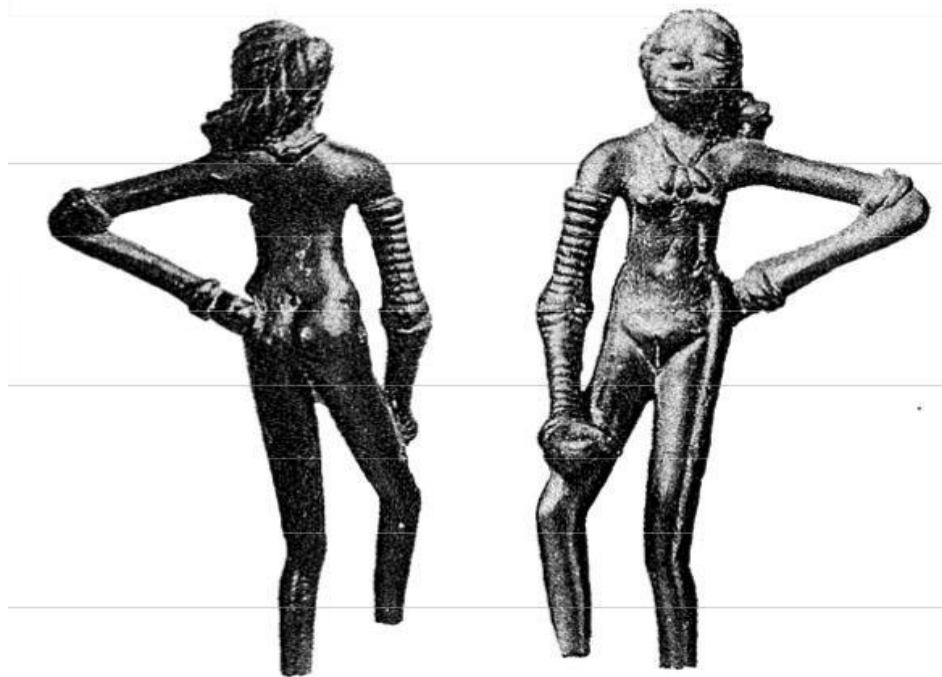
The Indus people manufactured variety of textiles and the same is evident from numerous spindle-whorls of terracotta and frit that are found in Indus settlements. Apparently, hand spinning was widely practiced. Textiles were also dyed and this fact is supported by a fragment of dyed woven cotton that is found from Mohenjodaro. The practice of embroidery craft is shown by the trefoil motif on the robe of the 'Priest King' in stone sculpture from Mohenjodaro. Even Mesopotamian records talk about the cotton, which was one of the important imports from Meluhha. Besides textiles, Indus craftsmen manufactured jewelry of gold, silver and semi-precious stones. In excavations, beads made of gold, silver, and precious stones are found in considerable number. In addition to jewelry, silver was also used to make small vessels, beads, buckles and other small ornaments. Faience was used to manufacture bangles, containers, beads, buttons, amulets, and figurines. Glass making however was not known. Semi-precious stones, for instance, Jade, Agate, and Lapis Lazuli were used to manufacture beads. These beads were drilled and then pierced together to make bead ornaments of various types (e.g., necklace, bangles, etc.). Evidences of bead making industry are reported from Lothal, Kuntsai, Chanhu Daro, and Shortughai.

The trade and commerce that flourished in the Indus cities necessitated the standardization of weight and measures to provide a uniform character to exchange activities across the Indus civilization. Based on the available archaeological evidences, scholars have suggested the prevalence of a binary system in smaller weights (1: 2: 8:16: 32: 64) and a decimal system in the higher weights (with a ratio of 160, 200, 320 and 640). The heaviest weight known from any Harappan site is about 10.9 kilograms and the lightest is 85.1 centigrams. For linear measurements, graduated scales were in use and the same is evident from the discovery of three scales made of shell (Mohenjodaro), bronze (Harappa) and ivory (Lothal). Since these scales do not conform to each other, it seems that different systems of linear measurement were in practice in different areas of the Indus civilization. Once the standard of weights and measurements were fixed, the Indus craftsmen produced weights in the form mainly of chert cubes that are found in large numbers at Mohenjodaro and Harappa. The standardized units of weight and measures are found across the civilization and from Chanhu Daro remains of a workshop are found, where weights appear to have been manufactured.

In the construction of the Indus cities, a large quantity of fired bricks and sun-dried bricks were used. The standard universal size of the Indus fired brick is identified to have been about 7x15x31 centimeters, and it gives roughly the ratio of 1:2:4. Evidences related to ivory work and seashell cutting are also discovered. A few pieces of ivory work are found in Mohenjodaro. On the other hand, seashell was mainly used to manufacture bangles, beads, receptacles, discs, and inlay. Scholars have identified Balakot, Nageswar, Dholavira, Chanhudaro, Kuntasi, Rangpur, Lothal, Nagwada, and Bagasra as important shell-craft centers of the Indus civilization.



Painted Pottery of the Harappa Culture⁵



Female figure. Bronze statue from Mohenjodaro. Ht: 11.5 cm⁶

⁵ A.L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India*, Vol.I, New York: The Macmillan Co.,1954, p.57.

⁶ D.N. Jha, *Ancient India: In Historical Outline*, New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1998, p.36.

2.5 DECLINE OF THE INDUS CIVILIZATION

The way rise of the Indus civilization has puzzled the scholars, in a same way no one definite theory is there to explain the decline of it. In this regard, scholars have provided different theories, but none so far has been accepted as the final one. One of the earliest theories was proposed by Ramprasad Chand and Mortimer Wheeler, who blamed the hoards of Aryan invaders responsible for the destruction of the Indus cities. The Aryans, who inhabited the central Asia originally invaded Mohenjodaro and Harappa, massacred the people and destroyed these cities. Since evidences indicating large scale destruction, killing and conflagrations are not found in excavations at Indus cities, the idea of Aryan invasion is questioned. Not only this, the gap between the decline of the Indus cities in about 1900/2000 BCE and the arrival of the Aryans in about 1500 BCE is also cited to argue against the Aryan invasion theory. The Aryan invasion theory was firmly rejected by the 1960s, when M. R. Sahni, George F. Dales, and Robert R. Raikes shifted the focus from the Aryans to the natural factors, such as, floods and earthquakes to explain the decline of the Indus cities. It was argued that the seismic disturbances disrupted the economic life at Mohenjodaro, Chanhu Daro and several other Indus cities that had been located near the coast. The earthquakes uplifted the seacoast, which caused massive floods in Indus river and shifted the seacoast away from several coastal sites, for instance, Sutkagendor and Balakot.

In the 1970s, scholars like D. P. Agrawal, R. K. Sood, Yash Pal, and Baladev Singh held desiccation of the river Ghaggar-Hakra due to tectonic movements for the decline of this civilization. It was argued that tectonic shift or earthquakes caused a shift in the course of river Sutlej and river Yamuna, which originally had been the tributaries of river Ghaggar-Hakra. As a result, Sutlej joined the river Indus and Yamuna joined the river Ganga and therefore, the river Ghaggar-Hakra dried up, which caused the desertation of those settlements that had been situated in the valley of Ghaggar-Hakra river. On the other hand, Gurdip Singh held severe ecological changes that started in the second millennium BCE responsible for the decline of the civilization. According to Singh, between *circa* 3000 BCE and 1800 BCE, monsoon and winter rainfall dwindled in the north-western India and it caused the advent of an arid climate. Due to such a climatic change, Indus cities were abandoned and its inhabitants moved towards the interior parts of the Indian subcontinent. Unlike the other scholars, W. F. Fairervis suggests the over-exploitation of natural resources by the Indus people, responsible for the decline of the Indus cities. Possibly, over-grazing, over-cultivation and deforestation would have caused ecological changes, which disrupted the supply of food and fodders to Indus population.

In recent years, scholars have raised new questions regarding the decline of the Indus civilization. What actually declined? What happened to the Indus people after the decline of their cities? In response to such questions, scholars point out that the decline refers to the end of urban lifestyle and urban settlements. The decline of civilization does not mean extinction of the Indus population altogether. Instead, it appears that after the decline of the Indus cities, Indus people moved eastwards and they settled down in the Ganga-Yamuna doab, Gujarat and adjacent areas. Several regional tribal and rural cultures as a result came into existences and some of the important one of these have been, Jhukar culture in Sindh, the Cemetery-H culture in Punjab and the Ghaggar-Hakra valley, and the Rojdi culture in Saurashtra (Gujarat). With the appearance of these Late Harappan cultures, the distinctive

features of the Indus civilization such as urban lifestyle, writing, long-distance trade, and uniform pottery style as well as weight and measures, all disappeared.

2.5.1 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS II

1. From which Indus cities terracotta models of ploughs are found?

2. From which Indus site remains of Camel are reported?

3. Where were Ratanpur mines located?

4. Explain the term, Meluhha?

5. Write a note on the Aryan invasion theory?

2.6 SUMMARY

Students, the Indus civilization rose from the background of the indigenous Neolithic cultures in the third millennium BCE, and it continued to flourish for several centuries. One of the important characteristics of this civilization was its well-planned cities. The remains of these cities are discovered from a large geographical area of the North-western parts of the Indian subcontinent. Since the Indus script is not deciphered, our entire knowledge regarding it is based on the archaeological evidences that are found in excavations at different Indus settlements. Artefacts such as ceramics, seals, sealings, precious or semi-precious stone beads, copper and bronze tools, toys, utensils, and implements, stone tools, and so forth are discovered and they suggest the prevalence of trade, craft activities, and various industries in the Indus civilization. The Indus peasants cultivated various crops such as wheat, barley and millets, and kept domesticated animals, particularly, sheep, goats, and cattle. The Indus civilization declined due to various factors, ranging from ecological to manmade, by the 2000/1900 BCE and it was followed by the appearance of several rural-tribal cultures in different parts of northern and western India.

2.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

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2.8 QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE

2.8.1 LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the importance of Indus civilization in India's history.
2. Write an essay on the origin of Indus civilization.
3. What are the salient features of the Indus cities? Discuss.
4. Discuss the main characteristics of the Indus economy.
5. Why Indus cities declined? Assess different theories on the decline of Indus civilization.

2.8.2 SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Who was John Marshal?
2. Why Indus Valley civilization is known as Harappan civilization?
3. What were the main features of the drainage system of the cities of the Indus Valley?
4. What was Lothal famous for?
5. Comment on the layout of 'Kalibangan'?
6. From which Indus site evidence of bead making factory found?
7. Write few sentences on Indus seals?

BACHELOR OF ARTS

SEMESTER I

COURSE: HISTORY OF INDIA: INDUSCIVIZATION TO c. 1200 CE

UNIT 3: THE VEDIC AGE: ECONOMY, SOCIETY, CULTURE

STRUCTURE

3.0 Learning Objectives

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Geography of the Vedic Cultures

3.3 Political Institutions

3.4 Vedic Economy

3.4.1 Check Your Progress I

3.5 Vedic Society

3.6 Vedic Culture

3.6.1 Check Your Progress II

3.7 Summary

3.8 Suggested Readings

3.9 Questions for Practice

3.9.1 Long Answer Questions

3.9.2 Short Answer Questions

3.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the geography of the Vedic cultures.
- Acquire information about the political systems of the Vedic Age.
- Acquire information about the Vedic economy.
- Gain knowledge regarding the Vedic society and culture.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Students, the Vedic age (circa 1500-600 BCE) was a long period of socio-cultural developments, when the earliest Sanskrit literature was composed by the people, who styled themselves as the Arya. Our views on the Vedic society, economy and culture are mainly based

on this Sanskrit literature that comprises the four Vedas (i.e., the *Rigveda*, the *Samaveda*, the *Yajurveda* and the *Atharvaveda*) and several Brahmana texts, Aranyaka texts and the Upanishads. The people associated with the Vedic culture are usually called the Aryans or Indo-Aryans (an expression, that is derived from the term, 'Arya'). The Aryans are argued to have migrated to India in hoary past and scholars like P. Giles and Max Muller have had endorsed the Aryan migration theory. Whereas P. Giles located the original home of the Aryans in Hungarian plains, Max Muller suggested Central Asia as their original home. In Max Muller's view, the Aryans due to unknown reasons migrated out of Central Asia and their different sections spread over Europe and Asia. On the other hand, Indian social reformers, for instance, Dayanand Saraswati and Bal Gangadhar Tilak expressed different views. Dayanand Saraswati traced the migration of the Aryans from Tibet to India. Bal Gangadhar Tilak identified the North Pole as the original home of the Aryans, from where they migrated to India after the glacial age. India was argued to have been the original home of the Aryans by Colonel Olcott and Madame Blavatsky, who had been the founders of the Theosophical society (established in 1875). In their view, the Aryans had been the forefathers of the modern Hindus of India.

Following India's independence in 1947, Indian scholars were divided into two groups on the question of Aryan's original homeland. One section of Indian scholars (e.g., Romila Thapar, R. S. Sharma, D. N. Jha, and Shereen Ratnagar) endorsed the Aryan migration theory. The arrival of the Aryan people into India in about 1500 BCE was connected with the beginning of the Vedic Age. Another section of the Indian scholars (for instance, B. B. Lal, K. N. Diskhit, V. N. Misra and S. P. Gupta) identified the Aryans as the original inhabitants of India. They even argued that the Aryans were the founder of the Indus civilization. The debate between these two groups of scholars have brought into light many new evidences regarding the Vedic Age cultures. The Aryan migration theory is supported by majority of the scholars on the basis of both archaeological and literary sources. Since neither the remains of horse nor of spoked wheel are found in excavations at the Indus cities, the identification of the Vedic Aryans with the Indus people is highly unlikely. Traces of the Aryan culture (for instance, horse and chariots) are noticed in the archaeological assemblages of the Andronovo culture of Central Asia (*circa* second millennium BCE) and in the Oxus Civilization or Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex (dated to *circa* 1900-1500 BCE) of northern Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Remains of horse are also reported from Ghalighai IV (1800-1400 BCE) in the Swat region and Pirak- I (1600-1400 BCE) as well as Pirak II (1300-800 BCE) in Baluchistan region of Pakistan. These remains indicate the movement of the Aryan people to the Indian subcontinent from Central Asia possibly in several waves.

The presence of the people associated with the Vedic culture in West Asia is also evident from the Mittani-Hittite inscription (*circa* fourteenth century BCE) that is found at Boghaz Keui in Turkey. This inscription informs us about the Rigvedic deities like Mitrashil, Uruvanshil, Indruah, and Nashatyana (i.e., Mitra, Varuna, Indra and Nasatya respectively). Another inscription from West Asia is the Kassite inscription (*circa* sixteenth century BCE) that records the names of Vedic deities like Surias and Maruttas (i.e., Surya and Marutas respectively). Even a striking similarity is evident between the *Rigveda* (*circa* 1500-1000 BCE) and the *Avesta*, an old Iranian text (*circa* thirteenth century BCE). Terms like *ahura* and *daeva* of the *Avesta* are similar to *asura* and *deva* of the *Rigveda*, but their meanings are different.

The term *ahura/asura* refers to deities in the *Avesta*, while in the *Rigveda* it is used for anti-gods. Similarly, *daeua/deva* referring to anti-gods in the *Avesta*, means deity in the *Rigveda*. The cult of Soma mentioned in the IXth Book of the *Rigveda*, is also given importance in the *Avesta*, which calls Soma as ‘Hoama’. These similarities suggest a common ancestry of the authors of the *Avesta* and the *Rigveda*.

3.2 GEOGRAPHY OF THE VEDIC CULTURES

Both archaeological and literary sources support the Aryan migration theory. It appears that the Aryans or the Indo-Aryans migrated from central Asia to India in the middle of the second millennium BCE. They first settled down in the North-western India and composed the *Rigveda* in Sanskrit language in the early Vedic period (*circa* 1500-1000 BCE). The famous hymn ‘Nadi-Stuti’ (i.e., Hymn to the Rivers) in the Xth Book of the *Rigveda* refers to Sindhu (Indus) and its tributaries: Vitasta (Jhelum), Asikni (Chenab), Parushni/Yavyavati (Ravi), Vipash (Beas) and Shutudri (Sutlej). The river Sarasvati is generally identified with the now dried-up channels of the Ghaggar-Hakra. In the *Rigveda*, Sarasvati is described as a mighty river. Gradually, the Aryans moved eastwards and occupied the Ganga-Yamuna doab and the upper Ganga valley in the later Vedic period, dated between 1000 BCE to 600 BCE. In the later Vedic literature, the region dominated by Kurus (Kurukshetra) lying between Sarasvati and Drishadvati rivers, and the Ganga-Yamuna doab dominated by Pancalās, are particularly mentioned. The region between the Sarasvati and Drishadvati (modern Chautang) is called Brahmarishidesha and it roughly corresponded to present day Haryana in the Indo-Ganga divide. A story of king Mathava of Videgha in the later Vedic literature narrates the movement of sacrificial fire from the banks of River Sarasvati to the banks of river Sadanira (modern Ghaghara or Gandak). Based on this story, scholars suggest the movement of the Vedic culture eastwards towards the mid-Ganga valley. In this way, the later Vedic literature shows a familiarity with the vast region comprising the Indo-Ganga divide, the upper Ganga Valley, and Ganga-Yamuna *doab* up to Allahabad. Same is also indicated by the numerous references to the Janapadas of Kuru-Panchalās, Kashi, Kosala, Kekayas, Madras and Videha. The Bharatas and Purus, mentioned as rivals in the *Rigveda*, by the later Vedic period came together to form Kurus. Subsequently, the Kurus joined the Panchalās (i.e., Kuru-Panchalās) and together they ruled entire Indo-Yamuna divide and the Ganga-Yamuna *doab*.

3.3 POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

In the early Vedic age, the society was divided into numerous tribes, which were often at war with each-other. As a social and political unit, tribe comprised several clans and it was known as *Jana* – a term that appears at least 275 times in the *Rigveda*. Another term for a tribe was *Vish*, which is mentioned at least 170 times in the *Rigveda*. It appears that the *Vish* was divided into *Gramas* (tribal units for military purposes). Even though about 300 tribes or clans are mentioned in the *Rigveda*, tribes for instance Bharata, Yadu, Turvasa, Anu, Druhyu and Puru are mentioned quite frequently. Scholars suggest the origin of the name Bharata or Bharatvarsha of India from Bharata tribe. There are several references to the conflicts between Aryans and Dasas/Dasyus, which displays hostile relations between the Indo-Aryans and the

non-Aryans. The non-Aryans are often described as nose-less, black coloured, and of an unintelligible speech in the *Rigveda*. It is noticeable that the difference between Aryans and Dasas or Dasyus was not racial, rather it was more in terms of cultural and linguistic practices.

The relations among the Aryan tribes were not always cordial and it is well evident from the battle of ten kings, about which we come to know from the VII Book of the *Rigveda*. The battle was fought between Tritsu-Bharata chief Sudasa and a confederacy of the kings of nine different tribes, which were Yadu, Turvasa, Anu, Druhyu, Puru, Alina, Bhalana, Pakhta and Vishanin. In this battle, which took place at the bank of Parushni (Ravi) river, Sudasa defeated his enemies. It shows that the Aryans not only fought against the non-Aryans but also among themselves. The Aryans also allied with the non-Aryan tribes against their Aryan adversaries. In the *Rigveda* at least one tribe, named Shimyu in the confederacy against Sudasa, is mentioned to have been of Dasyus. Evidently, the relations between the Aryans and the non-Aryans were not always hostile. A careful study of the *Rigveda* shows that the non-Aryan people were equally powerful and had their own distinct linguistic and cultural features. For example, non-Aryan *dasyu* chief Shambara is mentioned as the possessor of 90, 99 or 100 forts. The *Panis* who were also non-Aryans, were wealthy merchants and often had hostile relations with the Indo-Aryans.

The *Rigveda* uses the terms, such as Rajan, Gopati and Vishpati for tribal or clan leader. The Rajan did not enjoy unlimited power in the Rigvedic period and kin-based assemblies like sabha, samiti, vidatha and gana put a check on his authority. Vidatha was an assembly meant for secular, religious, as well as military activities. It was a folk assembly, which was participated by both men and women. The *sabha* was the council of the selective and exclusive members, whereas the *samiti* was an assembly of the entire clan. Both the assemblies : *sabha* and *samiti*, began to gain importance only towards the end of early Vedic period. The Rajan, who presided over these assemblies, was either selected or elected on the basis of merit. There was no concept of hereditary political authority. The Rajan was assisted by Purohita (priest) and Senani (head of the army). There was however no standing army and only in the time of war, a militia was mustered. There were no fix taxation and people made voluntary gifts or tributes, which was called *bali* or *bhaga* to Rajan. The chariot and horses provided greater mobility to them.

In the later Vedic period, the position of Rajan increasingly became hereditary with the emergence of territorial kingdoms with loosely defined boundaries. However, a systematic structure of taxation was yet to evolve. Several sacrifices like *rajasuya*, *vajapeya*, and *asvamedha* were performed by Rajans to legitimize their political authority. The *rajasuya* refers to a coronation sacrifice in which king was formally conferred the authority to rule. The *vajapeya* sacrifice comprised a chariot race in which the king was supposed to participate. Though initially, it was believed that the kingdom belonged to the winner of the chariot race, later it became a mock race in which king was deliberately made to win. In *asvamedha* sacrifice, a horse was set loose and the entire region covered by the horse was held as a territory of the king performing the sacrifice. The horse was accompanied by an army to protect it in case any other ruler challenged the claim of the sacrifice-performing king. These sacrifices were performed to legitimize the political authority of the king, who now no more was a mere tribal leader. The later Vedic period therefore needs to be seen as a transitional period from tribal polity to state polity because the full-fledged monarchical state had not yet emerged.

In the later Vedic period, Janapada [literally, a place where Jana (tribe/people) place their Pada (feet) first time] as a territorial entity associated with different tribes/clans began to appear. To run the administration of a Janapada, a bureaucratic system comprising several functionaries, gradually evolved. Some of the important functionaries of Janapadas were: commander-in-chief of the army, chief priest, chief queen, charioteer, bard, village headman, collector of tributes, dice-keeper, chief huntsman, courtier, chamberlain, carpenter, and so forth. The popular assemblies known as *Sabha* and *Samiti* checked the growing power of the king. Though they are mentioned in the *Rigveda*, but only in later Vedic period they gained considerable importance. At the same time, the most prominent *Rigvedic* assembly *Vidatha* gradually disappeared. Both men and women attended the *Sabha*, where judicial functions, Vedic sacrifices, and popular amusement like gambling (dicing), dancing, and music were performed. The *Samiti* on the other hand was a folk assembly, which was presided over by the king and attended by the people in general. Besides dealing with religious-philosophical matters, *Samiti* also discussed matters related to wars, exiling of a ruler, or bringing back an exiled ruler.

3.4 VEDIC ECONOMY

The early Indo-Aryans built no cities and they primarily lived in the villages. Thus, early Vedic society was mainly pastoral and rural. The chariot racing, gambling/dicing, and singing were their popular pastime. The introduction of wheel-with-spokes was a major development as it made the transportation easier. Even though, they appear to have been aware of the Arabian Sea, but they possibly were not associated with overseas navigation. They wore simple clothes probably made of wool and animal skins. Perhaps, they were not familiar with cotton or cotton plant. It seems they used gold ornaments like earrings etc. We do not come across any refers to the gift of land in the *Rigveda*, which also does not provide much information about the gift of cereals. Wage labour, it seems had not yet come into practice. However, domestic slaves, particularly the women, were present in early Vedic society and the slaves had generally been the war captives. The early Vedic society was not egalitarian and control over wealth and resources defined an individual's position in social hierarchy. In the *Rigveda*, wealthy and resourceful persons are called as 'Maghavan', who had been the owner of cattle-wealth particularly. The cattle were the marker of people's wealth and status in society. The cow was also used as a medium of exchange. It seems that the staple diet of the people comprised vegetables, fruits, wheat, and barley besides milk, *ghi*, and meat. Rice was yet to become a part of their diet, though the non-Aryans were familiar with it.

It seems both barter system and precious metal like gold were used in transactions of goods. But it does mean the use of metallic currency, which was entirely absent in the Vedic age. The terms, such as, Nishka and Hiranya are used for gold or gold ornament in the *Rigveda*. The early Indo-Aryans, at least prior to the tenth century BCE, were not aware of iron-technology. Artisans like carpenters and leather-workers enjoyed a respectable position in the society. The carpentry was an important craft due to its association with the manufacturing of war-chariots besides household furniture and other artifacts. Several terms related to agriculture like *kshetra* (cultivated field), *krishi* (act of ploughing), *langala* or *sira* (plough), *phala* (ploughshare), and *sita* (furrow marks) are mentioned in those sections of the *Rigveda*

that were added to it later. A ploughed field that is dated to the eleventh century BCE is found at Aligrama in Swat Valley (Pakistan), which further corroborates the association of the Indo-Aryans of the early Vedic period with agriculture. However, the Indo-Aryans in spite of knowing the cultivation, had been associated with cattle husbandry more. The references to agriculture whereas come from the later parts of the *Rigveda*, the references to cattle are numerous in earlier parts. The terms related to cattle appear about 700 times in the *Rigveda*. The importance of cattle in the early Vedic society is well evident from the several terms that we find in the *Rigveda*, for instance, for the tribal chief (*gopati* or *gopa*), battles (*gavishthi*) and daughter (*duhitri*, i.e., one who milk a cow). It appears that though agriculture was practiced, pastoralism was the dominating mode of economy. Only towards the end of the early Vedic period, agriculture gained wider importance.

In the later Vedic period, society gradually became sedentary in character with the expansion of agriculture along with cattle keeping. In the Shatapatha Brahmana, the furrows in the fields are compared with a female womb, in which seeds could be sown. The four important stages of agriculture, via., ploughing, sowing, harvesting, and threshing are talked about in the Shatapatha Brahmana. The later Vedic people had the knowledge of seasonal crops, and the Taittiriya Samhita mentions that the barley was sown in winter and harvested in summer, paddy was sown in monsoons and harvested in autumn, and in a same way, sesame was sown in summer and harvested in winter. On the other hand, the *Atharvaveda* records several charms and spells to protect the crops from pests and natural calamities. The later Vedic literature talks about the use of six, eight, twelve, and even twenty-four oxen to plough the field. The concept of private property had not evolved yet and it seems that the clan or an extended family exercised the rights over the landed property.

Several crops were grown by the later Vedic peasantry and some of these were: rice, barley, *urd*, sesame, *mung*, *kulthi* or horse gram, Italian millet, *cheena* or common millet, *sanwa* or poor man's millet, wild rice, wheat, *masur* or lentil, sugarcane. Possibly, cow-dung was used as manure. In the *Yajurveda* references to several artisans and professionals, for instance, bow-maker, rope-maker, bowstring-maker, arrow-maker, leather worker, dyer, fisherman, elephant-keeper, cattle-keeper, actor/bard, horse-keeper, musician, hunter, distiller, washer man, potter, blacksmith, goldsmith and jeweller are identified. Clearly, specialised craftsmen, artisans and professionals had begun to appear in the later Vedic times. Traders participated in the transactions of goods and also possibly in the trade/exchange of these. Six metals, i.e., gold, bronze, iron, copper, tin and lead are mentioned in the later Vedic period, which was also a time that witnessed a wider use of iron artifacts. Terms such as *krishana-ayas*, *shyama* and *shayma-ayas* are used for iron, and available evidences show that the iron implements had begun to be used in both- agriculture as well as wars. So far only from Jakheda in western Uttar Pradesh an iron ploughshare is found and it is dated to the later Vedic period. Both oxen drawn carts and chariots were in use for transportation. People were aware of boats, but it is not clear whether they indulged in riverine or sea transportation. It appears from the archaeological evidences that Hastinapura and Kaushambi had begun to develop and by the end of the later Vedic period, both of these settlements reached to a position of proto-towns.

3.4.1 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS I

1. Write a note on the Nadi-Stuti hymn.

2. Who were Dasa and Dasyu?

3. Comment on the term, Vidatha?

4. Explain the term, *Maghavan*.

5. Who was Gopati?

3.5 VEDIC SOCIETY

The Vedic tribes comprised several clans, and clan members were divided into two groups: *rajanya* and *vish*. The *rajanya* category comprised the ruling families, while the *vish* category included those who were associated with production activities like cattle herding. The *vish* provided tributes to the *rajanya* for the performance of sacrifices, and members of both the categories enjoyed a closer relationship. The basic unit of a tribe was family, which was called *kula*. A family was headed by an elder male usually a father. The families were usually extended in nature as appears from the *Rigveda*, which informs us about the father, sons, daughters, and grandchildren living altogether under one roof. A senior male member of the family headed the extended family and also took all the decisions on the behalf of the family.

The society of the early Vedic period was patriarchal. Even though the birth of a girl was not despised in the early Vedic period, the birth of boys was highly desired. The inheritance was usually transferred from father to son, and daughters were hardly seen as a claimant of it. Neither we get reference to Purdah custom, nor to Sati custom and child marriage; even prohibition on widow remarriage does not appear anywhere in the *Rigveda*. Women seems to have enjoyed much freedom in choosing a life-partner, and it means that the marriages used to take place in post-puberty age. The *Niyoga* (i.e., levirate) custom was in practice, according to which a widow could cohabit with her deceased husband's brother until the birth of a male child. This practice not only underlines the subordination of women, but also highlights the importance of a male progeny in the Vedic society. In fact, both payments of bride price and dowry were in practice. Even though monogamy was commonly in practice, we do find references to the practice of polygamy at least by Rajanyas. Polyandry too appears to have been in practice, however at small scale, in the Vedic society. Women attended assemblies like *vidatha* and *sabha* and they could participate in Vedic sacrifices along with their husbands. Women scholars, for instance, Apala, Ghosala, Visvavara, and Surya have

composed several hymns of the *Rigveda*. It suggests that women had some access to education; but it does not mean that they had a status equal to men. Compared to the hymns composed by men, the hymns attributed to women are far less in number.

The social systems of the early Vedic period were drastically changed in the later Vedic period, when four-fold Varna system was introduced to divide the people into different categories. The Purushasukta, in the Xth book of the *Rigveda*, mentions the origin of brahmanas from the mouth of the primeval man Prajapati/Brahma, of kshatriyas from his arms, of vaishyas from his thighs, and of sudras from his feet. Since, the Xth book of the *Rigveda* was composed towards the end of the early Vedic period, it appears that the division of Vedic society into four *varnas* gained prominence only in the later Vedic period. The brahmanas were assigned the work of teaching, study of Vedas, and performance of sacrifices. Unlike them, the term kshatriya, derived from *kshatra*, referred to warriors, whose main work was to protect the people and rule the territory. It is suggested that the kshatriya replaced the *rajanyas* of the early Vedic period. On the other hand, the term vaishya was derived from *vish* for the common people, who managed the production activities (e.g., trade, agriculture and crafts), paid tributes to kshatriya rulers and hired brahmana priests for the performance of Vedic rituals. Compared to them, shudras were given the lowest position in the *varna* based social hierarchy, and they were supposed to serve the upper three *varnas*. Shudras neither could participate in nor could perform the Vedic sacrifices. Unlike shudras, the other three *varnas* were considered twice born (*dvijas*) because they could perform purificatory rites called the Upanayan Samskara (i.e., investiture of sacred thread); this ritual marked their second birth – a ritual birth. Since shudras could not perform this rite and had been prohibited from wearing a sacred thread, they were considered impure.

As the *varna* system gained prominence in the later Vedic period, it impacted the position of women in the society. A family remained the basic unit of the Vedic society under the authority of father or an elder male of the family. In the princely families, a greater emphasis was also laid upon the primogeniture. In the later Vedic period, a desire of son's birth became even more prominent, and the birth of a girl began to be seen as a source of misery possibly because of the wide spread practice of dowry. By now, two important changes had taken place in relation to marriage institution: first, the *gotra* exogamy (marriage outside the kin group), and second, *varna* endogamy (marriage within the *varna*) were firmly established. The inter-*varna* marriages were categorised into *anuloma* and *pratiloma* groups. The *anuloma* referred to a marriage between higher *varna* male and lower *varna* female, and its opposite, the *pratiloma* referred to a marriage between higher *varna* female and lower *varna* male. The former whereas was still accepted, the latter form of marriage was strictly prohibited. Since *varna* identity was based on birth, control over woman became necessary to ensure stability of the *varna* hierarchy. The pre-puberty marriage for girl was encouraged in the later Vedic period. Even though some women, e.g., Gargi and Maiteryi are mentioned to have participated in philosophical discourses, by an-large women were denied access to education. Compared to polygamy, references to polyandry are very sparse. It seems that women were mainly expected to bear sons and obey their husbands sincerely.

Even though women could accompany their husbands in the Vedic sacrifices, but they alone could not perform any of these. Owing of menstruation, they were considered impure, and therefore, they were denied a right to wear sacred thread. The later Vedic literature

thus places women along with shudras at the lowest social position. The female domestic slaves are numerous mentioned and they appear to have been involved in domestic chores. Besides them, women were also involved in various labour-works, such as splitting of cane, working in thorns, embroidering, washing clothes, dyeing, making of ointments and sheath-making. But their hard work did not bring any social recognition to them. In the later Vedic literature, women begin to appear in the list of gifts made to priests or brahmanas for their priestly services. In fact, several negative terms like wanton, lascivious, impure, and liar are used for women in the literature, which suggest their inferior position compared to male members of the later Vedic society.

