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# Political Structure and State Formation in Ancient India

MAHCC104

**CENTRE FOR DISTANCE AND ONLINE EDUCATION**



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**POLITICAL STRUCTURE AND  
STATE FORMATION IN  
ANCIENT INDIA  
(MAHCC104)**

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**Unit-1**  
**Chapter-I**  
**SOURCES OF ANCIENT INDIAN HISTORY:**  
**Literary, Archaeological and Foreign Accounts.**

**Structure**

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### **1.1.0. Objectives**

After the study of this chapter, the learners can understand:

- *the nature and significance of literary source for reconstruction of history;*
- *the nature and importance of archaeological sources for writing of history*
- *foreign accounts and their importance for the writing of Indian history.*

### **1.1.1. Introduction**

India has a rich cultural heritage. The progress of man in the past is the subject matter of history. In order to understand the present India we have to trace back its roots in Ancient India. However, to reconstruct its history is a difficult task for the historians. Especially difficulty faced in the matter of types and nature of sources. In order to study the life of Indian people in the past, we have to rely on different sources of Indian history. Although there is an absence of any historical chronicle, it does not mean that Indians lacked in historical sense. The information derived from literary sources and corroborated by archaeological evidence helps us to form a complete picture of our ancient times. The sources for the reconstruction of ancient Indian history can be studied under three broad headings namely (1) Literary sources (2) Archaeological sources and (3) Accounts of the Foreign historians and travellers.

### **1.1.2. Sources of Ancient Indian History**

'Availability and decipherment' are two limitations regarding the sources of Ancient Indian History. Those were the British administrative officers who, for their administrative needs, first paid attention to Ancient Indian history. Like, Sir William Jones (judge), in 1784, founded 'Asiatic Society of Bengal', for learning, understanding and publishing sources of Ancient Indian History. Then, after the formation of Archaeological Survey of India in 1861, search for archaeological sources get legal-momentum. Then, after the discovery of Indus civilization in 1922, boosted love for ancient Indian history among Indians. Then, until now, various types of sources are coming forth and their interpretation is becoming more challenging job for the historians of Ancient India. This chapter will analyze the importance of various sources for the reconstruction of Ancient Indian History

### **1.1.3. Literary/written sources**

The literary/written sources to reconstruct Ancient Indian history can be classified among three major categories, (i) Religious, (ii) Secular and (iii) Scientific. It also comprised of some different kinds of sources like (iv) Sangam literature and (v) travelogues of foreign travelers.

#### **1.1.3.1. Religious literature**

Religion was the backbone of society of Ancient World. India was not an exception. Hence, we find large amount of canonical/religious literature of various religions, prevalent in Ancient India. These throw light on the, along with religious, socio-economic aspects and political thought and ideology of the period under study. However, such sources should be used with caution. Because, first of all, most of the religious sources are retained through oral traditions and put into writing, hundreds of years after their actual creation. Besides, 'what-we-have-now' are the editions of actual writings. Secondly, religious literatures were mainly written to provide guidance with an idealist approach. Hence, whatever written is there, is 'dos and don'ts' kind of nature and not 'as-actual'. Sometimes, the body of works like Puranas, though written in 4th century AD onwards, written as if they were created 1000 years before and prophesying something about 1000 years after! Hence, with tools like internal and external criticism, a historian can make use of these sources and reconstruct the history of Ancient India.

#### **1.1.3.1.1. Vedic/Hindu canonical literature:**

It comprised of sources like four Vedas, Brahmins, Aranyakas, Upanishads, Shad-darshanas, Shad-angas, Sutras, Smritis and Puranas.

**Vedas:** The Aryans have created four Vedas; Rig, Yajus, Sam, Atharva. The Vedas (from Vid means to know) were basically compilation of prayers of Aryans for the Gods, which were mainly the powers in nature. According to Aryans, the Vedas were heard (and not created by men), hence these were called 'Shrutis' and 'a-paurusheya (not created by any man)'. The Vedas are also called as 'Samhita'.

**Rig-Veda:** Rig-Veda is the earliest among four Vedas. It is comprised of 10 mandalas and 1028 suktas. These were prayers to the gods like Indra, Varuna, Agni, Parjanya, Vayu, Marut etc. It gives us information regarding socio-economic, religious, political condition of Early Aryans, located in the area of Sapta-Sindhus. For example, the 'Purushsukta' of Its 10th mandala depicts the origin of Varnasystem in India.

**Yajur-Veda:** It comprised the prayers to be recited while performing sacrifices or yajnya. Actually, the major parts of the prayers are borrowed from the Rig-Veda, itself. It has two parts, Shukla and Krishna and six other samhitas. The Vajasaneyi Samhita of Yajurveda throws ample lights on various Vedic sacrifices.

**Sam-Veda:** It comprised the prayers to teach how to recite the prayers while performing sacrifices. Again it comprised the prayers from Rig-Veda, and provided methods to recite them. Hence, it is considered as the origin of Indian classical music.

**Atharva-Veda:** It comprised assorted subjects like magic, black-magic, superstitions etc. We find origins of medicines, botany, and surgery in this Veda. The four Vedas throw light on life-ways of Vedic Aryans. We come to know that, when the Aryans, initially were settled in Saptasindhu region, their life-style was different. The second to ninth mandala of Rig-Veda tells us about this. But when they migrated to more eastern part of their actual location, and came into contact with other communities, we find drastic changes in their life-ways. The first and 10th mandala of Rig-Veda and other three Vedas inform such change. Hence, to understand Vedic Aryans, we have to think in two parts: Early Vedic and Later Vedic.

After Vedas, some other important works were compiled by Vedic Aryans. These were basically created to explain the thoughts and laws in the Vedas: to make them more understandable. Hence, these work as appendices of Vedas and were mostly in prose. These were comprised of, Brahmanas, Aranyakas, Upanishads, Vedangas, Shad-darshanas.

**Brahmanas:** The Brahmanas were created to teach the procedure of sacrifices that were compiled in the Vedas. Hence, each Veda has its own Brhamana, e.g. of Rigveda-Aitareya Brhamana, of Samveda- Jaiminiya Brhamana, Yajurveda-Shatapath and of Atharvaveda-Gopath. From these Brahmanas, we get information of Vedic Aryans' various institutions, like, four Varnas, four Ashramas, philosophy etc.

**Aranyakas:** The Aranyakas were created to teach the learning of Vedic religion, especially sacrifices & mystic philosophy into seclusion. Aitareya Aranyaka is meant for Rig- Veda whereas Taiteriya Aranyaka is for Yajur-Veda.

**Upanishads:** The word Upanishad means 'to learn, by sitting close to one's teacher'. These were to be created to teach the learning of Vedic spiritualism, comprising the subject of, like, knowledge of one's self, knowledge of God, relations between self and God, creation of Universe, our place in such a vast Universe, etc. Traditionally there are 108 Upanishads, however, some of the important are, Ken, Kath, Prashna, Aiterya, Chandogya etc. As these come, chronologically, at the end of Vedas, hence, the Upanishads are also known as 'Vedanta'. The basic backbone of Indian religions were based, mostly, on Upanishads, hence, with the help of later, we can understand Indian religions more holistically.

**Vedanga:** These were created to make Vedas more understandable, as follows:

- **Shiksha:** How to pronounce the Vedic prayers in proper manner
- **Kalpa:** Rules to perform sacrifice in a proper manner

- **Vyakaran:** To know the proper grammar of Sanskrit language
- **Nirukta:** Etymology of words, mentioned in the Vedas.
- **Chanda:** Various meters in which Vedic shlokas are structured to recite. It comprised of Gayatri meter (chanda), Anushtubha meter (chanda) etc.
- **Jyotish :** It deals with proper time (Shakun) on which sacrifices should be performed. It also discusses the subjects of astronomy like Sun, Moon, and constellations and, on cycles of seasons etc.

**Shad-darshanas:** These works deal with philosophical teaching or aspects in the Vedas. These are six, like, Vaisheshik (Kanad), Nyaya (Kanad), Sankhya (Kapil), Yog (Patanjali), Mimamsa (Jaimini), Uttar-mimnsa (Badrayan). These cover topics like the theory, logic, unity of soul with God, atoms, Vedic rituals, structure of universe etc.

**Sutras:** The 6th century BC was the milestone in the history of India. The period witnessed emergence of early states and growth in economy and coinage. In this period, India went through its second urbanization. This was the period where heterodox religions like Buddhism, Jainism, Ajivakas were grew and developed. They challenged Vedic religion and its shortcomings and provided a strong alternative. Besides, during that period, India was came into closer contacts with foreigners.

Such was the period of constant churning and speedy processes. In response to such changes, the custodians of Vedic religion resorted to reconstruct and regulate their religion. Hence, Sutras were created to provide norms, rules and regulation to consolidated Vedic religion. Sutras were compiled around 6th c. BC. These were comprised of three sutras, viz. Dharmasutras, Shrautasutras and Grihyasutras; together they are called as Kalpasutras. They throw ample light on such processes, going through during 6th c. BC.

**The Smritis:** During the last centuries of BC and first centuries of AD, India again witnessed the period of speedy changes. The economy was flourished, India had great relations with Roman world, Buddhism was at its peak, local dynasties were forming empires: thus no area, be it society or culture, was untouched by such changes. Such was the dynamic and vibrant scenario. Vedic religion, again, felt to reconstruct their religion and thus created the Smritis. The Smritis, like Sutra, are the books of norms, codes, rules, regulations to consolidate and reconstruct Vedic religion. These were written by various scholars, like, Manu, Narad, Parashar, Yajnyavalka etc. Hence, we find many smrities on their name, e.g. Manu-smriti, Narad-smriti etc.

**Puranas:** Up to 3-4th century AD, Buddhism was its peak. Under Mahayana, the idol of Buddha was started worshipping; and thus, it gained popularity. On the other side, Vedic religion was felt alienated and needed popularity among the masses. It was introspecting and experimenting in its thoughts. As a result, Vedic religion, for common mass, created a certain kind of literature and, through it, opened the doors of religion to common mass. The genre of literature is called as 'Puranas'. The Puranas are mainly comprised of 18 Puranas and these were classified according to the devotional cults, prevailed in 3rd-4th c. India. For example, the Puranas of Shaiva consisted of Shaiv Puranas, Vayu Puranas, Skanda Puranas; whereas the Vaishnavas venerated Vishnu Purana, Garud Purana, Matsya Purana, Varaha Purana. The Shakti cult (devoted to mother goddesses) and Ganapatya cult also created their own Puranas.

Such Puranas have common sections, like, origin of universe, stories regarding respective God and its Family, importance of pilgrim centres and pilgrimages, political dynasties and myths of lineages (vansha and vanshanucharit) etc. Subsequently, other related subjects were also touched in the Puranas, like, iconography, architecture (Vishnudharmottar Purana), medicines, geography, political history etc. In short, to understand India of 3rd to 6th century AD, the Puranas help historians in a large manner.



### 1.1.3.1.2. Buddhist Canonical Literature

Buddhism was the religion of masses; hence, their literature and the language of them were maintained as of the followers. Hence, these are in various languages, like, Prakrit (Pali), Tibetan, Chinese, Sinhali etc. To challenge Vedic religion, these were also written in Sanskrit language. The vast body of Buddhist literature comprised of, mainly, the Pitakas, the Jatakas, etc.

**Pitakas:** The Pitakas comprised of three compilations, viz. Vinaya, Sutta, Abhidhamma and together they are known as 'Tri-Pitakas. The Vinay- Pitaka was compiled by Upali and comprised of five books. These were basically created to provide codes of conducts for Monasteries, Bhikus, Bhikkunis, their daily routine, ethics etc. It has parts like Sutta-vibhanga (origin of codes regarding Bhikkus), Khandaka (rules regarding entry into monastery and admissions etc) and Parivar. The Sutta-pitaka compiled by Ananda. These were created to teach Buddha's teaching with examples, parables and lectures. This body of literature is oriented towards common people. The Sutta-Pitaka comprised of five books (nikayas), like Digha-nikay, Mazzim-nikaya, Sanyukta-nikaya, Anguttar-nikaya, Khuddak-nikaya. The Khuddak-nikaya was an important volume consisting of works like, Dhammapada, Suttanipata, Thergatha and Therigatha. Jatakas were also become part of Khuddak-nikaya.

The same, i.e. Buddha's teaching is the main theme of Abhidhamma-Pitaka, however, it has a philosophical & scientific form. Obviously, these were meant for Buddhist scholars. It comprised of 'Kathavastu' an important Buddhist book. In, short, these books throw ample light on thoughts and codes-of-conducts of Buddhism.

**The Jatakas:** The Jatakas are the compilation of the stories regarding previous births of Buddha. To solve the problems of his followers, Buddha devised a beautiful method to tell the stories from his own-experiences that of his previous births, and, the skeptic or problem follower drew answers from these stories. These were the Jatakaas who throw light on India during 6th c. BC.

**Dipvamsha and Mahavamsha:** These Buddhist works are of Shri Lankan origin. They inform us about Ashokathe Mauryan Emperor and various Buddhist scholars.

**Divyavadan:** This Buddhist work is of Napali origin. It tells Buddhist stories and throws light on northern dynasties, from Mauryan kings to Shunga period. The Buddhist literature also comprised of other important works, like, Milind-Panha (discussion between Bhikku Nagsen with Milind (Menander) Buddhist turned Greek king; Ashvaghosha's Buddha-Charit (biography of Buddha); Mahavastu, Lalitvistar, Manjushri Mulkalpa etc.

### 1.1.3.1.3. Jain Canonical Literature

Ancient Jain literature is in various languages, like, Prakrit (Ardhamagadhi, Shaurseni), Tamil, Sanskrit etc. The literature can mainly be classified into two parts, Anga (14) and Agamas (purva). Besides, Chedasutras (6) and Mulsutras (4) are also important parts of it.

**Anga and Agam:** These works throw light on the teaching of Mahavir. The Acharang Sutra reflects on codes-of-conducts of Jain monks'; whereas, Bhagavati Sutra throws light on Mahavir's biography and his exploits.

**Philosophical:** These comprised of Samaysar, Pravachansar etc. These were mainly created by Acharya Kundakunda, reflected upon Jain spiritualism.

**Puranas:** The Jain Puranas were based on the framework of Vedic epics and Puranas; however, with the main content of Jain philosophy. These comprised of Harivamsha purana, Mahapurnana, Padmcharit etc.

**Biographies:** These were comprised of Bhadrabahu-Charita, Jasahar-chariu, Naykumar-chariu etc. The Bhadrabhau -charita throws light on the events related to Mauryan Emperor Chandragupta and his teacher, Bhadrabhau-Jain Acharya. The Jain literature also comprised of Kathakosh of Harisen, Parishishta-parva of Hemchandra Suri, Dhananjay-mala (thesaurus),

Alankar-chintamani (on literature), Mahavir-ganit-sarsamgraha (mathematics), Niti-vakya-mrita of Somdeva (Political Science) etc.

### **1.1.3.2. Secular Literary Sources**

India was not totally engulfed itself in religions, as half-learned people may think. It also created a large hoard of secular literature throughout thousand years of its history. A mere cursory glance through it may testify this.

#### **1.1.3.2.1. Histories**

India was not unaware of history-writing. We would understand some regional histories in following lines.

**Rajtarangini:** This is perceived as the first-book of history of India, as per modern lines of historiography. It is the history of Kashmir, written by Kalhan (born in 1100 AD in Kashmir). He completed this book within two years, during the reign of King Jaysimha of Kashmir. It is in Sankrit, comprising eight Khandas (chapters/volumes) and 7826 sholkas (verses). It gives history of Kashmir from the period of Mahabharata-war up to 12th century AD; however, only from 9th century, a precise history can be seen. Kalhan was an unbiased historian who, for writing history, utilized large body and variety of sources. He undertook field-work and traveled throughout Kashmir. During his travel, he, not only collected sources but also interviewed local people and collected oral traditions. Thus based on literary sources and oral tradition and through extensive field-work, he wrote 'Rajatrangani'. His work shows his love of Kashmir and respect of his patron king. However, as a historian, he also criticizes the negative-points of his king. The work shows his beautiful narrative-descriptive style, dramatic dialogues, sprinkled with good-advises here and there. Rajatrangini shows importance of sources and variety of them for writing of history. It also stresses the impartiality and unbiased nature of historian. According to Kalhana, "...Such person (historian) should be praised whose writing abstained itself from any kind of anger-hatred and remained impartial while describing historical events..". Such was the urge of Kalhana and work like Rajtarangini. Hence, it is called as first book of History in India. Apart from Rajtarangini, the 'Rasmala' and 'Kirtikaumudi' (written by Someshvar) inform us about the history of Gujarat during the Chalukya (of Lata) period.

#### **1.1.3.2.2. Eulogies**

The Eulogies are those works which are created to praise the patron king (and his deeds) by a charan/bhat/poet in the court. Such work, though one-sided, informs us about king, his dynasty and family, his deeds & policies etc.

**Vikramank-deva-charit:** This eulogy is written by Bilhan who praises the king Vikramaditya (of Chalukya dynasty) and his various deeds.

**Gaudavaho:** Vakpati wrote this eulogy in praise of Yashovarman's (of Malwa) victory over Bengal (Gaud region).

**Harsha-charit:** This eulogy was written by Banbhatta in praise of Harshavardhana. Besides, some other notable eulogies comprised of Kumarpala-charit (by Hemchandra), Hammir-mad-mardan (by Jaychand Suri) etc.

#### **1.1.3.2.3. Epic and Kavya Literature**

The literature comprised of dramas, poetry, epics etc. These are secular kind of literature hence we find factual information regarding society and economy, sometimes polity of specific period. However, these should be used with caution as their purpose was not-to-write-history but to entertain readers.

**Epics:** Epics comprised of Mahabharata (by Vyasa) and Ramayana (by Valmiki). We get information from these epics of vast areas of interests, like, the movement of Aryans throughout Indian subcontinent, their relations with local or native communities and tribes, their political thoughts, institutions, society, social customs and traditions, forest tribes, economy etc. It also deals

with long-term processes like Aryanization of India, inception of Urbanization, conflicts between two modes of economies (Pastoralism and agriculture) etc. In short, to understand India during 8<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, these epics proved to be important source.

**Dramas:** The 'Sariputta-prakaran' was considered as the first drama, written by Ashvaghosha. Then, one scholar-Bharat wrote his famous 'Natysashtra' on dramatics. Some of the important dramas are as follows:

**Mudra-rakshas:** This is a drama, written by one Vishakhadatta. The drama deals with one incident concerned with Chanakya (the prime minister of Chandragupta Maurya) and Rakshasa (Amatya of Dhanananda). The play gives information on Chanakya's politics, espionage and the foundation of Mauryan Empire. His drama 'Devi-chandraguptam' deals with the life of Chandragupta II of Gupta dynasty.

**Mrichcha-katika:** This drama revolves around the love between one poor Charudatta and beautiful Ganika (prostitute) Vasantasena. It is written by Raja Shudrak which sheds light on economical affluence of ancient India, the prostitutes and respect to them in society, the social structure etc. It also gives passing reference on people's revolt against unjust king.

**Malvika-agnimitra:** This play was written by Kalidasa, great poet and dramatist during Gupta period. The subject of the drama is the love between one Malvika and Agnimitra, brave king of Shunga dynasty. Kalidasa also wrote beautiful dramas like Vikramorvasiya, Shakuntal etc.

**Naganada, Ratnavali, Priyadarshika:** These plays were written by king Harshavardhana. These reflect upon socioeconomic condition and religious outlook during his reign. Other dramas of importance comprised of Uttar-rama-charit and Malati-madhav of Bhavbhuti, Svapna-vasavdatta of Bhasa, etc.

**Poetry:** After early centuries of Christian era, and especially during Gupta times, India witnessed growth of classical literature. The 'Raghu-vamsha', 'Kumar-sambhav', 'Riti-samhar' and 'Meghaduta' were the classic creation of Kalidasa. The last two are world-famous and the description of nature and cycles of seasons, written therein reflects, not only the classicality India received at that time, but, the contemporary ecology of that time. Other works of poetry consisted of Dashakumara-charit (Dandi), Kiratarjuniya (Bharavi), Ravan-vadha (Bhatti), Vasavadatta (Subandhu) etc.

**Compilations:** Some compilations are of worth mentioning regarding secular sources; such as **Gatha-saptashati** of Hala, the Satavahana king was himself a great man of literature. He collected folk tales/songs and compiled into 'Gatha-saptashati, a compilation of 700 shortpoems. It has a great literary merit. As a source, it is an impartial source which gives information of common folks during early historic Godavari-valley. It touches, mainly the human relations, various relationships and complexities, the cropping patterns, social structures etc. Then, some other compilations include Brihat-katha (of Gunadhya), Brihatkatha-manjari (of Kshemendra), Panchatantra (of Vishnusharma). These are basically universal stories, told to inculcate ethics and moral values in the hearts and minds of peoples and children, by using imaginary dialogues between trees and animals.

### 1.1.3.3. Scientific Treaties

Ancient India was not unaware of scientific attitude. Hence, considerable amount of scientific work were created during that period. The treaties mainly comprised of works on Political sciences and Grammar, however, after early centuries, many scientific works were started showing up on subjects like medical science, agro-irrigation science, mathematics, astrology-astronomy, art-architecture, iconography etc. Especially, Gupta period witnessed the emergence of various sciences.

**Arthashastra:** This main subject matter of this book is 'Political Science', written by Chanakya/Kautilya, the prime minister in Chandragupta Maurya's court. He defines Arthashastra as

'the science to teach how to be benefitted by the power and how to preserve it'. In short, it informs us about methods to acquire power and various types of administrative systems/policies to sustain it. This book is a firsthand document which informs us about the polity and administrative system of Mauryan Empire. As it is an administrative document and especially 'written-for-the-king, it is in courtlanguage, i.e. Sanskrit. To write this book, Chanakya took review of, pervious researches of 18 scholars on the subjects. The Arthashastra comprised of 15 parts (pradhikaranas), 150 chapters (adhyayas), 180 headings (up-vibhagas) and 6000 verses (Shlokas). The Parts are as follows:

1. Vinaya-dhikar (appointments of ministers)
2. Adhyaksha-prachar (responsibilities of administrator: forts, taxes, weightsmeasure, espionage etc.)
3. Dharmasthiya (Laws regarding marriages)
4. Kantik-shodhan (punishments)
5. Yogvritta (duties of servants)
6. Mandal-yoni (External Polices: who are friends and who are enemies)
7. Shada-guna (External Affairs)
8. Vyasana-dhikaraka (how to search for the origin/cause of problems)
9. Abhiyasytkarma (Preparation before war)
10. Sangramic (war-strategies)
11. Sangha-vritta (how to divide and rule)
12. A-baliyas (how to defend weak state from more powerful enemy)
13. Durga-labhopay (how to capture forts)
14. Aushad-nishadak (various methods to defeat the enemy)
15. Tantra-yukti (the meaning of Arthashastra, i.e. political science)

In short Arthashastra have touched upon various matters of state-concerns, like, the integral parts of state system (theory of Saptanga), relations among various states, duties of officers and servants, administrative divisions of Empire, taxation system, laws, foreign affairs etc. Other subjects are also dealt with, like, social conditions in various regions, medicinal plants, mines and the art of mining, cropping pattern, irrigation systems etc.

Other political treaties comprised of Niti-sar (by Kamandak), Niti-vakya-mrit (by Somadevsuri).

***Ashtadhyayi and Mahabhashya:*** Ashtadhyayi deals with Grammar, written by Panini. It throws light on social churning of 6th century BC, i.e. the period of second urbanization in India. Similar work is Mahabhashya, written by Patanjali, informs us about social condition during Early Historic period.

***Charak-samhita and Sushrut-samhita:*** These works inform us about medical sciences during Ancient India and considered as the basis of Ayurveda-branch of medicines.

***Brihat-samhita:*** It is written by Varhamihir and of an encyclopedic nature. It touches various subjects like, crops, cropping pattern, agriculture technology, how to foresee earthquakes, astronomy, astrology etc. It testifies the scientific progress in India during Gupta period. He also has written 'Pancha-siddhantika', concerns with eclipses, path of planets and pace of constellation etc. Other works on astronomy and astrology comprised of Aryabahatiya (by Aryabhata), Brhama-sphuta-siddhant (by Brahmagupta) etc.

#### **1.1.3.4. Sangam Literature**

The Sangam literature gives us information regarding early historic and historic Southern India. The Sangam means an assembly. The body of Sangam literature comprised of the poems, presented in three assemblies, by Tamil poets. These poems were actually collected by the poets, from various eco-regions in southern India. Thus, these are basically folk-lore, compiled by urban poets. The important works are Shilappadikaram, Manimekhalai, Pattupattu etc. There are five eco-

regions in Tamil-land, called as 'Tinai' and these are five, hence, 'Ain-tinai'. Each 'tinai' has a specific kind of ecology and, naturally, specific kind of response (or mode of subsistence) to their surrounding ecology. Thus, the poems in hilly regions display different subject-matter or surroundings than those were of coastal region. However, these folk-songs were created on two basic theme lines, i.e. Love (ekam) and War (puram). Thus, 'waiting on the coast for her lover who was not written from fishing' is a matter of tension in coastal region and 'fear of attacks of wild animals on her lover' is a concern of hilly regions.

Such type of literature is mostly a secular one and reflects true nature of common men-women and their life-style. If we look deeply into that, vast hoard of information could come forward of utmost importance, like, ancient ecology, modes of subsistence and methods/techniques to acquire food, forest/sea/plain-products, cropping patterns and their cycle, methods of irrigation, social condition and tensions in social groups, independence of eco-regions and interdependence upon each other whereas on other sides, Tamil polity, kingship and duties of kinds, towns and town administration, laws, judiciary, city-layouts, internal and external trade etc.

### **1.1.3.5.Foreign Accounts**

After the invasion of Persians and Greeks, India was re-exposed to ancient world. The wars were some incidents; however the process of mobility of people between two counties became a sustainable phenomenon of Ancient India. Such travelers were foreigners hence they had no obligation to any king of the region. Hence, their accounts are impartial and; being 'eye-witness' gives us first hand information on the subjects they touched upon. However, it should be kept in mind that, as they were foreigners and not-rooted in India, it is not possible to expect from them a perfect knowledge of the socio-economic and political thoughts and institutions in India.

#### **1.1.3.5.1. The Greeks and Romans**

**Herodotus:** He is considered as first historian of the world. He, while describing the war between Persian and Greece, mention Indian soldiers, fighting along the side of Persians.

**Megasthenes:** He was the ambassador of Seleucus Nicator, posted in the court of Chandrgupt Maurya. In his work, 'Indica', he gives description of the layout of Pataliputra, like, a big city, with an extent of 14 km x 2 km, fortified with 570 bastions and 67 gateways with one huge royal palace etc. He also touches upon social structure, caste-system, caste-relations etc. It should be noted that the original Indica is lost; hence, we can't use any information, actually written in there. However, the travelers, who came into India after Megasthenes, have referred Indica and quoted it. Thus, through them i.e. indirectly, we can use 'Indica' as a source.

**Peryplus of the Erythraean Sea:** This travelogue is an anonymous work, presumed to be written by one fisherman on Egypt coast. The work gives us impartial and objective information on the Indo-Roman trade during Early Historic period. It informs us about the ports on India's coast-line, trade-centres in India, the trade-routes-connecting trade centres and ports, distance between centres, the list of items-of-trade, the annual volume of trade, the rates, types of ships etc.

#### **1.1.3.5.2. Chinese**

**Fa-Hien (Fa Xian) (337-422 AD):** This Chinese traveler visited India during Gupta period. He was a Buddhist monk, visited India to seek knowledge from Dev-bhumi (i.e. India) and visit Buddhist pilgrimage centres. On the basis of his three years of travel, he has written, in his chronicle 'Records of Buddhistic Kingdoms', on society and culture of North India, besides, various factors in Gupta administration.

**Hiuen-Tsiang (Xuan Zang) (602-664 AD):** This Chinese Buddhist monk, against all odds, visited India during Harshavardhana's reign. He started his journey in 629 AD, from Gansu, and then through, Gobi Desert-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan-Samarkand-Balkh came to India in 630 AD. He visited Buddhist pilgrimage centres, stayed at Nalanda University and studied Buddhism, gone through original Buddhist works, collected original manuscripts and mementos, made copies,

attended Harsha's assembly and after years of travel throughout India, returned to China in 645 AD. In China he wrote his account as 'Si-Yu-Ki' (Great Tang Records on the Western Regions). This chronicle give vivid description of what he had witnessed in India. He gives information of kings especially Harsha and his generosity, people and customs of various regions in India, life-ways etc. He has written of habits and nature of Maharashtrian people. Other chronicles consists of Taranath's (Tibetan Buddhist monk) Kangyur and Tangyur, reflect upon early Medieval India.

#### **1.1.4. Material/Archaeological sources**

The Material/Archaeological sources comprised of (i) Inscriptions, (ii) Coins, (iii) Ancient Monuments, (iv) Sculptures & Paintings and (v) Archaeological Remains

##### **1.1.4.1. Inscriptions**

After contact between Persian and India, India came to know the importance of 'art-in-stone'. Being a stable material, stones were being used for engraving king's orders, policies, outlooks to public them and kept them for time immemorial. These were also used for issuing land-grants to the grantee. With same notion, court-poets also engraved eulogies by using such material to make it immortal. These are generally called inscriptions and written, either on rock or pillar. These are called Epigraphs or edicts.

##### **1.1.4.1.1. Epigraphs**

The earliest epigraphs in India are those of Ashoka, the Mauryan Empire. He, to propagate his dhamma and policies, issued 14 edicts. These were inscribed on rocks, e.g. Junagadh (Gujarat). Besides, he put up pillars in public places or places where people can gather easily; and, inscribed them. To help people to read these commands, he, categorically, inscribed them into the language and script of common people, i.e. Brahmi (script) and Parkrit (language). The edicts in North-western India had Kharoshtri script, known to local people of that area. These Ashokan epigraphs (rock-edicts and pillar-edicts) inform us, near about biography of Ashoka, like, his early days, his gruesome war with Kalinga and his remorse, his conversion to Buddhism, his dhamma, his compassionate attitude towards other religion and the same expectations from his subjects, his methods of propagation, stress on moralityethics-civic sense and universal values etc. Other inscriptions of importance comprised of

- Naganika's inscription at Nangeghat which gives information of various sacrifices, performed by Satavahana King Satakarni I and his deeds
- Gautami Balashri's and Yajnya Satkarani's inscription at Nasik caves which give information on the adventures of Gautamiputra Satkarni, the great Satavahana king.
- Kharvela's inscription at Hathigumpu tells his deeds.
- Harisena's inscription (eulogy) on the pillar of Allahabad (called as 'Prayagprashasti), informing us about adventures and campaigns of Samudragupta, great Gupta emperor.
- Ravikirti's eulogy at Aihole informs us about adventures of Pulkeshi II, the Chalukya king of Badami.

So far the epigraphs for 'land-grants' are concerned; we find lots of information in there. Like, the king or issuing authority, his lineages, mythical origins of his dynasty, his kingdom and its extent, then; the origin/gotra of grantee; then; purpose of grant, the extents and limits of granted land, list of rights and privileges to the grantee, punishments to the trespassers or violators of the grant etc. Such epigraphs, along with the king's biographical sketch, as immovable, also inform us about the extent of the kingdom of the issuer.

##### **1.1.4.1.2. Copper-plates**

Generally for 'land-grants' the copper-plates were engraved and issued to the grantee. These are basically three plates of copper, tied with each other through copper knot. The upper and last portions are left un-engraved as these can be blurred with ravages of time. Such copper-plate reveals the same information that is in the land-grants, engraved as epigraphs. Such copper-plates

give information on socio-economic condition of that period. For example the 'Sauhagaura-copper plate' informs us about severe draught and the measures undertaken by authorities to tackle the problem of food-shortage.

#### **1.1.4.2.Coins**

Since 6th century BC we receive information regarding coins in India. Basically the earliest were crude and of punch-marked silver coins; Punch-Marked Coins then, after the stability of foreigners in India like Greek, Kushanas, Parthian, round, cast-coins with bust of kings-Deities, their titles etc. With their influence, Indian dynasties also came up with developed coins. However, those were the Guptas who came up with fully developed coins. We find such ancient coins, generally by accidents; or through gifts. Such coins help us to reconstruct our Ancient History through many ways, like,

- Coins inform us about such dynasties and kings which missed place in literary sources.
- The metal used in them informs us about ancient metallurgy.
- The proportion of pure metal in the coins of 'claimed metal' informs us about economical condition of issuing dynasty. For example, the gold-coins of Kushanas and Guptas are true to their 'claim' and show higher proportion of gold in them; whereas, the proportion is minimal or more-or-less absent in later Gupta rulers. This shows the growth of Indian economy since Kushanas to Gupta period and dwindling during later Gupta period.
- Coins inform us the economic relationship among people. For example, the discovery of northern punch-marked-coins in Deccan indicated relationships between north and south India. The same is true when we find Roman coins in Deccan during Satavahana period and Satavahana coins in Mediterranean world.
- Religious symbols or figures of deities on coins inform us about religious outlook of issuing dynasties. For example, Krishna and Balarama in the coins of Agathocles' indicated compassionate attitude of that Greek king. The symbols related to Vishnu on Gupta coins like Garuda-dhvaja indicates their belief on Vaishnavism. The titles also tell us about their religious attitude, e.g. titles of Guptas like Param-vaishnava, param-bhagavat indicate their inclination towards Vaishnavism. Samudragupta with Garud-dhvaja.
- Coins also reflect king's personality, his interests etc. For example, the lionslayer image of Chandragupta II indicates his braveness; the harp-in-hand image of Samudragupta indicates his love for art.
- Some coins also have years, engraved on them. It helps to date the issuers.
- The coins also help for relative dating. For example, in archaeological excavations, if we find coins in one specific stratum then that stratum is relatively dated to the period of that coin.

#### **1.1.4.3.Ancient Architecture/Monuments**

Earlier, during Stone Age, people took shelters in caves. However, the invention of agriculture compelled them to reside on plains. Thus, the houses get started from Neolithic period. Initially, those were made from perishable materials like wood and grass, hence, except post-holes, we find nothing of that. The scenario changed when burnt-bricks were started utilizing for constructing houses or public architecture or so-called Ancient Monuments. This can be witnessed from Chalcolithic period. Since then, India witnessed developments and variations in material, as well as, types of construction, public/civic and individual. These, broadly, can be classified into Secular and Religious architecture. So, let us, at first, look at the secular architecture in Ancient India.

##### **1.1.4.3.1. Secular Architecture/monuments**

So far the public and secular architecture is concerned; first instances were brought from western and north-western India that is of Harappan civilization of Chalcolithic period. During Harappan civilization, India went through its first urbanization. Hence, public/civic architecture of

utmost importance was dotted these cities. These comprised of, long-wide roads, huge bathing places, tanks, religious places, granaries/warehouses, thrashing floors, dock-yards, man-made ports, sanitary arrangements like bathrooms and gutters, stadium, pavilion, palaces, fortification, bastion etc. The site of Inamgaon, during Chalcolithic period, also came up with a large bund and canal.

Then, in Maurayan and post-Mauryan period, we find, large fortification (Pataliputra), palaces (Pataliputra), stadiums (Nagarjunkonda), flight of steps to the rivers (Nagarjunkonda) etc. The remains of houses also give information on the standard-of-life and livingcondition of that period. It also throws light on civic sense, personal hygiene of concerned people. Such sources give us information on socio-economic condition, the role of polity, defensive strategies, water-management, civic sense, life-style of the people of concern period.

#### **1.1.4.3.2. Religious Monuments**

**Monuments of Heterodox Religion:** The religious monuments started showing up from Mauryan period. It started with the caves of Ajivakas (at Barabar and Nagarjuni hills: Bihar), then, we find large number of Buddhist monuments in India. Then, since Gupta period, we find the beginning, growth and classicality in Hindu monuments in India. Buddhist Stupas, Chaityas, Viharas Since Early Historic period, India was dotted with Buddhist Stupas, Chaityas and Viharas. At the outset, the construction began in Northern India; then through Gujarat, percolated to Maharashtra; and through Orissa, came to Andhra Pradesh. The Stupas were created on the physical remains or used-equipments of Buddha or noteworthy Buddhist monks. These stupas were surrounded by beautifully decorative Gate-ways (torana), e.g. stupas at Sanchi, Barhut (Madhya Pradesh); Amaravati (Andhra Pradesh); Pauni, Kolhapur (Maharashtra); Sannati (Karnataka).

The Chaityas are Buddhist chapels/temples; where Buddha was worshipped in the symbolic form of Stupa at the end of Chaityas. Except one at Bairat, the Chaityas were created in the caves; e.g. Chaityas at Bhaje (the earliest of them), Bedasa, Karle.

The Viharas are the residential place of Buddhist monks, where a large space is surrounded by rooms along all its three sides. Similar to Chaityas, these were also hewn in rock, e.g. Viharas at Kanheri, Nasik, Junnar etc. After some centuries and under the influence of Mahayana cult, the stupa in Chaitya replaced by idol of Buddha and Chaityas were combined with Viharas. This development can be witnessed in Ajanta.

These Buddhist shrines give lot of information regarding various areas; like, the development of religious thought and ideology, its spread in various regions, influence from other religions, its influence on other cults, the monastery (Sangha), relations between monastery and traders, stylistic evolution and growth of art etc. Besides, the decorative motives on the gateways give us idea of public/individual architecture, flora-fauna, artistic styles of concerned period etc.

**Hindu Temples:** Since Gupta period we witness beginning of separate temple architecture. Initially, drawing influence from Buddhist cave art, these were started in caves. However, to congregate large masses, these descended on plains. The first experiment in separate-temple architecture can be seen in modest temple No. 7, at Sanchi. It only comprises two parts, garbhagriha (sanctum) and mukhamandapa (frontal space). Then, through Tigava, Nachana and Devghadh (all in Madhya Pradesh), a complete temple with 'garbhagriha-enclosed path of pradakshina-mukhamandapa at three sides and pier' emerged; and that is with beautiful sculptures. The treatment to the Shikhara was to maintain it high, hence, it got narrower to the top. Hence, when a viewer looks at the temple his gaze goes straight, from base to top. Such style is called as 'Nagara style'.

However, in Deccan and South India, the progress was different. At the outset, Chalukyas experimented in Temple architecture, from rock-cut temples (Badami) to separate temples (Pattadakal and Aihole). Near about same time, Pallavas, created temples in rock-cut fashion (the 'Ratha Temples at Mahabalipuram). Then, Cholas came up with huge temples. Drawing from these experiments, the Rashtrakutas undertook an experiment of beautiful temple; however, in rock-cut



fashion. That is Kailasa temple of Ellora. These temples in Deccan and South India generally use stone-slabs; placing upon each other for the Shikharas. Hence, the Shikhara looks steps-like, presenting squat impression. Such, architectural style is known as 'Dravida style'.

After such experimentation, large temples, beautified with sculptures started dotting whole of India. After 6th-7th century AD, growth of regionalism paved way of emergence of regional styles in temple architecture. Thus, within short period of time, India became abode of temples with beautiful sculptures on their walls and complex plan plus designs. Such Ancient monuments are the mute but objective source of Ancient Indian history. They help us to understand the growth of religion as well as ideology of religions. It also informs us about the exchange and influence of ideas among various belief systems. It also give us idea of changes, growth of artistic styles and influences they draw on them. It also tells us the nature of patronage and the role of temples in political economy of the concerned period.

#### **1.1.4.3.3. Sculptures & Paintings**

**Sculptures:** Since Harappan period we find evidences of sculptures in India. These were made of various materials, like, stone, steatite, clay, terracotta, lime, bronze, ivory, wood etc. Some of them got place in shrine and became idol or icon. Some of them were made to beautify the walls of temples. Some of them were individual sculpture, made for various purposes, like as toys and for entertainments. The bronze statues of dancer (Harappan civilization) and toys (Diamabad) during Chalcolithic period show artistic merit, as well as expertise in metallurgy of India. Various other statues of the same periods indicate place of entertainment, hairstyles, ornaments and costume of Harappans. Same is true with terracotta toys, belonged to Shunga period.

The Mauryan sculptures, like, the Yakshi of Didarganj indicate the contemporary affluence and aesthetic sense of people. The sculptural-reliefs on the gateways of stupas (Sanchi, Barhut), not only display growth of Buddhist ideology, but also of various other things like flora, fauna, civic architecture etc. The statue of Kanishka indicates the foreign origin of the king and costume of foreign style, like, high shoes, overcoats etc.

Bronze statue of Poseidon and relieves on plates/mirror-handles (Kolhapur) indicate trade relationship between Kolhapur and Rome during Satavahana period. The same is true by finding of ivory figure of Laxmi of Ter in the site of Pompeii (in Rome). Gupta sculptures indicate high artistic merit India achieved during that period. At this time, the science of sculptures had attained perfection and classicality. Hence, after Gupta period, the sculptures were made on the same models, that were determined during Gupta period. Whereas, the development of icon/idols (individual sculptures for worship) regarding their poses and weapons they carry, indicate, development of religious ideology and influence they draw from various sources. These also indicate synchronization of various cults. A separate branch as 'Iconography' studies such developments.

**Paintings:** Earliest instances of paintings can be found in the rock-shelters of Bhimbetaka (Madhya Pradesh). These were drawn by Mesolithic cave-dwellers by using colours and tools from his surrounding nature. Through these rock-paintings we can understand the life-style of Mesolithic people; like, his way of living, methods of hunting, the flora and fauna in his surrounding etc. Then, we find beautiful paintings, especially from Ajanta and then at Bagh. The world-famous paintings of Ajanta give us information about religious ideology, the spiritual serenity, the ornaments, the costumes, the foreign visitors etc. And of course, through these paintings, we can understand the artistic merit and great esthetic sense of concerned period.

Whereas, the paintings of Chola king on the walls of temples at Tamil Nadu, display the concept of 'divine kingship' of Chola polity.

#### 1.1.4.4. Archaeological Remains

People settle-people live-create institutions and physical structure and in some unfavorable condition leave the place. The place gets abandoned with material remains that people have left behind-unintentionally. Then, by the environmental agents like wind, soil, rain, a heap of soil gets accumulated on that place. Then, again the next group of people settles over there. Then, the same cycle continues. Thus, after sequence of repeated settlements and abandoning, a heap of soil forms over that place. Such heaps are called as 'archaeological mounds', hiding in its belly the history of mankind. Then some certain kind of historians, called as archeologists unearthed these mounds, called as an excavation. Through excavation, archaeologists exposed the hidden history of that specific settlement. The archaeological material they unearthed can be used as sources for the reconstruction of history of that particular settlement.

The material helps us to reconstruct history of: those common people who were disregarded by the written source; those periods before the discovery of writing; to supplement the history, reconstructed by written sources. Following is a brief list of archaeological material that can be used as source:

**Pottery:** During Protohistory up to Early Medieval period, the base equipment of the common people was the pottery. The Pottery or 'ceramic assemblage' comprised of various items, like, bowls, plates, pots, etc. It should be noted the pottery gets differentiated according to respective culture that created them. The difference lies in shapes, fabrics, surface-treatment (fabric, colour, designs, painting), pottery-making technique etc. Thus, specific pottery-type is assigned to particular culture/period. With such logic, archaeologist can date the site relatively on the basis of these differences. Hence, pottery is considered as alphabet of that site.

**Beads:** Since time-immemorial the bead-industry is one of the world-famous industries of India. These were made of various materials, like, stone, semi-precious stones (like Agate, Chalcedony, Crystal, Turquoise, Lapis-lazuli), glass, metals like gold, copper; terra cotta, ivory, shell etc. Besides, those were of different shapes like round, square, cylindrical, barrel-shaped etc. The technology was so higher that we have achieved the technique of making beads, inlaying other metal into them. These can be used as source to know the technological development & esthetic sense of specific period.

**Faunal Remains/Bones:** Excavations reveal large amount of bones or faunal remains. These shed light on the surrounding historical ecology or ecosystem of that particular site. Besides, we can also understand the dietary habits of concerned people.

**Floral Remains:** The floral remains are also give us information on the surrounding historical ecology and dietary habits of concerned people.

**Foundations of architecture:** During horizontal excavations, we come across foundation of architecture of related period. The architecture comprised of civic architecture like huts, houses, palaces, stadiums, assembly-halls, bath-rooms, ware-houses, activity areas like kitchen-bedrooms-hall-verandah-thrashing floors; roads, system of sanitation, watersource, etc. On these bases and the layout of sites we can know the standard-of-living of the people, besides, the spatial distribution in the area indicates the social division of particular period, if any. The structures like bunds/docks throw light on the economy and technological development, attained by these people. Whereas; defensive architectures, like fortification, bastion, moats indicate the affluence of that particular site and quantum of threat to that site.

**Domestic Material:** The excavations reveal a hoard of domestic items, like, kitchen equipment (pots, hearth, spatula, querns etc.), ornaments, items of entertainment like toys; etc. These were made of various materials, like, stone, clays, terra-cotta, metal, shell, ivory etc.

**Occupational Material:** The occupation material comprised of agricultural equipments (hoe, plough, fishing-equipments (hook, net), trade-equipments (weights & measures, seals and sealing, coins). These were also made of various material, like, stone, clay, terracotta, metal etc.

**The Charcoal:** Excavation unearths burnt-organic material of any kind. These are called as 'Charcoal'. Such charcoal, in specific amount and through laboratory tastes, could be used for dating the period, called as 'Carbon-14'.

#### **1.1.5. Use of Sources: An Analysis**

If we had to rely on literary sources alone, our information would have been incomplete. The greatest handicap in the study of the history of ancient India is the absence of a definite chronology. Since the fall of the Andhras in the third century AD our knowledge about ancient India is very less. Fortunately the gap has been filled by actual remains of this period in the shape of coins, inscriptions and monuments.

We do not have continuous written records of the past because some have been destroyed with passage of time. Some records narrate falsification of data, some do not write the events as they were held but mention the impression of the event on the mind of the writer followed by latter's interpretation. Moreover the bias and exaggeration in the works of court poets does not give an objective assessment of the period the work pertains to. It is at this stage that the actual remains of the past come to the rescue of the historians to form a fair and objective assessment of the events that took place in the past.

The digging of the old sites at Pataliputra gives us information regarding the old capital of the Mauryas. The Angkor vat in Combodia and Barabodur in Java bear testimony to the colonial and cultural activities of the Indians in ancient times. The temples of Deogarh in Jhansi and Bhitargaon near Kanpur throw light on the artistic activities of the Guptas. The excavations at Sarnath have added to our knowledge regarding Buddhism and Ashoka. Stone tools and artifacts tell us about the Paleolithic age. Paintings at Ajanta and Ellora show the artistic excellence of Indians in ancient times.

#### **1.1.6. Conclusion**

Thus, in order to study Indian history in a comprehensive manner one has to depend on literary as well as archaeological sources which help us to form a complete picture of the ancient times. The information provided by literary texts if corroborated by archaeological remains helps the historian to improve the scale of historical authenticity and reliability of fact.

#### **1.1.7. Summary**

- *India has a rich cultural heritage and Ancient India is a glorious epoch in Indian history. However, as we go back in time, we suffered great lack of written sources to reconstruct its history.*
- *Very few written sources are there at our disposal. They were mostly of religious nature and, should be used with caution, either for they were written by a small group of people or, for, they were basically the guidelines for the society-and don't depict actual facts. W*
- *We also find written sources of great literary merit, like, epics, anthology, dramas, etc. There were also treatises on science like politics, astrology, astronomy, medicines, irrigations, architecture etc.*
- *The architectural and evidences of art also help us to understand Ancient India. Another group of source is archaeological sources.*
- *For understanding India before the beginning of literacy and to understand life-ways of common man, and to date scientifically, such archaeological remains help us a lot.*

### **1.1.8. Exercise**

- Give information on the written sources for history-writing of Ancient India.
- Give information on the archaeological sources for history-writing of Ancient India.
- How foreign accounts help us to reconstruct ancient Indian history? Discuss.
- Write an essay on the role of religious literature in writing of early history of India.
- Analyze how different sources can be used for reconstruction of ancient history accurately.

### **1.1.9. Further Readings**

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**Unit-1**  
**Chapter-II**  
**PREHISTORIC CULTURES OF INDIA:**  
**Stone Age Cultures: Salient Features**

**Structure**

- 1.2.0. Objectives**
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  - 1.2.2.1. Lower Palaeolithic**
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- 1.2.7. Conclusion**
- 1.2.8. Summary**
- 1.2.9. Exercise**
- 1.2.10. Further readings**

### 1.2.0. Objectives

*This chapter will throw lights on the early human cultures of Indian subcontinent. After reading this chapter students will learn;*

- *the meaning and concept of does Prehistory or Stone Age;*
- *understand the lifestyle, settlement pattern and subsistence economy of this early man;*
- *to know about the stone and metal using Chalcolithic or Protohistory phase of Indian subcontinent; and*
- *the other stone and metal using cultural phase of India such as theMegalithic period etc.*

### 1.2.1. Introduction

Humankind's past is divided into two broad periods; the prehistoric and the historic. The prehistoric period belongs to the time before the emergence of writing and the historic period to the time following this event. Modern humans, evolved in Africa in or about 150,000 years ago, however, they learnt writing only about 5000 years ago. This means that only 0.1 % of humankind's past are known through the written record which constitute historic period and rest of 99.9 % comprise the prehistoric period in the history of mankind. Thus, most of the history of mankind has been reconstructed largely with the help of non-literary or archaeological sources including objects like tools, weapons, ornaments, structures and artistic creations which were produced and used by humans and survived to us.

The vast period of prehistoric age has been further divided into three ages namely stone, bronze and iron. These ages, besides being technological stages, also have economic and social implications. The Stone Age is divided into three periods, namely palaeolithic, mesolithic and neolithic. As the name suggests, the technology in these periods was primarily based on stone. Economically the palaeolithic and mesolithic periods represent the hunting-gathering stage while the neolithic represents the stage of food production, i.e. plant cultivation and animal husbandry.

In the history of mankind, the Stone Age was succeeded by a culture where metal was used for the first time. And the earliest metal using culture of human history was known as "Chalcolithic", or "Copper Age" which refers to a transitional period where early copper metallurgy appeared alongside the widespread use of stone tools. This period witnessed growth of early village culture with agro-pastoral economic activities. Within this chalcolithic culture some regions across the globe witnessed development of technology and economic activities which ultimately gave rise to the early urban settlements. In Indian context such an urban culture was flourished on the Indus River Valley in north-west India popularly known as Indus valley Civilization.

The chalcolithic culture is succeeded by a new metal using culture known as Iron Age culture. In the history of mankind, the **Iron Age** refers to the appearance of ferrous metallurgy. The adoption of iron coincided with other changes in some past cultures, often including more sophisticated agricultural practices, religious beliefs and artistic styles and political entity and the beginning of historical age.

In the light of above chrono-cultural parameters, the history of mankind in Indian subcontinent is also divided into different cultures and civilizations. In this chapter we will discuss the salient features prehistoric cultures including all the stone using cultures flourished on Indian subcontinent in pre-Christian era.

### 1.2.2. Palaeolithic Culture: Old Stone Age (2,50,000 to 10,000 B.C)

Robert Bruce Foote established the science of pre-history in India when in 1863 he discovered the first Palaeolithis. Subsequently, in the next two decades many prehistoric sites were reported in the southern peninsula. But it was only in the 1930s when H.de Terra and T.T. Paterson undertook a detailed survey of Kashmir, Potwar and Jammu areas, that the prehistoric research gained importance and a number of archaeologists began focusing their attention on the discovery of new prehistoric sites, construction of cultural sequences and reconstruction of palaeo environments. By

the 1960s Indian prehistorians could confidently divide the Palaeolithic industries of the Pleistocene (Ice-Age), into Lower, Middle and Upper Palaeolithic on the basis of the shape, size and methods of manufacture of the principal artifact types.

#### **1.2.2.1. Lower Palaeolithic**

The Lower Palaeolithic is characterized by hand axes, cleavers, chopping tools, and related artefact forms. The tools were all made by removing flakes from a block or core of stone until it reached the required size and shape.

Bori in Maharashtra is considered to be the earliest Lower Palaeolithic site. Lower Palaeolithic stone tools have also been found in the Soan valley (now in Pakistan), and several sites in Kashmir and the Thar Desert. These were known as the Soanian industries (while the artifacts found over much of the rest of India were known as Acheulian or 'MadrAsian') and were dominated by pebble or core tools and characterized as a predominantly chopper/chopping tools. The Acheulian industries was characterized by bifacially flaked artifacts-hand axes and cleavers – along with denticulates, scrapers, spheroids, and picks amongst other tools. The Acheulian artefacts were made principally on hard and durable quartzites. In the Hunsgi valley of Karnataka, limestone was used; at Lalitpur in Central India, pink granite was chosen while in parts of Maharashtra and Central India basalt was preferred. Belan valley in Uttar Pradesh, desert area of Didwana in Rajasthan, Chirki-Nevasa in Maharashtra, Nagarjunakonda in Andhra Pradesh are some of the important sites which have yielded Lower Palaeolithic tools. The caves and rock shelters of Bhimbetka near Bhopal also show features of the Lower Palaeolithic age. Majority of Lower Palaeolithic artefacts found in all parts of the subcontinent are made of quartzite.

The rivers – Tapti, Godavari, Bhima and Krishna have yielded a large number of Palaeolithic sites. The distribution of Palaeolithic sites is linked up with ecological variation like erosional features, nature of soils etc. The Tapti trough has deep regur (black soil), and the rest of the area is covered mostly by medium regur. There is scarcity of Palaeolithic sites in the upper reaches of Bhima and Krishna. From Malprabha, Ghatprabha and affluent of the Krishna a number of Palaeolithic sites have been reported. In Ghatprabha basin in Karnataka Acheulian handaxes have been found in large numbers. Anagawadi and Bagalkot are two most important sites on the Ghatprabha where both early and Middle Palaeolithic tools have been found. The rivers Palar, Penniyar and Kaveri in Tamil Nadu are rich in Palaeolithic tools. Attiranmpakkam and Gudiyam (in Tamilnadu) have yielded both Early and Middle Palaeolithic artefacts like handaxes, flakes, blades, scrapers etc.

#### **1.2.2.2. Middle Palaeolithic**

Middle Palaeolithic industries are characterized by smaller and lighter tools based upon flakes struck from cores, which in some cases are carefully shaped and prepared in advance. There was an increase in the Levallois and discoidal core techniques. In most region, quartzites continued to be used, and in such cases, Lower Palaeolithic elements continued into the Middle Palaeolithic. However, fine-grained siliceous rocks such as chert and jasper, were now preferred for tool-making, and raw material was often transported over several kilometers. Middle Palaeolithic hominids largely continued to occupy areas inhabited during the Lower Palaeolithic. But, in some parts of India such as Tamil Nadu, rock shelters began to be occupied for the first time. The artefacts of Middle Palaeolithic age are found at several places on the river Narmada, and also at several sites, south of the Tungabhadra river. The Belan valley (UP), which lies at the foothills of the Vindhyas, is rich in stone tools and animal fossils including cattle and deer. These remains relate to both the Lower and Middle stone age.

The Wagaon and Kadamali rivers in Mewar are rich in Middle Palaeolithic sites. A variety of scrapers, borers and points have been discovered in this area. Middle Palaeolithic artefacts have been reported from Chirki near Nevasa and Bhandarpur near Orsand Valley. At Bhimbetka, the

tools representing the Acheulian tradition were replaced at a later stage by the Middle Palaeolithic culture. By and large open-air sites along streams on hill slopes, stable dune surfaces and rock-shelters continued to be used as is evident from the finds from Sanghao cave in Modern Pakistan, Luni river basin in Rajasthan, the sand dunes of Didwana, the Chambal, Narmada, Son and Kortallayar river valleys, the plateaus of Eastern Indian and the Hunsgi valley in the south. Dates for this period range from around 1,50,000 to 30,000 before present (BP), a period characterized in general by aridity.

Perhaps the most remarkable group of Middle Palaeolithic sites in the subcontinent are those in the Rohri hills of upper Sind. The industry is based upon the large nodules of chert that cap this group of the flat topped limestone hills. These vast expanses of chert were extensively exploited in Middle and Upper Palaeolithic times and again in Chalcolithic period; but they appear to have been largely neglected during the Lower Palaeolithic and again during the Mesolithic, probably for climatic reasons. Extensive spreads of quartzite boulders, cobbles and pebbles in the Potwar region in the northern Punjab were used by Middle and Upper Palaeolithic tool makers.

### **1.2.2.3.Upper Palaeolithic**

Towards the end of the Pleistocene, around 30,000 years ago, there was a distinct change in tool types and technology, which could be related to either changes in hunting methods, or to a more general shift in the utilization of resources, or a response to environmental change. The technique of making parallel-sided blades from a carefully prepared core, is an essential basic element of all Upper Palaeolithic industries of the subcontinent, which were contemporary with the final arid phase. Artefact types include a wide range of scrapers, backed blades, points, choppers and burins, and regional variability in blade technology and assemblage structure may now be clearly identified. For the first time, bone tools appear in limestone caves of Kurnool.

Although aridity restricted settlement in the interior dunes of Rajasthan, elsewhere Upper Palaeolithic sites are abundant. Tools were made on a wide range of raw materials and were for the most part on long thin blades. Evidence for long distance transport of fine grained chert and chalcedony is widespread, testifying to the vast distances traversed by, or interaction between Upper Palaeolithic communities. The Upper Palaeolithic industries are generally, characterized by parallel sided blades and burins and other lighter artefacts.

The presence of Upper Palaeolithic artefacts has been reported in the Thar regions (though they are more sparsely distributed than those of the Middle Palaeolithic), at Sanghao caves in the North West Frontier Province and in the Potwar plateau of the northern Punjab (both in Pakistan), from parts of South India, central Gujarat and north-western Kathiawar. An Upper Palaeolithic blade and burin industry from a group of sites near Renigunta in Chittoor district, Andhra Pradesh was also found.

The faunal remains of the Palaeolithic period suggest that the people were primarily in a hunting and gathering stage. The Palaeolithic people subsisted on animals such as ox, bison, nilgai, chinkara, gazelle, black buck antelope, sambar, spotted deer, wild bear, a variety of birds, and tortoises and fishes and on honey and plant food like fruits, roots, seeds and leaves. Hunting is reflected as the main subsistence pursuit in the Rock paintings and carvings found at Bhimbetka. The earliest paintings at Bhimbetka belong to Upper Palaeolithic when people lived in small groups.

### **1.2.2.4. Palaeolithic Culture- An Analysis**

In this period, most of the land was under glacial; however, large forest tracts were also there. In this period, the man hunted big games like Elephants, wild cattle, Rhino etc. During Upper Palaeolithic period, the humans were attracted towards large meadows or pastureland. Now, he started hunting relatively small games, like, deer and white-footed antelopes.



So far his settlement pattern is concerned; the Lower Paleolithic man selected various types of places for his residence. It seems that he took shelter in caves as well as selected an open ground. Besides, he also lived nearby the area of raw material.

**Stone Tools:** It should be remembered that the man, during various phases of his progress, was changing tools, their techniques and required raw material. The Early Paleolithic people, by using locally available stone, made chopping tools from pebbles and hand axes from flakes. Then, the Middle Paleolithic people used flakes and Upper Paleolithic people used blades to make tools. They used crypto crystalline rock for the purpose.

**Social Life:** During the entire Paleolithic period, people were nomadic, wandering here and there for hunting fishing and gathering. Earlier they used to hunt big games like rhino, elephants etc., then after developing their tool kit they started hunting speedy and small animals, like, wild boar, white-footed antelope. Their food stock also comprised of turtles and fish; whereas, he used to gather honey, fruits, roots, seeds and leaves to subsist on. It should be noted that the Paleolithic people preferred the gathering to hunting in this period. So far, their subsistence pattern is concerned; he never had completely finished his resources; instead, he used to reserve some areas for the future use. When we consider his residence, it seems that, even from the earliest times they were thinking about some place to take shelter. An oval shaped rammed floor, encircled by granite-boulders, discovered from Lower Paleolithic Hunasgi. Besides, a stone-partition wall found in one of the rock-shelters of Bhimbetka. The people, though still nomad, selected rock-shelters and raise thatched hut for their den. The people of Luni culture constructed thatched hut for their protection from fast-flowing winds. Due to lack of evidences, it is difficult to comment on their social structures. However, large factory sites indicate their capability to fulfill the requirements of distant communities, which, in turn roughly delineate some sort of social relations of Paleolithic people.

We can presume something about their belief-system. A carved piece of bone is discovered from Lohanda Nala (Belan valley, U.P.), identified as mother-goddess. Besides, a bored tooth of animal discovered from Karnul caves. This tooth probably used as a pendent. In the same period, a bead of ostrich shell discovered from Patane. All these things indicate to the belief-system of Paleolithic people. A triangular stone, placed in the centre of round stone, discovered from Bagor (M.P.). According to the scholars, this was the part of Paleolithic ritual. Today also, tribes like Kol and Baiga (found nearby Bagor) follow similar kind of ritual.

### 1.2.3. **Mesolithic Culture: Middle Stone age (10,000 to 4000 B.C)**

The *Mesolithic* and other stone industries of the Holocene (c.9000 B.C.) in the subcontinent represent a further contribution of the developmental process of the Palaeolithic. Changes in climate (which became warm and rainy) resulted in changes in flora and fauna. The hunter-gatherer communities spread rapidly over India. Microlithic industries associated with what appear to be the cultures of hunting people, fishermen, pastoralists or people practicing some form of agriculture, have been found widely throughout the subcontinent.

Microlithic or small stone tools (their length ranging from 1 to 8 cm) comprised of tools made on blades and bladelets and include burins, lunettes, crescents, triangles, points, trapeze etc. which were subsequently hafted onto bone or wooden handles to form composite tools. Mesolithic sites abound in Rajasthan (Bagor, Tilwara, etc.), Uttar Pradesh (Sarai Nahar Rai, Morhana Pahar, Lekhahia etc.) Central India (Bimbetka, Adamgarh etc.) eastern India (Kuchai in Orissa, Birbhanpur in west Bengal, Sebalgiri-2 in Garo hills of Meghalaya etc.) and slo south of the river Krishna (Sangankallu, Renigunta etc.) There is a rich concentration of microlithic sites in the Narmada, Mahi and Sabarmati valley of Gujarat. The primary excavated site is Langhanaj which has revealed three cultural phases, the phase I producing microlithic, burials and animal bones. Pottery appears in later phases at the sites of Lekhahia and Baghai Khor. Faunal remains of cattle, sheep, goat, buffalo, pig, boar, bison, elephant, deer, jackal, wolf and a number of aquatic animals have been

found. Since the Mesolithic age marked a transitional phase between the Palaeolithic age and the Neolithic age, the first tentative steps towards domestication occurred. At Bagor (Rajasthan), bones of domesticated sheep and goat, are dated to around the 5<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.

We can have an idea about the social life and economic activities of the Mesolithic people from the art and paintings found at sites like Bhimbetka, Adamgarh, Pratapgarh and Mirzapur. Mesolithic rock paintings depict people hunting game, gathering plant resources, trapping animals, eating together, dancing and playing instruments. Animals are the most frequent subjects. Other subjects include animal headed human figures; squares and oblongs partly filled in with hatched designs which may represent huts or enclosures and what appears to be pictures of unusual events, such as the chariots waylaid by men armed with spears and bows and arrows at Morhana Pahar group of rock shelters near Mirzapur. The colours and brown painted net traps for fishing, and for hunting small game, highlight the richness of material culture of which no trace survives in the archaeological record.

The Mesolithic culture paved the way for the Neolithic, where pastoralism and agriculture supplemented hunting-gathering as the prevalent mode of subsistence. In the Indian context, there emerges a broad overlap in the chronology of the so-called Mesolithic cultures and the earliest agricultural settlements now coming to light in the Indus basin. But, by and large the Mesolithic culture continued to be important roughly from 10,000 to 4000 B.C.

#### **1.2.3.1. Mesolithic Culture-An Analysis**

Holocene starts from this period, which was reflected in a slowly rise in temperature and general dryness of climate. Naturally, that clearly affected the Ecology, too. Various kinds of transformations witnessed in the types, shapes and families of flora and fauna of India. Although man remained nomadic huntergatherer, he made changes in his tool kit and hunting-techniques. He started using composite tools, largely, which were more speedy and accurate. For that purpose, he started making microliths. With the help of those, now, he could easily hunt smaller and faster games like that of deer-family and flying birds.

His place of abode can be found at various places, like, rock-shelters (cave), open ground/slopes, hilltops, sand-dunes, alluvial and rocky-uplands, coastal areas and scatters. In short, Mesolithic man successfully controlled environment and made any kind of environmental condition suitable for him. Hence, we can find his distribution across all kind of geographical regions.

**Social Life:** The population increased in this period, hence, it forced people to explore and make relationships with more new environmental regions and cultures of India. They, still nomad and were subsisting on the hunting-gathering mode of life. However, for some months he was using thatched huts and rock-caves for shelter. So far, their food is concerned; they still used to hunt big games, like, wild buffalo, camel, rhino etc. However, due to microliths he could more easily hunt small and faster animals, like that of deer-family, wolves, turtles, rabbits, mongoose etc. Their diet also comprised of wild roots, fruits, seeds, honey and edible grass. From many Mesolithic sites, ring stones, rubble, Muller, querns, big hearths discovered; it shows that he was somewhat aware of the importance of vegetables and grains. In this period, they were resorted to little bit of Pastoralism and exchange on limited scale.

**Mesolithic Rock-Art:** Mesolithic Rock-art was a milestone in the developing process of early people. During 1867-68, A.C.L. Carlyle of Archaeological Survey of India discovered traces of Mesolithic Rock-art in the rock-shelters of Sohaghat in the mountain range of Kaimur (Dist. Mirzapur). Since then, around 150 such rockshelters discovered which again can be classified among 19 types. Among these, most of the rock-shelters (3/4) are located in the Vindhya-Satpura ranges in Madhya Pradesh. The Rock-art of Bhimbetka (45 km from Bhopal) is a much more noteworthy and widely appreciated. V.S. Vakankar found these rock-paintings in 1957. At here, we see 642 rock-shelters in its periphery of ten km and seven mountains. Due to ample rains, perennial

supply of water, raw material in large quantity, dense forest holding a diversity of animals; Bhimbetka remained favorite choice of Prehistoric man to reside.

Mathapal classified these painting in three stages. In earliest five sub-stages, we find Mesolithic rock-paintings. These paintings drawn on the ceilings and walls of the caves in this area. For this, he used 16 types of natural colours and their shades, comprising of Red (from red oxide), White (lime-stone), Green (Green Chalcedony) in various shades and brush from tails of animals. The colours made out of natural minerals, found locally. They mixed animal fat, white part of egg and natural gum in colours to increase their life.

These paintings are mostly in line drawings, of which, art historians identified around twelve styles. Some of them are in single colour and some are in multicolour. Sometimes we find geometrical design on the paintings of animals. Some of made in 'X-Ray-style' i.e. when showing an animal, an embryo was also shown. Animals and hunting-scenes are most favorite subject matter in these paintings.

The animal-cache, comprising 29 types, included tigers, leopard, elephant, rhino, deer, wild boar, monkey, rabbits, foxes, squirrels etc. in various movements. Snake is absent from these paintings. They filled their bodies with various geometrical designs. The hunting-scenes comprised of mob as well as individual hunting and catching games with the help of trap. The hunters shown horn-headed. They also shown wearing ornaments, like, neck-less, bangles, armlets etc. The scenes also reflect his tool-kit, which found from various Mesolithic sites, like, composite tools with microliths, bow-arrow, sticks, catapult etc. Sometimes, the hunters were shown in company with dogs.

Apart from hunting, the animals were shown in various activities/movements, like, the pregnant animal, father-mother playing with their kids, deer chasing birds, jumping rabbits and monkeys, animal grazing etc. The paintings also depict various modes of subsistence of Mesolithic people like, honey gathering and fishing. Their lifecycle also shown; showing birth of baby, their cuddling, their growth and their mortuary practices.

We also find 'division of labor' among these people. We see that the male members were engaged in hunting whereas the women undertook gathering and food-preparation. The paintings also show the dress and hairstyle of these people. We find that Men used under-garments made out of tree-bark or animal-hide. They are shown with free hair whereas women had their hair bound in rounded fashion. Some of the men were designed in geometrical lines indicating their special status in the society. Similar to Bhimbetka, we find many rock-paintings in other parts of India, too. Around 55 rock-shelters discovered from the districts of Sundargarh and Sambalpur in Orissa. However, the paintings over there of geometrical nature besides the paintings of people and animals are quite rare. In the 'Yezuthu rock-shelter' in Kerala, display paintings of animals but not of humans. A special mention should be made of 'rock-painting' of Jaora caves (M.P.). From this painting, we can understand the concept of Mesolithic people about the creation and nature of universe. Here we find a whole world comprising of animal-human world along with wind, water etc.

It seems that these paintings mostly done for some religious purpose. For, the caves where the paintings drawn; never utilized for residence. Besides, the outlines were repeatedly drawn. It indicates the ancient concept of getting the desired animal through drawing repeatedly on the same painting. In sum, it seems that this man was relatively more socially organized and systematic than his predecessors. Besides, he also made use of various modes of subsistence. Through these factors, he might have controlled any sort of environment to which he was exposed. That is why he can now turn to the unproductive matters like 'art'.

#### 1.2.4. Neolithic Culture: New Stone Age(6000 to 1000 B.C)

The concluding phase of the Stone Age, the Neolithic Age, which followed the Mesolithic, heralded the beginning of food production. Scholars have long debated the onset of this fundamental, lifestyle altering development in human prehistory- what was the catalyst that moved humans in vastly separated parts of the world to adopt agriculture and animal domestication? While convincing hypothesis have been put forward for all three schools of thought, it is today generally agreed that it was a combination of the three i.e. climatic change at the beginning of the holocene, increasing population density and evolving cultural and technological strategies of human groups that ushered in this transformation.

So what is it about the neolithic that it is at once, the last leg of the Stone Age and also the link or platform on which all subsequent civilizations arose? That it is a Stone Age culture can be established by the use of stone tools. But unlike the lighter and sharper tools of the palaeolithic or mesolithic, the neolithic tool kit was composed of heavy ground tools – pestles, mortars, grinders and pounders – as also axes and sickles which have a characteristic sheen on them, the result of harvesting wild or domesticated plants and grasses.

But besides the use of stone tools, the neolithic people had little in common with their predecessors. The palaeolithic and Mesolithic humans were mobile hunter-gatherers who travelled long distances to procure their food. On the other hand, neolithic populations all over the world have relied on agriculture or food production and the domestication of animals for their dietary needs. Interestingly, all of the largest and most complex civilizations throughout history have been based on the cultivation of one or more of just six plant genera – wheat, barley, millet, rice, maize and potatoes and these have thus been called the main ‘engines of civilizations’. Sedentism is another feature that distinguishes the neolithic period. Somewhere between 10,000 and 3,500 years ago, people all over the world, without any apparent connection, began settling down in agricultural communities and gave rise to villages, towns and then cities.

The use of pottery and the wheel and the subsequent invention of crafts like spinning, weaving and bead-making also serve to demonstrate the uniqueness of the neolithic phase. Most neolithic cultures start as aceramic or pre-pottery neolithic. However, soon enough, sherds of hand-made pottery are found, often followed by wheel-thrown pottery. The technological breakthrough of the wheel enabled developments like spinning and by the time of the bronze age civilizations, the use of the wheel in carts.

It was a consideration of all these developments that made the prehistorian Gordon V. Childe designate this phase as the ‘Neolithic Revolution’. However, his critics were quick to point out that the term ‘revolution’ is synonymous with sudden or abrupt change, often accompanied by bloodshed and that the neolithic was a gradual unfolding of developments, the culmination of the Stone Age. While the significant socio-economic impact of the Neolithic cannot be denied, it is today generally viewed as a ‘transformation’ or ‘evolution’ rather than a ‘revolution’.

The second point in Child’s hypothesis, which has direct bearing on the advent of the neolithic in the Indian subcontinent, is the presumption that farming was first invented in a single ‘nuclear region’ – the Fertile Crescent in Mesopotamia or the Near-East from where it spread or was diffused to other parts of the world. This diffusionist paradigm propounded that the ‘idea’ of agriculture arose here and then spread to other regions depending on their proximity to this core region.

##### 1.2.4.1. Onset of Agriculture In India.

India was thus, for a long time seen as having borrowed the idea of food production from its western neighbour, Mesopotamia, via the Iranian plateau. Modern research on the subject, especially since the 1970s, has discredited this viewpoint. It is now generally believed that agriculture in India was an independent, indigenous development rather than an import from

outside. A remarkable coincidence, it has been proved for three of the main staples of the subcontinent-the discovery of wheat and barley in Mehrgarh, Pakistan grown almost contemporaneously with the Fertile Crescent sites cancels the possibility of diffusion into India. Similarly, the discovery of rice from Koldihwa in Uttar Pradesh and millet from sites in South India have put a question mark on the diffusion of these two crops from South China and South Africa respectively.

The occurrence of food production in India was spread over a few millennia-from the 8<sup>th</sup> millennium BC to c.1000 BC. A neolithic celt was discovered as early as 1842 by Le Mesurier in the Raichur district of Karnataka, and later by John Lubbock in 1867 in the Brahmaputra valley of Upper Assam. Today, as a result of vast explorations and excavations, the distribution and nature of the neolithic in the subcontinent has been brought to light. Some scholars, like R.S.Sharma, divide the neolithic settlements into three groups-northwestern, northeastern and southern, based on the types of axes used by the Neolithic settlers. Others, for e.g., V.K.Jain, argue for as many as six different geographical regions, each with its own distinctive features and chronological time-span. These regions are, (i) Northwestern i.e. Baluchistan and its adjoining area in Pakistan (7<sup>th</sup> to mid 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC), (ii) Northern i.e. Kashmir Valley (2500-1500 BC), (iii) Central India, i.e., Vindhyan region, south of Allahabad (4000 BC-1200 BC), (iv) Mid-Gangetic basin, i.e., eastern U.P. and Bihar (2000 BC-1500 BC), (v) Eastern India, i.e., Bengal, Orissa and Assam, (vi) Peninsular or South India, i.e., Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu (2500 BC-1500 BC).

An overview of the above time frame will indicate that the Neolithic phase in India did not develop everywhere at the same time nor did it end simultaneously. In fact, there were many neolithic cultures which were coexisting with the copper using, urban Harappan Civilization (2600-1900 BC). These cultures, besides having different time frames, exhibit some regional variations too. For example, in the northeast region, neolithic tools have been found but there is no evidence so far of plant cultivation. Similarly, while most of the neolithic cultures evolved out of the preceding mesolithic cultures, no such evidence is reported from the Kashmir Valley. Bone tools have only been recovered from sites in Kashmir and from Chirand in Bihar and in terms of cereal consumption, while wheat and barley predominate in Mehrgarh in Pakistan, it is rice from Central India and millet and ragi cultivation from the South Indian neolithic sites (Jain 2006: 78-79).

The corpus of evidence gathered so far suggests that while each region responded to its specific geographical setting, the tapestry that finally emerged had distinct parallels. This was the rise and growth of agriculture and the beginning of settled village life. In the next part, we shall try to understand the dynamics and nature of this massive change in human lifeway across the length and breadth of the country.

#### **1.2.4.2. Regional Distribution of Neolithic Cultures**

**North-West India:** Comprising the province of Baluchistan and the Indus plains in Pakistan, this area represents the earliest evidence of the Neolithic Culture in the subcontinent, indicated by the growth of farming and animal husbandry. Basically, an inhospitable mountainous region, with a climate of extremes, Baluchistan has nevertheless revealed many traces of early settlements in its valley pockets. The important sites are Mehrgarh in the Kachhi plain, Kili Gul Muhammad in the Quetta Valley, Rana Ghundai in the Loralai valley and Anjira in the Surab valley.

The Indus plains provide a sharp contrast in the archaeological setting from that of Baluchistan. The lifeline of the area, the Indus is a highly unstable river, which flows through a wide alluvial flood plain. Neolithic sites start appearing in the North-West Frontier Province-Gumla, Rehman Dheri, Tarakai Qila and Sarai Khola; Jalilpur in Punjab.

**Mehrgarh:** The earliest evidence of agricultural life based on wheat, barley, cattle, sheep and goat in the subcontinent comes from the site of Mehrgarh on the

bank of the Bolan river in the Kachhi plain of Baluchistan. Its convenient chronological point is c. 7000 BC. For the next two to three millennia the evidence of this type of agriculture seems to be limited to Baluchistan, although by the end of this period it is found spread all over its major areas.