3.6 VEDIC CULTURE

The *Rigveda*, containing hymns and prayers, was the religious text of the Indo-Aryans. Even though this text assumed a written form at much later time, the *Rigveda* was orally preserved by brahmana priests. In the early Vedic period, hymns recorded in the *Rigveda* were chanted during the sacrifices and prayers were sung in praise of the gods. In the Vedic sacrifices, people offered cereals, ghee, milk, curd, grain, bread-cakes to the deities, and animals too were sacrificed along with the performance of rituals. The performer of the sacrifice was called Yajamana, who performed the rituals and sacrifices with the help of priests known as Purohita and Hotri. The Vedic gods were offered an intoxicating drink (extracted from Soma plant) in sacrifices. The importance of this Soma drink in the Vedic rituals is quite evident from an entire section of the *Rigveda* (IXth *mandala*) that is dedicated to Soma. Neither temple nor idols were part of the Vedic rituals, and the early Vedic people mainly worshiped natural phenomenon, which had been personified in human forms. Their religion was anionic (without signs or symbols or images) as well as anthropomorphic (inanimate things personified in human form). According to Romila Thapar⁷, the Vedic sacrifices had a social aspect and they sustained the integrity of clans. The wealth and resources collected by chiefs in the forms of voluntary gifts or tributes and war-booty were consumed as well as redistributed during the time of sacrifices among other chiefs, priests and clan members. These sacrifices thus strengthened the bonds among tribe/clan members.

Among the numerous Vedic deities, the Agni (the fire god) appears to have been the most important deity and about 200 hymns are dedicated to Agni in the *Rigveda*. Agni was perceived as a bridge between humans and gods. All the offerings that were put into the fire, were believed to be delivered to the concerned deity/deities by Agni. Another important deity had been Indra, to whom are dedicated 250 hymns in the *Rigveda*. Indra was a war hero who like a tribal leader led armies against enemies and destroyed their forts. Therefore, he was also known as *Purandara*, i.e., the destroyer of enemy forts. His weapon was thunderbolt and it was believed that rain was brought to earth by Indra. Varuna was another important Vedic deity, who was a personification of water. Mitra, a sun-god, was closely associated with Varuna. It was believed that both Varuna and Mitra controlled the nature, movement of sun and heavens. Maruts whereas personified the storm, Surya was another sun god. Both Rudra (Siva) and

⁷ Romila Thapar, *The Penguin History of Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300*, New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2002, p. 128.

Vishnu appear to have been minor deities. Even though Yama was associated with death, in the early Vedic period the concept of soul's transmigration or rebirth was entirely absent. Among female goddesses, the names of Usha (the goddess of dawn), Sarasvati (river goddess, not yet associated with knowledge), and Aditi (mother of all gods) appear quite prominently. However, compared to male deities, hymns dedicated to these goddesses are less in number and they perhaps enjoyed lesser power and position. In early Vedic period, both cremation as well as burial of the dead was practiced to dispose the dead bodies.

As the Indo-Aryans migrated eastwards in the later Vedic period, their rituals and sacrifices, for instance, *rajasuya*, *vajapeya* and *asvamedha*, became highly complex and elaborated. Sacrifices began to be seen as a chief cause behind different natural events/changes, and several mythologies were created in the Brahmana texts to rationalise different Vedic sacrifices. Still neither temple nor idol worship was practised in the later Vedic period. The sacrifices were performed by the elites with the help of brahmana priests and except shudras all other three *varna* people could participate in these. The priests were gifted cattle, gold, cloths, horses and even female slaves by Yajamana for performing the sacrifices. Brahmana priests became ritually superior due to their knowledge of the Vedas. As the importance of sacrifices and rituals increased, the earlier gods like Indra, Agni, Varuna and others lost their importance. Now, Prajapati (the creator or primeval man) occupied a central place among the Vedic pantheons. Besides him, Rudra (the god of animals) and Vishnu (the preserver and protector of people) also gained some importance. According to R. S. Sharma⁸, the expansion of agriculture in the later Vedic period was accompanied by the emergence of sedentary lifestyle and it impacted the Indo-Aryan culture. People having resources began to perform private sacrifices in their homes with the help of brahman priests. Alongside, the grand sacrifices continued to be organised by the ruling elites and these later Vedic sacrifices caused large scale destruction of cattle and agricultural produce.

Towards the end of the later Vedic society, a new philosophy appeared in the Upanishads against the Vedic sacrifices and priestly domination. The Upanishads emphasised upon meditation and they mainly focused on the Brahman (universal being or absolute consciousness) and Atman (self or soul). It was argued that Brahman and Atman are identical and same. Even after the demise of human body, according to Upanishadic philosophy, soul always remained alive due to its being eternal. Alongside, the concept of 'transmigration of souls' or 'rebirth' was formulated. Under the influence of an individual's work or conduct (i.e., *karman*), it was argued in the Upanishads that soul entered into a new body after the death of previous body and this cycle continued perpetually until an individual attained *moksha* (release from the cycle of life and death). Once it was established that the previous *karmans* decided one's rebirth in a specific *varna-jati*, it became easy to justify the *varna-jati* based social discrimination. Because, now a person's birth in any of the *varna-jati* group could be explained as a result of that very individual person's *karmans* in previous life.

⁸ R. S. Sharma, (2008). *India's Ancient Past*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 126.

3.6.1 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS II

1. Mention the name of any two women, whose hymns are included in the Vedas.

2. Explain the term, *Dvija*?

3. Which section of the *Rigveda* is dedicated to Soma?

4. Highlight the importance of Agni in the Vedic sacrifices.

5. Mention the name of any two female goddesses of Vedic period?

3.7 SUMMARY

Students, the Vedic age was a long period of transition, when North-west India was occupied by several Indo-Aryan tribes. Having migrated from central Asia, these Indo-Aryan tribes settled down first in the land of Indus and its tributaries in the early Vedic period. In the following period, they migrated eastwards and occupied the Indo-Ganga divide, the Ganga-Yamuna doab and upper Ganga valley. In the early Vedic period, they were divided among different tribes/clans and cattle rearing was their main economic activity. They worshipped natural phenomenon (e.g., fire, wind, rain, storm, etc.) as deities and attributed to them a human form. Neither temple nor idol worship was in practice. The Indo-Aryans offered grains and animals to deities in sacrifices to obtain success in wars, progeny, wealth and long life. But the Indo-Aryan lifestyle changed as they moved deeper into India and in the later Vedic period their pastoral-tribal setup gradually gave way to territory-based polity (Janapada). Their rituals and sacrifices became elaborate, and society was restructured on the basis of *varna-jati* hierarchy. The Indo-Aryans also interacted with the non-Aryans, and they maintained hostile as well as cordial relations with them. In a thousand years long period of the Vedic age (*circa* 1500- 600 BCE), the Indo-Aryan society was thus transformed from the tribal-pastoral communities to the territory-based polities (Janapadas).

3.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

R. S. Sharma, *India's Ancient Past*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Ranabir Chakravarti, *Exploring Early India, Up to AD c. 1300*, New Delhi: Primus Books, 2016.

Romila Thapar, *The Penguin History of Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300*, New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2002.

Upinder Singh, *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India: From the Stone Age to the 12th Century*. Delhi: Pearson-Longman, 2009.

Irfan Habib and Vijay Kumar Thakur, *The Vedic Age*, New Delhi: Aligarh Historians Society and Tulika Books, 2011.

3.9 QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE

3.9.1 LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the Aryan migration theory.
2. Highlight the salient characteristics of the political institutions of the Vedic period.
3. Assess the role of cattle husbandry in the Vedic economy.
4. Write an essay on the Vedic society with special reference to women's position.
5. Analyse the salient characteristics of the Vedic culture.

3.9.2 SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Who were Aryans?
2. Mention four theories about the Original Home of the Aryans.
3. What do you know about the social life of Rigvedic Aryans?
4. How did the position of women undergo a change in the Later Vedic Period?
5. Define the term, Janapada?
6. Write a note on Asvamedha Yajna?
7. Write the names of the four Vedic divinities.

BACHELOR OF ARTS

SEMESTER I

COURSE: HISTORY OF INDIA: INDUS CIVIZATION TO c. 1200 CE

UNIT 4: POLITICAL CONFLICT IN THE SIXTEEN GREAT STATES, RISE OF MAGADHA

STRUCTURE

4.0 Objectives

4.1 Introduction

4.2 The Sixteen Mahajanapadas

4.3 Nature of State-polity

4.4 Emergence of the Magadha Kingdom

4.4.1 Check Your Progress I

4.5 Reasons of the Rise of the Magadha Kingdom

4.5.1 Check Your Progress II

4.6 Summary

4.7 Suggested Readings

4.8 Questions for Practice

4.8.1 Long Answer Questions

4.8.2 Short Answer Questions

4.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the emergence of the Mahajanapadas.
- Acquire information about the nature of State-polity.
- Acquire information about the geographical spread of the Mahajanapadas.
- Gain knowledge regarding the rise of Magadha as the most-powerful kingdom.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Students, the term Janapada came into wider use by the sixth century BCE. As a territorial unit, Janapada literally means a place, where people (*jana*) have placed their feet (*pada*) for the first time. According to the *Arthashastra*, Janapada was one of the seven limbs of the monarchical polity, and from this, it appears that Janapada had been a well-defined geo-political entity. Available evidences show that Janapada came into use for the political authorities that had fixed territorial boundaries in the later Vedic period. From the Janapadas, subsequently bigger territorial polities known as Mahajanapadas came into existence. It seems that few Janapadas managed to defeat and annex the other Janapadas, and as their territories expanded, they began to be called Mahajanapada (literally, Great Janapada). As a territorial polity, Mahajanapadas comprised several rural as well as urban settlements. From the Pali texts, we come to know about *kuti*, and *grama*, which refer to rural settlements. The *kuti* possibly was a settlement that comprised two or three small houses or huts. On the other hand, the term *grama* meant a village, or a hamlet, and it could be used for even a temporary settlement or a caravan camped at one place for some month. Within a Mahajanapada, several settlements associated with specific professionals or craftsmen, for instance, village of park attendants (*aramika-grama*), village of carpenters (*vaddhaki-grama*), village of reed makers (*nalakara-grama*), and village of salt makers (*lonakara-grama*) are mentioned in contemporary literature. Usually, a village was managed by the village-head, who was known as *gamika/gramika* or *gama-gamani/grama-gramani*.

In a Mahajanapada, urban settlements, which are mentioned as *nigama*, *nagara*, *rajadhani*, *pura*, *mahanagara*, *pattana*, and *puta-bhedana* were also present and these settlements had been different from mere villages. The settlement called *nigama* stood between a village and a city, and it perhaps referred to either a market place or a small town of predominantly commercial character. A *nagara* appears to have been either a fortified city or a city without fortification. On the other hand, *mahanagara* had been a great or big city. According to the *Mahaparinibbana Sutta*, six major cities in the sixth century BCE had been: Champa, Rajagriha, Sravasti/Shravasti, Saketa (Ayodhya), Koshambi, and Varanasi. The term *rajadhani* referred to a capital city, and *pura* was in use for a fortified settlement. For a port-town, the term *pattana* was used and this settlement had been associated with commercial activities. The major city of Magadha, Pataliputra is called *puta-bhedana* in the Pali texts, and it refers to the urban character of this city. The term *puta-bhedana* literally means a place, where lids of merchandise were broken. Following this, *puta-bhedana* appears to have been an interior port or a transportation settlement, which was located at a bend or confluence of a river.

4.2 THE SIXTEEN MAHAJANAPADAS

The Mahajanapadas had been large territorial settlements and a diverse population resided in cities as well as villages in different Mahajanapadas. The residents of these territorial settlements following different professions, lifestyles and even different faiths (e.g., Buddhist, Jain, Ajivikas, Brahmanical). As the Mahajanapadas gained prominence, they begin to be included in the contemporary literature. The Buddhist text *Anguttara Nikaya* informs us about

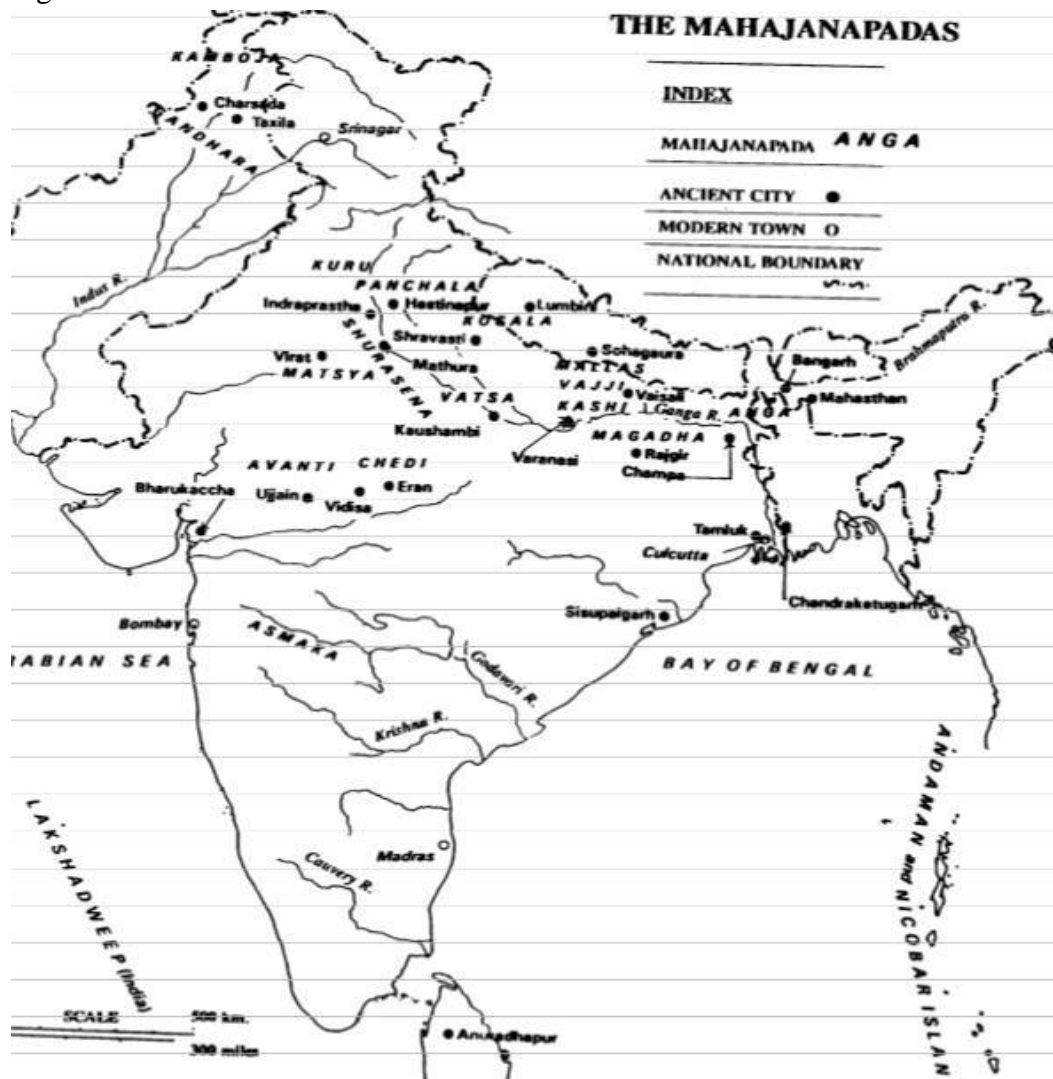
the sixteen Mahajanapadas, which dominated different parts of Indian subcontinent in the sixth century BCE. The Mahajanapadas wielded considerable political and economic powers in the post-Vedic period, and the list of sixteen Mahajanapadas is as follows:

1. The Kashi Mahajanapada was situated in south-eastern Uttar Pradesh with its capital Varanasi (Benares). According to Jain literature, king Asvasena, the father of twenty-third *tirthankara* Parsvanatha ruled over Benaras. This city was famous for good quality textiles and it has been an important trading centre.
2. The Kosala Mahajanapada mainly comprised modern eastern Uttar Pradesh. The Sarayu river divided this Mahajanapada into two parts: northern part with Shravasti (Saheth-Maheth) its capital, and southern part with Kushavati as its capital. Maheth whereas is identified with the main city and the area of Saheth was the ancient Buddhist monastery of Jetavana.
3. The Anga Mahajanapada covered the modern Bhagalpur-Monghyr region of Bihar. It was separated from Magadha by the Champa River, after which the capital city of Anga was named Champa. The Jatakas inform us about the merchants, who sailed from Champa to Suvarnabhumi for trading purposes, and it suggests the commercial character of this city. In archaeological excavations at Champa remains of fortification, which was surrounded by a moat, are found.
4. Magadha Mahajanapadas was the most powerful territorial polity and it is identified roughly with present southern Bihar. It was surrounded by three rivers and the Ganga, the Son and the Champa rivers were situated on the north, west and east of Magadha respectively. The Vindhya hills had been located in the south of Magadha. In the beginning the capital of Magadha was Girivraja/Rajagaha (Rajgir), but later a new capital was founded at Pataliputra (modern Patna). In the Vedic literature, people of Magadha are despised for not observing the Vedic rituals; however, in this same region both Buddhism and Jainism gained wider popularity in the sixth century BCE. The capital cities of Magadha had been connected to different cities via trade routes. One such trading route starting from Paithan in Deccan after going through the Ganga Valley terminated at Rajgir. Another capital of Magadha, Pataliputra is mentioned in the Pali literature as *puta-bhedana*, which means a place where lids of merchandise were broken.
5. The Vajji Mahajanapada was situated in the northern Bihar and it had been a confederacy of eight or nine different clans (*ganas*). Some of the important clans of this Mahajanapada were Jnatikas, Lichchavis, Videhans (Videha), and Vajjis etc. The twenty-fourth Jain *tirthankara* was Mahavira, who belonged to Jnatika clan and its capital was Kundagrama or Kundapura. On the other hand, the capital of Lichchavi was Vaisali (Vesali or Veshali), which has been identified with modern Basarh in Muzzaffarpur district of Bihar. Videha in the Vedic literature is described as a monarchy with its capital Mithila (modern Janakpur in Nepal). But, in the post Vedic period, Mithila appears to have become an oligarchy.
6. The Malla Mahajanapada had been located in the north-eastern Uttar Pradesh, and like Vajji Mahajanapada, it was a confederacy of about nine clans. It had two capitals, first was Kusavati/Kusinara (modern Kashia) and second was Pavapuri (Padaraona village). It started as a monarchy, but it transformed into an oligarchy by the sixth century BCE.

7. The Chetiya or Chedi Mahajanapada has been identified with modern Bundelkhand in central India. Its capital was Suktimati or Sukti-sahvaya, which was also known as Sothivatinagara.
8. The Vamsa or Vatsa Mahajanapada was situated in the region south of the Ganga River, and its capital was Kaushambi, which is identified with modern Kosam village near Allahabad. Owing of its strategic location Kaushambi was connected with the Deccan, the Ganga Valley and the north-west India through several trade routes.
9. The Kuru Mahajanapada has been identified with western Uttar Pradesh and Haryana including Delhi, and its capital is identified with Indraprastha (modern Delhi). This Mahajanapada was a monarchy up to the period of Buddha, and subsequently it was transformed into a *sangha* (oligarchy). In the archaeological excavations at Purana Qila (Indraprastha of the *Mahabharata*) in Delhi remains of the Northern Black Polished Ware, houses of mud-bricks and burnt-bricks, terracotta ring-wells, terracotta figurines of humans and animals, a clay sealing, and small rings, etc., are discovered.
10. The Panchala Mahajanapada was situated in the western Uttar Pradesh and this Mahajanapada roughly comprised present day Rohilkhand area and a part of the central *doab*. It was divided by the river Ganga into two parts: northern Panchala with its capital at Ahichchhatra (present day Ramnagar in Bareilly district) and southern Panchala with its capital at Kampilya (Kampil in Farukhabad district). Panchala appears to have transformed into an oligarchy by the post Vedic period. The archaeological excavations at Hastinapura have brought into light remains of burnt-brick structures, and terracotta ring wells of the Northern Black Polished Ware phase (*circa* 600-200 BCE).
11. The Matsya Mahajanapada was located in modern Jaipur area in the eastern Rajasthan and it possibly also comprised some parts of present day Alwar and Bharatpur. Scholars believe that Viratanagara or Bairat had been the capital of this Mahajanapada.
12. The Surasena Mahajanapada is mentioned as *Soursenoi* in the Greek sources, and its capital is mentioned to have been 'Methora' (Mathura), which was situated on the Yamuna River. According to the *Mahabharata* and the *Puranas*, Surasena was ruled by the Yadu or Yadava family. Owing of its location on the cross-roads, Mathura was a major commercial centre situated on the trading routes that linked north-west frontier region of India to the Ganga Valley in the east and to the Malwa corridor and the western seacoast in the south-west.
13. The Assaka (also known as Ashmaka/Ashvaka) was situated on the bank of Godavari River in Deccan. Scholars have identified Potana or Potali (modern Patan in Maharashtra) as its capital. According to the Assaka Jataka, the city Potali was a part of Kashi kingdom. From this, it appears that the Kashi Mahajanapada probably had subjugated the Assaka Mahajanapada at some point of time.
14. The Avanti Mahajanapada roughly corresponded to present day Malwa region of the Central India. This Mahajanapada was divided by the Vindhyan hills into two parts: northern Avanti with its capital Ujjain, and southern Avanti with its capital Mahishmati (modern Maheshwar, Madhya Pradesh). The trans-regional route, Uttarapatha connected Ujjain to Pataliputra on the one hand and Mathura on the other hand. At Ujjain, the trade route coming from northern India bifurcated into two routes:

one route went to Deccan and further south, while another route reached the western seacoast.

15. The Gandhara Mahajanapada comprised present day Peshawar and Rawalpindi districts of Pakistan and also some parts of the Kashmir Valley in India. Takshila (Taxila) was its capital and it had been one of the famous centres of trade and learning. The archaeological excavations have brought into light three ancient settlements here at Bhir Mound, Sirkap and Sirsukh. The Bhir Mound has yielded the remains of the oldest city that are dated to *circa* 600/500 BCE to 200 CE. Here in excavations remains of the Northern Black Polished ware, silver punch marked bar coins and other types of coins are discovered.
16. The Kamboja Mahajanapada is identified with a region situated in the Hazara district of Pakistan. Although, this Mahajanapada is mentioned to have been a monarchy in the sixth century BCE, but in the *Arthashastra* it is described as an oligarchy (*gana-sangha*). As far as its capital is concerned, we do not have any clear evidence in this regard.



The Mahajanapadas⁹

⁹ D.N. Jha, *Ancient India: In Historical Outline*, New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1998, p.84.

4.3 NATURE OF THE STATE-POLITY

As it is evident from above discussion, the sixteen Mahajanapada had been associated with two different types of political systems. One was monarchy and another political system is identified as oligarchy (*gana-sangha*). The emergence of monarchy was one of the most important developments of the post Vedic period in the Ganga Valley. The expansion of agriculture across the Ganga valley made available enough resources for the maintenance of army and bureaucratic structure, which had been two of the essential components of the monarchical state polity. In a monarchical rule, a clear difference between a king and subject population (*praja*) was maintained. Usually, the king claimed a share *bhaga* (share of produce), which was generally 1/6th of the entire produce, and *bali* (voluntary gift) of the agricultural produce in return of protection that the state provided to people from internal as well as external aggression. With the emergence of the Mahajanapadas, the boundaries of state became relatively fixed and these were guarded by the king. In a monarchical polity all the decisions were made by the king, and it made the mobilization of resources, organization of bureaucracy and army, regularization of trade and commerce highly efficient. As the authority of the king enhanced, he was attributed several new titles, such as *nripati*, *naresvara*, *narendra*, *naradhiva*, etc. These titles emphasised upon a king's sovereignty or lordship over all category of people (*nara*) in general. In the *Ashtadhyayi* of Panini (circa fifth century BCE), uses the expression, i.e., '*bhupati*' for a king. The expression, *bhupati* meaning 'the lord of the earth' further highlights the authority of a king over a well-defined territory. Since king was a lord of the land, he was paid taxes by the people. In return of the taxes, king protected the people, their family and also their belongings. In the post-Vedic period, kingship became hereditary and sacrifices like *Rajasuya*, *Vajapeya* and *Asvamedha* began to be used as a tool to legitimize the political authority. In the monarchical polities, the society was based on the four-fold *varna-jati* hierarchy. In Ranabir Chakravarti's words, the main task of a monarchical state was 'to maintain law and order not by obliterating the social inequalities, but by establishing an ordered society in spite of the differentiated social groups.'¹⁰

As the monarchical polities came into existence, new theories were also developed by the ancient philosophers to legitimize the king's authority. In the Sanskrit texts, the theory of divine origin of kingship was formulated. According to one such theory, the Vedic sages after killing a tyrannous king named Vena installed Prithu as a new king, who subsequently introduced agriculture and farming. In this way, kingship was conceptualised as a gift of brahmana sages. On the other hand, the Pali texts ('*Agganna Sutta*' in the *Digha Nikaya*) attributed the origin of monarchical authority to a 'social contract' between the king and his subjects (*praja*). According to it, people came together and elected a king to protect their paddy fields. The elected king agreed to protect the people and their paddy fields, and in return of it, people decided to pay a share of their paddy to the king. These theories were formulated in the Brahmanical and the Buddhist texts with an aim to legitimize the new form of territorial state-polity and it also justified king's right to collect taxes.

The character of the *gana-sangha* polity was entirely different from that of monarchies, and these *gana-sangha* polities are usually characterised as tribal oligarchies. The

¹⁰ Ranabir Chakravarti, *Exploring Early India, Up to AD c. 1300*, New Delhi: Primus Books, 2016, p. 88.

term 'republic' for *gana* or *sangha* is misleading. The term *gana* first appeared in the Vedic literature and this term is found at 64 places in the *Rigveda*, at 9 places in the *Atharvaveda*, and at several places in the Brahmana texts. The root of the term *gana* is *gan* meaning 'to count' and it literally means 'an artificial collection of people.' Hence, this term *gana* is used in a sense of a tribal or clan solidarity in the Vedic literature. In the Vedic times, society was largely pastoral with limited agriculture, and one of the main sources of income was cattle raids. Therefore, according to R. S. Sharma, 'the Vedic *gana* was an armed organization of the whole clan or tribe.'¹¹ The character of *gana* was changed with the expansion of agriculture. By the sixth century BCE, the expression *gana* was prefixed with *sangha*, and the term *gana-sangha* began to be used for a political setup that is characterized by various scholars as republic or oligarchy. On the basis of their geographical locations, the *gana-sanghas* can be placed in two groups. One group of *gana-sanghas* was situated in the Himalayan foothills in the eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, and second was located in the Indus Basin, Punjab and Rajasthan. Contrary to the *gana-sanghas*, the major monarchical kingdoms, for instance, Magadha, Vatsa, Koshala, etc., of the sixth century BCE mainly occupied the fertile alluvial tracts of the Ganga Valley.

In the *gana-sanghas*, the king was considered to be one among all the tribal members. He was either selected or elected for the position. The entire Mahajanapada was usually divided into small administrative units, each administered by a head called *raja*. The heads of these small administrative units formed the main assembly, which managed the affairs of the state. For example, the administration of the Shakyas and the Lichchhavis consisted of a *raja* (king), *uparaja* (vice-king), *senapati* (military commander), and *bhandagarika* (treasurer). The decision-making power in these *gana-sanghas* had been in the hands of the main assembly. According to the Buddhist literature, the Lichchhavis of Vaishali had 7707 *rajas*. Unlike Monarchical system in which only a King had the right to maintain army, in a *gana-sangha*, each *raja* owned a separate army, storehouse and administrative system. All the resources of state and revenue collected from people belonged to the king in monarchical system. But, in the *gana-sanghas*, the resources were usually divided equally among the tribe members. Whereas the four-fold *varna-jati* system was prevalent in the monarchies, the society in the *gana-sanghas* was divided between the land-owning *kshatriyas*, and landless labourers, *dasa-karamkaras*. Neither *brahmanas* nor *varna-jati* system exerted any influence on the socio-cultural set of the *gana-sanghas*. Some of the important *gana-sanghas* of the sixth century BCE were: the Shakyas of Kapilvastu, the Lichchhavis of Vaishali, the Mallas of Kusinagara, the Bulis of Alakappa, the Kalamas of Kesaputta, the Moriyas of Pippalivana, and the Bhaggas (Bhargas) of Sumsumara hill.

4.4.1 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS I

1. Explain the term Janapada.
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¹¹ R. S. Sharma, *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 2009, pp. 119-132.

2. Explain the term *gana-sangha*?

3. Why king was called *bhupati*? Comment.

4. Where was Gandhara Mahajanapada located?

5. How many capitals Avanti Mahajanapada had?

4.4 EMERGENCE OF THE MAGADHA KINGDOM

The sixteen Mahajanapadas were often at war with each-others to expand their territories. As a result of these conflicts, except four Mahajanapadas, viz., Magadha, Koshala, Vatsa and Avanti all others perished and their territories were annexed by either of these four Mahajanapadas. It seems Kashi Mahajanapada was first to fall and it was subjugated by the Koshala Mahajanapada. Under the Haryanka dynasty, Magadha first rose as a powerful state-polity in the mid-Ganga valley. The first known ruler of the Haryanka dynasty is Bimbisara, who is also called as Srenika in the Jain literature. The name 'Srenika' possibly indicates that the king maintained a standing army through state revenue and did not rely exclusively on the mercenary soldiers. Bimbisara provided the strong foundation to the Magadha kingdom and his capital city was Rajagaha or Rajagriha. Bimbisara was an expert diplomat and he used matrimonial relations to forge close relations with several of contemporary political powers. Bimbisara formed a marriage alliance with the rulers of Koshala, when a daughter of Koshala king Mahakosala was married to king Bimbisara of Magadha. Bimbisara received Kashi village in dowry. Besides Koshala, Bimbisara forged matrimonial ties with the Videhans and the Madras. He maintained diplomatic relations with the ruling house of the Gandhara Mahajanapada, which sent an embassy to Magadha. Bimbisara sent his chief physician Jivaka, when king Pradyota of Avanti was suffering from Jaundice. He is mentioned to have annexed the Anga Mahajanapada after defeating its ruler, named Brahmadatta. The village administration in Magadha was reorganized by Bimbisara, who also facilitated the safe roads for the traders as well as ordinary peoples.

In Kosala Mahajanapada, the king Mahakosala was succeeded by his son Prasenajit, who enjoyed considerable authority over the Sakyas of Kapilavastu. He patronized brahmanas as well as Buddha/Buddhist monks. On the other hand, the Vatsa kingdom had come under the king Udayana, who inherited it from his father Satanika Parantapa. It seems that he married, Vasuladatta or Vasavadatta, who was a daughter of the Avanti king Pradyota Mahasena. Pradyota Mahasena was one of the most powerful kings of the sixth century BCE. It appears from the Majjhima Nikaya that Ajatasatru, son of Bimbisara, had to fortify his capital city Rajagriha due to the fear of an invasion by Pradyota Mahasena. Ajatasatru is mentioned to

have usurped the Magadha throne after killing his father Bimbisara. Soon after this, Queen Kosaladevi, wife of Bimbisara died and because of it, Prasenajit took back Kashi from Magadha. It caused a long-lasting struggle between Prasenajit and Ajatasatru. This struggle was eventually ended after the marriage of Prasenajit's daughter Vajira with Ajatasatru. After this marriage, Kashi was again given back to Magadha in dowry. However, Prasenajit could not rule for long and was deposed in a court coup, which was followed by his tragic death.

Ajatasatru defeated the Lichchavis of Vaishali with the help of his minister Vassakara by creating a dissention among their ranks. He developed two unique weapons, viz., catapult to throw big stones (*mahasalakantaga*) and chariot with an attached mace (*rahamusala*) to fight a war against Lichchavis and both of these weapons caused much havoc in the war. Ajatasatru was followed by Udayin or Udayibhadda, who shifted the Magadha's capital from Rajagriha to Pataliputra (also known as Kusumapura). Pataliputra was situated at the confluence of the Ganga, the Son and the Ghaghra rivers. On the other hand, king Palaka ascended the throne of Avanti Mahajanapada after his father Pradyota's death. Palaka defeated the armies of the Vatsa kingdom, and its territory was annexed to the realm of Avanti. As the power of both Magadha and Avanti expanded, a direct conflict between them became inevitable for the mastery over the Ganga Valley. This struggle continued for a long period and it reached to its final conclusion during the reign of the Shaishunaga rulers. According to the Buddhist legends, the people of Magadha drove out the rulers of the Haryanka dynasty and it was followed by the establishment of an *Amtya* (a high ranking official) as the new ruler of Magadha kingdom.

In this way, the Shaishunaga dynasty under the king Shishunaga replaced the Haryanka dynasty. Subsequently, the Avanti Mahajanapada was annexed to the Magadha territory and it possibly brought the Vatsa kingdom under the Shaishunagas. Perhaps, the Koshala Mahajanapada was also annexed by the king Shishunaga. Under Shishunaga, the capital of Magadha was relocated from Pataliputra to Vaishali. He was followed by his son Kalasoka or Kakavarna (literally meaning, the black Asoka or the crow coloured). In Magadha, two most important events took place during the reign of Kalasoka. First event was the holding of the second Buddhist council at Vaishali, and the second even was the re-shifting of the capital city to Pataliputra from Vaishali. After the Shaishunagas came into power the Nanda dynasty at Magadha. According to the Puranas, the first Nanda ruler was Mahapadma Nanda, who was also known as Ugrasena. In the Puranas, Mahapadma whereas is called as a son of a shudra woman, he is mentioned as the son of a barber in the Jain text, *Parisishtaparvan*. From the Greek sources, we also get similar information. According to Curitus, Mahapadma's father was a barber, who with the help of the chief queen killed the reigning monarch and usurped the Magadha throne. From the Hathigumpha inscription of Kharavela (circa first century BCE), it appears that the Nanda king had conquered Kalinga and had taken away a Jina statue along with heirlooms of the Kalinga kings to the Magadha. Clearly, the Kalinga had become a part of the Magadha kingdom during the reign of the Nanda rulers.

It was during the reign of Dhana Nanda of Magadha, when Alexander of Macedonia invaded the north-western India. Dhana Nanda is mentioned in the Greek sources as Agrammes or Xandrames, which seems to have been a corrupt form of the Sanskrit patronymic Augrasainya (son of Ugrasena). The Greek writers have described him as the most powerful king, who had been ruling over the people of East Prassi (i.e., *prachya* meaning the

eastern people) and the Gangaridae (i.e., the people of the Ganga Valley) from his capital Palibothra (i.e., Pataliputra). The Greek writer Curitus describes the strength of Dhana Nanda's army, which comprised about 20,000 cavalry, 200,000 infantry, 2,000 chariots, and 3,000 war-elephants. The number of elephants, according to Diodourus and Plutarch was 4,000 and 6,000 respectively in the Magadha's army. The strength of the Nanda army may have been exaggerated, but it does highlight the fabulous wealth and resources that the Nanda rulers controlled. Scholars usually believe that the military strength of the Nandas was one of the chief reasons that discouraged the Macedonian soldiers to move further into the Indian subcontinent.

4.5 REASONS OF THE RISE OF THE MAGADHA KINGDOM

The Magadha kingdom became the most powerful polity under the Nanda rulers and it comprised almost entire land of the Ganga-Yamuna doab, the Ganga Valley, the Central India and the Deccan. The Nanda rulers appear to have built a vast kingdom on the firm foundations that were provided by previous dynasties, for instance, the Haryanka and the Shaishunagas. In addition to the powerful and efficient rulers, the Magadha kingdom enjoyed the benefits of its strategic geography and its unorthodox society. Scholars have identified variety of factors that have had played a crucial role in Magadha's rise from a smaller polity to a vast kingdom, and these factors are as follows:

1. **Powerful Rulers:** The Magadha Mahajanapada was ruled by some of the most efficient and powerful rulers of the ancient India. Bimbisara of the Haryanka dynasty not only reorganized the village administration, but he also ensured safe roads for the movement of traders and ordinary people. Through marriage ties with the Koshala Mahajanapada, the Lichchavi clan of Vaishali, and the Madra Mahajanapada, Bimbisara managed to consolidate his position. He annexed the Anga Mahajanapada and was followed by another efficient ruler named Ajatasatru. Both the Kosala as well as Vaishali were annexed by Ajatasatru, whose son Udayin shifted the capital from Rajagriha to Pataliputra. Shaishunaga dynasty that replaced the Haryanka dynasty, completed the annexation of the Avanti Mahajanapada. After the Shaishunagas, the Nanda rulers came into power and they are credited with the conquest of Kalinga (present day Odisha).

2. **The Iron Ores:** Scholars like D. D. Kosambi and R. S. Sharma have identified the iron ores of eastern India as the key factor that caused the rise of Magadha as a paramount power. It is argued that the access to the quality iron ores enabled the Magadha rulers to provide best types of weapons to their army. However, recent studies suggest otherwise. According to Upinder Singh¹², Magadha rulers did not enjoy a monopoly over the iron ores of eastern India. In fact, the archaeological evidences show that these iron ores began to be exploited only at a much later date. Therefore, the idea of Magadha's exclusive access to the iron mines of southern Bihar is now rejected by the scholars. On the other hand, Magadha did enjoy an access to the

¹² Upinder Singh, *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India: From the Stone Age to the 12th Century*, Delhi: Pearson-Longman, 2009, p. 273.

mineral resources of the Chhota Nagpur Plateau and it would have contributed in the rise of Magadha as a powerful polity.

3. Natural Defence System: Both the capitals of the Magadha Mahajanapada were located at strategic locations, which provided a natural protection to these. The old capital city, Rajgriha was surrounded by the five hills and these hills acted as natural defensive walls of it. Similarly, Pataliputra was situated at the confluence of the Ganga, the Son and the Ghaghra rivers. Criss-crossing the city at three sides, these rivers created a natural defence system of Pataliputra, and therefore, Pataliputra was also called as *jaladurga* (water-fort). Such natural defence systems that the Magadha rulers enjoyed, were not available to its enemies. The same rivers that protected Pataliputra also provided an easy river transportation. This riverine transportation was economically advantageous for both, traders as well as armies.

4. Natural Resources: The region in the east of Allahabad region had fertile alluvial soil that was suitable for paddy cultivation. The easy irrigation facilities from heavy rainfall and perennial rivers further stimulated the expansion of agriculture and high agrarian production. The Magadha enjoyed an access to timber and elephants of eastern India. In fact, the archaeological evidences show the use of a large amount of timber in the construction of the fortification walls around Magadha's capital, Pataliputra. On the other hand, the elephants constituted an important component of Magadha's army.

5. The Un-orthodox Society: The society of Magadha was unorthodox and it was open to new philosophical ideas. The *varna-jati* system did not impact the Magadha's society much. Possibly, this is the reason why the heterodox sects, such as, Jainism and Buddhism flourished in Magadha. Both of these sects received great support from the people of Magadha. In fact, the Magadha Mahajanapada was ruled by several non-kshatriya rulers, who had been able and efficient. Evidently, in Magadha it was ability and power of the rulers, rather than their birth, that decided their succession to the throne.

4.5.1 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS II

1. Where was Magadha Mahajanapada located?

2. Why Pataliputra was called *jaladurga*?

3. Who founded the Shaishunaga dynasty?

4. Which Magadha king is called Xandrames in the Greek writings?

5. Which Magadha king shifted the capital from Rajagriha to Pataliputra?

4.6 SUMMARY

Students, in the sixth century BCE, India witnessed the rise of sixteen great kingdoms (Mahajanapadas), which were spread over a large geographical area with a concentration in the Ganga valley. The emergence of the sixteen Mahajanapadas marked the culmination of political, economic and social processes that have started in the later Vedic period. Janapadas had emerged as loosely defined territorial polities in the later Vedic period. As certain Janapadas defeated the others and annexed their territories, then Mahajanapadas came into existence. These Mahajanapadas either embraced monarchical or oligarchical form of state system, and accordingly their administrative systems were organized. From territorial point of view, Mahajanapadas comprised variety of settlements (urban, rural, tribal, markets, manufacturing centers, etc.) and they were inhabited by people belonging to different classes, castes, linguistic groups and so forth. Out of these sixteen Mahajanapadas, Magadha was the most successful, and its rulers transformed their kingdom into a most powerful monarchical-polity of north India by annexing the territories of its enemies.

4.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

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4.8 QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE

4.8.1 LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Write an essay on the geographical spread of the sixteen Mahajanapadas.
2. Highlight the key features of the monarchical polity.

3. Discuss the political character of the *gana-sanghas*?
4. Analyze the rise of Magadha as the most powerful polity of north India.
5. How monarchies were different from oligarchies? Discuss.

4.8.2 SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Write short notes on the following:
 - a. Bimbisara. b. Ajatasatru
2. Write the contribution of the Republics in the 6th century B.C.
3. Mention the kingdoms which rose into prominence in the 6th century B.C.
4. Define the term *gana*?
5. Write few sentences on Magadha Mahajanapada.

BACHELOR OF ARTS

SEMESTER I

COURSE: HISTORY OF INDIA: INDUS CIVIZATION TO c. 1200 CE

UNIT 5: THE MAURYAN EMPIRE: EXTENT, ADMINISTRATION, ECONOMY, SOCIETY

STRUCTURE

5.0 Learning Objectives

5.1 Introduction

5.2 Magadha under the Mauryas

5.3 Extent of the Mauryan Empire

5.4 The Mauryan Administration

5.4.1 Check Your Progress I

5.5 Mauryan Society

5.6 Mauryan Economy

5.6.1 Check Your Progress II

5.7 Summary

5.8 Suggested Readings

5.9 Questions for Practice

5.9.1 Long Answer Questions

5.9.2 Short Answer Questions

5.10 Appendix

5.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the nature of the Mauryan empire.
- Acquire information about the extent of the Mauryan empire.
- Acquire information about the Mauryan administration.
- Gain knowledge regarding the Mauryan society and economy.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Students, the Nanda rulers of the Magadha were defeated by Chandragupta Maurya, who founded the Mauryan dynasty and made Pataliputra as his capital. The beginning of the Mauryan dynasty is traced from about 324 BCE or 321 BCE. According to the Puranas, the

Mauryan dynasty lasted for about 137 years. Following the Puranic literature, if a duration of about 137 years is attributed to the Maurya rule, then Mauryan polity could not have survived beyond the maximum duration of 140 years. Therefore, the terminal point of the Mauryan authority is suggested to have been about 185 or 187 BCE. In the absence of a clear evidence, the origin of the Maurya rulers has remained a matter of debate among scholars. In Brahmanical traditions, the Mauryas are attributed a Shudra status. Chandragupta Maurya is mentioned to have been a son of a woman named Mura, who had been a slave (or wife) of Nanda king. A different view is provided by the Buddhist and the Jain traditions. In the Buddhist tradition, Mauryas are assigned a kshatriya status. For instance, the *Mahavamsa*, a Sri Lankan chronicle of the fourth-fifth century CE, connects Chandragupta to the kshatriya clans of the Moriyas of Pippalivana. In a same way, the Jain tradition has associated Chandragupta with the Moriya clan. Based on the Buddhist and Jain traditions, the origin of the Mauryas can be traced from the Moriya clan that ruled over Pippalivana in the Nepalese Tarai region. Since, the Mauryas neither patronise the brahmana sects nor endorse *varna-jati* system, they were assigned a lower social status (i.e., shudras) by the brahmana authors of the Puranas.

5.2 MAGADHA UNDER THE MAURYAS

After the death of Chandragupta's father, his mother is mentioned to have shifted to Pataliputra, where he was born. From his childhood, Chandragupta displayed signs of leadership. Kautilaya, noticed Chandragupta's potential and took him to Taxila, where Chandragupta was trained in all the arts. Kautilaya with the help of Chandragupta wanted to take revenge from the Nanda ruler, who had insulted him in the court of Pataliputra. The Nandas had been tyrannous rulers and they exploited the people by enforcing heavy taxes over them. Kautilaya helped Chandragupta against the Nandas and they together defeated the last Nanda ruler, Dhanananda. After this, Chandragupta ascended the throne in either 324 or 321 BCE.

By the time Chandragupta came into power, Alexander had already died and his vast territory was partitioned among his governors. Alexander's departure from the North-west India provided an opportunity to Chandragupta to expand his authority in this region. On the other hand, Seleucus Nikator had occupied the areas of West Asia, which was analogous to the North-western borderland of the Indian subcontinent. Since Seleucus Nikator wanted to expand his authority in India, it brought him into a conflict with the Mauryan king Chandragupta. In *circa* 301 BCE, it seems a military conflict took place between the Seleucid forces and the Mauryan army. This conflict was eventually resolved by a treaty between Seleucus Nikator and Chandragupta Maurya. Here it is noticeable that Chandragupta Maurya is mentioned as *Sandrocottus* in the Greek literature. According to this treaty, Chandragupta received from Seleucus Nikator the region of Gedrosia (Baluchistan), Arachosia (Kandahar in present Afghanistan), and Paropanisadai (area to the southeast of the Hindukush). In return, the Mauryan king provided 500 war elephants to Seleucus Nikator. Chandragupta expanded his authority in trans-Vindhyan region. His authority was also firmly established in Gujarat as it is evident from the Junagarh inscription of Rudradaman-I (*circa* 150 CE), which records the construction of the Sudarshan lake by the governor of Chandragupta Maurya in Girnar. In addition, the Jain texts suggest the presence of Chandragupta's authority in Deccan, where a famous Jain sacred site, Shravana Belgola (in Karnataka) was present. If we accept the Jain

legends, then Chandragupta appears to have spent last days of his life in Shravana Belgola. Chandragupta maintained diplomatic relations with the Seleucid rulers and this fact is well established by the visit of Megasthenes to the Mauryan court as an ambassador. Megasthenes describes the Mauryan India in his book *Indika*. Even though, the original text is lost, but still the excerpts of *Indika* have survived in the writings of later Greco-Roman writers.

After Chandragupta, his son Bindusara became the ruler in about 300 BCE and he is called *Amitrochates* (Sanskrit *amitraghata*, i.e., destroyer of foes) in the Greek writings. He was an efficient ruler, who kept the vast Mauryan Empire intact. He possibly was a follower of Ajivika sect. When Bindusara died in 273 BCE, a four-years long succession war among his sons ensued. According to the Buddhist legends, Ashoka with the support of the ministers, particularly Radhagupta, killed 99 of his brothers and spared the life of only the youngest one named Tissa. The Buddhist legends narrating the killing of his brothers by Ashoka is doubted by some scholars, who draw our attention to the fact that in one of his edicts, Ashoka appears to be directing his officials to take a proper care of his brothers' households. Nevertheless, Ashoka's reign actually started only in 269 BCE due to the succession war after a gap of four years from his father's death. He ruled for about four decades until 232 BCE. In his edicts, Ashoka is called as *Devanampriyah Priyadarshi Raja*, i.e., Beloved of the Gods, the king *Priyadarshi*. Ashoka's married with Devi, who was a merchant's daughter from Vidisha and from her, Ashoka had two children: son Mahindra and daughter Sanghamittra. Other queens of Ashoka were named Asandhimitta, Tissarakhita, Padmavati, and Karuvaki. Ashoka is credited with the victory over Kalinga (present day Odisha) in his Rock edict XIII in the thirteenth regnal year (possibly, 260 or 261 BCE) of his reign. After seeing the much bloodshed in this Kalinga war, Ashoka abandoned the policy of war and in its place, he adopted the policy of Dhamma. Ashoka patronised the third Buddhist council in Pataliputra and after this, he sent Buddhist missions to foreign lands to propagate Buddhism. One such area, where Ashoka sent Buddhist mission was Sri Lanka, where Buddhist reached under the leadership of Ashoka's son Mahindra and daughter Sangamitra. Ashoka is the earliest ruler in India, who directed his officials to engrave his messages on durable material like stone (rocks and pillars) for public reading. His edicts are found written on rock-surfaces and pillars across Indian subcontinent. Ashoka himself has called his edicts as *Dhammalipi* (generally translated as principles of *Dhamma* or law of piety). The Ashokan inscriptions are written in three languages, which are: the Prakrit, Greek and Aramaic, and in four scripts: Aramaic and Greek in Afghanistan, Kharoshthi at Mansehra and Shabharzgarhi in the north-western part of Pakistan, and Brahmi in rest of the Mauryan empire (see, Appendix for the list of Ashoka's inscriptions/edicts).

The history of the Mauryas after Ashoka is far from clear. The names of Ashoka's grandson Dasaratha is found in an inscription from the Nagarjuni-Barabara hills (in Bihar), but we do not have any clear information about the successor of Ashoka. The last Mauryan ruler was Brihadratha, who was assassinated in about 185 BCE or 187 BCE by his own military commander, Pushyamitra Shunga during an inspection of the Mauryan army. With the death of Brihadratha, the Mauryan dynasty ended and the power over Magadha went into the hands of the Shunga rulers.

5.3 EXTENT OF THE MAURYAN EMPIRE

During the reign of the Mauryan king Ashoka, the vast Mauryan Empire shared boundaries with several neighbouring kingdoms and chieftaincies. To the south of the Mauryan empire were present the Cholas (in the Kaveri delta, Tamil Nadu), Pandyas (in the Tamraparni-Vaigai deltas, Tamil Nadu), Satiyaputras (Satyaputra, northern parts of Tamil Nadu), Keralaputras (the Chera country in Kerala) and Tamraparni (Sri Lanka). In the North-west and the West, several Greek kingdoms had been present. Some of the important contemporary Greek kings were: Antiyoka (Antiochus Theos of Syria), Turamaya (Ptolemy Philadelphos of Egypt), Antikini (Antigonus Gonatus of Macedonia), Maka (Megus of Cyrene) and Aliksundara (Alexander of Epirus). Ashoka, like his ancestors, maintained cordial relations with these contemporary Greek rulers. Based on the geographical distribution of the Mauryan epigraphs, scholars suggest that the Mauryan Empire comprised the entire landmass between Lamghan and Kandhar (in Afghanistan) in the North-west to Mahasthangarh (in Bangladesh), Jaugda and Dhauli (in Odisha) in the East, and from Shahbazgarhi, Mansehra and Taxila (in Pakistan) in the North to Amravati (in Andhra Pradesh), Maski, Brahmigiri, and Siddapura (in Karnataka) in the South. Ashokan edicts appears to have been located near Buddhist sacred sites like Sanchi, Sarnath, Rummindei, Nigali Sagar, Lauriya-Araraj, Lauria-Nandangarh, and Bairat. From the *Rajatarangini* of Kalhana (circa 12th century CE), Ashoka's rule over Kashmir is also evident. In one of his minor edicts, Ashoka has used the expression, Jambudvipa for his empire, which appears to have been one of the earliest nomenclatures for the Indian subcontinent.

The nucleus of the empire undoubtedly had been Magadha with Pataliputra as the capital city. Since the Magadha had emerged as a paramount authority after annexing the territories of other Mahajanapadas, the population as well as urban centres of, for instance, Taxila, Mathura, Kaushambi, Kashi, Shravasti, Champa, Suktimati, Vidisha, Ujjain, Tosali, Vaishali and several others were included in the Mauryan territories. In addition, the Mauryan empire comprised both the trans-regional trade routes, viz., Uttarapatha and Dakshinapatha that connected different cities and facilitated the movement of people as well as goods. Two major fertile river valleys, viz., the Ganga valley, and the Indus valley, where agriculture production was considerably very high had been under the Mauryan rulers. The areas of Rajasthan, Deccan, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, which had rich mineral resources were also included in the Mauryan realm. However, major parts of the Mauryan Empire were forested and these had been inhabited by different tribal groups.

The people belonging to different communities and cultures lived in the Mauryan empire and some of these had been: Yavanas (non-indigenous people living in North-western borderland), Kambojas (in the Hazara district, Pakistan), Nabhakas-Nabhapantkis (in Maharashtra and Karnataka), Bhoja (in Vidarbha-Nagpur area of Maharashtra), Pitinikyas (location not clear), Andharas (in present Andhra Pradesh) and Paulindas (in Narmada-Vindhya zone of central India). In the Mauryan empire several religious communities, for instance, Buddhist, Ajivikas, Brahmanas, and Nirganthas (i.e., Jain) also flourished. Unlike mainland India, where Ashokan edicts were composed in various Prakrit dialects and Brahmi script, edicts in Afghanistan and Pakistan were written in Greek and Aramaic. And it shows the presence of different linguistic groups in different parts of the Mauryan Empire.



Empire of Ashoka¹³

5.4 THE MAURYAN ADMINISTRATION

In the Mauryan empire, the king, who was called *Raja*, had been the centre of the administration. The Mauryan king sustained law and order in the empire and protected the people and their property. According to Megasthenes, the Maurya king used to go out of his

¹³ A.L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India*, Vol.I, New York: The Macmillan Co.,1954, p.109.

palace every day and supervised the administration of justice. Even during the time of relaxing, his officials were allowed to approach him for different administrative affairs. The Mauryan king was the paramount authority, and he was assisted by a council of ministers in administrative matters. The ministers were called *mantrin* or *mantri-parishad* and their duty was to advise the king on various administrative policies and matters. In the Ashoka's Rock Edicts, the ministers or high-ranking officials are usually called *Mahamattas* or *Mahamatras*. In addition, high priest (*Purohit*), commander-in-chief (*Senapati*), crown-prince (*Yuvaraja*), and several superintendents (*Adhyakshas*) provided their services to the king to run the Mauryan administration. Ashoka created the post of *Dharmamahamattas* for the propagation of his *Dhamma* ideals. From the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya, it appears that the Mauryan ministers and officials were paid cash salaries, and the highest annual salary that was paid had been of about 48000 *panas* (or punch-marked coins) and the lowest officer was given about 750 *panas* per annum.

Megasthenes informs us about the city administration of Pataliputra, which had been looked after by thirty officials, who were divided into six committees and each comprised five members. These committees looked after i) the industries and crafts, ii) comfort and security of visitors coming from distant places, iii) the registration of births and deaths, iv) supervision of the matters related to trade and commerce, v) the sales of products and supervision of weights and measures, and vi) the collection of the taxes on the goods sold in the markets of Pataliputra. Pataliputra was the centre of the Mauryan empire, which was divided into four major provinces, viz., Ujjain (western Madhya Pradesh), Takshila (Taxila in north-west Pakistan), Tosali (Dhuli in Odisha), and Suvarnagiri (in Karnataka). These provinces were under the command of royal princes (Kumaras or Aryaputras). For instance, Ashoka too had served as a governor of Taxila and Ujjain prior to his accession to the Mauryan throne. Ranabir Chakravarti has drawn our attention to few other administrative units, for instance, Manumadesha (in central India), Girnar (in Kathiawar, Gujarat) and (Vakshu) in the North-western borderland). Here it is noticeable that the Mauryan rulers perhaps were the earliest to employ officials of non-Indian background in their administration. For example, in Girnar an official of Iranian background, named Tushashpa was present during the reign of Chandragupta Maurya.

Several officials known as *Mahamattas*, *Pradeshikas*, *Rajukas*, *Yuktas*, and *Rashtrikas* assisted the provincial governors. From the *Arthashastra* and the edicts of Ashoka, we get information about several officials, who served the Mauryan rulers. The *Samahartta* (chief revenue official and in charge of account department), and *Sannidhata* (treasurer and in charge of royal stores) were two of the high-ranking officials, who managed state finances. The city superintendents (*Nagaraka*) were assisted by *Sthanikas* and *Gopas*. Officials like *Dauvarika* (chief of palace attendants), the *Antaravamshika* (chief of palace guards), and *Adhyakshas* (departmental heads) are also mentioned. In the *Arthashastra*, the *Adhyakshas* are described as the high-ranking officials, but they are called *Mahamattas* in the Ashokan edicts. The *Mahamattas* managed the administration of the frontier areas, inner chambers of royal household, pasture grounds, and they also looked after the propaganda of *Dhamma*. On the other hand, the *Rajukas* enjoyed the authority to either reward or punish the people at their own discretion. They measured and assessed the land for tax purposes and therefore, they appear to have been revenue settlement officers or rural administrators. Similarly, *Pradeshikas*

and *Yuktas* were involved in the district level administration. The *Yuktas*, *Rajukas* and *Pradeshikas* are instructed by Ashoka in one of the edicts to undertake official tours after every five years across the countryside to perform their duties as well as to propagate *Dhamma*. Ashoka himself undertook similar inspection tours (*dhamma-yatras*).

The Mauryan rulers maintained a vast network of informers or spies (*Pativedakas* and *Pulisani*), who provided information regarding public and state affairs. The roads were maintained and special officials were appointed for this work. The Aramaic edict at Laghman informs us about a royal road, which was looked after by an officer. In the same edict names of several places and distances are mentioned. Such edicts like milestones appear to have been established to provide information regarding directions and distances to the travellers. One of the most important components of the Mauryan administration had been the army. Megasthenes informs us about six boards, each comprising five members, that managed infantry, cavalry, chariot, elephants and supply of equipment and transportation. Similarly, the *Arthashastra* provide information about four superintendents, who managed infantry (*patyadhyaksha*), cavalry (*ashvadhyaksha*), chariots (*rathadhyaksha*) and elephants (*hastyaksha*). To administer law and justice, according to the *Arthashastra*, two kinds of courts, viz., *Dharmasthiya* (looked after the personal disputes) and *Kantakashodhan* (looked after the matters related to individual and the state) were established by the Mauryan rulers. Judges were known as *Dharmasthas*, and punishments for different crimes ranged from the minor fines to the mutilation of limbs and in the extreme cases, culprits were also executed.

5.4.1 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS I

1. Who founded the Mauryan empire?

2. Who authored the *Arthashastra*?

3. Mention the names of the areas that Seleucus Nikator ceded to the Mauryas?

4. Explain the expression, *Devanampriyah Priyadarshi Raja*?

5. Who was *Samahartta*?

5.5 MAURYAN SOCIETY

In the Mauryan society, the four-fold *varna-jati* hierarchy remained in practice, particularly in the Ganga valley, and this hierarchy was regularised with the composition of the *Dharmasutras* (circa 500-200 BCE). Megasthenes divided the Indian society into seven groups or classes,

viz., philosophers, farmers, soldiers, herdsmen, artisans, magistrates, and councillors. This list is usually studied by scholars in the light of the information provided by the *Arthashastra* and other sources to gain a better understanding of the Mauryan society. According to Megasthenes, the first social class in India comprised the philosophers, and in this group brahmanas and sramanas (e.g., Buddhist, Jain, Ajivikas, etc) appear to have been included. The farmers or cultivators, constituting the largest group, were attached to land, and Megasthenes has placed them in his second social group/class. The farmers cultivated the land and according to Megasthenes, they paid about 1/4th of the produce as tax to the state. The *Arthashastra* recommends the state to settle down new villages (*janapadanivesa*) and repopulate the deserted villages (*sunyanivesa*) by shifting shudras and labourers to these settlements. Both the concepts, *Janapadanivesa* and *Sunyanivesa* supported the colonisation of forest or wasteland as well as revival of deserted villages with an aim to enhance state's income. If a shudra cultivator failed to cultivate a field allotted to him in newly established or rehabilitated settlements, the ruler could take it back and allot it to another cultivator. Similarly, the crown land (i.e., *sita*), which belonged to the royal family, was cultivated by *dasa-karmakaras* (slaves-hired labourers). The Superintendent of crown land (*sitadhyaksha*) looked after the royal land and managed agrarian production in it.

The third class was of the herdsmen or hunters, who lived outside the agrarian society as a nomadic group. The *Arthashastra* is the earliest Indian political treatise that recognised the importance of forest resources, such as timber, elephants, medicines, and so forth. Whereas timber was largely used in construction activities, elephants were used in war, and their ivory was a valuable product. Kautilaya also recommended the collection of taxes and services from forest dwellers and hunters. In a similar manner, the employment of forest tribes as army troops and spies by the Mauryan state is recommended in the *Arthashastra*. The artisans constituted the fourth class. According to the Greek sources, the Mauryan state employed artisans particularly for the manufacturing of arms and weapons. These artisans possibly were exempted from the payment of taxes. Artisans, usually involved in same profession or craft, had been organised in guilds (*shreni*) and they observed their own rules and regulations.

The next class was of soldiers or military, which appears to have been the second largest group in terms of number. The soldiers were paid cash salaries and they were protectors of state boundary. They were exempted from tax-paying. However, this group was not restricted to kshatriya-*varna* alone. It appears that foot soldiers, charioteers and attendants would have mostly been drawn from the lower castes. The magistrates and inspectors were highly respectable officials in the Mauryan administration and they advised the king on various matters. They were possibly drawn from either brahmana or kshatriya castes. The seventh class comprised councillors and assessors, who enjoyed a respectable position in the Mauryan society. This group comprised officials known as *mahamattas*, who controlled influential positions in the Mauryan administration and also in the department of justice.

It seems, Megasthenes failed to understand the nature of *varna-jati* system and therefore, he confused caste hierarchy with class stratification of the Mauryan society. Contrary to Megasthenes, the *Arthashastra* emphasised on the observance of *varna-jati* hierarchy and in this hierarchy, brahmanas were placed at the top, followed by kshatriyas, vaishyas and shudras respectively in a descending order. The *Arthashastra* whereas associated the shudras with the

cultivation, it also recommended the donation of land to brahmanas and other learned people. In this way, Kautilaya allowed brahmanas and shudras to indulge in professions that were not meant for their *varna-jati*. As far as slavery is concerned, Megasthenes rejected its existence in the Mauryan India; but from the *Arthashastra* the presence of *dasas* (slaves) and *ahitakas* (debtors) in the society is evident. Possibly the nature of slavery in India had been different from the conditions of slaves in the Greek society, and therefore, Megasthenes failed to recognize its prevalence in Indian society. In the Mauryan society, women were not confined to domestic spheres; rather, the Mauryan rulers appears to have employed them as spies and bodyguard. Presence of female ascetics is indicated by the Buddhist and the Jain literature. On the other hand, Kautilya even recommended the state to collect taxes from prostitutes.

5.6 MAURYAN ECONOMY

The agriculture was the base of the Mauryan economy. The *Arthashastra* recommended the use of shudras for the expansion of agriculture in new areas. As the agriculture expanded in new areas, iron tools, particularly iron ploughshare, sickles, spades and so forth, came in wider use. In excavations at Ataranjikhhera, an iron share fixed to the wooden frame of a plough and iron sickles are discovered from the Mauryan-period levels. The Rummindei inscription is the only Mauryan epigraph that provides valuable information about revenue collection. Ashoka is mentioned to have visited Lumbini-grama, which is the birthplace of Gotama Buddha. Ashoka exempted Lumbini from the payment of *bali* completely and also reduced the payment of *bhaga* to 1/8th of the produce. Possibly the usual land tax in this area was one-sixth. In addition, taxes such as *kara*, *shulka*, *vishti* and *paranya* were collected by the state. Whereas *kara* referred to periodic supplies (e.g., fodder, timber, etc.) to the state authorities by villagers, tax called *paranaya* was an emergency tax collected at exorbitantly high rate from the people. The *vishti* was a tax paid by people in the form of labour to state and it appears to have been entirely voluntary in the Mauryan period. On the other hand, *shulka* was a toll tax, which was mainly collected from traders, caravans, artisans and other travellers.

A large variety of crops were cultivated by the peasantry in the Mauryan empire. From the Jain text, *Nayadharmmkahoo* (circa third century BCE) the prevalence of the paddy transplantation technique in Bihar, Anga, Magadha, Mithila and Rajagriha is evident. In a same way, the Greek author Eratosthenes (circa 230 CE, quoted in Strabo) provides information about the cultivation of seasonal crops such as flax, millet, sesame, rice, wheat, barley, pulses, and so forth. Sugarcane was also cultivated and its juice was used for making sugar and molasses. The cultivation of indigo (*nila*) and establishment of mango-groves, medical plants, and plantations of other fruits is evident from the available evidences. According to Megasthenes, the officials called Agronomoi supervised the sluices on rivers in countryside. The *Arthashastra* is the earliest text that talks about an irrigation tax, which ranged from 1/5th to 1/3rd of the produce. The same text strongly recommended the state to take up irrigation projects and one of the most important state maintained hydrological project was Sudarshana Lake, which had been constructed in Girinagara (Girnar in Gujarat) by the provincial governor, Pushyagupta of Chandragupta Maurya. During the reign of Ashoka, this lake was enlarged by the provincial governor, Tushashpa. In the *Arthashastra*, the use of water-lifting devices, for

instance, hand-pulled-water-bucket and *araghatta* (a wheel with pots tied to its spokes) is suggested.

The control over ports, cities, and trade routes allowed the Mauryan rulers to collect revenue various commercial activities. The most important factor that contributed in the growth of trade was security provided by the state to the merchants on the trading routes as well as in context of regulation of revenue collections. Two trans-regional routes, Uttarapatha and Dakshinapatha that evolved in the pre-Mauryan period continued and several cities flourished along these routes. Uttarapatha started in the North-western region of India and it swept across the Indus and the Ganga plains to reach the port of Tamralipti on the eastern seacoast. It connected cities such as Taxila, Kaushambi, Shravasti, Vaishali, Pataliptura, Champa and several others. The Uttarapatha was also linked to Deccan and peninsular India in south and Kalinga in southeast India. From Kaushambi, a route ran across central India before reaching Broach or Sopara via Vidisha and Ujjain. The importance of Kalinga was primarily due to its strategic location in eastern seacoast and therefore, control over it allowed the Mauryas to control the sea traffic in the Bay of Bengal. Under the Maurya rule, urban economy flourished and seven towns (*nagara*) are at least mentioned in the Ashokan edicts, which are: Taxila (in Pakistan), Ujjain (in Malwa, Madhya Pradesh), Kaushambi (in Uttar Pradesh), Tosali, Samapa (in Kalinga), Suvarnagiri and Isila (in Karnataka). According to F. R. Allchin¹⁴, Pataliputra, having an area of about 241 hectares, was the largest city known in the entire South Asia during the Maurya period. Compared to Pataliputra, Rajgir, Kaushambi and Vidisha occupied an area between 181 hectares and 240 hectares. Next in size were towns of Ahichhatra, Sravasti, Tosali (Sisupalgarh) and Mahasthangarh, which had a size between 121 hectares and 180 hectares. Whereas Ujjain, Jaugada (Samapa) and Paithan had a size between 61 hectares and 121 hectares, Kandhar, Taxila, and Dhanyakataka (Amravati) occupied an area between 60 hectares and 31 hectares. Clearly, cities or towns of different sizes had been present in the Mauryan empire.

The *Arthashastra* recommended a firm control of the Mauryan state over agriculture, trade, manufacturing, crafts, mining, and so forth. Mines and minerals are mentioned to have been the root of the state treasury and these were managed by the Superintendent of mines (*akaradhyaksha*). On the other hand, Superintendent of salt making (*lavanadhyaksha*) managed the salt making in the Mauryan empire. According to the Greek authors, the Mauryan state had a firm control over weapon manufacturing and ship building crafts. The officials called the Superintendent of ships (*navadhyaksha*) managed the sea going vessels, ships and boats. Their position particularly becomes important in the light of the flourishing overseas trade between the Mauryas and the Greek rulers of the Mediterranean world and North Africa. Several commodities, for instance, blankets, skins, gold, semi-precious stones, pearls, diamonds, and so forth were exported from India. The high-ranking officials, for instance, Superintendent of commerce (*panyadhyaksha*), Superintendent of market, Superintendent of weight and measures (*pautavadhyaksha*) and the Superintendent of tolls (*sulkadhyaksha*) managed different aspects of trade and commerce under the Mauryan rulers. To facilitate the flourishing market economy, the Mauryan rulers issued the punch

¹⁴ F. R. Allchin, 'Mauryan Architecture and Art,' in F.R. Allchin (ed.) *The Archaeology of Early Historic South Asia: The Emergence of Cities and State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 207.

marked coins (*panas, karshapanas*), mostly of silver, in large number. It seems that coins carrying dynastic specific symbols, viz., the crescent-on-arches, tree-in-railing, and peacock-on-arches, were issued by the Mauryan state. An official called, *rupadarshaka* inspected the coins, according to the *Arthashastra*.