Mehrgarh is essential for any discussion on the neolithic, not only because it has yielded the earliest evidence for this phenomenon but also because the inter-disciplinary and scientific approach to the excavations and the regular publication of the results have provided us with a very clear picture of the neolithic way of life there.

Excavations at the site began in 1974 under the leadership of J.F. Jarrige and continued into the 1980s and later. These have revealed an uninterrupted continuity in the growth and consolidation of village life in the area. Spread over about 200 hectares of land, this imposing site bears evidence of occupation in different periods, having been given separate numbers, such as MR 1, MR 2, MR 3 etc. In all, there are seven periods of which only the first three, I-III, are regarded as neolithic. The time frame for each of these is as follows: Period I from 7000-5500 BC; Period II, from 5500-4500 BC; and Period III, from 4500-3500 BC.

The earliest level of occupation, Period I, marks the transition from nomadic pastoralism to agriculture. It was an aceramic level with stone tools consisting of polished axes, chisels, querns and microliths and bone tools comprising awls, needles etc. The neolithic character of the site is reflected in bones of cattle, sheep and goat, indicating their domestication as also the bones of water buffalo, which is the earliest instance of the domestication of this animal in the subcontinent. Evidence of plant domestication comes from the charred seeds of wheat and barley as also Indian jujube (ber) and dates. The beginning of sedentism can be gleaned from foundations of mud-brick houses and small cell-like compartments which might have been used for storage of grains. But perhaps the most surprising piece of information concerns long distance trade and craft production. As part of grave goods were found, turquoise beads, probably from the Nishapur mines of Iran; shell bangles, with the seashell being from the Arabian Sea coast and beads of lapis lazuli, procured from the Badakshan region of Afghanistan. This clearly demonstrates that the neolithic people of Mehrgarh, Period I, were not an isolated community but engaged in exchange activities with other contemporary cultures.

Period II is characterized by an intensification and diversification of the economic base. Some coarse handmade pottery is found in the lower levels which becomes plentiful in the later part of the period. Towards the end, wheelmade and painted, as well as basket marked sherds are found having parallels with Kili Gul Muhammad I in the Quetta Valley. Houses became larger and one structure on the site has been termed a 'granary'. The stone industry continued, with the addition of 'sickle' like tools, substantiating the agricultural basis of the economy. Charred cottonseeds indicating cotton plantation and perhaps, spinning and weaving; ivory-making, presumed from an elephant tusk bearing groove marks; terracotta human figurines; a steatite workshop and beads of lapis lazuli and turquoise, all testify craft production, trade and the co-Neolithic stage of human evolution.

Period III at Mehrgarh, spanning from c. 4500 to 3500 BC, represents the final stage of the neolithic phase. Surplus production was achieved through a consolidation of agriculture and animal rearing activities. Vast quantities of pottery have been found, many of which bear painted motifs, which particularly in the later stages of this period, resemble those of Kili Gul Muhammad II and III. A continuity in the long distance trading pattern can be assessed from the beads of lapis lazuli, turquoise and fragments of conch shell. Copper objects found on the surface and traces of the metal found in crucibles suggest that the neolithic people of Mehrgarh were familiar with copper smelting. A picture of continuous growth of village life also emerges from a number of collective graves that appear in this period and indicate an increase in population.

**Kili Gul Muhammad:** The site of Kili Gul Muhammad in the Quetta Valley was excavated from 1949-51 by the American Archaeological Mission headed by W.A.Fairservis, Jr. The first three levels of occupation are ascribed to the neolithic period. Beginning as an aceramic site around 5500 BC or earlier, its inhabitants lived in wattle-and-daub and/or mud houses. Animal remains of cattle, sheep, goat, and horse/wild ass have been found and the tool kit comprises microliths, a few ground tools, bone points and spatula. The transition from Period II to Period III can be discerned from the evolution of a crude, handmade and basket-marked pottery to a fine wheelmade black-on-red ware with simple geometric designs.

**Rana Ghundai:** Situated in the Anambar valley, Rana Ghundai lies in the ecological transitional zone between the Baluchi hills and the Indus plains. The Rana Ghundai sequence was established, after brief excavations, by Brigadier E.J.Ross in 1946. Periods I-III belong to the neolithic phase and lasted from 4500 to 3100 BC. The remains of Period I attest the presence of 'a semi-nomadic community' and consist of handmade plain pottery, bones of domesticated animals like ox, sheep, goat and maybe a wild ass. A mixed tool kit, of stone and bone, comprised of microlithic chips and blades and bone points and eyed needles. Developments in pottery fabric, shapes and designs continued as the neolithic became a well-established phenomenon here, a way of life.

**Gumla:** The site of Gumla in the Gomal valley began as a small, one-acre encampment. Period I is aceramic and shows microliths, domesticated cattle bone, and large shallow pits used for cooking/roasting. Period II has a wide range of painted wheelmade pottery, microlithic tools, a limited amount of copper and bronze and terracotta bangles, gamesmen, toy carts and cattle and female figurines (Chakrabarti 1999: 138).

**Rehman Dheri:** A large site, spread over more than 20 hectares, Rehman Dheri shows a clear transition from the neolithic to the Kot Dijian and finally the Indus civilization phase. The site is fortified right from the beginning, with a 1.2 m wide mud and mud brick wall. Remains of wheat, barley, fish and domesticated cattle, sheep and goat give us clues as regards their diet. Pottery was used from the very first settlement at the site and most of the pottery specimens are of Kot Dijian forms and designs. The calibrated date range of Rehman Dheri is c. 3400-2100 BC.

**Amri:** A prominent pre-Harappan site in Sind, Amri is located at the edge of a cultivated alluvial plain, 2 km of the right bank of the Indus. Period I begins with a typical handmade red/beige pottery with geometrical designs painted in black and often with red fillings. People lived in mud-brick houses and domesticated remains of cattle, sheep, goat and donkey have been found. Pieces of copper, shell, terracotta bangles, sling stone and parallel-sided blades are other archaeological remnants collected from the site. The neolithic period of occupation, starting in the early to mid fourth millennium BC was followed by an intermediate phase and finally the Indus civilization phase.

**North India:** Evidence for the north Indian neolithic cultures comes mainly from the Kashmir Valley and is represented by a large number of sites above the flood plains of River Jhelum. The three principal sites of the area are: Burzahom, northeast of Srinagar; Gufkral, southeast of Srinagar and Kanishkapura or modern Kanispur, in the Baramulla district. All three are multi-cultural sites, where prolific neolithic remains are followed by evidence of megalithic and historical periods. An important feature of the northern Neolithic is the absence of a preceding microlithic/mesolithic phase and the development of this phenomenon occurred between 3500-1500 BC.

**Gufkral:** Literally meaning, the 'cave of the potter', the site of Gufkral, started as an aceramic neolithic site, probably around 3000 BC. From Period IA were discovered large dwelling pits surrounded by storage pits and hearths and with post-holes around the mouths of the pits and hearths. Remains of domesticated sheep and goat as well as barley, wheat and lentil along with wild

sheep, goat and cattle, deer, ibex, wolf and bear indicate the transition from a hunting to a food producing economy. Polished stone tools, including a large quern, bone/horn tools, steatite beads and a terracotta ball make up the rest of the archaeological repertoire. Periods IB and IC witnessed an intensification of the neolithic – handmade crude grey ware followed by wheelmade pottery, abundance of stone querns, pounders, double-holed harvesters etc along with domesticated sheep, goat, cattle, dog and pig.

**Burzahom:** The neolithic people of Burzahom, beginning with Period I around 2700 BC, lived in circular or oval-shaped lakeside pit dwellings and subsisted on a hunting and fishing economy, being familiar also with agriculture. The sides of the dwelling pits were plastered with mud and both ladders and steps were used to get inside the large pits. Storage pits containing animal bones, stone and bone tools have been found close to the dwelling pits. The site has yielded mostly coarse and handmade grey, buff and red pottery. The bone industry at Burzahom is most developed of all the neolithic cultures of India and comprises harpoons, needles, arrowheads, spear-joints, daggers etc. Another distinctive feature is the burials - graves, both of humans and animals, especially dogs, have been found. Sketchy evidence for ritual practice can be gathered from stone slabs depicting hunting scenes, or another representation of the sun and a dog. Two finds from Period II, dated around second millennium BC show contact with the Indus plains - a pot with carnelian and agate beads and another pot which bears the Kot Dijian 'horned deity' motif.

**Central India:** The focus of the Central Indian neolithic is, broadly speaking, the Vindhyan and Kaimur hill ranges of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh i.e. the area, having as its periphery River Ganges in the north and River Son in the south. The important neolithic sites are Koldihawa and Mahagara in Allahabad district, Sinduria in Mirzapur district and Kunjun in the Sidhi district of Madhya Pradesh. The dating of the neolithic horizon for this area remains problematic – some suggesting the beginning of the neolithic culture at Koldihawa to c. 6000 BC, while others assign it to a time range of 4000 – 2500 BC or 3500-1250 BC.

**Koldihawa:** Situated in the Belan valley of Uttar Pradesh, Koldihawa has a rich prehistoric sequence down to the mesolithic phase. The site's claim to fame is the earliest evidence of rice – 'Domesticated rice comes from the earliest, metal-free level of Koldihawa and occurs in a context of wattle-and-daub houses, polished stone celts, microliths and three types of handmade pottery – cord marked and incised ware, plain red ware with ochre slip on both sides and a crude black-and-red ware. Rice occurs as husks embedded in the clay of the pottery'. The overlap of the microlithic and the neolithic is testified by the presence of blades, flakes, lunates as well as polished and ground axes, celts, querns and pestles. Evidence of animal husbandry comes from the bones of cattle, sheep, goat and deer and fishing can be gleaned from the bones of turtles and fish. G.R.Sharma has dated rice cultivation at Koldihawa to around 5500 BC. Other scholars like F.R.Allchin and D.K.Chakrabarti feel that these dates need to be re-examined on the basis of fresh evidence. But consensus seems to be growing that rice cultivation was an indigenous, post – "Ice-Age" phenomenon that occurred independently in Central India and in Koldihawa can be dated to the fifth millennium BC.

**Mahagara:** Almost contemporaneous with Koldihawa, the site of Mahagara has yielded some bone implements along with a tool kit of mesolithic and neolithic tools made of materials such as chalcedony, agate, quartz and basalt. This site has also reported a cattle pen, which indicates the domestication of cattle. The pottery used by the neolithic folk was handmade and poorly fired; with straw and rice husk being used as tempering agents. The principal pottery type is the corded or cord-impressed ware though sometimes incised designs are also seen.

**Mid-Gangetic Basin:** Covering the areas of eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, the mid-Gangetic basin encapsulates the Ganges in its expansive, midstream flow, carrying along with it, the drainage of its tributaries like the Saryu and the Ghaghra. Predictably then, most of the neolithic



sites dotting the area are found on banks of rivers and streams – Narhan, on the banks of River Saryu; Imlidih, on Kuwana stream; Sohagaura, on the banks of River Rapti; Chirand, on the banks of River Ghaghra; besides other sites like Teradih and Senuwar. Chirand, considered to be the representative site of the area has revealed a cultural assemblage going back to the neolithic phase, dated from 2100 to 1400 BC.

**Chirand:** The 1 km long mound of Chirand lies at the confluence of the Sarayu and the Ganga and according to D.K. Chakrabarti, the beginning of occupation at the site may even be earlier than the middle of the third millennium BC. From Period I or the neolithic deposit of Chirand have been recovered coarse earthenware, comprising red, grey and black handmade wares, some with post-firing painting and graffiti. Terracotta objects including figurines of humped bull, birds, snakes and bangles, beads, sling balls etc. have been found.

People lived in circular and semi-circular wattle-and-daub huts with post-holes and hearths. For subsistence, they relied on plant cultivation and animal domestication. Among the crops are rice, wheat, barley, moong and lentil – which may indicate the raising of two crops a year, winter and autumn. Animal remains include a wide range from domesticated cattle to elephants and rhinoceros.

Chirand is the only other site in the country, besides Burzahom in Kashmir that has given a substantial range of bone and antler objects such as needles, scrapers, borers and arrowheads. Bone ornaments like pendants, bangles and earrings have also been discovered. Stone tools consist of microliths, neolithic axes and other implements, such as stone pestles and querns. Evidence of beads made of agate, carnelian, jasper, steatite, faience etc. and also the rich terracotta, bone and antler assemblage mentioned above suggest a movement towards craft production and possibly, exchange of commodities.

**Eastern India:** Eastern India comprises the states of Jharkhand, West Bengal and Orissa and the Neolithic here caps a rich prehistoric past. Important sites include Kuchai and Golbai Sasan in Orissa; Pandu Rajar Dhibi, Bharatpur and Mahisdal in West Bengal; and Barudih in Jharkhand. Since no rigorous excavations have been undertaken, only a tentative picture of the Neolithic way of life can be hinted at and dating too remains a problem.

**Kuchai:** The existence of a neolithic level at Kuchai near Mayurbhanj in Orissa was established on the basis of polished stone tools like celts and axes.

**Golbai Sasan:** The site of Golbai Sasan situated on the left bank of River Mandakini was excavated between 1990-92. Period I at the site is neolithic and shows a range of dull red and grey handmade pottery with cord or tortoise shell impressions in association with a few worked pieces of bone and traces of floors and post-holes.

**Pandu Rajar Dhibi:** Pandu Rajar Dhibi in the Ajay Valley was the first site to clearly demonstrate the Neolithic base of later developments like the chalcolithic. Excavations at the site link Period I of occupation to the Neolithic phase. This is characterized by a handmade grey ware with rice husk impressions, painted red pottery, some sherds of black-and-red ware, ground stone tools, microliths and bone tools. The coexistence of microliths and ground stone tools and bone tools reveals the emergence of the Neolithic from an underlying Mesolithic matrix.

**North Eastern India:** The entire northeastern region has yielded a rich haul of polished neolithic tools but no consolidated picture of a neolithic level has yet emerged. The spread of the neolithic is considered by some to be an import from South East Asia on account of the use of shouldered axes and also cord-impressed pottery, which has close affinity with the pottery from China and South East Asia. On the basis of this link, D. P Agrawal has dated the neolithic cultures of northeastern India between 2500-1500 BC.

The important sites of the region are Daojali Hading and Sarutaru in Assam, Napchik in Manipur & Pynthorlangtein in Meghalaya.

**Daojali Hading:** Situated in the North Kachhar hills of Assam, Daojali Hading revealed a 45 cm thick occupation deposit. The site has yielded neolithic stone and fossil wood axes, adzes, hoes, chisels, grinding slabs, querns, mullers, handmade grey to dull red cord marked pottery as well as dull red stamped pottery and plain red pottery. No domesticated cereals have been recovered but the presence of mullers and querns in the artifactual repertoire establishes the practice of agricultural activity.

**South India:** The South Indian neolithic culture, spread over the states of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, has given us the largest number of neolithic settlements, because of the easy availability of stone. The geographical terrain of this culture is that part of the Deccan plateau bound by River Bhima in the north and River Kavery in the south, with a major concentration of sites being in the Raichur and Shorapur Doabs. Besides the profusion of sites, what makes the South Indian neolithic remarkable is the issue of ashmounds and the location of settlements on the flat-topped or castellated granite hills or plateaux of the region. Ash mounds are vast mounds of burnt cattle dung ash accumulated as a result of periodical burnings and F.R Allchin in 1960 suggested a West Asian origin for these.

However today, their growth and development is viewed in the context of earlier indigenous stone age traditions.

Some of the important neolithic sites of the region are: Sangankallu, Hallur, Tekkalakota, Brahmagiri, Maski, and Piklihal in Karnataka; Utnur, Palavoy, Kodekal and Budihal in Andhra Pradesh; and Paiyampalli in Tamil Nadu. The chronological bracket for these sites ranges from about 2400 to 1000 BC.

The location of neolithic settlements near hills or plateau seems to have been motivated by access to perennial water in the form of streams or rivers, plentiful game, pasture for grazing animals and raw materials like stone and wood. Both campsites and habitation sites have been discovered where people lived in circular wattle-and-daub huts. Hearths and storage areas have been found in practically all the huts. Subsistence was primarily on a mixed economy – rudimentary farming and animal husbandry. Charred grains of millet, barley, horse gram, black gram and green gram have been found and scholars were earlier of the opinion that millet might have been introduced in south India from South Africa. But recent research negates this hypothesis and favours an indigenous growth of these crops. Fish bones and charred and split animal bones show that fishing and hunting contributed substantially to dietary requirements.

**Sangankallu:** Sangankallu presents a picture of a long occupation, beginning with the palaeolithic phase. Palaeoliths are followed by a microlithic industry of quartz flakes, cores and lunates. The classic neolithic industry of polished stone tools features next in the sequence but not before a sterile dark brown soil was formed at the site suggesting a time-gap between the neolithic and the earlier microlithic levels. Coarse grey, red pottery was discovered which was either handmade or produced on a slow wheel. Storage pits have given remains of charred grains and bones of domesticated animals like cattle, sheep and goat.

**Piklihal:** The site of Piklihal is essentially an ash-mound situated in District Raichur in Karnataka. The neolithic people who occupied the site were cattle herders who had domesticated animals like cattle, sheep, goat etc. A mobile group, they set up seasonal camps surrounded by cowpens made with wooden posts and stakes in which they gathered dung. When it was time to move, the entire camping ground was set afire and cleared for the next session of camping.

An overview of the expanse and variety of neolithic cultures in the subcontinent helps us to understand the larger and local dynamics, which shaped this phenomenon. While profuse microlithic remains precede the neolithic at some sites, others give a silent testimony and reveal only a full-blown neolithic phase. Yet, all across the country between the fifth and first millennium BC, people were moving towards a 'neolithic' way of life- settled hutments, practice of

agriculture and animal husbandry, pottery and beginning of craft production. But the story of human cultural evolution didn't stop here, for this was just the base on which, the next chapter i.e. of large-scale civilizations was to arise.

#### **1.2.4.3. Neolithic Culture- An Analysis**

The word Neolithic was used earlier by Sir John Lubak in his work 'Prehistoric Times' (1865). The highlights of this period comprised of polished stone-tools, the discovery of farming, Pastoralism, permanent residence, emergence of earliest villages etc. Besides such cultural processes, we find, developed pottery, polished stone-tools, bone tools and weapons, beads of semi-precious stone etc. Neolithic period is a revolutionary milestone in the progress of early man in India. In this period, man, started cultivation and settled by constructing houses for him. These Neolithic sites were located in specific types of environment, having specific kind of regional peculiarities. The Neolithic people at Mehargarh was pastoralist, however, then, they started cultivating wheat (of three types) and Barley (of two types); besides dates, too. Besides, they also constructed rectangular houses of sun-dried bricks. They also constructed communal wear-houses of multi-rooms to store grains. Such structures indicate beneficial pre-conditions for the Harappan Civilization in later period. They were in contact with West and Central Asia. These contacts helped the Indian Neolithic people with various types of discoveries like wheat, pastoralism etc. It should be noted that, although Neolithic people discovered farming, they continued their earlier ways of subsistence like hunting, fishing and gathering. For, they were getting more proteins through these modes than the farming of that period.

The people of Neolithic Kashmir, to get protection from cold weather used to live in pit-dwellings (Burzahom). On the ground, it is circled by cone-shaped thatched hut around the opening of pit. In due course of time, he started living in rectangular wattle-daub huts and houses of sun-dried bricks. This man has successfully domesticated animals of the families of Bulls-horse and Sheep. He made use of buffalo and Ass (horse family) to carry heavy loads. Besides, he also started farming Wheat, Barley, Linseed, although in a primary way.

The people started using polished and long stone tools (Celt), bone tools (arrowhead) and harvester (Gufkaral). They were in closed contacts with other cultures. The pit-dwellings and Harvester with Dog's bones as grave-goods testify his contacts with the Chinese Neolithic. In short, in Kashmir-region, we find the emergence of one village with houses, surrounded by cattle-pen, farms and pasture land. We also find an emergence of 'family-man' who follows agriculture and Pastoralism, has some beliefs and loves to live in society. He also connected with Northwestern India, Central Asia and China through regular contacts.

We find 'division of labor' in the Neolithic period, which was based on gender. Earlier, the hunting and gathering were divided between men and women, respectively. Naturally, through gathering, women came to understand the cycle of nature. Thus, they started experimenting in agriculture. That is why we say that women were the inventor of agriculture in the world. Thus, in Neolithic period, we find women engaged in agricultural activities. The agricultural production generates need of grain storing. For the purpose, women engaged in pottery making. Men, like earlier, engaged in hunting and fishing.

From 'Ash-mounds', of South Indian Neolithic site we find some types of belief-system of Neolithic people. Some statues of mother-goddess discovered from Neolithic sites. We also find indications of 'community-festivals' in this period. The butchering-place at Budhihal indicates its importance as a communal-butchering of animals. We also find that Neolithic people had some belief in the after-life. Hence, we find grave-goods in the burials. The treatment to the burials and the grave-goods also indicated variety of concepts among these people. Like, the corpses colored red at Mehargarh, whereas, corpse accompanied with dogs at Burzahom. We also find common-

burials at some places. Such was the Neolithic period who presupposes the progress of India, which would be witnessed in the Harappan period.

### **1.2.5. Chalcolithic (4000-900 BC)**

The Neolithic age was followed by the age of metals. The transition from stone to metal was a slow and gradual process. This is proved by the fact that the use of stone and metallic implements is found side by side. There is also a close resemblance in the shape of early metal and Neolithic implements. However, there is no uniformity regarding the use of metals in different parts of India. In the case of northern India, copper replaced stone as the ordinary materials for tools and weapons and gradually iron overpowered copper. Whereas in south India Iron Age immediately succeeded Neolithic age. In Indian context the first metal used by its inhabitant was copper. In the subsequent paragraphs a brief sketch on the various metal using cultures of Indian subcontinent with their characteristic features in chronological order has been given. The first nomenclature used for the culture where both stone and copper was used is the Chalcolithic culture. On the basis of appearance we may divide Chalcolithic cultures of India into Harappan Urban Chalcolithic culture and Non-Harappan rural chalcolithic cultures.

Chalcolithic groups were primarily rural farming communities living in different parts of the country. Evidences of their settlement has comes from many place. The important ones are Ahar, Gilund, and Balathal in rajasthan, Kayatha and Eran in Western Madhya Pradesh, Jorwe, Nevasa, Daimabad, Chandoli, Songaon, Inamgaon, Prakash and Nasik in Western Maharashtra. Narhan in eastern Uttar Pardesh, Pandur Rajar Dhibi and Mahisadal in West Bengal. In southern India also, many sites of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka have yielded a Chalcolithic horizon.

The term chalcolithic means the period or cultural phenomenon, where both copper and stone was in use. The word chalcolithic derived its name from two words that are Chalco-copper and lithic-stone. The Indian scenario of Chalcolithic culture includes non-urban, non-Harappan culture characterized by the use of copper and stone. These cultures make their appearance at the turn of second millennium B.C and eventually replaced by the iron-using cultures. Unlike the Harappan culture which was marked by a striking uniformity despite its spread over a vast area, these cultures show a distinct regional identity probably determined by smaller ecological unit. The main differences among these cultures lie in their characteristic ceramics, though economically they have a similar status. A limited amount of copper and an abundance of lithic blades mark most of these cultures.

Since, the accidental discovery of Jorwe in 1950, many chalcolithic cultures have been discovered during the last three decades in different parts of the country in general and central and western India in particular. These chalcolithic cultures of India share certain common features. They are all characterized by a painted ceramic, usually black-on-red, a specialized blade/flake industry of the siliceous material like chalcedony and copper which was restrictedly used. Their economy was based on subsistence agriculture, stock raising and hunting fishing. They were all rural cultures which did not develop into an urban status obviously because of inadequate technology for exploiting the environment. Their main focus was the great Indian plateau which is characterized by black-cotton soil.

The most important distinguished features of the Chalcolithic cultures is their distinct painted pottery. The Kayatha culture is characterized by a sturdy red slipped ware painted with designs in chocolate, a red painted buff ware and a combed ware bearing incised pattern. The Ahar people made a distinctive black –and-red ware decorated with white designs. The Malwa ware is rather coarse in fabric but was a thick buff slip over which designs were executed in dark brown or black. The chalcolithic cultures of India have a chronological sequence as follow.

- Kayatha Culture - C. 2000-1800 B.C
- Ahar or Banas Culture- C. 2000-1400 B.C

- Malwa Culture. - C. 1700-1200 B.C
- Chirand Culture. - C. 1600-600 B.C
- Pandu rajr Dhibi. - C. 1700-700 B.C
- Golabai sasan - C. 2200-700 B.C
- Nagarjuna Konda. - C. 2000-1000 B.C
- Brahmagiri . - C. 2000-1000 B.C

The entire chalcolithic cultural site in India flourished in the outskirts of 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium B.C and lasted up to 1<sup>st</sup> millennium B.C, up to the emergence of Iron Culture. The south Indian chalcolithic also chronologically matches with their northern and western counterparts though culturally differ in some respect.

Chalcolithic means during this period people were using copper tools along with stone tools. Indian Chalcolithic called as 'Age of Early Farmers', running from 3000 BC to 700 BC. It succeeds Neolithic period. During this period, India dotted with villages of early farmers. In those, the villages in the Indus-Sarasvati valley comparatively developed more. Hence, in this part we witness the emergence of first urban civilization, called as 'Harappa Civilization'.

According to geographical variations, we find sub-cultures of Indian Chalcolithic, viz. Ahar/Banas culture of Rajasthan, Kayatha-Ahar-Malawa culture of Madhya Pradesh, Jorwe culture in Maharashtra etc. Whereas, Chalcolithic culture in Karnataka developed alongside the Neolithic culture over there. These culture connected with each other through the exchanges.

#### **1.2.5.1. Highlights of Chalcolithic People:**

Salient features of the Chalcolithic cultures in India are as follows :

- These people used to live in rectangular/circular houses made of mud and mud bricks. The houses were of more rooms and of rammed floor and thatched roof.
- They followed alternative mode of subsistence, agriculture, pastoralism, hunting and fishing. Farming was done with wooden/bony plough and by adopting irrigation technologies. They were cattle-pastoralists, however, during adverse climatic condition, they followed sheep-goat pastoralism. They acquired expertise in copper-craft. However, as copper was rare and mined only in the areas of Rajasthan, they used bones and stones to make tools.
- Pots held significant position in their daily life-style; hence, we find quality and specialization in pot-making. These are Black-on-red painted ware; however, show different traits according to different sub-cultures.
- They also undertook exchanges with other communities hence we find foreign goods/tools in their areas.
- They were followers of 'Bull' and 'Mother-Goddess' cult. Besides, they also believed in 'After-life'. Hence, the dead found their final resting place either in their homes or close to their homes.

#### **1.2.6. Megalithic**

The culture in which large stones used to mark out the burials is called as 'Megalithic Culture'. The evidence of their settlements are rare; however, their burials were profusely discovered in all parts of Deccan. The Megalithic culture shows its existence in Deccan from 1000 BC and is gradually declined in 300 BC. Iron technology, horse, use of stones for burial marking, black-&-red ware etc. are the main highlights of Megalithic culture.

Babinton discovered earliest Megalithic burial in the Malbar region of southern India (1823). So far Maharashtra is concerned, we find evidence of this culture in the areas of Vidarbha only. Hundreds of burials discovered from the region in which only four to five places indicate remains of their settlements. The Megalithic culture was not a uniform one. It holds various subcultures; hence, we find various kinds of burial-types, like, Cairn circles, cist & cairn circles, dolmen/chamber, Menhir, Topic-Kal, urn-burials, sarcophagus, rock-cut cave etc. Among these, we

find mainly cairn circles in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra. The other types discovered from Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

#### **1.2.6.1.Settlement:**

We have comparatively less remains of their settlements than to their burials. The Megalithic people were mainly nomadic one. Instead of farming, they relied on hunting and pastoralism. Their diet also consists more of roots, fruits and meat. The remains of their settlement discovered from different part of south India. These settlements were of seasonal nature. They lived in rectangular, square or circular huts. The floor rammed and lime-plastered, the walls made of mud with thatched roof. They used storage bins to store the grains. The kitchen had hearth in it.

#### **1.2.6.2.Craft:**

The Megalithic people were expert artisans; especially in iron technology. It should be noted that their iron-tools show use of pure iron i.e. 99%. They made various tools and equipments from iron, like, swords, dagger, spearheads, arrowheads, chisel, axe, plough, sickles, tripod, plates, armlets, cauldron, nail cutter, nails, lamps, stirrups etc. They were also expert copper-smiths. They made various equipments from copper like earrings, bangles, bells, mirror, horse-ornaments. They also made various ornaments from silver and gold, like, rings, bangles, earrings, armlets, pendants, belts etc.

So far pottery is concerned, they made a typical pottery, known as 'Black-&-Red Ware'. They made bowls, basins, plates out of that. They also used to make red pots. It is informed that, either they, themselves prepare such pots or they got those from the villagers in exchange of iron-tools. They also made beautiful beads from semi precious stones, like, carnelian, lapis lazuli, shell etc.

#### **1.2.6.3.Contacts:**

Being nomadic they always encountered with various people. They maintained these contact through exchange in various items, like, lapis, shell, gold, silver. These were foreign objects to them. It is not exactly known who were these Megalithic people? On the basis of similarity in burial practice, some attribute their origin to the Mediterranean sea. It should be noted that modern studies have concluded that the Megalithic people of India were hailed from India only. However, as they were living in various geographical regions, they belonged to different subcultures. Regarding their life styles, scholars like Dhavalikar states that the Megalithic people were originally nomadic pastoralists. They had expertise in iron-metallurgy. During their journey, they used to settle near any village, temporarily. Then, they provide iron-equipments as per the requirement of those villagers. Then they marched forward. Such frequent journey and regular stops were utilized for their burial sites. The variety in their burial systems (types of burials) indicates the interaction among various tribes, belong to the same Megalithic culture.

#### **1.2.7. Conclusion**

Thus we noticed that, the history of human settlements in India goes back to prehistoric times. No written records are available for the prehistoric period. However, plenty of archaeological remains are found in different parts of India to reconstruct the history of this period. They include the stone tools, pottery, artifacts and metal implements used by pre-historic people. The development of archaeology helps much to understand the life and culture of the people who lived in this period.

#### **1.2.8. Summary**

- *Ancient Indian history starts from Prehistoric period. This is also called as 'Stone Age'.*
- *People of this period were integral part of their ecology. They utilized their surrounding for their adaptation. Their intelligence changed as per changes in their environment. It also*

*changed their lifestyle. This development can be witnessed from the walls they have filled with drawings.*

- *During the end of stone age and with experience of thousands of years, they invented agriculture and pastoralism. That was Neolithic period. They started settle down.*
- *On this prehistoric infrastructure, they entered into 'Chalcolithic period'. The period ushers with invention of copper-metallurgy with earliest villages.*
- *In due course of time, the villages in North-West India developed ahead and transformed themselves into the cities.*
- *Thus, we witness the first urbanization of India in this region. It is called as 'Harappa Civilization'. Although spanned throughout thousands of kilometers, we find a cultural and civic uniformity in this culture.*
- *The period ended with the emergence of Vedic culture in North India and emergence of Megalithic culture in South India. These people were nomadic pastoralists and used to mark their burials with large stones. They were expert in iron-metallurgy.*
- *We also find cultural variety in this culture at the same time witness considerable sort of uniformity in there. This is called as 'Megalithic culture'.*

#### **1.2.9. Exercise**

- Give an account on the old Stone Age culture of India.
- What is prehistory? How it is different from History? Discuss.
- Enumerate the status of Mesolithic culture of India.
- Write an essay on the regional distribution of Indian Neolithic culture?
- What is Megalithic culture? Discuss the salient feature of Indian Megalith.
- Describe the chalcolithic cultures of central India.

#### **1.2.10. Further readings**

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**Unit-1**  
**Chapter-III**  
**INDUS CIVILIZATION-**  
**Origin, Extent, Characteristic Features, Economy, Art and Religion, Causes of Decline**

**Structure**

- 1.3.0. Objectives**
- 1.3.1. Introduction**
- 1.3.2. Discovery of the Civilization**
- 1.3.3. Background and Origin.**
- 1.3.4. Chronology**
- 1.3.5. Geographical Distribution.**
- 1.3.6. Settlement pattern of the Civilization**
- 1.3.7. Subsistence Pattern of the Civilisation**
- 1.3.8. Artisanal Production and Trade**
- 1.3.9. Religious Beliefs**
- 1.3.10. Decline and Devolution of the Civilisation**
- 1.3.11. Character of the Indus civilization**
- 1.3.12. Conclusion**
- 1.3.13. Summary**
- 1.3.14. Exercises**
- 1.3.15. Further Readings**



### 1.3.0. Objectives

*This chapter will discuss the salient features of the Indus Valley Civilisation. After studying this lesson the students will be able to:*

- *know the origin and development of Indus Valley Civilisation;*
- *understand the civil life of the city dwellers of Indus Valley Civilisation.*
- *assess the socio-religious and economic aspects of the urban Indus valley habitant.*
- *identify the factors responsible for the decline of this earliest civilisation of Indian subcontinent.*

### 1.3.1. Introduction

The name 'Indus civilization' evokes the urban, literate culture of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and early 2<sup>nd</sup> millennia BC that flourished in the area around the Indus river and its tributaries. Its first known cities, Harappa on the banks of a dried up bed of the Ravi river, an Indus tributary, and Mohenjodaro, 570 kilometres downstream, in the vicinity of the Indus river itself. Geographically, however, this civilization (also called the Harappa, its first known site) included much more than the Indus zone; it was a combination of riverine lowlands that stretched to the east and southeast, highland areas to the north, and the coastal belt towards the southwest and southeast of the Indus system. This period witnessed the first experiments in urbanism in the subcontinent.

### 1.3.2. Discovery of the Civilization

In 1827 Charles Masson, a rather colourful character was the first recorded European to visit Harappa on his way to the Punjab after deserting the army of the British East India Company. Four years later, another soldier and explorer Sir Alexander Burnes visited Harappa after mapping the Indus River. The activities and reports of these early explorers eventually came to the attention of Sir Alexander Cunningham the first director of the Archaeological Survey of India. He visited the site twice, once in 1853 and later in 1856. However by the time of his second visit much damage had been done from the removal of bricks used to build the bed for the Lahore-Multan railway in what is now Pakistan. He concluded that the material was related to the ruins of nearby 7th Century AD Buddhist Temples.

Some minor excavation followed with some pottery, carved shell and a seal depicting either a one horned bovine animal, or the side-profile (Marshall 1931: 68) of a more probable two-horned animal with only one horn showing- one of the so-called unicorn seals. No more work was carried out until the early 1920s. The first real indications that there was a civilisation rivalling that of Ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt came during trial excavations during which Sir John Marshall, the second director general appointed R.Sahni at Harappa in 1921 and at Mohenjo-daro- D. R. Bhandarkar in 1911 followed later by R.D.Banerjee in 1922.

Later excavations have shown that this culture encompassed many other rivers and extended to a wide area over what are now modern North Western India and Eastern Pakistan. Satellite imaging has also revealed previously thought mythical Saraswati River flowed along side of some the settlements of this culture. Its mature, developed period lasted for only about 500 years between c. 2400-1900 BC. Later the culture became known as the Harappan Civilisation in order to de-emphasise what early archaeologist thought was a civilization solely geographically linked to the Indus River and also to remove the false assumption that the Indus Valley Civilisation was a superior, non-Indian culture. Today, the terms "Indus Valley Civilisation" or "Harappan Civilisation" are interchangeable and largely free of imperialist or anti-imperialist sentiment.

Wider excavation in India, that started after the independence of India and Pakistan and still continues sporadically today, revealed that there are, at the current count, possibly over a thousand Harappan, or at least Harappan related unconfirmed sites spanning modern Pakistan and North West India and other major rivers, deltas and coastal areas. The major rivers included the Indus,

Saraswati, Hakra-Ghaggar and their tributaries. This makes it the most geographically extensive of all ancient civilisations thus discovered. Far larger, in fact, than both Egypt and Mesopotamia together.

### **1.3.3. Background and Origin.**

Indus settlements mainly, though not exclusively, flourished in the part of the Indian subcontinent, which lies west of the Delhi-Aravalli-Cambay geographical axis. Several segments of that zone had seen the birth and development of agricultural communities, between c. 7000 BC and the genesis of urban centres in the first part of the third millennium BC. The subsistence pattern that is widely seen at Harappan sites- a combination of wheat and barley cultivation and domesticated animal species in which cattle was most preferred-goes back to Mehrgarh in the Kachhi plain of Baluchistan which has also yielded the earliest evidence of agricultural life in South Asia (c. 7000 BC). From the 5<sup>th</sup> millennium BC onwards, this pattern is found spread all over the major areas of Baluchistan, from the Zhob-Loralai region in the northeast to Las Bela towards the south.

At the same time, a majority of classic Indus sites are in riverine lowlands and the manner in which settlements and subsistence patterns had evolved in those areas, over a span of more than a thousand years prior to the efflorescence of the Harappan civilization, is central to understanding its evolution. In several lowland areas, there was a long period of antecedence. At the beginning of the fourth millennium BC, the Cholistan tract saw a well-defined phase of occupation, known as the 'Hakra ware' culture, named after the river around which its distinctive ceramic assemblage was first discovered. Although the largest concentration of sites is around the Hakra river, its spread included Jalipur in Multan and Kunal in Haryana. Most of the sites seem to be small camps with a few permanently established settlements of substantial size (such as Lathwala in Cholistan, with an area of 26.3 hectares). The Hakra horizon is the first culture of the lowlands, which utilized both the desert and the riverine environments, using a variety of stone and copper tools. There are also occasional manufactured goods in raw materials that were not locally available, as is indicated by Jalipur's repertoire of semi-precious stone, coral and gold beads. Towards the western fringe of the Indus lowlands, the fourth millennium BC witnessed the birth of another culture, known as the Amri culture (after the type site of Amri) which dominated the Kirthar piedmont and Kohistan. What is most significant is that some Amri sites are marked by an 'acro-sanctum/lower town' division, a settlement plan that can be witnessed subsequently, in a highly developed and sophisticated form, in the layout of Indus cites. The spatial exclusiveness of the 'acro-sanctum' is emphasized by a highly elevated, conically shaped hill with encircling, terraced stone walls and remnants of ramps/stairways. The general habitation area, which was lower town, possibly contained domestic structures.

The immediate backdrop to the Indus civilization is formed by the next phase, known as the Kot Diji culture, when elements of a common culture ethos can be seen across the Indus-Hakra plains and the Indo-Gangetic divide. There are several planned and fortified settlements; the construction of habitational areas aligned around a grid of north-south and east-west streets at Harappa, and the use of mud bricks in the Indus ratio of 1:2:4, along with a drainage system based on soakage pits in streets at Kunal are especially noteworthy. There is also an extensive but partly standardized repertoire of ceramic designs and forms (some of which are carried over into the Indus civilization), miscellaneous crafts and a sophisticated metallurgy that includes the manufacture of silver tiaras and 'armlets' as also disc-shaped gold beads (typical of the Indus civilization), wide transport and exchange of raw materials, square stamp seals with designs, the presence of at least two signs of Indus writing at Padri and Dholavira (both in Gujarat) and ritual beliefs embodied in a range of terracotta cattle and female figurines. Considered in totality, the term 'early Harappan' is appropriate for this phase since a number of features related to the mature Harappan period (a

designation used for the classic urban, civilizational form) are already present. Several of these features also evoke the presence of commercial and other elite social groups. When one considers the intensification of craft specialization, dependent on extensive networks through which the required raw materials were procured, or the necessity of irrigation for agriculture in the Indus flood plain, without the risk of crop failure, for which a degree of planning and management was essential, the emergence and the character of the controlling or ruling elites becomes clear.

On the whole, where is little doubt that the Indus civilization had indigenous roots and that its cultural precursors were the chalcolithic cultures of the northwest that flourished in the fourth and third millennia BC. Contrary to the views of some early scholars, Indus cities were not created either through the dissemination of the 'idea' of civilization or by migration of population groups from West Asia.

#### **1.3.4. Chronology**

It is unlikely that civilizational efflorescence was a simultaneous process in all parts of the Harappan distribution area. By 2600 BC, this civilization was in existence, as it had clear contacts, at that point of time, with Mesopotamia. It appears increasingly probable that it matured first in lower Sind, Cholistan and presumably, the Kutch region, which was linked by a river to the Cholistan area. Cities like Harappa, Kalibangan and Banawali came up a little later. The end was also staggered in time. Urban decline at Mohenjodaro had set by 2200 BC and by c. 2100 BC, it had ceased to exist as a city. However, the civilization continued after c. 2000 BC in other areas and at some sites survived till c. 1800 BC.

#### **1.3.5. Geographical Distribution.**

Indus settlements are spread over a wide area of northwest India and Pakistan and their distribution illuminates the various ways in which this varied geographical areas was exploited. In the lower Indus basin of Larkana, Mohenjodaro dominated the flood plain, agriculturally the richest part of Sind. Larkana is also marked by lake depressions, such as the Manchhar, where fishing settlements existed. Towards the west, there were clusters of sites in the foothills of the Kirthar mountain range and the Kohistan. There, agriculture must have depended on spring water and rains. Routes linking up with Baluchistan also passed through this area. In upper Sind, the Sukkur-Rorhi hills saw settlements of workmen in and around flint quarries, the raw material from which Harappan blades were manufactured. The course of the Indus river in the third millennium BC was more southeasterly and it flowed into the Arabian sea in the vicinity of the Rann of Kutch. The Indus river adopted its present course only between the tenth and the thirteenth centuries AD.

As one moves west, Baluchistan is reached where Harappan settlements are found in a variety of terrain-across the northern, mountain rim, on the flat Kacchi plain, in the district of Las Bela towards the south and along the coastal country known as the Makran. In the latter area, the fortified sites of Sutkagendor and Sotka-koh were important in terms of the Indus civilization's sea trade with the Persian Gulf and Mesopotamia. Both were suitable landing places for maritime traffic and from these points, convenient routes linked up with the interior. In other parts of Baluchistan, Indus sites are found in areas that are still agriculturally viable and lie on arterial routes. Pathani Damb, for instance, was near the Mula pass, from where a route went across the Kirthar range while Naushahro was in the general vicinity of the Bolan, through which a major route led to Afghanistan. Such routes were important because through them, Baluchistan's metallic-ferrous ores (copper and lead) and semi-precious stone (lapis lazuli and turquoise) could be procured by the resource-poor Indus valley. The northernmost site of the Indus civilization, Shortughai, is in northeast Afghanistan. Shortughai provided access to Badakshan's lapis lazuli and possibly to the tin and gold resources of Central Asia.

To the northeast of Sind is the Pakistan province of Punjab. A large part of the province is comprised of *doabs* or tracts lying between two rivers. Of these, the Bari *doab* (or land between the

Ravi and an old bed of the Beas) sites are noteworthy, especially the sprawling city of Harappa. There are no settlements in the interfluvies of the Jhelum and the Indus or that of the Jhelum and Chenab. South of the Sutlej river, is Bahawalpur. Part of it is made up of the desert tract of Cholistan, through which the Hakra river flowed. The largest cluster of Indus settlements is found here. Geographically, this tract connects the Indus plains with Rajasthan, which was vast copper deposits. There were several exclusive, industrial sites in Cholistan, marked by kilns, devoted to large-scale craft production that included the melting and smelting of copper.

East of the Sutlej is the alluvial terrain of the Indo-Gangetic divide, a transitional area between the Indus and the Ganga river systems, made up of the Indian states of Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and Ghaggar river course in Rajasthan. A large part of the riverine and stream drainage from the Siwalik ridge between the Sutlej and Yamuna used to converge into the Ghaggar, the Indian name for the river known as the Hakra in Pakistan. There were several provincial urban centres in this region such as Kalibangan and Banawali although Rakhigarhi (in the Hissar district of Haryana) was the largest city and is said to be as large as Harappa. Classic Indus sites are also found in the Yamuna-Ganga *doab*, with a preponderance in its most northerly portion around Saharanpur.

Finally, the spread of the Indus civilization included the quadrilateral of roughly 119,000 square kilometers between the Rann of Kutch and the Gulf of Cambay. Dholavira was the city *par excellence* of the Rann, with its vast expanse of tidal mud flats and dead creeks. Further east, the great mass of Kathiawad, now known as Saurashtra, is formed of Deccan lava and on its eastern edge flourished the port town of Lothal. The mainland of Gujarat is alluvial, formed by the Sabarmati, Mahi and minor parallel streams, actively prograding into the Gulf of Cambay. Here, Bhagatray, on the estuary of the Kim river, forms the southernmost extension of the Indus civilization.

### **1.3.6. Settlement pattern of the Civilization**

The settlement pattern was a multi-tiered one with urban and rural sites that were markedly varied in terms of size and function. There were cities of monumental dimensions like Mohenjodaro, Harappa, Dholavira and Rakhigarhi that stand out on account of their size (more than 100 hectares each) and the character of their excavated remains. While the older premise that such cities were based on a gridiron system of planning has been shown by recent research to be invalid, there is impressive evidence of centralized planning. City space was divided into public and residential sectors. At Harappa and Mohenjodaro, the separation of the largely (though not exclusively) public administrative sector from the residential part of the city took the form of two separate mounds. Dholavira's city plan was more intricate. At its fully developed stage, it had three parts made up of the citadel which was divided into a 'castle' and a 'bailey' area, the idle town and the lower town, all interlinked and within an elaborate system of fortification.

The character of some of the structure is also worth considering. Mohenjodaro's citadel, for instance, was constructed on a gigantic artificial platform (400 x 100m) made of a mud brick retaining wall (over 6m thick) enclosing a filling of sand and silt. This platform, after being enlarged twice, attained a final height of 7 metres and provided a foundation on which further platforms were built in order to elevate important structures such as the Great Bath and the granary, so that the highest buildings were about 20 metres above the surrounding plains and could be seen on the horizons for miles around. Another architectural marvel is Dholavira's system of water management, crucial in an area, which is prone to frequent droughts. Rain water in the catchment areas of the two seasonal streams – Manhar and Mansar – was dammed and diverted to the large reservoirs within the city walls. Apparently, there were 16 water reservoirs within the city walls, covering as much as 36 percent of the walled area. Brick masonry walls protected them, although reservoirs were also made by cutting into the bedrock. Furthermore, drains in the 'castle-bailey' area carried rainwater to a receptacle for later use.

The intermediate tier of the urban hierarchy was made up of sites that in several features recall the layout of the monumental cities of the civilization but are smaller in size. Kalibangan, Lothal, Kot Diji, Banawali and Amri are some of them and they can be considered as provincial centres. Kalibangan, like Mohenjodaro and Harappa, comprised of two fortified mounds-the smaller western one contained several mud brick platforms with fire altars on one of them. Most of the houses on the eastern mound had fire-altars of a similar type. Lothal was also a fortified town with its entire eastern sector being taken up by a dockyard (219x13m in size) which was connected with the river through an inlet channel. In its vicinity was the 'acropolis' where the remains of a storehouse, in which clay sealings, some with impressions of cords and other materials on them, were discovered. Lothal's urban morphology also suggests that there is no necessary relationship between the size of a city and its overall planning. Mohenjodaro was at least 25 times the size of Lothal but the latter shares with it the presence of two separate areas, burnt brick houses, and regularly aligned streets and drains. In fact, its paved streets and lanes are unrivalled in the Indus context. The third tier of the Indus settlement hierarchy is made up of small, urban sites. These show some evidence of planning but no internal sub-divisions. Notwithstanding their size and structurally unprepossessing character, they had urban functions. Allahadino in Sind is one such site, which had a diameter of only 100 metres but was an important metal crafting centre. Similarly, Kuntasi in Gujarat is a small Harappan fortified settlement where semi-precious stones and copper were processed.

Finally, urban centres were supported by and functionally connected with rural hinterlands of sedentary villages and temporary / semi-nomadic settlements. While the latter are generally small with thin occupational deposits, in the case of villages, outlines of huts and relatively thick deposits have been encountered. Kanewal in Gujarat, for instance, is 300 square metres and its cultural deposit (of 1.5 metre thickness) is suggestive of a secure village settlement. Similarly, the archaeological deposits of the Harappan phase in the Yamuna-Ganga *doab*-1.8 metres at Alamgirpur and 1.4 metres at Hulas-indicates that the pioneer colonizers of that area lived there for a long period of time. What is worth remembering is that, on the basis of size, it is not wise to distinguish rural and urban sites of the Indus civilization. In Cholistan, there are a few large sites, one of which covers 25 hectares (and, thus, is large than Kalibangan), which have been described as nomadic settlements, not urban ones. On the other hand, Kuntasi was only 2 hectares in size but has been rightly classified as an urban settlement because of its functional role as a provider of craft objects.

### 1.3.7. Subsistence Pattern of the Civilisation

A stable system of agriculture, supplemented by animal husbandry, hunting and plant gathering, provided economic sustenance to urban networks. In view of the widely differing ecological conditions of the distribution area of this civilization, the subsistence strategy is not likely to have been a single or uniform one. The Harappans were familiar with the plough. Terracotta ploughs have been found at Indus sites in Cholistan and at Banawali and a ploughed field was revealed through excavation at Kalibangan. Though it belonged to the early Harappan period, there is no reason to doubt that the pattern continued during the mature Harappan period. The Kalibangan field contained two sets of furrows crossing each other at right angles, thus forming a grid pattern, and it is likely that two crops were raised in the same field. In modern fields in that zone, mustard is grown in one set of furrows and horse gram in the other. Mixed cropping is suggested by other evidence as well as, for instance, in the mixture of wheat and barley at Indus sites. Such mixed cropping is practiced even today in many parts of north India as an insurance against weather hazards so that wheat fails to ripen, the hardier barley is sure to yield a crop.

Earlier, a broad division of cultivated crops among those areas in and around the Indus valley on the one hand and Gujarat on the other hand, used to be recognized. In the Indus area, the

cereal component was considered to be exclusively of wheat and barley while in Gujarat, rice and millets were more important. However, both rice and finger millet have now been discovered in Harappa. There is a range of other cultivated crops including peas, lentils, chickpeas, sesame, flax, legumes and cotton. The range suggests cotton. In Sind, cotton is usually a summer crop and such crops have generally been cultivated with the help of irrigation. This is because rainfall is extremely scanty, at about 8 inches. In any part of the Indian subcontinent which has less than 10 or 12 inches of rainfall, if agriculture on any scale has to be carried out with a substantial reduction of the risk factor, it can only be done with irrigation.

Cattle meat was the favourite animal food of the Indus people and cattle bones have been found in large quantities at all sites that have yielded bones. In addition to their meat, cattle and buffaloes must have supported agricultural operations and served as draught animals. Among other things, this is suggested by their age of slaughter. At Shikarpur in Gujarat, a majority of the cattle and buffaloes lived up to the age of maturity (approximately three years) and were then killed at various stages till they reached eight years of age. Mutton was also popular and bones of sheep/goat have been found at almost all Indus sites. Hunting of animals was not a negligible activity; the ratio of the bones of wild animals in relation to domesticated varieties is 1:4. The animals include wild buffalo, various species of deer, wild pig, ass, jackal, rodents and hare. The remains of fish and marine molluscs are frequently found as well as. As for food gathering, wild rice was certainly consumed in the Yamuna-Ganga *doab* although the most striking evidence comes from Surkotada in Gujarat where the overwhelming majority of identified seeds are of wild nuts, grasses and weeds. In general, the Indus food economy was a broad-based, risk-mitigating system—a pragmatic strategy, considering the large and concentrated population groups that had to be supported.

### **1.3.8. Artisanal Production and Trade**

A spectacular range of artisanal production is encountered at Indus cities. On the one hand, specialized crafts that had roots in the preceding period became more complex in terms of technological processes, and on the other hand, the combinations of raw materials being used, expanded. Along with the widespread urban demand for shell artefacts, semi-precious stone and steatite beads, faience objects, and implements as also jewellery in base and precious metals. It is now reasonably clear that the Indus civilization was not, in the main, a bronze using culture. Pure copper was the dominant tradition. Additionally, there was a variety of alloys ranging from low and high grade bronzes to copper-lead and copper-nickel alloys.

Some of the crafted objects are quintessentially Indus, in the sense that they are neither found prior to the advent of the urban civilization nor after its collapse. Indus seals (inscribed, square or rectangular in shape, with representations of animals, most notably the ‘unicorn’) for example, are rarely found in the late Harappan and post-Harappan contexts since the commercial transactions for which they were used had dramatically shrunk. This is also true for the series of Indus stone statues of animals and men, of which the most famous is that of the ‘Priest King’. These appear to have had a politico-religious significance and are in a sculptural idiom that is very much within the realm of ‘High Art’. The disappearance of this stone carving tradition can be linked to the abandonment of urban centres, along with the migration and transformation of elite groups. Similarly, long barrel carnelian beads are a typical Indus luxury product, which were primarily manufactured at Chanhundaro. Their crafting demanded both skill and time; the perforation in a 6 to 13 cm length bead required between three to eight days. Evidently, the largely deurbanized scenario that followed the collapse of cities could not sustain such a specialized production.

One of the most striking features of the Indus craft traditions is that they are not region-specific. Shell objects were manufactured at Nagwada and Nageshwar in Gujarat and at

Chanhundaro and Mohenjodaro in Sind. Similarly, metal artefacts were produced at Lothal in Gujarat, at Harappa in the Bari *doab* of Punjab and at Allahadino and Mohenjodaro in Sind. While craft objects were manufactured at many places, the manufacturing technology could be surprisingly standardized. In the case of shell bangles, at practically all sites they had a uniform width of between 5 mm and 7 mm and they were almost everywhere sawn by a saw that had a blade thickness of between 0.4 mm and 0.6mm. What is equally striking about the wide distribution of craft production is that, in a number of cases, manufacture depended on raw materials that were not locally available. At Mohenjodaro, shell artifacts were manufactured from the marine mollusc, *Turbinella pyrum*, found along the Sind and Baluchistan coast which was brought in a raw state from there. Similarly, there is impressive evidence of manufacture of copper based craft items at Harappa ranging from furnaces to slag and unfinished objects, even though the city was located in a minerally poor area.

Such craft production could survive and prosper because of a highly organized trading system. Indus people had the capacity to mobilize resources from various areas ranging from Rajasthan to Afghanistan and, considering the scale of manufacture, it is likely that there were full-time traders that helped in providing the necessary raw materials. Most of these resource-rich areas also show evidence of contact with the Indus civilization. For example, at Chalcolithic Kulli culture sites, Harappan unicorn seals and pottery have been found. Similarly, the exploitation of Rajasthan's raw materials is underlined by Harappan pottery at some sites of the Ganeshwar-Jodhpura Chalcolithic complex and by the strong stylistic similarities in the copper arrowheads, spearheads and fish hooks of the two cultures.

In addition to raw materials, other types of objects were traded. On the one hand, there was trade in food items as is underlined by the presence of marine cat fish at Harappa, a city that was hundreds of kilometers away from the sea. Craft items were also traded. Small manufacturing centres like Nageshwar were providing shell ladles to Mohenjodaro which also received chert blades from the Rorhi hills of Sind. It is now possible to visualize the exchange of finished objects between the monumental cities of the Indus civilization as well. For instance, stoneware bangles—a highly siliceous, partially sintered ceramic body with low porosity — manufactured at Mohenjodaro have been found 570 kilometres north, at Harappa. The nature of the social process involved in this exchange is unknown but is unlikely to be a case of satisfying an economic demand, since Harappa was also producing such bangles. Possibly, the unidirectional movement of some bangles from Mohenjodaro to Harappa is related to social transactions among related status or kin groups in the two cities.

The Indus civilization had wide ranging contacts with cultures and civilizations to the northwest and west of its distribution area. Indus and Indus-related objects have been found in north Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, north and south Iran, Bahrain, Failaka and the Oman Peninsula in the Persian Gulf, and north and south Mesopotamia. The objects include etched carnelian and long barrel-cylinder carnelian beads, square/ rectangular Indus seals, pottery with the Indus script, 'Indus' motifs on local seals, ivory objects, and various terracottas such as ithyphallic specimens that have strong Indus analogues. Externally derived objects and traits have been found at Indus sites such as seals with Mesopotamian and Persian Gulf affinities, externally derived motifs on seals and steatite/ chlorite vessels.

At the same time, the importance that has been attached in Indus studies to the regions west of Baluchistan as the main areas from which the Indus civilization procured its raw materials, whether it is copper from Oman or carnelian of Persian Gulf origin is somewhat misplaced. There is an abundance of raw materials on the peripheries and within the area where Indus cities and settlements flourished. Before the advent of Indus urbanism, these raw materials were being used by the various culture that were antecedent to the Indus civilization and

subsequently as well, they continued to be a part of the repertoires of late/post-Harappan horizons, albeit on a reduced scale as compared to the situation during the civilizational phase. While, there may have been some raw materials involved in long distance trade, there is no reason to argue that the Indus civilization was in any way either solely or significantly dependent on the regions to the west for such resources.

### **1.3.9. Religious Beliefs**

One of the most complex issues concerning ancient history is to determine past ways of thought and beliefs, especially in the case of the Indus civilization where these must be inferred from material remains, since its writing has not been satisfactorily deciphered. The archaeological indicators here are mainly portable objects of various kinds, figural representations and a few areas within settlements which seem to have been set apart for sacred purposes. There are no structures at Indus sites that can be described as temples nor are there any statues, which can be considered as images that were worshipped. A few structures reflect a connection between concepts of cleansing through water relation to ritual functions. The sunken, rectangular basin known as the 'Great Bath' at Mohenjodaro is one such instance. The cult connection of this water using structure is evident from its method of construction which had three concentric zones around it, including streets on all four sides (making it the only free standing structure of the city), for the purpose of a ritual procession leading into it. The bathing pavements and well in the vicinity of the offering pits on Kalibangan's citable also underline this connection. As for beliefs connected with fertility, it is possible that some terracotta Mohenjodaro and Harappa. At towns like Kalibangan and Surkotada, female figurines are practically absent. Even at Mohenjodaro, the fact that only 475 of the total number of terracotta figurines and fragments represented the female form means that this was not as common a practice as it has been made out to be. Several of the female figurines were utilized as lamps or for the burning of incense. Fertility in relation to the male principle has also been evoked not merely in the context on the 'Siva-Pasupati' seal but also with reference to the phallic stones that have been found at Mohenjodaro, Harappa and Dholavira as also with regard to a miniature terracotta representation of a phallic emblem set in a ovular shaped flat receptacle from Kalibangan. Religious sanctity was associated with particular trees and animals as well. The presence of part human-part animal characters on Indus seals and a human personage on a pipal (*ficus religiosa*) tree, in fact, suggest a shamanistic component in Harappan religion. None of these features, however suggest a trans-regional Indus religion with cult centres and state dominated rituals, of the kind that is writ large on the architectural landscape of Bronze Age West Asia and Egypt.

### **1.3.10. Decline and Devolution of the Civilisation**

The process of urban decline appears to have unfolded in various ways. At Mohenjodaro there was a steady deterioration, apparent in the fact that the walls of the terminal level structures are frequently thin walled, haphazardly laid out, made of unstandardized bricks. This is also true of Dholavira whose progressive impoverishment was hastened by two spells when the city was deserted. As urbanism crumbled, rickety, jerry-built structures and the reused stones robbed from older structures came to be commonly encountered on the other hand, Kalibangan was abandoned relatively suddenly and the same is true for Banawali. In other words, it is not one even but different kinds of events that must have led to the disappearance of urban life. There is, however, no unanimity about these events or about their relative importance. In fact, the collapse of the Indus civilization continues to be a focus of large historical speculation and debate.

The earliest formulations for urban collapse revolved around the hypothetical Aryans and the allusions in the *Rigveda* to the destruction wreaked on forts/cities by them. This idea continued to remain a popular one till the 1940s when archaeological 'proof' of Aryan invasions was claimed to have been discovered at Mohenjodaro, on the one hand, in the



assortment of scattered skeletons (apparently signs of a 'massacre') and at Harappa, on the other hand, in the form of deliberate blocking of entrances and a culture (Cemetery H) overlying the mature Harappan phase which was supposed to represent the conquerors. Since the 1950s, however serious doubts have been raised about the historicity of an Aryan invasion. Among other things, it has been demonstrated that the massacre evidence was based on very few skeletons that cannot be dated to the same stratum.

Increasingly, greater attention has been paid to the question of the environment in the Indus distribution area and the role of rivers and climate in the decline of an urban culture. At several Indus cities such as Mohenjodaro, Chanhudaro and Lothal, there are silt debris intervening between phases of occupation and these underline the possibility of damage being caused by the inundations of swollen rivers. It has been suggested that the excess river water was a product of earthquakes, although this has not been consequence not of excessive but insufficient river water. The river in question is the Ghaggar-Hakra, often been identified with the Vedic Saraswati, which was drying up number of sites dramatically shrank in the phase that post-dates the urban one. The reduction in the flow of the Ghaggar-Hakra was a consequence of river diversion and, according to one group of scholars it was the Sutlej that abandoned its channel and began to flow westwards, while others have contended that the Yamuna was diverted from the Indus into the Ganges system.

The impact of the Harappans on their environment is also a factor that has been considered as contributing to the collapse of the Indus civilization. A possible disequilibrium between urban demand and the carrying capacity of the land, leading to a fodder requirements and fuel for firing bricks are among the explanations that have been offered. However, the archaeological scaffolding for supporting such arguments remains to be systematically worked out. In the stretch that lies roughly east of Cholistan, the absence of long-term cultural roots has been highlighted. It has been suggested that since the Indus phenomenon there did not evolve through a long process but was imposed on a hunting-gathering economic context, its presence over time came to be thinly stretched and eventually, could not be sustained. The question of the absence of a long antecedence for the civilization in the Indo-Gangetic divide and Gujarat may require modification in the context of the discovery of cultures antedating the mature Harappan phase in Kutch and Saurashtra on the one hand, and in the Hissar area of Haryana on the other. At the same time, in the period following the demise of the urban form, chalcolithic village cultures as also microlithic hunter-gatherers are encountered, an indicator that such cultures were economically sustainable in those regions. However, the highly complex system of an urban civilization, which delicately balanced different social and economic sub-system, was no longer viable.

What followed the collapse of Indus urbanism was a variety of late/post Harappan cultures- the Cemetery H culture in Punjab and Cholistan, the Jhukar culture of Sind, the Rangpur IIB and Lustrous Red Ware phases of Gujarat. In this latter phase, a few elements of the Harappan tradition, by which one means features whose genealogy can be located in the mature harappan period, persisted to a greater or lesser degree, mediated by other cultural elements. However, the *civilization* had ended and even though aspects of this *tradition* continued, it was in a landscape whose cultural diversity contrasts sharply with that of the preceding, mature Harappan period.

What does the end of the Indus civilization mean in relation to the character of the cultural developments that followed? Urban settlements, for example, did not disappear completely- Kudwala in Cholistan, Bet Dwaraka off the coast of Gujarat and Daimabad in the upper Godavari basin are three of them. But they are relatively few, and certainly there is not city that matches the grandeur and monumentality of Mohenjodaro and Harappan cities, these are now few and far between, although baked bricks and drains are present in the Cemetery H occupation at Harappa while at Sanghol there was a solid mud platform on which mud houses stood. Writing is

occasionally encountered but remains generally confined to a few psters. The same holds true for seals, which became rare, and at Daimabad and Jhukar are circular, not rectangular like the typical Indus specimens. The Dholavira specimens, on the other hand, are rectangular but without figures. The other indicator of a reduction in the scale of trade is the relatively sparse evidence of interregional procurement of raw materials. On the whole, one would say that elements emblematic of the urban tradition of the Indus civilization dramatically shrank and finally disappeared.

Not everything that is associated with the Indus civilization disappeared, as it were, without a trace. A few craft traditions survived urban collapse and are found in the makeup of the late/post-Harappan mosaic. Faience was one such craft and ornaments fashioned out of this synthetic stone are commonly found in the post-Harappan period. A similar continuity can be seen in the character of metal technology, although there was a general decrease in the use of copper. The bronzes from Daimabad in Maharashtra made by the “lost wax” process and the replication of a marine shell in copper at Rojdi in Gujarat are evidence of this and underline the continuation of the technical excellence of the Indus copper and copper alloy traditions. There was also an extension of multi-exponential expansion in agriculture, settlements of late/post-Harappan lineage in the aftermath of the Indus phenomenon there was no cultural cohesion or artefactual uniformity of the kind that was a hallmark of that civilization. Instead of a civilization, there were cultures, each with its own distinct regional identity.

#### **1.3.11. Character of the Indus civilization**

In order to understand what set it apart from other contemporaneous cultures in the Indian subcontinent and from the Bronze Age civilizations of West Asia and Egypt, it is necessary to be clear about the character of the Indus civilization. The Indus phenomenon is called a civilization because it incorporated within itself the social configurations and organizational devices that characterize such a cultural form. It was the only literate sub-continental segment of its time. More than 4000 Indus inscriptions have been found, and even though they remain undeciphered, the script was used for mercantile purposes (as suggested by the seals and sealings), personal identification (in the form of shallow inscriptions on bangles, bronze implements etc.) and possibly for civic purposes (underlined by the remains of a massive inscribed board at Dholavira). The civilization’s essence was a settlement pattern in which cities and towns were particularly prominent. That such urban centres contained monumental structures whose construction required large outlays of labour and resources, and were marked by heterogeneous economic activities, are other conspicuous indicators. Earlier, Mohenjodaro and Harappa had alone stood out as the civilization’s large cities today we know of many more whose dimensions qualify them for a similar status. These are fairly spread out- Ganweriwala in Cholistan, Dholavira in Kutch and Rakhigarhi in Haryana are such centres- and symbolize the creation of aggregates of population on a scale previously unknown. The largest variety and quantity of jewellery, statuary and seals, are found in urban centres and indicate that craft production was, in the main, geared to the demands of city dwellers. Further, the characters of planning, the necessity of written transactions, and the existence of a settlement hierarchy in which urban and rural settlements of various sizes and types were functionally connected in important ways all indicate administrative organization on a scale that was unprecedented in relation to other protohistoric sub-continental cultures. Many of these are archaeological indicators of a state society as well. Whether there were several states or a unified empire in Harappan times remains unclear. Urban settlements may have functioned as city-states since their layout and character suggests the presence of local aristocracies, merchants and craftspeople.

The Indus civilization, while sharing many general features with the contemporary Bronze Age cultures such as the Sumerian civilization of Mesopotamia and Old Kingdom Egypt, had its own distinct identity. For one thing, with a geographical spread of more than a million square

kilometers, this was the largest urban culture of its time. Unlike Mesopotamia and Egypt, there were no grand religious shrines nor were magnificent palaces and funerary complexes constructed for the rulers. Instead, its hallmark was a system of civic amenities for its citizens rarely seen in other parts of the then civilized world-roomy houses with bathrooms, a network of serviceable roads and lanes, an elaborate system of drainage and a unique water supply system. Dholavira's network of dams, water reservoirs and underground drains and Mohenjodaro's cylindrical wells, one for every third house, epitomize the degree of comfort that townspeople enjoyed in relation to contemporary Mesopotamians and Egyptians who had to make do with fetching water, bucket by bucket, from the nearby rivers.

### **1.3.12. Conclusion**

We can say that the rise of the Harappans was a gradual development from pastoral nomads to farming villages in Baluchistan, spreading to the Indus plain and ending in the refinement of Harappan cities. Uniquely among Old World Civilisations towns were planned to a similar formula that included a surrounding wall, a citadel, granaries, housing and sophisticated water control systems. Agriculture was organised with granaries for storage, animals were domesticated as represented on seals and use of irrigation systems widespread. Long distance trade existed as is evidenced from presence of nonlocal material, the Akkadian/Indus intercultural seals and references in Sumerian texts. There was a shared typology of artefacts such as- elaborate beadwork, pottery, statuary (both crude and sophisticated), toys, stone, copper and bronze tools and a common seal script written language. Most evidence suggests that there was no sudden fall, rather a combination of environmental factors was the most likely reason for decline. We are also left with a general consensus of opinion among most scholars that the legacy of the Harappans was to influence the development of early Hindu culture.

### **1.3.13. Summary**

- *In this chapter, we have attempted to analyse the salient features of the Harappan Bronze Age culture.*
- *The earliest excavations in the Indus valley were done at Harappa in the West Punjab and Mohenjodaro in Sind. Both places are now in Pakistan. The findings in these two cities brought to light a civilization. It was first called the 'The Indus Valley Civilization'.*
- *This civilization was later named as the 'Indus Civilization' due to the discovery of more and more sites far away from the Indus valley. Also, it has come to be called the 'Harappan Civilization' after the name of its first discovered site.*
- *Among the many other sites excavated, the most important are Kot Diji in Sind, Kalibangan in Rajasthan, Rupar in the Punjab, Banawali in Haryana, Lothal, Surkotada and Dholavira, all the three in Gujarat. The larger cities are approximately a hundred hectares in size. Mohenjodara is the largest of all the Indus cities and it is estimated to have spread over an area of 200 hectares.*
- *The archaeological findings excavated for the last eight decades reveal the gradual development of the Harappan culture. There are four important stages or phases of evolution and they are named as pre-Harappan, early-Harappan, mature-Harappan and late Harappan.*
- *Total span of this culture should be between 2300 and 1750 B.C. Yet, there is further scope of modification of these dates.*
- *The Harappan culture was distinguished by its system of town planning on the lines of the grid system- that is streets and lanes cutting across one another almost at right angles thus dividing the city into several rectangular blocks.*

- *There was a great progress in all spheres of economic activity such as agriculture, industry and crafts and trade.*
- *Much evidence is available to understand the social life of the Harappans.*
- *The Harappan sculpture revealed a high degree of workmanship. Figures of men and women, animals and birds made of terracotta and the carvings on the seals show the degree of proficiency attained by the sculptor.*
- *The Harappan script has still to be fully deciphered. The number of signs is between 400 and 600 of which 40 or 60 are basic and the rest are their variants.*
- *From the seals, terracotta figurines and copper tablets we get an idea on the religious life of the Harappans. The chief male deity was Pasupati, (proto-Siva) represented in seals as sitting in a yogic posture with three faces and two horns.*
- *The cemeteries discovered around the cities like Mohenjodaro, Harappa, Kalibangan, Lothal and Rupar throw light on the burial practices of the Harappans. Complete burial and post-cremation burial were popular at Mohenjodaro.*
- *There is no unanimous view pertaining to the cause for the decline of the Harappan culture. Various theories have been postulated. Natural calamities like recurring floods, drying up of rivers, decreasing fertility of the soil due to excessive exploitation and occasional earthquakes might have caused the decline of the Harappan cities.*

#### **1.3.14. Exercises**

- Discuss the social structure in the Harappan period. After the disintegration of the state, why did post Harappan societies revert back to tribal forms?
- Give an account on the discovery, extent and distribution of Harappan culture.
- Discuss the background and origin of urban Harappan civilization in India.
- Describe the socio-economic and religious features of Harappan civilization.
- Write an essay on the factors responsible for the decline of Harappan civilization.

#### **1.3.15. Further Readings**

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**Unit-2**  
**Chapter-I**  
**VEDIC CULTURE**

**The origin of Aryans, Political, Social, Economic and religious conditions of the Aryans in the Rig Vedic and Later Vedic Period.**

**Structure**

**2.1.0. Objectives**

**2.1.1. Introduction**

**2.1.2. Vedic literature**

**2.1.2.1. The Vedas: Rig-Veda (2 to 9 mandalas)**

**2.1.2.2. Vedic literature in Later Vedic Period**

**2.1.2.3. Explanatory books of Vedas (Vedangas, Shada-darshanas)**

**2.1.3. Original Home of Aryans**

**2.1.4. Early Vedic period (circa 1500-1200 BC)**

**2.1.4.1. Polity**

**2.1.4.2. Administrative System:**

**2.1.4.3. Taxation System**

**2.1.4.4. Judiciary**

**2.1.4.5. Military System**

**2.1.4.6. Economy**

**2.1.4.7. Society**

**2.1.4.8. Religion**

**2.1.5. Later Vedic period (circa 1200-600 c. BC)**

**2.1.5.1. Polity**

**2.1.5.2. Administrative System**

**2.1.5.3. Income**

**2.1.5.4. Judiciary**

**2.1.5.5. Military System**

**2.1.5.6. Economy**

**2.1.5.7. Society**

**2.1.5.8. Religion**

**2.1.5.9. Position of Women**

**2.1.6. Conclusion**

**2.1.7. Summary**

**2.1.8. Exercise**

**2.1.9. Further Readings**

### 2.1.0. Objectives

*This chapter investigate the Vedic culture flourished in North-West and Northern India in the post Harappan period. After reading this lesson you will be able to:*

- *grasp knowledge on the Vedic Literature such as the four Vedas and the Brahmanas and other later Vedic literature;*
- *understand the Rig Vedic polity, society, religion and economy;*
- *assess the changes during the Later Vedic period in the sphere of polity and society;*
- *have an insight the increasing rites and rituals in the religious life of the Later Vedic people; and*
- *discuss the debate on the original home of the Aryans.*

### 2.1.1. Introduction

In the last unit, we studied India's development from Prehistory to Protohistory, We studied that India went through the processes of first Urbanization in Harappan period. However, mostly due to the environmental reasons, the affluent Harappan civilization and its architectural prosperity faced a gradual decline. After the decline of Harappan civilization, near about 1500 BC, we find a new culture in the Saptasindhu region, which was of nomadic nature. They were pastoralists who used to speak a different language, i.e. Sanskrit. They believed in nature-worship; and through, sacrifices, i.e. Yajnyas, expressed their faith. For worshipping, they created prayers (richa/shloka), and used to recite these prayers while performing sacrifices. The collection of these prayers was called as 'Veda'. And the language group who spoke Sanskrit (in which the Vedas were created) was called as 'Aryans'. The population of Aryans was of mixed one; however, spoke same language. Whereas, the culture in which the Vedas were created is known as 'Vedic Culture'.

At the outset, the Aryans were wandering in the areas of Saptasindhu region, i.e. northwestern part of India. The region is traversed by seven rivers, viz. Indus, Ravi, Sutlej, Biyas, Zelum, Chinab, Sarasvati; hence the name Saptasindhu. At that stage, they had certain kind of uniform culture. However, after two-three centuries, in search of pasture, they migrated in more internal part of India. At this stage, they met various tribes, communities those were foreign to them. Such new relations influenced their culture; and, in this period, we find Aryans following some different kind of culture. Thus, regarding Vedic culture, we find two stages of its development, termed as 'Early Vedic Period' (Saptasindhu region) and 'Later Vedic Period (more internal part of India). The literature, they had created in these two period indicate the cultural change through which the Vedic Aryans went. Who were those and what was their culture is the matter of this chapter.

### 2.1.2. Vedic literature

The 'Aryans' were follower of 'nature-worship', and through sacrifices, they express their faith. In order to express their faith, they created vast body of literature in Sanskrit. Various Vedic scholars created the prayers. In the beginning, these were not written. However, through the tradition of 'Teacher and Disciple', the prayers or the literatures were passed by from one generation to another through oral tradition. Obviously, the rules of correct pronunciation were strictly followed in this transmission.

To understand the Vedic Culture we have only this 'Vedic literature' at our disposal. These are comprised of Vedas (Rig-Veda, Yajur-Veda, Sam-Veda, Atharva-Veda) and their appendices (Brahmanas, Aranyakas, Upanishads) and some explanatory books of Vedas (Vedanga, Shad-darshanas). Together they are known as 'Vedic literature'. In Unit-1 we have gone through these literature in details; however, following is a brief reminder of them. As follows:

### 2.1.2.1. The Vedas: Rig-Veda (2 to 9 mandalas)

The Rig-Veda is the earliest of Vedic literature. It was created when Aryans were wandering in the region of Saptasindhu. It had 10 mandalas, however, in this period, i.e. Early Vedic period, 2 to 9 mandalas were part of the Rig-Veda. It is a collection of prayers, credited to specific scholars. The prayers, called as 'Richas', are devoted to various powers in nature, like, rain, fire, wind, sun, dawn etc. Such powers were deified as Indra, Varuna, Agni, Marut, Surya, Usha etc. Some Gods are benevolent whereas some are malevolent.

### 2.1.2.2. Vedic literature in Later Vedic Period

Before and during this period, Aryans were migrated to more eastern part/internal part of India. Due to relations with foreign lands and communities, they undergone through various changes in their culture. We can understand this 'cultural change' through the literature they have created in this period of transition.

**Rig-Veda (1 and 10th mandalas):** Remaining mandalas like 1 and 10th were created in this period. The 10<sup>th</sup> mandals comprised of one 'Purush-sukta'. In this sukta, we find early reference of the division of Vedic society, like, Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras.

**Yajur-Veda:** As we know, the prayers in Rig-Veda were recited at the time of sacrifices. Yajur-Veda was created to explain the methods of such sacrifices. Hence, most of the prayers in Yajur-Veda were taken from Rig-Veda. The Yajur-Veda has two parts, viz. Shukla and Krishna

**Sam-Veda:** Sam-Veda was created to explain the methods of recitation of prayers in Rigveda. Hence, most of the prayers of Sam-Veda are taken from Rig-Veda. The Sam-Vedas has two parts, viz. Archic and Uttararchik.

**Atharva-Veda:** This is the last of the four Vedas dealing with various types of subjects, like, mysticism, magic and black magic, treachery etc. ii. Appendices of Vedas (Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanishads) The Vedic Aryans created another body of prose literature in order to explain the knowledge in the Vedas. Hence, each Veda has its own Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanishads, like:

Rig-Veda has its Aiterya and Kaushitaki Brahmanas, Aiterya and Kaushitaki Aranyakas and Aiterya and Kaushitaki Upanishads Yajur-Veda has its Taitariya, Shatapath Brahmanas, Taitariya, Brihad Aranyakas and Aitariya, Kaushitaki Upanishads Sam-Veda has its Tandya, Jaiminiya Brahmanas and Chandogya, Jaiminiya Upanishads Atharva-Veda has its Mundak, Prasha Upanishads.

The Brahmanas deal with rules of sacrifices, whereas, Aranyakas and Upanishads discuss philosophical and spiritualistic issues from the Vedas, like, structure of universe, relations between one's soul and god, one's own existence etc.

### 2.1.2.3. Explanatory books of Vedas (Vedangas, Shada-darshanas)

**Vedangas:** To understand the knowledge of the Vedas in a proper and systematic manner, the Vedangas were created, like, Shiksha (to pronounce prayers correctly), Kalpa (the rules to perform sacrifice in a proper manner), Vyakaran (grammar), Nirukta (etymology of words in the Vedas), Chanda (to musical rules of recitation), Jyotish (proper time to perform sacrifices).

**Shad-darshanas:** To understand the philosophical content of Vedas, the Shad-darshanas were created, like, Nyaya (of Gautam, explaining logic), Sankhya (of Kapil, explaining the unity of soul with God), Yog (of Patanjali), Vaisheshik (Kanand, regarding atoms), Purva-mimasa (Jaimini, Vedic rituals), Uttar-mimasa (Badaraya, structure of universe, spiritualism) etc.

### 2.1.3. Original Home of Aryans

Until now we are unable to know the original home of the Aryans. Many theories have been put forward regarding this, according to some they have come from out-of India, whereas, some look their roots in India. Here, we would take a brief note on this debate.

**Early Philological Attempt:** In 1786 Sir William Jones, the founder of the Asiatic Society of Calcutta, discovered the close relationship between Sanskrit, the language of these Indo-Aryans, and Greek, Latin, German and Celtic languages. His epoch-making discovery laid the foundation for a systematic philological study of the Indo-European family of languages which as we know by now includes many more members than Jones had once assumed. The serious scholarship of the early philologists who discovered these linguistic affinities was later on overshadowed by nationalists who tried to identify the speakers of these ancient languages with modern nations whose origins were to be traced to a mythical Aryan race. In the late nineteenth century scholars had already agreed that the original home of the Aryans could be traced to the steppes of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. But in the twentieth century nationalist German historians and, more recently, also Indian nationalists have staked out a claim for their respective countries as the original home of the Aryans. In India this has become a major issue in contemporary historiography.

**Hangeri:** According to Gails and Macdonald, the flora mentioned in Rig-Veda can be found in the cold area of Hangeri; hence, Aryans might have originated from Hangeri.

**North Pole:** Based on the attraction of Aryans for the dawn and description of long nights and days in Rig-Veda, Tilak claimed that the original home of Aryans lay in arctic region of North Pole.

**Scandinavia:** Based on similarity in language, German scholars that both belong to same group, called as 'Indo-European' and hence, originally were resided in Scandinavian country.

**Central Asian Origin Theory:** During the last decades intensive archaeological research in Russia and the Central Asian Republics of the former Soviet Union as well as in Pakistan and northern India has considerably enlarged our knowledge about the potential ancestors of the Indo-Aryans and their relationship with cultures in West, Central and South Asia. Excavations in southern Russia and Central Asia convinced the international community of archaeologists that the Eurasian steppes had once been the original home of the speakers of Indo-European language. Since the fourth millennium BC their culture was characterised by the domestication of horses and cattle and by the use of copper and bronze tools and weapons and horse drawn chariots with spoked wheels. In the third millennium BC this 'Kurgan culture' spread from the steppes in the west of the Ural eastwards into Central Asia. Tribes of this nomadic population located in the area of present-day Kazakhstan which belonged to the timber-grave culture are now considered to be the ancestors of the Indo-Iranian peoples. By the end of the third millennium the Indo-Aryan tribes seem to have separated from their Iranian 'brothers'.

Although the eventual arrival of the Iranian and the Indo-Aryan speaking people in Iran and northwest India is well documented by their respective sacred hymns of the Avesta and Veda, the details and the chronology of their migrations from Central Asia are still a matter of controversy among archaeologists, historians and scholars of Indo-Iranian languages. Earlier historians had believed that there was a clearly identifiable gap of about five centuries (eighteenth to thirteenth centuries BC) between the end of the Indus civilisation and the coming of the Aryans. These scholars concentrated their attention on the Vedic Aryans, but more recent archaeological research has changed our knowledge about this period nearly as dramatically as in the case of our knowledge about the antecedents of the Indus civilisation. The alleged gap between Late Harappan and Early Vedic India is no longer considered to be as clearly defined as it used to be. On the one hand it becomes more and more clear that in some regions of South Asia Late Harappan traits continued right up to the Early Vedic period, whereas, on the other hand, 'intrusive elements' which are ascribed to early Indo-Aryan migrations into South Asia can be traced in Late Harappan sites. Excavations in Baluchistan (e.g. Mehrgarh VIII and nearby Nausharo III) brought to light a considerable number of new cultural elements around 2000 BC. These findings indicate a close



relationship with the contemporary Bronze Age culture of Greater Iran which is known from archaeological sites like Namazga V in southern Turkmenistan and Tepe Hissar III in northwest Iran. This culture may have been controlled by a semi-nomadic elite which is assumed to have belonged to the speakers of the Indo-Iranian languages.

In case the Indo-Aryan identity of the people of these early migrations in the early second millennium BC could really be proven, it is evident that some Indo-Aryan groups must have come into a direct and even active contact with the urban civilisation of the Indus cities which was still flourishing at that time. Such an identification however does not necessarily imply that these early Indo-Aryans have to be regarded as the direct ancestors of the (later) Rigvedic people. As will be discussed below, the Rigveda, the oldest Vedic text, reflects a socio-economic and cultural context which does not show any evidence of urban life. Scholars who accept an Indo-Aryan identity of these early Central Asian migrants in the Late Harappan period therefore assume that these early carriers of the 'Greater Iranian Bronze Age Culture' (Parpola) were soon absorbed by the Indus civilisation. This hypothesis is corroborated by the observation that the traces of these carriers of the Central Asian and Iranian Bronze Age end in northwest India around the sixteenth or fifteenth century BC. However this 'absorbed' population may have become the upholder of an Indo-Aryan cultural synthesis, combining Indo-Harappan (and therefore perhaps also Dravidian) elements with their Central Asian Aryan heritage. It is quite likely that this population was responsible for the continuity of certain traits of Harappan civilisation like the worship of animals and trees which changed and enriched the Vedic culture during the subsequent two millennia.

**India:** To some scholars the Aryans were not migratory instead India was their original home. The basis of their opinions are: there was no mention of any other geographical regions other than India in Rig-Veda; there was no mention of 'coming from- outside' in Rig-Veda, the references of geographical places in Rig-Veda only found in India.

**The Boghazkoy Evidence:** However, the first clearly documented historical evidence of these Vedic Aryans comes neither from Central Asia nor from India but from upper Mesopotamia and Anatolia. About 1380 BC a Mitanni king concluded a treaty with the Hittite ruler Suppiluliuma I in which the Vedic gods Mitra, Varuna, Indra and the Nasatyas were invoked. Moreover, among the tablets which were excavated at Boghazkoy, the Hittite capital, a manual about horse training was found which contains a large number of pure Sanskrit words. There can be no doubt about the very direct cultural and linguistic relationship of the ruling elite of the Mitanni kingdom with the Vedic Aryans in India. But this does not necessarily mean that these 'West Asian Vedic Aryans' originated from India. It is more likely that Vedic tribes started more or less simultaneously separate migrations from their mutual homelands in southern Central Asia to India and West Asia. As in the case of the Vedic Aryans in India, their 'brothers' in West Asia, too, appear to have had some earlier Aryan predecessors. In the early sixteenth century BC, the names of the Kassite rulers of Babylon may have been of Aryan origin, but they show no link with Sanskrit, the language of Vedic Aryans.

The arrival of several groups of a new population in South Asia which were speakers of Indo-European languages therefore can be dated quite safely in the first half of the second millennium around 2000 to 1400 BC. The general chronological framework of these migrations has thus been considerably extended in the course of the last decades. But a large number of questions still remain unsettled. This is particularly true with regard to the cultural and historical background of the migration of the Vedic Aryans. Their early hymns do not contain any reference to toponyms of Central Asia or Iran while they do mention some names of rivers in eastern Afghanistan and the Northwest Frontier Provinces of Pakistan, e.g. the Kubha and Suvastu rivers which are now known as Kabul and Swat rivers. In this region archaeologists have traced the 'Gandharan Grave Culture' with distinctive traits of new burial rites, fire altars, horses and the use of bronze and copper. But in

this case, too, archaeologists are divided on the issue whether these findings can be ascribed to the early pre-Rigvedic Aryans or already to groups of Vedic Aryans who were on their way to the plains of the Indus valley. In this respect the earlier verdict of scholars is still correct who pointed out that there is as yet no evidence which permits us to identify separate pre-Vedic and Vedic waves of migration. The Vedic texts, and in particular the Rigveda, still remain our major source concerning the early phases of Vedic culture in northwest India.

#### **2.1.4. Early Vedic period (circa 1500-1200 BC)**

Around 1500 BC, we find Vedic Aryans wandering in the region of Sapatasindhu. They were pastoral nomads with basic kind of polity. In this section, we would understand the life in Early Vedic period.

##### **2.1.4.1. Polity**

We find some terms, which denote a certain kind of administrative divisions of Vedic people. The Vedic Aryans were nomads hence; they were grouped in one tribe. We find various such tribes of Vedic Aryans.

**Units of Vedic Tribe:** Each tribe consisted of group of families. A family was called as 'Kula' (head-Kulap). The group of such 'Kulas' was called as 'Visha' (head-Vishpati). That means, the Visha was total people of that specific tribe; which was called as 'Jana' (Janapati). The larger form was the 'Rashtra' (Raja). The place where the tribe resided was called as 'grama'; and the larger form of grama was called as 'janapada'. Thus, the basic physical structure was the 'Grama' and basic-social structure was the 'Kula'.

**Emergence of King and polity:** Such tribes (or the 'Janas') were always busy in fighting with each other. As we have seen, the wars/fights were related to the issue of 'cattle-theft' and 'defend from cattle-theft'; in total called as 'Gavishti'. The warrior people of Vedic tribes used to undertake the responsibility to fight such wars. In due course of time, these warrior people got related with each other through matrimonial alliances. Thus, a separate class of 'warriors' was emerged from within the Vedic tribe. Such lineage of warrior was called as 'Rajanya'.

The regular fights/wars created the need of one brave leader who could lead the warriors in the battlefield. Hence, a need of 'king' was felt by the Vedic people. Hence, the 'Sabha' (or the assembly of people-visha) decided to select a king. The king was selected from the lineage of warriors. He was assigned the duty to wage war or defend the tribe from other attacks. As his payment, the people decided to give gifts to him, voluntarily.

Thus, a king was emerged. He was coronated with ceremony. He had to take oath that he would rule by the laws of canons. His duties comprised of to protect his tribe and capture maximum amount of cattle from other tribes. He was the leader of his tribe, however, controlled by many constraints, like, Sabha-Samiti (for, he was depended upon them for his selection), People/Vish (for, they gave him gifts or payment), Rajanyas/lineage of warrior class (for, he was selected among them) and mantri (for, they gave him advices). He was also depended upon the priestly class of his tribe. For; the priests used to coronate him and give religious legitimacy to his power. As he was so controlled that, if he deviated from his responsibilities, his post was snatched away from him and then another person was selected as a king.

##### **2.1.4.2. Administrative System:**

The king ran his administrative system with the help and control of Ministry and Sabha-Samiti.

**Ministry:** For the smooth governance, the king was assisted with ministers or mantris. This ministry comprised of Purohit (priest) He was the main minister of the king. He was appointed to give political and religious advices to the king. Besides, he was the one who give religious legitimacy to the king. Hence, his position was quite powerful. Besides, he was expected to guide

people in the areas of religion. Senapati (commander) He was in-charge-of military. He was expected to defend, to wage war, to arrange war-camps etc.

Her/Duta (spy) For smooth flowing of information, the spies were appointed. He was the chief of those spies. As a 'duta', he was in-charge of foreign affairs. Gramini (village-headman) Considering the limited area under the control of king, the Gramini also appointed in the ministry of King. It was expected from the king to rule by the consent and advices from these ministers.

**Sabha and Samiti:** The Visha (or the people), to govern their grama, used to gather at some specific place in their grama. The place or the gathering was called as 'Sabha' and 'Samiti'. The 'Samiti' was an assembly of all the people (visha) of that tribe. There, the people used to gather, discuss various issues and matters of concern, play, eat and drink. The meetings of Samiti took place regularly and discussion was taken openly on the issues of administration. Hence, it can be equated to the legislative assembly of modern days.

Whereas, the 'Sabha' was of limited people and discussed issues of confidential nature. Here, the executing decisions were taken, like, to wage war or to go under treaty; to help king in judicial matters, to create laws regarding weights-measures etc. The king was selected through Sabha and Samiti, hence, both the assemblies possessed controlling authority over the King.

#### **2.1.4.3. Taxation System**

There was no specific taxation system; instead the government (and their salary) was based upon the gifts, given voluntarily by the vish/people. The raids were another source of income. Such income was come in the form of cattle, food-grains, gold, horses etc.

#### **2.1.4.4. Judiciary**

The King used to solve judicial matters with the help of his ministry and Samiti. The source of law was Vedic literature, tradition and experiences of elder people. The crimes included theft, banditry, forgery, cattle-lifting, indebtedness and subjected to severe, capital punishments.

#### **2.1.4.5. Military System**

Besides, there are references of military, comprising infantry, cavalry, war chariots however, they were not of permanent nature and not properly systemized. The weapons comprised of, mainly the bow and arrow, swords, mace, spears, swingball etc. We also get references of armors, however, they may be of leather.

#### **2.1.4.6. Economy**

**Pastoralism:** The Early Vedic people were of pastoral community. For milk-products, wools, leather, agriculture, drawing chariots, the animals were raised. They were resorted to cattle Pastoralism; hence, 'cattle' was the wealth for them. Their total culture was revolved around the wealth in the form of cattle. Hence, the unit of family was called as 'Gotra' (lit. means cattle pen). That means, the families were identified on the name of their specific cattle pen, e.g. Vasisthta Gotra, Bharadvaj Gotra. The time of returning of cattle from pastures was perceived as auspicious time. Thus, ceremonies were performed at this time, called as 'Goraja Muhurta'. The wars were mainly fought for cattle-lifting or defending-the-cattle lift'. Hence, the word for war was 'Gavishti'. The basic food-content of Aryans was milk-products. To identify cattle, their ears were cut in specific manner. They had special pastureland, owned by community.

**Agriculture:** We find reference of some areas brought under cultivation. The land was owned by families. The farming was undertaken with the help of bulls. The Vedic Aryans knew basic agricultural techniques, like, to add fertilizers, to cut crops with the help of sickles, to arrange water-sources etc. The main crops consisted of Wheat and Barely, whereas, the cultivation of Rice/paddy was in early stage. However, it should be noted the cultivation of this stage was only of subsistence-type.

**Craft-industry:** We find reference of various crafts in the Early Vedic period; however quite of limited nature. These comprised of, Carpentry i.e. to make agricultural equipments, chariots, bullock carts, boats, homes, toys etc.

**Weaving:** Vedic Aryans used to wear colorful cloths of cotton and wool. The colours were added by dyers. Such colorful cloths were then embroidered by women, known as 'Peshaskari'. The weaver is called as 'Vaya'; whereas the Charakha is called as 'Tasar'.

**Smithy:** the smithy was related to copper only. Iron was not entirely unknown (krishna-ayas), however, the metallurgy was not known. Gold-smithy The Goldsmith was called as 'Hiranyakar'. He used to make jewellery of gold, both for human and horses.

**Cobbler:** Cobbler used to make water bags, shoes, bridle, whips, thread for bows etc.

**Pot-making:** There was no social division at this early stage; hence, anybody could take up any occupation. Fishing was also part of the occupation.

**Trade:** The trade was on the levels of exchanges only and that was of 'barter-system'. Generally, cloths and leathers were items of such exchanges. It was undertaken with the help of bullock-carts, pack-bulls; sometimes boats were also used. The people involved in trade were called as 'Pani'. The unit of exchange was cattle; however, we find reference of incipient currency like Nishka, which was of Gold. It was used for both coins and ornaments.

#### **2.1.4.7. Society**

**Family life:** The Vedic family was joint and patriarchal, i.e. organized under the headship of the eldest person (grihapati) in the family. The head of the family looked after the religious duties, economical duties and hospitality of the guests. It is expected that all the members should follow obedience towards the family-head. The family strictly followed moral of the society. The prestige of the family held first above all any persons in the family.

**Education:** The learning conducted at teachers' houses and funded by rulers. The doors were open for both the boys and girls, a separate women-teacher also provided in the case of later. In such gurukulas, the students received vocational education, as also of learning in moral values. There were no evidences of writing; however, the knowledge was preserved through oral tradition.

**The Social Division or Varna system:** During their stay in the area of seven-rivers, we do not find any kind of division in their society. However, when they entered into more internal part of India they came into contact with the indigenous people Hence, we find the earliest evidence of social division, mentioned in the purush-sukta (of 10th mandala) of Rig-Veda. In this sukta we witness a clear division of society in four Varnas, like, Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra. However, it should be noted that this mandala is actually belonged to the later Vedic period, for except this mandala, we never met with the later two Varnas in any other mandala of Rig-Veda. It seems that in the early period, there was no clear-cut discrimination in the society. Initially, the entire community called as visha. Then, based on occupation, two powerful categories emerged out of visha, viz. the Brahmans and Rajanyas (Kshatriya). Besides, references are scattered mentioning various occupation groups in the society, like, weavers, ironsmiths, cobbler, chariot-makers etc.

**Diet:** As the early Vedic people followed pastoralism, naturally, their main diet comprised of various milk produces and meat. They also used various items in their diets, viz. oilseed, barley, wheat, vegetables, fruits etc. Generally, the non-vegetarian feast organized at the time of ceremonies, festivals, marriages etc. They also regularly consumed intoxicated liquids. However, the Vedic literature condemns such type of intoxication.

**Houses:** Originally, the early Vedic people were pastoralists and always travel in search of fresh pasture. For the search of pastures, they settled in the area of seven rivers in northwest India. They were living in wattle-and-daub huts. Some affluent families live in wooden houses. Such houses comprised of rooms for various purposes, like, hall, bedroom for women, room for worship (where vajnyabhumi located) and a spacious courtyard.

**Dress & Hairstyle:** Vedic people wore cloths made from cotton, wool and animal hide. The cloths were called as 'nivi', 'vasam', 'adhivasam', 'drapi' etc. They colored with natural colours. They wore upper (a long piece of cloth: uparane) and lower garments (dhoti) and a headgear (of soft cloth). We find various types of hairstyles in this period. The men regularly cut the hair, whereas some tied their hair in a single knot. Some kept beards some removed. Women made different hair styles by using combs. They tied their hair with a specific ornament called as 'Kurir'.

**Ornaments:** Generally, both women and men were fond of various types of ornaments. The ornaments made of bronze, ivory, gold and jewels. Women wore bangles, earrings, rings, armlet etc.

**Entertainment:** Generally, Vedic people enjoyed themselves with race and fights of animals. They also went for hunting for amusement. They were fond of music. We find reference of various musical instruments, like, string-instruments, percussion instruments, made of animal hide. They also like community-dance. Both men and women participated in common-dance during the period of festivals. Besides, gambling was the favorite pass-time. Hence, we find reference of gambling in any kind of gathering.

#### **2.1.4.8. Religion**

The Early Vedic people were worshipper of nature. They personified and deified the benevolent and malevolent powers of nature and offered prayers to them.

**Indra:** Indra was perceived as God of wars. Being pastoralist, cattle was considered as wealth among Vedic people. Hence, we find frequent incidence of cattle-raids and cattle-protection in this period. Naturally, 'wars-on-cattle' was a point of concern; hence, Indra grew in importance among all other Gods.

**Varuna:** According the belief of Vedic people, the whole universe runs with some kind of rules, called as 'Rita'. Varuna was perceived as a controller of that 'Rita'. Hence, to maintain the order in the Universe, Varuna worshiped by the Vedic people.

**Agni (fire):** It is perceived that 'yajnya' is a medium through which food can reach to the Gods. Hence, to satisfy the Gods Vedic people used to give oblation into yajnyas. Naturally, yajnya held inevitable part in the daily/occasional religious rites/rituals of Vedic people. Domestic as well as communal activities perceived as incomplete without the performance of yajnya. Hence, Agni (fire), perceived as a connecting link between people and God hence it was venerated by the Vedic people. They called it as the replica of Sun on the earth.

**Surya (Sun):** Sun is worshipped as 'Mitra' (friend) by Vedic people. It is perceived as source of energy. In later period, the 'Surya' became prominent God and merged with the 'Vishnu'.

**Usha (dawn):** Usha is perceived by the Vedic people as the source of enthusiasm and inspiration. Many verses in Rig-Veda are devoted to the 'Usha'.

**Prithvi (earth):** Pritvi was worshipped, as she is the mother of all living being.

**Yama:** Yama is a god of death. He was worshipped not for his favor but to avoid him.

**Rudra:** Rudra was a god of storms. Similar to Yama, he was worshiped to avoid his wrath.

The religious concepts of Vedic people, as follows: Vedic people were simple, nomadic pastoralists. They could not comprehend the 'causation' behind natural favors/calamities. They personified these calamities/favors into Gods. They either feared of them or expected regular favor from them. For this purpose, they worshipped these Gods.

Again, as they were simple people they thought the Gods might reside in the sky or above the earth. We know that smoke from fire goes above to the sky. Hence, the Vedic people took 'smoke' as a connection link between earth and sky i.e. Gods. Thus, we find the importance of fire/Agni in their religious life.

Connecting to that, Vedic people thought that if they submit food in the fire/Agni, it, in the form of smoke, would reach to the Gods. It would satisfy the Gods and, either they favor them or stop troubling them.

Thus, Agni became a medium between Gods and people. Hence, it became an inevitable part in the religious life of Vedic people. Thus, the Fire/Agni became 'sacrifice/yajnya' and entire religious rites (and prayers) accompanied these yajnyas.

Similar to Agni, Surya (Sun) is also important, as it is a symbol of yajnya in the sky. Hence, after some centuries, another minor God like 'Vishnu' merged with the Sun and became a prominent God among the others.

The main corpus of Rig-Veda is the collection of prayers to these Gods. These prayers recited at the sacrificial piers. The sacrifices or yajna perceived as the medium for the manifestation of one's faith upon his God. Generally, it performed to get success in wars and to acquire cattle and sons. Every Vedic family or kula performed those sacrifices at their home. It should be noted that these prayers and sacrifices were not performed for gaining spiritual bliss or satisfying one's philosophical thirst. It was performed clearly to achieve simple material benefits from those who were perceived as powerful and uncontrollable.

#### **2.1.5. Later Vedic period (circa 1200-600 c. BC)**

##### **2.1.4.9. Polity**

In the later Vedic period, the Aryans were migrated more internal lands of India. Thus, they had near about control over vast and extensive areas. During their migration, they exposed to various types of communities, tribes and polities. In short, now the situation got wider and complex; and, increased both in quality and quantity. Emergence of King as an autocrat and kingship, divine The wars also became wider in scope and dangerous in nature. Hence, the need of king became very crucial regarding the changed scenario. The king drew benefits of such situation. He, to keep power in his hands, along with the priests, devised a system of polity.

He started performing large-scale sacrifices like Rajasuya, Ashvamedha and making heavy donations to priests. The performing priests (as they were benefited from such sacrifices through large donations) gave divine status to the king. Thus the king was equated with the Gods; or perceived as embodying elements of heavenly Gods. Thus, there emerged the concept of 'Divine Kingship'. Thus, the king and his own lineage became a powerful class in the Vedic society. The Aitereya Brahmana describes King of Later Vedic period as Adhiraja, Rajadhiraja, Samrat, Ekkrat, Virat etc. His tribe was started identified with the name of king and his lineages, like, Kuru, Puru, Turvashu etc. And, as the legitimacy of the king was depended upon the priestly class, the later became powerful.

To keep power in the hands of King/ruling class and the priests, they devised a system of Varna, which was based on the birth. Thus, the children of ruling class and of priestly class automatically became king or priests, respectively. Thus, the political, economical and religious powers were rested with these two classes. By same rules, the Vishas were compelled to remain Vishas and pay taxes to the king. The children of Visha, automatically became Visha and subjected to pay taxes. Whereas; the children of Shudras automatically became Shudras. Thus, through Varna System, the power was rested with two classes (ruling and priestly) and a due care was taken of the permanent supply of tax (from Vishas) and manual labor (from Shudras). Such system was again got fixed with the theory of 'Rebirth'; in which, no chance of freedom was attributed to the class of Visha and Shudras.

##### **2.1.4.10. Administrative System**

**Ministry:** The king was assisted by advisors in the administration. The early ministers were remained there but some new ministers were included, like, Mahishi Main Queen of King, Purohit (priest), Senani (commander) Duty of earlier Senapati, Sangrahit (treasurer) To look after income & expenditure of the kingdom, Bhagdut (tax-collector), Gramini (Village-headman), Suta (Chariot-driver) This minister had a special place in the ministry. He was a driver of King's chariot. He used to accompany the king in the travels for every purpose, like, hunting, rides, wars etc. Thus, he was

quite close to the king. As he was personally attached to the king and witnessed many incidents, he was full of stories of King and his related matters. Hence, he was invited to tell the story of his masters. These stories, later, became main corpus of epics like Mahabharata and Ramayana.

Thus, we find a systematic ministry of king of later Vedic period. However, it should be noted that, as he was responsible solely to the Gods, there was no need to pay attention to such advices. The advices were not remained compulsory to follow. Thus, the previous control of 'Mantris' was no more found.

**Sabha and Samiti:** As the king was divine, naturally, the power became hereditary and remained in his family. Thus, no need was remained for him to get sanctions from Sabha-Samiti. Now there was no selection per se. Hence, the importance of Sabha and Samiti dwindled. Due to the vastness of the ruled area, it was also not possible to take meetings of the assembly as regularly as before. Hence, within some years, the Sabha and Samiti were no longer heard.

#### **2.1.4.11. Income**

Due to hereditary status and divine kingship, now King became responsible solely to the Gods. Now he could compel the vish to give him gifts. Thus, the gifts became no-more voluntarily, they transformed into 'tax'. He introduced a systematic taxation system. Thus, the previous control of Vish on the King was dissolved. However, there was still need of support of people. Hence, the king, started redistributing whatever gifts he had received on the occasion of sacrifices. Such taxes became main source of income for the kingdom. Along with it raids, loots were other sources.

#### **2.1.4.12. Judiciary**

He also became supreme of the people; hence, all the powers were rested into him. Thus, he could prepare laws, execute them and punish the criminals.

#### **2.1.4.13. Military System**

The frequency of wars forced King to systemize his military system. Thus, in this period, a proper military system was introduced. A hierarchy was created and rules were formed. His military comprised of sections like infantry, cavalry, archers, elephants and war-chariots. A concept of 'Dharmayudha' was developed meantime. Death of battlefield became heroic whereas running away from the battle-field became point of disgust and great humiliation. The attacks on women, children and un-armed were seen as unethical. Besides, to fight before Sunrise and after Sunset was perceived as unlawful.

#### **2.1.4.14. Economy**

Although Pastoralism was the main occupation of Vedic people; however, most of them were oriented towards agriculture.

**Agriculture:** Now the agricultural technology was developed. All the stages were undertaken thoroughly and systematically like, plowing, seeding, cutting, thrashing etc. The farmers started plowing lands with the help of 6 to 24 bulls. Rivers and streams were bunded and water were preserved for the entire year. Due to development in agroirrigation technology, now a farmer could take crops of various varieties, like, Wheat, Barley, Rice/paddy, cotton, vegetables, pulses, oil-seeds, fruits etc. Now Vedic Aryans started producing considerable surplus. Hence, now, they had to think about its investment. Thus, the growth in agricultural surplus paved way for the development of crafts and trade.

**Craft/industry:** The earlier crafts were continued in addition more specialization can be seen in this stage. However, the nature of such crafts was mostly of cottage type. The weaving and dying industry was flourished. So like the leatherwork. By using cane and grass the mats and carpets were made. Besides, we came across to some other artisans like musicians, astrologers, cooks, drivers, messengers, etc. However, due to rigid varna/caste system, we find hereditary occupation and its compartmentalization/specialization in relation to castes.

**Trade:** The growth of agricultural produce and consequent development of crafts led the trade to progress. Now, the Vedic Aryans controlled extensive region than earlier. Hence, with regions, the markets were also expanded. Now, the exchange of previous period developed into proper trade in goods, like, goats, leather, cloths, ornaments etc. The development of trade compelled traders to unite. Hence, we find the beginning of early trading-organization or proto-guilds in this period. Against the backdrop of increased trade, we find introduction of early coins, like Nishka & Karshapana in India; however, limited to smaller transaction. The tool of measuring was called as 'Krishnal'. The trade was carried out with the help of bullock carts; now, the waterways were also being utilized. We find the sea-trade through 100 ships.

The barter system was not altogether finished in this period. To manage such situation and for the sake of convenience, we find the rise of central places in vast areas. These centres, basically, were craft and trade centres. However, this development in later Vedic period was of an early stage, hence, necessary modalities were waiting. Nevertheless, in this period, an infrastructure was laid on which the second urbanization of sixth c. BC was made possible.

#### **2.1.4.15. Society**

In later Vedic period, the people dispersed in various parts of India. New contacts were made with different types of cultures. This affected social structures of Vedic people and made it more complex. Against this background, the Vedic jurist felt a need to bind the society with some concert and strict rules and regulations. They created various types of social systems for this purpose, like, Varna-system, ashram-system, marriage-system, samskara etc.

**Patriarchal Family System:** Similar to previous period, the Vedic people followed patriarchal family system. The eldest of male members of the family, perceived as the head of family, called as 'grihapati'. He holds total control over the family. Based on this system at micro level like family, the idea of Kingship developed on more macro level like state.

**Concept of Purushartha:** It was expected from every man to follow four main duties in his life, viz. Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha.

**Dharma:** He was expected to follow religious rules/regulations, prescribed by Vedic canons. Besides, he should perform sacrifices, regularly in his life. Thus by following 'Dharma' he could become free from the 'Rina' (lit.=loan; the responsibility) of Gods.

**Artha:** He was also expected to follow some kind of occupation and earned money in his life. Kama He was expected to marry and generated progeny. It is perceived that by the marriage and giving birth to children he could become free from the 'Rina' of his parents.

**Moksha:** After 'kama' and 'artha', he also expected to strive for Moksha or salvation. While performing his duties, he should always keep his eye on his ultimate goal, i.e. freedom from illusions of mundane life and uniting himself to the Gods. This is moksha.

In short, it was expected from Vedic people to follow domestic duties honestly. At the same time, he had the responsibility of the society hence he had to follow his duties in the society. Besides, he should also perform religious duties in order to maintain Vedic system.

**Concept of Varna:** Due to the cultural cohesion, the spiritual authority codified the social discrimination and came up with a clear-cut division of the society, termed as Varna. In the 10th mandala, in Purushsukta of Rig-Veda we can witness the earliest mention of social division. According to this system various duties assigned to each Varna, like,

**Brahman:** Teaching, learning, performance and hosting of sacrifice. Hence, they became the sole authority on the religion of this period. As their authorization was necessary for the rulers to rule, the rulers also gave large sum donations to the Brahmans for the religious legitimization to their power.



**Kshatriya:** Learning, hosting sacrifice and protection of people and land. Mostly the rulers and war-lords/warriors belong to this Varna. To maintain this power into their hands, the Kshatriya, legalized their status with the help of Brahmans. The real political power lies with this Varna.

**Vaishya:** Trade and agriculture; the agriculturists, traders and artisans belonged to this Varna. As the economical power rested with this Varna, they were prominent Varna in the Vedic society. They were the taxpayers in the society. However, the traders and artisans, although economically powerful, never received cent percent respect in Vedic religious system. Hence, they resorted to non-Vedic religions in later centuries.

**Shudra:** submission of service to upper three classes; this was the lowest of the Varna-ladder and had no powers and no rights in the society. They had no hold on any kind of mode of production and subsequent production. According to some historians the people belonged to this Varna were native people of the land. Following are the highlights of Varna-system of later Vedic period:

- The Varna-System, in few centuries, became or made hereditary that means, the membership of Varna based on birth in specific Varna. Thus Varna transformed into Jati (group based on birth) i.e. caste. Thus, we find the emergence of castes in this period.

- The Varna system was hierarchical. As there was no mobility or flexibility in such system, in this period, it became rigid and remained favorable only to the first three Varnas.

- In this period, the sacrifices became important, hence the Brahmans, who possessed the sole authority on the religion, received higher status in the society.

- The emergence of pre-State situation (although on a level of lineages) in this period made Kshatriya powerful in the society

- The taxpayers, agriculturist and trader class, i.e. Vaishya, also became powerful.

- The three (Brahmans, Kshatriya, Vaishya) in combination perceived as men of higher Varnas i.e. traivarnikas.

- However, the Shudras remained powerless and required to provide labour to the traivarnikas.

- Along with these four Varnas, a class of untouchables started emerging from the concept of purity.

**Concept of Ashrama:** To curb the rebellious nature of some people and strengthen the family institution and ones social commitment, the system of ashrama provided to the society. In this system, a person's life divided into four parts and he was assigned some duties with respect to his age. Like,

**Brahmacharya-ashrama:** During this ashrama, the importance of education was stressed. In this ashrama, he was expected to spend his childhood at his teacher's hermitage. The entrance in this ashrama sanctified with the religious sacrament (samskara) of 'upanayana' when he was 8 year old. After upanayana he was expected to remain in the teachers' hermitage up to 12 to 14 years. Here, he learned various knowledge-systems of this period, viz. the Vedas, literature, warfare, political science, trade etc. Here, the singular method of instruction was followed i.e. learn-by-heart. He should learn, at the same time, provide manual labour to his teacher. Thus after his education now he was ready for the second phase of his life, 'Grihasta-ashrama'.

**Grihasta-ashrama:** During this ashram, he was expected to follow his duty in family and commitment towards society. He was expected to marry and became father of sons. Besides, he should perform those duties, which assigned to him by the scriptures. Four purushararthas or duties assigned to him, like, dharma (socio-religious duties), artha (occupation), kama (marital life), moksha (to strive for union with God). He was expected to perform first three duties during this ashrama; whereas, in the next two ashramas he was required to thirst for moksha, the fourth one. He

should take care of his parents and committed to the society. In addition, through Vanaprastha-ashrama and Sanyasa-ashrama a space provided for his rebellious nature.

**Vana-prastha-ashrama:** During this ashrama, he was expected to relieve himself from all household tasks and assign his duty to his son. He could live in his house, but should spend more time in the seclusion, remembering God.

**Sanaysa-arshram:** This is the last phase of his life. During this period, he was expected to leave his home and spent rest of his life in forests or at the feet of God. This system of ashrama helped a lot in the maintenance of social order in this period, like:

- All the needs of human being were honored and properly timed which made his life healthy and satisfactory

- Through grihasta ashrama, the family institution was maintained and strengthened. It also took care of the aged people in the family. It became a support for the society. Hence, society also maintained through this ashrama. Thus with the completion by domestic and social duties, the entire Vedic society was maintained and sustained in this period.

- Through last two ashrama, the tensions emerged among different generations resolved and the issue of generation gaps regularized.

**The system of Marriage:** Marriage was considered as main duty of Vedic people and hence it became a point of religious importance. After brahmacharyashrama, a person entered into grihastashrama. He is expected by the canons to get married in this ashrama. We know that It is perceived that through marriage and giving birth to children one could become free from the 'rina' (lit. loan=responsibility) of his parents. It was one of the 16 important religious sacraments (samskar) of Vedic religion. In this period, 'inter-Varna' marriages were disliked, whereas 'similar-gotra/family marriages' were forbidden. Hence, they had to marry in the own Varna but in other families than theirs.

However, we find instances of 'inter-Varna' marriages in this period. The majority of such instances pressed Vedic jurists to devise some alternative system to accommodate and legalized such 'inter-Varna' marriages. Hence, they came forward with two types of legalized structures of marriages, viz. Anuloma marriage (between bridegroom from higher Varna and bride from lower Varna) and Pratiloma marriage (between bridegroom from lower Varna and bride from higher Varna)

Besides, as we know, in this period, the Vedic people encountered other cultures in India. The Vedic society deeply influenced by the customs and institutions of these people within some years. It shook the fundamental structure of Vedic society. Hence, to assimilate these communities or their influences in their fold, they had to allow and accommodate the institutions of these people. Thus, we see eight types of marriages, which were prevalent in the society. These types clearly reflect contacts of Vedic people with different kinds of cultures. Like

**Brahma-vivaha;** Father gives his daughters hand to the knowledgeable and well-behaved bridegroom with proper rites and rituals, **Daiva-vivaha;** Father gives the bride's hand to the priest, engaged in sacrifice, **Prajapatya-vivaha'** Father greets bridegroom and appeal the couple to follow religious duties, **Arsha-vivaha;** After receiving a pair of cattle from the Groom, father gives the bride's hand to the bridegroom, **Gandharva-vivaha** marriage-at-will i.e. through the consent of bridegroom and bride only, **Asur-vivaha;** Bridegroom gives money to the father and relatives of bride and purchases her for marriage, **Rakshasa-vivaha;** Forceful abduction of a crying girl and marrying her, **Paishacha-vivah;** With force making the girl unconscious and violate her chastity. The Vedic jurists only recommended the first four types of marriage. However to make the patriarchal system strict, the marriages-at-will disrespected by the jurists. Besides, there were references of inter-caste marriages like Anuloma (son of higher Varna with daughter of lower Varna) and Pratiloma (son of lower Varna with daughter of higher Varna) vivaha.

The marriages in this period now controlled by the patriarchal head of the family and the religion. Hence, 'marriage-at-will' of early period disliked in this period. At the same time, the age of marriages decreased. Besides, the polygamy became prominent feature of this period.

Thus, the marriage system of Later Vedic people shows radical changes in erstwhile simpler society of early period. The 'self-willed' 'domestic' marriages of early period, now controlled by many systems like patriarchy, society and religion. Thus, it became an important 'institution' of the society, prevailed until today.

**The Concept of Samskaras:** To provide socio-religious sanctions to every phases of physical & psychological development of a person and need of his social commitment, the jurists provided the system of samskara to the society. Every walk of his life, from his embryo status up to his death, sanctified with such samskara, which, by tradition are 16. Some of them can be classified as follows:

**Embryo stage** (to give support to the pregnant woman) garbhadan to pray for good child simantonnayana to make the mind of pregnant woman peaceful and fresh After birth jatkarma immediately after the birth of child, it is fed with honey and butter. After this samskara, it is allowed to fed by mother. namkarana On the 13 days after the birth, the child is named. nishkramana After four years, child is allowed to take outside the home. karnavedha The ears of child pierced. annaprashana First bite of food by the child vapan Child's first hair were removed Brhamcharyashrama upanayana Before going to teacher's hermitage for learning, child should go through this sacrament. keshanta Removal of hair before entering into education system samavartana End of his education and brahmacharyashrama.

**Grihashta-ashrama:** vivaha-Marriage, Aginiparigrahaana-Placing sacrificial-fire at home and worship it regularly anteysthi-Funeral Education

Later Vedic people understood the importance of education in the development of personality and society. The hermitage of learned sages became the center of education in this period. It is called as 'Gurukul'. The rulers and affluent people provided generous donations and patronage to these centres. A child was expected to take education by residing with the teacher at the teacher's place. He was provided food and shelter in the teachers' place only.

With the sacrament of 'Upanayana' the child enters in to 'Gurukul'. Such centres inclined to developed the overall personality of a child. Here he was expected not only to learn but also to do manual work. Thus, he could cherish the respect for physical labour in the society. The day at these centres started with cleaning the campus of hermitage, milking the cows, carrying wood, filling up water-tanks etc. Then, the whole day went into learning. In the evenings, he had to serve his teachers and then went to sleep.

The knowledge was imparted through oral-method i.e. learn by heart. Besides, discussions, debates, practical are the education aids of these centers. The subjects comprised of Vedas and their appendices, Ware-fare,, administration, political science, logic, trade, mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, medicines, medical science, moral values etc. The teachers were of four types, viz. Acharya, Pravakta, Shrotiya and Adhyapak.

**Dress:** People of this period wore colored cloths of cotton, woolen, silk etc. The soft cotton cloth was weaved in gold and provided with beautiful embroidery. The dressing style remained similar to previous period.

**Dietary Habits:** The dietary habits in early period continued in this period, too. However, the proportion of non-vegetarian food increased in this period. This was the period of large and time-consuming Vedic sacrifices. Hence, considerable amount of animals sacrificed during such occasion. Thus, no festival could complete without the meat of animals. Rather, it became a part of religious rituals.

**Entertainment:** Similar to the previous period, the Vedic people amused themselves with various kinds of items and activities. This was the period of big rulers and time consuming festivals. Subsequently, in this period, the proportion of entertainment increased bigger and hence, race, hunting, gambling became part of every gathering of people. Besides, during long sacrifices, the bards invited to present eulogies on the exploits of rulers. Crowds of people gathered to listen this poetry, which subsequently legalized rulers' position/status. It should be noted that from the collection of such bardic eulogies, the epics were emerged in this period.

#### **2.1.4.16. Religion**

As we know, Vedic people faced changes in the Later Vedic period. The religion became very complex in this period.

**Changes in Deities and ways of worships:** The prominent deities in Early period witnessed unimportance in this period. The Gods like Indra, Varuna and Surya became unpopular. Whereas there emerged new Gods like Vishnu, Rudra, Shiva. The people started worshipping such Gods in devotional way. Hence, we found the emergence of 'Devotional worship' or Bhakti in this period; however at primary stage. Due to social contacts with various types of cultures, new deities and rites found place in Vedic pantheon and rituals. This gave birth to various types of idol-worship, animism magic, superstitions etc. in Vedic culture. Besides, magic, superstitions, concepts of women and blind faith became part of religious life. Besides, to provide social sanctions to various changes in person's life, the concept of 16 samskara emerged. Whereas, to regulate the person's life in society, similar to the ashrams, the concept of four purusharthas was put forth, viz. dharma, artha, kama and moksha.

**Prominence of Sacrifices:** The sacrifices varied and codified with various types of rules and regulations, i.e. karmakanda. Earlier the sacrifices perceived as a mere medium between person and God. In this period, the sacrifices and their complicated rules became prominent. The people were told that if they follow the rules of sacrifices, the Gods would be compelled to bestow their favour on the performers. Obviously, the sacrifices took place of God in the religion of Later Vedic period. Hence, the religion was concentrated in the correct performances of those sacrifices. Subsequently, the priest class became prominent who possessed the sole authority to perform the sacrifices in a systematic manner. The right of performance of sacrifices was snatched off from kulapati and it was became the monopoly of the priest class. Consequently, the sacrifices became varied, so as the types of priests. Obviously, large amount of wealth-time-violence was involved in these sacrifices. Thus, the system of accommodating increasing numbers of priestly class institutionalized in this way. However, the religious rigidity and complexity of this period witnessed, some sort of reactions within the Vedic society itself. The Upanishads condemned waste of money, time and violence, engaged in sacrifices. They searched the truth of religion in introspecting one's self and meditating on the relationship of one's soul with the supreme-soul, the God. They tried to replace the material base of religion with spiritual one.

To sum up, it seems that, the Vedic people, the resident of land of seven rivers, in the later period, migrated to other parts of India. They met various types of cultures, societies, economies and belief systems. This led to social cohesion and complexity in Vedic society. On one hand, the economy diversified and developed through agriculture, crafts and trade, on the other, to keep its identity intact, the jurists made social and religious laws tight and rigid. For monopolizing powers, the Kshatriya and Brahman made the Varna-system birth-based and rigid. To legitimize this process, the religion took prominent place in society. It manifested into various types of rites and rituals, involving large amount of wealth and sacrifices therein. However, the taxpayer Vaishya Varna and labourer Shudra Varna, who provided labour and service, thrown away from various types of rights and socio-religious sanctions.

Against this background, India stepped into Early Historic period. The mixed economy of agriculture, trade and craft of Vedic period evolved into large amount of activities in the Early Historic period. That gave birth to the second urbanization of India. At the same time, to protest the sacrificial nature of Vedic religion, based on prominence of Brahmans and involving large amount of wealth and violence; the heterodox religions like Jain, Buddhist, Ajivakas were emerged. These cults provided legitimization to the Vaishya and Shudra Varna, who earlier discarded by Vedic religion.

#### **2.1.4.17. Position of Women**

**Early Vedic Period:** The position of women was reasonably well in this period. They received respects both in the family and in society. They participated in all the domestic works including religious rites/rituals along with men on equal footing. As they were educated, they could perform vedic rites in perfect manner. Hence we find examples of their performance of vedic sacrifices. It is informed that the richas in Samveda performed especially by women. Some sacrifices were prescribed only for the women, like, sita yajnya, rudrabali yajnya, rudrayag yajnya, svasti yajnya etc. These were meant to acquire good crops and children, to marry, for husband to win the wars etc. Women could perform all religious and domestic duties in the absence of their husbands. Similar to men, women, too, participated in education, social activities and politics, too. They had right to education. Women were allowed to go through the mandatory rite of upanayana (i.e. entrance rite for education) before entering into education. We find evidences of women who remained un-married for the sake of learning and received great respect in the society, viz. Ghosha, Apala, Vishvavara, Lopamudra, Sikata, Nivavari, Godha, Aditi etc. The marriages of women took place only after their maturity. Besides, their consent perceived as important in the decision regarding their marriage. There were provisions of adultmarriages, marriage-at-will, and widow-remarriages in the early Vedic society.

**Later Vedic Period:** The social interaction with newer communities forced Vedic jurists to impose restriction on the women. The rigid patriarchal family system also snatched off various rights of women in this period. The religion sanctified these newer restrictions on women. Thus, we find the negation of the rights of women of 'marriage-at-will'. Her age of marriage decreased. As she was married in her early age, her right of education cancelled. She was considered as a tool of regeneration only. Besides, to maintain the patriarchal family-structure, cent percent chastity was expected from women (but there was no such compulsion on male). Restrictions also imposed on her social mobility, which jailed her in her house. She was compelled to remain at home and work as homemaker. Her remarriages also prohibited and hence forced to live the life of widow unto her death. In the home, she was forced to follow domestic duty and help husband in generating progeny. Her erstwhile status of accompanying husband in rituals was also finished. The negation of her right to education, disallowed her rite to perform Vedic rites. Thus, we can see the position of women deteriorated in this period.

#### **2.1.5. Conclusion**

From the above discuss we come to know that, the cities of the Harappan Culture had declined by 1500 B.C. Consequently, their economic and administrative system had slowly declined. Around this period, the speakers of Indo-Aryan language, Sanskrit, entered the north-west India from the Indo-Iranian region. Initially they would have come in small numbers through the passes in the northwestern mountains. Their initial settlements were in the valleys of the north-west and the plains of the Punjab. Later, they moved into Indo-Gangetic plains. As they were mainly a cattle keeping people, they were mainly in search of pastures. By 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C., they occupied the whole of North India, which was referred to as Aryavarta. This period between 1500 B.C and 600 B.C may be divided into the Early Vedic Period or Rig Vedic Period (1500 B.C -1000 B.C) and the Later Vedic Period (1000B.C -600 B.C).

### 2.1.6. Summary

- *After the decline of Harappan civilization, the northwestern part of India witnessed an existence of a different culture.*
- *There was still a controversy on the original home land of the Aryan; and whatever bits of information we gather that is from the vast body of literature they have created and preserved through oral tradition.*
- *What we know is that they were nature-worshippers and used to perform sacrifice and pray to the Gods. The prayers, collectively known as 'Vedas' were in Sanskrit and the people who spoke that language were called as Aryans.*
- *The Aryans believed in Vedas hence called as 'Vedic Aryans'. The people were of nomadic-pastoral tribe. They had specific kind of administrative system and a king. However, the people-assemblies possessed the basic control of their tribe.*
- *They were pastoralists; hence, their main occupation was 'Cattle-Pastoralism'. They also followed subsistence agriculture and some crafts and exchanges on quite a small scale. Initially it was a stock of pastoral people with social divisions on occupational basis and space for women in the society. They were nature-worshippers and through sacrifices and reciting suktas they expressed their religious faith. Rig-Veda, the earliest of four Vedas, documents this early phase of Aryans.*
- *When, the Vedic Aryans entered into more internal part of India, they were exposed to other communities, language-groups and belief-systems foreign for them. However, their contacts and relations changed their way of life.*
- *The growth of ruled land made King powerful than earlier. Along with priests and through sacrifices, he became supreme and divine. In this age, the earlier controls on the kings were diminished and thus emerged the hereditary kingship.*
- *All the other administrative bodies were systemized and properly structured. The Pastoralism remained basic form of economy; however, we witness larger orientation towards agriculture and growth in craft and trade.*
- *We also find the emergence of central-places in this period. When they moved out to internal parts of India, after contacts with various other cultures, Vedic culture came up with rigid ideas regarding society and religion.*
- *They laid the foundation of various institutions, which remained until today, like, the Varna-system, Ashramas, Samskaras, Purusharthas etc.*
- *Besides, to maintain authority and monopoly on religion and power, the classes of Priests and Warriors came forth, putting labourer class out of the Vedic institutions. In such condition, women also faced the same fate as the labourers. This information can be known from vast body of literature in Sanskrit.*

### 2.1.7. Exercise

- Describe the socio and religious condition in Rig Vedic period.
- Elucidate the political and economical condition in later Vedic period
- Write an essay on the Vedic literature.
- Give an account on the original home land of Aryan.
- Discuss the Changing nature of Aryan socio-economic and political aspect in the later Vedic phase.

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**Unit-2**  
**Chapter-II**  
**RISE OF TERRITORIAL STATES IN NORTHERN INDIA**  
**Urbanisation of the Ganga Valley, Sixteen Mahajanapadas, Ascendency of Magadha.**

**Structure**

- 2.2.0. Objectives**
- 2.2.1. Introduction**
- 2.2.2. Rise of Territorial State in North India**
- 2.2.3. From Chieftdom to State**
- 2.2.4. Early Vedic Stage**
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- 2.2.6. Origin of Territorial States in the Age of Buddha**
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- 2.2.11. Urbanisation in the Ganges valley**
  - 2.2.11.1. Factors responsible for Urbanization**
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- 2.2.12. Rise of Magadha**
  - 2.2.12.1. Causes for rise of Magadha**
  - 2.2.12.2. Brief History of Magadhan Polity**
- 2.2.13. Conclusion**
- 2.2.14. Summary**
- 2.2.15. Exercises**
- 2.2.16. Further Readings**



### 2.2.0. Objectives

*In this chapter we intended providing you an insight into the political development in northern India during 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. By the end of this chapter the learners would be able to;*

- *to be familiar with the political condition and historical geography of northern Indian on the eve of 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C;*
- *to trace in brief the growth and significance of urban centre in northern Indian on the eve of 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C;*
- *know the rise of Magadha and the different dynasties ruled over it.*
- *assess the achievements of Bimbisara, Mahapadma Nanda and other kings of Magadha for the growth of Magadhan Empire.*

### 2.2.1. Introduction

The period extending from the sixth century BC to the fourth century BC is justifiably regarded as a very significant period of Indian history. It was in this period that we understand how the changes taking place in the earlier period matured to give a new dimension to the political developments which were deep rooted in the changed material life of the people. In the context of the agrarian situation, a new type of society emerged in the Ganga valley between this period. That is why historians place the beginning of the early historic period of Indian history in this phase. Increasing use of iron in eastern UP and western Bihar created conditions for the formation of large territorial states in the period under discussion. The surplus produced by the use of the new agricultural tools and implements enabled the people to be self sufficient and remain on their land. They could now expand at the cost of the neighboring areas and pass on their extra produce to the princes for military and administrative requirements. This led to the rise of large states with towns as their centre of activity. Since towns emerged as the seats of power and as the base for operations, this idea strengthened the concept of territorial affiliations. Now people owed their allegiance to the territory or Janapada to which they belonged. Thus the emergence of several territorial states in different parts of the country in the sixth century BC formed an important feature of the political life of the times. This chapter will discuss at length the political economy of northern India during post Vedic period before emergence of the Maurya. Aspects such as rise of territorial states, growth of urban centers and ascendancy of Magadha will be dealt here.

### 2.2.2. Rise of Territorial State in North India

In the Age of the Buddha one for the first time comes across the existence of a series of territorial states in northern India in general and the Gangetic plains in particular. These are known as the sixteen mahajanapadas. Peninsular India was beyond the pale of any such development in the middle of the first millennium B.C. Similarly, there were many other cultural backwaters in the sub-continent. States such as Anga, Magadha, Vatsa, Kasi, Kosala, Kuru, Pancala, Surasena, Matsya, Gandhara, Kamboja, Cedi, Avanti, Asvaka, Malla and Vajji flourished during these period. All of them were not of the same type, they included both monarchies and what has come to be popularly known as ‘republics’. Vajji and Malla are good examples of the latter. Actually, they represented non-monarchical forms of government or to use the expression known from the sources Ganga-Samgha political systems. While in the monarchies the king was raised above the society, exercised unfettered power and the individual was subordinated to the state and varna order, in the Gana Samghas the dominant kshatriya group exercised power to the exclusion of the other sections in society. These societies compared to the monarchical order were less stratified and took time to develop complex forms and varna hierarchy. With the establishment of monarchies and the so-called republics the details of early Indian history emerge with greater clarity. Before we get into details discussion on the emerging polity of territorial state, we should look into the process of formation of territorial states in this period.

### **2.2.3. From Chieftdom to State**

It is difficult to simplify the origin of states because they are products of the convergence of numerous processes of change. Nevertheless, one has to address the issue because the state as an institution did not exist from time immemorial. Before proceeding any further on the matter one may briefly dwell on the question of what are the core issues. One may begin by defining the term state, search for its correlates in ancient Indian texts and then move on to see how and when the constitutive elements came together, leading to the emergence of states. The saptanga theory of state in the Arthashastra can be a convenient point of reference and, flowing from it, one could investigate the emergence of kingship, crystallisation of varna divided society, evolution of private property in land, the idea of a sense of belonging to a territory and the introduction of taxes, fortified settlements, administrative machinery and the standing army to make the general point that these variables promoted the cause of the state. Alternatively, one can focus on the processes to show how complex were the developments and why and how ultimately the Brahmanas and Kshatriyas emerged as the power elite, enjoying a significant part of the societal surplus, while others agreed to pay taxes and render labour.

### **2.2.4. Early Vedic Stage**

During the early part society was characterised by kin organisation. Terms such as gotra, vratya, sraddha and even grama denoting groups of people were actually kinship terms. Such groups reared their cattle, went for a hunt and fought the enemy as a unit. These kin groups, possibly resembling band living, were based on the need for collective subsistence. Each of these units was headed by its chief, who need not be confused with the later day king. In the later part of the Rig Vedic stage, we are told, one encounters larger kin units like jana and vis, which are comparable to tribes and clans respectively. The chiefs came to be known as janasya gopta, gopa janasya or vispati. These terms emphasised their role as herdsmen or protectors. There is evidence for intra-tribal and inter-tribal conflicts which, it is said, strengthened the position of the chiefs because of the role they were called upon to play in such situations. Both in the event of victory and defeat, as also the weakening of kin loyalty, the chiefs had to provide for some kind of order and cohesion. Such role (functions) apart, the chiefs also presided over the Rig vedic assemblies viz., the Sabha, Samiti, Vidhatha and Gana. Community wealth, including the booty from successful raids, was distributed equally among the members of the tribe. Individual members on various occasions gave a part of what they had to the chief largely owing to the latter's leadership functions. The chiefs usually redistributed such gifts during community feasts. Since the economy was predominantly pastoral and it was difficult to accumulate wealth, therefore, Rig vedic society was largely egalitarian in nature. Notwithstanding the reference to the four varnas in the Purushasukta at the end of the Rig Veda, which is usually considered to be a later interpolation, society continued to be egalitarian. However, in so far as the political developments were concerned the chiefs gained in status both owing to their leadership role as well as the hymns composed in their praise by bards who received gifts (dana) from them.

### **2.2.5. Later Vedic Stage**

The Later Vedic period was an important transitional stage, marked by the sharpening of developments in certain areas, leading to the threshold of state systems. The scene of activity shifted eastward, to western Uttar Pradesh and the adjoining regions of Haryana and Rajasthan. Based on the chronological and spatial parallel between later vedic literature and the painted Grey Ware culture (PGW) which are dated to the first half of the first millennium B.C., it is envisaged that the authors of the texts and the archaeological culture were the same people. Flowing from it the material culture of the times is constructed on the basis of the combined testimony of the two sources. The people practiced agriculture and reared cattle. Wheat, rice, pulses, lentil. etc., were known. The assured food supplies sustained major and minor sacrifices (yajna), and the Doab

became the cradle of sacrifices. Royal sacrifices such as the rajasuya and asvamedha went on to influence kingship ideology for more than a thousand years. Apart from the fertility element inherent in these rituals, which had something to do with placating the earth and augmenting production, they also helped to raise the status of the chief and his associates. One comes across the term rajan and its expanded forms such as rajanya, rajanya-bandhu, as also kshatriya. While ranjan meant the chief, the term kshatriya, deriving from the word kshatra (power) represented the group of the people wielding power. The sacrifices involved community feasts which the rajan alone could organise and the successful performance of these rituals implied the bestowal of divine boons and attributes on the performer i.e., the rajan . These developments emphasised his importance.

The rajan or kshatriya's rise to power was not all that smooth, it was the result of long drawn processes. A whole range of imageries and rituals were played out in public to achieve the ascendancy of the rajan and subordination of the community (vis). The king ritually lent his hand to agricultural operations at the beginning of the season and practiced commensality with the members of the vis to signify common identity. Simultaneously the texts through the clever use of similes highlighted his exalted position. For example, the rajan and vis were compared with deer and barley or the horse and other ordinary animals respectively. The ambivalent attitude focusing on solidarity with the community on the one hand and differentiation on the other sums up the transitional nature of the times. The rajan was a part of the community and yet had to be above it to execute decisions of common interest. Such compulsions were attempted to be overcome through ritual means. With the rise of the rajanya/kshatriya there was a corresponding enhancement in the status of the brahmana. It was they who officiated at the rituals and were thus instrumental in the elevation of the rajan. That perhaps explains the brahmana-kshatriya relationship (involving legitimation for one and patronage for the other) and the emergence of the power elite in early India. The proper conduct of sacrifices was prescribed in the Brahmana texts to ensure brahmana kshatriya dominance and the subservience of the vis.

Rituals such as the upanayana ceremony were performed to emphasise varna and gender inequality. Women like sudras were kept out of it. There were differences in observance of the matters related to detail by the upper three varnas, signifying hierarchy. Similarly, groups from outside the kin were ritually roped in which weakened kin ties and helped the process of the emergence of differentiation, which was necessary for state formation. However, given the dependence of the elite on the lower varnas, pretensions of solidarity were maintained by involving members of the lower varnas in aspects of rituals or, for example, referring to the vaisyas as arya. These, however, did not prevent the emergence of varna divided society. While in theory chiefs continued to be elected the Brahmanical literature prescribed formulas for preserving the office of chief over generations in the same family. It suggests that the idea of hereditary succession was gaining ground. However, it was the favoured son, and not necessarily the eldest, who succeeded the father. That the idea of territory or territorial affiliation was acquiring currency can be seen from the prevalence of terms such as rashtra and janapada. However, taxes were not yet formally collected. Bali, the gift of affection of the earlier period, was possibly acquiring an obligatory character. The absence of officials and administrative functionaries to assess and collect revenues is quite clear. It is difficult to perceive the ratnins, who had a role to play in the coronation ceremony, as some kind of nascent officialdom.

When it came to the defense of the realm the vis in the absence of an organized army, did it collectively. At the end of the later vedic period certain attributes of the state were in place or to put it differently peasant communities were on the threshold of state formation, but the state had not yet fully emerged. It is argued that iron was yet to enter the productive process, agriculture had still not yielded the necessary surplus and sacrifices like the Asvamedha and Vajapeya, among others,

involved the slaughter of animals and wasteful consumption. Together they held back the rise of the state.

### **2.2.6. Origin of Territorial States in the Age of Buddha**

As one enters the age of the Buddha many of these limitations were overcome. The introduction of iron in agriculture helped deeper ploughing and the breaking of the hard soil in the mid-Ganga plains. Iron was also used in various crafts and the making of metallic money, i.e., the punch marked coins. Almost simultaneously wet paddy transplantation came to be practiced in this naturally rice growing area. Cumulatively these developments led to surplus produce, which in turn sustained trade, taxes and the emerging stratified society, with its administrative functionaries, ideologues and wage labourers. Dharmasutra literature justified varna divisions and institutionalised inequality. Vaisyas and sudras bore the brunt of carrying out production and provided the necessary revenue and labour to uphold the king's men, army personnel, priests, ideologues and so on. Buddhism too recognised and endorsed many of these developments. There are references to ministers and armies in the context of Magadha and Kosala. The presence of officials such as balisadhaka and karakara, for example, suggests that taxes like bali and kara were collected. Thus, by the sixth-fifth centuries B.C. territorial states emerged in northern India. The above mentioned perspective had been criticized largely on two counts. First, it is said that the final emergence of states has been explained with reference to some kind of technical determinism in what appears to be an iron-productivity-surplus-state formation line of argument. Secondly, the emergence of the varnas and their assigned roles, either as receivers of taxes and gifts or providers of produce and labour, has not been fully explained.

Romilla Thapar's while explaining the emergence of states refers to anthropological concepts like lineage society and house-holding economy to explain the evolution of the hierarchically structured varna society, and her emphasis is on the interplay of multiple processes of change, bearing on state formation. It is said that Vedic literature is replete with references to lineage terms, viz., gotra, vraja, etc. Lineage groups comprise members of the senior (rajanya) and junior (vis) lineage. The senior lineage both controlled and had greater access to community resources, though in principle there was collective ownership of land by the lineage group. In course of time by characterising the seniority based on genealogical superiority as one premised on the ideology of patrilineal descent the rajanya asserted its authority. It emphasised endogamy to claim purity, and flowing from it asserted its exclusivity and superiority. The differentiation between members of the senior and junior lineage increased with the transition to the later vedic period.

The emergence of a socio-economic form approximating what is known as householding economy is seen to have hastened the process of internal differentiation and the dissolution of lineage organisation during the later vedic times. The household comprised three to four generations of family members who may have resided in one or more than one house, but for purposes of production, consumption and rituals formed one single unit. The extended family gradually began to exercise right on the land it cultivated, theoretically though such land was initially allotted to the community for its use in cultivation. In situations where the extended family labour was not sufficient to work the land, the non-kin members who were not related to the family by kinship ties were roped in for agricultural activities. These people need not be confused with wage labour. They were practically a part of the family, participated in all family activities except the family rituals. In the long-term as land allotted for cultivation was transformed into private property such retainers, who were some sort of family inheritance and may have emerged out of defeated and dispossessed peoples, were reduced to family servants. The rajanya/kshatriya and vaisya evolved from the senior and junior lineages respectively. Those relegated to the position of labourers and artisans become Sudras. Because the extended families within the given socio-economic structure generally incorporated three-four generations it allowed younger generations to move out, clear and settle in

new lands in conditions of population pressure. There are literary references to the fissioning off among communities as a consequence of such developments. Such tendencies facilitated the process of agrarian expansion and extended the frontier of peasant activity. Thus, within the framework of the house-holding economy one comes to understand the transition from lineage society to a complex society and the state.

Environment, technology, social stratification, surplus, urbanisation and ideology, among others, were important factors in the making of the state, but it is difficult to prioritize them or identify the single most important factor. Surplus, for example, was related to social and political hierarchies and the need of the non-producers to live off the produce of others. Similarly, it was linked to the distribution of the produce. In brief, society does not produce a surplus simply because of the availability of a given technology. It is the result of a combination of factors. The relationship between social differentiation, urbanisation and ideology too are quite complex. Powerful contemporary religious ideas and systems (Buddhist) played an important role in shaping the nature of the emerging state systems-gana sanghas and monarchies. The Buddhist Sangha (monastic institution) characterised by its egalitarian ideas was useful to the early states because it was able to integrate the varied groups across caste and clan lines. The Sangha too depended for its sustenance on the existence of a strong state. Kings like Ajatsatru of Magadha and Ashoka Maurya extended patronage to Buddhism. In this analysis it is also argued that the mahajanapadas were either gana-sanghas or monarchies. While in the so called republics of Northeastern India (Malla, Vajji) the process of transition to powerful centralised state was slow owing to the common ownership of land by the kshatriya clans (which blocked the possibility of land revenue appropriation) whereas the territorial states in the upper Ganga plains (Kurus) could not easily shake off the later Vedic legacy of rituals, cattle sacrifice and wasteful consumption (which hindered the rise of strong states), those like Kosala and Magadha which were located in the mid-Ganga plains were characterised by no such limitations. In addition, Magadha had the advantage of rich soil, gentle gradient towards Ganga, a history of rice cultivation, good rainfall, irrigated land, Bandhs used as water reserves, several rivers like the Son, Gandak, etc., which could also be used for communication and trade, and it was close to the mines and minerals of Dhalbhum and Singhbhum. The forest of Rajmahal hills were used for procuring timber and were also the habitat of elephants. Magadha controlled the Dakshinapath (trade route) and all routes on the southern bank of the Ganga were linked to Magadha. The states that emerged in this part of northern India were evidently more viable and strong. They could sustain greater populations and generate the necessary taxes to meet the requirements of the state.

#### **2.2.7. Categories of Territorial States in the Age of Buddha**

During the sixth century BC, India came to be divided into a number of independent states and even north India had no single paramount power. The Buddhist and Jain religious texts are more informative regarding them as compared to the Hindu religious texts. The Buddhist text Anguttara Nikaya which is a portion of Sutta- Pitaka gives a list of sixteen Mahajanapadas in the time of Buddha. Another Buddhist text Mahavastu enumerates a similar list of the sixteen Mahajanapadas. Bhagavati Sutra, a Jaina work gives a comparatively different list of the sixteen Mahajanapadas while including Vanga and Malaya. However, the number sixteen seems to have been acceptable and conventional but the list of the sixteen Mahajanapadas varied because the regions important to the Buddhist and Jains had some variation. The list include a gradual shift of focus to the middle Gangetic valley because of the location of most of these Mahajanapadas in this area. So far as nature of government is concerned the early literature inform us that most of these states were monarchical but quite a large number of them had republican or oligarchic constitutions.

### **2.2.8. The Gana-Sanghas**

In post Vedic period the geographical focus shifted to the middle Ganga valley and migration and settlement of people took place along two routes: Northern originated from the Himalayan foothills and moved south to merge into the southern route near Pataliputra. The Buddhist sources as well as Ashtadhyayi of Panini give us information about middle Ganga valley and Gana sanghas respectively. It were the gana-sanghas of the middle Ganga valley such as Vrijis which contained the constituent features of state formation. Monarchy was initially established in Kosala, Magadha, Gandhara, Kasi and Kausambi. There were the two categories of state systems as they emerged in the Age of the Buddha: Gana-sanghas and Monarchies.

The origin of the gana-sanghas is related to migration to middle Ganga valley. Migration resulted due to population pressure and also due to a process of fission in lineage systems. Due to fissioning off among Kshtriya clans in later Vedic period the members of Rajakula migrated to some other area and established a new janapada. Janapada referred to a territory named after a Kshtriya clan. A group of clans formed a jana and the area where they settled was called janapada literally meaning the place where the tribe puts its feet. This is how Sakya, Koliya and Licchavi clans came into being. Some of the gana-sanghas comprised of single clan units like Sakyas, Koliyas and Mallas. Some were confederacies of clans of which important were Vrijji of whom Licchavis were most important. In the gana-sanghas the system of clan (vis) holdings was prevalent. Therefore, Gahapatis (family [three to four generations] as owners of holdings) are rarely referred to as agriculturists in gana-sanghas. In the gana-sanghas the Kshtriya lineages were regarded as owners of cultivable land. The name of the territory was derived from the Kshtriya lineage who had earlier cultivated land on a family basis but now used labour when the size of holdings became too big to be manageable. The clan held the land jointly on the criteria based on birth and the produce was therefore distributed among its members.

The gana-sanghas were the assemblies of Kshtriya lineages. They were established by the younger members of the established Kshtriya lineages. In the gana-sanghas ownership of land was vested in the Kshtriya lineage. Non-kin groups provided labour for working on the land of Kshtriya lineage. There was very little scope for rituals. Gana-sanghas have been variously interpreted as republics, oligarchies and chiefdoms. The members of the ruling lineages were referred to as rajas, rajakulas or consecrated Kshtriyas. The head of each household was raja. The symbols of the gana-sanghas were embossed on punch marked coins which indicates the beginnings of the use of coined money. Decisions were arrived at through the method of voting. Within the rajakulas all members were regarded as equal. Thus chiefdoms have a centralised command structure in which status to leadership is decided by birth and ancestry and genealogies become important. There is reference to military and fiscal offices. They did not possess a standing army nor did they have any regular system of revenue collection. However, the sources do refer to taxes imposed on traders. Varna organisation did not determine social status in Ganasangha areas. Rituals were not important and two broad categories in this area were those who owned land and those who laboured on it. All these features indicate the existence of an incipient state or stratified society. Difference among the members of the gana-sanghas would lead to fissioning off among groups. These groups would settle fresh areas. However in such a situation if one segment of the clan would seize power then the janapada (gana-sangha) could turn into a monarchy.

### **2.2.9. Monarchies**

With the establishment of the kingdoms of Magadha and Kosala the term janapada included villages, markets, towns and cities which meant existence of a system of administration and revenue. Power came to be vested in the hands of certain families, who did not possess the highest status. Pasenadi the king of Kosala legitimised his position as a king by performing asvamedha, vajapeya, etc. in which hundreds of animals were killed. The rituals were now a mere symbolism to

legitimize power and not a method to part with wealth acquired in raids. In Kosala and Magadha land was owned by gahapatis and they cultivated it themselves or used the labour of others (tenants). State also undertook cultivation of land. Wasteland was brought under cultivation and with the expansion of agrarian economy a large surplus was released in the monarchical states. The ritual gifts granted to Brahamnas at the time of Yajna were fewer and instead the practice of gifting of land to Brahamnas was initiated. The tax collection machinery was well established in Kosala. Bali now meant a tax but could also mean an offering at a sacrifice. Bhaga and ardha constituted a share of total and sulka meant customs duty. Reference to karsapana points to the introduction of coinage. Panini mentions taxes prevalent in the eastern area including land tax. The importance of Kosa (treasury) is indicated. This was necessary for maintaining a standing army an essential condition for emergence of a state system. Rulers of Magadha paid due attention to army organisation which included recruitment and training of soldiers and the innovation in armoury. In the campaign against Vrijjis Magadha used two new techniques *ratha-musala* (chariot with knives) and *maha-silakantika* (catapult for throwing stones). Now raids were replaced by planned campaigns.

### **2.2.10. The 16<sup>th</sup> Mahajanapadas**

As discussed above, during the sixth century BC, India came to be divided into a number of independent states and even north India had no single paramount power. Most of these states were monarchical but quite a large number of them had republican or oligarchic constitutions. The Buddhist and Jain religious texts are more informative regarding them as compared to the Hindu religious texts. The Buddhist text such as Anguttara Nikaya which is a portion of Sutta-Pitaka, Mahavastu and Jain text Bhagavati Sutra, gives us a list of the sixteen Mahajanapadas. Although, the number sixteen seems to have been acceptable and conventional but the list of the sixteen Mahajanapadas varied in the above texts because the regions important to the Buddhist and Jains had some variation. The list include a gradual shift of focus to the middle Gangetic valley because of the location of most of these Mahajanapadas in this area. The above mention text furnished the following list of sixteen Mahajanapadas in the time of Buddha.

**Kashi:** Of the sixteen Mahajanapadas Kashi seems to have been the most powerful in the beginning. Since it was at first the most powerful, it played important part in the subversion of the Videhan monarchy. Located in and around the present day Varanasi district its capital Varanasi is referred to as the foremost city of India situated on the confluence of the Ganges and the Gomati river and in the middle of the most fertile agricultural areas. The economic importance of Kashi lay in the fact that it had emerged as a leading centre of textile manufacture in the time of the Buddha. The Kashaya (orange brown) robes of the Buddhist monks are said to have been manufactured here. Kashi was not only famous for its cotton textiles but also for its market for horses. Excavations at the site of Rajghat which has been identified with ancient Benaras have not yielded any impressive evidence for urbanisation in the sixth century BC. It seemed to have emerged as a major town around 450 BC. But by the time of Buddha, it had emerged as a centre for commercial activity. Several kings of Kashi are mentioned as having conquered Kosala and many other kingdoms. Dasaratha Jataka also mentions Dasaratha and Rama as kings of Kashi and not of Ayodhya. The father of Parsva, the twenty third teacher (Tirthankara) of the Jains is said to have been the king of Benaras. The Buddha also delivered his first sermon after enlightenment in Sarnath near Benaras. All important religious traditions of ancient India are associated with Kashi. However, by the time of the Buddha the Kashi Mahajanapada had been annexed by Kosala and was a cause of war between Magadha and Kosala.

**Kosala:** The Mahajanapada of Kosala was bounded on the west by the river Gomati, on the south by the Sarpika or Syandika (Sai) which defined its southern boundary. To its east flowed the river Sadarvira (Gandak) which separated it from Videha Janapada. Towards the north, it skirted the

Nepal hills. Literary references indicate how Kosala emerged out of an assimilation of many smaller principalities and lineages. For example, we know that the Sakyas of Kapilvastu were under the control of Kosala. The Buddha calls himself as Kosalan in the Majjhima Nikaya. But at the same time, the Kosala King Vidudhaba is said to have destroyed the Sakyas. It would only indicate that the Sakya lineage was under the normal control of the Kosala. The newly emergent monarchy established a powerful centralized control and put an end to the autonomy of the Sakyas. Hiranyanabha, Mahakosala Prasenjita and Suddhodhana have been named as rulers of Kosala in the sixth century BC. These rulers are said to have ruled from Ayodhya, Saketa, Kapilvastu and Sravasti. Ayodhya or the Saryu associated with the Rama story in Ramayana, Saketa adjoining it and Sravasti (modern Sahet-Mahet) on the borders of the Gonda and Bahraich districts of Uttar Pradesh, were three important Kosala cities, though excavations indicate that none of them was settled on any considerable scale before the sixth century BC. Probably in the early years of the sixth century BC, the area of Kosala was under the control of many smaller chiefs who were ruling from small towns. Towards the close of the sixth century BC, Kings like Prasenjita and Vidudhaba succeeded in bringing all chiefs under their control. They ruled from Sravasti. Thus Kosala emerged as a prosperous and powerful kingdom having Ayodhya, Saketa, Sravasti under its control. Kosala also managed to annex Kashi in its territory. The Kings of Kosala favoured both Brahmanism and Buddhism. King Prasenjita was a contemporary and friend of the Buddha. In the years to come Kosala emerged as one of the most formidable adversaries to the emergent Magadha empire.

**Anga:** Anga on the east of Magadha was separated from it by the river Champa and comprised the modern districts of Munger and Bhagalpur in Bihar. It may have extended northwards to the river Kosi and included some parts of the district of Purnea. It was located to the west of the Rajmahal hills. Champa was the capital of Anga. It was located on the confluence of the rivers Champa and the Ganga. Champa has been considered one of the six great cities in the sixth century BC. It was noted for its trade and commerce and traders sailed further east through the Ganga from here. By mid-sixth century BC, Anga was annexed by Magadha. A large number of North Black Polished ware has been unearthed at Champa near Bhagalpur.