5.6.1 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS II

1. Who was Megasthenes?

2. Explain the term, *vishti*?

3. Where was Sudarshana Lake located?

4. Explain the term, *sulkadhyaksha*?

5. Explain the term, *paranaya*?

5.7 SUMMARY

Students, the Mauryan king Chandragupta Maurya defeated the Nanda rulers and annexed Magadha kingdom with the help of his mentor Chanakya. He laid the foundation of the first empire of the India. Covering almost entire Indian subcontinent, the Mauryan empire shared close diplomatic ties with the contemporary Greek rulers of the west Asia and north Africa. Under the Maurya rulers, a large administrative structure was erected that managed different department of this humongous territorial entity. From the *Arthashastra*, one learns about the various methods that the Mauryan state possibly took to expand agriculture in new areas. Both agrarian and urban economies flourished under the Mauryas and the Mauryan rulers mobilised resources from cities, countryside, forests, trade routes, and pastures in the form of taxes to finance the large administrative structure of their empire. However, the Mauryan empire did not last for long and only after less than hundred and fifty years it declined due to various reasons.

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5.9 QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE

5.9.1 LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the military achievements of Chandragupta Maurya.
2. Write an essay on the extent of the Mauryan empire.
3. Discuss the salient features of the Mauryan economy.
4. Highlight the salient features of the Mauryan administration.
5. Analyse the views of Megasthenes on the Mauryan society.

5.9.2 SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Mention four sources of Mauryan empire.
2. When was the Kalinga War fought? Give its two causes and results.
3. What was Ashoka's Dhamma?
4. Write few steps taken by Ashoka for the spread of Buddhism.
5. Who were Dhamma Mahamatras in Mauryan Administration?
6. What do you know about Ajivika sect?
7. Give two features of the social condition of the Punjab during the Mauryan Period.
8. Write a detailed note on Arthashastra?

5.10 APPENDIX

Ashokan Inscriptions

	Ashokan Inscriptions	Finding Places
1.	Fourteen Rock Edicts or Major Rock Edicts	Girnar (Junagardh district, Gujarat), Shahbazgarhi (Mardan district, Pakistan), Dhuli (Puri district, Odisha), Jaugada (Ganjam district, Odisha), Kalsi (Dehradun district, Uttarakhand), Sopara (Thana district, Maharashtra), Sannati (Gulbarga district, Karnataka), Mansehra (Hazara district, Pakistan) and Erragudi (Kurnool district, Andhra Pradesh)
2.	Two 'Separate' Rock Edicts or 'Kalinga' Rock Edicts	Dhuli (Puri district, Odisha) and Jaugada (Ganjam district, Odisha)
3.	Bairat Minor Rock Edict	Bairat (Jaipur district, Rajasthan)
4.	Seven Pillar Edicts or Major Pillar Edicts	Kandahar (Kandahar district, Afghanistan), Delhi-Topra , Delhi-Meerut , Allahabad-Kosam (Uttar Pradesh), Lauriya-Araraj (Bihar), Lauriya-Nandangarh (Bihar), Rampurva (Bihar)
5.	Minor Rock Edicts	Bahapur/Srinivasapuri (New Delhi), Ahraura (Mirzapur district, Uttar Pradesh), Sasaram (Shahbad district, Bihar), Ratanpurwa (Bhabua district, Bihar), Gujjara (Datia district, Madhya Pradesh), Rupnath (Jabalpur district, Madhya Pradesh), Panguria (Sehore district, Madhya Pradesh), Maski (Raichur district, Karnataka), Gavimath (Raichur district, Karnataka), Palkigundu (Raichur district, Karnataka), Nittur (Bellary district, Karnataka), Udegolam (Bellary district, Karnataka), Rajula-Mandagiri (Kurnool district, Andhra Pradesh), Erragudi (Kurnool district, Andhra Pradesh), Brahmagiri (Chitradurga district, Karnataka), Siddapura (Chitradurga district, Karnataka) and Jatinga-Rameshvara (Chitradurga district, Karnataka)

6.	Two Pillar Inscriptions	Rummindei/Lumbini (Rupandehi district, Nepal), and Nigali Sagar (Kapilavastu district, Nepal)
7.	Minor Pillar Edicts or Schism Edicts	Sanchi (Raisen district, Madhya Pradesh), Sarnath (Varanasi district, Uttar Pradesh) and Allahabad-Kosam (Uttar Pradesh)
8.	Three Cave Inscriptions	Barabara hill (near Gaya, Bihar)
9.	Queen's Edict	Allahabad-Kosam (Uttar Pradesh)

BACHELOR OF ARTS

SEMESTER I

COURSE: HISTORY OF INDIA: INDUS CIVIZATION TO c. 1200 CE

UNIT 6: THE GUPTAS: EXTENT OF EMPIRE, ADMINISTRATION, ECONOMY, SOCIETY

STRUCTURE

6.0 Learning Objectives

6.1 Introduction

6.2 Extent of the Gupta Empire

6.3 Gupta Administration

6.3.1 Provincial Administration

6.3.2 Local Administration

6.3.3 Revenue System

6.3.4 Check Your Progress I

6.4 Economy under the Guptas

6.4.1 Trade, Crafts and Guilds

6.4.2 Agriculture

6.5 Society under the Guptas

6.5.1 Check Your Progress II

6.6 Summary

6.7 Suggested Readings

6.8 Questions for Practice

6.8.1 Long Answer Questions

6.8.2 Short Answer Questions

6.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Acquire information about the extent of the Gupta empire.
- Acquire information about the Gupta administration.
- Gain knowledge regarding the Gupta society.

- Understand the nature of the Gupta economy.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Students, the Gupta dynasty ruled northern India from the early fourth century CE to the middle of the sixth century CE from their capital at Pataliputra. From the inscriptions of the Gupta rulers, the founder of the Gupta dynasty appears to have been Shrigupta (circa 275-300 CE) and he was followed by Ghatotkachagupta (circa 300-320 CE); however, none of them was of much significance. The third ruler of this dynasty, Chandragupta-I (circa 320-335 CE) laid the firm foundation of the Gupta authority and he was the first Gupta ruler, who assumed the title of *Maharajadhiraja*. Regarding the *varna* status of the Guptas, scholars have different views. According to S. R. Goyal, the *gotra* of the Guptas, namely 'Dharna', shows their brahmana origin. Some other scholars identify the Guptas as of vaishya *varna*. In the absence of any authentic evidence, it is difficult to clearly ascertain the *varna* status of the Guptas. In a same way, the original home of the Guptas is far from clear; however, it is believed by the scholars that the Guptas possibly had begun their career as subordinates of the later Kushanas. Earlier, it was thought that the early Guptas ruled over a small principality in Magadha, but in recent decades the region of western Ganga plain is identified as their area of control.

6.2 EXTENT OF THE GUPTA EMPIRE

The Gupta empire comprised almost entire land in the north of Narmada and to the south of Himalayas between the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea. However, such a vast empire did not come into existence under one king, rather different Gupta rulers over a period of several decades had built it. The making of the Gupta empire began in the reign of Chandragupta I (circa 320-335 CE), who was the first major king of this dynasty. Under Chandragupta I, the Gupta's kingdom comprised areas of modern Bihar and parts of Uttar Pradesh and Bengal. He

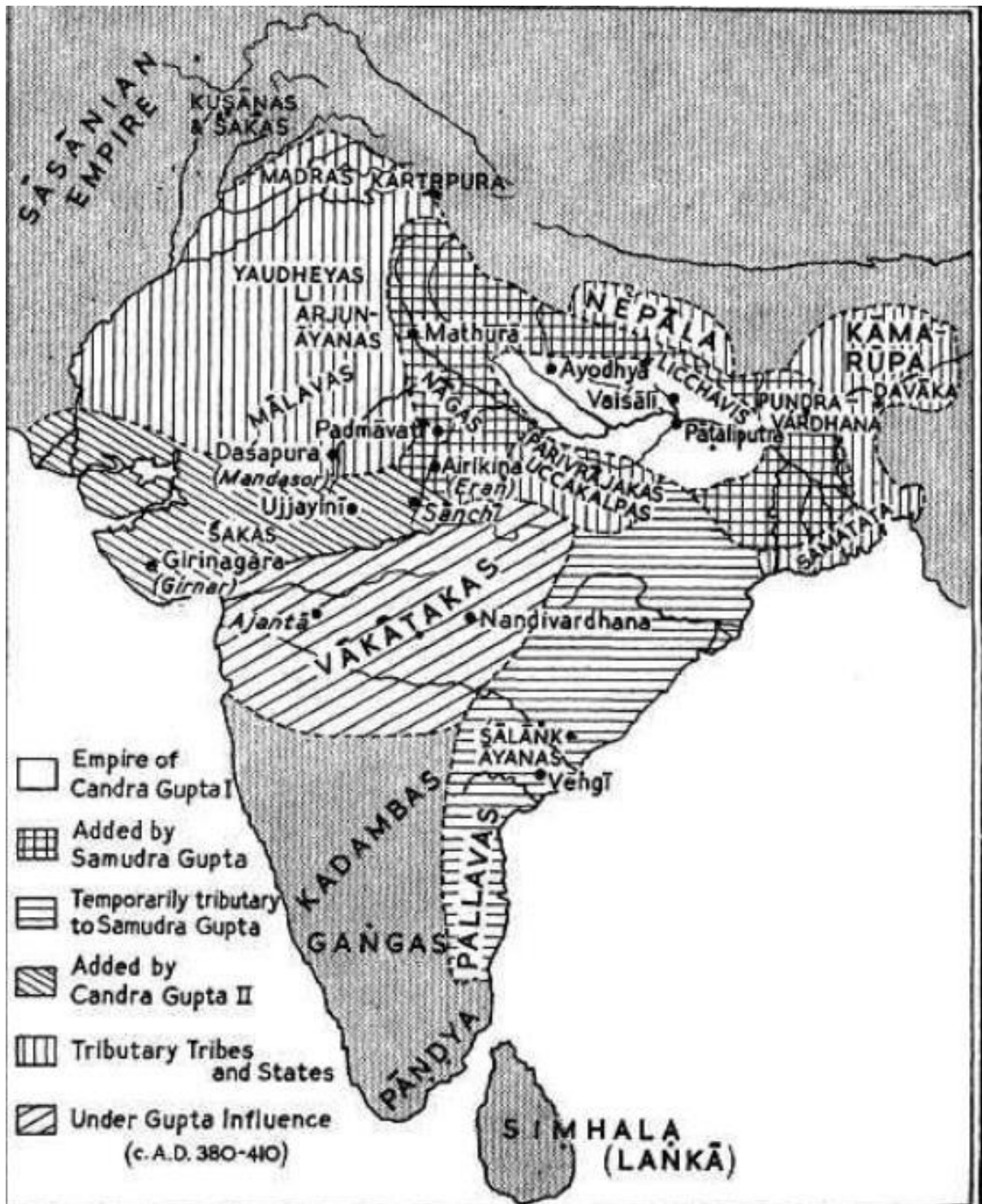
is also credited with the initiating of a new era (the Gupta era) in about 319/20 CE. Chandragupta I's marriage with Kumaradevi of the Lichchhavi ruling house brought the area around Vaishali within the Gupta realm. This marriage was considered so important by the

Guptas that the legendary gold coins of Chandragupta-Kumaradevi type were issued to commemorate this event. In these coins, queen Kumaradevi is depicted on the obverse and a seated goddess on the reverse with a legend *Lichchhavayah*. The political importance of this matrimonial relation is evident not only from the coin legend *Lichchhavayah*, but also from one of the epithets, i.e., *Lichchhavidauhitra* (literally meaning, the grandson of the Lichchhavis) that Samudragupta (progeny of this marriage) assumed. The Gupta power took firm roots under Chandragupta-I in the middle Ganga valley and the region around Pataliputra.

Samudragupta, who was a direct successor and son of Chandragupta I, was the most outstanding political figure of the Gupta dynasty. The Allahabad pillar inscription that eulogies the military achievements of Samudragupta was written by his court poet, Harishena who also occupied multiple administrative posts. He is mentioned to have uprooted no less than ten kings of north India (Aryavartta), whose territories too were annexed to the Gupta kingdom. Among the defeated kings of north India are included Kota-Kulaja of Kota (east Punjab), and

several Naga rulers, for instance, Nagadatta, Ganapatinaga (ruling over Mathura), Nagasena (ruling from Padmavati in Madhya Pradesh), and Achyuta (probably ruling over Ahichchhatra in Bareilly district of Uttar Pradesh). According to Allahabad inscription, Samudragupta defeated twelve rulers of Dakshinapatha; however, he did not annex the territories of these rulers. Several frontier kingdoms, for instance, Samatata (South-eastern Bangladesh), Davaka (probably in the Nowgaon district, Assam), Kamarupa (upper Assam), Nepal (modern Nepal) and Katripura (either Kartarpur near Jalandhar or Gadhwal area of Uttarakhand) were defeated and they were made to pay tributes to Samudragupta. In similar manner, several *ganasanghas* (e.g., Malavas, Arjunayana, Yaudheyas, etc.) and the forest kings (*atavika-rajās*) were also subjugated. On the other hand, foreign rulers of north-west (e.g., the Shakas and the Murundas) and the kings with title *Daivaputra Shahanushahi* (possibly the descendent of the Kushanas) acknowledged Samudragupta's authority and they appear to have forged matrimonial relations with the Gupta ruling house. Owing of his phenomenal military expeditions, Samudragupta has been attributed the title, 'Indian Napoleon' by V. A. Smith.

After Samudragupta, his son Chandragupta II (circa 375-414 CE) ascended the throne. He defeated the Shaka rulers of western India and issued special silver coins ('lion slayer type') to commemorate his victory. He was married to a Naga princess, Kubernaga and his daughter named Prabhavatigupta was married to the Vakataka king Rudrasena II, who was ruling the Deccan. It appears from the Mehrauli iron pillar inscription, Chandragupta-II is mentioned to have conquered the regions of Vanga (central deltaic Bengal) and Vahlīka (identified with Bactria or some region in the Indus valley). Son and successor of Chandragupta II was Kumaragupta I (circa 414-454 CE), who kept the vast Gupta empire intact and ruled efficiently the entire land between the Himalayas in the north and Vindhya in the south, and Bay of Bengal in the east and the Arabian sea in the west. He issued a large variety of gold coins with the representations of the god Kartikeya. The north-western parts of the Gupta empire towards the end of Kumaragupta I's reign faced the Huna invasions, which were successfully repulsed by his son, Skandagupta. Skandagupta faced troubles from two sides: first, invasion of a central Asian tribe, the Hunas in the north-west of the Gupta empire, and second, a domestic problem from Pushyamitras, who challenged the Gupta authority. Skandagupta successfully defeated the Hunas and repulsed the Pushyamitras (whose identity is not clear), and he retained the vast territories of the Gupta empire intact. But the death of Skandagupta was followed by a gradual disintegration of the Gupta authority. Skandagupta was succeeded by several rulers such as Purugupta, Kumaragupta II, Budhagupta, Narasimhagupta, Kumaragupta-III and Vishnugupta, who failed to resist the fresh invasions of the Hunas under Toramana and Mihirakula in the late fifth and the early sixth centuries CE. Though Mihirakula was defeated by the king Yashodharman of Malwa and the king Narasimhagupta Baladitya of the Gupta dynasty simultaneously, but this did not revive the past glory of the Gupta polity. The later Gupta kings failed to keep the vast empire intact and by the mid-sixth century CE, the Gupta dynasty came to an end.



Gupta Empire ¹⁵

6.3 GUPTA ADMINISTRATION

The king was the central authority in the Gupta empire and he was attributed several impressive imperial titles, such as, *maharajadhiraja* (the great king of kings), *parameshvara* (the supreme lord), *parama-bhattaraka* (the great king), *parama-daivata* (the foremost worshipper of the

¹⁵ A.L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India*, Vol.I, New York: The Macmillan Co.,1954, p.129.

gods) and *parama-bhagavata* (the foremost worshipper of Vasudeva Krishna). The Gupta's claim for divinity is also supported by the Allahabad pillar inscription, in which Samudragupta is equated with the gods, for instance, Vishnu, Kubera, Varuna, Indra and Yama. The Gupta rulers assumed grand titles and claimed a divine status to legitimise their political power. They created a vast administrative structure to manage their empire, and a large number of functionaries, usually designated by three terms *Amatya*, *Mantri* and *Sachiva* looked after the administration. These terms were often used interchangeably for high-ranking functionaries and ministers. The Gupta kings were assisted by the princes, ministers and advisers. The crown prince (*Yuvaraja*) was usually appointed as the governors of important provinces (called, *desha*, *rashtra* or *bhukti*) and other princes (*Kumaras*) and sometimes high-ranking officials (*Kumaramatyas*) were entrusted with the administration of other provinces.

The *Kumaramatya* were officials of high ranking, and they sometimes occupied multiple posts such as *Sandhivigrahika* and *Mahadandanayaka*. For example, Harishena, the author of Allahabad pillar inscription, is mentioned to have worked as *Kumaramatya*, *Sandhivigrahika* and *Mahadandanayaka*. It seems that the minister's offices were often hereditary and it is suggested by the Udayagiri inscription of Chandragupta-II, which informs us about Virasena Shaba, who had inherited the post of the minister for war and peace. The supreme judicial power was in the hands of the king, who was assisted by the chief justice (*Mahadandanayaka*). The Gupta army comprised infantry, cavalry, and elephant corps, which were managed by different officials, for instance, *Narapati* (head of foot soldiers), *Asvapati* (head of horses), and *Pilupati* (head of elephants). These officials worked under *Mahabaladhikrita*. The officer called *Ranabhandagarika* was the officer-in-charge of stores. On the other hand, the minister called *Sandhivigrahika* managed the affairs of state in the matters of war and peace. The officials, who led the army were known as *Baladhikrita* and *Mahabaladhikrita* (commander-in-chief of the army).

In the Gupta administration, *Samanta* began to play an important role in the local level administration. The term *Samanta* originally referred to a neighbouring ruler in the *Arthashastra*, but in the Gupta period it began to be used in a sense of vassal or subordinate, who served his overlord. One such subordinate was named Vijayasena, who is called *Mahasamanta* in the inscription of the Vainyagupta (507 CE) and he probably enjoyed a firm control over a large area in the south-eastern part of Bengal. On the other hand, the officials called *Mahapratihara* (the chief of the palace guards) and *Pratiharas* (palace guards) were associated with the administration of the royal palace. Another important official associated with the royal palace was *Khadyatapakita* (superintendent of the royal kitchen). Messengers were known as *Dutakas* and they appear in several land grants. Their task was to implement the gifts, whenever gifts of land were given to brahmanas and others. Another group of important officials were called *Ayuktakas*, who maintained the moral and social discipline in the district.

6.3.1 PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION

The Gupta empire was divided into several provinces, which were known as *bhukti*. From the Gupta epigraphs, names of Tirabhukti and Pundravardhanabhukti are found for the important provinces. Officials known as *Uparika* were assigned the responsibility to look after the affairs

of *bhukti*. These officials were more common in the mid-Gangetic valley and in the western India the provinces were called as *desha*, and the official who looked after these were called *Gopta*. On the other hand, districts were called *vishaya* and district administrator was known as *Vishyapati*, who was usually appointed by the *Uparika*.

6.3.2 LOCAL ADMINISTRATION

The provinces were further subdivided into districts (*vishaya*), which were administered by the officials called *Vishayapati*. These officials were most probably appointed by the provincial governors. For example, the Damodarpur copper plates from Bengal (the fifth-sixth century CE) inform us about the Vishayapati, who occupied the district headquarter of Kotivarsha *vishaya*. The Vishayapati of Kotivarsha is mentioned to have been assisted by *nagara-sreshthin* (chief merchant of the town), *sarthavaha* (chief caravan merchant), *prathama-kulika* (chief artisan) and *prathama-kayastha* (chief scribe). Except the chief scribe, all other members were not state-officials. The lowest administrative unit was village, which was administered by *ashtakula-adhikaranas* (a board of eight members), *maharatthas* (elders of the community) and *gramika* or *grama-adhyakshas* (the headmen of villages).

6.3.3 REVENUE SYSTEM

The main source of state's income was land revenue under the Guptas. In the Gaya copper plate inscription, *Gopasvamin*, who worked as *akshapataladhikrita* (the keeper of the royal records), is mentioned. *Gopasvamin's* main duty was to enter numerous matters in account's register, check embezzlement and recover fines for loss due to neglect or fraud. He was also responsible for the recovery of royal dues from the sureties of servants. Then, there were Pushtapalas, who were record keepers; the Pushtapalas looked after the department of survey and management of land, and they also collected land revenue. The *Narada-smriti* recommends the collection of 1/6th of the agricultural produce as royal revenue, and it was called *bhaga*. From the Gupta inscriptions, several fiscal terms like *uparikara*, *kara*, *bhoga*, *bali*, *hiranya*, *udranga*, *shulka* and *vishti* are mentioned as taxes. The tax called *uparikara* was an additional tax collected from temporary tenants. On the other hand, *udranga* was a tax that was collected from permanent tenants. Whereas *kara* was a periodic tax levied on villagers, *Hiranya* was a tax that was paid in cash by the cultivators of cash crops. *Bali* was a land tax paid by the peasants to state and *bhoga* possibly referred to a periodic supply of fruit, firewood, flowers, etc., to the king by villages. From cities and trade routes *shulka* was collected, which was a toll tax. The officials, who collected this tax were called *shaulkika*. *Vishti*, which was a voluntary tax in the form of labour in the Mauryan period, now in the Gupta age became mandatory and village-folks could be forced to provide it. Therefore, *Vishti* is identified as a forced labour, which was paid by villagers without any remuneration.

6.3.4 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS I

1. Which Gupta king started the Gupta era?

2. Explain the term, Lichchhavidauhitra?

3. Who was Harishena?

4. Explain the term, *Sandhivigraha*?

5. Write a note on the district administration of Kotivarsha *vishaya*.

6.4 ECONOMY UNDER THE GUPTAS

The Gupta period registered phenomenal growth in the field of trade and commerce, and the contemporary Sanskrit literature throw valuable light on the urban centres, busy markets, lavish dwelling houses and trade-craft activities. Evidences such as seals and sealings that are found from Basarh (ancient Vaishali) of Gupta period inform us about several professionals, for instance, artisans, merchants, caravan traders, bankers and their guilds (*nigama*). Vaishali under the Guptas was an important administrative and commercial centre.

6.4.1 TRADE, CRAFTS AND GUILDS

In the travel account of the Cosmos Indicopleustes, a Syrian Christian missionary (circa 600 CE) various ports, for instance, Kalyan, Chaul and Mangalore on the western seacoast of India are mentioned. Among the most prominent ports of the Gupta period are included Barbaricum, Barygaza, Suparaka, and Muziris. From the plays of Kalidasa, it appears that the people of Vanga (east Bengal) had been expert navigators. In the Bay of Bengal, Tamralipti was an important port and the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim, Fa Xian (circa 399-414 CE) is mentioned to have boarded a ship here on his return journey to China via Southeast Asia. Faridpur in the present-day Bangladesh was a famous for ship building. The flourishing overseas trade is also talked about in the Tamil epics, *Silappadikaram* and *Manimekhalai* (dated to circa sixth century CE), which informs us about the famous ports of Kaveripattinam and Kanchipuram on the eastern coastline.

In the Gupta period, several crafts flourished and one such craft was textile manufacturing. It appears from the three Sanjeli copper plates of Toramana (early sixth century CE) that Agricultural products such as grains, molasses, paddy, salt, and cotton were brought to the markets of Vadrपाली (in Gujarat) for trade. In Amarsimha's *Amarakosa*, various terms connected with the cotton textiles are mentioned and these are- weaver, loom, thread, coarse and fabric. The Mandasor inscription of Kumaragupta I and Bandhuvarman (circa mid-fifth century CE) also refers to the manufacturing of silk clothes in different colours in Dasapura (identified with present day, Mandasor in Madhya Pradesh). From the plays of Kalidasa, the

use of the Chinese silk-textiles by the rich people is evident in the Gupta period. In the Ajanta paintings, images are shown wearing elaborate garments, which suggests the presence of skilled tailors and embroiderers. Based on the Vakataka inscriptions, the presence of different craft-specialised settlements of leader worker, bronze workers, blacksmiths and goldsmith is evident in the Deccan. One of the best examples of the Gupta period metallurgy is the iron pillar of Mehrauli, which has not rusted till now. So is the six feet tall life size copper image of Buddha, which was found at Sultanganj near Bhagalpur (Bihar). The high-quality gold coins of the Gupta rulers further display a phenomenal development in the craft of metallurgy.

As the trade and commerce flourished, several professional groups and guilds (known as *shreni*, and *vaniggrama*) came into existence. These guilds were administered by a chief and some executive officers, and they had their own rule and regulations. The kings usually respected the decisions of the guilds and only in the case of serious internal crisis a king was allowed to intervene in the functioning of the guilds. It appears from the Mandasor inscription of Kumaragupta I and Bandhuvrman that a guild (*shreni*) of silk weavers migrated to Dashapura from Lata (i.e., Southern Gujarat) and its members adopted varied occupations related to astrology, music, storytelling, some engaged in religious discourses, writers, and military art. However, the guild did not give up the silk weaving craft. This guild of silk-weavers continued to function in the new place and financed the construction of a Sun temple. Likewise, the Indor copper-plate inscription of Skandagupta (mid-fifth century CE) provides information about a guild of oil-men (*shreni*), which functioned as banker. A brahmana invested money in this guild, which used the interest accrued on the invested money to provide oil to the sun temple for maintaining a lamp regularly. From the three Sanjeli copper plates of Toramana, we get to know about a professional organization of merchants (i.e., *Vaniggrama*, known as Mannigrama in south), and its members belonged to different cities, viz., Kanauj in Uttar Pradesh, Dasapura (Mandasor) and Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh and Vadrपालi in Gujarat. The members of this *Vanigramma* collectively made a religious donation to the temple of Vishnu. Several Brahmanas and one member possibly of non-Indian origin were also members of this professional organisation. On the other hand, the five copper plate inscriptions from Damodarpur, (circa fifth-sixth century CE) provide information about guild-president, chief-merchant, chief artisan, and chief-scribe, who all had been a part of local-administration of Kotivarsha *vishaya*. These examples show the involvement of professional groups and guilds in banking, financing and local administration under the Guptas.

6.4.2 AGRICULTURE

A large number of land grants were made to brahmanas and temples with fiscal and administrative rights during the Gupta period. In the Gupta empire, the chief donors of the land grants had been the subordinate kings of the Gupta monarchs. Usually, when a land grant was made the inhabitants of the donated village comprising peasantry, artisans and other residents were directed to pay customary taxes, dues and services to the donees (recipient of the grants). Sometime, the donees were also entitled to forced labour (*vishti*), which means they could make the inhabitants of the gifted villages/settlements to provide labour without any remuneration. The *Mahabharata*, the *Dharmashastras* and the Puranas strongly supported the donation of lands to brahmanas. The villages that were granted to brahmanas were known as *agraharas*

and *brahmadeyas*. As the brahmanas were made land grants in forested areas and waste lands, they carried their knowledge of cultivation, seeds, manure, calendar and so forth to new regions. Brahmanas migration thus facilitated the expansion of agriculture in new areas. Owning of land grants, a social hierarchy was created in the countryside in terms of control over land. As the temples and Buddhist monasteries received land grants from rulers, the institutional land-ownership became prominent in the Gupta period, and this trend continued in the subsequent period.

According to the Yajnavalkya and the Brihaspati, control over land created a four-graded hierarchy in country and in this hierarchy king (*mahipati*) was followed by landowner (*kshetra-svamin*), cultivator (*karshaka*) and the sub-tenant. The landowners here do not appear as intermediaries because they were no longer required to hand over the revenue or taxes collected from the donated villages/settlements to the king. The donees were exempted from the payment of any tax to the rulers. The income from the villages was to be utilized by the donees for various types of religious activities (e.g., performance of rituals, maintenance of temples, etc). However, the donees were not granted the ownership rights over the donated villages/settlements and therefore, they could not transfer, sell, depose the land of the local inhabitants. It means that the donee was not the owner of gifted land, rather he was much closer to the status of a landlord. Usually, the land grants were made to the donee for perpetuity (*aksaya-nivi*), which implies that the income from the gifted land could be used by the donee and his descendants without any right to alienate it to any other person. Here it is noticeable that the brahmana donees remained dependent upon the reigning monarch for the protection and implementation of their rights over the gifted land or villages/settlements because they did not keep their own armies or militia. In some of the cases, even after making a donation, kings retained certain rights like right to impose fines on thieves.

In the *Amarakosa* (circa fourth century CE), the land is divided into 12 types, which are: fertile (*urvara*), barren (*usara*), fallow (*aprahata*), grassy land (*sadvala*), muddy land (*pankila*), wet-land (*jalaprayamanupam*), land contiguous to water (*kaccha*), land full of pebbles and pieces of limestone (*sarkara*), sandy (*sarkavati*), land watered from river (*nadimatrka*), land watered by rain (*devamatrka*) and desert (*maru*). The cultivable land was called *kshetra*, and an untilled land was known as *khila*. From the inscriptions the prevalence of several types of measurements, e.g., *nivartana*, *kulyavapa* and *pataka* is evident. Kalidasa informs us about the cultivation of various varieties of rice, for instance, *sali*, *kalama* and *syamaka*. He also informs us about the sugarcane plantation. The Vakataka inscriptions indicate the spread of paddy transplantation in the Deccan from the Ganga valley. Varahmihira refers to one of the major cash crops, i.e., indigo, which was used as a dye in textile manufacturing. From the *Amarakosa*, we get to know about several cash crops like cotton, oilseed, indigo, mustard seeds, betel nuts, pepper and cardamom, which were cultivated in India.

6.5 SOCIETY UNDER THE GUPTAS

The society remained divided into four-fold *varna-jati* hierarchy. In fact, under the Guptas this hierarchy gained greater complexity with the emergence of numerous new *jatis* (castes). Whereas the *Manu-smriti* mentions about 61 mixed castes, the number of mixed castes became

more than hundred in the *Brahmavaivarta Purana*. Even though brahmanas remained at the top in the social hierarchy, the gap between the vaishyas and the shudras increasingly narrowed down. In the time of crisis, (*apad-dharma*) brahmanas were permitted to take up occupations that were associated with other *varnas*. Shudras were recognised as cultivators. Whereas the *Brihaspati-smriti* associated shudras with the crafts of gold, base metals, wood, thread, stone and leather, the *Amarakosa* included garland-makers, washer men, potters, bricklayers, weavers, tailors, painters, armourers, leatherworkers, blacksmiths, shell-cutters and workers in copper in the category of shudras. The *Yajnavalkya-smriti* also maintains that a shudra, if he failed to maintain himself by the services to the above three *varnas*, could take up the profession of trade. However, the Shudras were continued to be despised by other three *varnas*. The *Narada-smriti* and the *Brihaspati-smriti* have prescribed harsh punishments for shudras for committing crimes against brahmanas and they were considered as habitual thieves and criminals. A sharp distinction between the *varnas* was further reinforced by associating brahmanas with white colour, kshatriyas with red colour, vaishyas with yellow colour and shudras with black colour as a reflective of their innate character. Similarly, gold jewellery was associated with brahmana, copper with kshatriyas, silver with vaishyas and iron with shudras.

According to the *Dharmashastras*, the chief reason of caste proliferation was the inter-mixing of *varnas*. Since the progeny of an inter-*varna* marriage could not be attributed his father's *varna-jati* identity, new castes were invented for such progenies. For instance, a son of a brahmana woman and a shudra male was attributed the identity of a chandala; likewise, a son of brahmana male and shudra woman was called a nishada. Some of the castes were reduced to the level of untouchables and one such caste was chandalas, who were associated with the menial and filthy occupations like removal of animal and human corpses, executioner, butchery etc. The term '*Asparshya*' is mentioned for untouchables in the *Katyayana Dharmashastra*. According to the Chinese traveller Fa-xian (present in India 399-414 CE), chandalas lived outside the towns and they had to prior inform the residents by striking the wooden sticks before entering the towns. The untouchables neither owned land nor they were employed in agricultural activities. Whenever a tribe assimilated in the Brahmanical social structure, some of its leading families were accommodated in the higher castes of brahmanas or Kshatriya's and rest of tribal members were given the status of shudras. Evidently, the agriculture expanded in hitherto forested regions, numerous tribal people, e.g., Sabaras, Bhilas, Pulindas, Abhiras and others, were absorbed in the *varna-jati* based state-society, and as a result of this absorption of tribal population, several new shudra castes came into existence during and after the Gupta period. Furthermore, several craft or professional groups were transformed into distinct castes by the Gupta period. For instance, Svarnakara, Malakara, Sutrakara and several others, who had their own guilds, began to emphasise upon endogamous marital relations and therefore, they began to be identified as distinct castes.

In the Brahmanical literature, women were assigned a subordinate position to men and restrictions on their autonomy were recommended. An emphasis on the marriages within *varna* but outside the *gotra* continued. For woman monogamy was idealized, and remarriage of widows was increasingly condemned. Pre-puberty marriage became widely acceptable for girls and the expression *kanaya-dana* (gift of girl/daughter) in marriages began to highlight girl's position in a family as a private property of father before marriage and of husband after marriage. However, the *varna*-endogamy was not always observed by the ruling houses, and it

is evident from the marriage of a non-brahmana Gupta princess, Prabhavatigupta with a brahmana prince of the Vakataka dynasty. Similarly, Gupta king Chandragupta II had married a brahmana princess of the Kadamba ruling house. Monogamy for women and polygamy for men were usually accepted social practices in the Gupta period.

From the Gupta period, epigraphs and literature, the prevalence of *sati*-custom (i.e., immolation of wife on the funeral pyre of her husband) is evident. The *Brihaspati Smriti* (circa fifth century CE) recommended the sati custom for widows and the same is practiced by Madri, who immolated herself on the funeral pyre of her husband Pandu in the *Mahabharata*. Likewise, the Eran inscription of Bhanugupta (circa 510 CE) records the performance of Sati by the queen of a subordinate ruler of the Gupta king. Women were not given any right over the landed property. Instead, women's right on immovable property such as clothes, jewellery and utensils (called *stri-dhana*) were recognised. On the other hand, the *Kamasutra* of Vatsayayana, and plays of Kalidasa and Shudraka and also the Tamil epics the *Silppadikaram* and the *Manimekalai* throw valuable light on women of different classes and castes. In the non-Shastric literature, women appear as mother, wife, companion, sister, lover, courtesan, nuns, *devi*, nymphs, and domestic servants. The wife (*kulastri*) whereas was expected to remain loyal and obedient to her husband, a courtesan (*ganika*) was a public-woman, who was accessible to the elites. A courtesan was a learned person, who was supposed to be trained in 64 arts, for instance, writing, reading, singing, dance, poetry, and so forth, to please her male clients, according to the *Kamasutra*.

Three Basarh sealings were issued by Dhruvasvamini (queen of the Gupta monarch Chandragupta II) and it shows that not all women were confined to domestic affairs. Similar information is provided by the Vakataka inscriptions, which inform us about Prabhavatigupta's involvement in the state administration after her husband's death. Since her children were minor, Prabhavatigupta ruled the Vakataka kingdom as a regent for several decades. By the Gupta period, both women and shudras were allowed to hear the recitations of the Puranas and the epics (the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*). Another important development of the Gupta period was the emergence of Shaktism as a part of the Puranic Hinduism. It popularized the worship of female deities, such as, Durga, Kali, and Shakti. With the assimilation of several tribes in the *varna-jati* based state society, the tribal cults associated with mother-goddess appears to have found an entry into the Puranic Hinduism.

6.5.1 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS II

1. Write a note on the position of shudras?

2. Explain the term, *Shreni*?

3. Who was Prabhavatigupta?

4. Explain the term, *Vishti*?

5. Which Gupta inscription refers to Sati custom?

6.6 SUMMARY

Students, the Gupta dynasty ruled northern India in the fourth and the fifth century CE, and it maintained close diplomatic ties with the contemporary Vakataka rulers of Deccan. Having emerged from an obscure background under Chandragupta-I, the Gupta authority was established in regions beyond mid-Ganga valley by Samudragupta. However, it was during the reign of Chandragupta II, son and successor of Samudragupta, that the Gupta authority was firmly established in the entire landmass between the Himalayas in the north and Vindhya in the south, and between the Bay of Bengal in the east and the Arabian sea in the west. The Gupta rulers erected an efficient bureaucratic system, in which alongside state officials several local rulers and chiefs were also integrated to manage their trans-regional territorial polity. The stratification of the Indian society into numerous castes further intensified in the Gupta period and many new castes came into existence with the absorption of the tribal population in the *varna-jati* based society. Both economy and artistic activities flourished under the Guptas, because of which their rule is often characterised as a golden age by nationalist scholars including R. C. Majumdar and H. C. Raychaudhuri. Since the golden age concept tends to ignore the plights of the common people including peasantry, labourers and artisans, scholars for instance R. S. Sharma and D. N. Jha have questioned its use for the Gupta age. In place of the golden age concept, in recent decades scholars like Romila Thapar and Ranabir Chakravarti have suggested the use of the expression, 'classical age' for the Gupta age to underline the phenomenal artistic and literary developments that took place under the Gupta rulers in the field of sculptural art, architecture, painting, and Sanskrit literature.

6.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

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Ranabir Chakravarti, *Exploring Early India, Up to AD c. 1300*, New Delhi: Primus Books, 2016.

S. K. Maity, *Economic Life in Northern India: In the Gupta Period (c. AD 300-550)*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1970.

Upinder Singh, *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India: From the Stone Age to the 12th Century*, Delhi: Pearson-Longman, 2009.

D. N. Jha, *Ancient India in Historical Outline*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2009.

R. S. Sharma, *India's Ancient Past*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Romila Thapar, *The Penguin History of Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300*, New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2002.

6.8 QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE

6.8.1 LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Write an essay on the military expeditions of Samudragupta.
2. Discuss the salient characteristics of the Gupta administration?
3. Write an essay on the Gupta economy with a special emphasis on the guilds.
4. Write an essay on the position of women in the Gupta period.
5. Analyse the Gupta society in relation to *varna-jati* hierarchy?

6.8.2 SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Who is called 'The Indian Napoleon' and Why?
2. Who was Kalidasa?
3. What do you know about Allahabad Pillar Inscription?
4. Discuss the power and position of Kumaramatyā?
5. Who was Kumara Devi?

BACHELOR OF ARTS

SEMESTER I

COURSE: HISTORY OF INDIA: INDUS CIVIZATION TO c. 1200 CE

UNIT 7: KINGDOMS IN THE DECCAN AND SOUTH: CHALUKYAS, PALLAVAS, CHOLAS

STRUCTURE

7.0 Learning Objectives

7.1 Introduction

7.2 The Chalukyas

7.3 The Pallavas

7.3.1 Check Your Progress I

7.4 The Cholas

7.4.1 First phase (circa 850- 985 CE)

7.4.2 Second phase (circa 985-1070 CE)

7.4.3 Third phase (circa 1070-1279 CE)

7.4.4 Check Your Progress II

7.5 Summary

7.6 Suggested Readings

7.7 Questions for Practice

7.7.1 Long Answer Questions

7.7.2 Short Answer Questions

7.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Acquire information about the political formations in Deccan and peninsular India.
- Acquire information about the Chalukya, the Pallava and the Chola kingdoms.
- Gain knowledge regarding the military achievements of the Chola rulers.
- Understand the nature of the military conflicts between regional polities.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Students, the early medieval Deccan and South India witnessed the appearance of several regional polities, such as the Chalukyas, the Pallavas and the Cholas, and these regional polities were indulged in a continuous conflict over a period of several centuries. The boundaries of these regional kingdoms have been amorphous, but the core that usually comprised the area in and around the capital city remained more or less stable over the period. The Chalukyas dominated the Deccan from their capital at Badami/Vatapi, the Pallavas with capital at Kanchipuram and after them, the Cholas with their capital at Tanjavur ruled the peninsular India.

7.2 THE CHALUKYAS

Pulakeshin I (literally, meaning ‘the great lion’) founded the Chalukya kingdom and its capital was established at Badami near a hill in the Bijapur district of Karnataka in about 543-544 CE. He appears to have performed an *asvamedha* sacrifice to proclaim his sovereignty. The Chalukyan capital was in a close proximity to Malaprabha river, and sites such as Mahakuta, Pattadakal and Aihole, and these sites have yielded several temples and inscriptions of the Chalukyan rulers. Successor of Pulakeshin I was his son, Kirtivarman I (circa 566/7-597/8 CE), who expanded the boundaries of the Chalukyan kingdom by defeating the Kadambas of Banavasi, the Mauryas of Konkan and the Nalas of Bastar. The conquest of the port of Goa (known as Revatidvipa) provided the Chalukyas an access to the Indian Ocean trade and commerce. At the death of Kirtivarman I, his son Pulakeshin II was too young to ascend the throne, and therefore, brother of Kirtivarman I named Mangalesha came into power. Mangalesha continued the policy of his deceased brother, and raided Gujarat, Khandesh and Malwa, which were under the Kalachuri king Buddharaja. These raids brought much wealth but very little territorial gain to the Chalukyas. When Pulakeshin II became eligible for throne, he was denied his right by Mangalesha, who wanted his own son to become the king after him. As a result, Pulakeshin II waged a war against his uncle and with the help of loyal friends in administration, he eventually killed Mangalesha. Pulakeshin II (circa 609-642 CE) became the king and soon subdued a rebel Appayika, overthrew the Kadamba of Banavasi, and the Alupas of South Kerala and the Ganges of Mysore were forced to accept the Chalukya authority. A matrimonial tie was forged with the Ganga king Durvinita, whose princess was married to Pulakeshin II and from her, a son named Vikramaditya I was born.

One of the major achievements of Pulakeshin II was the defeat of king Harshavardhan of the Pushyabhuti dynasty of north India in a decisively fought battle at the bank of river Narmada. The victory of the Chalukyan king is described in the Aihole inscription of Pulakeshin II. Aihole is a place in Bagalkot district of Karnataka, and the famous Aihole inscription is found at a Jain temple (known as Meguti temple). The inscription is dated to 634-35 CE and it was composed by a poet named Ravikirti. This Aihole inscription glorifies the military achievements of Pulakeshin II, who is referred to as Satyashraya (i.e., the abode of truth) in the same inscription. The victory of Pulakeshin II on Harshavardhan is also

substantiated by the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Xuanzang, who appears to have visited the kingdom of both, Harshavardhan and Pulakeshin II in the second quarter of the seventh century CE. After his resounding victory over Harshavardhan, Pulakeshin II shifted his focus on the eastern Deccan and made the Southern Kosala and Kalinga (Odisha) to submit to his authority. In a same manner, the Vishnukundins were conquered and then he invaded the Pallava kingdom. Even though the Pallava king Mahendravarman managed to protect his capital, but the northern territories of his kingdom were lost to the Chalukyas.

Once the Andhra country was annexed, Pulakeshin II made his younger brother Vishnuvardhan a viceroy of it and thus the eastern branch of the Chalukyas came into existence with a capital at Vengi. An embassy was sent to the Persian court of Khusru II by the Chalukyas under Pulakeshin II in about 625-26 CE and perhaps also received an embassy from Persia in return. In about 641-642 CE, Pulakeshin II again invaded the Pallava kingdom, which had come under Mahendravarman's son Narasimhavarman I (circa 630-668 CE) by now. This invasion was successfully repulsed by the Pallavas, and in its response Narasimhavarman I invaded the Chalukyan capital Badami, defeated and killed Pulakeshin-II and took the title of *Vatapikonda* (literally meaning, the conqueror of Badami). In this way, for some time the authority of the Chalukyas eclipsed and the Pallavas occupied Badami. The credit for restoring the Chalukya authority goes to Vikramaditya I (circa 655-681 CE), who with the help of his maternal grandfather, the Ganga king Durvinita, captured Badami, and proclaimed himself king of the restored Chalukya kingdom. He rewarded his younger brother, named Jayasimhavarman, who had helped him in regaining control of the Chalukya territory by making him the viceroy of southern Gujarat (i.e., the Lata). As a result, the Chalukya's Gujarat branch came into existence.

The Chalukya-Pallava rivalry revived under Vikramaditya I, who invaded the Pallava kingdom but could not make any definite territorial gain. Overall, the reign of Vikramaditya I was peaceful and after him, his son Vinayaditya (circa 681-696 CE) and then Vijayaditya (circa 696-733 CE) came into power. The reign of Vijayaditya witnessed considerable temple building activities. Next ruler was Vikramaditya II (circa 733-744 CE), in whose reign the Arabs after occupying the Sind invaded the western India and Deccan; but Pulkeshin, who was the son of Jayasimhavarman of the Lata branch of the Chalukyas, repulsed the Arab incursions successfully. For showing valour against the Arabs in battle-fields, Pulkeshin was given the title, *Avanijanashraya* (literally meaning, 'refuge of the people of the earth') by Vikramaditya II. The conflicts with the Pallavas renewed under Vikramaditya II, who is mentioned to have overrun the Pallava capital, i.e., Kanchipuram thrice. However, Vikramaditya II after defeating the Pallavas and occupying their capital, neither damaged the city nor looted the residents. Instead, he made liberal gifts to the Kailasanatha and other temples in Kanchipuram. By making such liberal gifts to the temples, according to K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, Vikramaditya II aimed to wipe out the disgrace that had befallen the Chalukya dynasty by the occupation of their capital Badami by the Pallavas during the reign of Pulakeshin II. After this, Vikramaditya II withdrew from the Pallava territory and later he was followed by his son, Kirtivarman II (circa 744/5-754 CE). Kirtivarman II and his subordinate Ganga ruler Sripurusha came into conflict with the Pandya ruler Maravarman Rajasimha I of the Kongu region and beyond. In a fiercely fought battle at a place called Venbai, the Chalukyan ruler and his ally were defeated; however, soon peace was made with the marriage of a Ganga princess

with the son of Pandya king Maravarman. Kirtivarman II was the last ruler of the Chalukya line of Badami and the dynasty ended with the coming of the Rashtrakuta king Dantidurga in the middle of the eighth century CE.

7.3 THE PALLAVAS

The fall of the Satavahana rulers in the third century CE was followed by the appearance of the Pallavas in the eastern region to the south of the Krishna and they ruled over Tondaimandalam, the region round their capital Kanchipuram. This region of Tondaimandalam was situated between the north Penner and north Vellar Rivers. The names, such as, Simhavarman and Shivaskandavarman of the early Pallava rulers are known from a copper-plate charters, which are written in Prakrit and dated to about the third-fourth century CE. One of the early Pallava king was Vishnugopa of Kanchi, who was defeated by Samudragupta in the fourth century CE. But the Pallavas rose to power under Simhavishnu in the last quarter of the sixth century CE after putting an end to the political instability that had been caused by the Kalabharas in Tamilakam. Since the Pallavas are not mentioned in the Tamil literature of the Sangam age, they are usually regarded as foreigners, who had migrated to the Tamil land sometime during the Satavahana's rule probably as their governors or military officials. The origin of the Pallavas is shrouded in mystery and therefore, different scholars have different views on their origin. Some scholars have identified them with Pahlava or the Parthian. On the other hand, they are suggested to be an indigenous tribe, either identical with, or allied to the Kurumbas.

The firm foundation to the Pallava authority was laid down by Simhavishnu (circa 555-590 CE) with a capital at Kanchipuram. He was a devotee of Vishnu and had assumed a title, *Avanisimha* (literally, 'lion of the earth'). Simhavishnu is mentioned to have suppressed the Kalabharas¹⁶ and conquered the region up to Kaveri River. It brought him into a conflict with the Pandyas and the ruler of Sri Lanka. Simhavishnu was followed by his son, Mahendravarman I (circa 590-630 CE), who promoted the cult of the royal personality. He assumed several titles, for instance, truthful (Satyasanda), virtuous (Gunabhadra), upholder of dharma on earth (Dharmanitya), unflinching courage (Amoghavikrama), brave like lion (Virakesari), a great hero (Mahamalla), devotee of God (Ishvarabhakta), sovereign of entire earth (Trailokyanatha) and so forth. Several temples that Mahendravarman I built were named after his title, for instance, Shatrumalleshvaralaya (named after his title, Shatrumalla). In a same manner, places began to be named after the Pallava kings, and some of the examples of it are, Mahendravadi and Mahendrapura, which were named after Mahendravarman I. He was a great builder, a poet and a lover of music, and he authored a play, entitled the *Mattavilasa-Prahasana* (literally meaning, 'The Delight of the Drunkards'). In his reign, the Pallavas and the Chalukyas came into conflict. The Chalukya king Pulakeshin II invaded the Pallava kingdom and annexed the northern provinces of Mahendravarman I's dominions. Here it is noticeable that Pulakeshin II is the same king, who had defeated Harshavardhana and put a check on the expanding power of the Pushyabhutis of northern India.

¹⁶ The Kalabharas were tribal peasants, who revolted against the local polities of the Chola and the Pandyas of peninsular India in about sixth century CE. They are believed to have dominated the political scene of South India for about seventy-five years.

The conflict with the Chalukyas continued during the reign of Narasimhavarman I Mahamalla (circa 630-668 CE), who was the son and successor of Mahendravarman I. Narasimhavarman I defeated the Chalukyans with the help of his ally Manavarman, a Sri Lankan prince. He even invaded the Chalukya kingdom, defeated and possibly killed Pulakeshin II and occupied the Chalukya capital, Badami in about 642 CE. To commemorate the Pallava victory, he assumed the title, *Vatapikonda* (conqueror of the Vatapi/Badami). Narasimhavarman I appears to have defeated the Cholas, the Cheras, the Pandyas and the Kalabhras and he sent two expeditions to help his ally Manavarman, the Sri Lankan Prince. With the Pallava help, Manavarman was established at the throne of Sri Lanka. However, Manavarman could not rule for long and he again took refuge in the Pallavan court. Narasimhavarman I built magnificent rock-cut cave temples at Mamallapuram, which was a major port under the Pallavas. As it is evident from the name Mahamallapuram, this port was named after the title, *Mahamalla* (great hero) that Narsimhavarman I had assumed. Among the major rock-cut cave shrines at Mahamallapuram are included the Adi-Varaha cave, the Durga cave, and the Pancha-Pandava cave. These cave shrines contain several Hindu mythological scenes (e.g., Vishnu taking three strides, Gaja-Lakshmi, Mahishasuramardini, etc.) carved in relief. However, the most magnificent of all the relief is the large open-air-relief at Mamallapuram, which is carved across two boulders, and the rock surface exhibits either the descent of the Ganga or Arjuna's penance. Narsimhavarman I is also credited with the construction of the five Ratha temples or Pandava rock-cut shrines. These rock-cut shrines are in the shape of a Ratha (i.e., a chariot) and the reference to these shrines as Rathas possibly was based on the idea that they represented the celestial chariots of the deities. The Rathas shrines are believed to have been dedicated to Dharmaraja (Yudhishtara), Bhima, Draupadi, Arjuna and Sahadeva.

In about 668 CE, Narasimhavarman I died and he was succeeded by his son Mahendravarman II. In the short reign Mahendravarman I conflicts with the Chalukya king Vikramaditya I continued. He was followed by his son Parameshvaravarman I, who continued the conflicts with the Chalukya king Vikramaditya and his ally the Pandya king Arikeshri Parankusha Maravarman I. After several initial setbacks, Parameshvaravarman I won the battle with the Chalukyas and continued to rule the Pallava kingdom from Kanchi until his death in about 700 CE. The next Pallava ruler was Narasimhavarman II Rajasimha (circa 700-728 CE), whose reign was peaceful and no major conflict with the Chalukyas was erupted under him. His reign saw the construction of several magnificent temples and a shift also happened from the rock-cut shrines to the structural temples. In the reign of Narasimhavarman II patronized the construction of the Shore temple at Mamallapuram and the Kailasanatha at Kanchipuram. The Shore temple comprises three shrines dedicated to a stone Shiva-linga, the Somaskanda (i.e., Shiva with Uma and Skanda), and the Vishnu resting on the serpent Ananta. The two *shikharas* of Shore temple are terraced and slender. However, the relief sculptures of the temple are eroded owing of the impacts of sea-breeze and sand.

The Kailashanatha temple at Kanchipuram is also known as Rajasimheshvara, which a name derived from Narasimhavarman II's title *Rajasimha* (literally, a royal lion). This temple is situated within a large rectangular enclosure and surrounded by over 50 subsidiary shrines. A Shiva-linga is placed in a square sanctum in the main temple, around this sanctum is an enclosed circumambulatory passage. The *shikhara* of the Kailashanatha temple is in the

typical southern style. In front of the sanctum is a pillared hall and a verandah. The enclosure walls have large gateways (*gopuras*) and this temple is heavily ornamented with sculptures compared to other shrines of the Pallava period. Narasimhavarman II patronized the famous poet and writer, Dandin, who appears to have spent several years at the Pallava court. He also sent embassies to China, and maritime trade flourished under him. As Narasimhavarman II's son Mahendravarman III predeceased and therefore, another son Parameshvaravarman II (circa 728-731 CE) ascended the throne. In his short reign, he was attacked by the Chalukyan king Vikramaditya II with the help the Ganga prince Ereyappa, the son of Sripurusha. In the battle at Vilande, Paramesvaravarman was killed by the Ganga ruler. He was the last ruler of the main line of the Pallavas. Since he had not left any heir, the Pallava officials and chief people chose a prince, Nandivarman II from a collateral branch as their ruler.

Nandivarman II Pallavamall (circa 731-796 CE) was aided by his able and loyal general Udayachandra, who conquered for his lord some territories in the north by defeating a Nishada chief, who was subordinate of the Eastern Chalukayas of Vengi. Nandigarman-II made several attempts to annex the territory of the Pandyas, but the Pandya king Jatila Parantaka defeated the Pallava armies. Following it, the Pallavas lost control over Kongu and the areas south of the Pennar River. However, Nandivarman II had been very successful in his expedition against the Ganga rulers and he defeated the Ganga king Sripurusha, who was also made to surrender some wealth and territory to the Pallavas. Nandivarman II was a devotee of Vishnu and he patronized the repair of several temples, for instance, the Vaikunthaperumal temple at Kanchipuram, in the Pallava kingdom. It appears that the great Alvar saint, Tirumangai had been his contemporary. Nandivarman II was defeated by the Rashtrakuta king Dhruva, and he was made to pay tribute of elephants. Yet, Nandivarman II managed to keep his kingdom intact and he was succeeded by his son Dantivarman (circa 796-847 CE).

Dantivarman's authority was challenged by the Pandyas and the Rashtrakutas, who made considerable territorial gains after defeating the Pallavas. He was followed by his son Nandivarman III (circa 846-869 CE). Nandivarman III defeated the Pandyas in a fiercely fought battle at Tellaru (in Arcot district) and recovered the territories conquered by them. He was a powerful ruler, who maintained a powerful fleet. A Tamil inscription that is found at Takua-pa in Siam records the presence of a Vishnu temple along with a water-tank and this water-tank is called as *Avaninaranam* after one of the titles of Nandivarman III. However, he died in about 869 CE after being badly defeated by the Pandyas. The next Pallava ruler was Nripatunga, who had to face a challenge from his own brother Aparajita. In the battle between the brothers, Aparajita won and ascended the Pallava throne. But he could not keep the Pallava authority intact and he was overthrown by his subordinate, the Chola king Aditya-I in about 893 CE. With this ended the Pallava dynasty after ruling Kanchipuram for several centuries.

7.3.1 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS I

1. Who founded the Chalukya dynasty?
-

2. Which north Indian king was defeated by Pulakeshin-II?

3. Write a note on the Aihole inscription?

4. Who authored the *Mattavilasa-Prahasana*?

5. Write a note on the Ratha temples.

7.4 THE CHOLAS

The Chola rulers dominated the political scene of the southern India for more than four hundred years, from circa the mid-ninth to the twelfth century CE. However, their origin is not clear, but they claimed to have been descended from the Cholas, who had flourished in the Kaveri delta during the Sangam period. The Chola king, who was the center of the state, assumed several titles, for instance, *peruman* or *perumanadigal* (the great son), *udaiyar* (our lord), *ulagudaiya-perumal* or *ulagudaiya-nayanar* (the lord of the world), *ko* (king), *cakravarti* (emperor) and *tiribhuvana-cakravarti* (emperor of the three world). Such grandiloquent titles reinforced the royal authority over territory and people. One of the important features of the Chola polity was the appointment of crown-prince (Yuvaraja) by the reigning monarchs possibly to avoid succession struggles. They built several temples and patronized different Hindu sects (particularly Shaivism) to legitimize their authority.

The Chola kingdom is characterized by K. A. Nilakantha Sastri as a highly centralized polity and he glorified the military achievements of the Chola rulers. In the 1960s, Burton Stein proposed the 'segmentary state' theory to explain the nature of the Chola polity. According to this theory, the Chola rulers were mere ritual head of their kingdom. The Cholas neither had centralized army nor bureaucracy. Therefore, they ruled the areas outside the core of their kingdom with the help of local chiefs and subordinate rulers, who had accepted the ritual sovereignty of the Chola kings. Since their authority was mainly confined to the core of their kingdom, they derived land revenue from limited areas and depended on looting expeditions for resources. Burton Stein thus characterized the Chola kingdom as a decentralized polity. The segmentary state theory has been questioned by Noboru Karashima, Y. Subbarayalu and James Heitzman. These scholars have shown the presence of an efficient Chola administration across their kingdom down to the level of villages. In fact, the Chola rulers could not have undertaken several daring expeditions across the eastern coastline, and south-east Asia, if they had no centralized army. From available evidences, the presence of a strong naval fleets of the Cholas is firmly attested. Based on the available evidences, the theory of segmentary state is conclusively proven wrong in past few decades. Some scholars, for instance, Kesavan Veluthat and R. N. Nandi have used feudal model for the study of the Chola polity. And there are also scholars like Noboru Karashima and James Heitzman, who argue to

focus on the specific issues related to the Chola kingdom without fitting the Chola polity in the framework of any one particular theory or model.

Traditionally, the Chola territory was called Chola-nadu and in the ninth century CE, the Chola-nadu was confined to the Kaveri delta (mainly in Thanjavur district) roughly from the sea coast on the east to Tiruchirapalli on the west. The Chola-nadu as a core territory of the Chola kingdom continued to remain so till the end of its existence. Another key area under the Chola rulers was Tondai-nadu or Tondai-mandalam, which covered the northern parts of Tamil Nadu. In the eleventh century CE, the southern parts of Tamil Nadu, which was the territory of the Pandyas, along with the southern parts of Karnataka were brought under the control of the Cholas. However, territories including the districts of Andhra up to the river Krishna, northern Karnataka and Kerala could never become integral parts of the Chola state, and these areas were just tributary territories. In the more than four hundred years of its presence, the Chola kingdom was ruled over by some twenty kings. In this section, the period of the Chola rule (circa 850- 1279 CE) is divided into three sub-periods:

1. First phase (circa 850- 985 CE)
2. Second phase (circa 985-1070 CE)
3. Third phase (circa 1070-1279 CE)

7.4.1 FIRST PHASE (CIRCA 850- 985 CE)

This was the formative phase, when the foundations of the Chola kingdom were laid. The dynasty was established by Vijayalaya (circa 850- 871 CE), who captured Tanjore and built a temple of a goddess, Nishumbhasundari (i.e., Durga). However, he was a subordinate of the Pallava rulers at that time. His son, Aditya-I consolidated his position and overthrew his Pallava ruler Aparajita (circa 871-907 CE) in about 893 CE after capturing the core, i.e., Tondaimandalam of the Pallava kingdom. The Ganga ruler whereas accepted Aditya I's authority, the Pandyas were defeated and parts of their territory (i.e., Kongu country) was conquered. He forged matrimonial ties with the Chera ruler Sthanuravi, whose daughter was married to Aditya I's son Parantaka. After his death, a temple was built by his son over his remains. The Chola king Parantaka is credited with the victory over the Pandyas, whose capital Madurai was invaded and after it, he assumed the title, *Maduraikonda* (i.e., Capturer of Madura). Sometime before circa 916 CE, the Rashtrakuta king Krishna II invaded the Chola territories, but he was defeated. But the fate of Krishna III was different. Krishna III invaded the Chola kingdom and defeated the Chola armies in a fiercely fought battle at Takkolam in about 949 CE. The northern parts of the Chola kingdom were captured by the Rashtrakutas and Krishna III assumed the title, 'Conqueror of Kanchi and Tanjore'. This defeat turned the Chola kingdom into a small principality and the tide of fortune for the Cholas again turned during the reign of Sundara Chola Parantaka II (circa 957-73 CE). Sundara Chola twice defeated the Pandyas and even invaded the Sri Lanka, but none of this resulted in any territorial gain. He was followed by Uttama Chola (also known as Arumolivarman), who crowned himself as Rajaraja in the year 985 CE.

7.4.2 SECOND PHASE (CIRCA 985-1070 CE)

This phase is identified as a period of territorial expansion and consolidation of the Chola authority. In this phase, Uttama Chola Rajaraja (circa 985-1014 CE) transformed the Chola polity into a well-knit empire. He defeated the rulers of Pandyas, the Kerala kingdom and the Sri Lanka. He conquered the northern parts of Sri Lanka, where the major political center Anuradhapuram was destroyed and in its place, Polonnaruva was made the capital of the Chola province. In the north, he defeated the Chalukyas of Vengi and towards the end of his reign, he appears to have conquered some 12,000 islands in the open sea. These islands are usually identified with the Maldives islands. In 1010 CE, a magnificent temple dedicated to Shiva was built at Tanjore and it was named Rajarajeshvara after the title *Rajaraja* of Uttama Chola. During the reign of Uttama Chola, the Shailendra ruler of Shri-Vijaya (i.e., Palembang) patronized the building of Buddhist monastery at Nagapattinam (in Tamil Nadu). This monastery was named Cudamani-vihara after the father of the king of Shri-Vijaya. During the reign of Rajaraja I, several conquered territories were renamed after the reigning monarch's titles (e.g., Mala-nadu *alias* Rajashraya-valanadu, Ko-nadu *alias* Keralantaka-valanadu, etc). Likewise, Pandi-nadu (the Pandya territory) was renamed as Rajaraja-mandalam and Tondainadu (the Pallava territory) was called Jayangondachola-mandalam. It was a strategy that helped in the consolidation of the Chola authority in newly conquered territories.¹⁷

The territorial expansions that started during the reign of Uttama Chola Rajaraja continued under his son and successor, Rajendra-I (circa 1014 CE-1044 CE) invaded Sri Lanka and completed the conquest of entire island. He led the Chola armies across eastern Deccan up to the Ganga in West Bengal and brought under his control Vengi area. He brought the Ganga water to his kingdom, assumed a new name, *Gangaikondachola* (the Chola king who took the Ganga) and established a new capital, Gangagaikondacholapuram, where a magnificent temple was built to commemorate his victory. It was a daring raid from the Kaveri delta to the delta of Ganga. Another daring raid (usually called, the Kadaram expedition) of Rajendra I was launched in 1025-26 CE, when the Chola naval fleets raided some twelve areas (e.g., Myanmar, Sumatra, Thailand, Malay Peninsula, Nicobar Islands, etc.) successfully. At that time, Shri-Vijaya was the powerful maritime polity that ruled the Malay Peninsula, Sumatra, Java and several neighboring islands. The capital of the Shri-Vijaya was plundered and the king Sangrama Vijayottungavarman of Shri-Vijaya was captured by the Chola fleets. However, after the end of the expedition, the king of Shri-Vijaya accepted the Chola authority and then he was released as well as his kingdom was restored. The rulers of Shri-Vijaya thus controlled the sea-route from South India to China and therefore, Rajendra I appears to have undertaken this naval expedition across South-east Asia to assert his control over the overseas trade routes. The same is also evident from the several embassies that the Cholas sent to China in 1016, 1033 and 1077 CE.

Rajendra I was succeeded by Rajadhiraja I in 1044 CE and he defeated the armies of the Western Chalukya in a battle of Dhanyakataka on the river Krishna, destroyed the Chalukya fort of Kollipakkai (i.e., Kulpak) and later also sacked the Chalukya capital Kalyani.

¹⁷ Manu V. Devadevan, 'From the Cult of Chivalry to the Cult of Personality: The Seventh-century Transformation in Pallava Statecraft', *Studies in History*, Vol. 32, No. 2, 2017, pp. 127-150.

Then he performed the *virabhisheka* ceremony (i.e., coronation of victor) in the capital of the enemy and Rajadhiraja I assumed the title *Vijayarajendra*. The Chola-Chalukya conflicts that continued in subsequent times Rajadhiraja (circa 1044-54 CE), Rajendradeva II (circa 1054-63 CE), Virarajendra (circa 1063-69 CE) and Adhirajendra (circa 1067-1070 CE).

7.4.3 THIRD PHASE (CIRCA 1070-1279 CE)

It was the period that witnessed a gradual weakening of the Chola authority. During the reign of Kulottunga (circa 1070-1122 CE), Sri Lanka was lost to Vijayabahu and Vengi was raided by the Haihaya king Yashahkarnadeva of Tripuri (in central India). Even though he kept the rulers of Pandya and Kerala under his authority, but had to acknowledge the authority of Vijayabahu over Sri Lanka. Kulottunga forged a matrimonial tie with Vijayabahu and married one of his daughters with a Sri Lankan prince, Virapperumal. During his reign, a Chola embassy was sent to China in 1077 CE. This embassy comprised seventy-two merchants, who paid several articles comprising glassware, camphor, rhinoceros' horns, ivory, incense, rose water and so forth to the Chinese and in return received about 81,800 strings of copper cash. In a similar manner, the Chola king received an embassy from the Sri-Vijaya in 1090 CE. Kulottunga kept the Chola empire, comprising the entire land south of the Krishna and Tungabhadra rivers extending up to the Godavari river on the east coast, under his firm authority. But towards the end of his reign, the Chalukya threat again appeared and the Chola authority in Vengi and other parts of Telugu country was ended. After Kulottunga I, several Chola rulers, for instance, Vikrama Chola (circa 1122-35 CE), Kulottunga-II (circa 1135-50 CE) and RajarajaII (circa 1150-1173 CE) came into power, but none of them could revive the old glory of the Chola empire. The continuous military conflicts with the Chalukyas, the Pandyas and other neighboring polities exhausted the resources of the Cholas. As a result, the Chola authority ended towards the end of the thirteenth century CE.