**Magadha:** Between Anga and Vatsa, there lay the kingdom of Magadha corresponding to modern Patna and Ganga districts. It was protected by the rivers Son and Ganga on its north and west. On the south, it was bounded by the Vindhya outcrop and it had reached up to the Chotanagpur plateau. In the east, the river Champa separated it from Anga. Its capital was called Girivraja or Rajagriha. Rajagriha was an impregnable place protected by five hills. The walls of Rajagriha show the earliest evidence of fortification in the history of India. In the fifth century BC, the capital was shifted to Pataliputra which was the seat of the early Magadha Kings. In the Brahmanical texts, the Magadhans were considered inferior because of their mixed origin. This was probably because the people in this area did not follow the varna system and had no faith in Brahmanical traditions and rituals. On the other hand, the Buddhist tradition attaches great importance to this area. It was here that Buddha attained enlightenment. Rajagriha was a favourite place of the Buddha. The Magadhan monarchs Bimbisara and Ajatshatru were Buddha's friends and disciples. Magadha also gained importance because the fertile agricultural tracts of this area were best suited for wet rice cultivation. Moreover, it had control over the iron ore deposits of south Bihar. Finally, the open social system of the Magadhan empire made it the most important kingdom in the years to come. Its control over the trade routes of the Ganges, Gandak and Son rivers provided it substantial revenues. The Magadhan King Bimbisara is said to have called an assembly of the Gaminis of 80,000 villages. This shows that Bimbisara's administration was based on the village as a unit of administration. The Gaminis were not his Kinsmen but chiefs or representatives of villages. Therefore, through his conquests and diplomacy, Bimbisara made Magadha the most important kingdom in the subsequent history. Magadha as a kingdom kept prospering with its extension of



power over the Vajji of Vaishali under the control of Ajatshatru. This was to culminate in the Maurya empire in the fourth century BC.

**Vajji:** Centred around the Vaishali district of Bihar, the Vajjis (literate meaning pastoral nomads) were located north of the Ganga. This Mahajanapada stretched as far as the Nepal hills. Its western limit was the river Gandak which separated it from Malla and Kosala. In the east, it extended upto the forests on the banks of the river Kosi and Mahanadi. Unlike the Mahajanapadas previously discussed, the Vajjis had a different kind of political organisation. The contemporary literature refers to them as Ganasamgha, a term which was earlier used for a republic or an oligarchy. The Ganasamgha of this period represented a joint rule by a group of Kshatriya chiefs and not a rule by a single all-powerful king. This ruling class, members of which were called rajas, were now differentiated from different non-kshatriya group.

The Vajji state is said to have been a confederation of eight clans (atthakula) of whom the Videhas, Licchavis and the Jnatikas were the most well known. The Videha had their capital at Mithila which has been identified with Janakpur in Nepal. The Ramayana associated it with the King Janaka, the Buddhist sources consider it a chiefship. Licchavis, the most well known of the ancient Indian Ganasamghas had their headquarters at Vaishali which was a large and prosperous city. The Jnatikas were another clan which settled somewhere in the suburbs of Vaishali. To this clan belonged the Jain teacher, Mahavira. The other members of confederacy were the clans of the Bhogas, Kauravas, Ugras, Aiksavaras. Vaishali seems to have been the metropolis of the entire confederacy. Their affairs were managed by an assembly but they had no standing army or a proper system of collection of revenue from agriculture. According to a Jataka story, the Vajjis were ruled by many clan chiefs. In all likelihood the Vajji confederation took form after the decline and fall of the Videhan monarchy and was a flourishing non-monarchical state in the time of Mahavira and Gautama Buddha. The Magadhan King Ajatshatru is supposed to have destroyed this confederacy. He sowed discord among the chiefs by seeking the help of his minister Vassakara and then attacked the Licchavis.

**Mallas:** The territory of the non-monarchical Mallas supposed to have been ruled by five hundred chiefs was divided into two parts each having its own capital. It is another Kshatriya lineage referred to as Ganasamghas in ancient texts. They seem to have several branches of which two had their headquarters in the towns of Pawa possibly identical with Pawapuri in Patna district and Kushinara identified with the site of Kasia in the Gorakhpur district of UP. The Malla territories are said to have been located to the east and south-east of the territory of the Sakyas. The Mallas like the Videhas had at first a monarchical constitution, which was replaced by what has generally been described as a republican form of government. Literary writings refer to some kind of alliance between the Mallas, the Licchavis and the clan chiefs of Kashi – Kosala. This joining of hands could be against the rising threat of the Magadhan ascendancy.

**Chedi:** The Chedi territory roughly corresponds to the eastern parts of the modern Bundelkhand and adjoining areas and their kings' lists occur in the Jatakas, the Buddhist birth stories. It might have stretched upto the Malwa plateau. Sisupala the famous enemy of Krishna was a Chedi ruler. Both figure in the well-known epic, the Mahabharata, the latter being the most prominent among its different characters. The staying of the forms became the central theme of a long poem written by a later poet, Magha. According to the Mahabharata, the Chedis seem to have been in close touch with the chiefs of Matsya beyond the Chambal, the Kasis of Benaras and the Karusas in the valley of the river Son. Its capital was Sothivati (Suktrimati) probably located in the Banda district of Madhya Pradesh. Other important towns in this territory were Sahajati and Tripuri.

**Vatsa:** Vatsa was one of the most powerful principalities of the sixth century BC with its capital at Kaushambi (modern Kosam) which lay at some distance from Allahabad on the bank of the Yamuna. This means that the Vatsas were settled around modern Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh.

The Puranas say that the descendent of the Pandavas, Nichakshu shifted his capital to Kaushambi after Hastinapur had been washed away by floods. The dramatist Bhasa, has immortalized one of the kings of the Vatsas named Udayana in his plays. These plays are based on the story of the romantic affair between Udayana and Vasavadatta, the Princess of Avanti. These plays also indicate the conflicts among the powerful kingdoms of Magadha, Vatsa and Avanti. Probably, Vatsa lost its importance in the ensuing struggle because the later texts do not refer to them with great importance.

**Kuru:** The Kingdom of the Kuru was centred around the Delhi – Meerut region. The kings of the Kurus were supposed to belong to the family of Yudhishthira. The Arthshastra refers to the Kuru kings as Raja Sobadopajivinah i.e carrying the title of kings. This indicates some kind of a diffused structure of chiefship. Many political centres in this area prove that they did not have absolute monarchy. Hastinapura, Indraprastha, Isukara are mentioned separately as the capital of the Kurus with their own chiefs. We all know about the Kurus from the epic, Mahabharata. This epic relates the story of the war of succession between the Kauravas and the Pandavas. Earlier phases were characterised by cattle raids for personal gains but with the emergence of the Mahajanapadas, large scale wars started. The Mahabharata narrates the war between two Kshatriya lineages. It is with the emergence of the early historic period that the social economic and political interaction increased among the Mahajanapadas.

**Panchala:** The Panchal Mahajanapada was located in the Rohilkhand and parts of central Doab (roughly Bulandshahr, Bareilly, Pilibhit, Aligarh, Badaun etc.) The ancient texts make reference to the existence of two lineages of the Panchala – the northern Panchalas and the southern Panchalas with the river Bhagirathi dividing the two. The northern Panchalas had their capital at Ahichchatra located in the Bareilly district of Uttar Pradesh. The southern Panchalas had their capital at Kampilya. They seem to have been closely linked to the Kurus. The Kurus allied with the Panchalas and their trade centre is said to have been visited by the Buddha. Very little information is available about them but they too are called Samgha. By the sixth century BC, they seem to have become an obscure power.

**Matsya:** Not much information is available about Matsya who are traditionally associated with modern Jaipur – Bharatpur – Alwar region of Rajasthan. Their capital was at Viratnagara. The famous hiding place of the Pandavas. Mahabharata refers to this place as suitable for cattle rearing that is why when the Kauravas attacked Virat they took away cattle as booty. Since it was primitive, Matsya could not compete with the powers which had settled agriculture as their base. It was therefore absorbed by the rising Magadhan empire. Some of the most famous Ashoka edicts have been found in Baurat (Jaipur district), the ancient Virat.

**Surasena:** The Surasena, Kingdom, with its capital at Mathura, on the bank of the river Yamuna, was inhospitable because of ‘uneven roads, excessive dust, vicious talks and demons’. The Mahabharata and the Puranas refer to the ruling family of Mathura as belonging to the Yadava clan with which is associated the epic hero Krishna. The Yadava clan was divided into smaller clans like the Andhakas, Vrishani, Mahabhogas, etc. They too had a Samgha form of government. Mathura was strategically located at the junction of the two famous ancient Indian trade routes i.e. the Uttarapatha and the Dakshinapatha. This was because Mathura represented the ancient zone between the Gangetic plains having settled agriculture and the sparsely populated pasture lands jutting into the Malwa plateau. It could emerge as a powerful kingdom because of its varied landscape and splintered political structure. The chiefs could not give it a cohesive form of control.

**Assaka:** The Assaka lived on the bank of the river Godavari near modern Paithan in Mahabharata. Paithan has been identified with ancient Pratishthana, the capital of the Assaka. The Kaksina Patha or the southern route is supposed to have connected Pratishthana with the cities of the north. Our information about this region is quite meager because of vague references to the

kings of the Assakas. Probably, with passage of time, the territory of Assakas became commercially important.

**Avanti:** In the sixth century BC Avanti was one of the most powerful Mahajanapadas. The central area of this kingdom would roughly correspond to Ujjain district of Madhya Pradesh, extending upto the river Narmada. Its important city Mahismati is sometimes referred to as its capital. Divided into two parts, its southern capital was Mahasmati and its northern Ujjain, which became more important of the two. The Puranas attribute the foundation of Avanti to one of the clans of the Yadavas called the Haihaya. Located in a very fertile agricultural region and controlling the trade among from the south, this clan of the Yadavas here developed into a centralized monarchy. The Avanti King Pradyota is famous in legends according to which from an enemy he became father-in-law of Udayen who ruled over Vatsa kingdom.

**Gandhara:** Gandhara was located between Kabul and Rawalpindi in the North Western Province. Some parts of Kashmir might have been included in this territorial limit. In the early Vedic times, it was of considerable importance but in the Brahmanical and Buddhist traditions of the later phases it was not given any importance. The capital Taxila was an important city for learning and trading. In the sixth century BC, Gandhara was ruled by a king Pukkusati who was a friend of Bimbisara but by late sixth century BC, the kingdom was conquered by Persians. According to Greek historian Herodotus, Gandhara formed the twentieth province of the Archaemenid empire and was the most populous and wealthy, it supplied men and material to the persona army fighting against the Greek.

**Kambhoja:** Kambhoja was located close to Gandhara probably around Afghanistan. The Kambhojas were regarded as uncultured by the Brahmanical texts of the seventh century BC. The Arthashastra calls them Varta-Sastropajivm Samgha meaning a confederation of agriculturists, herdsmen, traders and warriors.

Thus the above mentioned sixteen territorial states are the prominent political entity flourished in the age of Buddha. Some of them are oligarchy and most are monarchical. In the end of 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. the political condition witnessed change as the Magadhan empire was growing at a rapid state. Finally the emerging and powerful Magadha engulf most of these state and established herself as the paramount power of entire Gangetic valley.

#### **2.2.11. Urbanisation in the Ganges valley**

The period from the 6th century B.C. onwards witnessed the emergence of the cities in ancient India for the second time, the first being the Harappan cities. The second urbanization is more important in Indian history because it endured for a long time and it shows the beginning of a literary tradition. Contemporary Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jain texts refer to several cities like Benares, Kasi and Sravasti. After the decline of the Indus cities small village settlements emerged in the Gangetic basin. The spread of agricultural settlements, developments of iron technology and surplus production of grains enabled the growth of market centres, small towns and other type of settlements.

In the Mahajanapadas, the basic unit of settlement was the Gama meaning village Agriculture was the main occupation of people in agriculture settlements. This shows a transition from pastoral and nomadic economy to an agricultural and settled economy. References to villages of cattle keepers, ironsmiths, woodworkers indicate specialization of crafts by now. Increasing trade and prosperity of the economy is reflected by the engagement of villagers not only in agriculture but is diversified arts and crafts. Barter system and regular exchange of goods became an integral part of the economic life of the people. Specialisation of crafts along with localization of the people led to a major change in the socio-economic and political life of the sixth century BC. This historic phase is associated with settlements using a pottery called the Northern Black Polished Ware. Increased trade and developing economies led to massive fortification of the cities like Kaushambi, Ujjain,

Rajghat (Vanaras), Rajgir etc. These cities emerged as the centres of power and control over the Mahajanapadas. In the wake of growing economy, the use of coinage made the position of the merchant class stronger. Thus, one notices that the period starting with the sixth century BC saw the emergence of cities in ancient India for the second time. This urbanisation was more significant since it endured for a longer time and saw the beginning of a literate tradition. This tradition is embodied in Buddhism, Jainism and many strands of Hinduism. It is not only big cities which emerged at this time. Along with agriculture based villages there existed market centres, small towns, big towns and other types of settlements.

#### **2.2.11.1. Factors responsible for Urbanization**

In order to understand the rise of cities in the sixth century BC one would like to emphasise on the need of establishing new centres of political power and activity in the wake of changing socio-economic milieu. The establishment of urban centres need not necessarily mean the increase in population of a particular area. Urban centres or cities are undoubtedly larger in size where people not only engage themselves in agriculture related activities but diversified non-agricultural activities also. Moreover, an urban centre functions in relationship to a large hinterland. In other words cities are able to harness the resources of the countryside. Or else cities could provide administrative, economic or religious services to the rural areas where the population residing is much larger than the physical space of the city. This could lead to the emergence of a class of kings, priests, merchants living in the cities who may turn out to be wealthier and more powerful than a common man. To lessen the economic disparity between different groups of people and to keep in check the hostilities between the rich and the poor, the centralized machinery of the state is needed. This kind of social structure also implies the coming into being a state society. It is against this background that the study of urban society and the rise of cities characterised by the presence of craft specialists, rich and poor people and a state administration, should be studied.

By the sixth century BC, the position of the Brahmins who specialized in ritual activity became questionable. The warrior class or Kshatriyas surfaced as a class of landowners. They desired a settled life based on agriculture and thus the introduction of the iron technology proved a boon for augmentation of agricultural surplus and clearing of forests. The middle Gangetic valley became the focus of increasing use of iron tools and wet rice cultivation. Larger food production made it possible to sustain increased production which is reflected in an increase in the number of settlements in the archeological records of the period between sixth century to fourth century BC. The groups that grew up controlling surplus wealth became the ruling class of the newly emergent kingdoms. And on the foundation of this wealth were born the cities of the sixth century BC.

The rise of cities in the sixth century BC is mentioned in the Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jain texts of the times. It was this period which saw the beginning of the written tradition in ancient Indian literary history. This evidence of the emergence of cities is corroborated by the archaeological sources. In the upper Gangetic valley, people used a particular kind of pottery called the painted grey ware, whereas in middle Gangetic plains, black and red pottery was known. By about the sixth century BC people of this entire zone started using Northern Black Polished Ware which is representation of the broad cultural uniformity in the Gangetic towns in the sixth century BC. Punch marked coins made of silver and copper, probably issued by merchants, reflect organised commerce by this time. The introduction of money in turn led to the emergence of the class of money-lenders. The use of terms 'Pura and Durga' to denote fortifications to protect urban centres and separate them from rural areas is an important indication for the rise of cities not only as seats of political power but as centres of commercial activity. The use of term 'Nigama' in Pali literature meant a township of specialized craftsmen. The term Nagara was commonly used for towns or cities which combined the political functions of the Pura and commercial functions of the

Niagrama. The Buddhist literature refers to six Mahanagaras located in the middle Gangetic valley namely champa, Rajgriha, Kashi, Sravasti, Saketa and Kaushambi.

Thus, several factors contributed for the second urbanization in ancient India. However the most significant factor which basically paved the way for the growth of urban centres was the use of iron and the development of technology. The use of iron and the development of technology helped the spread of agriculture and the increase of agricultural production. The surplus was utilized for the maintenance of non-food producing classes, particularly craftsmen of various types. The specializations of crafts and the use of iron initiated trading activities. Thus surplus production and trade played a crucial role in the second urbanisation in ancient India. The specialisation of crafts and trade developed simultaneously and both these turned out to be the important aspects of urban economy.

The rural people provided food and raw materials to the people in the urban centres and in turn they received finished goods, protection and services from the urban people. The growth of an urban centre is marked by the increase of population also. There was a steady migration of the village people to the cities. The urban centres absorbed the surplus rural population. All urban centres originated in diverse circumstances, apart from the primary factors mentioned above. Some of them developed as trading centres and markets, some as religious centres, some as educational centres, some due to its geographical location and some others at the initiative of the rulers.

There are certain terms used in the contemporary literature to denote urban centres. These terms include Pura, Durga, Nigama and Nagar. The term Pura, in the beginning was referred to a fortified settlement or the residents of the ruling family or families. In course of time the Pura simply meant a city. Durga was another term used to denote a fortified city, usually the capital of the king. The capital was often fortified in order to separate it from the neighbouring rural areas as well as to make it easier for the ruler to control the activities of the people in the city. The term Nigama is used to denote a town in Pali texts. Nigama is believed to have been a merchant town where sale and purchase of goods took place. Some scholars believed that Nigama was the part of a city where specialised craftsmen lived together. The most commonly used term for a city or a town in the literature is Nagar or Nagara. Political and commercial activities were going on in the Nagara together and king, merchants and artisans lived in the city. The Buddhist literature refers to six Maha Nagaras namely, Champa, Kasi, Sravasti, Kausambi and Rajyagreha. All these cities were located in the Gangetic basin.

#### **2.2.11.2. Role of Urban centers in the emerging polity.**

The rise of the mahajanapadas was directly connected with the emergence of the early urban centres of the Gangetic plains in the period after 600 BC. Five of the six major cities in the central Gangetic plains were capitals of mahajanapadas: Rajagriha (Magadha), Varanasi (Kasi), Kausambi (Vatsa), Sravasti (Koshala) and Champa (Anga). Only the sixth city, Saketa, was not an independent capital but was located in Koshala. It must have been the centre of an earlier janapada which merged with Koshala. In central India there was Ujjain (Avanti) and in the northwest there was Taxila (Gandhara) or rather the recently discovered early town which preceded both Taxila and the nearby township on the Bhir Mound which dates back to the period of Persian occupation around 500 BC. There seems to be a correlation between political development and urbanization in this period of the sixth to the fifth centuries BC.

The most remarkable contrast between the new cities in the Gangetic plains and earlier towns like Hastinapura is that of the system of fortification. Whereas the earlier towns were not fortified, these new cities had moats and ramparts. The ramparts were made of earth which was covered in some cases with bricks from about the fifth century BC onward; later on they were even replaced by solid brick walls. A millennium after the decline of the Indus civilisation, one encounters once more bricks made in kilns. Kausambi had the most impressive fortification, its city

walls are about 4 miles long and at some places 30 feet high. The archaeologist G.R.Sharma, who excavated Kausambi in the 1950s, thought that these walls resembled those of the Indus cities. There were also public buildings like assembly halls in these early Gangetic cities, and after the rise of Buddhism they also contained monasteries and stupas. City planning with regard to the network of streets seems to have started again only in the fourth century BC.

An important indicator of the growth of an urban economy are the punch-marked coins which have been found in those Gangetic cities. There were also standardised weights which provide evidence for a highly developed trade in the fifth century BC. Was there perhaps some cultural continuity right from the time of the Indus civilisation down to this new Gangetic civilisation? This question cannot yet be answered, but it is interesting to note that the weight of 95 per cent of the 1,150 silver coins found at Taxila is very similar to the standardised stone weights of the Indus civilisation.

### **2.2.12. Rise of Magadha**

The period from 6th century B.C. to about 400 B.C., was marked by far reaching changes in almost every aspect of life in India. This period saw the spread of agriculture over large parts of the country, the rise of cities and the formation of states. The Varna system, the system, of social organization popularly known as the caste system, which had arisen in the vedic age now became well-established and gradually became the dominant form of social organization throughout the country. The rise of cities, crafts and trade also furthered the process of cultural unity. The focus of the Aryan civilization had now moved to Magadha, Vatsa, Kosala and Avanti, eastwards. During this period of all the sixteen principal states, only four great kingdoms and the Vajji Republic of the Lichchhavis survived. Among the four kingdom, in Avanti, an outstanding ruler Pradyota was ruling. He was a very powerful King. His daughter Vasavadatta was married to Udayana, the ruler of Vatsa. In the beginning of the 4th century B.C. Sisunaga, a ruler of Magadha, destroyed the power of the rulers of Avanti. Udayana, was the most famous ruler of Vatsa. He married the daughters of the rulers of Magadha, Anga and Avanti, and thus increased his powers. But his career was meteoric. He left no worthy successor. In the end, ruler of Avanti annexed it to his own kingdom. In the days of Lord Buddha, Prasenajit was the ruler of Kosala. He gave his sister Kosaladevi in marriage to Bimbisara, the ruler of Magadha and gave a part of Kasi to her as pin-money. After death of Prasenjit, finally Kosala was assimilated with Magadha. Again it was during the days of Ajatasatru, the Vajjis lost their power and eclipsed in Magadhan imperialism.

#### **2.2.12.1. Causes for rise of Magadha**

Ultimately it was the kingdom of Magadha which eclipsed the power of the other three kingdoms. There were a number of factors which contributed to the growth of Magadha as the most powerful monarchy from the sixth century B.C to the fourth century B.C. This kingdom occupied a strategic position between the upper and lower parts of the Gangetic plain and it was a very important centre for trade and commerce. Though half in size in comparison to Kosala it had abundant forest resources, metal and prosperous agriculture. Its people were not orthodox in the social matters. Herein, a Brahmana could live on friendly terms with the Vratyas or degenerate Kshatriyas and the Kshatriyas could even marry Sudras girls. The ruler of Magadha built an impregnable mountain fort and organized a strong army because they had sufficient resources in men and money. They also had the wisdom of establishing an efficient system of government on the basis of regular officials and standing army devoid of tribal life. The bards of Magadha inspired the people and with their support, the rulers realized the ideal of establishing an empire under a Chakravarti ruler which had been the goal that many of the authors of the Brahmanas and the Upanisadas in pre-historic times had set for the rulers.

### **2.2.12.2. Brief History of Magadhan Polity**

Of all the kingdoms of north India, Magadha emerged powerful and prosperous. It became the nerve centre of political activity in north India. Magadha was endowed by nature with certain geographical and strategic advantages. These made her to rise to imperial greatness. Her strategic position between the upper and lower part of the Gangetic valley was a great advantage. It had a fertile soil. The iron ores in the hills near Rajgir and copper and iron deposits near Gaya added to its natural assets. Her location at the centre of the highways of trade of those days contributed to her wealth. Rajagriha was the capital of Magadha. During the reign of Bimbisara and Ajatasatru, the prosperity of Magadha reached its zenith.

#### **Bimbisara (546 - 494 B.C.)**

Magadha came into prominence under the leadership of Bimbisara who belonged to the Haryanka dynasty. He was a contemporary of the Budha. He became king sometime in the second half of the 6th century B.C. The most notable achievement of Bimbisara was the annexation of the neighbouring kingdom of Anga (East Bihar) which had its capital at Champa near Bhagalpur. He placed it under the vice royalty of his son Ajatasatru. The conquest of Anga was of much significance. Anga controlled the trade and the routes to the sea ports in the Gangetic Delta which in turn had commercial contacts with the coast of Burma and the East coast of India.

Bimbisara strengthened his position by marriage alliances. He took three wives. His first wife was the daughter of the king of Kosala. The Kosalan bride brought him as dowry a Kasi village yielding a revenue of 1,00,000. The marriage put an end to the hostility of Kosala and gave him a free hand in dealing with other states. His second wife Chellana was a Lichchavi Princess from Vaisali. And his third wife was the daughter of the chief of the Madra clan of Punjab. These marriage relations gave enormous diplomatic prestige and paved the way for the expansion of Magadha Westward and Northward. Magadha's most serious rival was Avanti with its capital at Ujjain. Its king, Pradyota Mahasena fought Bimbisara but ultimately the two thought it wise to become friends. Later when Pradyota was attacked by Jaundice, Bimbisara sent the royal physician, Jivaka to Ujjain.

Through his conquests and diplomacy Bimbisara made Magadha the paramount power in the 6th century B.C. His kingdom is said to have consisted of 80,000 villages. He was the earliest of Indian kings to stress the need for efficient administration. Officers were divided into various categories according to their work. The building of roads was recognized as essential to good administration. Bimbisara is credited by a Chinese pilgrim with having built a new city at the foot of the hills lying to the north of Girivraja, which he named Rajagriha or the King's house, the modern Rajgir, in Patna district. It was surrounded by five hills, the openings of which were closed by stone walls on all sides.

#### **Ajatasatru (494 - 462 B.C.)**

According to Buddhist chronicles Bimbisara ruled for 52 years roughly from 544 B.C to 492 B.C under him Magadha became a flourishing kingdom which attracted the most enlightened men of the age. Both Mahavira and Budha preached their doctrines during the time of Bimbisara. As a patron of Buddhism, Bimbisara made a donation of the park called 'Veluvana' to the Budha and the Sangha. Bimbisara also showed due reverence to Jainism. He was murdered by his son Ajatasatru, who was impatient to rule Magadha. Ajatasatru was determined to continue his father's policy of expansion through military conquests. He strengthened Rajagriha and built a small fort, Pataligrama in the vicinity of the Ganges (this was later to become the famous Mauryan metropolis of Pataliputra). His father having conquered the eastern state, Ajatasatru turned his attention to the North and the West. On Bimbisara's tragic death, his wife Kosala Devi died of grief. In consequence the Kosalan king, Presenajith revoked the gift of the Kasi village, which was granted to Bimbisara as dowry. The result was the outbreak of hostilities between Magadha and Kosala,

which continued with varying fortunes for along time. In the end, peace was concluded between the two, Presenajith restoring the disputed village of Kasi to Ajatasatru and giving his daughter Bajira in marriage to him.

The conflict with the Lichchavis was the next important event of Ajatasatru's reign. Though his mother was a Lichchavi princess, he did not resist from waging war with the Lichchavis. The excuse was that the Lichchavis were the allies of Kosala. He created dissension in the ranks of the Lichchavis and finally destroyed their independence by invading their territory and defeating them in battle. It took him full sixteen years to destroy Vaisali. Finally, Magadha was victorious and was recognized as the most powerful force in eastern India. The victory of Magadha was a victory for the monarchical system, which was now firmly established in the Gangetic plain. Ajatasatru faced a stronger rival in the ruler of Avanti. Avanti had defeated the Vatsas of Kausambi and now threatened an invasion of Magadha. To meet this danger, Ajatasatru began the fortification of Rajagir. But the invasion did not take place in his life time. Thus the foundations of the Magadhan empire laid by Bimbisara was now firmly established as a result of subtle diplomacy of Ajatasatru.

Ajatasatru is represented in the Jain texts as a Jain and in the Buddhist texts as a Buddhist. He paid frequent visits to Mahavira both at Vaisali and Champa and expressed his faith in the teachings of Jainism. In his later days he became a covert to Buddhism and found solace for his tormented soul. Partaking the bulk of the relics of Buddha. Ajatasatru enshrined them in a single sthupa at his capital, Rajagriha. He repaired at Rajagriha 18 Mahavihars which were forsaken after Buddha's death. He promoted the cause of Buddhism by association himself with its first general council, at Rajagriha which was attended by 500 eminent Bikshus. The account of the reigns of Bimbisara and Ajatasatru show that they were the first Indian kings who sought to establish a far-flung empire in historic time. According to Pali sources, Ajatasatru was succeeded by his son Udayibhadra in C.459 B.C. He founded the city of Patliputra on the confluence of the Sone and the Ganges. Udayibhadra's successors were Anurudha, Munda and Nagadasaka. They were weak and unpopular rulers. Hence Sisunaga the minister of the last ruler seized the throne.

### **Saisunaga dynasty**

Sisunaga destroyed the power of the ruler of Avanti and thus became the undisputed ruler of almost the whole of Madhyadesa, Malwa and other territories in the north. The genealogy and chronology of the Saisunagas are not clear. After Saisunaga, the mighty empire began to collapse. His successor was Kakavarman or Kalasoka. During his reign the second Buddhist Council was held at Vaisali. Kalasoka was killed by the founder of the Nanda dynasty.

### **Nanda Dynasty**

About the middle of the fourth century B.C the Sisunaga dynasty was overthrown by the first Nanda ruler Mahapadma. There are different traditions about his origin. According to the Puranas, he was born of a Sudra woman. In the Jain works, he is described as the son of a courtesan by a barber and according to a Greek writer Curtius, Mahapadma was the son of a barber who by good looks had won the queen's heart and who subsequently assassinated the ruler of Sisunaga dynasty (probably Kalasoka Kakavarna). All these accounts show that Mahapadma was of low origin, and succeeded in capturing the Magadhan throne by political intrigue of subterfuge.

The fame of Magadha scaled new heights under the Nanda dynasty. Their conquests went beyond the boundaries of the Gangetic basin and in North India they carved a well-knit and vast empire. Mahapadma Nanda was a powerful ruler of the Nanda dynasty. Mahapadma is said to have uprooted the Kshatriyas by defeating the Ikshvakus, Kurus, Panchalas, Kasis, Surasenas, Maithlas, Kalingas, Asmakas and Haihayas. There may be some exaggeration in this tall claim but it is certain that almost the whole of Madhyadesa and Malwa region formed parts of Sisunaga's empire. From the "Katha-sarit-sagar" we know that Kosala formed a part of Magadhan empire and the Hathigumpha inscription refers to the excavation of a canal by a Nandaraja who has been identified



with Mahapadma. In view of this the Nanda control over parts of Kalinga, the conquest of Asmaka and other regions lying further south does not seem to be altogether improbable. On the Godavari, there is a city called Nav Nand Dehra. This also suggests the inclusion of a considerable portion of the Deccan in the Nanda domains. According to Pliny, the Prasi (Easterners) surpassed in power and glory every other people all over India. This shows the high reputation which the Nandas enjoyed at that time. The eight sons of Mahapadma are said to have ruled for twelve years in succession. The last Nanda ruler was probably Dhananada. According to Greek writer Curtius, he maintained a strong army consisting of 2,00,000 foot soldiers, 2000 horses, 20,000 chariots and 4,000 elephants and had immense riches. But he was irreligious (adharmika), and of tyrannical disposition. He was, therefore, very unpopular. After Alexander's departure Chandragupta Maurya took advantage of the situation and destroyed the power of the Nandas of Magadha (C.320-21 B.C).

Magadha had thus step by step emerged as the premier kingdom in northern India, and henceforth its history merged with the history of India itself. The glamour of the Nandas had been dimmed by the greater splendour of the Mauryas. But we should remember that it was they who for the first time united the petty states of northern India, who were generally at war with one another, into one strong military unit. In other words, it was the Nandas who established a strong and unified political authority which covered most of northern India excluding Bengal.

### **2.2.13. Conclusion**

We have reviewed the political conditions prevailing in India of the sixth century BC. The Mahajanpadas which emerged as distinct geographical units witnessed new kinds of socio-political developments. What seems to be important is the fact that seven of them i.e. Anga, Magadha, Vajji, Malla, Kasi, Kosala and Vatsa were located in the middle Gangetic valley. These Mahajanapadas emerged as regions in different geographical zones reflecting the nature of the economy there. Since middle Gangetic valley is a rice growing area and the fact that in traditional agricultural system of India, rice output exceeded the wheat output, it was natural that the density of population would be more in these areas. Further, Mahajanapadas like Magadha had easy access to natural resources like metal ores. These factors may have contributed to the emergence of the middle Gangetic valley as the focus of politico-economic power. It also provided a convenient ground for a ruler to consolidate his power because of its flat terrain and the continuity of settlements. No wonder Magadha one of the powers in this zone, emerged as the most powerful kingdom in the subsequent period.

### **2.2.14. Summary**

- *In the beginning of the 6th century B.C., the northern India consisted of a large number of independent kingdoms. Some of them had monarchical forms of government, while some others were republics.*
- *While there was a concentration of monarchies on the Gangetic plain, the republics were scattered in the foothills of the Himalayas and in northwestern India. Some of the republics consisted of only one tribe like the Sakyas, Licchavis and Mallas. In the republics, the power of decision in all matters of state vested with the Public Assembly which was composed of the tribal representatives or heads of families. All decisions were by a majority vote.*
- *The Buddhist literature Anguttara Nikaya gives a list of sixteen great kingdoms called 'Sixteen Mahajanapadas'. They were Anga, Magadha, Kasi, Kosala, Vajji, Malla, Chedi, Vatsa, Kuru, Panchala, Matsya, Surasena, Asmaka, Avanti, Gandhara and Kambhoja.*
- *The Jain texts also contain references to the existence of sixteen kingdoms. In course of time, the small and weak kingdoms either submitted to the stronger rulers or gradually got eliminated. Finally in the mid 6th century B.C., only four kingdoms-Vatsa, Avanti, Kosala and Magadha survived.*

- *Of all the kingdoms of north India, Magadha emerged powerful and prosperous. It became the nerve centre of political activity in north India. Magadha was endowed by nature with certain geographical and strategic advantages. These made her to rise to imperial greatness.*
- *Her strategic position between the upper and lower part of the Gangetic valley was a great advantage. It had a fertile soil. The iron ores in the hills near Rajgir and copper and iron deposits near Gaya added to its natural assets. Her location at the centre of the highways of trade of those days contributed to her wealth. Rajagriha was the capital of Magadha.*
- *During the reign of Bimbisara and Ajatasatru, the prosperity of Magadha reached its zenith.*
- *During this period urban centre grew due to introduction of money economy and a the process of second urbanization was started.*

#### **2.2.15. Exercises**

- Explain the rise of territorial states in the age of Buddha.
- Write an essay on the early state formation in northern India.
- Describe the political condition and geographical location of sixteen mahajanapada in the age of Buddha.
- Examine the factors and course of Magadhan ascendancy.
- Discuss the aspect of urbanization of Ganga valley in 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.

#### **2.2.16. Further Readings**

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**Unit-2**  
**Chapter-III**  
**RISE OF HETERODOX RELIGION, IRANIAN AND MACEDONIAN INVASION**

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### 2.3.0. Objectives

*In this lesson, students explore the religious condition of India during 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C as well as foreign invasion on Indian territory took place during this period. After completing this chapter, you will be able to:*

- *trace the causes for the emergence of non-Vedic cults*
- *discuss Buddhism and Jainism; its philosophy and organization*
- *recognize the contribution Buddhism and Jainism to Indian culture;*
- *assess the Persian invasions and their occupation of northwest India.*
- *understand the causes and course of Alexander's invasion of India.*
- *examine the effects of Persian and Alexander invasion and occupation of north-west India.*

### 2.3.1. Introduction

In this unit, we would try to understand the ideological and social background of Early Historic India, i.e. 6th c. BC. In order to do this, to understand the ideological background, we would study non-Vedic cults like Jainism, Buddhism and Ajivakas. At the same time, we would study the position of women during this period. The sixth century BC witnessed the emergence and growth of Non-Vedic and Pro-Vedic ideologies. However, one should understand that in the crowd of various types of belief systems, examples of violent religious conflicts were almost absent in India. In fact, these systems resorted to the method of arguments and debates for the propagation of their respective belief system, which is a unique feature of Indian religion, or the ideological system.

The sixth century BC marked an important stage in the Indian history as far as the development of new religions is concerned. Numerous religious sects arose in the mid-Gangetic plains as a result of an upheaval of new ideas and the resulting rise of new philosophical tenets. These ideas were so diversified that the philosophical speculations based on them varied from religious speculations to the search for the Truth which the Upanishads had emphasized. The efforts in this direction brought about results in this century. In this period, we notice a growing resentment to the ritualistic orthodox ideas of the Brahmanas. In other words, the old Vedic religion had ceased to be a living force. The spiritual unrest and the intellectual stimulation led to the rise of various heterodox religious movements. The religious sects were based on regional customs and rituals practiced by different people living in north-east India. Of these sects, Jainism and Buddhism were the most important and they developed into most potent well organised popular religious reform movements.

Sixth century BC also witnessed many religious movements in different parts of the world. Heraclitus in Eoinia Island, Socrates in Greece, Confucious in China, Zoroaster in Persia, Isaiah in Babylon preached new ideas. These widely separated parts of the world displayed a wave of discontentment with the traditions of Kingships, priesthood and ritualistic sacrifices. People were waking up to find answers to their questions regarding salvation and the ultimate Truth. At the same time, Hinduism by this time had made its influence so widely spread on Indian soil that people started realizing that the degeneration in Indian society was mainly because of the evils of Hinduism. Hinduism was associated with perverted values. The emphasis on sacrifices, rituals and the dominance of Brahmanas had vitiated the original doctrines of Hinduism. Society was largely guided by Brahmanism which was firmly established by now and priesthood had also become predominant. It was against this background of exploitation of the masses by the Brahmanas and discrimination among people on the basis of caste system that Mahavira and Buddha revolted. They came forward as reformers very much determined to clean Hinduism of its innumerable evil practices and evils. They did not want to start new or independent religions but drew their inspiration from the teachings as embodied in the Upanishads. They provided a rational approach to handle the problems that had crept in the Indian society as a result of the prevailing complexities.

They did not approve the costly religious rituals and bloody sacrifices. There was hatred against the prevailing social order which led to pitiable conditions of the low born. The changing features of social and economic life, such as the growth of towns, expansion of the artisan class and the rapid development of trade and commerce also focused on the necessity to bring about changes in society and religion. The new ideas brought about by the reform movements challenged the established social order particularly the caste-system, the religious rituals and sacrifices, the supremacy of the Brahmanas, particularly by the Kshatriyas, and all the dead customs of the society. Outwardly, this spirit of the age was against the existing organisation of the society and inwardly against the caste system. It was based on elevation of man individually and spiritually. It emphasized personal liberty and purity and claimed that every individual had the right to attain Nirvana. These new religious ideas emerged out of the prevailing socio-economic and religious conditions of the times.

### **2.3.2. Social And Economic Life of North-West India**

Post-Vedic society was clearly divided into four varnas: Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras. Each varna was assigned well-defined function. Though varna was based on birth, the two higher varnas captured power, prestige and privileges at the cost of the two lower varnas. The Brahmanas who were allotted the functions of priests and teachers, claimed the highest status in society. They demanded several privileges, including those of receiving gifts and exemption from taxation and punishment. The next in hierarchy were the Kshatriyas who lived on the taxes collected from the cultivators. The third category thrived on agriculture, cattle-breeding and trade. They were the main tax payers. All these three classes were considered dvijas or twice born. The Sudras formed the lowest rung of the social order and were meant to serve the upper three castes as domestic slaves, agricultural labourers etc. in post-Vedic times. They were the down-trodden class because of the varna. This varna-divided society generated frustration among the adversely affected people. The Vaishyas and the Sudras were not satisfied with the division of society on the basis of birth but we do not have evidence of their open resistance. The reaction came in strongly from the Kshatriya class because Mahavira and Buddha, both belonged to Kshatriya clan.

However, the real cause of the rise of these new religions lay in the spread of a new agrarian economy in north-eastern India. The primary factor that revolutionized the material life of the people around 700 BC in eastern UP and Bihar was the beginning of the use of iron. Iron implements were made and used for agricultural purposes which resulted in enhancement of agriculture land and its production. Increased agriculture production led to the growth of trade and commerce. It resulted in the growth of cities where the population of traders and artisans was concentrated. It required changes in society and certain well entrenched traditions. The Vaishyas, having accumulated wealth and property, were gaining higher social status. The trading and commercial communities i.e. Vaishyas wanted their private property to be secure and social and religious sanctions for foreign trade and sea-travelling which, by then, was not sanctioned by the Vedic religion. These economic conditions necessitated changes in the society as well. The newly emerged financially strong class wanted changes in their status but the Kshatriyas took advantage of utilizing this opportunity to gain more importance and abolish the supremacy of the priestly class. That is why the preceptors of both Jainism and Buddhism, which came forward as reform movements and later became most popular religious movements, were Kshatriya princes. On the basis of the support that they acquired from Vaishyas and Sudras, the Kshatriyas opposed the supremacy of the Brahmanas, the prevalence of caste system, the complexities of rituals and sacrifices and desired change in caste according to Karma and not according to birth. Both these religious sects, therefore provided grounds to bring about changes in the social and economic set up. It was for this reason that Jainism discarded agriculture but did not protest against trade and Buddhism exhibited favourable opinion towards sea-voyages.

Prof. R.S. Sharma in his article on class formation and its material basis in the upper Gangetic Basin(1000-500 BC) says that northern India entered into a full-fledged iron age by the sixth century BC. In the second phase of iron associated with the NBP levels (500-200 BC) we encounter lot of agricultural implements. The use of iron led to the urban settlements in UP, Magadha and Bihar. Now, the village was not the neolithic village growing essentially in isolation, nor the chalcolithic village with restricted trade and inter-relationships. It was the prosperous iron using village, whose prosperity increased with easier access to both iron ore and more land for cultivation and this led to surplus production. Thus, this became the stable base for the growth of towns. This urbanization of the Gangetic valley is often referred to as the sacred urbanization with iron technology as its crucial factor. Surplus produce and specialisation of crafts, increase in trade based on production as well as improved communication (both by land and through the use of river navigation) all combined together to make urbanisation possible. This in turn produced the characteristics associated with urban centres the building of fortified cities, the introduction of script, the use of coinage (punch marked coins), a wide range of intellectual and metaphysical speculation (from the Carvakas to the Ajivikas), some of which reflected the requirement and aspirations of the new urban groups , the artisans the merchants and the traders.

The Jaina canonical writings mention different kinds of urban centres in the age of Mahavira. Taking the country as a whole nearly sixty towns are assigned to the period 600-300 BC. The big cities like Sravasti were 20 in number and 6 of them were important enough to be associated with the passing away of Gautama Buddha. These were Champa, Rajgriha, Saketa, Kaushambi, Benaras and Kushinara. Thus, from Buddha's time onwards, a remarkable beginning of town life in north-eastern India seems to have taken place.

Trade was both the cause and effect of increasing urbanization. The Jatakas, the Buddhist birth stories, make numerous references to caravans with 500 or 1000 carts going from one place to another. One such group of 500 carts is mentioned as passing by a street where Gautama Buddha was meditating. Iron technology by helping to clear jungles facilitated the process of moving from place to place.

Trade, on an increasing scale, led to the birth of money economy i.e. coinage. The earliest coins discovered cannot be dated beyond the time of Buddha. These coins were issued by the merchants and bore punch-marks. The use of coins in this period seems to have become fairly common and even the price of a dead mouse is stated in terms of money.

Diverse arts and crafts developed. Apart from such service occupations as those of the washerman and dyer, the painter, the barber, the tailor, weaver and the cook, several manufacturing crafts (reed-working pottery, vehicle making, needle-making, gold smithery, metal smithery, carpentry, ivory-working garland-making and silk manufacturing) are mentioned in the early Buddhist writings. The existence of so many crafts implies increasing specialisation in the field of commodity production.

Now, the artisans and craftsmen were often organised into guilds. Later, Buddhist works refer to the existence of 18 guilds in Rajgriha, though the names of only four, wood workers, smiths, leather workers and painters are specified. Each guild inhabited a particular section of the town. This led not only to the localization of crafts and industries but also to their hereditary transmission from father to son. Every guild was presided over by a head (Jetthaka). The Setthis, who also sometimes headed the guilds, handled trade and industries. They generally lived in towns but those among them who were granted revenues of villages for their maintenance (bhogagama) by the king had to keep links with the countryside. The Setthi was in some sense a financier or banker and sometimes also head of a trade guild. He was treated with respect even by absolute and despotic kings. All this implies that in towns, artisans and Setthis were emerging as important social groups.

In the countryside also, a new social group was coming up to the forefront by virtue of its wealth. The greater part of land came to be owned by gahapati (peasant-proprietors). In the earlier period, the word gahapati (literally the lord of the house) stood for the host and principal sacrificer at any considerable sacrifice. But in the age of the Buddha, it came to mean the head of a large patriarchal household of any caste who got respect primarily because of his wealth, which in the post-vedic period was measured not so much in cattle as in land. References to several affluent gahapatis occur in the early Buddhist writings. The gahapati Mendaka is described as paying wages to the royal army, as donor he is said to have instituted 1250 cow herds to serve the Buddha and his samgha. Anathapindika, another gahapati is said to have paid a fabulous price for Jetavana, a plot of land which he donated to the Buddha. Sometimes, the gahapatis are also represented as lending money to promising shopkeepers. The emergence of the gahapatis from the Vedic householder to a comparatively wealthy head of the household may indicate the growing disparity of wealth within the society. Common people, slaves and labourers, seem to have coveted his wealth and wished his harm, often he is depicted as keeping a bodyguard to protect himself.

Accustomed to the old ways of life some individuals found it difficult to adjust themselves to the breakup of the old tribal society caused by new material conditions which gave rise to social inequalities. Whatever may have been the ultimate objectives of Buddhism, ordinary people, whose support really mattered to the new religion, were certainly attracted towards it because of its successful response to the challenge posed by the social developments generated by the material conditions created by the use of iron, plough agriculture, coins and the rise of towns in eastern UP and Bihar.

Many aboriginal non-Aryan tribes, which remained unaffected by the knowledge of iron-technology lived at a very low level of material culture. The cultural lack of the aboriginals, living mainly as hunters and fowlers in contrast to the varna-divided society, which possessed the knowledge of implements and agriculture, perhaps led in the post-Vedic period to the growth of untouchability.

The newly developed features of the social and economic life of people did not fit in with the Vedic ritualism and animal sacrifice. The conflict between the Vedic religious practices and the aspirations of the rising social groups led to the search of new religions and philosophical ideas which would fit with the basic changes in the material life of the people. Thus, in the sixth century BC, in the Gangetic valley there emerged many new religious teachers who preached against Vedic religion. Ajita Kesha Kambalin propagated a thorough going materialistic doctrine called annihilationism (uchhaedavada). From this, the Lokayata or Charvaka school of philosophy is believed to have derived a great deal. Pakudha Katyayana, another religious leader, held that just as the earth, water, air and light are primary indestructible elements, so are sorrow, happiness and life. It has been suggested that from his ideas, the later Vaisheshika school originated. Purana Kassapa, the third contemporary preacher, which regarded the soul as distinct from the body laid the foundations of what later came to be known as the Sankhya school of philosophy. But of all the sects prevalent in northern India around the 6th century BC, only Jainism and Buddhism came to stay in India as independent religions.

Also, the urban setting in the age of the Buddha gave rise to certain features of town life which did not find favour with the Brahmanical society. The urban surroundings and breakup of the old tribal family created a class of alienated women who took toprostitution as a source of livelihood. So prostitution, characteristic of urban society, is tolerated by Buddhists but not by Brahmanas.

The use of iron weapons revolutionized military equipment and added to political importance of warriors in contrast to that of priests. They naturally claimed a position of equality in other fields. The conflict between the interests of the Brahmanas and Kshatriya is evident in many

texts. This partly explains the Kshatriya origin of Mahavira and Gautama and also the fact that from the beginning of Buddhism texts accord the first place to the Kshatriya and the second to the Brahmanas. As the Kshatriya rulers could be maintained only by regular payment of taxes, so both Brahmanical and Buddhist texts of the age of the Buddha justify the royal share of the peasant's produce on the ground that the King gives protection to the people (contract). In this way, with the change from nomadic pastoralism to settled agrarian villages, tribal identity was extended to territorial identity as is reflected in tribal names being given to geographical areas. This, in turn, gave rise to the concept of the state with both monarchical and non-monarchical form of government and woven into this concept were the institutions of caste and property, as already pointed out. With the rise of city life in the Ganges valley, a new pattern developed in the sub-continent, the cultural dominance of the Ganga region-the Hindustan of later centuries-exerted itself over all the regions.

Against the background of rigid Vedic religion, based on sacrifices & polytheism, the 6th century India witnessed the rise of heterodox & monotheist belief systems like Jainism, Buddhism, and Ajivakas etc. These systems opposed complex and time-labor-money consuming Vedic rituals and sacrifices. Besides, they also rebelled against the growth of Brahmins as a superior socio-religious and economical authority in the society. They provided an ideological alternative and base, on which the society flourished in sixth c. BC.

It should be noted that the non-Vedic religions were not of foreign origin. On the contrary, they were deeply rooted in Indian culture. Initially, they seem to be drastically debating each other, but, in due course of time, they followed similar lines and approaches for the propagation of their respective religions.

### **2.3.3. Factors responsible for Growth of Non-Vedic Cults**

There are some causes of the emergence of Non-Vedic cults, as follows:

#### **2.3.3.1.Proliferation of Sacrifices**

During Later Vedic period, the sacrifices became mandatory for receiving favour of God or fulfilling any wish. The scriptures suggested various types of sacrifices, which were time-money consuming and filled with violence. Besides, similar to the sacrifices, various types of specialized priests and crowd of Gods also emerged in the society. In all, the entire system became very complex and, except favorable to priest class, beyond the limits of common person.

#### **2.3.3.2.Discriminatory institutions**

The later Vedic culture based on rigid caste-system. The Vedic culture represented with the hierarchy of castes, proliferation of castes and sub castes, humiliating condition of women and Shudras etc. The non-Kshatriya rulers and economical superior trader class, along with common person, found no prestigious place or respect in this system.

#### **2.3.3.3.Ambiguous scriptures**

The Vedic literature was varied and specialized. However, it was written in ambiguous Sanskrit language, which was known to only Brahmins. Hence, it was necessary for the common person to know their religion in understandable and clear language and literature.

#### **2.3.3.4.Need of New Thoughts**

Even among Vedic people, many thinkers were dissatisfied by the ritual extremity of Later Vedic period. Hence, they created a different kind of Vedic literature, i.e. the Upanishads. The Upanishads preferred meditation and introspection to the extravagant sacrifices of Vedic scriptures. However, the meditation of Upanishads was revolving around the subjects like atman, Brahma, dvait-advait etc.; even more abstract than the rituals themselves.

Hence, people were in need of a new, unambiguous, simple thought or belief systems. Against the background of such complex nature of Later Vedic rituality, a need was felt of such belief system, which would give simple-clear thought and would suggest cheap, manageable rituals



in understandable language. Besides, economically superior Varna like Vaishya and politically superior non-Kshatriya rulers and people were in need of socio-religious sanctions to them or legitimacy in society. Hence, in 6th c BC, Non-Vedic cults emerged who fulfilled all the requirements mentioned above and provided legitimacy to Vaishya and non-Kshatriya powerful people and rulers.

#### **2.3.4. Jainism**

By tradition, Jainism is an anadi religion, i.e. the all time/ever-existed religion, and, through tirthankaras, it is retold from time to time. Rishabhdeva was the first among 24 tirthankaras, in which, Neminath was 22nd, whereas, Parshvanatha was 23rd. Parshvanath was the son of Ashvasena, ruler of Banaras and queen Vama. He, at the age of 30, left the throne and resorted to penance. He lived for 100 years and spent his life for the propagation of Jainism. He gave stress on four principles, like, Satya, Brahmacharya, Asteya and Aparigraha. The followers of Parshvanatha, wearing white cloth, consisted of 8 gana, 8 ganadhara and 1000 Shramanas. Vardhaman Mahavir was the 24th tirthankara and most venerated preacher of Jain religion.

##### **2.3.4.1. Vardhaman Mahavir (540 BC to 474 BC):**

###### **His Life**

Vardhaman born at Kundagrama in dist. Muzaffarpur (in present Bihar). He was the son of Siddhartha, king of dnyatrik republic and Trishaladevi, sister of Lichchavi king. Since his childhood, Vardhaman was detached from worldly pleasures and always engaged in meditation. He was married to one Yashoda and had a daughter. After the death of parents, at the age of 30, he took permission from his elder brother and submitted himself to the life of sanyasa (ascetic). Initially he wore cloths, however after 12 months left cloths and remained cloth-less. He resorted to painstaking penance (tapas) for 12 years. On the 13th year, he received enlightenment of supreme knowledge on the banks of Rijjpalika at village Jrimbhika and thus become kevalin or arhat. He successfully gained control on all his senses (indriyas). Hence, he is called the Jina, i.e. Jitendriya (who won over his senses). As he was freed from all the bondages, he was called as Nigranth. Afterwards, he propagated his thought in public up to 72 years. Then, at Pavapuri he received Nirvana.

###### **His Work**

Mahavira reinterpreted the then existed philosophy and code of conducts of Jainism. He contributed a new principle of non-violence (ahimsa) to the four principles, told by Parshvanatha. He, based on non-violence, framed a new set of philosophy and codes of conduct. Then, he consolidated his disciples. Besides, he refreshed Jain monachism (monasticism) and put rules of hierarchy of Jain-preachers or Shramanas. Besides, he provided such rules, which would be suitable for the laymen. For the propagation of his religion, he accepted ardhmagadhi-a language of people as a medium of preaching and methods of dialogue and debates to preach. Due to his simple codes of conducts and use of people-language, Mahavira could successfully propagated Jainism, which, within a short span of time, received popularity among common person-as also among kings and traders. Hence, Mahavira considered as an actual founder of Jainism.

##### **2.3.4.2. Basic Principles of Jainism**

The basic principles of Jainism surmised as follows:

- Negations of Vedas, Vedic rituals, sacrifices and its concept of God
- To achieve moksha, one should control his own senses instead of depending on the favours of God
- Universe is created due to jiva (soul) which is immortal
- To achieve moksha, jiva should freed from actions
- Belief in equality

### 2.3.4.2. The Philosophy of Jainism

The centre of Jainism is the concept of atman; the basic philosophic approach is the stress on ahimsa, and its foundation is anekantavada. Jainism or the philosophy of Jain revolved around these basic concepts. Here, we would take a brief review of the philosophy of Jainism and its major contributions to the Indian culture, like, syadavada and tools of moksha.

**Foundation:** The Anekantavada (multi-dimensional, inclusive approach)

The concept of Aneka-anta-vada is the foundation of Jaina philosophy, at the same time; it is an inclusive approach to look at the world. According to this concept, no single definite, decisive or conclusive aspect (ek- anta) of anything is existed; on the contrary, various kinds of possibilities or meanings (aneka-anta) were existed when we make a statement about anything.

According to Jain, if we wish to make statements about anything-say X, instead of one decisive argument, seven kinds of possible statements can be made. This concept is called as 'Syadavada'. According to this concept, our knowledge about anything is always one-ended, i.e. one-sided (ek-antaka). However, the truth about any thing is, in actual, multi-dimensional or open-ended (aneka-anta). That is why; we can explain the truth in many possible ways. Hence, a common person who is bounded by his actions or delusions (the karmabaddha jiva) should abstain himself from making extreme or decisive comments of any things. Instead, he should be compassionate in his approach to the world.

In short, the concept appeals compassion and inclusive spirit among us and thus protests the fanatics who excludes. It is an elaboration of the concept of ahimsa, which appeals to remain abstained from violation of thoughts or views of other people.

**The Concept of jiva (soul) & its travel towards Moksha (true knowledge)**

The Jain believed that every living thing on earth has a jiva (soul) in its body or physical structure. According to them, the soul is bounded by various actions and hence it is originally impure. To gain true knowledge (Moksha), it has to be pure or un-bound itself from those actions which pollute it and make it impure. When, it is freed from any bound, it receives the knowledge (keval-dnyana). Then only, it can receive true knowledge of any thing, i.e. the stage of Moksha. However to reach to the stage of understanding of the true knowledge, the soul has to travel through some stages, like, Jiva Jiva means soul, which is different from the body, which is full of senses. The soul encourages one to engage in activities, which are good or bad. It also suffers from the effects of its actions, good or bad.

**A-jiva:** A-jiva means unconscious and life-less. A-strava Various kinds of actions/deeds (karma) flows (strava) to the soul (jiva) and pollute it. Such flow of activities or pollution is called as a-strava. However, if the actions which bound the soul are good (shubha)-effecting then it is called as Punya. In other case, it is pap. Bandha Due to the flow of activities or pollution, the soul became bounded, called as Bandha.

**Sanvara:** To control and stop the flow of such activities which pollutes and bound the soul is called as Sanvara. Nirjara However, by stopping only the flow does not mean that the soul is freed from any bondage. It should clear those actions, which was already stored and bounded the soul. This is called as Nirjara. After a great penance, a nirjara can be achieved. Moksha After clearing the stored pollution (nirjara) and stopping the flow of activities or pollution (sanvara), the soul is freed from the bondage. This stage is called as 'Moksha'. That means the Moksha is equal to nirjara and sanvara.

**The Tools to achieve Moksha**

Every soul which was bounded and polluted by actions should always try to free himself and achieve the true knowledge of his being i.e. Moksha. We have understood its travel through various stages to achieve its goal. In this journey, we are helped with some tools or methods. Like the Triratnas

**Samyaka Darshana:** To have faith on the wisdom of tirthankara and the seven stages of journey to moksha as preached by him

**Samyaka Dnyana:** A knowledge or comprehension about the nature of jiva and ajiva

**Samyaka Charitra:** Righteous behaviour consisting of vrata (maha-vrata, anuvrata, guna-vrata, shiksha-vrata), samiti and gupti. Samiti means to take precautions to avoid breach of principles or vratas; whereas the Gupti means to put restrictions on ourselves to protect (gopan) our soul. The samiti and gupti meant for Jain monks and nuns only.

## **The Vratas**

### **a . Maha-vrata & anu-vrata**

Ahimsa This is the centre-thought of Jainism. It means to abstain from troubling any living thing with any sort of violence, like, physical, verbal and mental. Satya To speak truth and create such a situation in which other would speak truth. Asteya Not to possess the thing, which is not belonged to us Aparigraha To possess only those things, which are most needed Brahmacharya Abstain from sexual relations These five principles were mandatory for Jain monks and nuns. Hence, these are called as 'maha-vrata'. However, it is not possible for laymen to follow such strict codes of conduct. Hence, Jainism made provision of the same principles for them but in a soft or limited form. They are called as 'anu-vrata', like ahimsa-anuvrata, satyaanuvrata etc.

### **b. Guna-vrata**

To inculcate patience and sacrifice among laymen and women (shravaka and shravika), three guna-vrata were provided for them, like, Dig-vrata While traveling one should limit his directions and maintain that limitation.

### **c. Shiksha-vrata**

To increase the tendency of detachment from worldly pleasures and for the social-health, some principles are told, like, Samayika To follow habit of seating calmly at one place and meditate Proshadhopavasa To observe fast on fifth (panchami), eighth (ashtami), fourteenth (chaturdashi) day of every fortnight; or, on eighth and fourteenth day during chaturmasa (Ashadh to Ashvin i.e June-September/rainy season) On the day of fast one should seat in Jain temples and recite scriptures and follow meditation Bhogopabhoga parinama Decide limitation on food consumption and pleasure for each day and follow that limitation.

Atithi samvibhag To give part of our cooked food to the truthful and worthy guest

## **Types of Disciples**

According to Jainism, there are five types of disciples, comprised of 1. Tirthankara (free), 2. Arhata (a soul flowing to nirvana), 3. Acharya (Great Disciple), 4. Upadhyaya (Teacher), 5. Sadhu (general disciple)

### **2.3.4.3.Jain Scriptures**

According to tradition, the original preaching of Mahvira compiled in 14 volumes, called as Parva. In the first grand-assembly, held at Pataliputra, Sthulabhadra classified Jainism into 12 Anga. These Angas included famous angas like Acharanga sutra and Bhagavati sutra. Further in the second grand-assembly, held at Vallabhi, these supplemented by the Upangas. The original Jaina canons (85) comprised of sutragrantha (41), prakirnakas (31), Niyukti/Bhashya (12), Mahabhashya (1). These are called as Agama, written in ardhamagadhi script.

### **2.3.4.4.The Spread of Jainism**

By tradition, Jainism was existed before Mahavira. However, due to tenuous efforts of Mahavira and his new contributions like consolidation, reinterpretation of philosophy and codes of conduct, a separate set of codes for laymen, hierarchical systemized monachism; he was credited as an actual founder of Jaina religion. Among his 11 disciples or ganadharas, Arya Sudharma became the first mainpreacher or thera. During the period of Nanda dynasty, Sambhutavijaya propagated Jainism. Bhadrabahu, the sixth thera, was contemporary to Chandragupta Maurya. The basic reason

of the spread of Jainism was the support and favours of contemporary rulers. Great rulers like Bimbisara, Ajatshatru, Chandragupta Maurya, Kharvela (north) and southern dynasties like Ganga, Kadamba, Chalukya, Rashtrakuta, and Shilahara accepted Jainism as their personal and royal religion. They extended their support to Jain for their propagation and consecutive spread. The Jain were mainly concentrated in the region of Mathura; however, due to the favour of Chalukya rulers of Gujarat and notable dynasties of South, it spread in Gujarat and south India.

Apart from rulers, the trader and artisan's class also accepted Jainism. It spread on the financial base provided by these classes. Due to the favour of rulers, Jaina literature and art also flourished. Vast collections of Jaina literature created in the public-language like Ardhamagadhi and then Sanskrit, too. Besides, caves-viharas-temples constructed to accommodate the worshipers for large congregations. These places served as educational centres where renowned works and researches on Jainism were undertaken by various scholars, like, Mathura and Shravanbelagola were the most renowned research institutions of Jainism.

The stress of Jainism on the adherence of strict codes of conduct hampered its spread; however, on the other hand, by these, it could retain its oldest form until today. Especially, the concept of 'ahimsa' and 'anekantavada', were the immortal gift of Jainism to the India culture.

#### **2.3.4.5. Grand Assemblies**

During the draught of 12 years in Magadha, Bhadrabahu, with his disciples departed to Shravanbelagola, in South India, whereas, some Jain, mostly Shvetambaras, remained in Magadha under the leadership of Sthulbahubhadra. Around 300 BC, he organized first grand assembly at Pataliputra. The assembly came up with the classification of Mahavira's preaching in 12 Angas. When, Jain from south India, mostly Digambaras, returned to Magadha, they refuted these Angas and stated that all the original scripture were lost. After many years, in 512 AD, second grand assembly was held at Vallabhi (Gujarat) presided by Deavardhimani Kshamashramana. Meanwhile, the 12th Anga was lost. Hence, the assembly tried to consolidate and compile the scripture. They created new texts like Upanga and supplemented to remaining Angas.

#### **2.3.4.6. Dissensions**

Earlier, Jaina remained without cloths. During Chandragupta Maurya's time, most of the Jaina under the leadership of Bhadrabahu left Magadha towards south India. After some period, they returned to Magadha. Meanwhile, the Jaina at Magadha were resorted & become habitual to cover their body with white cloth. Besides, they have softened some codes of conduct, like permission of women in Jain monachism, whereas, the Jaina, who returned from south were attached to earlier strict rules and remained cloth-less. Obviously, their arrival created dissensions among Jaina. It divided between the two cults, the Shvetambaras (clad in white-dress) and Digambaras (cloth-less). The Digambara Jaina believed remaining cloth-less and they are against permitting women in the fold of religion, whereas, the Shvetambara Jaina supports participation of women and accepted the white (shveta) cloth to wear. In due course of time, both these major cults came up with their own version and scriptures of Jainism. Generally, the Digambaras were mostly concentrated in the southern part of India whereas north populated by the Shvetambaras.

#### **2.3.4.7. Contribution of Jainism to Indian culture**

Teachings of Mahavira became very popular among the masses and different sections of society were attracted to it. One of the important causes for the success was the popular dialect (Prakrit) used in place of Sanskrit. The simple and homely morals prescribed to the masses attracted the people. The royal patronage by the rulers of Magadha later made Mathura and Ujjain great centres of Jainism. Jain councils collected the material of the sacred texts to write them down systematically, in Ardhamagadhi. But in the absence of popular religious preachers after the death of Mahavira, its division into two important sects, absence of protection by the later rulers, revival of Hinduism under the Guptas, Cholas, Chalukyas and Rajput kings also contributed to its slow

decline. But its contribution to Indian culture particularly literature, architecture and sculpture has been remarkable. Though the language of its religious texts had been Prakrit, it helped in giving a literary shape to some spoken languages of India. The temples and idols still existing in various cities as Mathura, Gwalior, Junagarh, Chittor, Abu have been accepted as some of the best specimens of Indian architecture and sculpture particularly the temples of Abu, the Jaina tower at Chittorgarh, the elephant caves of Orissa and the 70 feet high idol of Bahubali in Mysore.

### **2.3.5. Buddhism**

#### **2.3.5.1. Gautama Buddha (566 to 486 BC): His life**

Siddhartha was born at Lumbini in present Nepal. He was son of Shuddodana, the King of Shakya gana of Kapilvastu and Mayadevi, princess of Koliya gana. In his childhood he was taken care by Gautami, hence he also called as Gautama. After his enlightenment, he called as Buddha. Shuddodana provided all kinds of comforts and pleasure to Siddhartha. However, since his childhood, Siddhartha was detached from worldly pleasure and engrossed in meditation. When he arrived to his youth, he deeply moved by the misery and agony of human life. Traditions inform us about the effects on Siddhartha of the sight of old man, a sick man, a dead body and meditative sage. He became restless to seek the cause of such agony and real meaning of truth. Hence, at 29, he left his wife Yashodhara and son Rahul and, moved to forests to know the real meaning of truth and reason of sorrow. His departure from material pleasure for the welfare of humanity engraved in history as maha-bhi-ni-shkramana. He spent his six years on experimenting in various methods of penance supervised under various scholars. However, he felt such methods as fruitless hence left them. At the end, on the banks of Uruvela, at Gaya, he received enlightenment under the pipal (bodhi)-tree. He became the Buddha-the enlightened one and Tathagath-who knew the truth.

He refuted the known methods and authority of knowledge and put forth his new version of truth. He decided to share his knowledge with the people, based on simple code of conducts and in the languages of people, i.e. Pali. He gave his first sermon at Sarnath and introduced his dhamma. This sermon refuted the earlier versions of truth and introduced a new beginning in the philosophical history of Indian culture; and hence, memorized as dhamma-chakra-parivartana. His knowledgeable, simple and sacrificial character and his teaching in simple tone impressed people. Initially there were five disciples-Ashvajit, Upali, Mogalalana, Shreyaputra and Anand. However, within a short span of period crowds and crowds of people gathered around him and accepted his knowledge. He was followed by, along with common person, wealthy merchants-traders, artisans and kings like Ajatshatru (Magadha), Prasenjit (Kosala) and Udayana (Kaushambi) of that time. Then, Buddha organized his disciples into a specific monachism rested on definite rules and codes of conduct. This is called the Sangha. The Buddhists express their devotions by submitting themselves to Buddha, his Sangha and his dhamma.

After painstaking propagation and travels through distant lands, in the age of 80, Buddha rested at Kusinagar (Kasaya, dist. Devriya, present Uttar Pradesh) in peace. His departure commemorated as maha-pari-nirvana.

#### **2.3.5.2. Philosophy of Buddhism**

The Buddhist philosophy comprises of four arya-satya, ashtang-marga, panchashila, four brhamavihara and classical concepts like pratityasamutpada, anityavada, anatmavada. Let us understand the highlights of Buddhism.

##### **Arya-satya**

Buddhism introduces its philosophy with four arya-satya or truths.

- dukkha (Sorrow): Human life is full of sorrow which would remain up to its end.
- dukkha-samudyaya (reasons of sorrow) (the reason): Sorrow is caused by desire.
- dukkha-nirodha (stopping sorrow): The end of desire is the end of sorrow.

- dukkha-samudaya-nirodha-marga (way of stopping) (solution): To end desire (that means to end sorrow), one should follow the ashtangamarga.

### **Ashtanga-marga (eightfold ways)**

For putting an end to the desire and in turn removing sorrow from human life, Buddha suggested ashtanga-marga or eight ways. He called them samyaka i.e. right or middle (not extreme) Samyak drishti knowledge of four arya-satyas Samyak sankalpa good will, good wish and love for all living beings Samyaka vacha abstaining from untruth, using words that hurt others and non-sense talking Samyaka karma non-violence, non-stealing, controlling senses Samyaka ajivika follow occupation with righteous way Samyaka vyayama consistent efforts to replace bad thoughts with good thoughts Samyaka smriti always remember that everything is full of sorrow, changing and time-being Samyaka samadhi experiencing peace after going through various stages of meditation

### **Pancha-shila**

The Buddhist monks expected to follow certain moral values, like, Ahimsa not to trouble any living being by violence Satya leaving of false speech and thoughts Asteya not to wish which is not belong to us or given to us Brhamacharya to remain abstain from sexual relationships Aparigraha not to possess which is not needed Brahma-vihara For cleansing our soul, Buddha suggested following methods, like, Maitri sustaining kindness towards all leaving beings and leaving of anger, jealousy and breach of trust Karuna to be sensitive towards the sorrow of others Mudita to be glad towards the happiness or progress of others Upeksha awareness of the bounded life of human being with his actions, which create happiness and misery, In short, to put an end to the desires and attain moksha, Buddha provided logic of arya-satya, and then suggested solutions in the forms of ashtanga-marga, panchashila and Brahma-vihara.

### **Other philosophical contribution of Buddhism**

Pratityasamutpada (the concept of cause-effect) According to Buddhism, every things or action has some causes behind them; and, both, the cause and its effect are separate entities. They say,

- Initially, the entity which we call as cause is finished then the entity, called as action emerged
- The cause holds no power to produce any action.

This concept refutes the atmavadi's principle according to which, the powers in causes gave birth to actions which is happened through some kind of external principle

### **Anityavada**

According to Buddhists, everything/being/action/quality is mortal and existed only for time being. Besides, nothing is stable and always succumbs to changes. Thus, it refutes the concept of Vedic culture of stability of soul, which is caused by some immortal principle.

### **Anatmavada**

Anatmavada questions the existence of soul. According to Vedic everything/being has soul, which is stable and everlasting. Buddhist refutes this concept. They state that 'this so called soul' cannot be experienced, hence, we must agree to such principles, which can be experienced. In short, Buddhism refutes the claim of Vedic that every thing has some stability and definite principles behind them. Instead, they suggested that there is no stable, immortal principle like soul; in fact, everything is changing & mortal (anatmavada) and independent from the other one as stated in Pratityasamutpada.

Such logical thinking of Buddhist and their adherence to the knowledge-byexperience, on one hand refuted abstract concepts of Vedic and on another influenced large mass of population.

### **2.3.5.3. Buddhist Monachism or Sangha**

For the propagation of Buddhism, Buddha created a disciplined mechanism of missionaries, called as Bhikshus and Bhikshunis. He organized the missionaries and his disciples in a specific organization, called as Sangha.

#### **Membership of Sangha (Monastery)**

Any person (male or female) who is above 18 and left his possessions could become member of Sangha based on equality. Initially women were not permitted in Sangha, but thanks to persistent efforts and convincing by Ananda (disciple) and Gautami (foster mother); the doors were opened for women. Besides, after the permission of owner, slaves, soldiers and debtors could also become member of Sangha. However, criminals, lepers and contagious patients not permitted into Sangha. At the outset, one has to take oath (loyalty towards Buddha-Dhamma-Sangha), then shave his head (mundana) and wear yellow dress. Then, after one month, he could take a diksha called as upasampada. In addition, after upasampada he is taken as a member of Sangha. However, the member is expected to follow the codes of conduct (dasha-shila), comprised of, abstaining from: consuming alcohol, taking untimely food, dance-songs, using perfumes, using mattress for sleep, wearing gold & silver ornaments, indulging in adultery etc.

#### **Rules for Bhikshu (monks)**

Some codes of conducts expected from monks which to be followed:

- Remain abstain from greed, malpractices, corruptions.
- Residing in forests and then in viharas.
- Possession of only eight things: kopin, kaphani, chati, bhikshapatra, upavastra, kamarbandha, needle, razor
- To live on the alms only and eat for subsistence
- Control of senses
- Mediation after lunch and on first and third prahara of night
- Follow 227 rules, written in Vinaya pitaka

#### **Highlights of Sangha**

The Sangha comprised of dedicated missionaries who aimed at moral upliftment of human being.

- It refuted discriminatory systems like gender, Varnas, castes or any other and followed equality among them.
- Nobody in Sangha possessed any special privileges; every opinion had the same value.
- These Sangha worked as learning-centre in which, not only the missionaries, but the common people also received learning in Buddhism. These learning centres, in due course time, became renowned universities of Ancient India.
- Due to the modest characters of missionaries, simple codes of conducts, preaching in simple-clear manner and people's language and favour-financial support by wealthy traders-craftsmen and kings, Buddhism expanded to distant parts of India and abroad.

The organizational base of Sangha was a democratic one. The monks are expected to travel for eight months for the propagation of Buddhism. Then, during the four months of rainy season, they gathered at one place, called as varshavasa. During varshavasa, they discuss, share their experiences, and gave confessions, take prayashcita (expiation). Hence, they were expected to frequently gather, behave unanimously and respect the elders in Sangha.

The monks assemble in upasabhas on specific days like eighth, fourteenth, full moon, no-moon days of the month. They submitted their reports, gave confessions and-in a situation of breach-of-rules, follow prayaschita. Due to such a disciplinary and chaste character of monks, they received a great respect in the society. It helped the increase in Buddhism in large population.

Besides, the Sangha also functioned as a socio-religious legitimization for the traders, for which, the latter generously gave donations for the constructions of Buddhist place of worships and residence. In need of support of superior economical class of that period and the support of religion of people, the rulers also provided favours, donations and protections to the Sangha.

#### **2.3.5.4. Buddhist Scriptures**

Buddha's preaching collected and classified into three volumes, collectively called as pitakas. The three volumes are like these, Sutta-pitaka It is a collection of Buddha's preaching in dialogue form, which mainly made for common people. It has five nikayas, in which, the stories of Buddha's rebirth (the jatakas) collected in the fifth nikaya.

*Vinaya pitaka:* It is a collection of rules and codes of conduct for Buddhist monks and nuns.

*Abhi-dhamma-pitaka:* It is a collection of Buddha's philosophical thought in the form of Question & answers. It mainly meant for scholars of Buddhism.

#### **2.3.5.5. Dharmaparishadas: The Grand Assemblies**

After the mahaparinirvana of Buddha, Buddhism witnessed the crowd of various versions of Buddha's preaching. Hence, to remove such discrepancy and reach to unanimous platform, a need was felt to rearrange and compile Buddha's original preaching and codify them. For this purpose, grand assemblies of Buddhist followers organized from time to time.

Immediately after the death of Buddha, around 483 BC, during the reign of Ajatshatru of Haryaka dynasty, the first grand assembly organized in the caves of Saptarni, close to Rajgriha. It was presided by Mahakashyapa. The assembly came up with collection of Buddha's preaching in pitakas. Under the supervision of Upali, Vinaya Pitaka compiled whereas Sutta-pitaka compiled under the supervision of Ananda.

Then during the reign of Kalashoka of Shishunaga dynasty, in 387 BC, second grand assembly organized at Vaishali. In this, monks of Pataliputra and Vaishali introduced some rules, however, debated by monks of Avanti and Kaushambi. The debate not reached to any conclusion; hence, Buddhism witnessed its first major division under the names of Mahasanghika and Sthavirvadis. The Mahasanghik supported new rules whereas the Sthavirvadi decided to stick to the rules, compiled under Vinaya pitaka.

During the reign of Ashoka of Maurya dynasty, in 251 BC, third grand assembly organized at Pataliputra, presided by Moggaliputta Tissa. The assembly came up with the collection of Buddha's philosophy under the volume called as Abhidhammapitaka. The assembly also drove away 60000 monks who were not following Buddha's rules.

In the background of waves of new thinking, Kanishka of Kushana dynasty called the fourth grand assembly at Kundalvana (Kashmir). The assembly came up with the collection of treaties on three pitakas. However, due to the debates between new thinking and traditional scholars, the earlier division was dissolved and united under the name of Hinayana, whereas the new thinkers known as Mahayana.

#### **2.3.5.6. Reasons for the spread of Buddhism**

Within a short span of period, Buddhism spread into distant lands of India and abroad. Some of reasons of such popularity can be summarized as follows: Ideal Personality of Buddha Buddha left his worldly possession and strived in search of truth and solution for human misery. Such a sacrifice was the ideal for the common people. After receiving enlightenment, Buddha shared his knowledge to the common people in their own language and with simple method. Such a chaste, sacrificial, knowledgeable character of Buddha remains an ideal for the common people.

#### **Stress on People's-language**

The Vedic knowledge and religion was in Sanskrit language, which was ambiguous to the common person, whereas Buddha preached in people's language, i.e. Pali. Hence, people could



easily understand Buddha's preaching and codes of conduct. Obviously, they could identify their own religious thirst to Buddhism, more comfortably.

### **Philosophy**

Due to complex and ritualistic nature of Vedic religion and ill systems like that of Varna, common man, as also the trader and ruler class were remained out of its purview. Against this background, Buddha preached in understandable language and provided simple codes of conduct, largely based on universal moral values. Hence, large crowds gathered around Buddha.

### **Contribution of Sangha**

The mechanism of Buddhist Sangha provided a framework and constant supply of missionaries to the people. These missionaries were renowned by their scholarship and chaste-simple characters. They used to mix with public and propagate Buddhism in understandable manner. The people were attracted to this concept and showed respect to the Sangha.

### **Support of economically powerful classes**

The traders and artisans, although economically superior in society, kept away from Vedic fold. Buddhist gave socio-religious sanctions and legitimization to them. In turn, they supported the Sangha in generous manner. They provided large sum of funds to Buddhist religious constructions and propagation. The missionaries traveled with the caravans of traders, hence their journey became secured and fruitful which helped in propagation.

### **Favour of rulers**

Buddhist religion was the religion of mass. Besides, economically powerful class of traders and artisans were followers of Buddhist religion. Hence, to gain support from mass and economically prosperous class, the rulers showered favour upon Buddhist religion. Besides, it should be noted that, many of the rulers of the contemporary India were not of Kshatriya origin. Hence, they were disrespected by the Vedic religion. Buddhist sanctioned legitimacy to such non-Kshatriya Kings. Obviously, rulers favored Buddhism, which caused its growth.

In short, due to Buddha's charismatic personality, his universal philosophy in peoples' language, simple codes of conduct based on good-behavior, the dedication of Sangha and missionaries and sanctioning of religious legitimacy to prosperous classes and non-Kshatriya kings; Buddhism expanded throughout large areas of world.

### **2.3.5.7. Dissensions**

During second grand assembly at Vaishali, Buddhism witnessed its major dissensions due to the intense arguments by the monks of Kaushambi and Avanti and those of Pataliputra and Vaishali. They are called as Sthavirvadis (those who stressed on strict observance of Vinaya-rules) and Mahasanghikas (those who wished to introduce new rules and changes), respectively. After Mauryas, the rulers started favoring Vedic religion than Buddhism. Besides, Vedic religion, in reaction to the popularity of Buddhism, started introspecting itself and making improvisation in their philosophical and practical approaches. At this time, foreign rulers and concepts of art were making entry into Indian soil. Besides, to enlarge mass base, every belief systems were adhering to the process of deification and idol-worship. Hence, these systems started considering Sanskrit language for their scriptures to compete Vedic religion.

Against this background, forth grand assembly was organized at Kundalvana. Many Buddhist thinkers, to enlarge mass base were inclined to idol-worship and appealing for other drastic changes in Buddhism. To oppose them, the earlier divisions of Sthavirvadis and Mahasanghikas united under Hinayana, whereas, the new thinkers were called as Mahayana.

By this time, Buddhism was already divided into eighteen important sects but the two most important and major ones were Hinayana or the Lesser Vehicle and the Mahayana the Great Vehicle. The Hinayanists believed in the original teachings of Lord Buddha and did not want any relaxation in them. Whereas Mahayanists accepted many Buddhisattvas who were in the process of

obtaining but had yet not obtained Buddhahood. Both the sects agreed that the Buddha had taken birth several times and in several forms as bodhisattvas before the attainment of Buddhahood and would take birth in future also. But both differed with regard to the cause of these births and deaths. According to Hinayanism, the different births were simply different stages of progress of the Buddha till salvation. Thus they believed that Buddha was a man and his birth as Gautama was his last stage in the attainment of Nirvana. But Mahayanism believed that Buddha was an incarnation of God. He took birth several times not to attain Nirvana for himself but to help others in the attainment. Secondly, whereas the Hinayansim regarded the salvation of one's own self as the highest goal, Mahayanism believed that the greatest ideal is to help the society in self elevation. Thirdly, Hinayanism regarded Nirvana as a state of permanent bliss or peace away from the cycle of birth and death while the Mahayanism regarded it as the union of an individual with Adi Buddha, an idea quite simpler to the union with the Brahman of the Upanishadas. Fourthly, Hinayana did not regard the Buddha free from the bond of birth and death while Mahayana regarded the Buddha as God and believed in his different incarnations, all free from the cycle of birth and rebirth. Fifthly, Hinayanism believed in the practice of self-culture and good deeds as the only way to salvation. Mahayanism was based on faith and devotion to various Buddha to attain salvation. Finally, while the religious texts of Hinayanism were written in Pali, those of Mahayanism were written in Sanskrit. The Mahayanism remained closer to the concepts of Hinduism with regard to Nirvana, Brahma, incarnations of God, faith, devotion etc. thus forming a bridge between the old Buddhism and modern Hinduism.

#### **2.3.5.8. Contribution of Buddhism to Indian Culture**

Buddhism remained one of the foremost religions of not only India but the whole of Asia for many centuries but slowly it lost its hold over Asia and practically became non-existent in India. Corruption had crept in Buddhist Samghas because of the free entry of wealth and women in the monastic order. The division of the Buddhism into different sects also contributed to the destruction of the image of the movement among the people. The adoption of Sanskrit as language of the Buddhist texts made Buddhism lose popular contact and hold over the masses, since Sanskrit was not the language of the masses. The moral corruption of monks led to intellectual bankruptcy of the Samgha and when Hinduism was reviewed particularly under the patronage of Gupta rulers, Buddhism failed to meet its intellectual challenge and therefore lost popular support. Moreover, Buddhism basically was an atheistic system which did not regard God as an essential creator and preserver of the Universe. On the other hand, Hinduism a strong faith based on the existence of God preached the masses about the God as Saviour and perpetual merciful helper of mankind. The ruling class also realised might as the order of the day and need of the time where non-violence and other teachings were becoming increasingly irrelevant, and thereby withdrew its support to Buddhism. Hinduism bounced back with the spirit of toleration and the acceptability of new ideas in its fold. But the final blow to Buddhism came with the invasion of Hunas and the Turks. Thus, Buddhism lost its control over the country of its birth.

Nevertheless, Buddhism made positive contribution to Indian culture. It gave to Indian people a simple, economical and popular religion. It rejected rituals and sacrifices, authority of the Brahmanas which had made Hinduism unpopular. The monastic system or the organisation of religious devotees in disciplined communities or orders was another contribution of Buddhism to India. It also provided religious unity to Indian people by raising the public morality by its adherence to a high moral code. At the same time, it gave serious impetus to democratic spirit and social equality. The philosophers of Buddhism had a rational approach towards religion and individualistic in its approach. It preached that the self-emancipation could alone help an individual to attain Nirvana. As far as the Indian education and literature is concerned, the Samghas became the centres of learning and Taxila, Nalanda, Vikramshila became centres of Buddhist learning. In

the domain of architecture, sculpture and painting, the stupas of Sanchi, Sarnath, Nalanda, Amravati and Ellora are regarded as the best specimens of Indian architecture. The famous lions of the Sarnath columns, the beautiful bull of Rampurva column, the carvings on the gateways of the great Buddhist sites at Bharhut, Ganga and Sanchi are remarkable specimens of sculpture. The schools of Gandhara and Mathura produced the first images of Buddha which are appreciable pieces of art. The statues of Buddha carved in stone, copper and bronze are also some of the best examples of Buddhist art. The mural paintings of Ajanta caves earned world-wide fame. Thus, Indian architecture, sculpture and painting owe a large debt to Buddhism. Finally, the power to assimilate foreigners into its fold and the spirit of toleration has been a source of great inspiration from Buddhism to Indian society.

#### **2.3.5.9. Decline of Buddhism**

As mentioned earlier, Buddhism witnessed clash of philosophy and stress on codes among various versions. In due course of time, it gradually declined and, around the end of 7th century, became almost invisible from the Indian land. What were the causes of such a decline? Let us find out. Shift of kings'-favor As we know that the favour and support of rulers were one of the causes for the spread of Buddhism. However, after the Mauryas, India was mushroomed with those kings who favoured Vedic religion. In fact, the rulers and their officers started resurrecting Vedic religion by performing huge sacrifices and giving donations. It hampered the support of Buddhism.

#### **2.3.6. Introspection of Vedic religion**

The speedy growth of non-Vedic religions forced Vedic religion to introspect within their own belief systems. Thus, they made some reforms in the erstwhile rigid ritualistic Vedic religion. It became people oriented. It introduced concepts like temples for mass-congregation, idol-worships, devotional mode of prayers, simple code of conducts, establishment of monasteries, pilgrimages etc. Hence, crowds of people were attracted to Vedic religion. Dissensions in Buddhism Immediately after the departure of Buddha, Buddhism faced with dissensions. To curb such conflicts and reach to unanimity, contemporary rulers organized grand assemblies from time to time. However, they proved in vain. Besides, for the people orientation, Buddhism also accepted the concepts like idol-worship, Sanskrit-language, concept of heaven & hell, cycle of birth etc. Such concepts marred the individualistic identity of Buddhism, which was originally revolutionary and heterodox in nature.

Except Menander and Kanishka, almost all foreign rulers were followers of the Vedic religion. Especially, the aggressive Huna tribe was the follower of Shaiva cult. It destroyed Buddhist monastery and learning centres. It was a final blow of dispersed Buddhists at that time.

In summing up, we can say that, by introducing religion based on simple philosophy and codes of conduct Buddhism presented a challenge to the then ritualistic, complex and isolated Vedic religion. Due to Buddhism, India witnessed the true religion of common person. Besides, it is credited of spreading Indian culture into distant foreign lands.

#### **2.3.7. Comparison and Contrast Between Jainism and Buddhism**

Mahavira and Buddha were contemporaries and there was much in common between them. It is because of the similarities between the two that some scholars think that Jainism owes its origin to Buddhism or Jainism is the oldest branch of Buddhism. Berth wrote 'Jainism is a sect which took rise in Buddhism'. Others like Weber and Lassen believe that Jainism branched off from Buddhism. But modern scholars disagree with the above views and maintain that the two religions have a lot in common but the basic difference in the philosophies of the two makes each of them a distinct religion. Both of them were the products of intellectual, spiritual and social forces of their age which arose as a challenge to the existing Bramanical order. Both possessed Aryan cultural background and were inspired by Upanishads especially the Samkhya-Yoga, Atheism, pessimism about human life being full of misery, doctrines of transmigration of soul and theory of Karma and

the belief in dualism about spirit and matter are all essence of Samkhya Yoga which Jainism and Buddhism adopted with some modifications. Both were started by Kshatriya class who appealed and gave Social status to the Vaishya and Sudra castes. They emerged in eastern India, a place which had retained some feature of pre-Aryan culture. Their common place of origin and their newly acquired support from the economically prosperous Vaishyas and socially oppressed Sudras all together helped in the publicity of their principles. Their attack on caste system, rituals and sacrifices, supremacy of the Brahmanas led the people to acquire new dimension to deal with problems of life and living. Both aimed at Nirvana or salvation from the cycle of birth and death as the ultimate aim of life. Both laid stress on pure and moral life for spiritual upliftment. Both emphasized Ahimsa or non-violence. Both denied authenticity of the Vedas as an infallible authority. Both emphasized the doctrines of transmigration of soul and laid stress on the effects of Karmas on individual's future birth. Both discontinued with Sanskrit and Jain text took to Prakrit and Buddhist to Pali, which was the language of the masses. In order to preach their religion, both established Samghas or orders for monks and nun and encouraged criticism as means to attain enlightenment.

Though Jainism and Buddhism resembled each other very much, yet there were distinctions between the two religions. Jainism is a much more ancient religion as compared to Buddhism. According to Jain tradition, it had twenty four Tirthankars of whom Mahavira was the last. In this light, Mahavira has been regarded as a reformer of an already existing religion while Buddha is the originator of a new one. Jainism believes that all elements of nature have a soul whereas Buddhism believed in life in animate things only. As far as non-violence is concerned, Jainism laid lot of emphasis on it and believed in extremities but Buddhism is liberal in approach and even permitted eating of flesh to its followers where it is a traditional diet of the people. Buddhism emphasized love to all beings which is a positive virtue and more affirmative concept of Ahimsa than the concept of non-injury to all beings as emphasized by Jainism. Jainism advised practice of strict ascetism to attain nirvana while Buddhism preached the middle path to attain salvation. While Jainism thought women and men householders could not fulfill the eligibility to attain salvation, Buddhism believed both could attain and were eligible for the nirvana. According to Jainism, salvation is possible only after death while according to Buddhism, it is possible during one's own life if one is able to detach oneself from the worldly existence. While Jainism describes nirvana as freedom from body, Buddhism describes it as an end of the self and breaking the cycle of birth and death by detriment from the worldly attractions. Buddhism was more practical in approach towards the problems of the time. It was more flexible to adopt changes into its fold with changing circumstances but Jainism was more rigid. While Buddhism spread all over Asia accommodating the traditions of the local population, Jainism remained confined to India only. Jainism remained closer to Hinduism than Buddhism. Therefore, conflicts between Jainism and Hinduism were negligible but Buddhism proved as a major rival to Hinduism. But with the bouncing back of Hinduism as a more positive religion with broader perspective, Buddhism practically disappeared from the land of its birth as a major reform movement.

Thus, there is no doubt that Jainism and Buddhism, born at different intervals, though at about the same period of time, were marked by distinct characteristics along with possessing strong resemblances.

### **2.3.8. Persian Invasions**

In the sixth century B.C., unlike in north-east India where Smaller principalities & republic merged with the Magadhan empire, there was no political unity in the North-West India. Several small principalities, such as those of the Kambojas, Gandhara and Madra fought one another. This, together with the fact that the area of north-western India was fertile and rich in natural resources,

attracted the attention of its neighbours and most probably persuaded the Persian emperors to seek territorial aggrandizement in the north-western region of India.

The Iranian ruler Darius penetrated into north-west India in 516 B.C. and annexed the Punjab, west of Indus, and Sindh. Xerxes, the son of Darius I, and his successors seem to have maintained some control of the Indian provinces, which furnished contingent to their army. It appears that India continued to be a part of the Iranian empire till Alexander of Macedonia defeated Darius III, the last Achaemenid emperor, and proceeded to conquer the whole of his empire.

#### **2.3.8.1. Cyrus (558-530 B.C)**

Cyrus the Great was the greatest conqueror of the Achaemenian Empire. He was the first conqueror who led an expedition and entered into India. He captured the Gandhara region. All Indian tribes to the west of the Indus river submitted to him and paid tribute. His son Cambyses had no time to pay attention towards India.

#### **2.3.8.2. Darius I (522-486 B.C.)**

Darius I, the grandson of Cyrus, conquered the Indus valley in 518 B.C. and annexed the Punjab and Sindh. This region became the 20th Satrapy of his empire. It was the most fertile and populous province of the Achaemenian Empire. Darius sent a naval expedition under Skylas to explore the Indus.

#### **2.3.8.3. Xerxes (465-456 B.C.)**

Xerxes utilized his Indian province to strengthen his position. He deployed Indian infantry and cavalry to Greece to fight his opponents. But they retreated after Xerxes faced a defeat in Greece. After this failure, the Achaemenians could not follow a forward policy in India. However, the Indian province was still under their control.

Darius III enlisted Indian soldiers to fight against Alexander in 330 B.C. It is evident that the control of Persians slackened on the eve of Alexander's invasion of India.

#### **2.3.8.4. Effects of the Persian Invasion**

The Persian invasion provided an impetus to the growth of Indo-Iranian commerce. Also, it prepared the ground for Alexander's invasion. The use of the Kharoshti script, a form of Iranian writing became popular in northwestern India and some of Asoka's edicts were written in that script. We are able to see the influence of Persian art on the art of the Mauryas, particularly the monolithic pillars of Asoka and the sculptures found on them. The very idea of issuing edicts by Asoka and the wording used in the edicts are traced to Iranian influence. In short, the Iranian connection with India proved more fruitful than the short-lived Indo-Macedonian contact.

The Indo-Iranian contact lasted for about 200 years. The Persians brought India into contact with the Western world and thus gave an impetus to her trade and commerce with the west. The cultural results were more important.

D.B. Spooner has tried to prove that at Patliputra, the Mauryan palace was modeled after the palace of Darius. But the evidence on which he has relied is scanty and unreliable. That is why his view is not accepted by the vast majority of other scholars. H.G. Rawlison has suggested that the bell capital of Ashokan pillars shows many traces of Persian influences. This view is also untenable. As pointed out by E.B. Havell, the capital represents inverted lotus which is characteristically a significant motif in Indian art. It is however, possible that the inspiration for building pillars might have come from the Persians, but the Asokan pillars are in no way imitations of their Persian prototype. The Persian shaft is fluted, i.e. has semi-cylindrical vertical grooves or channels, while Asokan pillar is plain and circular. The Persian shaft is built of separate pieces of stone, while the Asokan shaft is monolithic (i.e. single block of stone). So even when the inspiration for erecting pillars might have been derived from Persia, indigenous and original contribution to the creation of this item of Mauryan art is undeniable.

The Persian scribes introduced into India a new form of writing called Kharoshthi, which was made use of by Ashoka in some of his inscriptions in North-Western India and beyond. This script is a derivative of the Aramaic alphabet which was extensively used in the Achaemenid Empire (558-338 B.C.). This script like the Arabic script is written from right to left. The popularity of the Kharoshthi did not extend beyond 3rd century A.D. Certain words and the preamble of Ashokan edicts also show some Persian influences. The word *dipi* is used for a script and *nipishta* for 'written' which are clearly Indianised forms and Persian words.

Though the idea of Chakravarti ruler having an empire existed in the protohistoric times as it is definitely mentioned in the Brahmanas, yet it is possible as suggested by Prof. Basham that the expansionist policy of Bimbisara and Ajatasatru, the rulers of Magadha, "was inspired by the example of the Persians". We learn from Megasthenes that Chandragupta Maurya imitated the Persian hair style. He celebrated the hair-washing ceremony, employed women body-guards and lived in seclusion like the Persian Emperors got their administrative edicts inscribed on rocks. It is therefore probable that Ashoka borrowed this practice from the Persian but his use was the practice with the Persian but also his exhortations for spreading his dhamma. We also know that the Persian system of government by satraps was introduced in several provinces of North-Western India.

### **2.3.9. Alexander's Invasion of India (327-325 B.C.)**

Political Condition on the eve of Alexander's Invasion After two centuries of the Persian invasion, Alexander from Macedonia invaded India. On the eve of his invasion, there were a number of small kingdoms in northwestern India. The leading kings were Ambhi of Taxila, the ruler of Abhisara and Porus who ruled the region between the rivers of Jhelum and Chenab. There were many republican states like Nysa. In short, the northwestern India remained the most disunited part of India and the rulers were fighting with one another. They never come together against common enemy. Yet, it was not easy for Alexander to overcome so many sources of opposition.

Alexander ascended the throne of Macedonia after the death of his father Philip in 334 B.C. He conquered the whole of Persia by defeating Darius III in the battle of Arbela in 330 B.C. He also aimed at further conquest eastwards and wanted to recover the lost Persian Satrapy of India. The writings of Greek authors like Herodotus about the fabulous wealth of India attracted Alexander. Moreover, his interest in geographical enquiry and love of natural history urged him to undertake an invasion of India. He believed that on the eastern side of India there was the continuation of the sea, according the geographical knowledge of his period. So, he thought that by conquering India, he would also conquer the eastern boundary of the world.

#### **2.3.9.1. Causes of the Invasion**

In 330 B.C. Alexander (356-323 B.C.) of Macedon defeated Darius III, the last Persian emperor of Archamenid and set out to subdue the whole of the former Persian Empire. After a long campaign in Bactria, the region on the borders of the modern Soviet Union and Afghanistan watered by the river Oxus, Alexander crossed the Hindukush and occupied the district of Kabul.

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#### **2.3.9.2. North-West India on the eve of Alexander Invasion**

At this time, the North-Western India was divided into a number of petty principalities as there existed no great power in that area which could curb their mutual strifes and jealousies. These

principalities had little tendency to unite even against a foreign enemy. Ambhi, the ruler of Taxila, was at war with the Abhisaras and Poros. Poros and the Abhisaras were also enemies of the autonomous tribes like the Ksudrakas and the Malwas. The relations between Poros and his nephew were far from friendly. Owing to these quarrels among these petty states, Alexander did not face any united resistance. Some of these ruler like Ambhi of Taxila received him with open arms out of hatred of his neighbours. Alexander also received assistance from Sanrajya of Puskalavati, Kophaioi of the Kabul region, Asrvajit and Saisgupta. No doubt Poros and Abhisaras, the Malwas, the Khsudrakas and the neighboring tribes presented stiff resistance to the invader, Massaga, the strong-of the Assakenians was stormed with great difficulty. Poros, the Malvas, and the Khsudrakas were no doubt defeated but Alexander's army met with stubborn resistance from them. The Malavas almost succeeded in killing Alexander. But ultimately all this was of no avail. The disunited people could not long resist the united forces of the Greeks led by Alexander, one of the greatest generals of ancient Europe. Alexander had succeeded in conquering the old Persian provinces of the Gandhara and North-Western India but was unable to defeat the powerful Nanda king of Magadha, and other rulers to march further for his soldiers has heard that the Nanda king and the rulers of the Gangetic provinces were waiting for Alexander with an Army of 80,000 horses, 2,00,000 foot, 8,000 war chariots and 6,000 fighting elephants. The stout resistance put up by the Brahmins of the Punjab and the cities of Malavas was indeed the beginning of the reaction that was soon to wipe out all traces of Alexander from India. Alexander's efforts to persuade his mercenaries to proceed further were of no avail, and his soldiers having refused to advance beyond the river Beas (hyphasis) he was left with no option but to order the retreat in September, 326 B.C. Thus he failed to achieve his strongly held aim "of planting the Hellenic standard in the eastern ends of India." Alexander himself died in June 323 B.C. in Babylon and his dream of world empire came to an end.

#### **2.3.9.3. Battle of Hydaspes**

In 327 B.C. Alexander crossed the Hindukush Mountains and spent nearly ten months in fighting with the tribes. He crossed the Indus in February 326 B.C. with the help of the bridge of boats. He was warmly received by Ambhi, the ruler of Taxila. From there Alexander sent a message to Poros to submit. But Poros refused and decided to fight against Alexander. Then Alexander marched from Taxila to the banks of the river Hydaspes (Jhelum). On the other side of the river he saw the vast army of Poros. As there were heavy floods in the river, Alexander was not able to cross it. After a few days, he crossed the river and the famous battle of Hydaspes was fought on the plains of Karri. It was a well-contested battle. Although Poros had a strong army, he lost the battle. Alexander was impressed by the courage and heroism of this Indian prince, treated him generously and reinstated him on his throne.

Alexander continued his march as far as the river Beas encountering opposition from the local tribes. He wanted to proceed still further eastwards towards the Gangetic valley. But he could not do so because his soldiers refused to fight. Hardships of prolonged warfare made them tired and they wanted to return home. Alexander could not persuade them and therefore decided to return. He made arrangements to look after his conquered territories in India. He divided the whole territory from the Indus to the Beas into three provinces and put them under his governors. His retreat began in October 326 B.C. and the return journey was not free from ordeals. Many republican tribes attacked his army. Anyhow he managed to reach beyond the Indus. On his way he reached Babylon where he fell seriously ill and died in 323 B.C.

#### **2.3.9.4. The Effect of Alexander's Invasion**

The consequences of Alexander's invasion of India have been exaggerated out to all proportion by some foreign writers. Rapson and Smith regard this invasion an important and successful landmark in the history of India, while according to Radhakumud Mookerji it cannot be called a singular victory for Alexander. Alexander, of course, tried his best to consolidate his

conquest in India as far as possible by suitable administrative arrangements. He posted Greek governors to the west of the Indus; Peithon in Sind. Philip in the north, in the lower Kabul valley upto Bacteria, and Oxyartes in the valley of the Hindukush. To the east of the Indus, however, he did not dare to appointment Greek governors, but appointed only Indians, such as the King of Taxila, Abhisara, and Poros to rule over his conquered territories.

Nonetheless, one of its important consequences was that the political vacuum created in the North-West by Alexander's retreat did produce "indirect effects of utmost importance" in so far as the exploits of Alexander must have provided Chandragupta Maurya with some added inspiration to undertake his extensive territorial ventures. Alexander's invasion by destroying the power of the petty states of North-Western India gave an impetus to united India.

Thus by increasing the existing facilities for trade, Alexander's campaign paved the way for Greek merchants and craftsmen.

Alexander established in India a number of Greek settlements, some of which may have survived till the time of Ashoka's and even later. This promoted an exchange of ideas between Indian and Bactrian Greeks. Greek influence can be seen on Buddhist religion and also on art in course of time there grew a cosmopolitan school by the Hellenic influence. A. V. Smith has put it : "whatever Hellenistic elements in Indian civilization can be detected were all indirect consequences of Alexander's intension"

An immediate effect of Alexander's invasion was the destruction/weakening of tribes of India which had survived from earlier times. This made it easier for Chandragupta Maurya to bring them under his survey. Thus the process of political unification of northern India under one Government was unleashed. Alexander's historians besides having left valuable geographical accounts have also left clearly dated records of Alexander's campaign, which enable us to build Indian chronology for subsequent events on a definite basis.

The immediate effect of Alexander's invasion was that it encouraged political unification of north India under the Mauryas. The system of small independent states came to an end. Alexander's invasion had also paved the way for direct contact between India and Greece. The routes opened by him and his naval explorations increased the existing facilities for trade between India and West Asia. However, his aim of annexing the northwestern India to his empire was not fulfilled due his premature death. His authority in the Indus valley was a short-lived one because of the expansion of Mauryan Empire under Chandragupta Maurya.

### **2.3.10. Conclusion**

In 6th century BC, India witnessed Second urbanization, the process mainly concentrated in the Ganga valley, based on territorial identity. The process generated growth of urban centers, complex cultural profile of urban centers, growth of nonagricultural profession like industry and trade, use of coins and the rise of mahajanapadas based on regional identity. Such a vibrant culture needed suitable belief systems, which could legitimize newly powerful classes like artisans and traders, as the non-Kshatriya rulers; and which could provided more flexible and intelligible principles. The non-Vedic cults like Buddhism and Jainism provided the option catering to the needs of urban societies. Such ideologies based on ideal characters of founders, simple, intelligible preaching, and the system of missionaries; became popular within short span of time. At the same time due to the equal position taken by non-Vedic cults, the women were emancipated during this period. They were freed from the previous social and religious clutches of Late Vedic period. The period also witnessed the rise of Magadha as a powerful Empire under the illustrious ruler and very soon engulfed the other territorial states of north India. Taking the proximity and wealth of India, the Persian and later the Greek invaded India. Particularly the Greek under the Alexander's invasion to India opened a political and commercial route between the east and west.



### 2.3.11. Summary

- *The sixth century B.C. is considered a wonderful century in history. Great thinkers like Buddha, Mahavira, Heraclitus, Zoroaster, Confucius and Lao Tse lived and preached their ideas in this century.*
- *In India, the republican institutions were strong in the 6th century B.C. This enabled rise of heterodox sects against the orthodox religion dominated by rites and rituals. Among them the most successful were Jainism and Buddhism whose impact on the Indian society was remarkable.*
- *The primary cause for the rise of Jainism and Buddhism was the religious unrest in India in the 6th century B.C. The complex rituals and sacrifices advocated in the Later Vedic period were not acceptable to the common people. The sacrificial ceremonies were also found to be too expensive. The superstitious beliefs and mantras confused the people.*
- *The revival of Brahmanism and the rise of Bhagavatism led to the fall of popularity of Buddhism and Jainism in India.*
- *Jainism and Buddhism has made a remarkable contribution to the development of Indian culture.*
- *The concept of ahimsa was its chief contribution. Later, it became one of the cherished values of our nation. Its contribution to the art and architecture of India was notable. The language of Pali and other local languages developed through the teachings of Jainism and Buddhism. It had also promoted the spread of Indian culture to other parts of Asia.*
- *Taking the proximity and wealth of India, the Persian and later the Greek invaded India. Particularly the Greek under the Alexander's invasion to India opened a political and commercial route between the east and west.*

### 2.3.12. Exercise

- Discuss the Factors responsible for growth of heterodox religious movement in 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C India.
- Assess the course and impact of Persian invasions on India.
- Give an account of causes, course and significance of Alexander's invasion of India.
- Sketch the life and teachings of Mahavira.
- Give a brief account of the life and teachings of Buddha.

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**Unit-3**  
**Chapter-I**  
**SOURCES OF MAURYAN HISTORY**  
**Kautilyas Arthasastras and Meghsthenes Indica and Ashokan Inscriptions.**

**Structure**

- 3.1.0. Objectives**
- 3.1.1. Introduction**
- 3.1.2. Sources of Maurya Dynasty**
- 3.1.3. Literary Sources**
  - 3.1.3.1. Religious Literature**
  - 3.1.3.2. Secular Literature**
  - 3.1.3.3. Writings of classical workers**
- 3.1.4. Archaeological Sources**
- 3.1.5. The Rock Edicts of King Asoka**
- 3.1.6. Conclusion**
- 3.1.7. Summary**
- 3.1.8. Exercise**
- 3.1.9. Further Readings**

### 3.1.0. Objectives

*The chapter will be dealing with the sources employed by the historians for reconstruction of Mauryan History. After completion of this chapter students will acquire knowledge about*

- *the sources for the study of the Mauryas.*
- *importance of Kautilya's Arthashastra as a Sources of Mauryan History*
- *significance of Meghsthenes Indica as a Sources of Mauryan History*
- *value of Asokan Edict as a Sources of Mauryan History*

### 3.1.1. Introduction

The age of the Mauryas is a landmark in the history of Ancient India. The great historian Dr. Vincent Smith has aptly stated that, "the advent of the Mauryan dynasty marks the passage from darkness to light for the historian. Chronology suddenly becomes definite, almost precise; a huge empire springs into existence unifying the innumerable fragments of distracted India". The Maurya Empire was physically extensive and most dominant kingdom of Indian ancient history in the reign of 322 BC to 185 BC. Maurya Dynasty ruled over the state of Magadha from the capital city at Pataliputra. Chandragupta Maurya, established the Kingdom in 322 BC under the guidance of Kautilya after dethroning the Nanda Dynasty. Bindusara succeeded Chandragupta and he was succeeded by his illustrious son Asoka. The Maurya dynasty established first Empire in India stretching from Himalaya in the north to Mysore in the south and Assam in the east to Afghanistan in the west. After Asoka the empire crumbled into pieces, finally in 185 B.C Pushyamitra Sunga depose the last Maurya King Brihadratha, he himself ascended the throne and established Sunga dynasty in Magadha.

The foundation of the Mauryan Empire opens a new era in the history of India. For the first time, the political unity was achieved in India. Moreover, the history writing has also become clear from this period due to accuracy in chronology and sources. Besides plenty of indigenous and foreign literary sources, a number of epigraphical records are also available to write the history of this period. This unit at a length discuss the importance of various sources of information based on which historian reconstructed the history of Maurya dynasty.

### 3.1.2. Sources of Maurya Dynasty

Sources are very backbone of history. In other word to know history we must have some definite sources in our hand. Unfortunately, however, there was no systematic tradition of history writing in ancient India. There was no Herodotus or Thucydides who could depict a genuine picture of old India. Yet, with the passage of time the situation has changed a lot. The long untiring efforts of historians brought numerous sources to light. With the help of these sources the history of ancient India can now be fairly reconstructed. So far as the sources of Mauryan dynasty is concerned thanks to the untiring effort of historian of India that a numbers of sources of all kinds are come to the light. For the purpose of better understanding we may discuss those sources in the following few passages.

### 3.1.3. Literary Sources

Among literary sources, we see three types of literature- religious, secular and Foreign accounts.

#### 3.1.3.1. Religious Literature

Among religious literature, Buddhist sources are the most important. Various jatakas reveal a general picture of the socio-economic condition of the Buddhist period which to a large extent continued in the Mauryan period also. Certain sections of Buddhist scriptures like Dīgha Nikaya are important in determining the influence of Buddhist ideas in the then political sphere, for example the concept of chakravarti (or universal emperor) as a political idea. The Dipavamsha and the Mahāvamsha may also be regarded as source materials, since they describe at great length the part

played by Ashoka in spreading Buddhism. The Divyavadana depicts Ashoka in a legendary way. These Buddhist texts also help in tracing the origin of the Mauryas. They also give us an account of rise of Chandragupta Maurya to the throne of Magadha, the coronation and life sketch of Bindusara and Ashoka and conversion of Ashoka to Buddhism. Jaina sources like the kalpsutra, Parishistparva and Bhadrabahucharita throw light on the life and activities of Chandragupta Maurya. Various Puranas and Mudrarakshas of Vishakhadatta are important Sanskrit texts which throw light on the Mauryan historiography. List of the Mauryan kings are included in the Puranas. Puranas also help in ascertaining the origin of the Mauryas.

Traditions also throw a flood of light on the Mauryan Age. The Jains claim that Chandragupta Maurya in the later part of his career became a Jain. Ashoka, as you know, was personally a Buddhist. A work known as Jain Kalpasutra by a Jain writer Bhadrabahu of about 4th century B.C. imparts some useful information about the Mauryas. Sanskrit Buddhist texts like the Divyayadana, Lalitavistara and the Mahavastu also provide valuable information for the period. Likewise, the Jataka stories of previous births of Lord Buddha or Bodhisattvas – compiled in the second or third century B.C. also provide some useful data about the social economic and religious condition of India during this age. The Pali chronicles of Ceylon the Dipavamsa and Mahavamsa (the former being older of the two) most probably completed in the fifth century A.D. throw some light on Mauryan India.

### **3.1.3.2. Secular Literature**

Among the secular literature for the history of Mouryan History, we have texts on economy and polity and kavya literature or plays and dramas are noteworthy.

**Arthashastra of Kautilya:** The key to Chandragupta's worldly successes lay in the help and advice he received from his chief minister, Kautilya. While, after 1793, Chandragupta became a figure of importance in the pages of world history, Kautilya remained, for a further century and more, a marginal figure. In the old Vedic, Jainist and Buddhist sources, and in the later Itihasa-Purana, the genealogical records, he was known as Chanakya, the one who was the chief minister of Chandragupta. This was all that was known, and except for a very strange twist of history the memory of his name would have remained confined within those sources. One day, in 1904, an anonymous pandit, a learned man from the Tanjore district, came to the Mysore Government Oriental Library and handed over to the librarian, Dr Shamasastri, a palm-leaf manuscript of an ancient text. This text, which is now known as Kautilya-Arthashastra, was translated by the librarian in the pages of the Indian Antiquary in 1905. With the encouragement of the Maharaja of Mysore, Dr Shamasastri published the full text as Volume 37 of the Bibliotheca Sanskrita of Mysore in 1909. Thus was resurrected the fame of Chandragupta's adviser, Kautilya, and his great text, the Arthashastra.

**Date of Arthashastra:** There has been much controversy, among scholars, about the dating of the Arthashastra. Several believe that the present text is from a later period and that it may also have been written by more than one person. This is an understandable argument, because in ancient India there was quite often multiple authorship of the texts; also, the texts were refined and embellished long after the core sections had been written by the original author. This work would be undertaken with great love and respect for the memory of that original author, and could have happened in the case of the Arthashastra too. Indeed, in the very first sentence of Chapter 1 in Book I, we are told that the Arthashastra is made as a compendium of almost all the Arthashastras, 'which, in view of acquisition and maintenance of the earth, have been composed by ancient teachers'. Kautilya, therefore, modestly eschews the claim of complete originality. At the same time, every chapter and book in the text ends with the phrase 'Thus ends Chapter X from Book Y of the Arthashastra of Kautilya'. When the overall message, rather than the technical language, of the text of the Arthashastra is closely examined, it is indeed very striking that it greatly confirms the

picture of the early Mauryan world and society that is corroborated from other Indian and foreign sources. On the other hand, the name of Chandragupta Maurya is not once mentioned-which, of course, leads to an understandable uncertainty among historians as to whether the Arthashastra describes the Mauryan, the pre-Mauryan or the post-Mauryan society. The translation of the Kautalya-Arthashastra, by Dr Shamasastri, is a well-established standard work, published in Mysore.

**Historical Information from Arthashastra:** This work is one of the most important documents concerned with diplomatic skills, political economy and general secular knowledge to come out of ancient India. It is a guidebook for monarchs and a rulebook for citizens. While it is not a text of political philosophy, it deals with the issues of political craftsmanship in great detail. It is also concerned with civil and political institutions and the ways the ruler can operate them. Above all, it is a primer of secular law; after reading the precepts of the Arthashastra, no one can claim that ancient India was a lawless place. Dr Shamasastri's translation of the Sanskrit text is laid out in fifteen books, each with a number of chapters. The English text has approximately a quarter of a million words. In addition to the names of people and places, the index to the text lists 430 different items and issues, ranging over a wide spectrum of subjects and experiences in which humanity is involved. Although the entire text is concerned with material and worldly issues and contains very little on religious matters, the philosophical premise of the work is entirely Vedic in outlook. The Vedic ideas of a social hierarchy, for example, along with the dominance of the brahmins and kshatriyas, are 108. The paradox of Mauryan imperialism taken for granted. Heterodoxy is shunned, as can be evidenced in the following injunction: 'when a person entertains, in dinner dedicated to god or ancestors, Buddhists, Ajivakas, Sudras and exiled persons, a fine of 100 panas shall be imposed.'

Because of what is written in the Arthashastra we can surmise that Kautalya must have advised Chandragupta in the arts of war and peace. There is a great deal of originality in his ideas on the relationship between a monarch and his neighbouring states. For example, he tells us that there are only two forms of policy for a king to choose in his dealings with other kings: war or peace. The operation of these two policies can take six different forms: agreement with pledges is called peace; offensive operation is war; indifference is neutrality; making preparations is marching; seeking the protection of another is alliance; and making peace with one and waging war with another is termed a double policy. Kautalya deals at considerable length with the complexities and duplicities required for a king to pursue his relationships with his peers. The collecting of intelligence was particularly vital. It was the specific task of officially employed spies, informants and secret service agents, and its diligent use was of the utmost importance to the ruler. What is generally termed Machiavellian in the context of historic rivalries of dynasties and ruling elites in European history was very much grounded in Kautalya's thinking eighteen centuries before Machiavelli himself. A large part of the text is also concerned with the duties of a king. Many of the personal qualities recommended for the king would be considered admirable in any age. The king is advised to avoid betaking to others' women, appropriating others' wealth and injuring others; long sleep, fickleness, falsehood, gaudy dress, associates of low character and unrighteous actions are all condemned. This emphasis on the king's personal discipline is part of the wider rule of law that Kautalya prescribes for society in general. A quite harsh and unforgiving environment of rules and regulations is to be maintained by an extremely efficient and organised bureaucracy, whose officers wield great authority over every aspect of the lives and occupations of the people. The legal relationships between husbands and wives, debtors and creditors, employers and workers, masters and servants, traders and customers-in all these relationships a severely retributory regime is invoked as soon as one party is deemed to have broken the contract. The index to the text lists 336 different offences for which fines are to be levied. The offences and fines, in a sense, tell us about one highly placed person's criteria for a well-governed society based on Vedic codes of conduct.

***Visakadatta's Mudrarakshasa:*** The Mudrarakshasa written by Visakadatta is a drama in Sanskrit. Although written during the Gupta period, it describes how Chandragupta with the assistance of Kautilya overthrew the Nandas. It also gives a picture on the socio-economic condition under the Mauryas.

***Other Literature:*** Apart from these three important works, the Puranas and the Buddhist literature such as Jatakas provide information on the Mauryas. The Ceylonese Chronicles Dipavamsa and Mahavamsa throw light on the role Asoka in spreading Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

### **3.1.3.3. Writings of classical workers**

Besides these indigenous literary sources, the classical writings in Greek and Latin by the foreign visitors are also important literary sources. The most valuable account has been left by Megasthenes, ambassador of Seleukas to the court of Chandragupta Maurya. His original work 'Indica' is unfortunately lost. But few extracts from his work have been extensively found incorporated in the writings of many subsequent Greek and Roman writers. In addition to Megasthenes, we have an account of the voyage between the Persian Gulf and the Indus by Nearchus, one of the great naval commanders of Alexander. Then there was Deimachose who was sent by the Syrian court to Amtrachates, i.e., Bindusara. Similarly, the Egyptian courts sent an envoy named Dionyius to Pataliputra. Though somewhat later, the account left by Patrocles, one of the governors of Seleukas Nikator and Antiochus I of the region lying between the Indus and the Caspian sea, and Erastosthenes, the President of Alexandrian Library (296 to 249 B.C.) provide us with geographical and political data of considerable value.

***Megasthenes' Indica:*** Our understanding of the early Mauryan world in the reign of Chandragupta is further enhanced if we complement the Arthashastra with fragments of the contemporary account left behind by the Greek ambassador at the court. Megasthenes was a native of Ionia (modern Turkey) who represented the diplomatic interests of Seleukos Nikator. During his four years in India, from 302 BC to 298 BC, he observed and recorded the varied features of life in India; although his diary, Indica, is now lost, its contents were known to the later European classical writers such as Strabo, Arrian and Diodorus Siculus, and it is from their writings that we learn what Megasthenes had earlier described. Considerable doubt was cast on both the veracity and the credibility of Megasthenes' writing even by the ancient historians themselves, particularly Strabo. Megasthenes was certainly wrong on a number of matters. His erroneous calculations of the area of India and the length of the rivers can be excused by the fact that no one could have done better with the sort of instruments they possessed at that time. He also had a most distorted view of India's history before his time, when he wrote that 'the Indians had no cities . . . [and] they dressed in the skins of animals and ate the bark of trees'; and that it was only after 'Dionysus came and made himself master of India, he built cities and established laws for them, and he became the giver of wine, for Indians as well as the Greeks, and he taught them to sow the land, furnishing them with seed'.

Notwithstanding such errors, historians are satisfied that on at least some of the matters Megasthenes was correct in his observations. The first is his social picture of India. He observed that its people formed seven estates. At the pinnacle were the philosophers who, according to him, performed public sacrifices, learnt the ancient texts, gave blessings to kings and led a life of abstinence and frugality. Many of them went about naked. In the context of the ritual caste system of India, this class would include the brahmans and various groups of sages and mendicants belonging to both Vedic and dissident traditions. The second estate consisted of the majority of the Indian people, the cultivators. Their task was to produce food and remit one-fourth of it to the king who owned all the land. Unlike in mediaeval Europe, they did not have to fight for him, although this was not strictly true. In the third estate were the herdsmen and the hunters who had to bring in a certain proportion of their cattle into the cities as tribute, for which, in return, they received free

corn. Traders, artisans and the boatmen constituted the fourth estate. The fifth estate was that of the soldiers, who did nothing else but fight, and were always paid and maintained, thereby constituting a standing professional army. The sixth estate was made up of spies and intelligence officers, whose work is also described at length in the Arthashastra. The seventh and the smallest estate was that of those who constituted the political and imperial establishment. This sevenfold division seems to be a more elaborate classification of Indian society than the ritual hierarchy of the traditional caste system.

Another item of interest in Megasthenes' diary was his description of the Magadhan capital, Pataliputra, which he called Palimbothra. This is especially valuable, as we have relatively little evidence for what the cities and towns of India in the third and fourth centuries bc looked like. While the splendid bricks and the isolation of Mohenjo Daro and Harappa preserved the original layout of those cities for posterity, the cities of the Ganga have suffered from both poor quality materials and periods of great turbulence. That is why Megasthenes' Pataliputra is so evocative. Built at the confluence of the Ganga and the Son, the palisade defences of Pataliputra formed a great oblong, 9 miles long and 1.8 miles in width. All along the palisade were 570 towers and sixtyfour gates. Outside the palisade ran a ditch, 60 feet deep and 200 yards wide, serving as both defence and public sewer. Megasthenes describes both the hustle and bustle of the streets of the capital and the peace and beauty of the royal park, and he gives a colourful account of the royal palace, which he considered more sumptuous than those of Susa and Ecbatana in Iran. It is also in his accurate understanding of the way in which the municipality of Pataliputra was organised by Chandragupta that historians have found Megasthenes most useful. The work of six major committees is described at length. Their duties covered such varied issues as the promotion of arts and crafts in the city, the reception and care of foreigners, the registration of births and deaths, the supervision of weights and measures, the quality control over manufactures and the collection of duties over goods sold. An examination of the departmental details indicates to us not only a high level of bureaucracy but also a certain concern for the quality of life of the ordinary people. The greatest of all the Mogul emperors, Akbar, 'had nothing like it, and it may be doubted if any of the ancient Greek cities were better organised.' When the accounts of Megasthenes are corroborated with the vast number of details in Kautalya's Arthashastra, our knowledge of the world of Chandragupta Maurya becomes more complete. It was indeed a highly ordered and well-regulated world.

***Limitations of Foreign Accounts:*** It must be kept in mind that accounts of the classical writers are not uniformly reliable because even a man like Megasthenes included in his work much that was based on secondary information of which he had no personal knowledge. Nonetheless, the observations and comments of these foreigners have served us fairly reliable information and have also provided valuable corroborative evidence to indigenous sources of India. All these accounts studied with care have yielded information which has been ably utilized by many scholars and historians.

So far as literary sources are concerned, it is to be noted that whenever we are dealing with a literary source we must be careful about its authenticity. For example various religious sources like Buddhist sources are biased as they wanted to show the supremacy of Buddhism over other religions. Cross-checking of evidence from other sources like archaeological sources may be a solution to this problem.

### **3.1.5. Archaeological Sources**

Among the archaeological sources, edicts of Ashoka are most important. Besides the Imperial punched mark coins, monuments and potteries also speak us about the Mauryan history.

### 3.1.6. The Rock Edicts of King Asoka

With the rediscovery and translation of Indian literature by European scholars in the 19th century, it was not just the religion and philosophy of Buddhism that came to light, but also its many legendary histories and biographies. Amongst this class of literature, one name that came to be noticed was that of Asoka, a good king who was supposed to have ruled India in the distant past. Stories about this king, similar in outline but differing greatly in details, were found in the Divyavadana, the Asokavadana, the Mahavamsa and several other works. They told of an exceptionally cruel and ruthless prince who had many of his brothers killed in order to seize the throne, who was dramatically converted to Buddhism and who ruled wisely and justly for the rest of his life. None of these stories were taken seriously-after all many pre-modern cultures had legends about "too good to be true" kings who had ruled righteously in the past and who, people hoped, would rule again soon. Most of these legends had their origins more in popular longing to be rid of the despotic and uncaring kings than in any historical fact. And the numerous stories about Asoka were assumed to be the same.

But in 1837, James Prinsep succeeded in deciphering an ancient inscription on a large stone pillar in Delhi. Several other pillars and rocks with similar inscriptions had been known for some time and had attracted the curiosity of scholars. Prinsep's inscription proved to be a series of edicts issued by a king calling himself "Beloved-of-the-Gods, King Piyadasi." In the following decades, more and more edicts by this same king were discovered and with increasingly accurate decipherment of their language, a more complete picture of this man and his deeds began to emerge. Gradually, it dawned on scholars that the King Piyadasi of the edicts might be the King Asoka so often praised in Buddhist legends. However, it was not until 1915, when another edict actually mentioning the name Asoka was discovered, that the identification was confirmed. Having been forgotten for nearly 700 years, one of the greatest men in history became known to the world once again.

Asoka's edicts are mainly concerned with the reforms he instituted and the moral principles he recommended in his attempt to create a just and humane society. As such, they give us little information about his life, the details of which have to be culled from other sources. Although the exact dates of Asoka's life are a matter of dispute among scholars, he was born in about 304 B.C. and became the third king of the Mauryan dynasty after the death of his father, Bindusara. His given name was Asoka but he assumed the title Devanampiya Piyadasi which means "Beloved-of-the-Gods, He Who Looks On With Affection." There seems to have been a two-year war of succession during which at least one of Asoka's brothers was killed. In 262 B.C., eight years after his coronation, Asoka's armies attacked and conquered Kalinga, a country that roughly corresponds to the modern state of Orissa. The loss of life caused by battle, reprisals, deportations and the turmoil that always exists in the aftermath of war so horrified Asoka that it brought about a complete change in his personality. It seems that Asoka had been calling himself a Buddhist for at least two years prior to the Kalinga war, but his commitment to Buddhism was only lukewarm and perhaps had a political motive behind it. But after the war Asoka dedicated the rest of his life trying to apply Buddhist principles to the administration of his vast empire. He had a crucial part to play in helping Buddhism to spread both throughout India and abroad, and probably built the first major Buddhist monuments. Asoka died in 232 B.C. in the thirty-eighth year of his reign.

Asoka's edicts are to be found scattered in more than thirty places throughout India, Nepal, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Ashokan edicts are of three types-rock edicts (major rock edicts and minor rock edicts), pillar edicts and cave inscriptions. Rock edicts consist of fourteen major rock edicts located at Kalsi, Mansehra, Shahabgarhi, Girnar, Sopara, Yerragudi, Dhauri and Jaugada; and a number of minor rock edicts and inscriptions at Bairat, Rupanath, Sahasram, Brahmagiri, Gavimath, Jatinga-Rameshwar, Maski, Palkigundu, Rajula-Mandagiri, Siddapura, Yerragudi,



Gurjarra and Jhansi. Seven pillar edicts exist at Allahabad, Delhi-Topra, Delhi-Meerut, Lauriya-Araraja, Lauriya-Nandangarh, and Rampurva. Other inscriptions have been found at the Barabar Caves (three inscriptions), Rummindei, Nigali-Sagar, Allahabad, Sanchi, Sarnath, and Bairat. Recently a minor inscription in Greek and Aramaic was found at Kandahar. The language of Ashokan inscriptions is Pali and the script is Brahmi though two major rock edicts at Mansehra and Shahbajgarhi are inscribed in Kharosthi, a script derived from the Persian Aramaic. Most of them are written in Brahmi script from which all Indian scripts and many of those used in Southeast Asia later developed. The language used in the edicts found in the eastern part of the sub-continent is a type of Magadhi, probably the official language of Asoka's court. The language used in the edicts found in the western part of India is closer to Sanskrit although one bilingual edict in Afghanistan is written in Aramaic and Greek. Asoka's edicts, which comprise the earliest decipherable corpus of written documents from India, have survived throughout the centuries because they are written on rocks and stone pillars. These pillars in particular are testimony to the technological and artistic genius of ancient Indian civilization. Originally, there must have been many of them, although only ten with inscriptions still survive. Averaging between forty and fifty feet in height, and weighing up to fifty tons each, all the pillars were quarried at Chunar, just south of Varanasi and dragged, sometimes hundreds of miles, to where they were erected. Each pillar was originally capped by a capital, sometimes a roaring lion, a noble bull or a spirited horse, and the few capitals that survive are widely recognized as masterpieces of Indian art. Both the pillars and the capitals exhibit a remarkable mirror-like polish that has survived despite centuries of exposure to the elements. The location of the rock edicts is governed by the availability of suitable rocks, but the edicts on pillars are all to be found in very specific places. Some, like the Lumbini pillar, mark the Buddha's birthplace, while its inscriptions commemorate Asoka's pilgrimage to that place. Others are to be found in or near important population centers so that their edicts could be read by as many people as possible.

There is little doubt that Asoka's edicts were written in his own words rather than in the stylistic language in which royal edicts or proclamations in the ancient world were usually written in. Their distinctly personal tone gives us a unique glimpse into the personality of this complex and remarkable man. Asoka's style tends to be somewhat repetitious and plodding as if explaining something to one who has difficulty in understanding. Asoka frequently refers to the good works he has done, although not in a boastful way, but more, it seems, to convince the reader of his sincerity. In fact, an anxiousness to be thought of as a sincere person and a good administrator is present in nearly every edict. Asoka tells his subjects that he looked upon them as his children, that their welfare is his main concern; he apologizes for the Kalinga war and reassures the people beyond the borders of his empire that he has no expansionist intentions towards them. Mixed with this sincerity, there is a definite puritanical streak in Asoka's character suggested by his disapproval of festivals and of religious rituals many of which while being of little value were nonetheless harmless.

It is also very clear that Buddhism was the most influential force in Asoka's life and that he hoped his subjects likewise would adopt his religion. He went on pilgrimages to Lumbini and Bodhi Gaya, sent teaching monks to various regions in India and beyond its borders, and he was familiar enough with the sacred texts to recommend some of them to the monastic community. It is also very clear that Asoka saw the reforms he instituted as being a part of his duties as a Buddhist. But, while he was an enthusiastic Buddhist, he was not partisan towards his own religion or intolerant of other religions. He seems to have genuinely hoped to be able to encourage everyone to practice his or her own religion with the same conviction that he practiced his.

Scholars have suggested that because the edicts say nothing about the philosophical aspects of Buddhism, Asoka had a simplistic and naive understanding of the Dhamma. This view does not take into account the fact that the purpose of the edicts was not to expound the truths of Buddhism,

but to inform the people of Asoka's reforms and to encourage them to be more generous, kind and moral. This being the case, there was no reason for Asoka to discuss Buddhist philosophy. Asoka emerges from his edicts as an able administrator, an intelligent human being and as a devoted Buddhist, and we could expect him to take as keen an interest in Buddhist philosophy as he did in Buddhist practice.

The contents of Asoka's edicts make it clear that all the legends about his wise and humane rule are more than justified and qualify him to be ranked as one of the greatest rulers. In his edicts, he spoke of what might be called state morality, and private or individual morality. The first was what he based his administration upon and what he hoped would lead to a more just, more spiritually inclined society, while the second was what he recommended and encouraged individuals to practice. Both these types of morality were imbued with the Buddhist values of compassion, moderation, tolerance and respect for all life. The Asokan state gave up the predatory foreign policy that had characterized the Mauryan empire up till then and replaced it with a policy of peaceful co-existence. The judicial system was reformed in order to make it more fair, less harsh and less open to abuse, while those sentenced to death were given a stay of execution to prepare appeals and regular amnesties were given to prisoners. State resources were used for useful public works like the importation and cultivation of medical herbs, the building of rest houses, the digging of wells at regular intervals along main roads and the planting of fruit and shade trees. To ensure that these reforms and projects were carried out, Asoka made himself more accessible to his subjects by going on frequent inspection tours and he expected his district officers to follow his example. To the same end, he gave orders that important state business or petitions were never to be kept from him no matter what he was doing at the time. The state had a responsibility not just to protect and promote the welfare of its people but also its wildlife. Hunting certain species of wild animals was banned, forest and wildlife reserves were established and cruelty to domestic and wild animals was prohibited. The protection of all religions, their promotion and the fostering of harmony between them, was also seen as one of the duties of the state. It even seems that something like a Department of Religious Affairs was established with officers called Dhamma Mahamatras whose job it was to look after the affairs of various religious bodies and to encourage the practice of religion.

***Coins, Monuments and Ceramics:*** Among other archaeological sources the most important source is the coins. They consist largely of silver and copper punch-marked coins and silver bar coins. These coins have been found in large numbers and it seems that they were in circulation throughout the empire. But these coins are punch-marked which means there is absence of names and dates which makes them a less important source regarding the Mauryan history.

The archaeological phase associated with the NBP wares was the period when towns and cities emerged and during the Mauryan period there were further changes in the material life of the people. The details of NBP wares have been discussed elsewhere. The coins as a source became significant during the Mauryan period. The coins of this period not bear the names of the kings. They are called Punch-marked coins as different symbols are punched on them separately. The punch marked coins of the Mauryan period were issued probably by a central authority as it indicated by the uniformity of the symbols used.

### **3.1.7. Conclusion**

All these sources of information have certainly increased our knowledge about almost every aspect of the life of our countrymen during the Mauryan Age and also explain why, as graphically described by one scholar “the advent of the Mauryan Dynasty marks the passage from darkness to the light for the historian” as chronology comparative to the previous ages becomes more definite. The much coveted ideal of Ekkrat Sarvabhaum since the Later Vedic period was given the political reality for the first time in the history of India by the Mauryas. The authors of this political reality,

Chandragupta, his son Bindusara and his grandson Ashoka, in a real sense, for the first time brought about political and administrative unity of Indian sub-continent.

### 3.1.8. Summary

- *The foundation of the Mauryan Empire opens a new era in the history of India. For the first time, the political unity was achieved in India. Moreover, the history writing has also become clear from this period due to accuracy in chronology and sources. Besides plenty of indigenous and foreign literary sources, a number of epigraphical records are also available to write the history of this period.*
- *Arthashastra written by Kautilya, a contemporary of Chandragupta Maurya. The manuscript of Arthashastra was first discovered by R. Shama Sastri in 1904. The*
- *Arthashastra contains 15 books and 180 chapters but it can be divided into three parts: the first deals with the king and his council and the departments of government; the second with civil and criminal law; and the third with diplomacy and war. It is the most important literary source for the history of the Mauryas.*
- *The Mudrarakshasa written by Visakadatta is a drama in Sanskrit. Although written during the Gupta period, it describes how Chandragupta with the assistance of Kautilya overthrew the Nandas. It also gives a picture on the socio-economic condition under the Mauryas.*
- *Megasthenes was the Greek ambassador in the court of Chandragupta Maurya. His book Indica has survived only in fragments. Yet, his account gives details about the Mauryan administration, particularly the administration of the capital city of Pataliputra and also the military organization. His picture on contemporary social life is notable. Certain unbelievable information provided by him has to be treated with caution.*
- *Apart from these three important works, the Puranas and the Buddhist literature such as Jatakas provide information on the Mauryas. The Ceylonese Chronicles Dipavamsa and Mahavamsa throw light on the role Asoka in spreading Buddhism in Sri Lanka.*
- *The inscriptions of Asoka were first deciphered by James Prinsep in 1837. They are written in Pali language and in some places Prakrit was used. The Brahmi script was employed for writing. In the northwestern India Asokan inscriptions were found in Karoshti script.*
- *There are fourteen Major Rock Edicts. There are minor Rock Edicts and minor pillar Edicts. These Edicts of Asoka deal with Asoka's Dhamma and also instructions given to his officials. The Asokan inscriptions remain valuable sources for the study of Asoka and the Mauryan Empire.*

### 3.1.9. Exercise

- Write an essay on the Historical significance of Arthashastra of Kautilya.
- Discuss the content of Megasthenes's Indica so far as the historical facts of Maurya empire is concerned.
- How Asokan Edicts throw lights on the Historicity of Asoka Maurya? Discuss.
- Examine the Archaeological Sources for reconstruction of Mauryan history.
- Describe the importance of religious literature for the writing of Mauryan History.

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**Unit-3**  
**Chapter-II**  
**FOUNDATION AND CONSOLIDATION OF EMPIRE**  
**Chndragupta Mourya, Bindusara and Asoka; Administrative system.**

**Structure**

**3.1.0. Objectives**

**3.1.1. Introduction**

**3.1.2. Ancestry of Chandragupta Maurya**

**3.1.3. Chandragupta's Early Career**

**3.1.3.1. Overthrow of the Nandas**

**3.1.3.2. Repulse of the Greek-Seleukidan War**

**3.1.3.3. Conquest of Other Parts of India**

**3.1.3.4. The Last Days of Chandragupta**

**3.1.4. Emperor Bindusara**

**3.1.4.1. Important Military Incidents during Bindusara**

**3.1.4.2. Foreign Relations**

**3.1.4.3. Bindusara's Family and Last Days**

**3.1.5. Asoka Maurya**

**3.1.5.1. Accession to the throne**

**3.1.5.2. Early Career up to Kalinga War**

**3.1.5.3. Kalinga War and After**

**3.1.5.4. Extent of Asokan Empire**

**3.1.5.5. Asoka and South India**

**3.1.5.6. Asoka's Foreign Relation**

**3.1.5.7. Asoka's Religion**

**3.1.5.8. Asoka's Family**

**3.1.5.9. Asoka: The Greatest Monarch in Human History**

**3.1.6. The Mauryan Administration**

**3.1.6.1. Central Administration**

**3.1.6.2. Administration of Justice**

**3.1.6.3. The Army**

**3.1.6.4. Espionage**

**3.1.6.5. Provincial Administration**

**3.1.6.6. Local Administration**

**3.1.6.7. Municipal Administration**

**3.1.6.8. Revenue and Expenditure**

**3.1.7. Conclusion**

**3.1.8. Summary**

**3.1.9. Exercise**

**3.1.10. Further Readings**

### 3.1.0. Objectives

*In this lesson, students explore the history of India under the imperial Maurya. After completing this chapter, you will be able to:*

- *trace the political history of Mauryan Empire from Chandragupta to Asoka Maurya;*
- *discuss the career and achievements of Chandragupta, Bindurasa and Asoka;*
- *know the administrative system of the Maurya on the lights of Arthashastra of Chanakya;*
- *appreciate the role of three early Mauryan Emperor for the establishment of first Empire of India .*

### 3.1.1. Introduction

In B.C. 326 the flood of Macedonian invasion had overwhelmed the Indian states of the Panjab, and was threatening to burst upon the Madhyadesa. The question whether India was, or was not, to be Hellenized awaited decision. At this time rising an Indian who was made of different stuff. This was Chandragupta", the Sandrokoptos or Sandrokottos of the classical writers. The rise of Chandragupta is thus described by Justin that "India after the death of Alexander had shaken, as it were, the yoke of servitude from its neck and put his governors to death. The author of this liberation was Indians who chafed under the Macedonian yoke, and after Alexander's departure defeated his generals and "shook the yoke of servitude from the neck" of India. The verdict of the Hydaspes was thus reversed. With the rise of Chandragupta and emergence of the Mauryan Empire culminated, the growth of Magadhan Emperialism. Chandragupta Maurya, who founded the empire (c. 321 BCE), extended control as far northwest as Afghanistan and Baluchistan, and his son Bindusra annexed the Deccan finally, Asoka, arguably the most famous ruler of early India, conquered Kalinga. The foundation of the Mauryan Empire opens a new era in the history of India. For the first time, the political unity was achieved in India. Moreover, the history writing has also become clear from this period due to accuracy in chronology and sources. This chapter throw lights on the political aspects of Maouryan Empire in brief.

### 3.1.2. Ancestry of Chandragupta Maurya

The ancestry of Chandragupta is not known definitely. Some Hindu literary evidences relate him with the Nandas of Magadh. A Chandragupta Katha has come into existence by piling story after story round the hallowed name of Chandragupta. The fragments of the Katha and the different versions of it are preserved in lands, talks, prayer and even in the philosophical dissertations in Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit and Tamil. Outside India, they are preserved not only in the writings of the Greek and Latin writers but are also in Burmese legends and Ceylonese chronicles. The historical authenticity is lent to this Katha by inscriptional evidence and writings of Greek and Latin historians and Indian and Ceylonese scholars.

The ancestry of Chandragupta Maurya, as stated above, is controversial and is subject to widely divergent views ranging from base origin to high Kshatriya lineage. The Puranas which are our earliest available Brahmanical sources are more concerned with the origin of Nandas than with that of Chandragupta. They simply mention that the irreligious Nanda were uprooted by the Brahmin Kautilya who appointed Chandragupta as sovereign of the realm. The formal appointment (Rajyabhisheka) of Chandragupta by Kautilya, an uncompromising champion of Dharma, indicates that Chandragupta was a Kshatriya eligible for kingship. Nowhere in the Puranas there is any mention of Mura, the supposed mother or grandmother of Chandragupta: nowhere in these works is attributed to Chandragupta a Sudra or base origin: nor do they link him with the preceding Nanda Dynasty.

It was Sridharswamy, the commentator, of Vishnu Purana who for the first time, mooted the theory about the base origin of Chandragupta by way of explaining his title Maurya. He sought to derive this appellation from Mura, one of the wives of a Nanda king and made her the mother of Chandragupta. But the commentator is guilty both of bad grammar and fictitious history. The

derivative from Mura is Maurya and not Maurya and again the commentator makes Chandragupta the scion of Nandas. However, he does not fasten the blame of the base-origin to the name of Mura. He describes her as the lawfully wedded wife of the Nanda king, thereby implying that Chandragupta was of Sudra origin as the Nandas themselves belonged to that caste.

The Mudrarakshasa calls him not only Maurya putra but also Handanvaya, Kshemendra and Somadeva refer to him as Purvanandasuta, son of the genuine Nanda, as opposed to Yoga Nanda. The Commentator on the Vishnu Purana says that Chandragupta was the son of Nanda by a wife named Mura. Hence he and his descendents were called Mauryas. Dhudiraja, the commentator on the Mudrarakshasa informs us on the other hand, that Chandragupta was the eldest son of Maurya, who was the son of the Nanda king, Sarvarthasiddhi by Mura, daughter of Vrishala (Sudra).

The Buddhist tradition, however, gives us an altogether different story. The Divyavadan refers to Bindusara, the son of Chandragupta, as an anointed Kshatriya, thereby alluding to a Kshatriya origin of Chandragupta. The Mahavamsa, a Ceylonese chronicle, makes Chandragupta a scion of the Kshatriya clan named Moriyas (after peacock or Mora) of Pippalivana lying somewhere between Rummidei in the Tarai and Kasia in the Gorakhpur district of eastern Uttar Pradesh of today. The existence of this clan can be traced back to the time of the Buddha and is mentioned in the Mahaparinibbansutta, one of the most authentic and ancient canonical texts of the Buddhists. According to this text, the Moriyas sent a messenger to the Mallas, claiming portion of the relics of the Buddhas, by saying: “The Blessed one belonged to the Kshatriya caste and we too are of the Kshatriya caste.”

The Jain tradition supports the Buddhists in indicating a connection between peacocks and the family name of Chandragupta. Whereas according to the former, Chandragupta was the son of a daughter of a village headman of peacock-tamers (mayura poshaka), according to the latter, he was the son of the Moriya clan. It appears that Jain writers were not aware of the origin of Chandragupta’s family and have given only an etomological meaning of the Pali word ‘Moriya’.

According to Buddhist source, there is a supposed connection between the Maurya expression Morya and Mora or Mayura (peacock). Aelian informs us that these peacocks were kept in the park of the Mayura Palace at Patliputra. Sir John Marshall points out that figures of peacocks were employed to decorate some of the projecting ends of the gateway at Sanchi. Faucher does not regard these birds as a sort of eating vadge for the dynasty of the Mauryas. He prefers to imagine in them possible allusion to the Mora Jataka.

Justin, the Latin classical writer, knew Chandragupta as a ‘novus homo’, a man “Born in humble life”. This does not necessarily meant that he was a man of low caste but merely a commoner with no pretension to the throne yet aspiring for royalty. According to a Greek biographer and moral philosopher Plutarch it was Chandragupta who was seeking to make capital out of the base origin of his rival instead of himself suffering from the same disability.

Taking into consideration all the available evidences we may summarise that Chandragupta, the founder of the Maurya Dynasty, belonged to the Kshatriya, clan named Moriya, originally ruling over Pippalivana. The fortunes of the family declined after the death of Chandragupta’s father who was the chief of the clan, and died in a border clash. It was left to Chandragupta to redeem the prestige of his family.

### **3.1.3. Chandragupta’s Early Career**

It is not known when Chandragupta was born. He was a mere stripling according to Plutarch, when he met Alexander 329-25 B.C. in the Punjab. His birth could not have taken place before the middle of the fourth century B.C.

According to Mahavamsa the mother of Chandragupta after the death of her husband sought shelter in Pushpapura (Kusumpura-Pataliputra) where she gave birth to Chandragupta. He was brought up first by a cowherd and then by a hunter in a village. The child showed promise right

from his childhood. He towered over his friends when he played the role of the king with them. This attracted the notice of Chanakya, i.e., Kautilya, who happened to pass through that village. The latter took him away to his native city of Taxila. The new mentor gave him a thorough grounding in certain aims and objectives and, inter alia the most important was that he must rid the country of the hated rule and tyranny of the Nanda king, who had insulted Chanakya.

### **3.1.3.1. Overthrow of the Nandas**

The Nanda ascendancy was not only regarded as “unlawful” and “irreligious” because of their origin, but it was equally despised for the wickedness of the disposition of its rulers and the forcible exactions levied by them on their subjects. The “unlawfully” amassed wealth of the Nandas had become almost proverbial. Its notoriety had reached as far South as the Tamil Country. The Punjab and the North-Western India lay prostrate to Alexander’s invasion. These areas were being constantly squeezed and hurried by his prefects. Chandragupta had thus a double fold task to accomplish. He must rid the country of foreign domination and liquidate the oppressive rule of the Nandas. These tasks with which Chanakya had entrusted Chandragupta were indeed very difficult yet the latter achieved both these aims with resounding success. He soon successfully mobilized the military resources of the country, rehabilitated its moral, awakened its spirit of resistance, and brought about a unique national rejuvenation.’ Thus well equipped, he began war of national emancipation which proved eminently successful and resulted in bringing about a national unity in the country which was envied by many successive rulers of India and which India had never witnessed before. He sought to accomplish a part of his mission by including Alexander, when he was in Punjab in 326 B.C. to attack the Nandas. But Alexander was greatly offended by the tone and boldness of Chandragupta and gave order to kill him. According to another account, he was caught spying in Alexander’s camps where he had gone to study the Greek military strategy. He, however, escaped. Encouraged by various visions, he was determined to claim the sovereignty of India. He knew it full well that he had to depend upon himself for realizing this destiny of his.

Chandragupta and Chanakya both set out according to the Pali work Mahavamsatika, to collect a huge army from different sources. Justin describes these soldiers as mercenaries, hunters as well as robbers. According to Arthasastra, a treatise on policy whose authorship is attributed to Kautilya, the army is to be recruited from the Choras, i.e., thieves, Mlechchhas, choraganas (organised gangs of robbers), Atavikas or foresters, and Sasiro-pajivi...Srenis or warrior clans. Such elements were found in great abundance in the Punjab after the defeat and disintegration of the large number of republican people like the Mailoi, Oxydrakai Astakenoi, etc. who as you have been told before, had fought Alexander heroically but had failed for want of cohesion and leadership. Chandragupta obviously weaved together these loose elements into a huge and formidable army. His personal heroism and magnetic personality provided the required leadership. He also made an alliance with the Himalayan King Parvataka (of doubtful identity according to Mudrarakshasa, a work of the sixth century written by Vishakhadatta, and Jain work Parisistaparvan). This alliance with the Himalayan king gave to Chandragupta as stated in the Mudrarakshasa a composite army formed with the Sakas, Yavanas, Kirathas, Kambojas, Oarsikas and Bahilikas. Shorn of dramatic allegory, it means that Chandragupta tapped all the available sources and armed with a huge composite army attempted to overthrow the existing Nanda Empire.

The details of the conquest of Magadha by Chandragupta are not preserved. But the related episodes can be gleaned from the different traditions. The Mahavamsatika tells us about the initial mistakes of his campaign in attacking on the centre without conquering the frontier regions. The Jain tradition similarly compares the advance of Chandragupta to a child who puts his thumb into the middle of a hot pie instead of starting from the edge which was cool. But the Buddhist traditions mention his preliminary failure to consolidate the frontier rashtras and janapadas en route to Patliputra.



The different stories point to the fact that Chandragupta had to make repeated attempts on Patliputra before he could wrest it from the Nandas. The Milindapanho gives an exaggerated account of the slaughter from the destruction of the Nanda army led by Bhaddasala (Bhadrasala).

The Brahmanical tradition, however, gives credit for the overthrow of the Nandas to Kautilya. The Puranas, Arthashastra and the Mudrarakshasa all of them cast the figure of Chandragupta into shade in this heroic fight and give full credit to Chanakya (alias Kautilya) for bringing about the dynastic revolution in Magadha by his diplomacy and appointing Chandragupta as king.

The different versions of this story seem to have preserved only a part of the truth and not the entire truth. The seemingly conflicting views can be easily reconciled by stating that the military skill and bravery of Chandragupta in the battlefield was ably seconded by the astute diplomacy of Chanakya. This witty Brahman who is variously known as Kautilya and Vishnugupta is supposed to be the author of the Arthashastra (Treatise on Polity). It has also been argued that Kautilya is not the writer of the Arthashastra. He had a serious grouse against the Nandas. Chandragupta and Chanakya made a common cause. The two together brought about the downfall of the Nandas. The extensive Nanda empire comprising the entire Gangetic Valley and Eastern India along with the considerable portion of the Deccan, passed into the hands of Chandragupta who thus, heralded the foundation of the Mauryan Empire.

According to Plutarch, this event took place 'not long after' Chandragupta's meeting with Alexander in the Punjab in 326-25 B.C. The Buddhist tradition dates the accession of Chandragupta one hundred and sixty two years after the Mahaparinirvana of the Buddha which according to the Cantonese tradition took place in 486 B.C. thus assigning Chandragupta a period of twenty-four years rule i.e., from 324 B.C. to 300 B.C. as the first Mauryan empire.

### **3.1.3.2.Repulse of the Greek-Seleukidan War**

After accomplishing his first task, he turned his attention towards the second, viz, freeing his country from foreign domination. This became easier owing to the growing difficulty of the Greek position in the Punjab, by many uprisings of the Indians, against the Greek Satraps and the outbreak of jealousy between the Greek and Macedonian elements of the occupying forces. Above all, there came the death of Alexander himself in 323 B.C. This led to the disruption of his empire and letting loose of the centrifugal tendencies. At the first partition of Alexander's empire at Babylon in 323 B.C., no change was affected in the term of Indian position. Both Porus and Ambhi were left free in their respective domains which were greatly increased. Greek authority was limited. Eudomus, in charge of the Greek garrisons in India and Pithon, son of Agenor, as the Greek Satrap of Sind were the two important officials left in India. But during the second partition of Alexander's empire that took place at Triparadisus in 321 B.C., Pithon, was transferred to the North West without appointing any substitute. The quiet withdrawal of the Greeks from India in 321 B.C. was most probably due to the fact that Chandragupta had already started war of the liberation in Sind by then. He carried further north where Eudemus after testing the blood of Chandragupta's sword discreetly retired from India in 317 B.C. Pithon who was in the north was also left in 316 B.C. to participate in the Greek war of succession. The achievements of Chandragupta are thus summed up by Justin: "India after the death of Alexander had shaken off the yoke of servitude and put his governors to death. The author of this liberation was Sandrocottus." This Sandrocottus was obviously Chandragupta. The task of liberating the Punjab and Sind was not an easy one. It invited hard fighting which lasted for almost a decade from about 323 B.C. to 316 B.C.

While Chandragupta was engaged in emancipating his country and consolidating his conquest, the Greek King, Seleucus of Syria, who had succeeded Alexander in the eastern part of his empire was moving towards India to recover the lost provinces. The river Indus formed the boundary between his dominion and that of Chandragupta, before the two kings came to wage

conflict. The former, according to another classical writer, is said to have “crossed the Indus and war with Sandrocottus, king of the Indians who dwelt on the banks of the streams”. Neither the date of the war, nor its duration is known for certain reasons. Justin however, dates Seleucus’s treaty or understanding with Chandragupta and settlement of affairs in the East prior to the former’s return home to prosecute the war with Antigonos who died in 301 B.C. The conflict between the two is generally assumed to have taken place in 305 B.C. The Greek writers who were painstakingly meticulous about Alexander’s campaigns were abnormally reticent about the details of Seleucus’s invasion of India. Reasons are quite obvious. This was indeed a very humiliating treaty for the Westerners. According to another classical writer, Strabo, Seleucus ceded to Chandragupta territories then known as Aria (i.e. Herat), Arachosia (i.e. Kandhar), Propanisade (i.e., Kabul) and part of Gendrosia (i.e. Baluchistan) in return for 500 elephants, and a matrimonial alliance, the exact nature of which is not clear. The diplomatic relations were also established between the two as Strabo refers to the sending of Megasthenes-Seleucus’s ambassador to the court of Chandragupta in Patliputra where he wrote his famous book called “Indica”. These terms of the treaty leave no doubt that Seleucus fared badly at the hands of Chandragupta who thereby secured a scientific frontier by acquiring Afghanistan and Baluchistan for his newly founded empire.

### **3.1.3.3. Conquest of Other Parts of India**

About the subsequent career of Chandragupta, we have to rely on the stray inscriptional and written notices. In a vague statement, Plutarch asserts that “with an army of 6,00,000 men Chandragupta overran and subdued all India”. Justin also refers to mastery over the entire country. The conquest and inclusion of one important province that is of Saurashtra in the empire of Chandragupta is clearly attested to by the testimony of Junagadha inscriptions of Rudradaman of 150 A.D. (72 Saka Era) where it is mentioned that Saurashtra-Kathiawar was governed by Chandragupta’s Rashtria, Vaishya Pushyagupta, who constructed the famous Sudarshan Lake there.