7.4.4 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS I

1. Who founded the Chola dynasty?

2. Explain the expression, *Tiribhuvana-cakravarti*?

3. Where was Tondaimandalam situated?

4. Why Rajendra- I assumed the title, Gangaikondachola?

5. Write a note on the Kadaram expedition.



Major Dynasties of Peninsular India c. 700-1300¹⁸

7.5 SUMMARY

Students, the military conflicts between the Chalukyas, the Pallavas and the Cholas have been the major feature of the early medieval history of peninsular India. In peninsular India, the Chalukyas were busy in a continuous fight with the Pallavas and after them, the Cholas to establish their authority over the Andhra region. On the other hand, they fought the Pushyabhutis of north India and stopped the victory march of Harshavardhan's armies at the bank of river Narmada. The famous Aihole inscription narrates the victory of the Chalukya

¹⁸ Upinder Singh, *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India: From the Stone Age to the 12th Century*, Delhi: Pearson-Longman, 2009, p.891.

king Pulakeshin-II over Harshvardhan and several other kings of Deccan and far south. Under the Chalukyas, a distinctive style of temple architecture (Vesara) evolved in Deccan. Far reaching developments in the field of art and architecture also took place under the Pallavas and the Cholas, who patronized the building of grand temples and shaped the formation of Dravida style of temple architecture (about different styles of temple architectures, we will study in the chapter 9). The influence of the Chola authority reached even beyond peninsular India with the Chola naval fleets that conquered Sri Lanka, Maldives, Nicobar Island and different parts of South-east Asia.

7.6 SUGGESTED READINGS

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R. C. Majumdar, H. C. Raychaudhuri, and Kalikinkar Datta, *An Advanced History of India*, London: Macmillan & Co Limited, 1953.

Romila Thapar, *The Penguin History of Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300*, New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2002.

7.7 QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE

7.7.1 LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Highlight the military achievements of Pulakeshin-II.
2. Write an essay on the Chalukya and the Pallava conflicts.
3. Write an essay on the art and architectural developments under the Pallava rulers.
4. Highlight the military achievements of the Pallava rulers.
5. Discuss the military achievements of Rajaraja and Rajendra- I.

7.7.2 SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. What do you know about Aihole inscription?
2. Mention the titles assumed by Rajadhiraja I.
3. Who was Pulakeshin II?
4. Write a short note on Kailashanatha temple.
5. Who was the founder of the Pallava dynasty?
6. Define the term, Gopuras?

BACHELOR OF ARTS

SEMESTER I

COURSE: HISTORY OF INDIA: INDUS CIVIZATION TO c. 1200 CE

UNIT 8: RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENTS: JAINISM, BUDDHISM, PURANIC HINDUISM, VAISHNAVISM AND SHAIIVISM

STRUCTURE

8.0 Learning Objectives

8.1 Introduction

8.2 Jainism

8.2.1 Jain Philosophy

8.2.2 Jainism after Mahavira

8.3 Buddhism

8.3.1 Buddhist Philosophy

8.3.2 Buddhism after Gotama Buddha

8.4 Puranic Hinduism

8.5 Vaishnavism

8.6 Shaivism

8.6.1 Check Your Progress I

8.7 Summary

8.8 Suggested Readings

8.9 Questions for Practice

8.9.1 Long Answer Questions

8.9.2 Short Answer Questions

8.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the emergence of Buddhism.
- Acquire information about Jainism.
- Gain knowledge regarding the Puranic Hinduism.
- Understand the nature of Vaishnavism and Shaivism.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Students, several sects, cults and religious practices have been part of India's cultural fabric. To understand their prevalence in present Indian society, their history is required to be understood. These religions and sects have evolved over a period of time. Historical personalities like Gotama Buddha and Mahavira Swami have played a key role in the popularization of Buddhism and Jainism respectively in ancient society of India. Gotama Buddha whereas was the founder of Buddhism, Jainism is associated with twenty-four *tirthankaras*. On the other hand, origin of Vaishnavism and Shaivism is not associated with any one person. Instead, their origin and spread are connected with the complex political and social processes. The Puranic Hinduism is a religion that revolves around pantheistic beliefs and it acknowledges the presence of multitude of deities and goddesses. In this unit, not only the main characteristics of different sects, cults and religious practices are discussed, but the context in which they have emerged is also highlighted.

8.2 JAINISM

In the sixth century BCE, Vardhman Mahavira popularised Jainism among people. According to Jain traditions, prior to Mahavira twenty-four *tirthankaras* have led the Jain community. The first *tirthankara* is believed to have been Rishabhnanatha, who is also known as Adinatha. Parshvanatha, who was twenty-third *tirthankara*, possibly was followed by the parents of Mahavira, and therefore, it is believed that Parshvanatha was also the teacher of Mahavira. Mahavira was the son of Jnatrika clan's chief Siddhartha, and his mother was named Trishala. He was born in 539/540 BCE in Kundagrama (modern Basarh) near Vaishali and at the age of 72, he died in 467/468 BCE at Pavapuri near Rajagir. He is believed to have been married to Yasoda, from whom a daughter named Priyadarsana or Anuja was born. Unlike the Svetambara Jains, the Digambara Jains believed that Mahavira was a celibate. Mahavira renounced the material world at the age of 30, and after twelve years long penance, he attained enlightenment in a field near Jrimbhika-grama situated at the bank of river Rijupalika, and after this, he came to be known as *jina* (conqueror), *tirthankara* (ford-maker) and *arhat* (worthy). Even though Mahavira was not the founder of Jainism, but he immensely popularized it among people.

8.2.1 JAIN PHILOSOPHY

In Jain philosophy, five great vows are considered central. It is believed that first four vows were introduced by Parshvanath and the fifth one was an addition of Mahavira. These five vows are: 1) Not to lie (*satya*), 2) Not to steal (*asteya*), 3) Not to hurt (*ahimsa*), 4) Not to hoard (*aparigraha*) and 5) Practice of celibacy (*brahmcharya*). These vows aimed to purify the inner self of the Jain followers. In a similar manner, the *Tri-ratnas* (or three Jewels), viz., Right Knowledge (*samyag-jnana*), Right Action (*samyag-charitra*) and Right Faith (*samyag-darshan*), were considered important for attaining salvation. An individual was expected to perform actions based on these great vows in order to avoid anger, pride, deceit and greed. Mahavira advocated sever asceticism and complete nudity. In Jainism, even a smallest particle

on earth is believed to have a life, and therefore Jain monks and their followers attach great importance to non-violence. In Jain philosophy, both the idea of rebirth (or transmigration of soul) and *karman* theory are supported. It is believed that the good and bad *karmans* (actions), even if performed unintentionally, would influence the rebirth in higher or lower *varna*. Therefore, right knowledge makes the Jain monks/followers to act without passions, desires and hatred and it helps them in the attainment of salvation (*moksha*). The Jains believed in the existence of gods, but they place gods at a lower position compared to *tirthankaras*. In Jainism, hunting and animal husbandry are completely rejected as an occupation for Jain laity. Six occupations that are considered permissible for a laity in Jainism are – governing, writing, farming, the arts, and trade. Out of these six, even agriculture is despised because it causes injury to small insects, while ploughing or digging the land. The profession that is particularly endorsed in Jainism is trade and commerce. Jains in this way emphasized upon an extreme form of non-violence and vegetarianism.

8.2.2 JAINISM AFTER MAHAVIRA

Mahavira popularised Jainism in parts of present-day Bihar, western districts of west Bengal and eastern parts of Uttar Pradesh. In subsequent centuries, Jainism spread in different parts of India including Mathura, Gujarat, Odisha, and various parts of the South India (i.e., Tamil Nadu, Kerala etc.). From Lohanipur (in present day Bihar), a nude male torso of the Mauryan age is discovered and it is believed to be one of the earliest sculptural representation of Jain *tirthankara*. According to Jain traditions, about 160 years after the death of Mahavira in the reign of Chandragupta Maurya the first Jain council was organised at Pataliputra (present day Patna, Bihar). In this council, canonical literature (particularly, the 12 Angas) of the Jains was composed. After 827 years of Mahavira's death in the fourth-fifth centuries CE, second Jain council was organised at two places simultaneously, one in Mathura (Uttar Pradesh) under Skandila and second in Valabhi (Gujarat) under Nagarjuna. In this second council, the Jain canonical literature was given a final shape.

The Jain *sangha* faced a schism in the third century BCE, when two Jain sects, viz., *Svetambaras* (white clad) and *Digambaras* (sky clad, or the naked) came into existence. According to Jain legends, a severe twelve years long famine took place during the reign of the Mauryan king Chandragupta in Magadha. Because of it, a section of Jain community migrated to south under Bhadrabahu, and other Jain monks remained in Magadha under Sthalabahu. Those who were stayed in Magadha began to wear a white piece of cloth. After the end of famine, Jain monks returned from the south and they accused the monks living in Magadha for violating the Jain principles. This conflict between the monks resulted in a schism and Jainism community was divided into *Svetambaras* and *Digambaras*. The former continued to wear white cloth, while the latter practiced complete nudity. Chandragupta Maurya is believed to have embraced Jainism and migrated along with the Jain monks to south towards the end of his life. He appears to have died there by practicing a fast unto death (*sallekhana*). Even though women were allowed to join the Jain monastery, but they lived their lives under strict supervision of the senior male monks. Nuns were answerable to monks and subjected to their authority.

8.3 BUDDHISM

Buddhism is founded by Gotama Buddha. Buddha, who was also known as Siddhartha, was the son of Shakya clan chief, Suddhodhana and his wife, Mahamaya. He was born in 567 BCE in Lumbini (in present day Nepal) near Kapilavastu and died at the age of 80 in 487 BCE in Kusinagara (Kashia, Uttar Pradesh). The event of his death is known in the Buddhist literature as *mahaparinibbana*. Due to the early death of his mother, Siddhartha was brought up by his foster mother, Mahaprajavati Gotami, from whom he received the name Gotama. Siddhartha was married to Yasodhara/Yasoda, and his son's name was Rahul. Siddhartha lived a luxurious life and therefore, once when he saw a) an old man, b) a diseased man, and c) a corpse in Kapilavastu, he became agitated. His agitation ended after seeing an ascetic in a simple yellow robe with a calm face. He realised impermanence of material world and human life. He renounced the world at the age of 29. After performing severe penance for six years, he attained enlightenment at the age of 35 at Bodhgaya, under a *pipal* tree. Siddhartha thus became Buddha (an enlightened being) and he gave his first sermon in a deer park near Banaras/Varanasi to his five former companions, who had deserted him. In the Buddhist literature, this event is known as *dharmachakraparivartna* (discourse on the turning of the Wheel of Law).

The *sangha* (monastery) was founded in the life of Buddha. Both men and women were allowed to join the Sangha, but nuns were subjected to the authority of elder monks. In the *Vinaya Pitaka*, several rules and regulations were included to regularise the activities of monks and nuns. The aim of these rules was to maintain the integrity of *sangha*. The sangha was a place that provided lodging to monks and nuns during rainy season (*vassavasa*); however, these temporary stays at one place subsequently resulted in the establishment of permanent monastic settlements at different places in India. Buddhism received patronage from royal families, artisanal-craft groups, mercantile class and rich land-owning peasantry. The male lay follower whereas was called *upasaka*, a female lay follower was called *upasika*. The lay followers were those persons, who had even though accepted Buddhist teachings, but did not embrace a monastic way of life. They were directed to practice ten vows: a) non-violence, b) not to steal, c) avoid sexual misconduct or practice chastity, d) not to lie, e) not to consume intoxicants, f) avoid slandering, g) avoid arrogant, h) avoid greed, i) avoid animosity, and j) avoid heretical view, by Gotama Buddha in order to live a righteous life.

8.3.1 BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY

Gotama Buddha rejected extreme asceticism and he condemned an over indulgence in material life and sensual pleasures. He preached a middle path and asked his followers to practice non-violence. Buddha conceptualised the four noble truths (*caturaryasatya*), and according to it- 1) The world is full of sorrow; 2) Sorrow has a cause that is desire; 3) Sorrow can be removed by overcoming the desires; and 4) Desires can be removed by following the eight-fold path (*ashtangikamarga*). The suffering was argued to have been caused by ignorance of human beings, who do not understand the true nature of the material world. To overcome desire and ignorance, the observance of the eight-fold path was recommended by Gotama Buddha. The eight-fold path refers to: 1) Right Faith, 2) Right Recollection, 3) Right Action, 4) Right Meditation/Concentration, 5) Right Speech, 6) Right Endeavour, 7) Right Livelihood, and 8)

Right Thought. The aim of the four noble truths and the eight-fold path was to help individuals in the attainment of true knowledge and then *nirvana* (i.e., release from the cycle of life and death).

Interestingly, in Buddhism the *karma* theory is accepted, but the existence of soul (*atman*) is denied. Gotama Buddha emphasised on the impermanence of the universe. In other words, nothing in the universe is permanent and therefore, everything is subjected to a change. The good and bad *karmans* performed intentionally were held responsible for the sorrow and hardships in human life. It was argued that it's not the soul, rather the psychosomatic elements (e.g., body, feelings, perceptions, states of mind, and awareness) that under the impact of *karmans*, take rebirth. Gotama Buddha considered debate on the question of God or creation of universe or soul futile, and therefore, did not engage with these questions. Even though both Jainism and Buddhism advocated the practice of non-violence (*ahimsa*), but compared to Mahavira, Buddha had a milder attitude towards it. In Buddhism, extreme observance of *ahimsa* is not preached. Buddhist monks were even allowed to take meat, but only if they were given it in alms.

8.3.2 BUDDHISM AFTER GOTAMA BUDDHA

After Buddha's death, the first Buddhist council took place soon at Rajagriha (present day Rajgir in Bihar) under the patronage of Magadha's king Ajatasatru. It was presided over by Mahakassapa and major parts of *Sutta-Pitaka* and *Vinaya-Pitaka* were composed in this council. After 100 years of Buddha's death, the second Buddhist council took place at Vaishali. In this council, Buddhist *sangha* was divided into the *Mahasanghikas* (also known as 'Members of Great Community') and *Theravadins* or *Sthaviravadins* (also known as 'Believers in the Great Community'). The third Buddhist council took place during the reign of the Mauryan king Asoka at Pataliputra and it was presided over by a monk named Moggaliputta Tissa. In this council, the compilation of Buddhist canonical literature (known as *Tri-Pitakas*) was completed. Following this council, Ashoka sent missionaries to different parts of the worlds including Sri Lanka, to propagate Buddha's teachings. Under the Kushana king Kanishka, the fourth Buddhist council took place in Kashmir. The council was presided over by Vasumitra and in this council commentaries known as '*Vibhasha Shastras*' on Buddhist doctrines were compiled. In this council, Buddhism was also divided into two different schools, viz., Mahayana or 'Greater Vehicle' and Hinayana or 'Lesser Vehicle.'

With the coming of Mahayana school, Gotama Buddha was raised to the status of God and the worship of Buddha's idols was popularised. Now, Buddha was perceived as a benevolent divine being, who if worshipped would fulfil the desires of his followers. The emergence of Mahayana school is traced back to the Mahasanghika School, which had come into existence after a split in Buddhism community in the second Buddhist council at Vaishali. The other group that had emerged after the second Buddhist council was Sthaviravadins (Pali Theravadis), from which after the fourth Buddhist council emerged Hinayana. Mahayanists believed that everyone has a potential to attain Buddhahood through the various stages of bodhisattva (i.e., Buddha-to-be). The bodhisattvas were seen as the enlightened beings, who in spite of attaining enlightenment had chosen not to attain *nirvana* in order to help others in their spiritual growth. In this way, the "great compassion" that they showed became the key element

of the Mahayanist idea of bodhisattva. It was believed that after performing *paramitas* or meritorious acts such as true knowledge, generosity, good conduct, forbearance, mental strength, meditation and determination, etc., an individual could become a Bodhisattva. The Mahayana school gradually spread into China via Central Asia, Korea and Japan.

On the other hand, the Hinayanists believed that Buddha and bodhisattvas were not gods; rather, they were celestial beings. In their view, not everyone could attain the status of Buddhahood. They advocated the observance of the four noble truths and the eight-fold path to attain true knowledge and then the salvation. This school spread into Sri-Lanka, Myanmar and in south-east Asia. The Hinayanists believed in the performance of good deeds and self-control as the only way to attain salvation, but the Mahayanists paid great importance to image worship, lavish rituals and gift giving. Another Buddhist school that came into existence in the post-Gupta period was known as the Vajrayana (Vehicle of Thunderbolt). Based on the tantric practices, the Vajrayana developed in the region of Magadha, Nepal, Assam, Bengal and Odisha. From eastern India, it spread into Tibet. In this school, female goddess, Tara was perceived as a feminine personification of the idea of compassion. According to the Buddhist traditions, she was born out of the tears of bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, when his eyes were filled with tears out of the compassion for all human beings. Every Buddha and bodhisattva was believed to have had a spouse, named Tara. She was perceived as the source of “force” or “potency” of their husbands. Since an active goddess was seen as a medium to approach a transcendent god, sexual union was made part of the ritual practices and rites. The aim of the monks in Vajrayana Buddhism was to gain magical and supernatural powers, and for this, they were required to pronounce right formula in right manner (*mantra*) and draw a correct magical symbol (*yantra*).

Both Jainism and Buddhism received immense material support from mercantile class, artisanal groups and landed peasantry besides royal houses. In spite of having considerable wealth at their disposal, merchants, artisans and land-owning peasantry was assigned a lower status (i.e., vaishya-varna) compared to brahmins and kshatriyas, by brahmana lawgivers. Therefore, in order to gain higher social status and recognition, these professional groups extended their patronage to Jainism and Buddhism. Unlike Brahmanism, Buddhism and Jainism supported the practice of usury and long-distance trade, which had been condemned by brahmana lawgivers. Gotama Buddha provided a firm ideological support to the concept of private property and he endorsed a strict family structure. To sustain the existing socio-political orders, Buddha debarred the entry of slaves, thieves, and royal employees into *sangha* as monks. The concept of *ahimsa* (non-violence) of Buddha and Mahavira supported the preservation of cattle wealth and it had a wider impact on production activities. They criticised the Vedic sacrifice, which was in the interest of peasantry particularly the big land-owning groups like *gahapatis*. As the agriculture spread across the fertile lands of the Ganga valley, the need of cattle to undertake cultivation increased phenomenally. Besides the use of cattle for ploughing the cultivable land, they were also the source of dairy products and could be used as means of transportation. K. M. Shrimali suggests that possibly the doctrine of *ahimsa* also helped the peasant communities, wishing to expand into the domain of the forest tribes, which mainly lived by hunting and killing animals. The latter occupation was naturally

held blameworthy in the eyes of *ahimsa* preachers, and this could, in turn, justify the subjugation of the forest tribes at the hands of the higher elements of rural society'.¹⁹

8.3.3 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS I

1. Who was the founder of Buddhism?

2. Explain the term *Tirthankara*.

3. What are the five principles vows of Jainism?

4. Who was Mahaprajavati Gotami?

5. At which place Gotama Buddha attained enlightenment?

8.4 PURANIC HINDUISM

The term, 'Hinduism' was first used by Raja Ram Mohun Roy in the early nineteenth century. However, the term 'Hindu', from which the 'Hinduism' is derived, is much older and it first appeared in ancient Persian inscriptions for the land beyond the river Indus (Sindhu). The word, Sindhu is pronounced and therefore, mentioned as Hindu in the Persian and it was first used in a geographical sense. In subsequent times, this term was attributed various religious-cultural meanings and by the modern times, the term Hindu began to refer to all those, who professed Hinduism. Unlike other religions, Hinduism neither has one canon nor one founder. Instead, it comprises a great variety of sects, practices, beliefs and traditions. According to Upinder Singh²⁰, 'certain devotional practices that can be associated with Hinduism' came into existence during the period, circa 200 BCE – 300 CE. This phase is identified to have been a formative period in the evolution of early Hindu pantheons. Some of the deities that gained prominence had first appeared in the Vedic literature, but they assumed newer forms and characteristics in this formative period.

In this formative period (circa 200 BCE - 300 CE), theistic cults, viz., Vaishnavism and Shaivism, took their initial shape. The term 'theism' literally means a belief in the existence of a god or gods. However, it is not simply a belief in the existence of a god or gods; rather, it is a belief in a personal god, who was perceived as a creator as well as a ruler of the entire world. The period following the *circa* second century BCE witnessed the rise of theistic cults

¹⁹ K. M. Shrimali, *A People's History of India-4: The Age of Iron and the Religious Revolution, c. 700-c. 350 BC*. New Delhi: Aligarh Historians Society and Tulika Books, 2011, p. 139.

²⁰ Upinder Singh, *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India: From the Stone Age to the 12th Century*. Delhi: Pearson-Longman, 2009, pp. 433-434.

of Vaishnavism and Shaivism and these cults are usually associated with the Puranic Hinduism. One of the key features of these theistic cults was an increasing emphasis upon the worship of a personal deity as the supreme divinity. These theistic cults played an important role in the popularisation of idol worship, which was followed by the emergence of temples as a monument as well as an institution. The Vedic rituals had required the services of Brahmana priests and they had exclusively been accessible to upper *varna-jatis*. But the Puranic Hinduism gained wider popularity with the emergence of theistic cults because it was accessible to all people, including shudras and women. Both, Vaishnavism and Shaivism fall in the category of the Puranic Hinduism because the Puranic literature constitutes the core of the Vaishnava and Shaiva mythology. The Puranaic literature contains the myths and legends associated with these theistic cults. As a literary piece, this literature 'is a manual on the worship of a specific deity and a guide for the worshipper. As a genre, it later gave rise to other categories of texts on mythology, legends about deities, the ritual of worship and the presumed histories of places sacred to the deities.'²¹

The post-Mauryan period witnessed a phenomenal expansion of trading networks across the Indian subcontinent on the one hand and across the Asia and Africa up to Mediterranean world on the other hand. It was a time, when several new political authorities, e.g., the Kushanas, the Shaka-Kshatrapas and the Satavahanas, came into existence in the areas outside the Ganga valley. Both, the economic and political developments, facilitated the intermixing of various peoples, communities, and cultures; and in this situation it became necessary for Brahmana lawgivers to devise new strategies and frameworks to accommodate different peoples, cultures and communities within the Brahmanical fold as they were not part of it previously. As a result, several cults and communities were Sanskritized. This process of Sanskritization played an important role in the formation of Vaishnavism and Shaivism. It also impacted the position of Vedic deities, for instance, Indra, Varuna, and Agni, who were now reduced to the position of minor or subsidiary deities of Vishnu and Shiva. The idea of devotion (Bhakti) was different from the Vedic sacrifices. It was also contrary to the ideology of renunciation, which was preached by Jainism and Buddhism. Because, the idea of devotion emphasises upon the complete surrender of an individual self to a personal almighty god (for instance, Vishnu or Shiva). It was expected from a devotee to perform his duties, as propagated in the Bhagvata-Gita, without any concern of the consequences. The grace of god rather than the action was considered important in Bhakti, because the supreme gods – Vishnu and Shiva - were believed to have been transcended to the scheme of rebirth and karma.

8.5 VAISHNAVISM

The Vedic literature do not talk about Vaishnavism or Bhagavatism, even though we do have references to Vishnu as a sun deity associated with fertility; he was a minor deity compared to Indra, Varuna and even Agni. The emergence and popularity of Vaishnavism or Bhagavatism was linked to a change in brahmana's attitude towards tribal-folk beliefs and practices. A tribal deity known as Narayana was merged with a minor Vedic deity Vishnu by the second century

²¹ Romila Thapar, *The Penguin History of Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300*, New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2002, p. 272.

BCE. Narayana was conceived as a divine counterpart of a tribal chief or leader, and his devotees came to be known as Bhagavatas. It was the belief that as a tribal chief in return of gifts and loyalty protected and redistributed the resources among his followers, in a same way deity Narayana bestowed prosperity and divine grace upon his devotees. Narayana, according to Suvira Jaiswal²², was a deity of Dravidian origin, whose worshipers were called *Pancaratra*. Besides him, Samkrishana-Baladeva of Vrishni tribe, Vasudeva-Krishna of Abhira tribe, and Shri-Lakshmi of non-Aryan origin were also associated with the Vedic deity Vishnu by the end of the first millennium BCE. Interestingly, all these tribal deities were not only non-Brahmanical but they also had been associated with the idea of fertility, thereby, with agriculture. Hence, the merger of different non-Brahmanical deities within Vishnu not only brought devotees of different cultural background together, but it also widened the mass base of Brahmanism.

Megasthenes, who was a Greek ambassador in the court of Chandragupta Maurya, informs us about a deity of Soursenoi tribe of Mathura region, and this deity is called as Herakles. Scholars believe that this deity Herakles was none other than Vasudeva-Krishna, whose heroic adventures are mostly connected with Mathura and Vrindavana region in the ancient Indian literature. Seemingly, the Greeks came across Vasudeva-Krishna cult in Mathura region and they identified this local-folk deity with their own hero god Herakles. One of the earliest depictions of Vishnu is found on a coin of the Kushana ruler Huvishka. Vishnu is depicted with four arms and he appears to be holding a mace (*gada*) and a wheel (*chakra*) in his arms. On the other hand, the coins of the Shaka rulers carry the images of Gaja-Lakshmi or Abhisheka-Lakshmi, who is identified with the consort of Vishnu. The study of the sculptural remains from Mathura has brought into light several stone images of Vishnu and Balarama and these are dated to the period of circa 200 BCE- CE 200. The discovery of these sculptures from Mathura region corroborates the presence and popularity of Vasudeva-Krishan cult in the Ganga-Yamuna doab.

The popularity of Vaishnavism is also displayed by the epigraphic evidence of the post-Mauryan period. The earliest epigraphs providing information about Vaishnavism begin to appear from about the 200 BCE onwards. A pillar inscription from Besnagar (near Vidisha, Madhya Pradesh) records the erection of a Garuda-pillar dedicated to Vasudeva by the Greek ambassador named Heliodoros, who had come from Taxila to central India. Interestingly, Heliodoros is mentioned in the inscription as a devotee Bhagavata. It shows the popularity of Vaishnavism or Bhagavatism even among people of foreign origin. Likewise, the Ghosundi stone inscription mentions about the erection of a stone railing, which was dedication to Samkrishana and Vasudeva. Not differently, the Mora well inscription mentions the establishment of the images of holy Pancaviras of the Vrishni tribe. The Panchaviras refer to the five heroes, viz., Samkrishana or Balarama, Vasudeva, Pradhyumna, Samba and Aniruddha, who had been revered by the Vrishni tribe. Interestingly, the Satavahana king Gautamiputra Satakarni is equated with the epic heroes, for instance, Balarama, Kesava, Arjuna and Bhimsena in his Nasik inscription dated to the second century CE. These inscriptions roughly dated to the post-Mauryan period clearly demonstrate the presence as well as

²² Suvira Jaiswal, *The Origin and Development of Vaishnavism: Vaishnavism from 200 BC to AD 500*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1981, pp. 35-115.

popularity of Bhagavatism or Vaishnavism in the region comprising present day Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. The Sangam literature (dated to circa 300 BCE-CE 300) of south India also provide information related to Shiva and Vishnu. Even one of the Pandya kings has been compared with Shiva, Vishnu, Balarama and Subramanaya (Karttikeya, son of Shiva) in the Sangam literature.

By the Gupta period, the concept of ten incarnations (*avatars*) of Vishnu came into existence. The term, *avatara* was derived from the root *avatri*, which means “to descend”. According to this concept, Vishnu was believed to have taken births in various forms at different epochs in order to relieve the humanity from ‘adharmā’ and to establish ‘dharma’. The Dashavatara temple of Deogarh in Lalitapur district, Uttar Pradesh has some of the earliest depictions of Vishnu’s incarnations, and it further indicates the popularity of the *avatara* concept among the people. The ten incarnations that are associated with Vishnu includes, the Fish (*matsya*), the Tortoise (*kurma*), the Boar (*varaha*), the man-lion (*narsimha*), the Dwarf (*vamana*), Parasurama (Rama with axe), Rama (prince of Ayodhya), Krishna, Buddha and Kalkin (future incarnation of Vishnu). Here it is noticeable that Buddha was added to the list of Vishnu’s incarnations only towards the end of the first millennium CE. Scholars believe that the various incarnations of Vishnu display an absorption of various tribal-folk cults within Puranic Hinduism.

Numerous sculptures of Vishnu in his different forms were produced during the Gupta period. The standing image of Vishnu usually depicted him with four hands, each holding conch-shell, discus, mace and lotus flower. He was also shown with his consort Sri-Lakshmi and his mount Garuda. The Garuda was made the royal insignia by the Gupta rulers, who have consistently styled themselves as the foremost devotees of Vishnu (*paramabhagavata*) in their epigraphs. By the Gupta period, both the concepts, non-violence and vegetarianism were associated with Vaishnavism possibly due to the Buddhist and the Jain influences. Two of the important Vaishnava sects, Pancharatra and Vaikhanas were also developed by now. The Sanskrit Hindu literature comprising the *Mahabharata*, the *Bhagavadgita*, the *Padma Purana*, the *Vishnu Purana*, and the *Harivamsha* further organised the Vaishnava mythology and played an important role in the popularisation of Vishnu’s incarnations.

8.6 SHAIIVISM

Shaivism was another most popular theistic cult of ancient India and its origin can be traced back to a minor Vedic deity Rudra (“the howler”). Shiva was an amoral and fierce archer-God, whose arrows were believed to have the power to cause diseases. Rudra resided in remote mountains, and he was worshipped by people to ward off diseases and disasters. He was also considered to have been a guardian of healing herbs. In the later Vedic literature, Shiva is also mentioned as Rudra, Ishana, Mahadeva, Maheshvara, Bhava, Pashupati and Sharva, and he is associated with snakes, poison and cremation grounds. It is mentioned in the Yajurveda that if Rudra is appeased, he becomes Sambhu (i.e., benignant), Sankara (i.e., beneficent), and Shiva (i.e., auspicious). One of the widely popular forms of Shiva in present is *linga* or phallus (a short cylindrical pillar with rounded top), and it has been suggested by scholars that *linga* worship had been associated with the non-Aryans. By the first century BCE-CE, the *linga* cult

was gradually merged with the Vedic deity Rudra and it indicates to the Sanskritization of a local-tribal cult. Some scholars even have traced the origin of phallus worship from the Harappan civilization and this view is supported by the discovery of phallic symbols in excavations at Mohenjodaro and Harappa. The *linga* form of Shiva appears to have been connected with the worship of yoni or female reproductive organ gradually. In fact, both *linga* and *yonis* symbolises the reproductive capacity of man and woman. In agricultural societies these symbols (*linga* and *yonis*) are often linked to land's fertility and cultivation.

The Shiva worship in the form of *linga* is described in both the epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Several *lingas* or phallus-sculptures are discovered in Mathura (dated to circa 200 BCE- CE 200). Likewise, a curved figure of Shiva on *linga* from Gudimallan village in Andhra Pradesh (dated to 200/100 BCE) shows wider popularity of Shaivism in the Indian subcontinent. Archaeological remains of Shiva temples of the Gupta period are found at Bhumara and Khoh (both in eastern Madhya Pradesh). The Shiva worship is also mentioned in the *Gathasaptasati* of Hala, and the Sangam literature. The coins of several Gana-Sanghas (oligarchies) of the North-western India carry symbols associated with Shiva. For instance, the coins of Arjunayanas depict a bull before lingam. In a similar manner, coins of Audumbaras have depiction of trident and axe. A coin of Gondopharnes, who was the Indo-Parthian king, depicts Shiva with trident-battle-axe in his right hand and a skin garment, hanging down in the left hand. In the Kushana coins, Shiva is depicted in various forms with the name, i.e., Oesho. One coin of the Kushanas has an image of four armed Shiva, who is shown standing and holding a Damaroo, an Ankusha, a trident and an antelope in each hand. One of the earliest depictions of Shiva's Ardhanarishavara (Shiva as half male and half female) form is identified on one of the Kushana coins. In his Ardhanarishavara form, Shiva is shown standing enface, wearing a dhoti, a necklace, and a *yajnopavita* on right side of his body, and he also appears to be reclining against his mount, i.e., a bull. The left side of Shiva's body has a woman's bosom with round well developed breast. Under this image of Shiva on the coin is written a legend, which is – Oesho, i.e., Shiva. A later period seal from Bhita also carries a depiction of Shiva in his Ardhanarishavara form.

In the Puranas, Shiva's various forms and aspects such as Chandrashekhara (God with a crescent moon in his hair), Gangadhara (supporter of river ganga), Vaidyanatha (lord of physicians), Kalasmhara (destroyer of time), Pashupati (lord of beasts), Shamkara (beneficent) and Ardhanarishvara (the god who is half male and half female), are mentioned and his different legends associated with these different forms are narrated. In South India, Shiva's two forms are most popular- one, Nataraja (Shiva as a lord of dance) and second, Dakshinamurti (south facing Shiva as a universal teacher). By the Gupta period, non-Aryan-deity Skanda, who was also known as Kumara, Kartikeya, and Subramanya, was associated with Shiva as his son. Kartikeya was the god of war, and in the Puranas, he is mentioned as the younger son of Shiva and Parvati. In Patanjali's *Mahabhashya* is described the practice of making images of Skanda or Visakha. On the other hand, the Kushana coins carry several depictions of Skanda as Kumara, Visakha and Mahasena. In the *Mahabharata* also, Kartikeya's various forms such as Visakha, Mahasena, and Kumara are mentioned. In the Tamil land, Kartikeya was known with the name of Murugan, who was associated with fertility cult. Another non-Aryan deity, Ganesha or Ganapati (lord of Ganas) was connected with Shiva as his second son from Parvati

by the middle of the first millennium CE. Ganesha is usually depicted with an elephant head and a broken tusk on his mount, i.e., rat, in the Puranic and the Epic literature.

By the Gupta period, the concept of Trimurti was formulated and gradually it gained wider popularity. As a Trimurti, Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahesha (Shiva) together represented the concept of “origin and creation” (Brahma), “protection and prosperity” (Vishnu) and “destruction and regeneration” (Shiva). In this way, the Trimurti concept connected the creation, preservation and destruction of human life and the material world with the divine forces. Parvati, who had been Shiva’s consort, was gradually linked with the idea of Shakti by associating her with the female deities like Durga, Gauri, and Kali. Several Tantric sects were connected with Shaivism and the Pashupata sect possibly was the earliest such sect that was established by Lakulisa in Gujarat in about 200 CE. Lakulisa is usually shown as holding a club in his hand and surrounded by animals. Pashupatas were associated with yogic practices and they used to smear their bodies with the ashes of human corpses (*bhasma*). Other tantric sects associated with Shiva came into existence in the post-Gupta period were known as, Kalamukha and Kapalika. Both of these sects were associated with extreme practices such as eating food in skull, besmearing the body with the ashes of human bodies, and consumption of intoxicants.

8.6.1 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS II

1. Who was Herakles?

2. Explain the term, ‘theism’.

3. Mention the ten incarnations of Vishnu?

4. Write a note on Shiva’s Ardhanarishavara form?

5. Who were Pashupatas?

8.7 SUMMARY

Students, the people of ancient India followed different sects and practiced various faiths. Jainism and Buddhism had been monastery-based sects that allowed its members to renounced the material world and devote their entire life for their spiritual upliftment. Usually called the heterodox sects because neither Jainism nor Buddhism endorsed the authority of the Vedas, these sects emerged at a time, when north India witnessed the emergence of the sixteen Mahajanapadas and the second urbanization. As the economy changed from pastoral to agricultural, a dissatisfaction with the Vedic sacrifices involving killing of animals and destruction of grain also developed in society, and in a response to it, Jainism and Buddhism

popularized the concept of *ahimsa* (non-violence). Since the heterodox sects were in tune with the people's requirement, they found much support from the traders, artisans, landowners and also the rulers. However, the theistic cults, viz., Vaishnavism and Shaivism, gained popularity towards the end of the first millennium BCE and it was a time, when the state-society expanded in hitherto tribal and forested areas and several tribal groups were absorbed in the *varna-jati* based society. As the tribal groups became part of the state-society, their deities and goddesses were also merged or associated with either Vishnu or Shiva. To understand the emergence of different sects and cults, therefore, the study of the context in which they had gained prominence also becomes important.

8.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

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8.9 QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE

8.9.1 LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Assess the role of Gotama Buddha in the emergence and popularization of Buddhism.
2. Assess the role of Vardhman Mahavira in the popularization of Jainism.
3. Highlight the key features of the Puranic Hinduism.
4. Discuss the salient characteristics of Vaishnavism.
5. Discuss the salient characteristics of Shaivism.

8.9.2 SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. What do you understand by 'Great Enlightenment' and Dharam Chakra Parivartan'?
2. What is Middle Path in Buddhism?
3. Explain the term Tirthankara.
4. Write main teachings of Jainism?
5. Mention the main sects into which Buddhism split.
6. Who were Digambara?
7. Who wrote Mahabhashya?
8. Who was Megasthenes?

BACHELOR OF ARTS

SEMESTER I

COURSE: HISTORY OF INDIA: INDUS CIVIZATION TO c. 1200 CE

UNIT 9: ART AND ARCHITECTURE: TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE, SCULPTURE- MATHURA AND GANDHARA, PAINTINGS

STRUCTURE

9.0 Learning Objectives

9.1 Introduction

9.2 Temple Architecture

9.2.1 Temple Styles- Nagara, Dravida and Vesara

9.2.2 Check Your Progress I

9.3 Mathura Sculptures

9.4 Gandhara Sculptures

9.5 Paintings

9.5.1 Check Your Progress II

9.6 Summary

9.7 Suggested Readings

9.8 Questions for Practice

9.8.1 Long Answer Questions

9.8.2 Short Answer Questions

9.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Acquire information about the temple architecture and its regional styles.
- Gain knowledge about the Mathura and Gandhara sculptures.
- Understand different aspects of the early Indian paintings.
- Acquire knowledge regarding the early Indian art and architecture.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Students, from both literary and archaeological evidences, we get to know about the phenomenal developments in the field of art and architecture in ancient India. The earliest remains of sculptures, monuments and rock-cut caves that are found in India belong to the Mauryan period. Usually, the Mauryan age is identified as a time, when a transition from wood to stone as a medium of artistic expressions happened with the royal patronage. The trend that the Mauryan artists set in motion gained wider popularity in the post-Mauryan period. Sculptural arts flourished in Mathura and Gandhara regions and alongside, both rock-cut and structural shrines began to be built with the support of the rulers, merchants, artisans and professional groups (or guilds). The Hindu shrines appeared by the Gupta period and in the early medieval period, regional styles of temple architecture evolved. The rock-cut caves and structural temples were the monuments that integrated the sculptures as well as paintings in its edifice. In this unit, the main features of the regional styles that evolved in relation to temple architecture, sculptures and paintings in ancient India will be discussed.

9.2 TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE

A Hindu temple is considered as a 'Place of Worship' or 'House of God'. From top to bottom a Hindu temple represents the entire cosmic world (*brahmanda*), which is composed of the earthly world (*prithvi*), the heavenly world (*akasha*), the astral world (*svarga*), and the world below the waters (*patala*). Since a temple represents the entire cosmic world, its walls are covered with the representations of men, women, children, animals, birds, pests, insects, reptiles, tree, rivers, flowers, seas, mountains, houses, forts, palaces, villages, huts, etc., because all these constitute the earthly world. Images of gods and goddesses, semi-divine and mythical beings that are described in the Hindu mythologies are also depicted on the walls of the Hindu temples.²³

The earliest remains of temple remain that are found in India are dated to the Gupta period and several of these, for instance, at Nachna-Kuthara, Bhumra, and Deogarh are located in central India. However, the archaeological evidences suggest the appearance of temples in the late first millennium BCE. According to Himanshu Prabha Ray²⁴, the earliest temples possibly had elliptical shapes and it is evident from the remains of shrines that discovered at Besnagar (Vidisha) of the second century BCE and Nagari (district Chittor, Rajasthan) of the first century BCE. From the Besnagar pillar inscription, the presence of a temple dedicated to Vishnu is evident at Besnagar and the same is supported by the remains of an elliptical temple that are found here in excavations. In a same way, remains of second century BCE elliptical temples dedicated to Shiva and Vishnu are known from Dangwada in central India. Apsidal shrines dedicated to the Naga cult (snake worship) are discovered at Sonkh in Mathura district and these are dated to the first century CE. In this way, the origin of the Hindu temples clearly predates the references in the Puranas and the inscriptions of the Gupta and post-Gupta period.

²³ S. P. Gupta, and S. Prabha Asthana, *Elements of Indian Art (Including Temple Architecture, Iconography and Iconometry)*, New Delhi: D. K. Printworld, 2007, pp. 11-12.

²⁴ Himanshu Prabha Ray, 'The Apsidal Shrine in Early Hinduism: Origins, Cultic Affiliation, Patronage,' *World Archaeology*, Vol. 36, No. 3, 2004, pp. 343-359.

An architectural change began to appear in the Hindu temples by the fourth century CE onwards and a new form of temple was developed, which provided a foundation to the later date Nagara, Dravida and Vesara style temple structures.

The fifth century CE temple at Sanchi (Madhya Pradesh) has a flat roof. In the same period at Deogarh (near Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh), a slightly more elaborate temple dedicated to Vishnu was built. In this temple, the roof over the *garbhagriha* (sanctum) was tall, pyramidal and pointed (*shikhara*). The *shikhara* is like a spire, which is a tall structure that tapers to a point above. The two key features of north Indian temples are: first- the cruciform plan, and second, curvilinear shikhara, which begin to appear from the sixth century CE onwards, and two of its best examples are: the Dashavatara temple at Deogarh and the brick temple at Bhitargaon (both in Uttar Pradesh). The typical Nagara style *shikhara* first appeared in the Mahadeva temple at Nachna-Kuthara and a brick-built Lakshmana temple at Sirpur in central India. The fully developed Nagara style temples began wide-spread by the eighth century CE. In a temple, the *shikhara*, the walls, the pillars and the roofs over the *garbhagriha* and the *mandapa*, are usually decorated with floral and geometric patterns. Sometimes, the images of gods and goddesses as well as scenes from mythologies are also depicted. A Nagara style temple has a highly decorated entrance door-frame, which usually contain images of some good or goddess, and floral and geometrical designs. At the bottom, door-jambs are depicted either the *dvarapalas* (i.e., security guards) or Ganga and Yamuna rivers.

Some of the earliest Hindu temples were built under the Pallavas and the Chola rulers in peninsular India and a new temple style (Dravida style) evolved here in the early medieval period. Among the early Dravida style temples are included the rock-cut Ratha temples and the Shore temple at Mamallapuram (Mahabalipuram). The five Ratha temples are named after the Pandava brothers and their wife Draupadi. Having a square plan, Dharmaraja Ratha (dedicated to Yudhishtira) has open porches and a terraced pyramidal spire. The curvilinear roof of Draupadi Ratha is similar to a thatched roof of a hut. On the southern wall of the Dharmaraja Ratha, an image of the Pallava king Narasimhavarman Mamalla I is depicted along with an inscription. In the reign of Narasimhavarman II Rajasimha, a structural temple (known as Shore temple) dedicated to Shiva and Vishnu was built in Mamallapuram and it has typical Dravida style terraced pyramidal spires. Under the Chola rulers, the Hindu temples became much large in size. One of the most grandeur and magnificent Dravida style temple of the Chola period is the Brihadishvara (also known as the Rajarajeshvara) shrine at Tanjavur. The terraced pyramidal spire of the Brihadishvara temple is about sixty meters in height and this temple is dedicated to Shiva. The main temple comprises a large pillared porch and a circumambulation passage around the sanctum (*garbhagriha*). Located within a spacious courtyard, the temple complex is surrounded by a huge enclosing wall pieced with large gateways (*gopuras*).

On the other hand, sites such as Aihole, Badami and Pattadakal in Karnataka witnessed the construction of several temples under the Chalukyas in the early medieval period. Here a distinctive temple style, usually called Vesara or Besara developed with the royal support. The structural temples are made of large blocks of sandstone, and the inner walls and roofs of these temples have sculptural ornamentation. One of the best examples of the Vesara style temple is the Durga temple at Aihole. Originally, it was not dedicated to Durga and it came up in the reign of the Chalukya king Vijayaditya in about 725-30 CE. This shrine is

apsidal in form and has a circumambulatory path along the outer side of the apse. The pillared hall and the *verandah* whereas are in the Dravidan style, the spire is in a Nagara style. Other important temples that were built during the Chalukya rulers are the Lad Khan temple in Aihole, the Virupaksha temple in Pattadakal and several others.

9.2.1 TEMPLE STYLES- NAGARA, DRAVIDA AND VESARA

The Nagara style temple evolved in the land between the Himalayas and the Vindhya. On the other hand, the Dravida style is associated with the land between the Krishna and Kaveri rivers. Another temple form, the Vesara style is associated with the area between the Vindhya and the Krishna River. The temples of northern India whereas belong to the group called 'Nagara', the temples of south India are placed in the category of 'Dravida'. The temples of mixed types (Nagara and Dravida) belong to the middle region (for instance, Karnataka, Odisha) and they are called Vesara or Besara (*vesara* literally means 'mule') form of temple. A Nagara type temple is usually four-sided. The *garbhagriha* usually has a perfect square shape, and the whole temple plan could be of oblong shape. The temple's elevation is marked by a tall tapering *shikhara*. On the other hand, a Dravida style temple is hexagonal or octagonal from the plinth to the finial and it is either marked with terraces or with hexagonal or octagonal *shikhara*. The South Indian temples were usually built within a spacious courtyard, which was surrounded by an enclosing wall with huge gateways known as *gopuras*. A Vesara temple sometime have a square body, but the *shikhara* is either circular, or octagonal or apsidal in form. In the same way, the body of Vesara style temple sometime is oblong, but with elliptical *shikhara*. In this way, the Vesara style appears to have been a hybrid style, which borrowed elements from the northern and southern temple styles in various degrees. Therefore, the Nagara and Dravida styles are considered the pure types, and the Vesara type temple is considered mixed type. The temples that were built in the Deccan under the Chalukya rulers of Kalyani and the Hoyasala rulers are the best examples of the Vesara style temples. Based on the available evidences, some of the common features of the ancient Hindu temples, irrespective of their architectural styles, are as follows:

- i) The *garbhagriha* or sanctum sanctorum or central cella has only one door and in it the image of the main deity is placed.
- ii) A circumambulatory path (*pradakshinapatha*) for the devotees to go around the *garbhagriha*.
- iii) The *mandapa* or porch is in front of the *garbhagriha*, and it is usually open from three sides for the worshippers to stand under shade to have *darshana* or view the deity and offer prayers.
- iv) The *shikhara* or spire is built above the *garbhagriha*. Unlike a curvilinear spire (*shikhara*) of Nagara style temple, the Dravida style temple has a pyramidal *shikhara*, which consists of progressively smaller and smaller storeys, culminating in a small pinnacle surmounted by a small dome (*stupika*). The terraced pyramidal spire of the Dravida style temples is usually called *Vimana*.

9.2.2 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS I

1. Comment on the Nagara style temples?

2. Write a note on the Dravida style temples?

3. Comment on the Vesara style temples?

4. Where is Shore temple located?

5. Write a note on the Brihadishvara temple?

9.3 MATHURA SCULPTURES

Mathura, which was one of the major trade centres of north India, flourished as a religious and artistic centre under the Kushanas. The sculptures associated with Buddhism, Jainism, Hinduism and secular themes were made of red sandstone, which was quarried at Sikari. The sculptures that were made in Mathura were exported to other cities, for instance, Sanghol in Punjab, Kaushambi, Ahichchhatra, and Sarnath in Uttar Pradesh, and to Mahasthangarh in present-day Bangladesh. The themes and style of the Mathura sculptures are completely indigenous and they show no trace of any foreign influence. Variety of sculptures including those of *yakshas*, *yakshis*, *nagas*, *nagis*, Buddhas, and bodhisattvas, Jain tirthankaras, and the Hindu deities are discovered. At Mathura, Buddhism, Brahmanism and Jainism had their respective pilgrimage centres, and these religions inspired their own sculptures, images and architectural stupas, or shrines. The artists of Mathura possibly had taken inspiration from the master craftsmen, who were working at Bharhut and Sanchi. In the Mathura sculptural art, nature is freely represented and it expresses the joys and emotions of human beings.

Some of the best Mathura sculptures are of Buddha and bodhisattvas, either in seating or standing posture. Although there are several variations, Buddha is usually shown seated cross-legged on a throne (in some cases *simhasana*, i.e., lion throne), with his right hand raised in the *abhayamudra*. With either shaved head, or curly hair, Buddha is depicted with a coiled *ushnisha* (a protuberance or a topknot of hair). A transparent garment, one end of which is draped across his chest and goes over his left shoulder adorns Buddha's upper body and a *dhoti* covers the lower body part. The transparent textiles covering the body of Buddha or Bodhisattvas was a distinctive feature of Mathura sculptures. A halo surrounds Buddha's head, which symbolises his super-human character. Several images of bodhisattvas, for instance, Matreya, Vajrapani, and Avalokiteshvara are reported from Mathura. In addition, remains of several carved reliefs depicting scenes from Buddha's life are. Buddha and Bodhisattva are generally shown with long-earlobes and a mark of wisdom, i.e., *urna* between the eyebrows.

A large number of Jain images are discovered at Kankali Tila in Mathura. Jain tirthankaras are shown either seated or standing, and these tirthankara images display some similarities with the images of Buddha that are found in Mathura. Like the images of Buddha, Jain tirthankaras are shown with long earlobes and some of them are also depicted with an auspicious mark known as an *urna* between the eyebrows. However, the difference between the Buddha and Jain tirthankara lies in the nudity of the latter. Whereas Buddha is shown wearing a garment, Jain tirthankara are shown without clothes and with emblems on their chest. The Jain Tirthankara, Adinatha or Rishabhanatha is depicted with a couple of loose-locks falling on his shoulder, and another Jain Tirthankara, Suparshvanatha is shown standing under a canopy of serpent hoods. On the pedestal of these images, lions and a Dharmachakra in front are depicted. Generally, devotees including men, women and children are also depicted as worshippers. From the point of view of art, the images of Jain tirthankaras appear stiff and exhibit Jain tirthankara's contemplative mood (Samadhi) and austere penance (*tapas*). Archaeological evidences of very early Jain Stupa are also found at Mathura, which is mentioned in an inscription from Kankali Tila as Devanirmita Stupa (literally, created by deities) and it is dated to the third century BCE. Several images of Jain tirthankaras and beautiful *Ayagapatas* (or Tables of Homage) are found in excavations. The word '*ayaga*' is from Sanskrit '*aryaka*', and it means 'worshipful'. The *Ayagapatas* appear to have been installed round the Jain stupa and devotees worshipped and made offerings on these. On the *Ayagapatas*, images of Jain tirthankaras alongside floral and geometrical designs are depicted and it illustrates the popularity of symbol worship among the Jains.

From Mathura, several stone images of Hindu deities, for instance, Shiva, Vishnu, Surya, Durga and Lakshmi are discovered. Surya is shown seated in an image that is found at Kankali Tila and this image clearly displays a west Asian influence in Surya's moustache, tunic, boots, and ringed crown. Shiva is represented both anthropomorphic and *linga* form, and several *mukha-linga* and *vighraha-lingas* are reported. Shiva is shown alone as well as with his mount, Nandi bull. Images of Shiva with his consort Parvati, and in diverse forms including the Chaturvyuha Shiva (Shiva with his three emanations), Adhanarishvara (the god who is half woman), and Harihara (a combination of Vishnu and Shiva) are found at Mathura. In a similar manner, sculptures included kinship triads depicting Vasudeva-Krishna, his brother Baladeva, and their sister Ekanamsha are found. Even independent images of Vasudeva-Krishna, but also some of Vishnu (four-armed), Vishnu on *garuda*, and in anthropomorphic boar form are discovered at Mathura, which was also an important centre of Vaishnavism. Among the goddesses, images of Matrikas, Yakshis, Lakshmi and Durga are discovered here. In an image of Shri Lakshmi, she is shown standing on two lotus buds that emerge out of a vase of plenty (*purna-ghata*), and it represents the idea of fecundity and nourishment.

Under the Kushana rulers, Mathura was a major commercial and cultural centre, and therefore, the Kushanas established a royal sanctuary here. Remains of this royal sanctuary with the stone images of the Kushana kings are identified at Mat (locally called, Tokri Tila), which is located near Mathura. Like other sculptures, these images are made of Sikri red-sandstone. The heads of both the images, one of Vima Kadphises and second of Kanishka-I are missing. Vima Kadphises is seating on a lion-throne, but Kanishka-I is shown standing majestically. The huge image of Vima Kadphises (even now 6 feet 10 inches) is shattered across the knees, and it is completely fractured through the waist. The king is shown wearing

high, heavy boots and long tunic. On the other hand, Kanishka-I is shown wearing a heavy clothing. Even though the king's arms are lost, but his broken hands appear to be holding a sword and a massive club. The long over-coat falls stiffly from the waist and it spreads almost to the ankles. The thickly padded boots of Kanishka-I are splayed outward on a plinth, upon which stands Kanishka-I. Across the lower area of the image, is carved a Kharoshthi inscription, i.e., 'the great King, the King of Kings, the Son of God, Kanishka'.

Besides the sculptures of deities and rulers, several images of Shalabhanjika women depicted on the railing pillars are discovered. The term Shalabhanjika originally referred to a female sport or gathering of shala flowers by women standing under the shala trees. Women are shown engaged in various garden and water sports. These figures on railings are carved in bold relief and in several planes. The images of Shalabhanjika are found on the gateways of Bharhut and Sanchi stupas (late centuries of the first millennium BCE) and also on the railing pillars of Mathura (dated to the early centuries of the Common Era). In one of the relief panel, a woman is shown standing under an Ashoka tree and bending low Ashoka tree's branch with her left hand touches its stem with the left foot. The scene represents a popular ancient belief in a woman's ability to make an Ashoka tree blossom by kicking it with her left foot. From Mathura, images of folk divinities, for instance, *yakshas*, *yakshis*, *nagas* and *nagis*, which were considered as wish-bestowing folk deities, are also found.

9.4 GANDHARA SCULPTURES

The Gandhara region was divided into two parts, the eastern (*purva*) with Taxila as major city and the western (*apara*) with Pushkalavati as major city, by the Indus River. This region was traversed by the ancient route called Uttarapatha, which connected Mathura to Shakala (Sialkot), Taxila, Pushkalavati, and other cities in the North-west India. In the early centuries of the Common Era, the distinctive sculptural art mainly associated with Buddhism flourished in Gandhara. A large number of images of Buddha and bodhisattva, and narrative scenes in low and high relief connected with Buddhism are unearthed in excavations. Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara (Padmapani) was one of the popular figures that was sculpted by the artists in Gandhara. Other bodhisattvas that are depicted in Gandhara sculptural art are Maitreya, who can be identified by the vase he holds in his left hand, and Padmapani, who holds a lotus. The Gandhara art was first stimulated by the Indo-Greek rulers, but in subsequent centuries it flourished with the patronage of the Kushana rulers and other elites. Initially, for making the Gandhara sculptures blue schist and green phyllite stone was used widely; but from the first century CE onwards, stucco (lime plaster) gradually replaced stone.

The most explicit feature of the Gandhara art is syncretism, which was based on an intricate fusion of the Greco-Roman, Iranian and Indian elements. The themes are predominantly indigenous (i.e., Buddhist), but the style of sculptural art was non-Indian. The Graeco-Roman influence is clearly displayed by the images of the Buddha and bodhisattvas in the facial features and curly wavy hair, the muscular body, and the fine, deeply delineated folds of the robes. The clean-shaved oval face of the Buddha with youthful countenance and spiritual element was inspired from the indigenous Yaksha images. In the Gandhara art, the standing Buddha images are very common. Buddha stands barefoot, and his heavy Roman-toga like robe covers both the shoulders. Sometime, his one hand is shown holding his robe, and the

right hand is bent in protection-granting *abhayamudra*. His curly hair is tied in a knot (*ushnisha*) on the top of his head. Buddha is shown with elongated earlobes. A halo encircling his head, symbolises Buddha's status as a divine or enlightened person. Buddha's seated images are also discovered. Usually, a seated Buddha is shown with the mudras, for instance, the *dharmachakra* mudra (the teaching pose), and the *dhyanamudra* (the meditative pose). In the Gandhara art, some of the Buddha figures have moustache.

Apart from Buddha figures, the Gandhara artists have also carved bodhisattva's images. A bodhisattva is a 'Buddha-to-be', who had delayed his Nirvana in order to help others in their spiritual quest and therefore, Bodhisattva is shown wearing ornaments and royal costumes. A depression in the forehead of Bodhisattva image is shown with the *urna* that was originally set with a precious stone. The fingers of the hand are webbed and the curls of Bodhisattva's hair are straight and parallel and the hair are tied in a topknot. The larger halo behind the head appears to have been an inspiration from Mathura. Since, bodhisattva has not attained Buddhahood, he is shown in a royal attire, which symbolises his active presence in the material world. On the other hand, Buddha due his attainment of enlightenment is shown as a yogi, who had broken all his links with the material world. Contrary to the Buddha figures, therefore, the bodhisattvas are generally shown heavily ornamented. They have elaborate hairdos and/or turbans, and bodhisattvas are also shown wearing sandals. Several of them have been shown with moustache in the Gandhara art.

Sculptures and relief panels that are found attached to the stupas and monasteries usually depict scenes from the life of Buddha and Jataka tales. One of the most important monuments at Taxila is the Dharmarajika Stupa. The original Dharmarajika Stupa was first built in the reign of Ashoka, and then it was enlarged during the reign of the Shaka kings. Around this great Stupa were situated several smaller stupas. Near it remains of a monastery are also found. From different Buddhist sites, several freestanding sculptures and Buddhist statues including scenes from Buddha's life, and statues of bodhisattva have been found in the Gandhara region. Other frequently depicted sculptural themes in the Gandhara art include the image of Yaksha Panchika, and his consort, Hariti. The Gandhara sculptural art terminated by the fifth century CE mainly due to the invasions of a central Asian tribe, the Hunas.

9.5 PAINTINGS

The art of paintings was widely popular in ancient India and in the *Kamasutra* of Vatsayayan, it is included in the list of sixty-four arts. Amongst the best survived remains of paintings of the ancient India, the name of Ajanta shines like a bright sun. Situated in the Aurangabad district of Maharashtra, Ajanta rock-cut caves are associated with Buddhism and these have been located at the inter-regional trade routes. There are 29 rock-cut caves at Ajanta, which had been built between circa 200 BCE and circa sixth century CE. The remains of mural paintings (frescoes) are discovered in the cave number 1, 2, 9, 10, 16, and 17. The first phase of construction belongs to the period of the Satavahana rulers and under the Hinayana school's influence, in this phase rock-cut cave number 9, 10, 12, 13 and 15-A were built. These caves remained occupied by the Buddhist monks in subsequent period. The next phase of construction took place during the reign of the Vakataka king Harisena in the mid-fifth to mid-sixth century CE. In the second phase, the predominant influence of the Mahayana school is

quite evident. The paintings of both the phases (the Satavahana and the Vakataka) are discovered by the scholars at Ajanta.

At Ajanta, the mode of paintings is the tempera and the materials that are used in these paintings are very simple. The five colours, viz., red ochre, yellow ochre, lamp black, lapis lazuli, and white are used by the painters here. Usually, clay mixed with rice husk and gum was applied on the surface of the rock as the first coating. A coat of lime was applied over this first coating, and it was then carefully smoothed and polished. Once this surface was prepared then the paintings were created on it. The outline of images was in dark brown or black colour and subsequently, more colours were used. The Ajanta painting exhibits the mastery of the painters in creating a vast complex of human, animal, and plant form on rock-surfaces and the entire credit for creating such beautiful images go to the free scope to these painter's imagination. The proportions and compositions of individual figures are well balanced. The paintings that are found in Ajanta cover completely the walls, pillars and ceilings. The major themes of the Ajanta paintings are: i) scenes from the life of the Gautam Buddha and bodhisattvas from different Jataka and Avadana stories; ii) the fabulous beings, for instance, *Yakshas*, *Yakshis*, *Nagas*, *Nagis*, *Apsaras*, *Gandharavas* and so forth. These fabulous beings appear in diverse contexts particularly connected with different Jataka and Avadana stories; and iii) natural patterns (floral designs and animals, e.g., elephants, horse) and decorative designs are also depicted in the Ajanta paintings.

Another site from where remains of ancient paintings are discovered is Ellora (Elapura) in the Aurangabad district of Maharashtra. The rock-cut caves began to be built at Ellora in the middle of the sixth century CE, when work at nearby Ajanta was almost finish. Based on the available evidences, Ellora witnessed art activity for nearly four centuries (circa 550- 950 CE) and it was a period, when rock-cut caves dedicated to Buddhist, Jain and Hindus were built here. The remains of paintings are found at the rock-cut Kailasa temple. The paintings at Kailasa are identified on the ceilings and walls of the *mandapas* (porch) and in these paintings not only the iconographic forms but also the beautiful floral designs, animals and birds are shown. However, the majority of the paintings are based on the Hindu mythology, and these are found in a Sabha-Mandapa (also called Rang-Mahala) of the Kailasa temple. Some of the important paintings display the Nataraja-Shiva. The Nataraja having multiple-arms is shown dancing in the *chatura* pose. It is one of the most beautifully preserved paintings at Ellora. Another painting displays a scene of flying gods and their consorts amidst the clouds and they are shown making adoration with their joined hands to Shiva. Their depiction amidst clouds suggests a flying mood. Another panel depicts four-armed Vishnu on his mount Garuda in the air. One panel depict Ganesha on a rat which, in spite of its heavy load, is shown galloping. The depiction of flying Vidyadharas is also noticed. Scenes depicting Shiva riding on a bull with Parvati, and also a Lingodhava (Shiva coming out of a *linga*) are identified in the Kailasa temple.

The evidences of paintings are also found in the Jain rock-cut cave at Ellora. The entire surface of ceiling and wall of this Jain cave was covered with paintings. There are paintings illustrating Jain legends and decorative patterns with beautiful floral, animal, and bird designs. The Jain caves at Ellora are dated to the ninth and tenth centuries CE and belong to the Digambara (sky-clad) sect. Therefore, the figures of Jain tirthankaras are not shown wearing any clothes. The remains of paintings are found here in the cave number 32 ('Indra

Sabha’) and cave number 33 (‘Jagannath Sabha’). The Indra Sabha (Indra’s court) is highly ornate. In one panel on the ceiling, Yama with his consort on a buffalo is depicted, along with his retinue. The depiction of clouds and wide opened eyes of figures is particularly noticeable. In the cave 33 at Ellora, which is known locally as Jagannath Sabha (literally meaning, ‘the court of the lord of the world’), has paintings on the ceiling and also on the walls. These paintings generally comprise geometric patterns and Jain Tirthankaras with their devotees. The Jain rock-cut caves at Ellora were possibly excavated during the reign of the Rashtrakuta king Amoghavarsha (circa 819-881 CE), who had been a great patron of Jainism. It seems the work at the Jain caves continued in subsequent times.

By the time paintings began to be made at Ellora, a change in the techniques of paintings took place. One finds a gradual disappearance of Ajanta like smooth curves and lines (delineating the figures) in the paintings at the rock-cut caves of Ellora. In place of curves and lines, in the Ellora paintings somewhat acute angles became quite prominent. The eyes of the figures are wide open and lower lips are curved. Unlike the Ajanta cave paintings, which exhibit the ‘forthcoming element,’ at Ellora images are arranged laterally in neatly defined panels. If one looks at the paintings at Ajanta, the figures of the paintings seem to be moving inside out towards the spectator. On the other hand, in Ellora paintings images appear to be moving from one side to another side. It means, the ‘forthcoming element’ is entirely missing in Ellora paintings. In Ellora, paintings depiction of clouds particularly provide a sense of movement of images from side to side. Since most of the figures are depicted amidst clouds at Ellora, it gives a sense of weightlessness and flying mood.

9.5.1 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Comment on the material used for making the Mathura and Gandhara sculptures?

2. Explain the term, Shalabhanjika.

3. Where the remains of the Kushana royal sanctuary are found?

4. Write a note on the themes of the Ajanta paintings?

5. Write a note on the paintings found at Kailasa temple at Ellora?

9.6 SUMMARY

Students, the large-scale use of stone by artists began in the Mauryan period for making variety of artefacts and sculptures. It was also the period, when earliest rock-cut caves were built and these had been dedicated to the Ajivika sect. The rock-cut Buddhist caves emerged in central India and Deccan and in some of these caves (e.g., Ajanta, Ellora) remains of beautifully

executed paintings are found. In addition, remains of paintings are also discovered in some of the rock-cut shrines and structural Hindu and Jain temples. The phenomenal growth took place in the field of art and architecture in the post-Mauryan period across Indian subcontinent with the support of the rulers, merchants, and artisans. The sculptural art was perfected in the workshops of Mathura and Gandhara, and images of Buddha, Bodhisattvas, Jain *Tirthankaras*, and Hindu deities were produced and these images exhibited philosophical ideas and mythological themes. By the Gupta period, both rock-cut and structural temples began to be built and some of the excellently preserved remains of these temples are found in central India at places, for instance, Sanchi, Bhumara, Nachna-Kuthara, and Deogarh. As the artists found patronage from the regional polities in the early medieval times, it prepared the ground for the evolution of distinct regional styles of temple architecture.

9.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

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9.8 QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE

9.8.1 LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Highlight the key features of temple architecture.
2. How Nagara style temples are different from the Dravidian type temples? Write an essay.
3. Discuss the salient characteristics of the Mathura sculptures.
4. Discuss the salient characteristics of the Gandhara sculptures.
5. How Ajanta paintings are different from the paintings found at Ellora? Discuss.

9.8.2 SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. What do you know about Besnagar Pillar Inscription?
2. Define the term, Shikhara.
3. Comment on Five Ratha Temple.
4. Write few sentences on Gandhara School of Art?
5. What do you know about Ajanta paintings?

BACHELOR OF ARTS

SEMESTER - I

COURSE: HISTORY OF INDIA: INDUS CIVIZATION TO c. 1200 CE

UNIT 10: INDIA C. 1200: AN OVERVIEW

STRUCTURE

10.0 Learning Objectives

10.1 Introduction

10.2 The Arab and the Ghaznavid Invasions

10.2.1 North-West India

10.2.2 Sind

10.2.3 Kashmir

10.2.4 Check Your Progress I

10.3 The Rajputs and the Ghurid Invasions

10.4 Eastern India, Deccan and the Further South

10.5 Factors responsible for the success of the Turkish armies

10.5.1 Check Your Progress II

10.6 Summary

10.7 Suggested Readings

10.8 Questions for Practice

10.8.1 Long Answer Questions

10.8.2 Short Answer Questions

10.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the political condition of India in the twelfth century CE.
- Acquire information about the Arab invasions.
- Gain knowledge regarding the Turkish invasions.
- Understand the factors responsible for the success of the Turkish armies.