### **3.1.3.4. The Last Days of Chandragupta**

Jaina tradition recorded in the *Iljavallkathe* avers that Chandragupta was a Jaina and that, when a great famine occurred, he abdicated in favour of his son Simhasena and repaired to Mysore where he died. Two inscriptions on the north bank of the Kaveri near Seringapatam of about 900 A.D. , describe the summit of the Kalbappu Hill, i.e., Ohandragiri, as marked by the footprints of Bhadravahu and Chandragupta Munipati. Dr. Smith observes "The Jain tradition holds the field, and no alternative account exists." Chandragupta died about 300 B.C., after a reign of 24 years. If the Parisuhtaparvan<sup>4</sup> of Hemachandra is to be believed Chandragupta had a queen named Durdhara who became the mother of Bindusara, the son who succeeded him on the throne. In the absence of corroborative evidence, however, the name of the queen cannot be accepted as genuine.

### **3.1.4. Emperor Bindusara**

Chandragupta Maurya was succeeded in or about the year 300 B.C. by his son Bindusara Amitraghata. The name or title Amitraghata (slayer of foes) is a restoration in Sanskrit of the Amitrachates of Athenaios, and Amitrochades of Strabo, who is stated to have been the son of Sandrocottus. Fleet prefers the rendering Amitrakhada or devourer of enemies, which is said to occur as an epithet of Indra. In the *Rajavallkathe* the name of Chandragupta's son and successor is given as Simhasena. From Asoka's Rock Edict VIII (e.g. the Kalsi Text) it appears probable that Bindusara, as well as other predecessors of Asoka, used the style Devanampiya.

#### **3.1.4.1. Important Military Incidents during Bindusara**

If the author of the *Arya-Manjusri Mula Kalpa*, Hemachandra and Taranatha are to be believed, Kautilya or Chanakya continued to serve as minister for some time after the accession of Bindusara. "Chanakya" says Taranatha, "one of his (Bindusara's) great lords, procured the destruction of the nobles and kings of sixteen towns, and made the king master of all the territory between the eastern and western seas." The conquest of the territory between the eastern and

western seas has been taken by some scholars to refer to the annexation of the Deccan. But we should not forget that already in the time of Chandragupta, the Maurya Empire extended from Surashtra to Bengal (Gangaridae), i.e., from the western to the eastern sea. Taranatha's statement need mean nothing more than the suppression of a general revolt. No early tradition expressly connects the name of Bindusara with the conquest of the Deccan. The story of the subjugation of sixteen towns may or may not be true, but we are told in the Divyavadana that at least one town of note, viz., Taxila, revolted during the reign of Bindusara. The king is said to have dispatched Asoka there. While the prince was nearing Taxila with his troops, the people came out to meet him, and said, "We are not opposed to the prince nor even to king Bindusara, but the wicked ministers (Dushtamatyah) insult us", The high-handedness of the Maurya officials in the outlying provinces is alluded to by Asoka himself in his Kalinga Edict. Taxila made its submission to Asoka. The Maurya prince is further represented as entering the "Svasa rajya".

#### **3.1.4.2.Foreign Relations**

In his relations with the Hellenistic powers Bindusara pursued a pacific policy. We learn from the classical writers that the king of Syria dispatched to his court an ambassador named Deimaehos. Pliny tells us that (Ptolemy II ) Philadelphos, King of Egypt (B. C. 285-247), sent an envoy named Dionysios. Dr. Smith points out that it is uncertain whether Dionysios presented his credentials to Bindusara or to his son and successor, Asoka. It is, however, significant that while Greek and Latin writers refer to Chandragupta and Amitraghata they do not mention Asoka. This is rather inexplicable if an envoy whose writings were utilized by later authors, really visited the third of the great Mauryas. Patrokles, an officer who served under both Seleukos and his son, sailed in the Indian seas and collected much geographical information which Strabo and Pliny were glad to utilize. Athenaios tells an anecdote of private friendly correspondence between Antiochos ( I , Soter), king of Syria, and Bindusara which indicates that the Indian monarch communicated with his Hellenistic contemporaries on terms of equality and friendliness.

We are told on the authority of Hegesander that Amitrochates (Bindusara), the king of the Indians, wrote to Antiochos asking that king to buy and send him sweet wine, dried figs, and a sophist, and Antiochos replied : We shall send you the figs and the wine, but in Greece the laws forbid a sophist to be sold. In connection with the demand for a Greek sophist it is interesting to recall the statement of Diodoros that one Iamboulos was carried to the king of Palibothra (Pataliputra) who had a great love for the Oraecians. , Dion Chrysostom asserts that the poetry of Homer is sung by the Indians who had translated it into their own language and modes of expression. Garga and Varahamihira in a later age testify to the honour that was paid to Greeks for their knowledge of astronomy.

#### **3.1.4.3.Bindusara's Family and Last Days**

Bindusara had many children besides Asoka, the son who succeeded him on the throne. We learn from a passage of the Fifth Rock Edict in which the duties of the Dharma-mahamatras are described, that Asoka had many brothers and sisters. The Divyavadana mentions two of these brothers, namely, Susima and Vigatasoka. The Ceylonese Chronicles seem also to refer to these two princes though under different names, calling the former Sumana and the latter Tishya. Susima-Sumana is said to have been the eldest son of Bindusara and a stepbrother of Asoka, while Vigatasoka-Tishya is reputed to have been the youngest son of Bindusara and a co-uterine brother of Asoka, born of a Brahmana girl from Champa. Hiuen Tsang mentions a brother of Asoka named Mahendra. Ceylonese tradition, however, represents the latter as a son of Asoka. It is possible that the Chinese pilgrim has confounded the story of Vigatasoka with that of Mahendra.

Bindusara died after a reign of 25 years according to the Puranas, and 27 or 28 years according to Buddhist tradition. According to the chronology adopted in these pages his reign terminated about 273 B.C.

### **3.1.5. Asoka Maurya**

Asoka was the third and greatest Emperor of the Maurya dynasty. He ruled almost all of the Indian Subcontinent for a long period. His realm stretch over Hindu Kush mountain in the West to Bengal in the East and covered the entire Indian subcontinent except parts of extreme south. Emperor Asoka like other famous ruler of the world not famous for war and conquest but he is renowned for his humanistic activities.

#### **3.1.5.1. Accession to the throne**

Both the Divyadana and the Ceylonese Chronicles agree that there was a fratricidal struggle after the death of Bindusara. Asoka is said to have overthrown his eldest step-brother with the help of Radhagupta whom he made his Agramatya (Chief Minister). The fact that his formal consecration or coronation (abhisheha) was delayed for some four years until 269 B.C., confirms the tradition that his succession was contested, and it may be true that his rival was an elder brother named Susima. It is possible that the long delay may have been due to a disputed succession involving much bloodshed, but there is no independent evidence of such a struggle. Dr. Jayaswal gave the following explanation for the delay in Asoka's coronation: " it seems that in those days for obtaining royal abhisheha the age of 25 was a condition precedent. This seems to explain why Asoka was not crowned for three or four years after accession." The contention can hardly be accepted.

The information found in the Ceylonese tales which relate that Asoka slew many of his brothers as silly because Asoka certainly had brothers and sisters alive in the seventeenth and eighteenth years of his reign, whose households were objects of his anxious care. But we should remember that the Fifth Rock Edict refers only to the family establishments of his brothers as existing. This does not necessarily imply that the brothers themselves were alive. One should, however, admit that there is nothing to show, on the contrary, that the brothers were dead. The Fifth Rock Edict, proves nothing regarding the authenticity or untrustworthiness of the Ceylonese tradition. In the Fourth Rock Edict Asoka himself testifies to the growth of unseemly behaviour to kinsfolk and slaughter of living creatures.

Like his predecessors Asoka assumed the title of Devanampiya. He generally described himself as Devanampiya Piyadasi. The name Asoka is found only in literature, and in two ancient inscriptions, viz., the Maski Edict of Asoka himself, and the Junagadh inscription of the Mahakshatrapa Rudradaman I The name Dharmasoka is found in one Mediaeval epigraph, viz., the Sarnath inscription of Kumaradevi.

#### **3.1.5.2. Early Career up to Kalinga War**

During the first thirteen years of his reign Asoka seems to have carried on the traditional Maurya policy of expansion within India, and of friendly co-operation with the foreign powers, which was in vogue after the Seleukidan war. Like Chandragupta and Bindusara he was aggressive at home but pacific abroad. The friendly attitude towards non-Indian powers is proved by the exchange of embassies and the employment of Yavana officials like Tushaspha. In India, however, he played the part of a conqueror. The Divyavadana credits him, while yet a prince with the suppression of a revolt in Taxila and the conquest of the Svasa country.

#### **3.1.5.3. Kalinga War and After**

In the thirteenth year of his reign (eight years after consecration), he effected the conquest of Kalinga. We do not know the exact limits of this kingdom in the days of Asoka. But if the Sanskrit epics and Puranas are to be believed, it extended to the river Vaitarani in the north, the Amarakantaka Hills in the west and Mahendragiri in the south. An account of the Kalinga war and its effects is given in Rock Edict XIII.

**Causes of Kalinga War:** We have already seen that certain places in Kalinga formed parts of the Magadhan dominions in the time of the Nandas. Why was it necessary for Asoka to

reconquer the country? The question admits of only one answer, viz., that it severed its connection with Magadha after the fall of the Nandas. If the story of a general revolt in the time of Bindusara be correct then it is not unlikely that Kalinga, like Taxila, threw off the allegiance of Magadha during the reign of that monarch. It appears, however, from Pliny, who probably based his account on the Indika of Megasthenes, that Kalinga was already an independent kingdom in the time of Chandragupta located strategically in between the uttrapatha and dakshinapatha on the eastern sea coast thus enjoying prosperity through internal and maritime trade. In that case there can be no question of a revolt in the time of Bindusara. Pliny says, "the tribes called Calingae are nearest the sea...the royal city of the Calingae is called Parthalis. Over their king 60,000 foot soldiers, 1,000 horsemen, 700 elephants keep watch and ward in 'precinct of war.' "

The Kalinga kings probably increased their army considerably during the period which elapsed from the time of Megasthenes to that of Asoka, because during the war with Asoka the casualties exceeded 250,000. It is, however, possible that the huge total included not only combatants but also non-combatants. The existence of a powerful kingdom so near their borders, with a big army 'in precinct of war,' could not be a matter of indifference to the kings of Magadha, Magadha learnt to her cost what a powerful Kalinga meant, in the time of Kharavela.

**Consequences of the War:** The Thirteenth Rock Edict inform us that Asoka made war on the Kalinga country and annexed it to his empire. "One hundred and fifty thousand persons were carried away captive, one hundred thousand were slain, and many times that number died." Violence, slaughter, and separation from their beloved ones befell not only to combatants, but also to the Brahmauas, ascetics, and householders.

The conquered territory was constituted a viceroyalty under a prince of the royal family stationed at Tosali, apparently situated in the Khurda district. The Emperor issued two special edicts prescribing the principles on which both the settled inhabitants and the border tribes should be treated. These two edicts are preserved at two sites, now called Dhauli and Jaugada. They are addressed to the Mahamatras or High Officers at Tosali and Samapa.<sup>4</sup> In these documents the Emperor makes the famous declaration "all men are my children," and charges his officers to see that justice is done to the people.

The conquest of Kalinga was a great landmark in the history of Magadha, and of India. It marks the close of that career of conquest and aggrandisement which was ushered in by Bimbisara's annexation of Anga. It opens a new era—an era of peace, of social progress, of religious propaganda and at the same time of political stagnation and, perhaps, of military inefficiency during which the martial spirit of imperial Magadha was dying out for want of exercise. The era of military conquest or Digvijaya was over, the era of spiritual conquest or Dhamma-vijaya was about to begin. We should pause here to give an account of the extent of Asoka's dominions and the manner in which they were administered before the Emperor embarked on a new policy.

#### **3.1.5.4. Extent of Asokan Empire**

Asoka mentions Magadha, Pataliputra, Khalatikapavata (Barabar Hills), Kosambi, Lummini-gama, Kalinga (including Tosali, Samapa and Khepimgalapavata or the Jaugada Rock), Atavi (the forest tract of Mid-India perhaps identical with Alavi of the Buddhist texts), Suvarnagiri, Isila, Ujjayini and Takshasila expressly as being among those places which were under his rule.

Beyond Takshasila the empire stretched as far as the confines of the realm of "Amtyako Yonaraja," usually identified with Antiochos II Theos of Syria (261-246 B. C.), and included the wide territory round Shahbazgarhi and Mansahra inhabited by the Yonas, Kambojas and the Gandharas. The exact situation of this Yona territory has not yet been determined. The Mahavamsa evidently refers to it and its chief city Alasanda which Cunningham and Geiger identify with the town of Alexandria (Begram, west of Kapisa) founded by the Macedonian conqueror near Kabul. Kamboja, as we have already seen, corresponds to Rajapura or Rajaur near Punch in Kasmira and

some neighbouring tracts including Kafiristan. The tribal territory of the Gandharas at this time probably lay to the west of the Indus, and did not apparently include Takshasila which was ruled by a princely Viceroy, and was the capital of the province of Uttarapatha. The capital of Trans-Indian Gandhara was Pushkaravati, identified by Coomaraswamy with the site known as Mir Ziyarat or Bala Hisar at the junction of the Swat and Kabul rivers.

The inclusion of Kasmira within Asoka's empire is proved by the testimony of Hiuen Tsang's Records and Kalhana's Rajatarahgint: Kalhana says : "The faithful Asoka, reigned over the earth. This king who had freed himself from sins and had embraced the doctrine of the Jina covered Sushkhetra and Vitastatra with numerous Stupas. At the town of Vitastatra there stood within the precincts of the Dharmarayya Vihara a Ghaitya built by him, the height of which could not be reached by the eye. That illustrious king built the town of orinagari. This sinless prince after removing the old stuccoed enclosure of the shrine of Vijayesvara built in its stead a new one of stone. He...erected within the enclosure of Vijayem, and near it, two temples which were called Aiokesvcvra." The description of Asoka as a follower of the Jiwa, i.e., Buddha, and the builder of numerous stupas leaves no room for doubt that the great Maurya monarch is meant. We are' told by Kalhana himself that he is indebted for much of the above account to an earlier chronicler named Ohhavillakara.

The inscriptions near Kalsi and those on the Rummindei and the Nigali Sagar pillars prove the inclusion of the Dehra-Dun District and the Tarai within the limits of Asoka's Empire, while the monuments at Lalitapatan and Rampurwa attest his possession of the valley of Nepal and the district of Champaran. Further evidence of the inclusion of the Himalayan region within Asoka's empire is possibly furnished by Rock Edict XIII which refers to the Nabhapamtis of Nabhaka, probably identical with Na-pei-kea of Fa Hien, the birthplace of Krakuchchanda Buddha, about 10 miles south or southwest of Kapilavastu. According to Blihlér, Rock Edict XIII also mentions two vassal tribes Visa (Besatae of the Periplus) and Vajri (Vrijikas). More recent writers do not accept Buhler's reading and substitute (Raja) Visayamhi, 'in the (king's) territory,' in its place. There is, thus no indubitable reference either to the Vrijikas or the 'Besatae' in the inscriptions of Asoka.

We learn from the classical writers that the country of the Gangaridae, i.e., Bengal, formed a part of the dominions of the king of the Prasii, i.e., Magadha, as early as the time of Agrammes, i.e., the last Nanda king. A passage of Pliny clearly suggests that the "Palibothri," i.e., the rulers of Pataliputra, dominated the whole tract along the Ganges. That the Magadhan kings retained their hold on Bengal as late as the time of Asoka is proved by the testimony of the Divyavadana and of Hiuen Tsang who saw Stupas of that monarch near Tamralipti and Karnasuvarna (in West Bengal), in Samatata (East Bengal) as well as in Pundravardhana (North Bengal). Kamarupa (Assam) seems to have lain outside the empire. The Chinese pilgrim saw no monument of Asoka in that country.

### **3.1.5.5.Asoka and South India**

We have seen that in the south the Maurya power at one time, had probably penetrated as far as the Podiyil Hill in the Tinnevely district. In the time of Asoka the Maurya frontier had receded probably to the Pennar river near Nellore as the Tamil Kingdoms are referred to as "Prachamta" or border states and are clearly distinguished from the imperial dominions (Vijita or Rajavisliaya), which stretched only as far south as the Chitaldrug District of Mysore. The major part of the Deccan was ruled by the vice-regal princes of Suvanajagiri and Tosali, the Mahamatras of Isila and Samapa and the officers in charge of the Atavi or Forest Country. But in the belt of land on either side of the Nerbudda, the Godavari and the upper Mahanadi there were, in all probability, certain areas that were technically outside the limits of the empire proper. Asoka evidently draws a distinction between the forests and the inhabiting tribes which are in the dominions (vijita) and peoples on the border (anta avijita) for whose benefit some of the special edicts were issued. Certain vassal tribes are specifically mentioned, e.g., the Andhras, Palidas, Bhojas and Kathikas (Rashtrikas). They

enjoyed a status midway between the Provincials proper and the unsubdued borderers. The word *Petenika* or *Pitinika* mentioned in Rock Edicts V and XIII should not, according to Dr. D. R. Bhandarkar and some other writers, be read as a separate name but as an adjective qualifying *Rishtika* (Edict V) and *Bhoja* (Edict XIII). Certain passages in the *Anguttara Nikaya* mention the term *Pettanika* in the sense of one who enjoys property given by his father. The view that *Pitinika* is merely an adjective of *Rathika* (*Ristika*) or *Bhoja* is not, however, accepted by Dr. Barua who remarks that " it is clear from the Pali passage, as well as from Buddhaghosha's explanations, that *Batthika* and *Pettanika* were two different designations."

The *Andhras* are, as we have already seen, mentioned in a passage of the *Aitareya Brahmana*. The *Bhojas* are also mentioned in that work as rulers of the south. Pliny, quoting probably from *Megasthenes*, says that the *Andarae* (*Andhras*) possessed numerous villages, thirty towns defended by walls and towers, and supplied their king with an army of 100,000 infantry, 2,000 cavalry and 1,000 elephants. The earliest *Andhra* capital (*Andhapura*) was situated on the *Telavaha* river which, according to Dr. D. R. Bhandarkar, is either the modern *Tel* or *Telingiri*, both flowing near the confines of the *Madras Presidency* and the *Central Provinces*. But the identification is by no means certain. The *Palidas* were identified by *Bulhler* with the *Pulindas* who are invariably associated with the *Nerbudda* (*Reva*) and the *Vindhyan* region. Their capital *Pulinda-nagara* lay not far from *Bhilsa* and may have been identical with *Rupnath*, the find-spot of one recension of *Minor Rock Edict I*. The association with the *Andhras* in *Asokan* inscriptions suggests that in the *Maurya* period they may have been in the *Deccan*. But the matter must be regarded as not definitely settled. It is interesting to note in this connection that a river *Parada* (identified with the *Paradi* or *Par rivet* in the *Surat District*) is mentioned in a *Nasik* inscription.

The *Bhojas* and the *Rathikas* (*Ristikas*) were evidently the ancestors of the *Mahabhojas* and the *Maharajhis* of the *Satavahana* period. The *Bhojas* apparently dwelt in *Berar*, and the *Rathikas* or *Ristikas* possibly in *Maharashtra* or certain adjoining tracts. The former were, in later ages, connected by matrimonial alliances with chieftains of the *Kanarese* country. In the west *Asoka's* Empire extended to the *Arabian Sea* and embraced all the *Aparantas* including no doubt the vassal state (or confederation of states) of *Surashtra* the affairs of which were looked after by the *Yavana-rajā Tushaspha* with *Giri-nagara* (*Girnar*) as his capital. Dr. *Smith* says that the form of the name shows that the *Yavana-rajā* must have been a *Persian*. But according to this interpretation the *Yavana Dhammadeva*, the *Saka Ushavadata* (*Risahabha-datta*), the *Parthian Suvisakha* and the *Kushan Vasudeva* must have been all native *Hindus* of *India*. If *Greeks* and other foreigners adopted *Hindu* names there is no wonder that some of them assumed *Iranic* appellations. There is, then, no good ground for assuming that *Tushaspha* was not a *Greek*, but a *Persian*.

### **3.1.5.6. Asoka's Foreign Relation**

Like his father, *Asoka* also maintained a good foreign relation. He sent ambassadors (*duta*) to the distant countries of the *West*. As a unique event in *Indian* history the kings of these distant countries are mentioned by name in the thirteenth rock edict: the king of the *Greeks* (*Yona*), *Antiyoka* (as mentioned above), *Tulamaya* (*Ptolomaios II*, *Philadelphos*, 285-247 BC), *Antekina* (*Antigonos Gonatas* of *Macedonia*, 276-239 BC), *Maka* (*Magas* of *Cyrene*, c. 300-250 BC), *Alikasudala* (probably *Alexander* of *Epirus*, 272-255 BC). The independent states of southern *India* and *Sri Lanka* were once again visited by ambassadors and also some of the tribes in areas within the empire (e.g. the *Andhras*). The frequency of inscriptions in the border regions of the northwestern and southern provinces is an eloquent evidence of *Ashoka's* missionary zeal.

This activity of imperial missions was unique in ancient history. Of greater consequence than the establishment of direct contact with the *Hellenistic* world was, however, the success of missions in the south and in *Sri Lanka*. There *Ashoka's* son *Mahinda* personally appeared in order to teach right conduct. The northwest was also deeply affected by this missionary zeal. From

southern India, Buddhism later travelled to Southeast Asia and from northwest India it penetrated Central Asia from where it reached China via the silk road in the first century AD.

### **3.1.5.7.Asoka's Religion**

In early life Asoka is believed to have been a Brahmanical Hindu, specially devoted to Siva, a god who delights in bloody sacrifices, and he had consequently no scruple about the shedding of blood. Thousands of living creatures used to be slain on the occasion of a banquet (samaja) to supply the kitchens of the overgrown royal household with curries for a single day. As he became gradually imbued with the spirit of Buddhist teaching, this wholesale daily slaughter became abominable in his eyes and was stopped, only three living creatures at the most, namely, two peacocks and one deer, being killed each day, and in 257 B.C. even this limited butchery was prohibited.

Two years earlier, in 259 B.C., Asoka had abolished the royal hunt, which formed such an important element in the amusements of his grandfather's court. "In times past", he observes, "their Majesties were wont to go out on pleasure tours, during which hunting and other similar amusements used to be practiced". But his Sacred and Gracious Majesty no longer cared for such frivolous outings, and had substituted for them solemn progresses devoted to inspection of the country and people, visits and largess to holy men, and preaching and discussion of the Law of Piety.

As time went on, Asoka's passionate devotion to the doctrine of the sanctity of animal life grew in intensity and, in 243 B.C., resulted in the production of a stringent code of regulations applicable to all classes of the population throughout the empire, without distinction of creed. Many kinds of animals were absolutely protected from slaughter in any circumstances, and the slaying of animals commonly used for food by the flesh-eating population, although not totally prohibited, was hedged round by severe restrictions. On fifty-six specified days in the year, killing under any pretext was categorically forbidden, and in many ways the liberty of the subject was very seriously contracted. While Asoka lived, these regulations were, no doubt, strictly enforced by the special officers appointed for the purpose, and it is not unlikely that deliberate breach of the more important regulations was visited with the capital penalty.

Asoka openly avowed his readiness to act upon these latitudinarian principles by doing reverence to men of all sects, whether ascetics or householders, by means of donations and in other ways. The Cave Inscriptions, which record costly gifts bestowed upon the Ajivikas, a sect of self mortifying ascetics, more nearly allied to the Jains than the Buddhists, testify that Asoka, like many other ancient Kings of India, really adopted the policy of universal toleration and concurrent endowment.

But his toleration, although perfectly genuine, must be understood with two limitations. In the first place, all Indian religions, with which alone Asoka was concerned, had much in common, and were all alike merely variant expressions of Hindu modes of thought and feeling. There was no such gap dividing them as that which yawns between Islam and Puranic Brahmanism. In the second place, the royal toleration, although perfect as regarding beliefs, did not necessarily extend to all overt practices. Sacrifices involving the death of a victim, which are absolutely indispensable for the correct worship of some of the gods, were categorically prohibited, at least at the capital, from an early period in the reign, and were further restricted, in all parts of the empire, by the code promulgated later in the Pillar Edicts. The conscientious objector was not permitted to allege his conscience as a justification for acts disapproved on principle by the government. Men might believe what they liked, but must do as they were told. Asoka cared little for ritual, and was inclined to look with some scorn upon ordinary ceremonies, which are, as he observes, "of doubtful efficacy".



### **3.1.5.8. Asoka's Family**

Asoka, like all Oriental monarchs, was a polygamist, and had at least two consorts, who ranked as queens. The name of the second of these ladies, Karuvaki, is preserved in a brief edict signifying the royal pleasure that her charitable donations should be regarded by all officials concerned as her act and deed, redounding to her accumulation of merit. She is described as the mother of Tivara, who may be considered as a favorite child of the aged emperor at the time the edict was issued, late in his reign. Tradition avers that his faithful chief queen for many years was named Asandhimitra, and that when she died, and Asoka was old, he married a dissolute young woman named Tishyarakshita, concerning whom and her stepson Kunala, the old folklore tale, known to the Greeks as that of Phaedra and Hippolytus, is related with much imaginative embellishment. But folklore is not history, and the pathetic story of the blinded Kunala must not be read or criticized as matter-of-fact narrative. The legend appears in diverse forms with various names. Another son of Asoka, named Jalauka, who plays a large part in Kashmir tradition, although rather a shadowy personage, has more appearance of reality than Kunala. He was reputed to have been an active and vigorous King of Kashmir, who expelled certain intrusive foreigners, and conquered the plains as far as Kanauj. He was hostile to Buddhism and to the worship of Siva and the Divine Mothers, in whose honor he and his queen, Isanadevi, erected many temples at places which can be identified. But the story of Jalauka, notwithstanding the topographical details, is essentially legendary, and no independent corroboration of the Kashmir tradition has been discovered. Tivara, the son mentioned in the Queen's Edict, is not heard of again, and may have died before his father. Dasaratha, the grandson of Asoka, who is described in the Vishnu Purana as the son of Suyasa, or Suparsva, was certainly a reality, being known from brief dedicatory inscriptions on the walls of cave-dwellings at the Nagarjuni hills, which he bestowed upon the Ajivikas, as his grandfather had done in the neighbouring Barabar hills. The script, language, and style of Dasaratha's records prove that his date was very close to that of Asoka, whom probably he directly succeeded. Assuming this to be the fact, the accession of Dasaratha may be dated in 231 B.C. His reign appears to have been short, and is allotted (under other names) eight years in two of the Puranas.

### **3.1.5.9. Asoka: The Greatest Monarch in Human History**

Ashoka's greatness was due to his insight into the futility of further expansionist warfare which would not have added much to the empire but would have impeded its consolidation. In order to conquer the vast areas in the interior, Ashoka would have had to fight many more bloody wars. In consolidating his empire, Ashoka adopted revolutionary methods. As emphasised by Romila Thapar, he must have realised that such a vast empire could not be based simply on the naked power politics of the Arthashastra but that it required some deeper legitimation. Therefore he adopted the doctrine of right conduct as the maxim of his policy. For the spread of this doctrine, he relied on the spiritual infrastructure provided by the new Buddhist community which was in ascendance in those days. But he carefully avoided equating his doctrine of right conduct with Buddhism as such. He also included the Brahmins and the sect of the Ajivikas in his religious policy.

After a period of unscrupulous power politics under the earlier rulers of Magadha, Indian kingship attained a moral dimension in Ashoka's reign. But in the means he adopted, he was influenced by the tradition of statecraft epitomised by Kautalya. The Dhamma-Mahamatras which he put into the entourage of his relatives-from whom challenges to his power would be expected to come-were different in name only from Kautalya's spies. This, of course, should not detract from the greatness of his vision which prompted him to strive for an ethical legitimation of his imperial rule. His success was nevertheless not only due to his ideology and the strength of his army and administration but also to the relative backwardness of central and southern India in his day. When regional centres of power emerged in those parts of the country in the course of an autochthonous

process of state formation in later centuries, the course of Indian history was changed once more and the great regional kingdoms of the early medieval period arose. In that period the old tradition of the legitimation of Hindu kings was revived and Ashoka's great vision was eclipsed.

### **3.1.6. The Mauryan Administration**

Indian history entered a new era with the beginning of the Mauryan Empire in around 321 B.C. as for the first time, India attained political unity and administrative uniformity. The Mauryan Empire as founded by Chandragupta stretched from the Bay of Bengal in the East to Afghanistan and Baluchistan in the West, the Himalayas in the North to the ChitalduRig district in the South.

Chandragupta was not only a great conqueror, he was also a great administrator. Megasthenes, the ambassador of Seleukes in the court of Chandragupta, has left detailed accounts of his system of government. The treatise on state craft called the Arthashastra attributed to Chandragupta's able minister Chanakya (also known as Kautilya), confirms and supplements the accounts of Megasthenes. According to the Puranas, the son and successor of Chandragupta was Bindusara who is believed to have ruled from 300 B.C. to 273 B.C. After his death there was a struggle for succession among his sons for four years. Ultimately, Ashoka succeeded him to the throne. Ashoka's imperishable records inscribed on rocks and pillars testify that the Mauryan Empire under Ashoka embraced the whole of India except Assam in the extreme east and the Tamil Kingdom of the Far South.

Besides the sources mentioned above, the Buddhist and Jain traditions, the literary sources like the Divyavadana and Mudrarakshasa (though they belong to much later times) and inscriptions (eg. The Girnar inscription of Rudradaman) provide us a variety of evidence for the study of the administrative organization under the Mauryas.

#### **3.1.6.1. Central Administration**

**The King:** At the apex of the Mauryan administrative system stood the king: The king was primarily the wielder of the power, who was given primacy among the seven components (Saptanga) of the state. His chief function was to promulgate the social order. It was his moral duty to punish the wrongdoers and to maintain peace in the empire. Arthashastra refers to him as *dharmapravartaka* who had to set a high ideal in front of his subjects. The people were looked upon as children for whose happiness the head of the state was responsible and to whom he owed a debt which could only be discharged by a good government. Nevertheless the powers of the king were extensive. He had, military, judicial, legislative, as well as executive functions.

There are instances when the Emperor left his palace for war. He considered plans of military operations with his Senapati or Commander-in-Chief. He also sat in his court to administer justice. "He remains there all day thus occupied, not suffering himself to be interrupted even though the time arrives for attending to his person. This attention to his person consists of friction with pieces of wood, and he continues to listen to the cause, while the friction is performed by four attendants who surround him. Arthashastra says, "when in the court, he (the king) shall never cause his petitioners to wait at the door, for when a king makes himself inaccessible to his people and entrusts his work to his immediate officers, he may be sure to engender confusion in business, and to cause thereby public disaffection, and himself a prey to his enemies. He shall, therefore, personally attend to the ' business of gods, of heretics, of Brahmanas learned in the Vedas, of cattle, of sacred places, of minors, the aged, the afflicted, the helpless and of women ; -all this in order (of enumeration) or according to the urgency or pressure of those works. All urgent calls he shall hear at once."

As to the king's legislate should note that Kautilya Arthashastra calls him "*dharmapramrttika*" and includes Rajasan a among the sources of law. As instances of royal "Sasanas" or rescripts may be mentioned the Edicts of Asoka, the famous grandson of Chandragupta. Among executive functions of the king, our authorities mention the posting of watchmen, attending to the accounts. of

receipts and expenditure, appointment of ministers, priests and superintendents, correspondence with the *Mantriparishad* or Council of Ministers, collection of the secret information gathered by spies, reception of envoys, etc. It was the king, who laid down the broad lines of policy and issued rescripts for the guidance of his officers and the people. Control was maintained over the most distant officials by an army of secret reporters and overseers and, in the days of Chandragupta's grandson, by itinerant judges. Communication with them was kept up by a network of roads, and garrisons were posted at strategic points.

Kautilya puts the following ideal before the king: "For a king his Vrata (religious vow) is a constant activity for the cause of his people (utthanam); his best religious ceremony is the work of administration, his highest charity-equality of treatment noted out to all". The brahmanical law books such as Manu and Baudhayan stressed that the king should be guided by the laws laid down in the Dharmasastras and by the customs prevailing in the country.

**The Council of Ministers:** Kautilya holds that *Rajatva* (sovereignty) is possible only with assistance. A single wheel can never move. Hence the king shall employ Sachivas and hear their opinion. The Sachivas or Amatyas of Kautilya correspond to the "seventh caste" of Megasthenes which assisted the king in deliberating on public affairs. This class was small in numbers, but in wisdom and justice excelled all the others. The most important amongst the *Sachivas* or *Amatyas* were undoubtedly the Mantrins or High Ministers, probably corresponding to the Mahamatras of Asoka's Rock Edict VI and the "advisers of the king" referred to by Diodoros. They were selected from those Amatyas whose character had been tested under all kinds of allurements. They were given the highest salary, i.e., 48,000 *panas* per annum. They assisted the king in examining the character of the Amatyas who were employed, in ordinary departments. All kinds of administrative measures were preceded by consultation with three or four of them.

In addition to the Mantrins there was the *Mantriparishad*, i.e., Assembly of Counsellors or Council of Ministers. The existence of the Parishad as an important element of the Maurya constitution is proved by the third and sixth Rock Edicts of Asoka. The members of the Mantriparishad were not identical with the Mantrins. In several passages of Kautilya's Arthashastra the Mantrin are sharply distinguished from the Mantriparishad. The latter evidently occupied an inferior position. Their salary was only 12,000 *panas*, whereas the salary of a Mantrin was 48,000. They do not appear to have been consulted on ordinary occasions, but were summoned along with the Mantrins when works of emergency had to be transacted. The king was to be guided by the decision of the majority. They also attended the king at the time of the reception of envoys.

Besides the Mantrins and the Mantriparishad, there was another class of *Amatyas* who filled the great administrative and judicial appointments. The Arthashastra says that the Amatyas, officers purified by religious test, should be employed in civil and criminal courts; the Amtyas, officers purified by money-test should be employed as Samaghirtri (Chancellor of the Exchequer) and Sannidhati (High Treasurer and Keeper of Stores); the "kamopadhasuddha" Amatyas, officials purified by love-test, should be appointed to superintend the pleasure grounds, the "bliayopadhasuddha" Amatyas, officers purified by fear test, should be appointed to do work requiring immediate attention (*asanna karya*), while those who are proved to be impure should be employed in mines, timber and elephant forests, and manufactories. Untried Amatyas were to be employed in ordinary or insignificant departments (*samanya adhikarana*). Persons endowed with the qualifications required in an Amatyas (*Amatyasampadopeta*) were appointed Nisyishtarhah or Ministers Plenipotentiary, Lekhakas or Ministers of Correspondence, and Adhyahshas or Superintendents.

They are referred to as councillors and assessors by Greek writers whereas Rock Edict VI of Ashoka refers to them as Mahamatras or high officials. The most important among the officers were the Mantrins or high ministers. The dharmamahamatras and mahamatra of Ashoka were concerned

with the propagation of dharma. Antapala of Arthashastra was concerned with guarding the frontier and controlling the import trade. The other officers were the high priest or purohit, commander-in-chief or Senapati and crown prince or Yuvaraja and adhyakshas or Superintendents who assisted the King in economic activities of the State. They controlled and regulated agriculture, trade and commerce, weights and measures, crafts such as weaving and spinning, mining etc.

### **3.1.6.2. Administration of Justice**

King was at the head of the judicial administration. He constituted the highest appellate court in the realm. In the villages and towns, cases were settled by the Gramvrdha and Nagarvyavaharika Mahamatras respectively. In the countryside, there were Rajukas who were equal to our modern district-magistrates. All disputes arising out of land and its ownership were heard by them and Ashoka made them autonomous to expedite the settlement of the disputes and to prevent undue delay in meeting out justice: Kautilya refers to two other kinds of courts Dharmasthiya and Kanatakashodhana. The Dharmasthiya courts were civil courts presided over by three Dharmasthas learned in sacred law and three amtyas and they were located in all important centers. They tried cases involving disputes in marriage, divorce inheritance, houses, water-rights, trespass, debt, deposits, serfs, labour and contract, sale, violence, abuse, assault, gambling and miscellaneous. Punishments, were carefully graded and executed by royal authority; they included fines, imprisonment, whipping and death. There must have been in existence also caste panchayats and guild-courts which regulated the affairs of communities and professional and dealt with disputes among them in the first instance.

The Kantakashodhana courts were presided over by the three Pradeshtis and three Amatyas. These were a new type of courts constituted to meet the growing needs of an increasingly complex socio-economic structure and to implement the decisions of a highly organized bureaucracy on all matters that were being brought under their control and were unknown to the old legal system. These courts were special tribunals to protect the state and people against the anti-social persons-the thorns (Kantaka) of society. These were designated to safeguard both government and society from the possible evils of the new order that was being introduced, and at the same time, they served as powerful weapons to implement the mass of new regulations to regulate the new order.

Besides the royal court there were special tribunals of Justice both in cities (nagara) and country parts (janapada) presided over by Vyavaharika Mahamatras and Rajukas respectively. Greek writers refer to judges who listened to oases of foreigners. Petty oases in villages were doubtless decided by the headmen and the village elders. All our authorities testify to the severity of the penal code. But the rigours of judicial administration were sought to be mitigated by Asoka, grandson of Chandragupta, who meted out equal justice to all and instituted the system of itinerant Mahamatras to check maladministration in the outlying provinces. Considerable discretion was, however, allowed to the Rajukas. We are informed by Greek writers that "theft was a thing of very rare occurrence" among Indians. They express their surprise at this for they go on to observe that the people "have no written laws but are ignorant of writing, and conduct all matters by memory."

The sum-total of this judicial system was that control of the bureaucracy over the people was strengthened and there was a sharp decline in crime as a result of fear and moral exhortation as mentioned by Megasthenes.

### **3.1.6.3. The Army**

A considerable part of revenue was spent on the army. The maintenance of a huge army led to the political unification of nearly the whole of India except the extreme South. According to Indian tradition, the army consisted of four departments-elephants, chariots, cavalry and infantry. The Arthashastra maintains that the army was organized in squads of 10 men, companies of a hundred and battalions of a thousand each. The king was the commander-in-chief of the Army and the Senapati was directly under him. According to Megasthenes, the army was controlled by a war

office consisting of 30 members distributed among 6 boards who were in charge of different departments. Behind the success of the army was the diplomacy of the Mauryas. Arthashastra refers to the employment of secret agents or spies, winning over enemies people, siege assault are the fine means to capture a fort shows the importance given to diplomacy. The Arthashastra clearly prefers diplomacy to force.

#### **3.1.6.4.Espionage**

From Indian literature, we know that at all times kings used to entertain spies (chara or gudha purusha). These agents were grade into high ones, low ones and those of middle rank. Recruits to the service of special agents or news writers were chosen for their good character. The employment of women of easy virtue as spies, is also alluded to by Kautilya's Arthashastra. A similar class of officers which was created by Asoka himself were the reporters or *prativedaka* who were posted everywhere in order to report the affairs of the people at any time.

The classical writers refer to a class of men called Overseers (Episkopoi) who "overlook what is done throughout the country and in the cities, and make report to the king where the Indians are ruled by a king, or the magistrates where the people have a democratic Government." Strabo calls this class of men the Ephori or Inspectors. "They are," says he, "intrusted with the superintendence of all that is going on, and it is their duty to report privately to the king...The best and the most faithful persons are appointed to the office of Inspectors. The Overseer of Arrian and the Inspector of Strabo may correspond to the Bashtriya of the Junagadh Inscription or to the Pradeshtri or the GudhaPurusliyas (secret emissaries) of the Arthashastra. Pradeshtri may be derived from Pradis which means 'to point,' 'to communicate.'

Strabo speaks of different classes of Inspectors. He tells us that the City Inspectors employed as their coadjutors the city courtesans ; and the Inspectors of the Gamp, the women who followed it. The employment of women of easy virtue as spies is also alluded to by the Kautilya Arthashastra. According to that work there were two groups of spies, viz. :

Samstah, or stationary spies consisting of secret agents styled Kapatika, Udasthita, Grihapatika, Vaideliaha and Tdpasa, i.e., fraudulent disciples, recluses, householders, merchants and ascetics. Sancharah or wandering spies, including emissaries termed Satri, Tikshna and Bashada, i.e., class-mates, firebrands and poisoners and certain women described as Bhikshukis (mendicants), Parivrajikas (wandering nuns), Mundas (shavelings) and Vrishalis. It is to the last class, viz., the Vrklhalls that Strabo evidently refers. We have also explicit references to courtesan (pumschill, vesya, rupajiva) spies in the Arthashastra.

#### **3.1.6.5.Provincial Administration**

The Mauryan empire was a vast one. But Chandragupta devised a plan in overcoming these difficulties and introduced a decentralized scheme of administration. The whole empire was divided into four administrative divisions: besides the center with its headquarters at Pataliputra headed by the king and assisted by the ministers and the Council, the other four divisions had their capitals respectively at Taxila in the North-west, Ujjain in West, Suvarana-giri in the South and Tosali in the East, as mentioned in the edicts of Ashoka. Each administrative division was put in charge of Viceroy designated as Kumara or Aryaputra who was normally the prince of the royal blood or some other relative to the king or high official. The details of the provincial administration are not amply known. But even then it can be guessed that the Viceregal courts were the smaller replica of the imperial courts with the difference that the council of ministers could sometime even dwarf the viceroy and oppress the people as was the case in Taxila in the time of Bindusara. The same contingency led Ashoka to demonstrate with his officials to be honest in the discharge of their duties.

The Viceroyalties were subdivided into provinces under the charge of the Pradeshikas referred to in Ashoka's inscriptions and the Junagarh inscription of Rudradaman I of 150 A.D.

Girnar was one such province governed by Pushyagupta in the time of Chandragupta and Raja Tushaspa in the time of Ashoka.

#### **3.1.6.6. Local Administration**

The provinces were further split up into smaller areas equivalent to the district and tehsil comprising 100 villages under sihanika and 5 to 10 villages under Gopa respectively. Each had its own staff of officials comprising mostly Yuktas and Rajukas. They were entrusted with the collection of revenue and general administration of their respective areas. They were, in fact, the link between the people and the government and were under the final authority of the Samaharta or the chief-collector.

The smallest unit of administration which enjoyed semi-autonomous power was the village. It regulated its own affairs with regard to defence, discipline, cultivation, payment of revenue, land and water-rights, etc., through the gramani who was chosen from amongst the village elders who assisted the official of the government in disposing petty disputes arising in the village. Cultivable land was parceled out in states belonging to individuals, while pastures and forest lands were held in common. The administrative and judicial business of villages was, in Ancient India, carried on by the Gramikas, Gramabhojakas or Ayuktas who were, no doubt, assisted by the village elders. The omission of the Gramika from the list of salaried officials given in the Arthashastra is significant. It probably indicates that in the days of the author of the treatise the Gramika was not a salaried servant of the crown, but an elected official of the villagers. Rural administration must have been highly efficient. We are told by Greek observers that the tillers of the soil received adequate protection from all injury and would devote the whole of their time to cultivation.

#### **3.1.6.7. Municipal Administration**

The cities of the empire were administered, most probably, on the lines of the municipal administration of Patliputra which has been graphically described by Megasthenes. He designated the town-official as Nagaradhyaksha of Kautilya. According to Megasthenes, the officers-in-charge of the city were divided into six boards, five members in each. Each board was assigned specific functions, e.g., the first board looked after everything relating to the industrial arts; the second looked after foreigners; the third recorded the births and deaths within the city, the fourth supervised trade and commerce; manufactured articles were the concern of the fifth board, and the sixth collected the tenth of the prices of the articles sold. Thus, nothing escaped the notice of the city officials from birth to death. In their collective capacity these officials looked after the civic amenities like water, sanitation, cleanliness, public-buildings (temples) etc. There were city-magistrates, each termed as the Nagarvyvaharika Mahamatra as mentioned in the Asokan Edicts, to maintain law and order and to settle disputes of the residents of the city.

#### **3.1.6.8. Revenue and Expenditure**

The cost of civil and military administration even at the centre must have been enormous. The chief sources of revenue from villages were the Bhaga and the Bali. The Bhaga was the king's share of the produce of the soil which was normally fixed at one-sixth, though in special cases it was raised to one-fourth or reduced to one-eighth. Bali seems, to have been an extra impost from the payment of which certain tracts were exempted. According to Greek writers husbandmen paid, in addition to a fourth part of the produce of the soil, a land tribute because, according to their belief, "all India is the property of the crown and no private person is permitted to own land." Taxes on land were collected by the Agronomoi who measured the land and superintended the irrigation works. Other state dues included tribute and prescribed services from those who worked at trades, and cattle from herdsmen. In urban areas the main sources of revenue included birth and death taxes, fines and tithes on sales.

The Mahabhashya of Patanjali has an interesting reference to the Mauryas' love of gold which led them to deal in images of deities. The distinction between taxes levied in rural and in

fortified areas respectively is known to the Arthashastra which refers to certain high revenue functionaries styled the Samahartri and the Saimidhatri, No such officials are, however, mentioned in Maurya inscriptions. Greek writers, on the other hand, refer to 'treasurers of the state' or 'superintendents of the treasury'. A considerable part of the revenue was spent on the army. The artisans, too, received maintenance from the Imperial exchequer. Herdsmen and hunters received an allowance of grain in return for clearing the land of wild beasts and fowls. Another class which benefited from royal bounty were the philosophers among whom were included Brahmanas as well as Sramanas or ascetics. Vast sums were also spent for irrigation, construction of roads, erection of buildings and fortifications, and establishment of hospitals in the days of Chandragupta's grandson.

To conclude, one may say that the imperial organization under the Mauryas as it comes down to us through the Arthashastra of Kautilya, inscriptions of Asoka and other sources, was of a very high order with the king as the head of the State, wielding all power, a huge standing well organized military system and an efficient system of criminal administration, new sources of revenue and a huge bureaucracy organized in a hierarchical way, which together contributed to strengthen the royal power.

### **3.1.7. Conclusion**

Thus, we noticed from the above discussion that, for a brief period of less than two centuries, from the early fourth to the late second century B.C, an imperial polity held sway over nearly three-quarters of the land mass of the Indian sub-continent and the eastern half of Afghanistan. This was the Mauryan Empire. As with any empire, its genesis lay in the economic and military strength of a heartland state and the ability of its leaders to assert their power beyond its frontiers. From their central state of Magadha, the first three Mauryan emperors evinced a capacity, never before witnessed in Indian history, to muster extraordinarily large material resources for maintaining an imperial hegemony in South Asia. This hegemony was exercised by two methods of governance which, paradoxically, were contradictory but which helped weld together the many different peoples of the empire. On the one hand, as under any imperial system, the strong buttresses of bureaucratic institutions and administrative diktats gave the people a sense of security and belonging but also demanded strict obedience to the emperor. This remained the style of governance throughout the period of the empire; but, halfway through its history, a new element was introduced. Under the third emperor, Ashoka, a unique form of cultural coherence based on the moral values of Buddhism came to be bestowed upon the empire, in the shape of moral exhortations inscribed on stone erected in different parts of India. These messages constituted an ideal norm of benignity, civility and humanity in matters of governance: they are benchmarks of progress in Indian political maturity. The relative prosperity of the Mauryan Empire was underwritten by a huge base of agricultural wealth and extensive commercial networks. It would be a long time before India would experience, nay enjoy, such a bold experiment in imperial sovereignty on this scale. The experiment did not last long, and most of the knowledge concerning the empire was lost. However, the painstaking researches of the last two hundred years, along with accidental discoveries, have made it possible for us to appreciate the empire today in a truer perspective.

### **3.1.8. Summary**

- *Chandragupta Maurya was the founder of the Mauryan Empire. He, at the young age of 25, captured Pataliputra from the last ruler of the Nanda dynasty, Dhanananda. In this task he was assisted by Kautilya, who was also known as Chanakya or Vishnugupta.*
- *After firmly establishing his power in the Gangetic valley, he marched to the northwest and subdued the territories up to the Indus. Then he moved to central India and occupied the region north of Narmada river. In 305 B.C., he marched against Selukas Niketar, who was*

*Alexander's General controlling the northwestern India. Chandragupta Maurya defeated him and a treaty was signed.*

- *Megasthenes was sent to the Mauryan court as Greek ambassador by Seleucus Nikator.*
- *Chandragupta embraced Jainism towards the end of his life and stepped down from the throne in favour of his son Bindusara. Then he went to Sravana Belgola, near Mysore along with Jain monks led by Bhadrabhagu and starved himself to death.*
- *Bindusara was called by the Greeks as "Amiratagatha" meaning slayer of enemies. He is said to have conquered the Deccan up to Mysore.*
- *Bindusara received Deimachus as ambassador from the Syrian king Antiochus I. Bindusara wrote to Antiochus I asking for sweet wine, dried figs and a sophist. The latter sent all but a sophist because the Greek law prohibited sending a sophist. Bindusara supported the Ajivikas, a religious sect. Bindusara appointed his son Asoka as the governor of Ujjain.*
- *There is little information regarding the early life of Asoka. He acted as Governor of Ujjain and also suppressed a revolt in Taxila during his father Bindusara's reign. There was an interval of four years between Asoka's accession to the throne (273 B.C.) and his actual coronation (269 B.C.).*
- *The most important event of Asoka's reign was his victorious war with Kalinga in 261 B.C. Although there is no detail about the cause and course of the war, the effects of the war were described by Asoka himself in the Rock edict XIII. After the war he annexed Kalinga to the Mauryan Empire. Another most important effect of the Kalinga war was that Asoka embraced Buddhism under the influence of Buddhist monk, Upagupta.*
- *According some scholars, his conversion to Buddhism was gradual and not immediate. About 261 B.C. Asoka became a Sakya Upasaka (lay dsicple) and two and a half years later, a Bikshu (monk). Then he gave up hunting, visited Bodh-Gaya, and organized missions.*
- *The ascendancy of the Mauryas had resulted in the triumph of monarchy in India. Other systems like republics and oligarchies that were prevalent in the pre-Mauryan India had collapsed. Although Kautilya the foremost political theorist of ancient India supported the monarchical form of government, he did not stand for royal absolutism. Under the advice of Kautilya, the Mauryas established a strong and centralized bureaucratic administrative system across the empire under a strong Emperor.*

### **3.1.9. Exercise**

- Write a note on the career, ancestry and achievements of Chandragupta Maurya.
- Write in detail the salient features of the Mauryan administration.
- Discuss the career and achievements of Bindusara.
- Examine the early career of Asoka upto Kalinga War.
- Discuss the Municipal administration of Mauryan Empire as described by Meghasthenes.

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**Unit-3**  
**Chapter-III**  
**ASOKA'S POLICY AND REFORMS**  
*Dhamma, Art and architecture: Decline of Mouryan Empire.*

**Structure**

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**3.3.6.4. Worthless Successor of Asoka**

**3.3.6.5. Expensive Mauryan Bureaucracy**

**3.3.7. Conclusion**

**3.3.8. Summary**

**3.3.9. Exercise**

**3.3.10. Further Readings**

### 3.3.0. Objective

In this lesson, students explore the history of Asoka Maurya post-Kalinga War period of his reign. After completing this chapter, you will be able to:

- trace the history of Asoka and his achievements after Kalinga War;
- recognize the role of Asoka's spread of Dhamma through various means such as issuing Edicts and appointing officers like Dhamma Mahamatras.
- know the contribution Asoka for propagation of Buddhism as an international religion;
- understand the salient features of the Mauryan art such as pillars, caves and stupas.
- Examine the causes for the decline of the Mauryan empire.

### 3.3.1. Introduction

The figure of Asoka takes an honourable place in the galaxy of monarchs ever known to Indian history. He is a great ideal today because he is a great harbinger of peace. He is the only monarch in the history of the world who is the preacher of universal morality to the people. The ideal of kingship of Asoka was to promote the material as well as spiritual welfare of his subjects; to make the mankind happy in this world and also in the other world. We have already seen that the Kalinga war opened a new epoch in the history of Magadha and of India. During the first thirteen years of his reign Asoka was a typical Magadhan sovereign-the inheritor of the policy of Bimbisara, of Mahapadma and of Chandragupta-conquering peoples, suppressing revolt, annexing territory. After the Kalinga war all this is changed. The older political philosophy which tradition associates with the names of Vassakara and Kautilya gave way to a new statecraft inspired by the teaching of the sage of the Sakyas. This chapter give an account of the remarkable change witnessed by Indian subcontinent during the reign of the great innovator: Emperor Asoka.

### 3.3.2. The Change of Asoka's Religion

Asoka had doubtless inherited the traditional devotion of Hindu kings to the gods (*devas*) and the Brahmanas and, if the Kashmir chronicle of Kalhana is to be believed, his favourite deity was Siva. He had no scruples about the slaughter of men and animals : "formerly, in the kitchen of His Sacred and Gracious Majesty the King each day many hundred thousands of living creatures were slaughtered to make curries." The hecatombs of thousands of men and women sent to their doom during the Kalinga war have already been mentioned. The sight of the misery and bloodshed in that sanguinary campaign made a deep impression on him and awakened in his breast feelings of *anusochana*, "remorse, profound sorrow, and regret". About this time he came unde' the influence of Buddhist teaching. We read in Rock Edict XIII "after that, now that the Kalingas had been annexed, began His Sacred Majesty's zealous practice of the Law of Piety (*dhramasilana*), his love of that Law (*dhramakamata*), and his inculcation of that Law (*dhramanusasti*)" Although Asoka became a Buddhist he was not an enemy either of the *Devas* or of the *Brahmanas*. Up to the last he took pride in calling himself *Devanampiya*, beloved of the gods. He found fault with unseemly behaviour towards Brahmanas and inculcated liberality to the same class. He was perfectly tolerant. "The king does reverence to men of all sects." He reprobated *atmapasamd-puja*, honour to one's own sect, when coupled with *para-pasamda-garaha*, disparagement of other sects. That he was sincere in his professions is proved by the Barabar Cave Dedications to the *Ajivika* monks. His hostility was chiefly directed not towards the *Devas* and the Brahmanas, not even towards *Varnasrama*, but the killing of men in war and *Samajas* ( festive gatherings ), ill-treatment of friends and acquaintances, comrades and relatives, slaves and servants, the slaughter of animals in sacrifice, and the performance of vulgar, useless and offensive ceremonies.

#### 3.3.2.1. The Change of Foreign Policy

The effect of the change of religion was at once felt in foreign policy. The Emperor declared that "of all the people who were slain, done to death, or carried away captive in Kalinga, if the

hundredth part or the thousandth part were now to suffer the same fate, it would be a matter of regret to His Sacred Majesty. Moreover, should anyone do him wrong, that too must be borne with by His Sacred Majesty, so far as it can possibly be borne with." In Kalinga Edict I, the Emperor expressed his desire that the unsubdued peoples in the frontiers of the imperial dominions (*Amta avijita*) "should not be afraid of him, that they should trust him, and should receive from him happiness not sorrow." The chiefest conquest in the Emperor's opinion was the conquest by righteousness (*Dhamma-vijaya*). In Edict IV he says, "the reverberation of the war-drums (*Bherighoso*) has become the reverberation of the Law of Piety (*Dhammaghoso*)." Not content with what he himself did he called upon his sons and even his great grandsons to eschew new conquests-*putra papotra me asu navam vijayam ma vijetaviyam*. Here we have a complete renunciation of the old policy of military conquest or *Digvijaya* and the enunciation of a new policy, viz., that of *Dhammavijaya*. The full political effects of this change of policy became manifest only after the death of Asoka, perhaps even after the 27th year of his consecration. From the time of Bimbisara to the Kalinga war the history of India was the story of the expansion of Magadha from a tiny state in South Bihar to a gigantic Empire extending from the foot of the Hindukush to the borders of the Tamil country. After the Kalinga war ensued a period of stagnation at the end of which the process is reversed. The empire gradually dwindled down in extent till it sank to the position from which Bimbisara and his successors had raised it.

True to his principle Asoka made no attempt to annex the frontier (*Prachihta, amta, samanta, samlpa*), kingdoms, viz., Chola, Pandya, Satiyaputra, Keralaputra Tambapamni (Ceylon) and the realm of *Amtiyako Yonaraja*, who is usually identified with Antiochos II Theos, King of Syria and Western Asia. On the contrary, he maintained friendly relations with them.

The Chola country was drained by the river Kaveri and comprised the districts of Trichinopoly and Tanjore. Satiyaputra is identified with *Satya-vrata-kshetra* or Kauchipura. Keralaputra (Ketalaputo or Chera) is "the country south of Kilpaka (or Satya), extending down to Kanneti in Central Travancore (Karunagapalli Taluk). South of it lay the political division of Milshika." It was watered by the river Periyar, perhaps identical with the Churnl of the *Arthasastra* on the banks of which stood its capital Vanji (near Cochin) and at its mouth the seaport of Muziris (Kranganur). Ceylon was known in ancient times as Parasamudra as well as Tamraparn (Greek Taprobane). Tambapamni, i.e., Tamraparni is mentioned in Rock Edicts II and XIII of Asoka. Asoka maintained friendly relations not only with the Tamil powers of the south, but also with his Hellenistic frontage, Antiochos II Theos, king of Syria and Western Asia (B.C. 261-246) ; and even with the kings the neighbours of Antiochos, namely, Ptolemy II Philadelphos, king of Egypt (B.C. 285-247) ; Magas, king of Cyrene in North Africa (who probably died not later than B.C. 258); Antigonos G-onatas, king of Macedonia (B.C. 277 or 276-239) ; and Alexander who ruled over Epirus (B.C. 272-c.255) according to Norris, Westergaard, Lassen, Senart, Smith and Marshall. Beloch and Hultsch, however, suggest that Alikasudara of Edict XIII is Alexander of Corinth, the son of Craterus (B.C. 252-cir. 244) and not Alexander of Epirus (272-cir. 255), the son of Pyrrhus.

Though Asoka did not covet the territories of his neighbours, there is evidence that he gave them advice on occasions, and established philanthropic institutions in their dominions. In other words, he regarded them as objects of spiritual conquest (*Dhamma-vijaya*).

### 3.3.2.2. The Change in Internal Policy

The effects of Asoka's change of religion after Kalinga war were felt not only in foreign policy but also in internal affairs. The principal objects of his complaint according to Rock Edict IV and the Kalinga Edicts were :

- The sacrificial slaughter (*drambho*) of living creatures.
- Violence (*vihimsa*) to animate beings.

- Unseemly behaviour to (*asampratipati*) to kinsmen (*jfiati*).
- Unseemly behaviour to *Brahmanas* and *Sramanas*.
- Maladministration in the Provinces.

According to Rock Edict I, Asoka saw much offence not only in the sacrificial slaughter of animals, but also in certain *Samajas* or festive gatherings which, as we learn from the *Kautilya*, were often witnessed by kings and emperors. Asoka determined to put a stop to the practices, which he did not approve. At the same time he sought to improve the moral and material condition of the people to such an extent as to effect the "association of gods with men". He did all this "in order that he might discharge the debt (which he owed) to living beings (that) he might make them happy in this (world) and (that) they might attain heaven in the other (world)." The means employed to achieve this object may be classed under four heads :

- Administrative reforms.
- Dissemination of instructions in the *Dhamma* (Law of Piety or Duty).
- Benevolent activity ; promotion of the welfare of man and beast.
- Religious toleration and prevention of schism in the Buddhist church.

**Administrative Reforms:** In the first place, Asoka instituted the Quinquennial and Triennial *Anusaihyana* or Circuit of the *Yutas*, *Bajakas Pradesikas*, and *Mahamatras*. Jayaswal and Smith were of opinion that the whole administrative staff from the *Rajilkas* and the *Pradesikas* down to the *Yutas* could not possibly have gone on circuit at once every five years. They interpreted the term as signifying a regular system of transfers from one station to another. But there is nothing in the text to show that *all* the officers were required to go on circuit *at once*. The *amisamyana* of the *Yutas*, *Rajukas* and *Pradesikas* was quinquennial and was mainly intended for propaganda work. The *annsamyana* of the *Mahamatras* was specially instituted for the purpose of checking miscarriage of justice, arbitrary imprisonment and torture in the outlying provinces. Secondly, Asoka created a number of new posts, e.g., *Dharma-mahamatras* and possibly *Dharma-yutas*. The *Dharma-mahamatras* were given a protective mission among people of all sects including the *Brahmanas* and the *Nirgranthas* or *Jainas*, and among the *Yavanas*, *Kambojas*, *Grandharas*, *Ristikas* and all the *Aparantas*. It is apparent from the *Kalinga Edicts* and *Rock Edict VI* that Asoka kept a watchful eye on the *Mahamatras* especially on those who administered justice in cities. But he was more indulgent towards the *Bajnkas* for whose intelligence he apparently entertained great respect. Lastly, Asoka issued certain regulations restricting slaughter and mutilation of animals, and up to the twenty-seventh year of his coronation effected twenty-five jail deliveries. This suggests, as has been pointed out by Hultzsch, that the emperor used to proclaim an amnesty to criminals at almost every anniversary of his coronation.

**Measures adopted to disseminate Instructions in the Law of Piety:** Though himself convinced of the truth of the Buddha's teaching, of the efficacy of worship at Buddhist holy places, of the necessity of making a confession of faith in the Buddhist Trinity, of keeping in close touch, with the Buddhist Order of monks and maintaining its discipline and solidarity, Asoka probably never sought to impose his purely sectarian belief on others. He attempted, however, to put an end to practices and institutions that he considered to be opposed to the fundamental principles of morality which, according to him, constituted the essence of all religions. The prospect that he held before the people at large is not that of *sambodhi* (or of *nirvana*) but of *svarga* (heaven) and of mingling with the *devas*. *Svarga* could be attained and the gods could be approached by all people, high or low, if only they showed *parakrama*, zeal, not in adherence to a sectarian dogma or the performance of barren ritual (*mamgala*) but in following the ancient rule (*porana pakiti*), the common heritage of Indians of all denominations, viz., "obedience must be rendered to parents and elders ; firmness (of compassion) must be shown towards living creatures ; truth must be spoken ;

these same moral virtues must be practised. In the same way the teacher must be revered by the pupil, and fitting courtesy should be shown to the relatives. In Edict XIII we have the following: "hearkening to superiors, hearkening to father and mother, hearkening to teachers ( or elders), and proper treatment of friends, acquaintances, comrades, relatives, slaves and servants, with steadfastness of devotion." Edict VII lays stress on "mastery over the senses, purity of mind, gratitude, and steady devotion". In the Second Pillar Edict it is declared that the Law of Piety consisted in *Apasi7iave, bahuhayane, day a, dane, sache, sochaye*, "little impiety, many good deeds, compassion, liberality, truthfulness, purity". In the Pillar Edicts again prominence is given to self-examination and spiritual insight. Towards the end of his career Asoka seems to have been convinced that reflection and meditation were of greater efficacy than moral regulations. But the need for such regulations was keenly felt by him in the early years of his reign. We learn from Minor Rock Edict I that for more than two-and-a-half years Asoka was a lay disciple (*Upasaha*). During the first year he did not exert himself strenuously. Later on he seems to have *entered* the *Sahgha*, and begun to exert himself strenuously. He issued the famous proclamation, "Let small and great exert themselves and caused to be engraved the imperishable record of his purpose on the rocks and upon stone pillars wherever there were stone pillars in his dominions.

Asoka at first utilised the existing administrative machinery for religious propaganda. He commanded his Council (*Parishad*) to inculcate the *Dharma* on the subordinate officials styled *Yidas* and ordered the latter as well as the higher officials styled *lldjulcas*, and *Pradesilcas* to inculcate the same while they set out for tour (*anasamyana*). The *Dharma* which they were to preach was explained thus : "An excellent thing is the hearkening to father and mother ; an excellent thing is liberality to friends, acquaintances, relatives, Brahmanas and ascetics ; excellent is abstention from the slaughter of living creatures ; excellent is small expense with small accumulation."

When he had been consecrated thirteen years, Asoka created the new officials called *Dharma-mahamatras* who were specially entrusted with the work of "*dhamrnadhi-thana*" and "*dhammavadhi*", i.e., the establishment and increase of Piety. While his officers were busy preaching the new Gospel, the emperor himself did not remain idle. Already in his eleventh regnal year he had "started on the path" leading to *Sambodhi* (*ayaya Sathbodhim*) and commenced the tours of Piety (*Dhanma-yata*) in the place of the old tours of pleasure (*Vihara-yata*). In the tours of Piety this was the practice-visiting ascetics and Brahmanas, with liberality to them ; visiting elders, with largess of gold ; visiting the people of the country or perhaps rural areas (*Janapada*) with instruction in the Law of Piety, and discussion of that Law. The memory of a pious tour in Asoka's twenty-first regnal year ( B. C. 219 according to Smith ) is preserved by the Rummidei and Nigali Sagar epigraphs in the Nepalese Tarai. These records prove that Asoka visited the birthplace of Gautama and paid reverence to the *stupa* of Konakamana, one of the former Buddhas.

***Benevolent Activit-Promotion of the Welfare of Man and Beast:*** Asoka abolished the sacrificial slaughter of animals, offensive and the massacre of living creatures to make curries in the imperial kitchen. Rock Edict VIII refers to the abolition of the *vihara-yatras* or tours of pleasure in which hunting and other similar amusements used to be practised. Pillar Edict V contains a code of regulations restricting the slaughter and mutilation of animals. The emperor established healing arrangements in two kinds, namely, healing arrangements for men and healing arrangements for beasts. Medicinal herbs also both for men and for beasts, wheresoever's lacking, were imported and planted. Roots also and fruits, On the roads wells were dug, probably at intervals of 8 *kos*, flights of steps built for descending into the water, and banyan trees and mango groves planted for the enjoyment of man and beast.

Pillar Edict VII refers to the employment of superior officers (*Mukhyas*) in the distribution of alms, both the emperor's own and those of the queens and princes. One of the Minor Pillar Edicts

refers to the donations of the second Queen Karuvaki, mother of Tivara : "whatever gift has been given here by the second Queen-be it a mango-garden, or pleasure-grove (*drama*) or alms-house (*danagriha*) or aught else- is reckoned as proceeding from that queen." Mention may also be made of remission of taxes by the emperor himself, *e.g.* in Lumminigama, and money-grants (*hirannapatividhana*) to old men. The people of *janapadas* (districts), doubtless including the *gramas* (villages), were also sought to be benefited by the grant of autonomy and the establishment of uniformity of punishment and procedure (*dandasamata* and *vyavaharasamata*) as well as diffusion of moral instruction (*dhramanusasti*).

**Religious Toleration and the Prevention of Schism in the Buddhist Church:** In Rock Edict XII the emperor declares that he "does reverence (*Puja*) to men of all sects (*Pasamdani*) whether ascetics (*Pavajitani*) or householders (*Oharastani*) by gifts and various forms of reverence". That he was sincere in his professions is proved by the Barabaf cave dedications in favour of the Ajivika ascetics, who were more closely connected with the Jainas than with the Buddhists.

The emperor only cared for the "growth of the essence (*Sara- Vadhi*) of the matter in sects". He says that "he who does reverence to his own sect while disparaging the sects of others wholly from attachment to his own, with intent to enhance the splendour of his own sect, in reality by such conduct inflicts the severest injury on his own sect." Concord is praised by him as meritorious. Just as Asoka tried to secure concord among the various sects, so he wanted to prevent schism within the Buddhist church. Tradition affirms that a Buddhist Council was convened at Pataliputra in the seventeenth year of his reign for the purpose of suppressing heresy and making a compilation of the true Buddhist doctrine (*Saddhammasamgaha*). The Sarnath Edict and its variants may perhaps be regarded as embodying the resolution of this Council.

### 3.3.3. Asoka's Dhamma: The Law of Piety

Asoka's efforts after Dhamma date from his conquest of Kalinga. The reason of his moral propagandism is suggested to be that he feels bound to promote the real welfare of his subject, as 'a father does of his children'. The reason is further indicated in the following statement: "And whatever efforts I am making is made that I may discharge the debt which I owe to living beings, that I may make them happy in this world and that they may attain heaven in the other world" (R.E.VI). Thus Asoka takes to moral propagandism as an absolute duty of the ruler towards his subjects, one of the obligations of kingship. Such a duty must need be wide and Catholic in its outlook and scope, such as the promotion of happiness of all sections of people both in this world and the next.

We are told in Rock Edict XIII that a turn in his ideal of kingship or in his religious thought came after his conquest and annexation of Kalinga in his 9th regnal year. There arose in his mind a heavy remorse by thinking of horrors of Kalinga war. These slaughter, death and captivity seemed exceedingly serious to the monarch. His actions as a monarch were changed and since then the sound of 'Bheri' had become the sound of 'Dharma'.

After the war the chiefest conquest, in his opinion, was not the victory in a military war, but the victory of law of Piety (*dharma vijaya*) and in a way he advised his sons and grandsons not to think of conquering a new conquest by war, and that they should consider that to be the real conquest which is through the law of piety, as it avails both for good in this world and the next.

It appears that after Kalinga war he altogether stopped slaughter and killing of animals. It cannot be ignored that Asoka was up in arms against sacrificial slaughter that was prevalent in this country under the brahmanic system of Vedic sacrifices. He found offence in even convivial gatherings where meat doles must have been distributed to merry makers. Due to his compassion for animal life the king brought out a code of regulations (in R.E.V.) restricting slaughter and mutilation of various kinds of animals, birds and aquatic lives, prevention of castrating of cocks, of burning of chaff along with living creatures within, of forest conflagration, feeding of the living

with the living, and of destruction of elephant preserves or of fish ponds and these were prominent features in the king's restrictive regulations.

D.R. Bhandarkar opines that 'his ideal was to promote material and spiritual welfare of the whole world consisting not only of men but also of beasts and other creatures, not only again in his own kingdom but also over the world known or accessible to him. The source of his ideal was his *dhamma*. Asoka's *dhamma* is a code of certain ethical principles and humanitarian ideals with its universal dimension. And it is this which Asoka tries to propagate as far as possible. His *Dhamma* edicts is not any particular religious system but the moral law independent of any caste or creed, the *sara* or essence of all religions. One can see in it the efforts on the part of the king to unite the various sects and sections of the society and to promote the ideas of peaceful co-existence and universal brotherhood.

Scholars dispute whether Asoka's concept of *dhamma* was based on Buddhism or not. Negatively, we may say that it was not to be identified with any of the then prevailing faiths of the country. It was certainly not Buddhism, his own religious system. "We hear from him nothing concerning the deeper ideas or fundamental tenants of that faith; there is no mention of the Four Grand Truths, the Eight fold Path, the Chain of Causation, the supernatural quality of Buddha;' the word and the idea of Nirvana fail to occur; and the innumerable points of difference which occupied the several sects are likewise ignored". It can be argued that his idea of *Dhamma* absorbed common ethical principles or essence of all religious sects in which Buddhist principles also form a part. It has two aspects; Negative and Positive.

### **3.3.3.1. Positive aspect of Dhamma**

In its positive aspect, we find the mention of certain virtues in the edicts, viz, (i) Sadhuta, saintliness, (ii) apasnavam, freedom from sin (iii) Daya, kindness (iv) Danam, liberality (v) Satyam, truthfulness (vi) Saucham, purity (vii) Mardavam, gentleness (viii) Samyama, self control (ix) Dharmarati, attachment to morality.

In R.E.I. love to Dharma, self-examination, obedience, fear of sin and enthusiasm are mentioned as requisites for the attachment of happiness in this world and the next. In its practical aspect, it prescribes a comprehensive code of conduct embracing various relations of life. It is described as comprising:

- Prananam anarambha, abstention from slaughter of living beings.
- Avihisa bhutanam, non-violence towards life.
- Susrusa, obedience to father, mother and teachers
- Apachiti, respect of pupils towards the gurus
- Sampratipatti, proper treatment towards brahmanas, sramanas, relations and acquaintances.
- Danam, liberality towards brahmanas, sramanas, friends and the aged.
- Apa-vyayata, less expenditure
- Apa-bhandata, moderation in saving

By the inclusion of those common duties, the emperor no doubt aimed at this purity of domestic life so essential to the well being of the society. The circle of human relations embraced even the *brahmanas* and *sramanas*, thereby making it necessary to the householders to support the ascetics. In R.E. III and IV the king gave the direction and even enforced it that the lower animals must be met kind treatment by their human masters.

In R.E. XIII, the *Dhamma* is described in a nutshell as the right attitude towards all manifesting itself in non-injury, restraint, equal treatment and mildness in respect of all creatures, human beings as well as beasts and birds.



### 3.3.3.2. Negative aspect of Dhamma

In its negative aspect Asoka has pointed out certain vices which should be avoided and not be practiced by human beings viz krodhah, anger; manam, pride; irsa, envy; nisthuryam, cruelty; chandyam, rage or fury. In R.E. X the dhamma is also negatively defined as aparisravam, i.e. freedom from evil.

We have already seen how much Asoka cherished all his domestic relations brothers and sisters, sons and grandsons and other female relations of his, in whose affairs, moral welfare and happiness both in this world and the next, he was keenly interested. Those outside his own family the people at large, he regarded as his own children for whose welfare he was constantly working. In R.E. II, Asoka himself refers to his many and various kindnesses and good deeds in respect of both man and beasts, birds and aquatic creatures. Asoka also insists on *dharmanusasanam*, preaching morality as the supreme duty of the king, and accordingly he himself undertook a part of this public instruction in morality by moving among his subjects in different parts of the country, instructing them in morality and questioning them also about morality as stated in R.E. VIII. In R.E., VI, he asserts the promotion of good of all as the most important duty of the king, which could only be discharged by exertion and dispatch of business.

Asoka has drawn certain comparisons between the practices of ordinary life and those of Dhamma so that the people may understand his idea of Dhamma. Dharmadana is better than the ordinary gift. While alms-giving was commended, the higher doctrine was taught that there is no such charity as the charitable gift of the law of piety; no such distribution as the distribution of piety R.E. XI.

Secondly Asoka cared very little for ordinary mangalas or rituals performed by the people specially by the women kind and was inclined to look with some scorn upon ordinary ceremonies, which, as he observes, bear little fruit. True ceremonial consists in the fulfilment of that law which bears great fruit; and includes kind treatment of slaves and servants, honour to teachers, respect for life and liberality towards sramanas and brahmanas.

Thirdly, Asoka insists on Dharmavijaya, which, he considers is only the true conquest rather than an ordinary conquest. Glory of a king does not depend upon the physical extent of his dominion but upon the victory of hearts and wills of the people by the force of moral persuasion.

### 3.3.3.3. Features of Asoka's Dhamma

It is distinguished by several doctrines and philosophical positions bringing out Asoka's ideas of moral reform Asoka insists on the quality of self-examination. This must mean examination of one's bad deeds with his good ones (R.E. III). In R.E.I, he emphasises intense self-examination (pariksa) and intense effort (utsaha) as among the aids to moral life.

Next is emphasised the need of self-exertion as a means of moral progress. The need, he frankly admits, is all the greater for a man of 'high degree' (R.E. X). He further points out: 'Difficult, verily, it is to attain such freedom (from sin), whether by people of low or high degree, save by the utmost exertion (parakrama), giving up all other aims'. The Minor Rock Edict-I publishes the declaration: 'Let small and great exert themselves'. He wanted to see such a purpose to increase from more to more. He did not forget to say that even people living outside the Indian borders should strive for the same end.

Asoka also emphasised on the quality of tolerance. It appears that many religious sects and faiths flourished during his reign in India and hence, toleration was insisted as an absolute duty. The root of toleration is restraint of speech, 'refraining from speaking well of one's own sect and ill of others.' On that basis toleration among the followers of different faiths will grow, and it should be further promoted by making them know of one another's doctrines, so that the follower of one sect may be able to appreciate the doctrine of other sects. Out of this width of knowledge will spring a wider outlook, charity and toleration, and purity of doctrines, the essence of all religions (R.E. XII).

Another important feature of his dhamma is emphasis on the essence of religion. Every religion has two aspects; ethical and doctrinal. Ethics is the inner and doctrine is the outer manifestation of the religion. All religions agree on the ethical aspect but they differ with respect to outer manifestation. The ethics is the Sara or essence of all religions.

Lastly for kings and administrators, the ideal of Dharmavijaya has been prescribed. The real fame for a king does not depend upon the territorial expansion of his dominion, but upon the moral progress he can help his people to achieve. It is evident that by these and other similar prescriptions. Asoka tries to install morality as the governing principle and force in every walk of life and to spiritualise politics and, indeed, all life's activities. His new ideals and doctrines express themselves in a new language, a variety of terms invented by Asoka himself. In Pillar Edict-I he sums his intention by saying that he wants the maintenance, governance happiness and protection of the people to be regulated by dharma, and the people to grow day by day in their dependence upon Dharma and devotion to Dharma.

We may note that Asoka had faith in the other world repeated in several of his edicts and also in the attainment of *svarga* or happiness in the that world as a result of pursuit of dharma in this world. He also believed in the eternity of heaven and, consequently, in the immortality of soul. He considered the other world, as the ultimate objective of life. In R.E.X, he makes it clear that all his endeavour is for the sake of other world. As a believer in the *svarga*, Asoka also says in his R.E. IV how he tried to stimulate his people to virtue by presenting before them pictures of such blisse's awaiting them after death.

The *dhamma* that is thus presented in these Edicts is another name for the moral and virtuous life and takes its stand upon the common ground of all religions. It is not sectarian in any sense, but is completely cosmopolitan, capable of universal application and acceptance as the Sara, essence of all religions and is thus worthy of a sovereign of a vast empire comprising peoples following different religions. Thus in the moral interests of the diverse peoples committed to his care, Asoka was at pains to think out a system which might be imposed upon his subjects irrespective of their personal faiths and beliefs. Thus he laid the basis of a universal religion and was, perhaps, first to do so in history.

#### **3.3.3.4.Propagation of Dhamma in external relations**

Asoka organised an efficient system of foreign missions with a desire to diffuse the blessings of his ethical system in all the independent kingdoms with which he was in touch. His conception of the idea of foreign missions was absolutely original, and produced the well considered results. Royal missionaries were dispatched to all the dependent states and tribes on the borders of the empire, and in the wilder regions within its border to independent kingdoms of Southern India, and to the five Hellenistic countries of Syria, Egypt, Cyrene, Mecedonia and Epirus. Asoka for the same purpose sent his son Mahendra and daughter Sanghmitra to Ceylon in the reign of Tissa.

The Border states and tribes brought in this way within the circle of his ethical system included the Kambojas; the Gandhars and Yavanas of the Kabul valley regions; the bhojas, Pulindas and Pitenikas dwelling among the Vindhya range and Western Ghats, and the Andhra Kingdom. Four independent Southern Kingdoms; the Chola, Pandya, Keralputra and Satiyaputra were on such good terms with Asoka that he was at liberty to send his missionaries to preach the people of these lands.

In organizing such missions to foreign countries at the expense of India, Asoka perhaps felt that India also would be benefited along with them. These were the countries with which India had active intercourse in those days, and it was desirable that they should conform to common codes and ideals of conduct and thought. The influx of foreigners to India in those days is quite apparent from the statement of Megasthenes that there was a separate department of administration to deal

with their special interests. The history of the Western Greek countries does not preserve any record showing how Asoka's missionaries fared there, but we need not assume on a priori grounds that those countries did not welcome the Indians who too brought them only a message of peace and good will. It is difficult to dispute that Buddhist thought has left its marks upon some phases of Western thought, notably "the heretical Gnostic sects and some of the more orthodox forms of Christian teaching".

It is almost certain that Asoka, by his comprehensive and well-planned measures, succeeded in transforming the doctrine of a local Indian sect into one of the great religions of the world. He did not attempt to destroy either Brahmanical Hinduism or Jainism; but his prohibition of bloody sacrifices, the preference which he openly avowed for Buddhism and his active propaganda, undoubtedly brought his favourite doctrine to the front and established it as a dominant faith in India as well as Ceylon.

### **3.3.3.5. Asoka's Concept of Peaceful Co-existence**

The discussion on Asoka's Dhamma would remain incomplete unless it is analysed in the light of his idea of peaceful co-existence. Religious toleration in India is traditional coexistence of all religious sects and creeds prevails even now. But the root of such toleration may be traced to Asoka's religious activities. His idea of peaceful co-existence suggests that there should not be shown dishonour and condemnation to another sect; all other sects should be honoured by all men and in all ways. Thus acting they would be able to promote their own sect and benefit the other sect. Acting otherwise they would hurt their own sect and harm other sect. Asoka's principle of co-existence strove to bring together people following different faiths and to bind them in a harmonious union. As has been stated above the king did not attempt to destroy brahmanical religion, Jainism or any other faith but tried to provide a common ground for all sects by means of certain ethical principles and practices acceptable to all. And, therefore, Asoka preached his concept of Dharmavijaya. It differs from the concept of Digvijaya of later Hindu monarchs who believed in the territorial expansion of their dominions. Asoka ardently desired to conquer human hearts not by sword but by the superior ideals of humanity i.e., love, goodwill sympathy and assurance of non-aggression and advancement of the cause of humanity through piety and works of public utility.

The principles of non-violence and peaceful co-existence reflected in Asoka's Dhamma are the instruments of global force of "peace, progress and prosperity" that plays by the rules without hegemonic designs based on military might. Hence, it was an empire of righteousness, an empire resting on right and not on might. He also gave to his people belonging to different communities and sects, certain common ideas of thought and conduct which entitle him to be the humanity's first ruler with universal love and morality. He lives with us even today in our national emblem. Such is the influence of Asoka's dhamma on history. In the word of Toynbee "Asoka will continue to be remembered because he put conscience into practice in the exercise of his political power. This is all the more notable considering that unlike ourselves Asoka lived in the pre-atomic age, and therefore he did not have the obvious urgent utilitarian incentive, that our generation of mankind has to renounce the use of war as an instrument of national policy. Waging war with even with the deadliest of weapons then at Man's disposal, Asoka would have run no risk of getting his own subjects exterminated not to speak of bringing annihilation upon the human race as a whole."

### **3.3.4. Mauryan Art**

The history of art in ancient India virtually begins from the reign of Asoka. Whatever we find in Indus valley is isolated, its continuity is broken. We find for the first time, buildings and structures of permanent materials like stone, rock and brick during the Mauryan period. During the Vedic and later Vedic period buildings were made of impermanent materials. It was Asoka who substituted stone for wood the common material for the construction of the buildings. This change from impermanent to permanent material was due to the desire of the emperor under whose

patronage the Indian art flourished considerably. From Circa 2500 B.C. to 250 B.C. is a long period of which we have hardly any record in the matter of artistic expression. The architecture of this period was mostly of wood and has perished without leaving a trace behind.

#### **3.3.4.1. Architecture**

Asoka was a great builder. The legend which ascribes to Asoka the erection of eighty four thousand stupas within the space of three years, proves the depth of impression made upon the popular imagination by the number, magnitude and magnificence of the great Maurya's architectural achievements. Mauryan architecture can be divided into three categories for the sake of convenience.

- Remains of the places
- Remains of the stupas
- Rock-cut caves.
- Remains of Palaces

**Remains of the places:** Megasthenes gave a detailed description of the Mauryan palace where the king resided. It was magnificent and famous for its artistic excellence. According to Megasthenes, the entire palace was made of wood and in splendour and magnificence it was better than the palaces of Susa and Elbatana. So imposing was the structure that it was universally believed to have been erected by supernatural agency.

Fa-Hien who visited India during the Gupta period, was so much impressed and surprised to see this palace, its skill and work magic that he thought that it was not the work of men, but of spirits. The Royal palace and halls in the midst of the city (Pataliputra), which exist now as of old, were all made by spirits which he employed, and which piled up the stones, reared the walls and gates, and executed the elegant carving and inlaid sculpture work in a way which no human hands of this world could accomplish.

Similar residences must have been built for the establishment of Kaushambi and other places and also for the kumaras serving as viceroys. The excavations of Bulandi bagh and Kumrahar near Patna have been carried out and remains of this palace have been actually discovered. Remains of some pillars of very huge size have been found, particularly a hall built of high pillars. Thus the accounts of Megasthenes and Fa-Hien are very well supplemented by the archaeological evidence.

**Remains of Stupas:** A stupa was usually destined either to enshrine a casket containing the relics of Buddha or other saint or simply to mark permanently the reputed scene of some incident famous in the history of Buddhist church. Generally a stupa was erected in honour of a Buddha. Origins of the stupas are to be found in the Vedic and later Vedic 'chitas'. The stupas, are in purpose, similar to the Egyptian Pyramids. It is possible that architecture and designing of Pyramids must have influenced these stupas. It is significant point to note that stupas of huge bricks were made in India only after Asoka when Sindh and Western Punjab had been in possession of Persia for hundred years and when Egypt was also a province of Persia. Hence, it is possible that the architecture of the stupas might have been influenced by the Persian art like other artistic monuments of the Asoka.

A stupa was a nearly hemispherical mass of solid masonry either brick or stone, resting upon a plinth which formed a perambulation path for worshippers, and flattened at the top to carry a square alter shaped structure which was surmounted by a series of stone umbrellas one above the other. The base was frequently surrounded by stone railing. Sometimes the entrances through the railings were equipped with elaborate gateways (toranas).

As stated in Divyavadana Asoka got built eighty four thousand stupas all over his empire. Yuan-Chwang who travelled in different parts of India visited these stupas in Afghanistan, Sarnath,

Sanchi and Taxila in Northern India; Tampralipi and Pundravardhan in Eastern India and Kanchi in South India. Now we shall discuss the art of stupas erected during the Mauryan period.

**Stupa of Bharhut:** The stupa is situated at Bharhut a village in Nagod state of Baghelkhand, about ninety five miles south west from Allahabad. It is a stupa made of bricks having a moderate size nearly 68 feet in diameter, surrounded by an elaborately carved railing bearing many dedicatory inscriptions. The stupa has wholly disappeared and its richly sculptures were principally devoted to the illustration of Buddhist Jatakas or Birth stories. As at Sanchi the buildings were of different stages the stupa itself probably dating from the time of Asoka while one of the gateways is known to have been erected in the Shunga period. The more or less similar railing, fragments of which exist at Bodhgaya has been generally designated as the 'Asoka Railing' but in fact belongs to Shunga times like the Bharhut gateway.

**Stupa of Sarnath:** The Dharmarajika stupa of Sarnath was possibly erected during the Asokan period. Here we only find the ground plan. Mauryan polish is still visible on its railing. The stupa was erected at a place where Buddha gave his first sermon to his five Brahman companions.

**Stupa of Sanchi:** The principal stupa at Sanchi which stands on the top of a hill at a distance of 25 miles from Bhopal is built of red sandstone. Its diameter is 121 feet and its total height is 77 feet. It is enclosed by a massive plain stone railing having four gates in four different directions, 34 feet in height, covered with a profusion of relief sculptures. The railing too is covered with sculptures depicting either scenes from the life of Buddha or incidents from his legendary past lives. The art is essentially of folk art with an intense feeling of nature. The method is that of continuation narration suggesting everything. The stupa is one of the important monuments of Asokan period. Other stupas in the neighbourhood are more or less alike in form.

**Rock-cut Caves:** The Asokan age is also note worthy in the history of Indian art from the point of view of cave architecture. There are seven rock-cut caves of the Mauryan age. Four caves are to be found on a hill named Barabar in Gaya district. All these caves were excavated for the residence of the monks of Ajivaka sect and these were places of shelter during the rainy season. The cost of such work must have been enormous and the expenditure of so much treasure on the Ajivakas is an evidence of their influential position and the catholic spirit of Asoka for the Ajivakas were extreme fatalists having nothing in common with the Buddhists. Three other caves are to be found on Nagarjuni hill. These caves too were dedicated by the grandson of Asoka – Davanamapriya Dasaratha to the monks of Ajivaka sect.

These rock cut caves are important because of two reasons; firstly, they are the first examples of buildings in rock-cut architecture, and secondly these are the exact imitation of former wooden buildings. The cost, labour and skill in turning these huge rocks into residential places is remarkable in reality. The interiors of these caves are highly polished. Thus the cave architecture in the age of Asoka seems to have attained a high standard of workmanship and excellence.

#### **3.3.4.2.Sculpture**

The figure sculpture of the Mauryan period is important not only in the history of India but also in the world sculpture due to its workmanship, beauty and artistic magnificence. In this class of art, we shall first discuss the pillars of Asoka. Because these are standing independently and upon them we find animal sculpture, these can be placed among the sculptural work.

**Asokan Pillars:** Asoka took special delight in erecting monolithic pillars, inscribed and un-inscribed, in great numbers and designed on a magnificent scale. No less than thirty pillars set up by Asoka have been found so far. Hiuen Tsang mentions specifically sixteen of such pillars, four or five of which can be identified with existing monuments more or less convincingly; and, on the other hand most of the extant pillars are not referred by the Chinese pilgrim. These pillars have been found in Bakhira, Lauriya-Nandangarh, Rampurva, Sanchi, Sarnath, Kaushambi and Allahabad. It is important to note that these pillars are distributed over a large area stretching from the northern

bank of the Ganges to the Nepal border and were erected at the places connected with Buddhism. A Mauryan pillar consists of a shaft, surmounted by the capital. The shaft, plain and circular has a slight taper upwards is made out of a single block of stone (monolithic). Over the shaft is the capital being another piece of stone and fixed to the top of the shaft by means of a copper-dowel. The capital consists of an inverted lotus design, abacus (platform) and carved animal sculpture in the round. The surface of both the shaft and the capital has the Mauryan polish.

The perfect un-inscribed pillar at Bakhira near Basar, the ancient Vaishali in the Muzaffarpur district of Bihar, is a monolith of fine sand stone highly polished for its whole length of 32 feet above the water level. A square pedestal with three steps is said to exist under water. The shaft taper uniformly from a diameter of 49 inches at the water level to 38 at the top. The total height above the level of the water is 44 feet. Including the submerged portion the length of the monument cannot be less than 50 feet and its weight is about 50 tons. The inscribed Lauriya Nandangarh pillar in the Champaran district of Bihar resembles that at Bakhira in design but is lighter and less massive and therefore appears graceful. The polished shaft diminishes from a base diameter of 35 inches to a diameter of only 22 inches at the top. The entire monument is nearly 40 feet high.

Two mutilated pillars exist at Rampurva in the Champaran district of Bihar. One Pillar was surmounted by a finely designed lion and the other un-inscribed pillar had a bull capital. The Asokan pillar found at Sarnath is the most famous among all Asokan pillars. The abacus has an originality in having four animals-elephant, horse, bull and lion-separated from one another by figure of wheels. These wheels and animals have been carved out in moving position. The pillar represents the high watermark of the evolution of the capital. The whole pillar is gracefully united and indeed it ranks among the best sculptures of which our country is proud.

Sixteen centuries later in A.D. 1356, the two Asokan pillars which now stand near Delhi on Firoz Shah Kotla and the Ridge near Bara Hindu Rao Hospital were transported by Sultan Firoz Shah the one from Topra in the Ambala district and the other from Meerut. Their transportation and erection bear eloquent testimony to the skill and resource of the stone cutters and engineers of the Mauryan age. No pillar has yet been discovered in the distant provinces, where the Rock Edicts were incised.

**Figure Sculpture:** A few huge figure sculptures are ascribed to the Mauryan period on the basis of two facts; first they have the Mauryan polish and second they are made of sand stone of chunar. These figure sculptures are mostly the portraits of Yakshas and Yakshinis. Two such Yakshas have been found at Patna having Mauryan polish. However the ascription of these figures to the Mauryan period is by no means all certain. A fragmentary relief on a piece of stone belonging to Mauryan period is remarkable. It is intensely lyrical and subtle figure of a young sorrowing woman.

**Terracotta Heads:** Terracotta is a material combined of sand and mud. A few male heads from Sarnath and Rajghat are also ascribed to the Mauryan period because they are carved out of the chunar sand stone and have the Mauryan polish. It is very likely that they are parts of portrait figure. Their special feature is their headdress.

**Rock-cut elephant at Dhauli (Odisha):** This rock-cut elephant at Dhauli coming out with foreparts of the body from the natural rock is artistically far superior to many Mauryan Sculptures.

**Monolithic railing at Sarnath:** This railing was found at Sarnath. It is made of sand stone of chunar having Mauryan polish. It is artistically excellent and smooth. Foreign influence on Mauryan art European scholars trace the foreign influence on Mauryan Sculpture. Sir John Marshall is of the opinion that the Asokan pillars were adopted and copied from the Persian pillars. Monolithic pillars prove the reality of Persian influence and it appears that early Indian art was largely indebted to Persia for its inspiration, But a minute observation would reveal many

differences between the two. Asoka may have borrowed the idea to raise pillars from Persian art, but it is not reasonable to say that the whole pillar is the imitation of the Persian Pillar. The Sarnath pillar is far less conventional than its prototypes and much superior in both design and execution to anything in Persia.

Scholars like V. Smith find Greek influence on the animal sculpture of the Mauryan period. The treatment of the body and its different parts are said to have been derived from the Greek originals. But the Indian scholars point that we have our own traditions of carving animals for we find much resemblance between the Mauryan bull and that of Indus Valley. Therefore, it may be concluded that though there may be some Hellenistic influence on Mauryan art, yet the theme, spirit and details are purely Indian.

It seems clear that Indian art in the Mauryan period, whatever may have been the nationality of the artists employed, attained a high standard of excellence and merit when compared to anything and that it deserves an honourable place in the artistic achievements of the world.

### **3.3.5. An Estimate of Asoka.**

Asoka is one of the most interesting personalities in the history of India. He had the energy of a Chandragupta, the versatility of a Samudragupta and the catholicity of an Akbar. He was tireless in his exertion and unflagging in his zeal—all directed to the promotion of the spiritual and material welfare of his people whom he looked upon as his children. His illustrious grandfather was accustomed to dispose of cases even when indulging in the luxury of a massage of the limbs. Similarly, Asoka used to listen to reports about the affairs of his people even while 'he was eating, in the harem, in the inner apartment, at the cow pen, in the palanquin and in the parks'. The great soldier who had brought under subjection a huge territory unconquered even by his ever victorious grandfather, could, at the same time, argue points of doctrine and discipline with a fraternity of erudite monks. The statesman who could pilot an empire through the storm and stress of a war that involved the death and deportation of hundreds of thousands of men was, at the same time, capable of organizing religious missions the sphere of whose activities embraced three continents, and transforming a local sect in the Ganges Valley into one of the great religions of the world. The man who penetrated into the jungles of the Nepalese Tarai to pay homage to the birth-place of the Buddhas, bore no ill-will towards the descendants of their Brahmana and Jaina opponents, and granted cave-dwellings to the adherents of a rival sect. The king who undertook tours with the object of granting largesses of gold to Brahmanas and *Sramanas*, admitted to office *Yavanas* in whose country there were neither Brahmanas nor *Sramanas*. He preached the virtues of concord and toleration in an age when religious feeling ran high and disruptive influences were at work within the fold of the Jaina and Buddhist churches. He preached nonviolence when violence in war, religious ritual, royal pastime and festive gatherings was the order of the day. He eschewed military conquest not after defeat but after victory and pursued a policy of patience and gentleness while still possessed of the resources of a mighty empire. The forbearance of this strong man was only matched *by* his truthfulness, and he describes in burning words which no Kalinga patriot could have improved upon, the terrible misery that he had inflicted on a hapless province. The example of Dharmasoka, the pious king, exercised an ennobling influence on posterity. In the second century A.D. Queen Gautami Balasri takes pride in the fact that her son was "alien to hurting life even towards an offending enemy". Even in the fifth century A.D., the rest-houses and free hospitals of Magadha excited the wonder and admiration of foreigners. The benefactions of Dharmasoka were a source of inspiration to royal personages as late as the time of Govindachandra of the Gahadavala dynasty.

We have already seen that the political record of the great Maurya's early years was brilliant. His reign saw the final triumph of those centripetal forces that had been at work since the days of Bimbisara. The conquest of Kalinga completed the unification of non-Tamil India under the

hegemony of Magadha. The dream of a United Jambudvipa was nearly realised. But the policy of *Dhamma-vijaya* which he formulated after the Kalinga War was not likely to promote the cause for which a long line of able sovereigns from Bimbisara to Bindusara had lived and struggled. The statesman who turned civil administrators into religious propagandists, abolished hunting and jousts of arms, entrusted the fierce tribesmen on the North-West Frontier and in the wilds of the Deccan to the tender care of "superintendents of piety" and did not rest till the sound of the war-drum was completely hushed and the only sound that was heard was that of moral teaching, certainly pursued a policy at which Chandragupta Maurya would have looked askance. Dark clouds were looming in the north-western horizon. India needed men of the calibre of Puru and Chandragupta to ensure her protection against the Yavana menace. She got a dreamer. Magadha after the Kalinga War frittered away her conquering energy in attempting a religious revolution, as Egypt did under the guidance of Ikhnaton. The result was politically disastrous as will be shown in the next section. Asoka's attempt to end war met with the same fate as the similar endeavour of President Wilson, According to Dr. Smith's chronology Asoka died *in* 232 B.C., after a reign of about 40 years. A Tibetan tradition is said to affirm that the great Emperor breathed his last at Taxila.

### **3.3.6. Causes of the decline of the Mauryan Empire**

India came to enjoy a proud position and became the nucleus of diffusion of its civilization in the world under the Mauryas. However, the anti-climax came immediately after Asoka and the Mauryan Empire disintegrated within fifty years of his death. It collapsed as suddenly as it had risen; but the suddenness of its collapse is not as startling as its longevity. In those early times with the primitive mode of transport and communication, to hold together different and diverse social, political, and cultural groups in a country as vast as India for even a century and a half was virtually a task of political geniuses and not dreamers as the Mauryan kings have sometimes been accused.

#### **3.3.6.1. Brahminical Reaction**

Asoka has been sometimes held responsible for the downfall of the empire. The end of the dynasty at the coup of Pushyamitra Shunga was considered Brahmanical revolt against the pro-Buddhist policy of Asoka. But there is no support for this contention. Asoka never allowed his personal religion to come into conflict with his state religion (Dharma). A king who never felt tired of teaching his subjects the virtues of religious toleration, and who encouraged the different religious demonstrations all over his empire could not be blamed of religious intolerance. As aptly observed by one critic "his general policy was neither specifically pro-Buddhist nor anti-Brahman. It was open to acceptance or rejection by all or any." Moreover, the Brahmanical dynasty founded by Pushyamitra Shunga, the annihilator of the Mauryans, was itself overthrown by another Brahmanical dynasty of the Kanvas. Thus political and not religious causes were at the root of this change in dynasty accentuated no doubt by the vastness of the country.

#### **3.3.6.2. Centralised Nature of Empire**

History of India is a continuous interplay of centrifugal (i.e., breaking away from the centre) and centripetal (i.e., on a centre) tendencies, when the former are on the ascendance regionalism and disintegration assert themselves as was the case after Asoka, and when the latter manifest themselves, the political unification becomes a natural sequence. The nature and scope of the unification depends on the personality of the unifier. The Mauryan Empire was not an exception to his historical phenomenon.

#### **3.3.6.3. Asoka's Policy of Peaceful Existence**

Asoka's eschewing of war and its substitution by dharmavijaya (conquest by religion of course did not lead to the disbanding of the army; nor was the advocate of it for his non-violence was not of such an unrealistic nature. It had likely dimmed the moral and spirit of the army and farsightedness of his successors. It is because of this that the rise of powers and new political combination of the Bactrians and Parthians across the Hindukush were overlooked, and frontiers



were left inadequately guarded. This very dynastic empire had its inherent weakness of too much dependence on the personality of the king and when the supply of equally capable monarchs were exhausted. All the evils of centrifugal tendencies like rise of factions in the court, assertion of independence by the provincial governors and viceroys in the distant regions, and the resulting foreign invasions manifested, themselves. The Mauryans, in spite of creating a permanent cadre of administrative service under the name Mahamatras could not check these tendencies, mostly because of the weak successors of Asoka.

#### **3.3.6.4. Worthless Successor of Asoka**

Notwithstanding any high sounding theoretical basis claimed of monarchy in ancient India, Mauryan kings in practice were more or less despots. And as you know quite well no despot however, efficient, benevolent or conscientious and who knows his obligation to his subject, can despite his best efforts assure that his successors would follow his footsteps. There is no certain method by which he can pass on his virtues and qualifications to his successors. Thus most frequently-and the history of India is replete with innumerable such instances-a good and benevolent king is succeeded by a worthless, profligate and inefficient successor. This is the chief bane of almost every personal rule. The same thing happened when Asoka died. His successors, by and large, were weak and irresponsible despots who wasted much of their time, energy and expense in dissipation at the cost of the subjects' welfare and "thus the dominion of Dharma (Dharma-Chakra), the kingdom of Righteousness which Asoka sought to establish, could not survive after him because it was not broadbased upon the people's will through a democracy which is independence of the personal factor in a monarchy." (R.K. Mukherjee).

#### **3.3.6.5. Expensive Mauryan Bureaucracy**

We should never ignore the economic cause which precipitated the downfall and disintegration of the Mauryan empire. The cumbersome and expensive Mauryan bureaucracy despite its excellent record of efficiency under Chandragupta and Asoka, tended to be lax, indifferent and parasitic. The cost of administration increased phenomenally. But the resources remained almost static. The debasement of currency resorted to in the latter part of the Mauryan rule was indicative of the new trend towards economic stagnation. Growing weakness of the economy had its inevitable impact on administrative efficiency and his coupled with the weakness of the rulers who succeeded Asoka unavoidably led to the early dissolution of the once powerful Mauryan Empire.

One should also not overlook another factor. Asoka by preaching his Dharma had unwittingly deprived monarchy of its traditional strength based on the claims of divinity. This irresistibly led to one inevitable outcome. "Gradually Dharma replaced the idea of a state. Even a divine was no longer infallible, because an unrighteous king could be removed." (Romila Thapar)

Thus, a number of causes are responsible for the decline of Mauryan dynasty, but it is difficult to place them in order of importance. One set of issues has to do with the size of the empire at a time when the means of communication were poor. The outlying areas always had a temptation to pull away from the centre, and there is some evidence of the reassertion of regionalism under the fairly autonomous governors and princes within the empire. This pulling-away process would intensify in areas where the people felt oppressed by the system. The Mauryan bureaucracy failed to establish long lasting popular institutions through which the local people could participate in their own governance. The state used espionage much too frequently for a true bond of trust to develop among the people. One may rightly suspect that the officers appointed by Asoka to promote harmony in the countryside were not above using spies to collect information. The large-scale economy of the empire also concealed an underlying stress of raising enormous revenues through a near penal form of taxation. On the other hand, feelings for autonomy grew in some of the conquered areas where substantial development had taken place, such as the provinces of Kalinga or

Avanti. Historians have also suggested that the overtly Buddhist pieties of Asoka had made a large mass of people subscribing to the Brahmanic traditions antipathetic to the empire, thereby weakening the internal cohesion of the state. This point has been challenged on the grounds that Asoka dealt fairly towards all in his kingdom. There may be something in another view that holds that Asoka's non-militarism undermined the strength of the army, leading to disaffection within the ranks. The last Mauryan emperor was stabbed to death by his own commander-in-chief at a military parade as he had been weak and indecisive. All Asoka's successors lacked force and character, a fact that would certainly have contributed to the decline of the empire. That decline was accelerated by both external and internal threats.

### **3.3.7. Conclusion**

Thus we see that, the Mauryan Empire was the first national empire of India. Emperor of this empire truly achieved the concept of Chakravartin status. Third and most powerful Emperor Asoka not only immortalized himself through his military policy but also his policy of Dhamma and paternalistic policy, patronization of Art and Architecture and finally propagation of Buddhism to other parts of world made him famous in the annal of monarchs in human history. The Empire lasted a little over a century and broke up fitly years after the death of Asoka. Slowly, the various princes of the empire began to break away and set up independent kingdoms. In 185 BC. the Mauryan king was overthrown by Pushyamitra Shunga, an ambitious Commander-in-Chief of armed forces. He started the Shunga dynasty in Magadha. The Mauryan Empire ushered in a dream that was to survive and echo again and again in centuries to come.

### **3.3.8. Summary**

- *Asoka was "the greatest of kings" surpassing Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar and other renowned Emperors of the world.*
- *According to H.G. Wells "Amidst the tens and thousands of names of monarchs that crowd the columns of history, the name of Asoka shines and shines almost alone, a star". Asoka was true to his ideals.*
- *He was not a dreamer but a man of practical genius. His Dhamma is so universal that it appeals to humanity even today. He was an example in history for his benevolent administration and also for following the policy of non-aggression even after his victory in the war. His central ideal was to promote the welfare of humanity.*
- *The most important event of Asoka's reign was his victorious war with Kalinga in 261 B.C. Although there is no detail about the cause and course of the war, the effects of the war were described by Asoka himself in the Rock edict XIII.*
- *After the war he annexed Kalinga to the Mauryan Empire. Another most important effect of the Kalinga war was that Asoka embraced Buddhism under the influence of Buddhist monk, Upagupta.*
- *Although Asoka embraced Buddhism and took efforts to spread Buddhism, his policy of Dhamma was a still broad concept. It was a way of life, a code of conduct and a set of principles to be adopted and practiced by the people at large. His principles of Dhamma were clearly stated in his Edicts.*
- *The monuments before the period of Asoka were mostly made of wood and therefore perished. The use of stone started from the time of Asoka. Even of the numerous monuments of Asoka, only a few have remained. His palace and monasteries and most of his stupas have disappeared. The only remaining stupa is at Sanchi. The artistic remains of the Mauryan period can be seen in the sic category.*
- *There are multiple causes for the decline of the Mauryan empire such as weak successors, partition of empire and administrative abuses after Asoka's reign. The combination of these*

*factors speeded up the breakup of the Mauryan empire and facilitated Pushyamitra Sunga to drive away the Mauryan power and establish the Sunga dynasty.*

**3.3.9. Exercise**

- Mention the efforts taken by Asoka for the spread of Buddhism.
- Assess the significance of the Mauryan art.
- Analyse the causes for the decline of the Mauryan empire.
- Examine the achievements of Asoka after Kalinga War.
- Give an account of Asoka's achievements and his policy of Dhamma.

**3.3.10. Further Readings**

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**Unit-4**  
**Chapter-I**  
**POST MAURYAN POLITY IN INDIA**

**Ruling dynasties in Northern and Southern India: Sungas, Satavahanas and Kushanas.**

**Structure**

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- 4.1.5. Socio-Economic Condition of India in Post Mauryan Era- A Review**
- 4.1.6. Conclusion**
- 4.1.7. Summary**
- 4.1.8. Exercise**
- 4.1.9. Further Reading**

#### 4.1.0. Objective

After learning this lesson the students will be able to explain

- the reign of Pushyamitra and the importance of Sunga rule;
- the Satavahana rule and Gautami Putra Satakarni's achievements;
- the socio-economic conditions of the Satavahana period and also their cultural contributions;
- the Kushana and Emperor Kanishka's achievements and his role for the spread of Mahayana Buddhism;
- the salient features of the Gandhara and Mathura school of art; and
- the socio-economic condition of India in the post-Mauryan era.

#### 4.1.1. Introduction

The Mauryas had done much for Indian unity by bringing the greater part of the country under "one umbrella," by defending it against the generals of Alexander and Seleukos, by establishing a uniform system of administration, by using Prakrit for official purposes throughout the length and breadth of the empire and attempting to knit together the different sections of its composite population by the strong tie of a common Dharma. With the fall of the dynasty Indian history for the time being loses its unity. The command of one single political authority is no longer obeyed from the snowy heights of the Hindukush to the verdant plains of Bengal and the Upper Carnatic. Hordes of outlanders pour through the north-western gates of the country and establish aggressive monarchies in Gandhara, Western Malwa and neighbouring regions. The Punjab is seized by foreigners and the Deccan by local dynasties. The political connection of the Madhyadesa with the valleys of the Indus and the Grodavari is temporarily snapped, and the splendor of the Magadhan metropolis is dimmed by the rising glory of Sakala, Vidisa, Pratishtana and other cities. Brahmanism gains ground in the Ganges valley and the Deccan, while Jainism flourishes in Orissa. The sects of the Mahesvaras and the Bhagavatas become powers to reckon with. The study of Sanskrit receives an impetus at the hands of the grammarians of the Madhyadesa, while Prakrit literature enjoys the patronage of the courts of Pratishtana and Kuntala in Southern India. This chapter discuss the political and socio-religious as well as economical condition of India in the post Mauryan India.

#### 4.1.2. The Sungas

Brihadratha, the last Maurya Emperor of Magadha, was, according to the Puranas and the Harsha-charita, assassinated by his general, Pushyamitra, who usurped the throne, and founded a new line of kings. The dynasty founded by him known to history as that of the Sungas. Capital continued to be, as of old, Pataliputra, and probably all the central or home provinces of the empire recognized the usurper's authority, which extended to the south as far as the Narmada River, and presumably embraced the territories in the Ganges basin, corresponding with the modern Bihar, Tirhut, and the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh. It is unlikely that either the later Mauryas or the Sungas exercised any jurisdiction in the Panjab.

##### 4.1.2.1. Origin of the Sunga

The origin of the usurping family is wrapped up in obscurity. According to the *Divyavadana* Pushyamitra was descended from the Mauryas. The *Malavikagnimitram*, on the other hand, makes Agnimitra, son of Pushyamitra, a scion of the Baimbika family, while the *Puranas*, and apparently the *Harsha-Charita* represent these kings as Sungas. One writer suggests that the Sungas whose names ended in Mitm were Iranians, worshippers of Mithra (the Sun). Others, regard them as Indian Brahmanas. Curiously enough, Panini connects the Sungas with the well-known Brahmana family of the Bharadvajas. Saungiputra, "son of a female descendant of Sunga," is the name of a teacher in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. Saungayani, "descendant of Saunga" is the name of a teacher in the

*Vamsa Bralmaya*. Macdonell and Keith point out that the Sungas are known as teachers in the *Ahalayana Srauta Sutra*. In view of the conflicting statements in the *Malavikagnimitram*, the *Puranas*, etc., it is difficult to say whether Pushyamitra and his known descendants (down to Vasumitra) were Sungas of the Bharadvaja Gotra or Baimbikas of Kasyapa lineage. The historic "Sungas" of the time of Dhanabhuti are assigned by competent scholars, to the period B.C. 100-75. This accords with the testimony of the *Harsha-charita* which, while denying this dynastic epithet to Pushyamitra, applies it to the latest kings of the Puranic list, the immediate predecessors of Vasudeva Kanva.

It is not known for certain when and why the family of Pushyamitra, like the Kadambas of a later date, exchanged the quill for the sword. There is no reason to think that Asoka tyrannised over the Brahmanas and that his oppression forced them to engage in non-priestly pursuits. Brahmana Senapatis were by no means rare in ancient India. The fact that officers of this class found employment under the Later Mauryas proves conclusively that the latter could not have pursued an anti Brahmanic policy.

#### **4.1.2.2. Dominion of Pushyamitra**

The Dominions of Pushyamitra extended to the river Narmada, and included the cities of Pataliputra, Ayodhya, Vidisa, and, if the author of the *Divyavadana* and Taranatha are to be believed, Jalandhara and Sakala are also part of Pushyamitra dominion. It appears from the *Divyavadana*, that the Emperor himself continued to reside in Pataliputra. The *Malavikagnimitram* tells us that Vidisa (Besnagar in Eastern Malwa) was governed by Prince Agnimitra, probably as his father's viceroy (*Goptri*). Another viceroy, also a relation of the emperor, may have governed Kosala. Agnimitra's queen had a brother of inferior caste, named Virasena. He was placed in command of a frontier fortress on the banks of the Narmada.

#### **4.1.2.3. Relation with Vidarbha**

It appears from the *Malavikagnimitram* that the foundation of the dynasty of Pushyamitra almost synchronised with the establishment of a new kingdom in the Deccan, viz., Vidarbha or Berar. Agnimitra's Amatya (Minister) refers to the kingdom, as "*achiradhishtita*" (established not long ago) and compares its king to a tree which is newly planted and, therefore, not firm. The king of Vidarbha is represented as a relation (sister's husband) of the Maurya minister (Sachiva) and a natural enemy (Prahrityamitra) of the family of Pushyamitra. It appears that during the reign of Brihadratha Maurya there were two parties or factions in the Magadha Empire, one headed by the king's Sachiva or minister, the other headed by his Senapati or general. The minister's partisan Yajnasena got the ruler-ship of Vidarbha, while the general's son Agnimitra obtained the viceroyalty of Vidisa. When the general organised his *coup d'etat*, killed the king, and imprisoned the minister, Yajnasena apparently declared his independence and commenced hostilities against the usurping family. This is why he is called *achiradhishtita-rajya* and *pralcrity-amitra* by Agnimitra and his Amatya.

The *Malavikagnimitram*, says that when Kumara Madhavasena, a cousin of Yajnasena and a partisan of Agnimitra, was secretly on his way to Vidisa, he was captured by an *Antapaia* (Warden of the Marches) of Yajnasena and kept in custody. Agnimitra demanded his surrender. The Vidarbha king promised to give him up on condition that his brother-in-law, the Maurya minister, should be released. This enraged the ruler of Vidisa who ordered Virasena to march against Vidarbha. Yajnasena was defeated. Madhavasena was released and the kingdom of Vidarbha was divided between the two cousins, the river Varada (Wardha) forming the boundary between the two states. Both the rulers seem, to have accepted the suzerainty of the House of Pushyamitra.

#### **4.1.2.4. Hypothetical Conquest of Kharavela**

In the opinion of several scholars an enemy move formidable than Yajnasena threatened Pushyamitra's dominions from Kalinga (Orissa). In his Oxford History of India Dr. Smith accepts

the view that Kharavela, king of Kalinga, defeated Pushyamitra who is identified with Bahapatimita or Bahasatimita, a prince supposed to be mentioned in the Hathigumpha Inscription of the Kalinga monarch. Prof. Dubreuil also seems to endorse the view that Kharavela was an antagonist of Pushyamitra, and that the Hathigumpha Inscription is dated the 165<sup>th</sup> year of Raja-Muriya-kala (era of king Maurya) which corresponds to the 13th year of the reign of Kharavela.

However, the supposed conquest of Kharavela was challenged by many historians. On the possible evidence based on Hatigumpha inscription of Kharavela we can assumed that Mahapadma Nanda and his sons ruled in the fourth century B. C, Kharavela is to be assigned either to the third century B. C, (taking *ti-vasa-sata* to mean 103) or to the first century B.C. (taking *ti-vasa-sata* to mean 300). In neither case could he be regarded as a contemporary of Pushyamitra who ruled from about 187 to 151 B.C.

#### **4.1.2.5. The Yavana Invasion.**

The only undoubted historical events of Pushyamitra's time, besides the *coup d' etat* of c. 187 B. C, and the Vidarbha war, are the Greek invasion from the North West referred to by Patanjali and Kalidasa, and the celebration of two horse-sacrifices. Patanjali is usually regarded as a contemporary of Pushyamitra. Sir R. G. Bhandarkar draws our attention to the passage in the Mahabhashya: "here we perform the sacrifices for Pushyamitra" which is cited as an illustration of the *Varttika* teaching the use of the present tense to denote an action which has been begun but not finished. The instances given by Patanjali of the use of the imperfect to indicate an action well-known to people, but not witnessed by the speaker, and still possible to have been seen by him, are, "*arunad Yavanah Saketam: arunad Yavano Madhyamikam.*" This, says Sir R. G. Bhandarkar, shows that a certain Yavana or Greek chief had besieged Saketa or Ayodhya and another place called Madhyamika when Patanjali wrote this. It is, however, possible that the instances cited by the great grammarian are stock illustrations which are simply quoted by him from earlier authorities. But a war with Greeks in the days of Pushyamitra is vouched for by Kalidasa. In his *Malavikagnimitram* the poet refers to a conflict between prince Vasumitra, grandson and general of Pushyamitra, and a Yavana on the southern (or right) bank of the Sindhu. Unfortunately the name of the leader of the invaders is not given either in the *Mahabhashya* or in the *Malavikagnimitram*. There is considerable divergence of opinion with regard to his identity. But all agree that he was a Bactrian Greek.

It is permissible to conjecture that one of the two conquering kings Menander and Demetrios, was identical with the Yavana leader who penetrated to Saketa in Oudh, Madhyamika near Chitor, and the river Sindhu possibly in Central India, in the time of Pushyamitra. Smith and many other scholars identified the invader with Menander. On the other hand, Dr. Bhandarkar suggested, the identification of the invader with Demetrios. We learn from Polybius that Demetrios was a young man at the time of Antiochos III' s invasion (between 211 and 206 B.C.). Justin says that Demetrios was " king of the Indians " when Eukratides was king of the Bactrians and Mithradates was the king of the Parthians. "Almost at the same time that Mithradates ascended the throne among the Parthians, Eukratides began to reign among the Bactrians ; both of them being great men...Eukratides carried on several wars with great spirit, and though much reduced by his losses in them, yet, when he was besieged by Demetrios, king of the Indians, with a garrison of only 300 soldiers, he repulsed, by continual sallies, a force of 60,000 enemies". Dr. Smith assigns Mitbradates to the period from 171 to 136 B.C. Eukratides and Demetrios must also be assigned to that period, that is the middle of the second century B.C. We have seen that Demetrios was a young man and a prince in or about 206 B.C. We now find that he ruled as king of the Indians about the middle of the second century B. C. He was, therefore, the Indo-Greek contemporary of Pushyamitra who ruled from c. 187 to 151 B. C. Menander, on the other hand, must have ruled over the Indo-

Greek kingdom much later, as will be apparent from the facts retrieved from Classical writers and Buddhist literature.

According to the Buddhist tradition recorded in the *Milinda-panho*, Milinda or Menander flourished "500 years" i.e., not earlier than the fifth century after the *Parinirvana*, "*parinibbanato panchavassa sate atikhante ete npajjissanti*". This tradition points to a date not earlier than the period 144-44 B.C. according to Ceylonese reckoning, or 86 B.C.-14 A.D. according to Cantonese tradition, for Menander. Thus both according various sources Menander could not have been the Indo-Greek contemporary of Pushyamitra. It is Demetrios who should, therefore, be identified with the Yavana invader referred to by Patanjali and Kalidasa, one of whose armies was defeated by Prince Vasumitra.

#### **4.1.2.6. The Mantri-parishad in the days of Pushyamitra**

Patanjali refers to the Sabha of Pushyamitra. B u t it is uncertain as to whether the term refers to a Royal Durbar, a tribunal of justice, or a Council of Magnates. The existence of Councils or Assemblies of Ministers (Mantri-Parishad) is, however, vouched for by Kalidasa. If the poet is to be believed the Council continued to be an important element of the governmental machinery.

He gives us the implant information that even vice regal princes were assisted by Parishads. The *Malavikagnimitram* refers in clear terms to the dealings of Prince Agnimitra, the Viceroy of Vidisa (in Eastern Malwa), with his Parishad: It seems that the *Amatya-parishad* or *Mantri-parishad* was duly consulted whenever an important matter of foreign policy had to be decided upon.

#### **4.1.2.7. Horse Sacrifice**

Pushyamitra determined to revive and celebrate with appropriate magnificence the ancient rite of the horse-sacrifice (*asvamedha*), which, according to immemorial tradition, could only be performed by a paramount sovereign, and involved as a preliminary a formal and successful challenge to all rival claimants to supreme power, delivered after this fashion :- "A horse of a particular colour was consecrated by the performance of certain ceremonies, and was then turned loose to wander for a year. The king, or his representative, followed the horse with an army, and when the animal entered a foreign country, the ruler of that country was bound either to fight or to submit. If the liberator of the horse succeeded in obtaining or enforcing the submission of all the countries over which it passed, he returned in triumph with all the vanquished rajas in his train; but if he failed, he was disgraced and his pretensions ridiculed. After his successful return, a great festival was held, at which the horse was sacrificed".

The Yavanas and all other rivals having been disposed of in due course, Pushyamitra was justified in his claim to rank as the paramount power of India, and straightway proceeded to announce his success by a magnificent celebration of the sacrifice at his capital. The dramatist Kalidasa, who has so well preserved the traditions of the time in his play on King Agnimitra, professes to record the very words of the invitation addressed by the victorious king to his son, the crown prince, as follows: "May it be well with thee! From the sacrificial enclosure the commander-in-chief Pushyamitra sends this message to his son Agnimitra, who is in the territory of Vidisa, affectionately embracing him. Be it known unto thee that I, having been consecrated for the Rajasuya [i. e. asvamedha] sacrifice, let loose free from all check or curb a horse which was to be brought back after a year, appointing Vasumitra as its defender, girt with a guard of a hundred Rajputs. This very horse wandering on the right [or 'south'] bank of the Sindhu was claimed by a cavalry squadron of the Yavanas. Then there was a fierce struggle between the two forces. Then Vasumitra, the mighty bowman, having overcome his foes, rescued by force my excellent horse, which they were endeavoring to carry off. Accordingly I will now sacrifice, having had my horse brought back to me by my grandson, even as Anumat brought back the horse to Sagara. Therefore



you must dismiss anger from your mind, and without delay come with my daughters-in-law to behold the sacrifice”.

#### **4.1.2.8. Beginning of Brahminical reaction**

The exaggerated regard for the sanctity of animal life, which was one of the most cherished features of Buddhism, and the motive of Asoka’s most characteristic legislation, had necessarily involved the prohibition of bloody sacrifices, which are essential to certain forms of Brahminical worship and were believed by the orthodox to possess the highest saving efficacy. The memorable horse-sacrifice of Pushyamitra marked the beginning of the Brahminical reaction, which was fully developed five centuries later in the time of Samudragupta and his successors.

#### **4.1.2.9. Accused Persecution of Buddhist**

But the revival of the practice of sacrifice by an orthodox Hindu ruler did not necessarily involve persecution of Jains and Buddhists who abhorred the rite. There is no evidence that any member of those sects was ever compelled to sacrifice against his will, as, under Buddhist and Jain domination, the orthodox were forced to abstain from ceremonies regarded by them as essential to salvation. Pushyamitra has been accused of persecution, but the evidence is merely that of a legend of no authority.

But, although the alleged proscription of Buddhism by Pushyamitra is not supported by evidence, and it is true that the gradual extinction of that religion in India was due in the main to causes other than persecution, it is also true that from time to time fanatic kings indulged in savage outbursts of cruelty, and committed genuine acts of persecution directed against Jains or Buddhists as such. Well-established instances of such proceedings will be met with in the course of this history, and others, which do not come within its limits, are on record. That such outbreaks of wrath should have occurred is not wonderful, if we consider the extreme oppressiveness of the Jain and Buddhist prohibitions when ruthlessly enforced, as they certainly were by some rajas, and probably by Asoka. The wonder rather is that persecutions were so rare, and that as a rule the various sects managed to live together in harmony, and in the enjoyment of fairly impartial official favour.

#### **4.1.2.10. The Later Sunga**

Pushyamitra died in or about 151 B.C., probably after a reign of 36 years,<sup>1</sup> and was succeeded by his son Agnimitra. The name of a prince named Agnimitra has been found on several copper coins discovered in Rohilkhand.

When Pushyamitra, some five years subsequent to the retreat of Menander, died, after a long and eventful reign, he was succeeded by his son, the crown prince Agnimitra, who had governed the southern provinces during his father’s lifetime. He reigned but a few years, and was succeeded by Sujyeshtha, probably a brother, who was followed seven years later by Vasumitra, a son of Agnimitra, who as a youth had guarded the sacrificial horse on behalf of his aged grandfather. The next four reigns are said to have been abnormally short, amounting together to only seventeen years. The inference that the extreme brevity of these reigns indicates a period of confusion, during which palace revolutions were frequent, is strongly confirmed by the one incident of the time which has survived in tradition. Sumitra, another son of Agnimitra, who was, we are told, inordinately devoted to the stage, was surprised when in the midst of his favorite actors by one Mitradeva, who “severed his head with a scimitar, as a lotus is shorn from its stalk”. The ninth king, Bhagavata, is credited with a long reign of twenty-six years, but we know nothing about him. The tenth king, Devabhuti, or Devabhumi, was, we are told, a man of licentious habits, and lost his life while engaged in a discreditable intrigue. The dynasty thus came to an unhonored end after having occupied the throne for a hundred and twelve years.

#### **4.1.2.11. Importance of the Sunga period in Indian History.**

The rule of the emperors of the house of Pushyamitra marks an important epoch in the history of India in general and of Central India in particular. The renewed incursions of the Yavanas, which once threatened to submerge the whole of the Madhyadem, received a check, and the Greek dynasts of the borderland reverted to the prudent policy of their Seleukidan precursors. There was an outburst of activity in the domains of religion, literature and art, comparable to that of the glorious epoch of the Guptas. In the history of these activities the names of three Central Indian localities stand pre-eminent:

Vidisa (Besnagar), Gonarda and Bharhut. As Poucher points out " it was the ivory-workers of Vidisa who carved, in the immediate vicinity of their town, one of the monumental gates of Sanchi." Inscriptions at Vidisa (and Ghosundi) testify to the growing importance and wide prevalence of the Bhagavata religion. Though no Asoka arose to champion this faith, the missionary propaganda of its votaries must have been effective even in the realms of Yavana princes, and a Yavana duta or ambassador was one of its most notable converts. Gonarda was the traditional birth-place of the celebrated Patanjali, the greatest literary genius of the period. Bharhut saw the construction of the famous railing which has made the sovereignty of the Sungas (*Suganam raja*) immortal.

#### **4.1.3. The Satavahanas**

In the Deccan, the Satavahanas established their independent rule after the decline of the Mauryas. Their rule lasted for about 450 years. They were also known as the Andhras. The Puranas and inscriptions remain important sources for the history of Satavahanas. Among the inscriptions, the Nasik and Nanaghat inscriptions throw much light on the reign of Gautamiputra Satakarni. The coins issued by the Satavahanas are also helpful in knowing the economic conditions of that period. The founder of the Satavahana dynasty was Simuka.

##### **4.1.3.1. Identity of the Satavahanas**

The Pauranic genealogies refer to the kings of 'Andhra-Jati'. Some Puranas style them as Andhrabhrityas. The Nanaghat and Nasik cave inscriptions and coins discovered in the Deccan mention the names of several kings of 'Satavahana-Kula'. On the basis of certain names, and their order of succession common to various kings mentioned in the two sources, some scholars identified the Satavahanas of the epigraphical records and coins with the Andhras of the Puranas. However the Puranas never use the term 'Satavahana' and the inscriptions and coins do not refer to the Satavahanas as the Andhras. On the basis of this, some scholars strongly objected to the identification.

According to R.G. Bhandarkar, 'The Andhrabhritya dynasty of the Puranas is the same as the Satavahana dynasty of the inscriptions'. The basis, he relied upon, is that the names occurring in the inscriptions and on the coins as well as the order (of their succession) sufficiently agree with those given in the Puranas under the Andhrabhritya dynasty. He explained the term 'Andhrabhritya' as meaning 'Andhras who were once servants or dependents.' Dr. K. Gopalachari asserted that the Satavahanas were Andhras by tribal connection. He suggested that either they were the scions of the royal family in the Andhradesa or Andhra fortune-hunters who accepted service in the western Deccan under the Mauryan suzerains, thereby getting the Puranic appellation 'Andhrabhritya' and that after Asoka's death their descendants might have struck a blow in their own interests in the land of their adoption.

J. Burgess, V.A. Smith, E.J. Rapson, L.D. Barnett and P.T. Srinivasa Ayyangar held the same opinion as that of Bhandarkar as regards the Andhra-Satavahana identity. However V.S. Suktankar, K.P. Jayaswal, H.C. Roychaudhuri and V.S. Bakhle rejected the Andhra-Satavahana equation. Jayaswal regarded the Satavahanas as probable representatives of the Satiyaputras of the Asokan records. In view of certain common names and the order of succession, one has to say that

two different dynasties with same names of kings ruled over the same area during the same period, which is impossible. Thus it appears most likely that the Satavahanas belonged to the Andhra Community.

#### **4.1.3.2.Home Land of the Satavahanas**

A subject of controversy regarding the Satavahanas is their homeland or origin. There are conflicting theories and contradictory opinions regarding this. Earlier scholars like D.R. Bhandarkar conjectured that the land of the Andhras must have at the early period consisted of certain parts of the Central Provinces together with the Visakhapatnam district and may have also included the Godavari and Krishna districts. The eastern Deccan was not called Andhra after its conquest by the Satavahanas. Andhradesa existed where it is today even before the Satavahanas came into prominence.

Several theory such as the Canarese origin, Vidarbha origin, Maharashtra origin and Andhra origin are put forth by several historians. Out of all the Andhra origin theory is more noteworthy. The theory that the eastern part of Deccan, i.e. Andhradesa was the homeland of the Satavahanas, is championed by scholars like E.J. Rapson, V.A. Smith, R.G. Bhandarkar, J. Burgess and others. Suktankar and others held this opinion that the Satavahanas came to power from Andhradesa as unwarranted mainly on four grounds: (1) Their earliest records, epigraphic and numismatic, have been discovered at Nanaghat and Nasik in the Western Deccan; (2) In Hathigumpha inscription of Kharavela, the dominions of the contemporary Satakarni are spoken of as being to the west of Kharavela's own kingdom of Kalinga; (3) Bala Sri's inscription while recounting the territorial possessions of her son, Gautamiputra Satakarni makes no mention of any locality in the Andhra area; and (4) the first available Satavahana records begin to appear in Andhradesa only during the reign of his successor Vasisthiputra Pulomavi.

These arguments that Satakarni of the Nanaghat record, who performed two Asvamedhas, one Rajasuya and other sacrifices, bore the title 'Dakshinapathapati', i.e. the lord of Deccan. Deccan naturally includes Andhradesa which is its eastern part. If it is conceded that the Satavahanas were Andhras and that they were masters of the Deccan, then the sentence 'heedless of Satakarni, he sent his forces to west' in Kharavela's inscription does not mean that Satakarni's dominions were confined only to the west of Kalinga and had no connection with the Andhra area. Further Bala Sri's record has not completely ignored the Andhra area. It refers to Siritana (Srisailam), Mahendra (the Eastern Ghats) and 'Assaka' (the south-east province of Hyderabad state and the Godavari district), as within her son's dominions.

Moreover the earliest coins known hitherto were those of Satakarni I, the third member of the dynasty. Some very important coins have come to light recently. Of such coins the Kondapur coins bear the legend 'Sadvahana'. On palaeographical grounds, this Satavahana can be placed in 3rd century B.C. Dr. P.V. Parabrahma Sastri collected very recently over hundred early coins near the village Kotitingala on the eastern side of the hillock called Munulagutta on the right bank of the river Godavari in the Peddabankur taluk of the Karimnagar district of Andhra Pradesh. These included seven coins belonging to the first Satavahana ruler Simuka. This discovery is of momentous importance for the history of the Satavahanas. It leaves no doubt about the association of the Satavahanas with Andhra from the very start. The legend on these coins strengthens the possibility that king Satavahana of Kondapur coins is none other than Simuka himself who is called Simuka Satavahana in a Nanaghat label inscription also. The Jain sources mention Satavahana as the first Andhra king. The Kathasaritsagara contains a story about Satavahana. Therefore Satavahana or Simuka Satavahana of the Kondapur and Kotilingala coins respectively is the same Satavahana who founded the imperial Andhra line and his successors called themselves Satavahanas.

With regard to the capitals of the Satavahana kings, unreliable and much later legend points to Srikakulam in the Krishna district, which cannot stand for scrutiny. Dhanyakataka (Dharanikota

in the Guntur district) seems to be the eastern capital and when Maharashtra became part of Andhra empire and when the Satavahanas concentrated their more attention on western Deccan because of the Saka-pahlava menace. Paithan became the seat of their government in the west.

#### **4.1.3.3. Political History of the Satavahanas**

The vague, disputed and uncorroborated doubtful evidences form the basis for the history of the Satavahanas. The Jain sources mention Satavahana as the first king in the family. The Kathasaritsagara also contains a story about Satavahana. The Kondapur coins bear the legend 'Sadvahana'. On scriptal grounds this Satavahana is placed close to (either before or contemporaneous with) Simuka, the first ruler of the family mentioned in the Puranas. The latest discovery, Kotilingala coins (from Karimnagar district) included seven coins belonging to this Simuka. The legend on these coins strengthens the possibility that the king Satavahana of Kondapur coins is none other than Simuka himself who is called Simuka Satavahana in a Nanaghat label inscription also. It may be assumed that Simuka Satavahana was the founder of the dynasty and his successors called themselves Satavahanas.

Though Simuka Satavahana was the reputed founder of the Satavahana line of kings, he had not founded an independent state. He was probably the first to bring several Andhra family groups together and to oblige them to recognise him as their mutual and unique leader. He emerged as a prominent figure about 271 B.C. When the great Asoka Maurya, according to the Buddhist sources, was waging a bitter war of succession against his brothers. With Asoka's show of force in the Kalinga war, Simuka and his associates who held power for 23 years were content with their semi-independent status, Kanha (Krishna), the brother and successor of Simuka, came under the spell of Asoka's increasing zeal for Dharma.

A cave at Nasik for the Sramanas was constructed. Taking advantage of Asoka's death and the disturbed conditions in the Magadhan capital, Kanha probably broke off from the Mauryan yoke and acquired an independent status for the area under his authority.

The earliest of the Satavahana rulers to receive wide recognition was Satakami-II (184 B.C.-128 B.C.), the sixth of the Matsya corresponding to the third of the Vayu list and also to Satakami of both Kharavela's Hathigumpha inscription and Naganika's Nanaghat record. The wide recognition was due to his policy of military expansion in all directions. He defied Kharavela of Kalinga. He was the 'lord of Pratishthana' (modern Paithan in the north-western Deccan. He conquered eastern Malwa which was being threatened by the Sakas and the Greeks. He gained control of the region of Sanchi. After conquering the Godavari valley, Satakami became the 'lord of the Southern Regions' (Dakshinapathapati). He supported the brahman orthodoxy and performed an Aswamedha to establish his claim to an empire.

The Satavahanas did not hold the western Deccan for long. They were gradually pushed out of the west by the Sakas (Western Kshatrapas). The Kshaharata Nahapana's coins in the Nasik area indicate that the Western Kshatrapas controlled this region by the first century A.D. By becoming master of wide regions including Malwa, Southern Gujarat, and Northern Konkan, from Broach to Sopara and the Nasik and Poona districts, Nahapana rose from the status of a mere Kshatrapa in the year 41 (58 A.D.) to that of Mahakshatrapa in the year 46 (63 A.D.).

Gatitami putra Satakami, the 23rd king of the Matsya list, was one of the most illustrious rulers of ancient India. His reign is placed between 62 A.D. and 86 A.D. Some scholars attribute to him the foundation of the Sadvahana era in 78 A.D. Gautami putra was credited with the restoration of the fallen prestige of the dynasty. The Nasik inscription of his mother Gautami Bala Sri and his own records at Nasik and Karte furnish us a vivid account of his accomplishments and achievements. His phenomenal success realized his ambition to recover the imperial position of the Satavahanas. He first won back the territories on his western borders from the Kshaharata successors of Nahapana. Nahapana's coins were re struck in his name. Bala Sri's record credits him

with the extirpation of the Kshaharata family. It is solid that he humbled the power and pride of the Kshatriyas and destroyed the Yavanas, Sakas and Pahlavans.

Gautamiputra Satakarni's dominions included the countries of Asika. Asaka, Mulaka, Surashtra, Kakura, Aparanta, Anupa, Vidarbha, Akara and Avanti, the mountainous regions of Virdhya, Achavata, Pariyatra. Sahya, Kanhagiri, Siritana, Malaya. Mahendra, Seta and Chokora and extended as far as the seas on either side. These details indicate the extent of his empire over the country between Rajasthan and Cuddalore and between the Rishikulya and Vaijayanti. Gautamiputra made his horses drink the waters of the three oceans. He was uniquely skilled as an archer, absolute as a sovereign and a figure of the heroic mould.

Though an absolute monarch, Gautamiputra was kind to his subjects and a father to his people. He tried to fulfil the duties of the Trivarga-Dharma, Artha and Kama. He shared the sorrows and pleasures of his people. He is described as 'the abode of the Vedas'. A pious and orthodox Brahmin, he was meticulous in maintaining caste-purity. Gautamiputra's son and successor Vasisthiputra Pulomavi (86-114 A.D.) could not maintain for long his hold over his vast inheritance. During the last years of his rule, he lost the north-western provinces of the Andhra empire to Chashtana, the founder of the Western Kshatrapa Kardamaka line. His successors, Siva Sri and Sivaskanda each ruled for seven years during which period the house of Chashtana expanded its authority upto Cutch in the west by 130 A.D. Chashtana's grandson Rudradaman made his substantial contribution in the growth of the Kardamaka power.

Gautamiputra Yajna Sri (128 A.D.-157 A.D.) was the last of the great Satavahana rulers. He made attempts to recover the western (Aparanta) provinces. His efforts proved futile. Rudradaman won over the disgruntled Vasisthiputra Satakami, a relation of Yajna Sri, to his side by giving him his daughter in marriage. The two encounters between Yajna Sri and Rudradaman's forces went against the Andhras. The Saka suzerainty was acknowledged. The Satavahana rule was confined to the Andhra area. The reigns of Yajna Sri's successors, Vijaya, Chanda Sri and Pulomavi (III), covering altogether a period of seventeen years, are of little significance historically. The rise of the Chutus in the west and south, the Abhiras in the Nasik area, the Ikshvakus in the east and the relentless pressure of the Kardamakas of Ujjain sounded the death-knell of the Satavahana empire. Thus came to an end the glorious phase of the rule of the Satavahanas who not only gave the area political integrity but protected it from foreign invaders who inundated the North at that time.

#### **4.1.3.4. The Satavahana - Western Kshatrapa Relations**

The Andhra Satavahanas ruled for four centuries and a half in the Deccan. During their rule they came into contact with their neighbouring kingdoms, the prominent of which was that of the Western Kshatrapas. During the Indo-Parthian rule, the Satraps or Governors were appointed to rule over various areas conquered by them. One of those satrapal seats was Malwa and Saurashtra. The chronology of the Satavahanas and the early phase of the Kshatrapa rule have been controversial. The Kshatrapa rule includes that of the Kshaharatas like Bhumaka and Nahapana and of the Kardamaka family from Chashtana onwards. Of the Kshaharatas, Bhumaka was the first ruler. From the palaeography of his coin legends, he is regarded as the predecessor of Nahapana; but the actual relationship between the two is not known. The coins of Bhumaka mention him as a Kshaharata Kshatrapa. The coins show the symbol of the Lion-capital. These coins were found in Gujarat and rarely in Malwa which might indicate the area of rule of Bhumaka. The figure of the thunder-bolt appearing on Nahapana's coins resembles that of the Mathura Kshatrapas. It is also known that some of the inscriptions of the Mathura Kshatrapas were incised on a lion capital. These show that the two families were alike. There are scholars who conclude from these resemblances that the Kshatrapa Kshaharatas were originally subordinates of the Mathura Kshatrapas and that they declared themselves independent after the death of the great Mathura Kshatrapa Rajula in 177 A.D.

Nahapana succeeded Bhumaka on the western Kshatrapa throne. During his rule, the kingdom seems to have been extended, as is known from the inscriptions. An inscription at Nasik refers to the gifts given by Ushavadata, the son-in-law of Nahapana at places like Govardhana, Sopara, Dasapura, Prabhasa, Barulachhgh and Pushkara. Nahapana's inscriptions were discovered at Nasik, Karle and Junnar. These taken together show that in the north Nahapana's empire extended upto Rajasthan and in the south to Maharashtra.

The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea composed in 60 A.D. records the hegemony of Nahapana in this area and refers to the trade activity of Western India with the Red Sea ports, which was grabbed by Nahapana after defeating the Satavahana rivals probably Sundara Satakarni and Chakora Satakami, The Satavahana ports like Kalyan and Sopara lost their commercial importance to Barygaza. In the inscriptions, mention of Nahapana's years 41-46 was made. There has been a controversy with regard to the era to which these years should be assigned. Scholars like R.G. Bhandarkar, D.R. Bhandarkar, Prof. Rapson, Roy Chowdhuri, D.C. Sircar and V.D. Mirashi assign them to the Saka era. Another set of scholars like Cunningham, V.S. Bakhle, K.A.N. Sastry and G.V. Rao think that they were dated in the Vrkhrama era. But the difficulty in these two propositions is that Nahapana would be placed either in the 2nd century A.D. or in the 1st century B.C. respectively, both of which are improbable in view of evidence of the Periplus.

The evidence of the Periplus leading to a 1st century A.D. date for Nahapane has to be accepted. The difficulties in the assignment of Nahapana's years to one of the two eras have been exposed by scholars like R.D. Banerji, A.S. Altekar etc. Taking these years as the regnal years of Nahapana, these scholars placed him in the second half of the 1st century A.D. There is also a belief that these years could be the independent years of rule of the Kshaharatas in Malwa and Saurashtra, probably when there was weak succession on the Mathura Kshatrapa throne. Anyway Nahapana's rule cannot be extended beyond 60 or 70 A.D. because at the time when Periplus was writing, Nahapana's power was at its zenith. So it is quite likely that the years referred to in the inscriptions could be equivalent to 60 or 70 A.D.

Nahapana's rule was put to an end by Gautamiputra Satakarni, the first of the later Satavahanas. His main credit was the destruction of Kshaharata power and the restoration of the fortunes of the Satavahana family. The Nasik prasasti issued in his son's reign gives a good description of the achievements of Gautamiputra over the Kshaharatas and the Sakas, Yavanas and the Pahlavas. It is not known as to whether the Scytho-Parthians who ruled until the establishment of Kushana power effectively in northern India, came to the rescue of the Kshaharatas who were definitely defeated by Gautamiputra.

In addition to the achievements recorded by Gautamiputra at a later time, we have a little information from one of the inscriptions. The Nasik inscription dated in the 18th year was issued from the battle field after his success over an unnamed enemy. The same inscription also records the grant of the land to the Buddhist monks and it is stated that the land was in possession of Ushavadata earlier. From this, scholars conclude that the erstwhile Kshaharata possession went into the hands of Gautamiputra by his 18th regnal year. The list of areas mentioned in his son's inscription shows that Saurashtra, Aparanta, Malwa and parts of Rajasthan were occupied by Gautamiputra. After this victory, he seems to have re struck the coins of Nahapana as is known from the Jogelthambi hoard of coins.

Gautamiputra retained all these areas during his life time. He died in circa dated 87 A.D. and was succeeded by his son Vasisthiputra Pulomavi. The latter ruled for 28 years, i.e. from 87 A.D. to 115 A.D. Till his 19th regnal year, the areas of rule under Gautamiputra must have been retained by Pulomavi, because the Nasik inscription of that year refers to Gautamiputra's areas of rule and also styles Pulomavi as 'Dakshinapatheswara'. During the last 9 years of rule, he must have lost the

Malwa region to Chashtana, who was the founder of the Kardamaka line. The Kardamakas were at first subordinates to the Kushanas. Later on they might have become independent.

According to Ptolemy, Chashtana of Ujjain was ruling at the time when Pulumavi was ruling at Paithan. So the seizure of some of the Satavahana possessions must have taken place between 106 A.D. and 114 A.D. The clashes between the Kardamakas and Satavahanas continued during the rule of Siva Sri and Siva Skanda on one side and Chashtana and Jayadaman on the other. During these conflicts must have occurred the death of Jayadaman who predeceased his father Chashtana. The latter could have obtained the territory in between Malwa and Kutch including Saurashtra by about 130 A.D. The Andhra inscriptions of Chashtana issued along with his grandson Rudradaman show the western limit of the Kardamaka empire.

Meanwhile by 129 A.D., Yajna Sri Satakarni came to the Satavahana throne. During his rule, he had to contend against the power of Rudradaman who came to the throne in or after 130 A.D. In the Girnar inscription of Rudradaman, dated in the year 72 corresponding to 150 A.D., the king is said to have defeated the 'Dakshinapathapati' Satakarni and liberated because of his non-remote relationship. This ruler could have been Yajna Sri Satakarni. The Aparanta region seems to have been the arena of conflict between the two empires. Yajna Sri's defeat must have occurred after his 16th year of rule because his inscription dated in that year comes from Kanheri. The Aparanta territory thenceforth became a Kshatrapa possession. After the reign of Yajna Sri, the rulers of the Satavahana family could not regain these areas and had to be contended with parts of the Andhra area. While there had been conflicts throughout between the Satavahanas and the Western Kshatrapas, evidence also points to one matrimonial alliance between the two families (Kardamakas and Satavahanas). This is known from an inscription at Kanheri which mentions the daughter of one Mahakshatrapa Rudradaman, who was the queen of one Vasisthiputra Satakarni. The identity of Vasisthiputra Satakarni and his relationship with Yajna Sri are problematic. Scholars like Rapson and Smith identify him with Vasisthiputra Pulumavi. This is improbable because of the contemporaneity of Vasisthiputra Pulumavi with Chashtana. It is likely that Vasisthiputra Satakarni was a successor of Pulumavi who must have had some clashes with the other Satavahana rulers for succession to the throne and who thereby must have entered into this matrimonial alliance with the Kshatrapas. This might also explain the absence of reference to his name in the Puranic list of the Andhra kings. He must have been benefitted by this alliance as an inscription at Nanaghat was issued by him in his 13th year which indicates that the Aparanta region went into the hands of Vasisthiputra Satakarni with the consent of his father-in-law Rudradaman.

Thus during the first and second centuries A.D., fortune favoured for a time the Kshaharatas, later the Satavahanas and afterwards the Kardamakas in the possession of Western India. There had been throughout a conflict between the Satavahanas and the Western Kshatrapas. The areas that were conquered by Rudradaman to a large extent retained by his successors. The Satavahanas confined themselves to the Andhra region for nearly a quarter of a century more when their power eclipsed finally.

Cultural Condition Under the Satavahanas

The cultural history of the period is the history of Aryanization of the country. 'Administration, social and economic life, religion and philosophy, art and literature—in fact every branch of human activity, was recast in the Aryan mould. The Vedic rishis, Mauryan officers and Buddhist missionaries alike by precept and example hastened the revolutionary change and served to implant Aryan institutions firmly in the Deccan soil.' The Satavahanas accepted them and deliberately and consciously followed the policy laid down in the Sastras available to them.

#### **4.1.3.5. Administration**

The extent of the Satavahana empire fluctuated continually according to the political vicissitudes of the times. At its zenith, their empire stretched from the Bay of Bengal in the east to

the Arabian sea in the west and embraced the entire region between the Narmada in the north and the Krishna in the south. There is also archaeological evidence regarding the Satavahana conquest of Malwa and the Puranic evidence for their control over the ancient imperial capital of Magadha, i.e. Pataliputra. Being the political successors of the Mauryans, they borrowed much from the Mauryan administrative system. Their government was based upon hereditary absolute monarchy. They were not content with the simple title of Raja.

Gautamiputra Satakarni bore the imperial title 'Rajarano' i.e. of King of Kings. The rulers regarded themselves as the guardians of social and political order and the welfare of their subjects. For administrative purposes, the empire was divided into a number of Aharas or Rashtras (Govardhana, Sopara, Manrrala, Satavahana etc.), each of which consisted of at least one central town (Nigama) and a number of villages. The Amatyas governed these Aharas. The Maharathis and the Mahabhojas, the feudatory chieftains, were superior in rank and power to the Amatyas. The inscriptions refer to officers like Mahassnapati, Heranika, Bhandagarika, Mahamatra, Lekhaka and Nibandhakar. Gramas (villages) and Nigamas (towns) were the lowest administrative units. Considerable autonomy was there in managing the affairs of these units. The trade and merchant guilds (srenies) played an important part in this regard.

#### **4.1.3.6.Social Conditions**

During this period, the people were familiar with the Aryan fourfold division of society into Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras. Outside the Aryan influence were the indigenous tribes, indifferent to Aryan ways of life and thought. People were known according to their professions such as the Halika (cultivator), the Sethi (merchant), the Kolika (Weaver) and the Gadhika (druggist). The Buddhists and the Saka-Pahlavas shook in social structure considerably. The foreigners were becoming absorbed in the indigenous society by adopting the faith and customs here and through intermarriages with the caste people. It is true Gautamiputra Satakarni attempted in restoring the balance and stopping the contamination of the castes. Yet caste rules were not strictly observed. Inscriptions and other records indicate the prominence of women in social life. Their lavish charity and assumption of the titles of their husbands like Mahatalavari signify their economic and social status. The sculptures of the period reveal their scanty dress and profuse ornamentation. Joint family system was another normal feature of society in the Aryan patriarchal mould. The prevalence of polygamy among the princes was revealed by the metronymic titles (calling sons after their mothers), which some of the later Satavahanas bore along with the personal name.

#### **4.1.3.7.Economic Conditions**

In the economic sphere, agriculture was the mainstay of both the people and the government. The country abounded in agricultural products. The king collected the traditional one-sixth of the produce as the share of the state. Salt was a state monopoly. Industry and commerce occupied the next place in the economic life of the state. Various classes of workers such as Kularika (potters), Kolika (weaver), Vasakara (bamboo worker), Dhanntka (com dealer) and ICamara (iron worker) are known from the inscriptions. Most of these crafts and trades were organised into guilds or srenies. These guilds provided banking facilities.

There was brisk inland trade and sea-borne commerce. Paithan, Tagara, Karahataka, Nasik, Govardhana Vijayanti, The Satavahanas 43 D-hanyakataka, Vijayapura and Vinukonda were great inland market towns of the period. They were connected with each other and with the important parts by roads. Ptolemy described Barukachcha and Kalyan on the west and Maisolia, Allosygne and Apheterion on the east as great centres of foreign trade. The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea notes that Barukachcha imported wines, silver vessels, fine cloth and ornaments while her exports included ivory, agate, silk cloth and pepper. The number and variety of the Satavahana coins also



prove this vigorous commercial activity. The Roman gold flowed into the Deccan for articles of luxury.

The Satavahana period also witnessed an active maritime activity (as revealed by the ship-marked coins of Pulumavi and Yajnasri Satakarni) with the Far East, Ptolemy and the Periplus give descriptions of the Indian settlements in Burma, Sumatra, Arakan and Champa.

#### **4.1.3.8. Religious Conditions**

Most of the Satavahana rulers were staunch followers of the Vedic religion with its ritual and caste system. Satakarni II of the Nanaghat record performed a number of Vedic sacrifices including Aswamedhas and Rajasuya. Gautamiputra restored the caste system and protected the Brahmins. Adherence to the Vedic creed is also indicated by the name of King Yajna Sri. The invocations to various gods like Indra, Sankarshana, Vasudeva, Surya, Varuna etc. show the transition from the Vedic to Puranic pantheon. This feature is prominently reflected in Hala's Gatha Saptasati wherein there are references to Pasupali and Gauri, Rudra and Parvati, Lakshmi and Narayana. The Aryanized foreigners and mixed castes had the solace in the Puranas. As PT. Srinivasa Iyyengar observed, the two cults Vedic and Agamic had coalesced completely during this period and modern Hinduism was born.

The Satavahana kings were renowned for their spirit of tolerance They even extended their patronage to the Buddhist ascetics. Buddhism commanded greater influence with the women folk (especially with the royal ladies) and with the masses. It was in fact the heyday of Buddhism in the Deccan. The Buddhist monuments at Nasik, Karie, Bhaja, Bedsa, Ajanta, Amaravati. Jaggayyapeta and Nagarjunakonda show the Chaitya cult predomment in the South. Mehasanghika sects flourished. Acharya Nagarjuna received patronage from the ruler Yajna Sri and from his time Andhra became the stronghold of Mahayanism. Due to the patronage and great services of Kharavela of Kalinga, Jain ism made considerable progress in the coastal region to the north of river Krishna.

#### **4.1.3.9. Literature**

As regards the contemporary system of education and literary development, it is but natural that the Aryan, teachers and missionaries brought with them, into the Deccan their own literature and methods of instruction. The elaborate sacrifices performed by Satakarni II show how the priests were well-versed in the Vedic literature. The Asokan Edicts in the Deccan prove the familiarity of the people with the Brahmi script and the Prakrit language. Almost all the records of the Satavahana period are in Prakrit. Instruction in secular and sacred learning was imparted in the asramas of the Brahmins or the Viharas of the Buddhists and the Jains, which received liberal grants from the rulers. The craft and trade guilds too might have served the cause of education.

Among the literary works of outstanding merit produced during this period under the patronage of the Satavahana rulers, mention may be made of the Katantra, the Brihatkatha and the Gatha Sattasai. Sarvavarman, probably a minister of Hala composed the Katantra on Sanskrit grammer for the use of the King. Gunadhya made over his Brihatkatha in Paisachi Prakrit to the same king Hala. Hala himself compiled the Gatha Sattasai, an authology of 700 Prakrit verses of various poets and poetesses. This Sattasai contains many Desi terms. An unknown author composed another poem in Prakrit, called Lilavati Parinayam on the marriage of Hala. In the later part of the Satavahana period, with the revival of Brahmanical Hinduism, Sanskrit became predominant. The Mahayana Buddhists including Nagarjuna wrote all their works in Sanskrit.