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Students, the twelfth century CE marked the end of the early medieval and beginning of the medieval period. It was a century of political changes that transformed the character of Indian political landscape forever. In the early medieval period, the country was divided into several regional polities, which were involved in perennial conflicts for territorial gains. The boundaries of these regional kingdoms had been fluid and are difficult to demarcate. Having its nucleus more clearly identifiable, the boundaries of the regional kingdoms kept on changing over the period. The changes in their boundaries depended more on the success or failure of these kingdoms' armies in the battlefield than any other factor. The size of the kingdoms also varied and often smaller polities were subordinated to the larger ones. Since these regional polities were involved in a constant struggle with each-others, they failed to put a united front against the invading armies of the Turks in the twelfth century CE. One after another these kingdoms fell, when the central Asian cavalry swarmed across India. This unit studies the political formations that took place in early medieval India and also the consequences of these to understand the decisive political shift that took place in the twelfth century CE in the history of India.

10.2 THE ARAB AND THE GHAZNAVID INVASIONS

The political changes in West Asia from the seventh century CE onwards had a far-reaching impact on the history of India. At the end of the sixth century CE, Prophet Muhammad was born in Arabia and a new religion, Islam was founded. Following the death of Prophet Muhammad, Caliphate came into existence. Under the Caliphs, Islam spread across northern Africa up to Spain in the west. And the Arab armies moved towards Afghanistan and western India in the east. The Arab naval fleets invaded Thana near Bombay in circa 637 CE, and it was followed by military expeditions to Broach (a port in Gujarat) and Debal (a port on the mouth of the river Indus). But, the Arabs could not make any major territorial gain in Western India. On the other hand, the Arabs occupied Persia and several areas in central Asia. The central Asian Turkish tribes that previously professed Buddhism and a variety of Shamanist religions, were converted to Islam. Their conversion into Sunni Islam coincided with the formation of powerful states in central Asia. A small principality called Ghazni in Afghanistan was one amongst several others that rose to prominence as a Turkish polity in the ninth century CE. A Turkish slave from central Asia, Sabuktigin established the Ghazni kingdom and he was involved in a conflict with the Hindu Shahi rulers, who ruled the territory around the Hindukush mountains. The Ghaznavid kingdom comprised some parts of central Asia and Persia (Iran) and it was considered as a major political power in eastern Islam. The Hindu Shahi rulers managed to keep in check the advances of the Ghaznavids for about twenty-five years often with some help of other Indian kings of the north India.

10.2.1 NORTH-WEST INDIA

In the North-western parts of India, the Hindu Shahi dynasty was founded by Kallar (also known as Lalliya) towards the end of the ninth century CE. The capital of the Hindu Shahi

kingdom was Und, which has been identified with Udabhandapura, or Waihand or Ohind on the bank of River Indus (now in Pakistan). Jaipal (Jayapala) was an important ruler of this dynasty, and he ruled a large territory from Lamghan (in Afghanistan) to Kangra (in Himachal Pradesh). The areas that he controlled supported minimum of agriculture, because of which the main income of the Hindu Shahis came from the trading caravans and local pastoral communities. In the same region, variety of religions, for instance, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Puranic Hinduism, and subsequently, Islam were practiced by the people. The prevalence of some central Asian Shamanic cults among some sections of this region's population is also suggested by scholars. As the Hindu Shahis rose to power, their kingdom became a buffer zone between the northern India and Afghanistan. The Hindu Shahi king Jaipal fought several battles against Sabuktigin, the ruler of Ghazni, but failed to keep his territory intact. As a result, Sabuktigin occupied areas in the neighborhood of Lamghan. After Sabuktigin's death, his son Mahmud came into power in 998 CE at the age of 27 years. Jaipal was badly defeated by Mahmud in 1001 CE near the city of Peshawar, and after this humiliating defeat, Jaipal burnt himself on a funeral pyre. Next ruler of the Hindu Shahi kingdom was Anandapala, who ascended the throne in about 1002 CE. But, the new ruler too failed to keep in check the Turkish incursions, and Anandapala's army was routed at the battle of Waihand in 1008 CE. Trilochanpala ascended the throne and he continued to resist the Turkish advances with the help of king Samgramaraja of Kashmir. Trilochanpala approached other rulers of India for help against Mahmud of Ghazni. He even though found some support from the Chandella ruler of Kalinjar and several others, but Trilochanpala lost the battle fought on the river Rahib (i.e., Ramganga). After his assassination in 1021-1022 CE, his son Bhimapala came into power. But he could not revive the fortunes of the Hindu Shahis and died in 1026 CE, with which also ended the Hindu Shahi dynasty.

The loss of the Hindu Shahi was actually the gain of the Turkish armies, which ravaged and plundered several cities and temples across north India under their leader, Mahmud of Ghazni. Once the Hindu Shahis were eliminated, one by one other north Indian rulers, for instance, the Gurjara-Pratiharas of Kanauj, the Chandellas of Khajuraho, and several other Rajput rulers, were also defeated and their treasuries were looted. Even Multan, which was under a Muslim ruler also met the same fate. Mahmud led seventeen military expeditions into Indian subcontinent over a period of twenty-seven years (from 1000 to 1027 CE) with an aim to plunder cities and temples. Under him, the Turkish armies invaded Shahiyas, Multan, Bhatinda, Narayanpur, Thaneshwar, Kanauj, Mathura, Kalinjar, and Somnath. At Somnath, the Turkish soldiers killed several thousand brahmans and smashed the Shiva-*lingam*. It appears that the final campaign of Mahmud was against the Jats. Mahmud undertook these Indian expeditions in the harvest season. Arrival of the Turkish armies in harvest season facilitated easy availability of food and supplies. Since the rivers of Punjab used to be flooded in monsoon, the route of the Turkish army could have been cut off. To avoid this situation, Mahmud always returned back to Afghanistan before the onset of the monsoon rains.

The Turkish soldiers particularly targeted the Hindu temples, which were the repository of ample wealth. Desecration of the temples also allowed him to project himself as a champion iconoclast. Here it is noticeable that temple desecration during his India campaigns was motivated more by Mahmud's lust for wealth than any communal sentiment. According

to Romila Thapar²⁵, plundering of temples was part of the political designs of the early medieval polities in India, and often the Indian rulers desecrated the temples of their enemy kings to commemorate their victory in battles. For instance, the Rashtrakuta king, Indra III, who defeated the Pratihara armies in a battle, is mentioned to have destroyed the Pratihara temple in the early tenth century CE to establish his victory. In a same way, the Pratihara king of Malwa, Subhatavarman, is mentioned to have destroyed a Jain temple and a mosque (built for the Arab traders) to proclaim his victory of the Chalukyas. Somnath which was a major port-town and center of Shaivism had been immensely rich, and therefore, Mahmud plundered the city and destroyed the Shiva temple in 1026 CE. Such iconoclasm of Mahmud earned him praise and a title from the Caliph of Baghdad and he was recognized as a champion of Islam. Along with the invading armies of Mahmud came Al-Beruni into India. He was ordered to spend about ten years in India by Mahmud, who wanted to gather information about Indian people, culture and sciences.

The book, *Tahqiq-i-Hind* was the outcome of Al-Beruni's stay in India and this book is an important source of information of Indian traditions, knowledge system, social norms, religion and philosophy. Mahmud also issued coins that according to Romila Thapar²⁶, carried the invocation at the beginning of the Quran and the Sanskrit translation of it called Prophet Mohammad as an incarnation (*avatara*) of the God. This concept was not acceptable to Islamic orthodoxy, which recognized Prophet Mohammad only as the messenger of Allah. On the other hand, his successors issued coins with the image of Lakshmi. The wealth that Mahmud looted in India was used to transform his capital city of Ghazni into one of the most prosperous political centers in the contemporary world of Islam. In his court, renowned Persian scholars, for instance, Firdausi (author of the *Shahnama*) and Al-Beruni received patronage. Nevertheless, the military expeditions of Mahmud that brought much wealth to Ghazni, did not bring much territorial gain. The only exception is the Hindu Shahi kingdom. The extinction of the Hindu Shahis was followed by the annexation of some parts of their kingdom by Mahmud in the North-west India.

10.2.2 SIND

Mahmud of Ghazni in spite of undertaking numerous military expeditions did not aim to annex and rule the northern India. The case of Arabs was entirely different. From the very beginning they desired to occupy Indian territories. In the seventh century CE, Sind was under a brahmana dynasty, which was founded by a person named Chach. After Chach, his son Dahar or Dahir ascended the throne. During the reign of Dahir, the Arabs under Muhammad ibn-Kasim invaded Debal (a famous port on the mouth of Indus) and captured it. Subsequently, he defeated and killed Dahir in a battle near Raor (712 CE) and soon after it, Muhammad ibn-Kasim occupied Bahmanabad, Alor and Multan. In this way, entire lower valley of Indus was brought under the Arabs. Under another leader Junaid, the Arabs invaded Kutch, Saurashtra and Malwa, but their advances were thwarted by the Pratihara king Nagabhata I and the Chalukya king

²⁵ Romila Thapar, *The Penguin History of Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300*, New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2002, pp. 427-429.

²⁶ Romila Thapar, *The Penguin History of Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300*, New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2002, p. 432.

Pulakeshin II. In the ninth century CE, the Arab rulers of Sind declared their independence and founded new dynasties. The population of Sind at that time mainly comprised the followers of Buddhism, Brahmanism and possibly of Shamanism. The significant presence of Buddhists and Jains is also suggested in the lower Indus plain. The Arabs had mainly been interested in trade and commerce, and therefore, they tolerated the presence of non-Muslims. As a result, the Buddhism continued and stupas remained present with the support of local population. The Sun temple of Multan was famous and it received patronage from local traders and artisans. After arrival of the Arabs, both Multan and Mansura also became important centers of the Shia'h and the Isma'ili sects, both of which also endorsed commercial activities. However, the followers of these sects were despised by the orthodox Sunni Muslims because the Shia'h and the Isma'ili were break away sects from conservative Islam. Sind was under the Arabs, when Multan was plundered by Mahmud of Ghazni. Not only the wealth of Multan, but also the presence of breakaway sects of Islam drew the attention of Mahmud, who was an orthodox Sunni and considered the Shia'hs as well as the Ismai'lis as heretics. Both, the Arab and the Ghaznavid invasions of North-west India did not cause any major political change in the mainland India, which remained divided among different regional polities.

10.2.3 KASHMIR

In Kashmir, first Karkota dynasty emerged in the eighth century CE under Durlabhvardhan, and amongst the important rulers of this dynasty are included Lalitaditya and Vajraditya. Lalitaditya is credited with a victory over the king Yashovarman of Kanauj. In a same manner, Jayapida Vinayaditya is mentioned to have defeated the rulers of Gauda and Kanauj. However, these attempts to occupy the Ganga valley failed due to their kingdom's base being too far away in the Kashmir valley. Yet, they occupy some parts of North-west and Punjab primarily to gain a firm control over the trans-regional trade routes that traversed across these regions. After the decline of the Karkota polity in about 855-56 CE, the Utpala dynasty was founded by Avantivarman. The *Rajatarangiri*, which is a history of Kashmir and has been composed in the twelfth century CE by Kalhana, informs us about the major hydrological projects that were undertaken by minister Suyya during the reign of Avantivarman. The bed of river Jhelum was cleared and deepened to protect the nearby villages from seasonal floods. In a same way, embankments and dams were built on the river, and even the course of both the rivers, Jhelum and Indus was shifted marginally to reclaim land for cultivation. Such changes helped in the expansion of agriculture and it stabilized the Kashmir polity. Shankaravarman, who was the son and successor of Avantivarman, extended the boundaries of Kashmir. He came into conflicts with the king Bhoja I of Kanauj and Lalliya Shahi of Und on the Indus.

In the tenth century CE, two women rulers, viz., Queen Sugandha and Queen Didda occupied the Kashmir throne. They had to face resistance from the powerful factions constituted by the Tantrins and the Ekangas of the Kashmir polity. The Tantrins were a body of foot-soldiers, who formed a strong group that interfered in the making and unmaking of the kings. Similar was the group of the Ekangas, who were royal bodyguards and had an influential position in the Kashmir polity. To counter the power of these political factions, Queen Didda mobilized the help of the Damaras, who were resourceful landlords in Kashmir. However, the internal political conflicts had considerably weakened the power of Utpala rulers and therefore,

after Queen Didda the Lohara dynasty under Samgramaraja came into power in the early eleventh century CE. It was during the rule of Utpala dynasty, northern India was invaded by Mahmud of Ghazni and Muhammad Ghori. Kashmir escaped from the wrath of the Turkish armies in the eleventh and twelfth century CE, but it eventually succumbed to the expanding power of the Delhi Sultanate in the fourteenth century CE.

10.2.4 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS I

1. Who founded the Ghazni kingdom?

2. Mention the name of Hindu Shahi's capital?

3. Who was the last king of the Hindu Shahis?

4. Who authored the *Tahqiq-i-Hind*?

5. Who was Dahir?

10.3 THE RAJPUTS AND THE GHURID INVASIONS

In the ninth and the tenth century CE, several Rajput dynasties established their kingdoms in different parts of northern, western and central India. Scholars have explained the origin of the Rajputs differently. For some, they had emerged from central Asian tribes that had entered India along with the Hunas or the Gurjaras. Contrary to it, the origin of the Rajputs from obscure tribal background is also suggested. As the tribal chiefs were conquered, they managed to acquire kshatriya status with the help of brahmana priests and thus, several Rajput ruling houses came into existence. Some of the Rajput clans associated with the tribal groups, such as, Pulindas, Bhils, Shabaras, Meenas, Medas and Ahirs is indicated by literary and epigraphic evidences. From it, the origin of the Rajputs either with the help of these tribal groups or from these tribal groups is quite evident. As the Rajput kingdoms evolved, their rulers began to create fictive genealogies with the help of brahmana priests. In this way, they began tracing their origin from either the *Suryavamsha* (Solar lineage) or the *Chandravamsa* (Lunar lineage). Since, both the *Suryavamsha* and the *Chandravamsa* appear in the Puranic literature as respectable kshatriya lineages, the Rajput clans made attempts to connect themselves with these to claim a respectable kshatriya identity.

In the Bardic traditions, thirty-six Rajput clans are mentioned. But the list of these clans varies in different sources. Among the most prominent Rajput clans, the names of the Pratiharas (or Pariharas), the Chahamanas (or Chauhans), the Chalukyas (different from the

Chalukyas of Deccan) also known as Solankis and the Paramaras (or Pawars) are included. The origin of these four Rajput clans was embedded in a Hindu myth. It was maintained that the Rishi Vasishtha had a *kamadhenu* cow, which could grant all the wishes of an individual. This cow was stolen by another Rishi, named Vishvamitra. In order to take his cow back, Vasishtha performed a grand sacrifice at Mount Abu and from the sacrificial fire, a hero came out. This hero was named Paramara (literally, 'slayer of enemy'), who brought back the stolen *kamadhenu* cow to Vasishtha. From this hero then came into existence the Paramara dynasty. Gradually, the Rajputs clans of the Pratiharas, the Chalukyas, the Paramaras and the Chahamanas were identified as 'Agnikula Rajputs'. And the origin of all these four Rajput clans was traced from the sacred fire of the sacrifice. In Romila Thapar's view, 'the fire-rite had a purificatory symbolism and the insistence on the *agnikula* story is significant in view of the ambiguous origin of those involved.'²⁷

The four Rajput clans, viz., the Pratiharas, the Chalukyas, the Paramaras and the Chahamanas, dominated the early Rajput activities in the northern, central and western India. These all had arose from the ruins of the Gurjara-Pratihara kingdom. The Gurjara-Pratihara dynasty was founded by a brahmana Harichandra in the area of Jodhpur in Rajasthan. They claimed their origin from the epic hero Lakshmana, who had served as a doorkeeper (*pratihara*) to his elder brother Rama during the performance of some rituals. In the eighth century CE, the Gurjara-Pratihara king Nagabhata successfully resisted the Arab incursions. His triumph over the Arabs was followed by the expansion of Nagabhata's authority over parts of Malwa, Rajasthan and Gujarat. Later, Kanauj (also known as Mahodaya) became the capital of the Gurjara-Pratiharas. King Bhoja was amongst the great rulers of this ruling house and he ascended the throne in about 836 CE. In the travel account of an Arab merchant, Sulaiman, the Gurjara-Pratiharas under Bhoja (mentioned as Juzr) are described as great military power of northern India. The Gurjara-Pratiharas were involved in a power-struggle with the Rashtrakutas of Deccan and the Pala rulers of Eastern India. The conflicts with the Rashtrakutas and the Palas, exhausted the resources of the Gurjara-Pratihara to an extent that they utterly failed to resist the Turkish invaders in the early eleventh century CE. Their capital was plundered by Mahmud of Ghazni. Then after, the power of the Gurjara-Pratiharas disintegrated and they were succeeded by several local polities including the Chahamanas in Rajasthan, the Chalukyas in Gujarat and the Paramaras in Malwa. Other notable Rajput kingdoms of this period were the Chandellas of Bundelkhand, the Kalachuris of Tripuri, the Guhilas of Mewar, the Gahadavala of Kanauj, and the Tomars of Delhi. During the reign of these Rajput clans, India was invaded by Muhammad of Ghur in the twelfth century CE.

The kingdom of Ghazni severely weakened by the mid-twelfth century CE and it gave way to the rise of Ghur as a new political center in western Afghanistan. Muhammad of Ghur occupied Multan by 1175 CE. Soon he attacked Punjab, where the last successor of Mahmud of Ghazni had taken refuge. In this way, he vanquished the last descendent of Mahmud in 1186 CE. Punjab then became the base of Muhammad of Ghur, who desired to annex the Indian territories and it brought him in a direct conflict with the Rajput rulers of India. By this time, Delhi had been brought under the Chahamanas and Prithviraj Chauhan was

²⁷ Romila Thapar, *The Penguin History of Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300*, New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2002, p. 420.

ruling it at the time of Turkish invasions. In the first battle at Tarain, north of Delhi, Muhammad of Ghur was defeated by the Rajput confederacy under the leadership of Prithviraj Chauhan in 1191 CE. Another battle was fought in the following year (1192) at Tarain, in which Prithviraj Chauhan was defeated and his kingdom of Delhi was occupied by the forces of Muhammad. In the following years, several other Rajput rulers lost to the invading armies of the Turks. The Gahadavala dynasty was defeated in 1193 CE and both Kanauj and Varanasi were captured. Soon the cities of Gwalior (in Madhya Pradesh), Ajmer (in Rajasthan) and Anhilwara (in Gujarat) were conquered by the Turkish armies and several Rajput kingdoms were eliminated.

10.4 EASTERN INDIA, DECCAN AND THE FURTHER SOUTH

In the eastern India, the Pala dynasty had been founded in the eight century CE by a person named Gopala, who was elected by the local people to protect them from prevailing anarchy in the region. The boundaries of the Pala kingdom expanded during the reign of Gopala's successor, Dharmapala (circa 770-810 CE). Dharmapala in spite of suffering initial defeats at the hands of the Gurjara-Pratihara and the Rashtrakuta kings, managed to occupy Kanauj, where he appointed his puppet king Chakrayudha on the throne. The core of his kingdom was constituted by the region of Bihar and Bengal. According to the Tibetan traditions, Dharmapala established the Buddhist monasteries at Vikramashila (in Bhagalpur district, Bihar), Somapuri (in Rajshahi district, West Bengal), and Odantapuri (in Bihar). Clearly, the Palas patronized Buddhism in eastern India. For a brief period, Assam (known as Kamrupa) was under the Pala ruler Devapala (circa 810-850 CE). It was during the reign of Mahipala -I (circa 977-1027 CE), when the Ghaznavid armies raided Mathura, Kanauj and Varanasi. But the Pala control over Bihar and Bengal remained firm and Mahipala-I faced no major threat from the Turk invaders. However, the late eleventh century CE witnessed the Kaivartta rebellion, which shook the foundations of the Pala authority in north Bengal. About this rebellion, poet Sandhyakaranandin talks about in the *Ramacharita* - a biography of the Pala king Ramapala (circa 1077-1127 CE). It is mentioned that this Kaivartta rebellion was crushed by Ramapala with the help of his subordinates. Due to their continuous involvement in power struggle with the Gurjara-Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas, their resources were exhausted and the Pala authority eventually ended in the mid-twelfth century CE by Vijaya Sena.

After the Palas, the Sena dynasty under Vijaya Sena came into power in Bengal. The Senas possibly had migrated to Eastern India from Karnataka and the foundation of the ruling line was laid by Samanta Sena, who was the grandfather of Vijaya Sena. Vijaya Sena expanded his authority in parts of Bihar, Assam and Odisha. During the reign of Lakshmana Sena, the Ghurid armies under the military commander, Bakhtiyar Khalji, invaded the Eastern India either towards the end of the 12th century CE or in the early years of the 13th century CE. The Senas failed to put a strong resistance and Lakshmana Sena had to run away to save his life. Even though the sons of Lakshmana Sena, namely Vishvarupa Sena and Keshava Sena continued the struggle against the Turkish armies, both Bihar and Bengal had gone out of their hands to the Ghurids.

The Deccan and the far South remained outside the influence of the Ghaznavid and the Ghurid invasions in the eleventh-twelfth century CE, but the same period registered the disintegration of the kingdoms of the Western Chalukyas of Deccan and the Cholas of the

Tamil land. By the middle of the twelfth century CE, the Western Chalukyas declined. In Maharashtra and Karnataka, two vassal polities of the Western Chalukyas rose to power and they carved out their independent kingdoms. First of these was the Hoysalas of Dvar Samudra (modern Helebid) in southern Karnataka and second was the Yadavas of Devagiri in Maharashtra. The Hoysalas gained prominence during the reigns of Vishnuvardhana and his grandson, Vira Ballala- II. The Yadava kingdom of Devagiri was founded by Bhillama and for some time, Devagiri had become a famous center of learning and literary activities. In eastern Deccan, the Kakatiyas came into prominence under Prolaraja II with their capital at Warangal (in present day Telangana) in the thirteenth century CE. Their kingdom flourished during the reigns of king Ganapati and his daughter, Rudramma. It was during the rule of Rudramma, the Venetian traveler, Marco Polo visited the Kakatiya kingdom. On the other hand, the Chola kingdom declined and far South witnessed a brief revival of the Pandya authority at the same time. All three – the Hoysalas, the Yadavas and the Kakatiyas, however dominated the Deccan in the thirteenth century CE, they failed before the expanding power of the Delhi Sultanate simultaneously in the early fourteenth century CE. Same was the fate of the Pandyas of Madurai, who were also crushed by the Sultanate armies.

10.5 FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SUCCESS OF THE TURKISH ARMIES

Among the several factors that have been responsible for the success of Mahmud of Ghazni and Muhammad of Ghur was the political conditions of northern India in around 1000 CE. The perennial triangular conflicts between the Gurjara-Pratiharas, the Palas and the Rashtrakutas exhausted their resources. Particularly, the strength of the Gurjara-Pratiharas was severely weakened. No major political power was present in northern India that could resist the invading armies of Mahmud of Ghazni. The greatest power of that time was the Cholas, but they were located too far away from the political scene of North-western India. They hardly took any note of the Turkish invasions. Another reason was Indian's lack of interest in cultures and communities of foreign background. According to Al-Beruni, the Hindus believed in their own superiority and hardly ever they tried to learn from the others. Indians, who travelled to different parts of Asia for trade and other works, did not record about what they experienced and observed. They have remained silent about the politics and kingdoms that thrived in regions away from India. The Indians were self-centered and considered all other cultures and communities inferior to them. The attitude of Indian travelers was clearly in contrast to the people of China and Arabia, whose travelogues are filled with details of Indian culture, politics and settlements.

Indian rulers heavily depended upon the war-elephants, and they did not exploit the tactics of a cavalry to the fullest. Unlike elephants, the central Asian horses facilitated the swift movement of Turkish armies. Mounted archers played a key role in the armies of Mahmud of Ghazni and Muhammad of Ghur, and Indian soldiers failed to resist the attack of the Turkish cavalry. The Turks preferred to capture forts, which provided them a strategic advantage against the Indian soldiers. These forts became the protected settlements for the Turks, who used these as base for future expeditions. Forced into defensive positions, the Indian soldiers also failed to use Guerrilla warfare against the marching armies of the Turks. Furthermore, the Indian armies comprised troops supplied by several subordinates (*samantas*), and these troops

were often loyal to their own chief. It created several factions in the Indian armies that failed to put a united front against the invaders. Indian rulers were aware of the insecure Hindukush Mountain range of the North-west India, which was frequently breached by the central Asian invaders through the centuries. Time and again invading armies entered into India through the mountain passes of the Hindukush, but none of the Indian rulers ever attempted to guard these by constructing a series of fortifications along the passes. The defense of the India's North-western frontier always remained in the hands of mountain tribes and local rulers, who usually controlled these passes to derive an income from the trans-regional trade.

10.5.1 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS II

1. Write a short note on the *Agnikula* Rajputs.

2. Which Gurjara-Pratihara king successfully resisted the Arab invasion?

3. Who was Prithviraj Chauhan?

4. Who was Muhammad of Ghur?

5. Who was Bakhtiyar Khalji?

10.6 SUMMARY

Students, the twelfth century CE was a century of far-reaching changes in India. In the Indian historiography, this century is treated as a dividing line between the ancient/early medieval and the medieval periods. In the colonial and nationalist histories, the former period was labelled as the Hindu and the latter period as the Muslim in order to highlight the cultural divide between the two. Such religion-based approach to the periodization of Indian history has been questioned by scholars, who argue against the idea of a sharp cultural break between the ancient/early medieval and medieval period. In recent decades, an emphasis is laid on the cultural continuities from the ancient/early medieval to the medieval period with some changes in the nature of the state system. No doubt, the Delhi Sultanate that came into existence in 1206 CE under Qutb-ud-din Aibak, had characteristically been different from the indigenous political systems. But, owing to a gradual absorption of several local Hindu elites (e.g., *rana*, *khut*, *muqqadam*, *chaudhuri*, *thakur*) in its administration, the Delhi Sultanate was not entirely alien to the India society. The new rulers adopted diverse methods including issuance of bilingual coinage and marriages in local Hindu elite families among other to integrate both land and people of the conquered territories in their political edifice. Therefore, the Ghaznavid

and the Ghurid invasions need to be studied as a part of political processes that culminated in the twelfth century CE and gave birth to a new political order in the subsequent centuries.

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10.8 QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE

10.8.1 LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Write an essay on the political condition of India on the eve of the 12th century CE.
2. Discuss the key features of the Arab invasions.
3. How the Turkish invasions under Mahmud of Ghazni changed the political map of northern India? Discuss.
4. Write an essay on the origin of the Rajputs.
5. Discuss the factors responsible for the success of the Turkish armies.

10.8.2 SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Define the term Caliphate?
2. Who was Alberuni?
3. Write few sentences on the Hindu Shahi king Jaipal?
4. What do you know about battle of Wahind?
5. Who was Kalhana?

GLOSSARY

ahimsa : non injury, non- violence

ajivika : an ancient religious sect, associated with Makkhali Gosala

agraharas: land or village gifted by a king

avatars: an incarnation of the god Vishnu

bodhisattva: a future Buddha

brahmacharya: the stage of celibate student hood in the ashrama scheme

brahmadiyas: land gifted to Brahmanas, generally by kings

chaitya: a Buddhist shrine

cowries: marine shells, once used as currency from ancient times

dhamma: a Pali word (Sanskrit, dharma), referring to the ideal conduct of an individual living in society

dhamma-mahamatas: a new cadre of officials created by Ashoka to propagate *dhamma*

digambara: literally ‘sky-clad’; a Jaina sect

gahapati: a land owner

gana-rajya :oligarchy/chiefdom

garbha-griha :literally, the womb-house the sanctum sanctorum of the Hindu temple

grama: village

guru: teacher or guide

hinayana: the Lesser Vehicle, a major school of Buddhism

jana :people, subjects, tribe, clan

janapada: literally, where the clan or tribe places its foot; the territory initially occupied by a clan and which could evolve into a state

jati :caste; a social segment identified by membership through birth, marriage circles, occupation, custom and location

jataka: one of the 15 books containing stories of the previous births of the Lord Buddha

jina: literally ‘victor’; a Jaina Saint

kaliyuga: the fourth and final age of the great cycle of time, the mahayuga

kama: desire

karma: action or deed, and also used in the theory of future births being conditioned by the deeds of the present life

kayastha: a caste, chiefly of scribes

kshatriya: the second in rank among the four *varnas*; included a warrior aristocracy, landowners and royalty

kshetra: field

kula: family
kuladevi :clan goddess
kumaramatya: a title of honour, often used for a prince
lingam: the phallic symbol, associated with the worship of Shiva
mahadanas: great gifts/donations
mahajanapadas: the great states of the 6th century BCE
maharajadhiraja: great king of kings
mahasamanta: ruler or governor but subordinate to an overlord
mahasammata: ‘the great elect,’ the person elected to rule and signifying the origin of government in Buddhist theory
Mahasenapati: commander-in-chief of the army
Mahayana: the Great Vehicle, a major school of Buddhism
Mandalam: an administrative unit
Matha: a hospice or a monastery attached to a temple and often a centre of education
mlechchha: outside the pale of caste society/impure
moksha: liberation from rebirth
nadu: a territorial unit in south India
nataka: dance, mime, drama
nataraja: the dancing Shiva
nigama: a market or a ward of a city
nirvana: release from the cycle of rebirth
nishka: a unit of value, later used for a coin
niyoga: levirate; the ancient custom of a widow cohabiting with her brother-in-law or another man in order to produce sons
panchayat: an administrative body, said to be a council of five
pradesha: an administrative unit
pratiloma: literally, against the direction of the body hair, therefore against the hierarchy of castes in relation to marriage
purohita: priest and mentor, especially in families of status
rashtra: country/administrative unit
rajadhiraja: royal title
rajasuya: sacrifice performed to enhance royal or chiefly status
rajuka: official designation
sabha: an assembly, usually small and of special persons
samiti: an assembly

sangha: frequently used to indicate the organisational Order in the Shramanic religions and more commonly in Buddhism

sati: a virtuous woman; one who has immolated herself on the funeral pyre of her husband

shatamana: coin

shikhara: tower surmounting the sanctum of the temple

shraddha: worship of the ancestors at a particular time of the year

shreni: formal association of members of a profession; a guild

shudra: the fourth and lowest *varna*

shvetambara: literary, clad in white, one of the major Jaina schools

soma: the plant from which the juice was prepared and drunk in a ritual context during some Vedic sacrifices, and thought to be a hallucinogen

stri-dhana: the wealth of a woman given specifically to her own use

stupa tumulus-like structure containing relics of the Buddha or others and worshipped by Buddhists

suryavamsha: solar lineage

theravada: an early Buddhist sect

tirtha : literally a ford, more frequently a place of pilgrimage

tirthankara :l iterally, a ford-maker; the teachers of Jainism

ur: village assembly in south India

varna-ashrama-dharma: upholding a society organized on the basis of *varna* and the social and sacred duties that this entailed

vihara: Buddhist monastery

vina: lyre

vishaya: an administrative unit

vishti: forced labour or labour in lieu of a tax, often compared to the corvée

vaishya: the third status in the *varna* hierarchy concerned theoretically with raising livestock, cultivation and trade

valanadu: administrative unit in South India

vana: forest

varna: literally, colour; used for the four castes often as ritual statuses; the reference was not to skin pigmentation since in one text the four colours listed are white, yellow, red and black

yaksha: a demi-god

yoni: female organs of generation

CHRONOLOGY

HARAPPAN CIVILIZATION

- c. 3200-2600 BCE - Early Harappa Period
- c. 2600-1900 BCE - Mature Harappa Period
- c. 1900-1300 BCE - Late Harappa Period

THE VEDIC AGE

- c. 1500-1000 BCE - Early Vedic Period
- c. 1000-600 BCE - Later Vedic Period

THE AGE OF MAHAJANAPADAS

- c. 567-487 BCE - Gautama Buddha
- c. 539/40 – 467/68 BCE – Vardhman Mahavira
- c. 327-325 BCE - Invasion of Alexander of Macedonia

THE MAURYAN EMPIRE

- c. 324-300 BCE – Chandragupta Maurya
- c. 300- 273 BCE - Bindusara
- c. 273-232 BCE - Ashoka
- c. 185 or 187 BCE - End of the Mauryan Dynasty

POST MAURYAN PERIOD

- c. 58 BCE – Beginning of the Vikrama Era
- c. 78 CE – Beginning of the Shaka Era

THE GUPTA PERIOD

- c.320- 335 CE - Chandragupta- I
- c. 335-375 CE - Samudragupta
- c. 375-414 CE - Chandragupta II
- c. 399- 414 CE – Chinese Buddhist pilgrim, Fa Xian in India
- c. 414-454 CE - Kumaragupta I
- c. 454-467 CE - Skandagupta
- c. 550 CE - End of the Gupta Dynasty

EARLY MEDIEVAL PERIOD

- c. 606-647 CE – Pushyabhuti king Harshavardhana
- c. 609- 642 CE – Chalukya king Pulakeshin- II
- c. 555- 590 CE – Pallava king Simhavishnu
- c. 630 – 668 CE – Pallava king Narasimhavarman I Mahamalla
- c. 700- 728 CE – Pallava king Narasimhavarman II Rajasimha
- c. 893 CE – End of the Pallava Dynasty
- c. 712 CE – Arab Invasion of Sind
- c. 770- 810 CE – Pala king Dharmapala
- c. 810- 850 CE – Pala king Devapala
- c. 977 – 1027 CE – Pala king Mahipala-I
- c. 985- 1014 CE – Chola king Rajaraja
- c. 1014-1044 CE – Chola king Rajendra -I
- c. 1025/26 CE – The Kadaram expedition of the Chola naval fleets
- c. 1191 CE – First Battle of Tarain (Muhammad Ghuri was defeated)
- c. 1192 CE – Second Battle of Tarain (Prithviraj Chauhan was defeated)