#### **4.1.3.10. Art and Architecture**

With religion and that too Buddhism as the source of inspiration, the Satavahana period witnessed great building activity. The ancient monuments that have been brought to light south of the Vindhya are almost all post-Asokan and Buddhist in inspiration'. They included Stupas, Chaityas, Viharas and Sangharamas discovered both in the Western and in the eastern dominions of

the Satavahanas. The Bhattiprolu and Amaravati Stupas were the oldest brick built Stupas in the south. The brick-built Chaityagrihas were located at Chejerla and Nagarjunakonda in the east, whereas the rock-cut grihas were in the west at Karle, Nasik, Bhaja and other places. The sculptural representations on most of the stupas, of the Jataka tales or the incidents in the life of Buddha and scenes from normal social life, are noteworthy. At Amaravati, the well known South Indian centre of Buddhism, a thoroughly indigenous school of sculpture grew up. For the conception of delicate beauty of human form and the technical skill and efficiency to realise that conception and for the wonderful imagination and sense of symmetry in depicting the most subtle human feelings, the Amaravati artist won universal praise. With regard to the minor arts, the articles like beads, terracotta figurines, pottery, shell ornaments, precious stones and jewels and coins excavated at Paithan, Maski, Kondapur and other places, indicate their progress during this period.

#### **4.1.4. The Kushana**

The Kushana is one of the important dynasties in the history of India. It was the time of intense artistic literary activity. The Kushana period is a fitting prelude to the age of Guptas. It marks an important Epoch of Indian history. For the first time, after the fall of Mauryas there was a vast empire which not only embraced the whole of north India but also considerable territories outside it, as far as Central Asia. According to the Chinese sources, it is believed that, the Kushanas were a section of the *yueh chi* tribe of North West China. The coins and inscriptions help us in fixing the chronology of Kushanas. "History of Dynasty gives a lot of useful information regarding the history of Kushanas. It says that Kushana played a dominant role in the Indian politics the *yueh-chi* tribe occupied Bactria and started its administration.

Kadphises I is considered as the founder of Kushana dynasty. He was also known as Kujala Kadphises. He might have ruled from 15 A.D. to 65 A.D. he founded a new kingdom and over Bactria and Gandhara. He called himself a great king. He might have followed Buddhism.

Kadphises II conquered India proper. He also known as Weema Kadphises. He assumed the imperial titles like the 'Lord of the whole world'. He was a Saivaite and worshipped Shiva. He had good relationship with Rome. He issued gold and silver coins. He might have ruled between 65 A.D. to 75 A.D.

#### **4.1.4.1. Kanishka I:**

Kanishka was the greatest of the Kushana empire. But there is no unanimity among the scholars regarding the date of his accession to the throne. Dr. Fleet Says that Kanishka was the founder of Vikrama Era in 58 B.C. but Dr. Smith says Kanishka was the ruler in 125 A.D. R. C. Majumdar says that Kanishka might have founded an era but not Vikrama Era. R. D. Banerjee and Dr. Rayachaudri say that Kanishka was the founder of 'Saka Era' and ascended the throne in 78 A.D. and might have ruled upto 120 A.D. he conquered northern India as far as Pataliputra, Buddha Gaya, Malwa, and Sindh. He brought Kashmir under his control. He built Kanishkapura. His capital was Purushapura or Peshawar. His coins and inscriptions exist from Peshawar to Benares. He defeated Parthian king. He styled himself as Devaputra. He extended his empire from U.P. in the east to Khotan and Khorasan in the west and from Kashmir in the North to Konkon in south. Dr. Smith says, Empire of Kanishka extended all over north western India probably as far south as the Vindhyas as well as over the remote regions beyond the Pamir Passes. It is defined that his empire upto Central Asia. Kanishka was the most important ruler of the Kushana dynasty. He was the founder of the Saka era which starts from 78 A.D. He was not only a great conqueror but also a patron of religion and art.

**Kanishka's Conquests:** At the time of his accession his empire included Afghanistan, Gandhara, Sind and Punjab. Subsequently he conquered Magadha and extended his power as far as Pataliputra and Bodh Gaya. According to Kalhana, Kanishka invaded Kashmir and occupied it. His coins are found in many places like Mathura, Sravasti, Kausambi and Benares and therefore, he

must have conquered the greater part of the Gangetic plain. He also fought against the Chinese and acquired some territories from them. During the first expedition he was defeated by the Chinese general Pancho. He undertook a second expedition in which he was successful and he scored a victory over Panyang, the son of Pancho. Kanishka annexed the territories of Kashgar, Yarkand and Khotan into his empire. The empire of Kanishka was a vast one extending from Gandhara in the west to Benares in the east, and from Kashmir in the north to Malwa in the south. His capital was Purushapura or modern day Peshawar. Mathura was another important city in his empire.

#### **4.1.4.2. Political Administration:**

The Kushanas had maintained an efficient administration. Kanishka was the greatest administrator. His coins and inscriptions are important sources to know about his administrative skill. He divided his empire into certain provinces called Satrapies 'satrap' was the provincial Governor. But there were provincial governors even in the Indian provinces. A Military general was known as Strategos'. But the Indian commander in chief was the District Magistrate. There were also the other subdivisions of the empire like Ahara/Janapadha/Desha/Vishaya, Grama etc. The Indian officers like Amatyas and Mahasenapathis, were also there. The officers having foreign names were stationed in the North West frontier, while officers having Indian names were stationed in the interior part of India. The Kushana rulers enjoyed the titles like Mahisvara Devaputra etc. The peace and order was maintained throughout the empire.

#### **4.1.4.3. Economic Conditions:**

The Kushanas maintained economic prosperity. They improved agriculture and industry. They issued gold and silver and copper coins with different figures of different Gods and Goddesses. The trade was carried on to the foreign countries. They were land routes through the North West and there were sea routes from the west coast. India had a favorable balance of trade with the Roman Empire. A large number of gold coins of Rome prove the trading prosperity with Rome. The trade was carried on with China, Persia, Mesopotamia and other countries. Though the Kushanas spent much on the conquest and on the art architecture, they had a witnessed financial prosperity through their regime.

#### **4.1.4.4. Religion**

The Kushanas followed Saivism and also Buddhism. It is said that Kanishka was converted himself to Buddhism. The fact is that before his conversion to Buddhism Kanishka believed in a large number of Gods. This is proved by his large number of coins with different figure of Gods and Goddesses. After his conversion to Buddhism he repaired old monasteries and set up a large number of Stupas in memory of Buddha. But unlike Ashoka, Kanishka continued to wage wars even after his conversions to Buddhism like Ashoka, Kanishka also undertook many measures to spread Buddhism. He sent missionaries to spread Buddhism to China, Japan, Tibet, and Central Asia.

The most important achievement was that Kanishka summoned the 4th Buddhist Council in Kudalavana near Srinagar in Kashmir. 500 monks attended the Council. Vasumithra presided over the council. Ashwaghosha was the vice-president. The whole of Buddhist literature was thoroughly examined. The voluminous commentary on Tripitakas were prepared. It came to be known as 'Mahavibhasha Sastra'. This commentary described as an 'Encyclopedia of Buddhism'. The decisions of the Council were carved on the copper sheet and they were deposited in the Stupa. During the 4th Buddhist council Buddhism was divided into two divisions namely Heenayana and Mahayana. Kanishka made Mahayanism a state religion. According to Mahayana the image of Buddha was worshipped with Flower, KumKum, Camphor, Lamp etc. Special importance was given to Bodhisattvas who guided the others to get the salvation. Sanskrit became the medium of instruction instead of Pali. Though Kanishka was converted to Buddhism, he followed the principle of Religious Toleration and maintained the religious peace throughout the empire.

Kanishka embraced Buddhism in the early part of his reign. However, his coins exhibit the images of not only Buddha but also Greek and Hindu gods. It reflects the Kanishka's toleration towards other religions. In the age of Kanishka the Mahayana Buddhism came into vogue. It is different in many respects from the religion taught by the Buddha and propagated by Asoka. The Buddha came to be worshipped with flowers, garments, perfumes and lamps. Thus image worship and rituals developed in Mahayana Buddhism. Kanishka also sent missionaries to Central Asia and China for the propagation of the new faith. Buddhist chaityas and viharas were built in different places. He patronised Buddhist scholars like Vasumitra, Asvagosha and Nagarjuna. He also convened the Fourth Buddhist Council to discuss matters relating to Buddhist theology and doctrine. It was held at the Kundalavana monastery near Srinagar in Kashmir under the presidentship of Vasumitra. About 500 monks attended the Council. The Council prepared an authoritative commentary on the Tripitakas and the *Mahayana* doctrine was given final shape. Asvagosha was a great philosopher, poet and dramatist. He was the author of *Buddhacharita*. Nagarjuna from south India adorned the court of Kanishka. The famous physician of ancient India Charaka was also patronized by him.

#### **4.1.4.5.Literature**

Kanishka was a great patron of art and learning. A large number of Sanskrit literary works of high standard, both religious and secular were produced during the reign of Kanishka. It is said that Kanishka met Ashwagosha at the time of his revolt towards Pataliputra. Aswagosha was a versatile genius. He was philosopher, poet, and a musician. His works have been compared to English scholar Milton, French scholar Goethe and French philosopher Voltaire. He wrote *Buddhacharita*, *Vajrasuchi*, *Sariputra Prakarana* and *Sutralankara*. Among the *Buddhacharita* is considered as the Epic of the Buddhists. It is compared to *Ramayana* of Valmiki.

Nagarjuna was not only a philosopher but also the Scientist. He was the chief exponent of Mahayanism. He enunciated the 'Theory of Relativity' in his great work '*Madhyamika Sutra*'. He is rightly called 'Indian Einstein'. His prominent work was a '*Prajana paramitra suthra shastra*'. He has been compared to Martin Luther, the leader of Protestants. Hiuen-Tsang called him "one of the 4 lights of the world". Vasumitra wrote the commentary on Tripitaka called '*Mahavibhasha sastra*' which is known as an 'Encyclopedia of Buddhism'. He was the president of the 4th Buddhist Council. It is believed that Charaka, the author of '*Charakasamhita*' a great book on Ayurveda was also patronized by Kanishka. It is said that he was the court of physician. Thus Kushanas contributed in a large scale towards literature with the help of the great scholars.

#### **4.1.4.6.Art and Architecture**

***Gandhara Art:*** The Kushan period is known for Gandhara art. The most important centers of Gandhara School were Jalalabad, Hadda and Baniyan in Afghanistan and Peshawar District in India. After the decline of Mauryan Empire Gandhara came under the Bactrian Greeks. It became the meeting ground for eastern and western cultures. The Greek princes employed a large number of Greek and Roman sculptors and artists to construct the buildings, Viharas and Chaityas in Gandhara. The art of their times was a combination of Indian and Greek styles. It is known as Gandhara art.

#### ***Features of Gandhara Art:***

- The artists represented Lord Buddha only in the forms of symbols like flowers. They were not carving his figures. But the Gandhara artists introduced the system of carving the figures of Buddha himself in different poses. They have produced the images of Buddha as Prince, as an ascetic with skeleton body, the enlightenment Buddha etc.

- The Greek influence can be found in the facial expression of the images of Buddha. The Buddha's face resembled 'Apollo' the Greek Sun God.
- The Gandhara artists depicted persons of different walks of life. According to Dr. Smith "considered as pictures of human life they represent as in a mirror, a vivid image of almost every phase of the life of northern India, lay and clerical during several centuries. Every class of population from Prince to Pariah is represented, and in short no subject of human interest was regarded as material unsuitable for the sculptor's chisel."
- According to Dr. Smith, "the Gandhara style is Greco-Roman based on the Cosmopolitan art of Asia Minor."
- The Gandhara art, though Hellenistic in form and execution is certainly Indian in content and subject matter. It follows Indian tradition. But according to Havell, "the influence of the Hellenistic art upon Indian art, was purely technical in character and was in no way the spiritual or intellectual force which shaped its ideals." Majumdar says "though the technique was borrowed from Greece the art was essentially Indian in spirit and it was solely employed to give expression to the beliefs and practices of Buddhism. So Gandhara artists had the hand of the Greek and the heart of the Indian." According to Will Durant, the Gandhara art had little influence upon the sculptural form or methods of India.
- R.D. Banerjee says that, the Gandhara art held sway nearly 5 centuries and gradually influenced all the other schools of India proper and the country within its zone of influence. The dating of Gandhara art is a very difficult problem as there are no monuments, which mention any date. Most probably it flourished from about the middle of 1st century to about 5th century. It is also believed that the Gandhara School had begun to take shape long before the Kushanas and it attained its greatest expansion during the reign of Kanishka.
- The main theme of Gandhara Sculpture was the new form of Buddhism and its important contribution was the evolution of an image of Buddha. The Gandhara School was a tremendous iconographic success. Fine images of Buddha and Bodhisattvas were remarkably executed in black stone, clay and terra-cotta. Buddha has worn clothing and has a moustache. A. L. Basham says that the Buddhas of Gandhara are gentle and graceful and compassionate. So Gandhara art is a lively commentary on the life and deeds of Lord Buddha.
- The Gandhara School was itself influenced by the other schools of Indian art, so it influenced the other schools only to some extent, says Majumdar. According to Paul, the Gandhara art exercised a two-fold influence. Its influence spread on one side through Central Asia to China and Japan and on the other in India itself and by the sea to the islands and Indochina. The art of Mathura seems to have been the first to come under the influence of Gandhara art. Thus Gandhara art became the parent of Buddhist art of Eastern or China, Turkistan, Mongolia, Korea, and Japan.

**Mathura School of Art:** The school of art that developed at Mathura in modern Uttar Pradesh is called the Mathura art. It flourished in the first century A.D. In its early phase, the Mathura school of art developed on indigenous lines. The Buddha images exhibit the spiritual feeling in his face which was largely absent in the Gandhara school. The Mathura school also carved out the images of Siva and Vishnu along with their consorts Parvathi and Lakshmi. The female figures of yakshinis and apsaras of the Mathura school were beautifully carved.

#### **4.1.4.7. Estimate of Kanishka**

Kanishka was undoubtedly one of the greatest kings of Ancient India. He was a great warrior, a great empire builder and a great patron of art and learning. No Indian ruler has ruled over such a vast empire in Central Asia as was done by Kanishka. He was the only Indo-Asiatic king whose

territories extended beyond the Pamirs. His empire included Kashgar, Khotan, and Yarkand. No wonder Kanishka occupied a unique position in the history of India. He was great administrator. He became famous because of his patronage towards Buddhism. He is compared to Chandragupta II of Gupta dynasty for his patronage to art and literature.

An attempt has been made to compare Kanishka with Ashoka. It is pointed out both that Ashoka and Kanishka were cruel bloodthirsty, before they came to the throne and before their conversion to Buddhism. Both of them were completely transformed under the influence of Buddhism. Both summoned the Buddhist Council. For eg. Ashoka summoned the 3<sup>rd</sup> Buddhist Council at Pataliputra and Kanishka summoned the 4<sup>th</sup> Buddhist Council at Kundalavana in Kashmir. Both of them devoted themselves wholeheartedly to spread of Buddhism. Both sent Buddhist missions to different countries. Ashoka sent to Ceylon, Nepal, and Burma. But Kanishka sent to China, Japan, Tibet and many other Central Asian countries. The teachings of Buddha were engraved on rocks and caves to propagate Buddhism. That is why Kanishka is called 'Second Ashoka' as Ashoka is called 'Second Buddha.' However it is pointed out that the comparison is not correct to some extent. First of all Ashoka belonged to Heenayana school of Buddhism but Kanishka belonged to Mahayana school of Buddhism. Secondly Kanishka did not adopt the principle of non-violence in his life. Thirdly, Kanishka continued to fight till the end of his life, even after his conversion to Buddhism. Fourthly, Kanishka started to worship Buddha more than following his original doctrines. Fifthly Kanishka did not render much service in the path of humanity. Lastly Kanishka was a slave of his ambitious. But Ashoka was a more saint than a ruler. Kanishka is certainly less noble, less great and less known. To recognize Kanishka a Second Ashoka' is to underestimate the greatness and service of Ashoka who was not only a king but also a Rishi. Kanishka met a tragic death. His officers were very much tired of his military campaigns. They were discontented, while crossing Pamir mountain Ranges one of his officers put him to death.

#### **4.1.4.8. Decline of Kushana Dynasty**

The mighty Kushana Empire reached as high watermark during the time of Kanishka. However the greatness was not maintained successors.

**Huvishka: (120-128):** Huvishka was the son and successor of Kanishka. He held his father's dominions in fact. He had under his control Kabul, Kashmir, Punjab and Mathura. He lost only Malwa and lower Indus Valley. He was a Buddhist and a patron of Buddhism. He built a city called Huvishkapura in Kashmir. He built monasteries at Mathura. He issued the coins with a figure of number of deities.

**Vasudeva: (152-177):** Vasudeva was the son of Huvishka. He gave up Buddhism. He was a great devotee of Shiva and Vishnu. His coins are found in Mathura, eastern Punjab and western U.P. under him, the Kushana Empire reduced in extent. He was a patron of letters. The gap of 14 years between the last known date of Huvishka and the initial date of Vasudeva may be regarded as reflecting the troubles of the empire. Dr. Smith says the plague in 167 A.D. which was fatal to the west affected Kushana Empire. According to the Persian coins, the aggression against the successors of Vasudeva might have brought the end of the Kushana dynasty. According to Puranas, the numerous foreign invasions might have brought the end of Kushana dynasty. The growing power of Nagas and Guptas led to the downfall of Kushana Empire. Finally the rapid Hinduisation of Kushanas might have weakened them in their conflicts. It can be concluded that "the Kushana period marked an important epoch in Indian history. For the first time, after the fall of Mauryas there was a vast empire, which not only embraced nearly the whole of Northern India but also considerable outside it as far as Central Asia. It also witnessed the important developments in religion, literature and sculpture especially the rise Mahayana form of Buddhism, Gandhara art the appearance of Buddha figure.

#### 4.1.5. Socio-Economic Condition of India in Post Mauryan Era- A Review

Literature and archaeology amply indicate that the period between 200 BC and 300 AD was one of urban prosperity all over the subcontinent. Indeed it can be said to represent the apogee of early historic urbanism. Not only did cities that arose in the sixth century BC, primarily in the Gangetic valley and the Malwa region, flourish but new towns came into being and city life spread to new regions as well, such as Kashmir, Sindh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Orissa, Andhra, Karnataka and the deep south. This went hand in hand with the expansion of agriculture, crafts production and trade, on the one hand, and the establishment of new ruling dynasties and power centers, on the other.

**Growth of Urban Centre:** Cities in this period not only show extensive construction activity, complex burnt brick buildings, well laid out streets and drains, and fortification walls but the adoption of new techniques like the use of tiles in flooring and roofing. There is also abundant evidence from the urban centers of the presence of coinage, a range of sophisticated artifacts like fine pottery, beads and terracottas, and of a population that engaged in a variety of urban occupations. A list of the thriving cities of this period includes Rajagriha, Pataliputra, Varanasi, Shravasti, Kaushambi, Mathura, Hastinapura, Ayodhya, Ujjayini, Pratishtana, and new towns like Sirkap, Sirsukh and Shaikhan (north-west) Hushkapura and Kanishkapura (Kashmir), Purushapura (Pakistan), Jaugada and Shishupalagarh (Orissa), Bairat and Nagari (Rajasthan), Kaundinyanagara and Bhogavardhana (Maharashtra), Nagarajunakonda and Amaravati (Andhra).

**Solid Agrarian Base:** At the root of this urban efflorescence was undoubtedly a firm agrarian base. While we no longer hear of state farms like under the Mauryas, texts like the Jatakas, Milindapanho and Manusmriti convey a picture of thriving cultivation on privately or individually owned plots of land in this period. Some inscriptions from the western Deccan indicate that the fields ranged in size from 2,3 or 4 nivartanas (one nivartana=one and a half acres) to 100 nivartanas or more. Nonetheless, the king exercised a general territorial sovereignty thanks to which he could grant (the revenue from) entire villages as dana to brahmanas and bhikkhu sanghas. In fact the earliest inscriptional evidence of royal land grants comes from the Satavahana kingdom (Maharashtra) from the first century BC and then again from the second century AD. Royal land grants carried certain privileges for the donee like exemption from tax freedom from entry of royal troops. They began to be endowed in perpetuity, known as the akshaya nivi land tenure, under the Kushanas. The practice of making land grants was to become common from the Gupta period onwards, with important consequences for the agrarian structure.

**Craft Specialisation:** A striking feature of the post-Mauryan economic scene was the remarkable growth in crafts production. Both texts and donative inscriptions from stupa sites like Sanchi, Bharut and Mathura indicate proliferation and a high degree of specialization of craft-based occupations. The Mahavastu lists 36 kinds in Rajagriha alone and the Milindapanho enumerates as many as 75. Some of the artisan groups mentioned are blacksmiths (lohakara), goldsmiths (suvarnakara), jewellers (manikara), stone masons (selavaddhaki), carpenters (vaddhaki), leader workers (carmakara), (oil-pressers (tailaka), perfumers (gandhika), garland makers (malakara), and also weavers, potters, ivory carvers, sugar manufacturers, corn dealers, fruit sellers and wine makers.

**Guild System:** Significantly, craftsperson's and traders were organized into guilds (shreni, nigama) and the post-Mauryan period saw a considerable increase in their number and the scale of their activities. The Jatakas refer to 18 guilds. Inscriptions from the western Deccan record gifts made by various shrenis which reflects their prosperity and social standing. Guilds were headed by a chief called the jetthaka or pramukha who could be close to the king. Guilds could issue their own coins and seals as have been founded at Taxila, Kaushambi, Varanasi and Ahicchatra. They also functioned as bankers when people wishing to make a donation to the sangha deposited a sum of

money with a guild. From the interest that accrued on that sum, the guild supplied at regular intervals provisions like grain or cloth, in accordance with the donor's wish, to the sangha.

**Money Economy:** A natural concomitant of all these developments was a monetary economy. A large number and variety of coins were in circulation in this period. As we have seen, these included coins issued by royal dynasties, ganas, shrenis and city administrations. They were made of gold (dinara), silver (purana), copper (karshapana) (the Kushanas issued a large number of coppers), lead, potin, nickel, etc. The range of metallic denominations shows that transactions at different levels-high value of small scale-were now being carried out in cash.

**Growing Trade Activities:** The post-Mauryan period saw trade activity, both internal and external, overland and maritime, acquire full-blown proportions, literary sources mention various items involved in trade within the subcontinent cotton textiles from the east, west and far south, steel weapons from the west, horses and camels from the north-west, elephants from the east and south, and so on. Cities were renowned for particular merchandise, like the silk, muslin and sandalwood of Varanasi, and cotton textiles of Kashi, Madurai and Kanchi.

Goods traveled up and down long distances connecting market towns by an intricate web of land and riverine routes that crisscrossed the subcontinent. For instance, the Uttarapatha was the major trans-regional route of north India, joining Taxila in the north-west with tamralipti on the east coast via Mathura, Vaishali, Shravasti and Pataliputra. The Dakshinapatha started from Pataliputra and went up to Pratihstana and from there to ports on the west coast. Another route ran from Mathura to Ujjayini and on to Mahishmati, on the one hand, and Bhrigukaccha and Sopara, on the other. Many routes then went further south.

The subcontinent's internal trade networks were integrally linked up with its transcontinental commercial interactions-with central and west Asia, south-east Asia, China and the Mediterranean. India's external trade consisted of two kinds: Terminal trade and Transit trade. Terminal trade was in merchandise manufactured in India and exported to other shores, or imported for sale in India's internal markets: either way, India was a terminus. Transit trade involved such commodities that originated in and were destined for other lands and only passed through the subcontinent; India functioned as an entrepot. The chief stimulus for India's transit trade was the demand for Chinese silk in the western world. The famous overland Great Silk Route from China to the Mediterranean passed through the northern frontiers of the Kushana empire-Kashmir and north Afghanistan, touching the cities of Purushapura, Pushkalavati and Taxila. Later, due to instability in the central Asian region, a part of this trade was diverted south further into India, and then from the Indian ports on the west coast, like Bhrigukaccha, Kalyana and Sopara, traveled on to the Roman empire via the Persian Gulf. This maritime route was facilitated by the south-west monsoonal winds. (India also had independent trade with China, exporting pearls, glass and perfumes and importing silk.).

Indo-Roman trade, however, went beyond Chinese silk. The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea and Sangam texts tell us that there was brisk commerce between first century BC and second century AD in spices, muslin and pearls that the Romans imported from India. In return the Romans, described as yavanas, exported to India wine and certain kinds of jars known as amphorae and a ceramic type named Arretine ware. Most of all, it was Roman gold and silver that poured into the subcontinent as a result of the balance of trade being favourable to India. Pliny, the first century Roman historian, complains of the drain of gold to India. Hoards of Roman coins, especially of the emperors Augustus and Tiberius, have been found at numerous sites in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Earlier it was believed that yavana traders founded trading colonies or 'emporia' here at sites like Arikamedu but historians now feel that this was not necessary since groups apart from Indians and Romans, like Arabs of the Persian Gulf and Greeks of Egypt, may have played the role of middlemen in carrying out Indo-Roman trade.



The subcontinent also had commercial links with south-east Asia that expanded perceptibly in the post-Mauryan period. The Jatakas and the Milindapanho refer to traders undertaking difficult sea voyages to Survarnavdipa (Malaysia and Indonesia) and Survarnabhumi (Myanmar). Archaeological discoveries in this region corroborate interaction. Imports from south-east Asia to India included gold, tin, spices like cinnamon and cloves, sandalwood and camphor. Exports from India were cotton textiles, sugar, valuable beads and pottery. It is important and interesting to note that social and cultural exchange went hand in hand with India's commercial contracts with the world. As we have seen, the north-west of the subcontinent was a cultural crossroads that witnessed the commingling of Greek, Persian and Mongol populations and traditions with the India. In the case of China, interaction took the form mainly of the spread of Buddhism-doctrines, scriptures, relics, and monks and pilgrims traveled over many centuries between the two regions; it is from China that the religion went further east to Japan and Korea and underwent significant transformations. And early south-east Asia was long believed to have been actually 'colonized' by people from India since the names, practices, religious affiliations and rituals of the earliest kingdoms that arose there (seen in their inscriptions) are Sanskritic and brahmanical while both Hindu and Buddhist sculpture and architecture prevail. However, it is now clear that all this may be evidence only of cultural borrowing rather than of a direct Indian presence and role.

**Changing Social Scenario:** It will be obvious that the intensified political and economic developments discussed above had important social implications. This took the form chiefly of the widening and deepening of the stratification along caste, class and gender lines that had started in the sixth century BC. The four varnas and the four ashramas (chaturvarnashramadharmā) emerge as the pillars of brahmanical ideology in the Dharmashastra texts of this period. Important features of caste were the preference for endogamy and hereditary occupation. There are indications of localization of caste and occupation with people of the same profession living in their own separate settlements or in distinct parts within settlements.

Principles of purity-pollution and hierarchy governed restrictions on the giving and receiving of food, particularly vis a vis brahmanas on the one hand and chandalas, the outcastes, on the other. The 'untouchable' (asprishya) occurs in the Vishnu Dharmasutra of this period. It signified complete segregation of the social group called chandalas, which include corpse-removers, cremators, executioners, sweepers, hunters, etc. According to the Manu Smriti, they had to live outside the village or town and could not eat out of other people's dishes. There were a number of other groups too that were categorized as lowly (antyaja). At the same time, outsiders such as the yavanas and Shakas, were sought to be assimilated within the traditional social structure by describing them as sankrita varnas, born out of the mixture of castes, or as vratya kshatriyas, degraded kshatriyas. All this shows that the forces of the ideologies of social exclusion and incorporation were simultaneously at work. Linked to the need for the maintenance and perpetuation of the caste and class structure was the strengthening of patriarchy in this period. It took the form of subordinating women and controlling their reproductive potential. The preference for sons over daughters continued. Women's access to knowledge, secular and scriptural, was diminished. Women of affluent classes were increasingly confined to the domestic sphere, making them economically dependent on their male kinsmen. Great emphasis was put on the chastity of women which was sought to be preserved by early (Prepuberty) marriages, on the one hand, and severe strictures on widows, on the other.

**Position of Women:** The texts also suggest that women were treated as property and akin to shudras. At the same time they were denied rights to inherit property which was patrilineally passed on (passed on from father to son). The lawgivers of this period, however, do allow a married woman some control over the gifts made to her as a bride which was known as stridhana. It should

be noted that the occurrence of number of women as donors of Buddhist sites indicates that certain women had some degree of access to economic resources of their households.

***Rise in Rituals:*** The post-Mauryan period also saw the growing role of rituals in the life of the individual and household, and society at large. Known as *sanskaras*, these were rites performed to mark various life stages such as pre-natal (*garbhadana*), initiation by sacred thread (*upanayana*), marriage (*vivaha*) and death (*antyeshti*). And then there were *panchamahayajnas* that were actually simple ceremonies obligatory for upper caste householders, including making offering to ancestors (*pitriyajna*), to the sacrificial fire (*daivayajna*) and to all being (*bhutayajna*). These can be understood as ways to regulate the individual's life as well as to string society together through common beliefs and practices.

#### **4.1.6. Conclusion**

The period between the decline of Mauryan Empire and the rise of the Gupta is a crucial phase of Indian History. The so called 'Post-Mauryan' is the name given to this period extending from approximately 200 BC to 300 AD, that is, from the fall of the Mauryan dynasty to the rise of Gupta power. Though several important new developments are seen in this phase, it is best viewed in terms of the continuity and intensification of political, economic and social processes that started in the post-Vedic (6th, century BC) and matured in the Mauryan, culminating in the post-Mauryan. The above discussion was based on the information retrieved from various sources such as literature (brahmanical, Buddhist as well as foreign accounts), archaeological excavations (late NBPW and post-NBPW), coins (of a large variety and number), inscriptions (in Prakrit and, for the first time, Sanskrit) and architectural and art remains from these five hundred years. From the discussion we come to know that Subsequent to the collapse and break-up of the vast Mauryan empire, Indian subcontinent witnessed the rise of a number of smaller territorial powers in its place in different regions of the subcontinent. In the Ganga valley, for instance, the Mauryas were immediately succeeded by the Shungas under Pushyamitra, the general of the Mauryan army who is believed to have assassinated the last Mauryan king in Circa 180 BC. The Shungas, who ruled for about a 100 years included in their kingdom Pataliputra (Magadha), Ayodhya (central Uttar Pradesh) and Vidisha (eastern Malwa), and possibly reached up to Shakala (Punjab). Pushyamitra is associated with the performance of the Vedic Ashvamedha sacrifice and with an antagonistic attitude to the Buddhist faith. In the Deccan, appeared in the scene the Satavahana kingdom, with its capital at Pratishthana (modern Paithan on the Godavari river), covered Maharashtra and Andhra and, at times, parts of north Karnataka, south and east Madhya Pradesh and Saurashtra.

Finally, in the post-Mauryan period the north-west and west-central parts of the subcontinent witnessed the rule of not one but several dynasties of external origin, often simultaneously, as a result of tribal incursions from central Asia. The first to come were the Indo-Greeks or Indo-Bactrians who were from the area north-west of the Hindukush mountains, corresponding to north Afghanistan. The next to invade were the central Asian tribe called the scythians or Shakas. Close on the heels of the Shakas were the Parthians or Pehlavas, originally from Iran. They occupied a relatively minor principality in the north-west, their best known king being Gondophernes. The last major central Asian force to enter the subcontinent in post-Mauryan times were the Kushanas. The Kushanas were a branch of a tribe bordering China known as the Yueh chi which, as a result of pressure from other tribes in their homeland, moved out to new regions. Kushana power entered the subcontinent proper, and reached its height, under a king named Kanishka. During his reign, which started circa 78 AD (the date from which a new era, later called *Shakasamvat*, was inaugurated), the Kushana empire extended further eastwards into the Ganga valley reaching right up to Varanasi, and southwards into the Malwa region. A vast expanse spanning diverse cultures-Indic, Greek, West and Central Asian-was thus brought under one umbrella, leading to the commingling of peoples and practices.

#### 4.1.7. Summary

- *After the death of Asoka, his successors were not able to keep the vast Mauryan Empire intact. The provinces started declaring their independence. The northwest India slipped out of the control of the Mauryas and a series of foreign invasions affected this region. Kalinga declared its independence and in the further south the Satavahanas established their independent rule. As a result, the Mauryan rule was confined to the Gangetic valley and it was soon replaced by the Sunga dynasty.*
- *The founder of the Sunga dynasty was Pushyamitra Sunga, who was the commander-in-chief under the Mauryas. He assassinated the last Mauryan ruler and usurped the throne. The most important challenge to the Sunga rule was to protect north India against the invasions of the Bactrian Greeks from the northwest. Pushyamitra was a staunch follower of Brahmanism. He performed two asvamedha sacrifices. Buddhist sources refer him as a persecutor of Buddhism. But there is enough evidence to show that Pushyamitra patronised Buddhist art.*
- *During his reign the Buddhist monuments at Bharhut and Sanchi were renovated and further improved. After the death of Pushyamitra, his son Agnimitra became the ruler. The last Sunga ruler was Devabhuti, who was murdered by his minister Vasudeva Kanva, the founder of the Kanva dynasty.*
- *The rule of the Sungas was important because they defended the Gangetic valley from foreign invasions. In the cultural sphere, the Sungas revived Brahmanism and horse sacrifice. They also promoted the growth of Vaishnavism and the Sanskrit language. In short, the Sunga rule was a brilliant anticipation of the golden age of the Guptas.*
- *In the Deccan, the Satavahanas established their independent rule after the decline of the Mauryas. Their rule lasted for about 450 years. They were also known as the Andhras. The Puranas and inscriptions remain important sources for the history of Satavahanas.*
- *The founder of the Satavahana dynasty was Simuka. He was succeeded by Krishna, who extended the kingdom up to Nasik in the west. The third king was Sri Satakarni. He conquered western Malwa and Berar. He also performed asvamedha sacrifices. The seventeenth king of the Satavahana dynasty was Hala. He reigned for a period of five years. Hala became famous for his book Gathasaptasati, also called Sattasai.*
- *The greatest ruler of the Satavahana dynasty was Gautamiputra Satakarni. He ruled for a period of 24 years from 106 to 130 A.D. His achievements were recorded in the Nasik inscription by his mother Gautami Balasri. Gautamiputra Satakarni captured the whole of Deccan and expanded his empire. He patronized Brahmanism. Yet, he also gave donations to Buddhists. Gautamiputra Satakarni was succeeded by his son Vashishtaputra Pulamayi.*
- *The Kushanas were a branch of Yuchi tribe, whose original home was central Asia. They first came to Bactria displacing the Sakas. Then they gradually moved to the Kabul valley and seized the Gandhara region. The founder of the Kushana dynasty was Kujula Kadphises or Kadphises I. His son Wima Kadphises or Kadphises II conquered the whole of northwestern India as far as Mathura. He issued gold coins with high-sounding titles like the 'Lord of the Whole World'. He was a devotee of Lord Siva.*
- *Kanishka was the most important ruler of the Kushana dynasty. He was the founder of the Saka era which starts from 78 A.D. He was not only a great conqueror but also a patron of religion and art. Under his patronization Gandhara and Mathura school of art flourished.*

#### 4.1.8. Exercise

- Assess the importance of the rule of Sungas.

- Give an account on the political history and the contributions of Satavahanas for the growth culture in Deccan region.
- Examine the salient features of the Gandhara art.
- Examine the salient features of the Mathura school of art.
- Assess the career and achievements of Kanishka.

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**Unit-4**  
**Chapter-II**  
**Rise of Kharavela in Kalinga and Pan Indian Political Scenario**

**Structure**

**4.2.0. Objective**

**4.2.1. Introduction**

**4.2.2. Early Life of Kharavela**

**4.2.3. Date of Kharavela**

**4.2.3.1. Mauriya Kala**

**4.2.3.2. Bahasatimata**

**4.2.3.3. Yavanaraja**

**4.2.3.4. Nandaraja**

**4.2.3.5. Satakarni**

**4.2.4. His Military Exploits**

**4.2.4.1. Conquest Against Satakarni**

**4.2.4.2. Conquest Against Rathikas and Bhojakas**

**4.2.4.3. Convened Military Exhibition**

**4.2.4.4. Expedition towards Rajagriha**

**4.2.4.5. Expedition of Bharatvarsa**

**4.2.4.6. Conquest of Tamil country**

**4.2.4.7. Conquest of Uttarapatha**

**4.2.5. His Administrative Measures and Public Activities**

**4.2.6. Religious faith of Kharavela**

**4.2.6.1. Salutation :**

**4.2.6.2. Protected Mathura from Foreigner and Respect to the Bull**

**4.2.6.3. Rescue of Kalinga-Jina**

**4.2.6.4. Patronage to the Jain Arhata**

**4.2.6.5. Convened Council of Jaina Monks**

**4.2.6.6. Worshipper of all Religion**

**4.2.7. Capital of Kalinga**

**4.2.8. Conclusion**

**4.2.9. Summary**

**4.2.10. Exercise**

**4.2.11. Further Readings**

#### **4.2.0. Objectives**

*In this lesson, students explore the history of ancient India during the rule of Kharavela on the light of Hatigumpha inscription. After completing this chapter, you will be able to:*

- *trace the historical significance of Hatigumpha inscription of Kharavela;;*
- *recognize the achievements of Kharavela as a general, as an Emperor and as a pious man;*
- *know the place of Kharavela in the arena of political condition of 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C India; and*
- *appreciate the role of Kharavela as a patron of art and culture of ancient Odishan Empire.*

#### **4.2.1. Introduction**

Sometime after the fall of Mouryas, Kalinga became independent again under the Chief of Mahameghavahana dynasty in the first century B.C. It was reckoned as a strong power under the Kharavela, the third ruler in the line of Mahameghavahana, when its sphere of political influence extended far beyond the usual limits. Though, the brunt of Kharavela's sword was felt throughout a large part of India., he was also as great in peace as in war. Kharavela's achievements were the pivot of all historical events in India in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the first century B.C. An inscription incised on the over-hanging brow of Hatigumpha in the southern side of Udayagiri hill near Bhubaneswar, contains detailed accounts of Kharavela from his boyhood up to the 13<sup>th</sup> year of his rule as Maharaja of Kalinga in perfect chronological order. This is the only inscription of India giving a year wise account of events in his career. King Kharavela of Kalinga is the most unique of the great personalities of early India of all our knowledge about whom we mostly depend on his Hatigumpha inscription. It is prudent that, the accounts of Kharavela have been presented not only through the inscriptions engraved in the caves of Udayagiri and Khandagiri, but also through the medium of sculptural art carved out in those caves. It has been suggested that many sculptural scenes are related with the activities of Kharavela and present the important events of his life. The life and achievements of Kharavela are thus presented both through epigraphic and artistic media, which require careful study. This chapter discuss the career and achievements of Kharavela.

#### **4.2.2. Early Life of Kharavela :**

Kharavela has been represented in the Hathi-Gumpha inscription and the inscription of his chief queen as the paramount sovereign of Kalinga. He has been extolled as a great scion of the Cheta or Cheti race which could boast of a long line of royal sages may be from Vasu (Uparichara). He is connected with the Mahanoghavana dynasty and represented as the third king in the direct line of the royal family of Kalinga. His chief queen was the daughter of one King Lalaka of Hathisana of a higher to unknown territory. It appears that this queen and her two sons, the elder, Kudepa and the younger Vadukha, cooperated with her in completing the Manchapuri group of caves. Kharavela has at least two queens, namely Vajiragravati and queen Sindhuja of Simhapatha. Since the later is mentioned with the title of queen, she appears to be identified with Agamahisi of the Svargapuri record.

Considerable care appears to have been bestowed upon his education. He was given training not only in correspondence, currency, accountancy, state regulations and laws, but was also taught music and was given liberal education covering other sciences, so as to make him an accomplished king. He was associated with administration at the age of fifteen when he was made Yuvaraja (crown prince) and for full nine years he was given practical training in administration. At the age of twenty four, he became king. The event of his father's death has been ignored altogether, probably because the record is too personal. It closes with his thirteenth regional year when he was only thirty seven years old. Nothing is known about him beyond that year.

#### **4.2.3. Date of Kharavela :**

To determine the date of Kharavela scholars have so far been relied mostly on the Hathi-Gumpha inscription. The partial damage of the inscription led them at times to unnecessary

speculations. On the basis of the inscription, Kharavela has been assigned a date from the fourth century B.C. to the first century A.D. R.L.Mitra giving the inscription to the credit of one Aira, placed him in the fourth century B.C, while Fleet and Luders took him to the third century B.C. Bhagavanlal Indrajai supported by Sten Konow, K.P. Jayaswal, R.D. Banerji, K.C. Panigrahi and others considered him to have ruled in the second century B.C. But another group of scholars like R.P. Chanda, H.C. Raychoudhury, N.N. Ghosh, D.C. Sircar, offer a contrary view and place him in the first century B.C. B.M. Barua however finds reason to take him to the second quarter of the first century A.D. Thus a wide difference of opinion prevails among scholars to determine the date of Kharavela in the political history of India.

Turning to the merits of theories advanced by these scholars we may safely abandon the idea of placing Kharavela in the fourth and third centuries B.C. when Mahapadmananda ruled over Kalinga and Asoka and his immediate successors held away over this territory. Further the Hathi-Gumpha inscription itself provides a few evidences which help us arriving at a tentative conclusion regarding the date of Kharavela. These are connected with an alleged Maurya era; one Bahastimita, the king of Anga and Magadha; a Yavanaraja tentatively named Dimita, a Nandaraja and king Satakarni of the Satavahana dynasty. We will now examine the validity of each of these references as to the way they have contributed to the date of Kharavela.

#### **4.2.3.1.Mauriya Kala :**

Indrajai finds in line sixteen of the Hathi-Gumpha inscription mention of an era Maurya Kala which he says “has not been found anywhere else; but he worked out his chronology on this doubtful basis. Both Fleet and Luders denied the existence of a date in the inscription. Jayaswal who earlier accepted the existence of the era 165 Maurya kala in line sixteen, finally gave it up. D.C. Sircar reads “Mukhiya kala’ in place of Mauriya kala and explains the expression. “Mukhiya kala vochhinam’ as chief arts that consists of singing and dancing. Under the circumstances the expression Mauriya kala has little to do with the date of Kharavela.

#### **4.2.3.2.Bahasatimita :**

Jayaswal’s identification of Bahasatimita of line twelve of the Hathi-Gumpha inscription with Pusyamitra Sunga, the founder of the Sunga dynasty on the authority of the Samkhyayana Grhya Sutra though finds support with R.D. Banerji, Sten Konow, V.A. Saith and Jouveau Dubreuli has been strongly refuted by H.C. Raychudhury and R.P. Chanda. They consider him as a distinct individual and his identification with Pusyamitra Sunga is farfetched and untenable. Efforts have been made to assume the two Brihaspatimitras of the Mora and Pabhosa inscriptions to be one and the same individual on the grounds that both the principalities acknowledged the suzerainty of the Sungas and further that they are also identical with the Brihaspatimitra of the coins found from Kosam (ancient Kasuambi) and Ramnagar (ancient Ahichhatra). If the provenance of the coins indicates to the extent of his territory, it may be said that he had political sway over Kasuambi and Ahichhatra region and in that case he obtained suzerainty over Ahichhatra after the death of his uncle Asadhasena, who was a king of that place when the Pabhosa inscription had been recorded. R.P. Chanda and D.C. Sircar on the basis of paleographic evidence of his coin legends and angular and sheriff forms in the Pabhosa inscription placed him in the second half of the first century B.C. Under these considerations Bahasatimita whom Kharavela claims to have defeated can be no other than the king Brihaspatimitra of the Pabhosa inscription of the Kausambi and Ahichhatra coins, who was ruling over an extensive territory including Anga and Magadha.

#### **4.2.3.3.Yavanaraja :**

Jayaswal further identified the Yavanaraja Dimita occurring in the length line of the Hathi-Gumpha inscription with the Indo-Greek king Dometrios. But he though read Dimita after Yavanaraja in his earlier readiness, traced the word ‘ma’ only subsequently and declared that the first and the third syllables could be made out with great difficulty. The restoration of the word

'Dimita' is therefore conjectural and as such cannot be accepted as a deciding factor for the date of Kharavela. Even if there was the reference to a Yavana king in the eighth line of the inscription he cannot be taken as Dometrios, the contemporary of Pusyamitra Sunga. We know of the Yavanas (Indo-Greeks) penetrating as far as the territories of the Satavahanas even as late as the second century A.D. when they were crushed by Gautamiputra Satakarni. It is therefore not unnatural, a Yavana king other than Demitrios and proceeded upto Mathura in the later part of the first century B.C.

#### **4.2.3.4.Nandaraja :**

Another notable reference to the date of Kharavela is supplied with the name Nandaraja occurring in the sixth and twelfth line of the Hathi-Gumpha inscription. The line six states that Kharavela enlarged an aqueduct in his fifth regnal year, which had been excavated by a Nanda king. The line twelve refers also to the recovery of Kalinga Jina by Kharavela, which had been taken away by a Nanda king. This Nanda king has been identified by majority of the scholars with Mahapadmananda, the ruler of the Nanda dynasty of Pataliputra who held away over the Magadha empire in the fourth century B.C. B.M. Barua and K.C. Panigrahi, however, attempted to identify Nandaraja with emperor Asoka. In this connection, the expression 'ti-vasa sata' occurring in the same line six of the inscription will only mean three hundred years and not one hundred and three years as suggested by Luders and Vincent A. Smith, as it goes not only against the traditional Indian way of reckoning by hundreds but also against known facts of history. Even if the aqueduct in question had been excavated about 32 B.C. when the Nandas were overthrown by the Mauryas, the year one hundred and three after the excavation corresponding to the fifth year of Kharavela's reign would fall in C 324 B.C. and the dynasty would appear to have been Kharavela's predecessor's predecessor about the middle of the third century B.C. But we know that Kalinga was an integral part of the Magadhan empire in the days of Asoka. The identification of Nandaraja with Nandivardhana or Nandavardhana of the Saisunaga dynasty by Jayaswal thus becomes untenable. It was Mahapadmananda who is described in the Puranas to have brought "all under his sole sway and who 'uprooted all Kshatriyas'. Thus if Mahapadmananda is the same as Nandaraja mentioned in the inscription and who is to be calculated three hundred years backward to the fifth year of Kharavela's reign, we may reasonably fix the date of Kharavela in the first century B.C..

#### **4.2.3.5.Satakarni :**

In this second year, Kharavela sent his forces towards the west disregarding Satakarni, who is none else than a ruler of the Andhra satavahana house. Now among the early Andhra rulers, we know of a certain Satakarni, the husband of Nayanika, from the Nanaghat record and he has been identified with the third ruler of the Puranic lists. Rapson supports the view of Buhler as regards the identification of Satakarni of the Hathi-Gumpha and Nanaghat inscriptions and the puranas. The founder of the Satavahana dynasty named Simuka is known to have ascended the throne after the assassination of king Susrmana Kanvayana and putting and to the remnant of the Sunga power in about 73 B.C. Simuka ruled for a period of twenty three years followed by his brother Kanna (Krsna) who reigned for eighteen years. After Kanha Satakarni-I, the son of Simuka ascended the throne and ruled for ten years. So Kharavela who was a contemporary of Satakarni-I, who appears in the Nanaghat inscription of the first century B.C. naturally belongs to the same period and not to the second century B.C. Moreover the well known scholars on architecture Messrs Fergusson and Burgess in their work on the cave temples of India assigned the Hasika Chaitya hall to the latter half of the first century B.C. Modern art critics agree to this date. Now according to John Marshall, a small Vihara excavated during the time of the second Andhra king Krsna, is of the same age as the Nasik Chaitya hall. So if Krsna flourished in the latter half of the first century B.C. the date of his nephew Satakarni who succeeded him may be placed at the first century B.C. So Kharavela does



not need to be placed in the second century B.C. for the reason of his identification with his western contemporary Satakarni-I as earlier scholars did.

Apart from the discussion on the alleged Maurya era, Nandaraja, Bahasatimita of Anga and Magadha, Satakarni of Satavahana dynasty and a Yavanaraja, we may now turn to other circumstantial evidence like palaeography. Kavya style, art, titles like Maharaja and Chakravarty and the excavated remains of Sisupalgarh, etc. to arrive at a more satisfactory conclusion as regards to the date of Kharavela.

We have already indicated that the Nanaghat inscription of queen Nayanika had close affinity with that of the Hathi-Gumpha inscription on the basis of palaeography. R.P. Chanda has pointed out a few cases of variations between the paleography of the Nanaghat and the Hathi-Gumpha inscriptions but he agrees to the fact that they might as well be recognized as contemporaneous local variations. D.C. Sircar opines that palaeographically the Hathi-Gumpha record is slightly later than the Nenaghat record and also that the letters of the Sanchi inscription of Satakarni resemble the script of the Hathi-Gumpha reord. But he is inclined to suggest that “if this slight development is over looked we may identify both these Satakarnis with Satakarni-I. Buhler and Rapson also recognize the close similarity between the script of the Nanaghat and the Hathi-Gumpha inscription.

The style of the Hathi-Gumpha inscription also takes us to a inter date. The use of the Kavya, style in that inscription accompanied rhythmic quality and elegant expression reveal an important landmark in the history of Indian literature. We may not be far wrong in saying that it not only shows an improved but also a very new and advanced style compared to the simple writings of the Asokan edicts and this notable difference is not that of place but is that of time which may take at least a period of two hundred years thus bringing Kharavela to the first century B.C.

Sircar maintains-“His (Kharavela’s) title Maharaja, which like Maharajadhiraja seems to have been inspired and popularized by the foreign rulers of India and was first used by the Indo-Greeks in the first half of the second century B.C. suggests a later date. A king of Kalinga far away from the sphere of influence of foreign rulers could have assumed it only at a later period”. Thus the titles ‘Maharaja’ and ‘Chakravarty’ in Kharavela’s own and his chief queen’s records respectively may point towards a late date. These are much in skin with the bombastic epithets used by the later Greeks.

On the basis of archaeological excavation we have elsewhere tentatively identified Sisupalgarh with that of Kalinganagara, the capital of Kharavela, mentioned in the Hathi-Gumpha inscription. According to the inscription, Kalinganagara was provided with fortifications and Kharavela in the very first year of his reign repaired the gateway and fortification wall, which had been damaged by a storm and the excavation did reveal a collapse and subsequent repair of the southern gateway flank of the fortification evidently the second and third phase of the cutting across the defences. But as the phase second was a short lived one, it is possible that the defences gave away just at the close of this phase or in the beginning of the next so that Kharavela who was possibly the ruler during the time repaired them by adding brick walls and also builders ramp to retain them. According to the excavation report the third phase seems to have come to an and about the middle of the first century A.D. as is indicated by the presence of the earliest example of the rouletted ware in a layer which accumulated subsequently to this phase.

John Marshall while discussing the chronology of the caves at Udayagiri and Khandaigiri considers the friezes on the ground floor, verandah of the Manchapuri cave for its depth and plastic treatment of the figures with their emotional appeal, they show as a decided advance on the work of Bharhut. According to D.C. Sircar the sculptured gateway which contains the inscription of king Visadeva the feudatory of the Sungas is ascribed to the first quarter of the first century B.C. D. Mitra also agrees to this proposition. “Although conforming to the common denominator of the art

tradition of Madhyadesa, as illustrated in the reliefs of Bharhut (District Satna), Bodhgaya (District Gaya) and Sanchi (District Raisen), the sculptured friezes of the Udayagiri-Khandagiri have a distinct place of their own in early Indian art. The workmanship of the carvings is by no means uniform but, taken as a whole the execution displays a decided advance on the work of Bharhut (Second century B.C.).N.N. Ghosh confirms to the view that the Bharhut sculptured gateway bearing an inscription is about a century later than the time of Pusyamitra Sunga i.e. about the first quarter of the first century B.C. and D.C. Sircar accepts the sculpture of the Manchapuri cave considerably posterior to the sculptures at Bharhut (belonging to the Sunga period).

Architecturally the caves are all characterized by a benched verandah, their pillars and pilasters are of the same design, square below and above and octagonal in the middle in most cases, the corners of the square chamfered with the resultant formation of half-medallions at the points of transition they have a comparable arrangement of the decoration of the facades with pilasters, arches, railings and mouldings simulating the roofs of structures. None of them speaks a different age of different architectural tradition. Their architectural features combined with the palaeographic evidence of the inscriptions they bear, suggest a date of the first century B.C. for all caves of this category with a probable extension to the next century.

Thus examining all the evidences referred to above we may reasonably conclude that Kharavela may be assigned a date in the first century B.C.

#### **4.2.4. His Military Exploits :**

The Hatigumpha inscription throw ample lights on the military conquest of Emperor Kharavela. From the inscription we come to know that in all the direction of his empire Kharavela marched and returned with victory. He following paragraphs discuss Kharavela's military conquest.

##### **4.2.4.1. Conquest Against Satakarni**

The first military campaign of Kharavela was directed in the second year of his reign against king Satakarni of the Satavahana dynasty, who rose to power almost simultaneously with the Mahameghavanas of Kalinga. His army evidently consisting of elephant, cavalry, infantry and chariot stormed the city of Asika, the capital of Assaka and marched upto the river Krishna (Kahnavaṃna). The details of the direct clash with Satakarni and the results of the war are however lacking in the account given in the inscription. This encounter no doubt served as a check on the further expansion of Satavahana empire to the neighbouring areas.

##### **4.2.4.2. Conquest Against Rathikas and Bhojakas**

In the fourth year of his reign he waged war against the Rathikas and Bhojakas whose territory was lying to the west of the Kalinga. Those Rathikas bore all the insignia of royalty i.e. crown, caparisoned horse, umbrella and golden pitcher and when crushed they cast of their umbrella, etc. and their jewellery and wealth confiscated and were compelled to pay obeisance at the feet of Kharavela. It is however, not known where the battle was actually fought. The battle was perhaps decisive and his western flank was thus fully secured as we do not hear of his any further expedition in that direction. As no annexations are claimed, he was perhaps satisfied by making his adversaries submit to him and by seizing their jewels and fortunes. The defeat of these peoples and luster on the glory of Kharavela as in invincible conqueror.

##### **4.2.4.3. Convened Military Exhibition**

In the seventh year of his reign the emperor caused a military exhibition to be opened, where his people different acts of warfare, the parade of the guards, swordplay and chariotteering, the cavalry charge and the rest. These military exercises were perhaps held to gear up the army to wage successful campaigns against the rulers of the north, that commence from the very next year.

#### **4.2.4.4. Expedition towards Rajagriha**

In the eight regnal year he led an expedition to the north and invaded Rajagriha, the ancient capital of Magadha now known as Rajgir in the Patna district of Bihar. The strong fort of Gorathagiri, identified with an ancient fort situated in the Barabar hill of the Gaya district was next stormed by him. But Kharavela did not proceed further into the heart of Magadha and he seems to have turned westwards to Mathura. It may be that there was some depredation from the north and Mathura was temporarily occupied by an aggressor and Kharavela drove out the aggressor from Mathura. The aggressor is generally identified with a Yavana king whose identity is still a matter of controversy. Kharavela, the champion of Jainism does not seem to have tolerated an attack on Mathura, the age old stronghold of Jainism. Mathura was not annexed by Kharavela and therefore it seems that on liberation it was restored to its original ruler. His further activities in Mathura were confined to performing religious ceremonies. His march to Mathura saved Magadha from being devastated by him during that year.

Probably to celebrate his magnificent achievement in the north he raised a royal building at an enormous cost during the ninth year of his reign and named it as the "Create victory place" to testify in all its grandeur the great victory of a great conqueror.

#### **4.2.4.5. Expedition of Bharatvarsa**

The conquering career of Kharavela however was not over. In the tenth year once more the Kalingan army was thrust into the north India (Bharatavarsa) against some unspecified power and after defeating them returned with huge booty of jewels and precious stones.

For the next two years he remained engaged in Marching the army to the south, then to the north and again to the south with the ambition to conquer the whole country and live upto the ideals of a Chakravartin.

#### **4.2.4.6. Conquest of Tamil country**

In the eleventh regnal year Kharavela was confronted with a great challenge from the confederated Tamil states of the south. The confederacy seems to have consisted of the states of the Cholas, Pandyas, Satyaputras, Keralaputras as well as the island of Ceylon (Tamrapani). This Tamil league was undoubtedly a very powerful political institution of the Tamil country. With the rise of Kharavela and defeat of Sri Satakarni and other southern powers by him, this Tamil league might have developed itself into an anti Kalinga league. Furthermore, taking the advantage of the long absence of Kharavela in the far-off north, the league might have fomented troubles and political unrest in the conquered lands of that emperor in the south. Thus driven by a necessity Kharavela had to throw his full weight against those hostile kings of the Tamil country and finally succeeded in breaking down the league beyond any hope of repair. The line thirteen of the Hathigumpha inscription referring to the engagement of Kharavela with the Pandya king reveals that Kharavela obtained horses, elephants and jewelleries after incurring heavy loss of wonderful elephants and ships. This was most probably in connection with his subsequent war against one of the leading numbers of the Tamil league. The king of Pandya who appears to be the head of the league surrendered to the conqueror and was forced to bring large quantity of pearls, jewels and precious stones to Kalinganagara as tributes.

#### **4.2.4.7. Conquest of Uttarapatha**

In the twelfth regnal year, Kharavela again marched with a strong army to Uttarapatha. During this expedition, he claims to have caused terror into the hearts of the rulers of the north. On his return from the Uttarapatha, he encamped on the banks of the Ganges for an onslaught over Magadha. The popular clamour in Kalinga would have been vehemently in favour of a war against Magadha, and Kharavela, at the height of his glory would have been bent upon in breaking the power of the northern kings and bringing them under the banner of Kalinga. The people of Magadha were struck with terror at the sight of his elephants and horses and Bahasatimita, the then king of

Anga and Magadha, was forced to bow at his feet. During this campaign Kharavela brought back the Jina of Kalinga, which had been taken away from that country by a by a Nandaraja.

By defeating the king of Magadha and bringing back the much coveted image of Kalinga Jina along with the riches of the country, Kharavela and achieved his sin and after that he never undertook any further military campaigns.

These expeditions do not appear to have led to any permanent result, as they were all military raids. Only Kalinga which was generally located between the rivers Ganges and the Godavari, seems to have been under his direct control.

Thus within the short period of his rule, Kharavela achieved miraculous success in leading his army all over the country barring a few areas like the western coastal regions and south-eastern extremities and enhanced the status and prestige of Kalinga in the eyes of the contemporary rulers, a feat very rarely achieved in subsequent periods of the history of Kalinga.

#### **4.2.5. His Administrative Measures and Public Activities :**

In course of conquests he had harassed the kings, captured the capitals, terrified the people, seized their wealth, stormed the fortresses, which were within the inevitable sphere of a conqueror's action. But in far away war fronts he never neglected the administration of his empire. The Hathi-Gumpha inscription gives instances of his benevolent and charitable deeds. He followed the traditional methods of Indian kings in pleasing his subjects. For example in the beginning of his eventful rule he undertook the repairs of the capital city of Kalinga which had been damaged by a storm. He repaired the gates, the walls and the buildings, erected embankments and excavated tanks of cool water and restored all gardens with an enormous cost of 35,000,00 pieces of money for the gratification of his subjects. In the third year of his reign he entertained his people residing in the capital by musical performances, merry gatherings and other festivities. In the fifth year of his reign he further extended the aqueduct which had been originally excavated by a Nanda king for the purpose of irrigation. During the sixth year he extended great favour to the people of Pura and Janapadas by remitting all taxes and duties. Thus in all probability he adopted the policy of pleasing his people for gaining their popularity and support.

For this able system of administration, effective military exploits and benevolent activities, a set of royal servants in charge of different boards or departments must have been recruited by Kharavela. But we have no information as to whether there were any separate boards and departments and as to whether any innovations were introduced by him in the existing administrative system. B.M. Barua has found a reference in the fourteenth line of the inscription to the royal servants as cooperating with Kharavela in excavating caves for Jaina saints. In the eighth regnal year's record too he has come across a reference to royal servants. A small inscription found in the Bagha-Gumpha on the Udayagiri hill records that it was got excavated by Bhuti who was holding the position of Nagara Akhadamsa (city Magistrate, Another brief inscription found in Jambesvar-Gumpha on the same hill records the excavation by Kakiya, the Mahamatra. The third inscription relating to the Tatowa-Gumpha No.2 of Khandagiri states that the cave was excavated by Kusuma the Padmulika meaning there by as "a server of the feet", evidently of the royal person. The official designations that we come across through inscriptional evidences of the place are too meager for working out the detail administrative set up of the entire kingdom. Kharavela was too much preoccupied with his military campaigns for extension of his sphere of influence and therefore he had little time to think of bigger administrative changes.

#### **4.2.6. Religious faith of Kharavela :**

The Hathi-Gumpha inscription of Kharavela along with those connected with his queen, sons and officials throw some light on the state of Jainism in Kalinga when the cave dwellings were excavated in the twin hills of Udayagiri and Khandagiri. The Hathi-Gumpha inscription opens with a salutation to the Arhatas and Sidhas, indicating that Kharavela was a Jaina by birth. On ascending

the throne he further promoted the cause of this religion by extending his great patronage to it. His digvijaya to adjacent dominions must have presupposed his visit to the established Jain sanctity of the places like Mathura in the north, Satrunjaya and Terapura in the west and Sravanabelagola in the south. The detail analysis of the epigraphic evidences in the following paragraphs pertaining to his religious activities will strengthen our contention that the affection and honour of the royal family as well as of the people of Kalinga became bound up with the Jain religion and with their presiding deity, the Kalinga Jina, which Kharavela recovered by waging successful wars against Magadha.

The inscription of Kharavela's chief queen records that the cave commutating her name was made for the sake of the Kalinga recluses of Arhata persuasion. Similarly, record of Kharavela's thirteen regnal year says that he caused to be excavated for purposes of worship the Relic Memorial (in honour of) the Arahmatas (who have) cast the transmigration, on Mount Kumari, the auspicious mountain in Vijaya circle.

#### **4.2.6.1. Salutation :**

The Hathi-Gumpha inscription opens with Namō Arahmtanam Namō Sava Sidhanam and confirms to the traditional fivefold obeisance (Pancha Namaskara) of the Jainas adopted by Kharavela as a mark of respect of the Jain pantheon and its followers. This indicates to his sincere devotion to that religion in bending his head as a token of respect.

Among the Jainas, Arhamta is not the common term for ascetics. The ascetics are called Samana (Sramana), Sahu (Sadhu) or Muni. It is clear from this inscription and that inscriptions on the other caves that shrines were built in the honour of the Arahmta while cave-dwellings were excavated for the use of the Sramana.

There is a reference to duality of soul (Jiva) and matter (Deha) in the fourteenth line of the Hathi-Gumpha inscription. The Jain recognized two categories as Jiva (soul) and ajib (non soul). Soul is independent with a separate entity altogether and is not to be identified with the body (deba), a form of matter in which it is contained temporarily. Kharavela's statement in this connection that his soul is dependent (Sirita-sk. asrite) upon body is quite in accord with Jain concept. Kharavela also defines Sramana as Suvihita or self possessed. Sramana is the general term used for the Jain monks.

#### **4.2.6.2. Protected Mathura from Foreigner and Respect to the Bull**

In the eighth regnal year, Kharavela led an expedition to Mathura to protect the Jain strong hold of the place from the hands of the invading Yavanas. On completion of his part of duty, the retreating army under his effective leadership turned to Kalinga with a sapling of the Kalpa Vrksa (wishing tree) burdened with foliage. His vast army, with horses, elephants and chariots made a majestic procession while carrying the Kalpa tree and after reaching the capital the emperor distributed the spoils of victory to all house holders and religious orders. N.K. Sahu associates this tree with the Kevala tree of Risabhanatha. He further points out that in the eleventh year of his reign Kharavela reclaimed the city of Pithuda which was once the metropolis of the ancient kings of Kalinga and in course of the work he cultivated the land with plough, drawn by asses. The use of asses in place of bulls for drawing ploughs is perhaps due to the fact that Kharavela was a devotee of Risabhanatha. Bull has been spiritually associated with the representation of Risabhanatha.

#### **4.2.6.3. Rescue of Kalinga-Jina**

The information recording the achievements of Kharavela in the twelfth year of his reign reveals that one Nandaraja had earlier taken away the Kalinga Jina, the symbol of national and religious sentiment of the people of Kalinga, to Magdha and Kharavela brought back the same after subduing its ruler. This occasion was signalized through a triumphal procession and erection of numerous lofty shrines with strong and beautiful gateways by spending the treasures of Anga and Magadha obtained as booty. This establishes the fact that Jainism was the personal faith of the king of Kalinga and his family whom the Nanda king had defeated and that the Nanda king was himself

a follower of Jainism since otherwise he would not have taken away the Kalinga Jina and installed it in a temple in his capital.

#### **4.2.6.4. Patronage to the Jain Arhata**

The line of fourteen of the Hathi-Gumpha inscription relating to the thirteenth year record of Kharavela's reign indicates the royal support and patronage extended to the Jaina Arhata. They are according to N.K. Sahu the persons who depend on royal patronage, those who fulfilled their (religious) vows (and) those sought shelter during the rains. Kharavela was the worshipper (Pujanu-rata) of the monks who called in fine garments (China vatani) and observing rainy season retreat (Vasasitanam). This indirectly refers to the Svetambar sect, of the Jainas. On the basis of another ambiguous terms i.e. Yasodyapakas, he inclined also to think the existence of the Digambara sect of the Jainas for whom Kharavela caused to have excavated a series of cells in the Kuamri hill (Udayagiri) for the resting of their bodies (Kayanisidiyaya).

#### **4.2.6.5. Convened Council of Jaina Monks**

Sashikanta assumes that Kharavela convened a council of Jaina monks, but no mention of it is available in the literature of Jaina monks of either the Digambara and Svatanbara sect of the Jainas probably because it relates to the period till when the schism had not been finalized and the main object of its meeting was to evert the schism and attempt reconciliation. While disagreeing to the fundamentals, they seem to have agreed on this piece of practical wisdom. There was a school in Mathura which tried to keep away from schismatic tendencies till about the beginning of the Christian era and it might have preserved in memory of this council, but no literature of this school has come to light. It seems to have been represented by Aratiya Yatis or the Yapaniyag.

Taking a clue to this event Sashikanta assumes that the honoured recluses were particularly invited to the Jain council referred to above and met on the Kumari hill (Udayagiri hill) which had already attained the status of famous place of pilgrims of the Jaina restinues. It appears to have been a well attended assembly in which 3500 monks from all directions joined. The site of the assembly was the quadrangle near the shrine of the Arhamta on the top of the hill more particularly on the roof of the Hathi-Gumpha on the face of which is the record inscribed. The quadrangle consisted of the stone platform.

He further assumes that "in front of the Assembly hall was set up a pale red and quadrilateral pillar inlaid with beryl, apparently to serve as a replica of the Manastambha in accord with the traditional description of Samavasarana (the preaching hall of the Tirthankar). At the council, the Principal scripture was given a reading. This is again in accord with the traditional description of Jaina councils as Vachana (reading) found in literature".

The excavation have revealed the remaining of an apsidal structure just over lying the Hathi-Gumpha. The circular structure towards the apse might be a stupa or just a round platform on which the object of worship was placed. All this is in perfect accord with what the inscription says about the relic memorial (Kaya nisidiya) excavated by Kharavela.

Further the excavation has also revealed an ancient imposing ramp built of laterite blocks. It is three metres wide, rising from the foot of the hill and reaches, the terrace of the Hathi-Gumpha, and is supported on either side by retaining walls. It is wedge-shaped in plan, showing greater width near the head than at the tail. This ramp seems to represent the quadrilateral pillar mentioned in the inscription".

#### **4.2.6.6. Worshipper of all Religion**

This magnificent building activity amply testifies to Kharavela's love and respect for the cause of religion and culture, and at the same time, it reveals his stately grandeur. Kharavela was also showing equal respect and honour for all religious denominations embracing the royal epithet Sava-Pasanda-Pujako as used in the concluding paragraphs of the Hathi-Gumpha inscription which undoubtedly confirms to the platform adopted by Devanampriya Priyadarsi Asoka. There would

have been no use of such an epithet had there been no followers among the common mass of Kalinga of different religious orders.

The same concluding paragraph further testifies to the fact that he was the repairer of abodes of all deities *sava devayatana-samkara-karako* without however, indicating to the names of particular shrines connected with a particular religious order. The repair of those monuments presupposes the earlier existence of religious shrines and his ardent love for maintaining their sanctity and proper preservation. Unfortunately no monument has yet been discovered with inscriptions or tablets, recording that they were caused to be repaired by Kharavela.

From the foregoing discussions, it is amply clear that Kharavela was a Jaina by birth, but followed the policy of religious toleration which involved non-interference, non-intervention, and not meddling in another man's religion. The observation of Barua, who examined thoroughly the merits of the religious policy adopted by Kharavela goes to prove that "The education which he received was purely macular and did not differ from that received by other Indian princes. His coronation ceremony was celebrated as may be easily imagined in accordance with Brahmanical rites. The principles and methods which he adopted in governing his kingdom were precisely those prescribed in the Brahmanical treatises on Hindu royal policy. Jainism did not compel him to exercise any scruples in undertaking military expeditions and aggressive wars for territorial expansion and world domination. The patriotic spirit which underlays all his activities was not inspired by Jainism. As for Jainism, he caused a large number of caves to be constructed on the Kumari hill to provide the resident Jaina saints and recluses with resting places and erected ornamented stone pillars, shrines, and pillared halls on a slope of the same hill. As for Hinduism, he made donations for repairing the temples dedicated to various gods and goddesses and feasted alike the Brahmin ascetics and Jaina recluses".

Thus Kharavela was a pious Jaina on one side and the benefactor of all religious on the other. He appear to have found it to be a wise policy on his part to leave each sect, to follow its own creed without taking the troubles of considering the unnecessary details and differences of each faith.

The example act by his partially in patronizing Jainas was followed by many officers and noble men, presumably of his time, as well as by his queens and sons. Some caves of Udayagiri and Khandagiri are associated with Chulakamma, Kamma, Bhuti, Rakiya and Kusumn, who were responsible for their excavations. The chief queen herself dedicated a suit of caves to the honour of the Sramanas of Kalinga while Maharaja Kudepasiri and prince Vadukha who probably came after Kharavela are known to have excavated beautiful cave dwellings being inspired by the sumo ideals.

#### **4.2.7. Capital of Kalinga :**

The capital of Kalinga as gleaned from the Hathi-Gumpha inscription of Kharavela was a highly fortified township adorned with beautiful cool tanks and gardens and having facilities of a canal or most apparently round about the fort and it was teeming with people enjoying festivals, convivial gatherings, dance and music. B.M. Barua says that the Hathi-Gumpha inscription shows that the capital of Kalinga during the reign of Kharavela was Kalinganagara 'the city of Kalinga', which has been identified with Mukhalingam on the Vamsadhara river and adjacent ruins in the Ganjam district. K.P. Jayaswal on the contrary, identifies the capital of Kharavela with Tosali, where a set of Asokan edicts have been found. In this way various theories have been cropped up regarding the identification of Kalinganagara.

But the location of this township has been revealed to some extent after the excavation of Sisupalgarh near Bhubaneswar in 1948 under the guidance of B.B. Lal. He tentatively identified Sisupalgarh with the site of Kalinganagara in the following words. "To turn to the possibility of Sisupalgarh representing the site of Kalinganagara. The Hathi-Gumpha inscription does not say anything about the distance and direction of the city of Kalinga from Udayagiri Khandagiri hills and

therefore the city could be anywhere far or near irrespective of the location of the inscription. If the city was somewhere in the neighbourhood the claim of Sisipalgarh has to be taken into consideration. According to the inscription, Kalinganagara was provided with fortification and king Kharavela repaired the gateway and fortification wall which had been damaged by a storm. Now, no fortified town of comparable date except Sisupalgarh is known to exist near about the Udayagiri and Khandagiri hills, secondly the excavation did reveal a collapse and subsequent repair of the southern gateway flank of the fortification. On these pieces of circumstantial evidence, a presumption is raised in favour of Sisipalgarh being identical with ancient Kalinganagara. But indeed, nothing can be conclusively said until some definite evidence is forthcoming from the site itself”.

The remains of the fort as it is found at present give the impression of a deserted township, its fortification walls being almost square in plan with each side measuring about three quarters of a mile in length. The contours of the fort can clearly be made out with eight large gateways, two on each side and having corner towers, while a moat with perennial water supply circumscribe the fort. The orientation of the gateway and the corner towers suggest excellent planning not only of the fortification, but also of the streets inside which presumably ran east to west and north to south connecting the opposite gateways. The fort while being too large for a mere citadel enclosing perhaps, the kings palace and attached residences or quarters, did not accommodate all the people most of whom to have lived outside its confines as appear from the pottery remaining on the north as far as the Brahmeswar temple and on the west as far as the present Bhausuni temple.

#### **4.2.8. Conclusion**

Thus, Kharavela was such an emperor who looked upon all his subject alike, all religion prevailing in his empire alike, one who kept his subject perfectly happy, one who lifted his kingdom from the depth of hellish misery to the heights of sublime glory and happiness, one who had the wisdom to distinguish between his own countrymen and foreigner, a great conqueror, an emperor and champion of Jainism. What a misfortune not many details about him are available. It is not known how a mighty monarch spent his last days. Nor do we know who the great lady was, who gave birth to so great a son.

#### **4.2.9. Summary**

- *Kharavela, one of the great rulers of ancient India, has left a detailed record of his deeds in the inscription found in the Jaina cave at Udayagiri near Bhubaneswar.*
- *He called himself ‘Supreme Lord of Kalinga’ (Kalingaadhipati) and he was probably a member of the Chedi dynasty which had migrated from eastern Madhya Pradesh to Orissa.*
- *Kharavela was a true chakravartin though he was a Jaina and should have believed in the doctrine of nonviolence (ahimsa). In his campaign against the rulers of North India he got beyond Magadha and so frightened a Greek (Yavana) king who lived northwest of this area that he took to his heels.*
- *Marching westward, Kharavela entered the realm of the Shatavahana king, Satakarni, and, turning south, he defeated a confederation of Dravidian rulers (Tamiradeha sanghata).*
- *The inscription contain some interesting information about some of his activities.*
- *In the first year of his reign he got the fortifications of his capital, Kalinganagara, repaired because they had been damaged by a storm. In the fifth year of his reign he restored an aqueduct which, the inscription states, had been constructed 300 years earlier by a king of the Nanda dynasty.*
- *In the twelfth year of his reign he brought back from Pataliputra a Jaina statue called Kalinga Jina which the Nanda king had abducted from Orissa. All this shows a great deal of continuity in the historical awareness of the region in this early period.*



- *The spoils of the many successful campaigns which Kharavela conducted almost every year seem to have made him so rich that by the sixth year of his reign he could afford to abolish all taxes payable by the citizens of towns (paura) and the rural folk (janapada) in his realm.*
- *The inscription also contains the interesting news that Kharavela reintroduced the sixty-four arts of song, dance and instrumental music (tauryatrika) which had been prohibited by the Mauryas. This testifies to the fact that Ashoka's Dhamma-Mahamatras had successfully implemented the imperial orders even in distant Orissa.*
- *Kharavela's far-flung realm, which included large parts of East and Central India, seems to have disintegrated soon after his death. Only his son and another member of the dynasty have left us some rather unimportant inscriptions.*

#### **4.2.10. Exercise**

- Discuss the significance of Hatigumpha inscription in the annal of ancient Indian epigraphy as a source of ancient Indian history.
- Describe the achievements of Kharavela in the light of Hatigumpha inscription.
- Estimate Kharavela as a champion of Jainism.
- Examine the possible date of Kharavela's reign as known from Hatigumpha inscription.
- Write an essay on the art and architecture of Khandagiri and Udayagiri caves.

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**Unit-4**  
**Chapter-III**  
**SANGAM AGE**  
**Literature, Economy and Society.**

**Structure**

- 4.3.0. Objective**
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#### 4.3.0. Objectives

*This chapter will deal with the ancient period of southern India on the lights of a vast corpus of literature called Sangam literature. After learning this lesson the students will be able to explain*

- *the Sources for the study of the Sangam period including the Sangam literature.*
- *the Chera, Chola and Pandya rulers of the Sangam period and their achievements.*
- *the Sangam polity including the administrative system and other details.*
- *the Sangam society, the five divisions of landscape, their religious life and the position of women.*
- *the economy during the Sangam period, particularly the overseas commercial contacts during the Sangam period.*

#### 4.3.1. Introduction

The Sangam Age constitutes an important chapter in the history of South India. According to Tamil legends, there existed three Sangams (Academy of Tamil poets) in ancient Tamil Nadu popularly called Muchchangam. These Sangams flourished under the royal patronage of the Pandyas. The first Sangam, held at Then Madurai, was attended by gods and legendary sages but no literary work of this Sangam was available. The second Sangam was held at Kapadapuram but the all the literary works had perished except *Tolkappiyam*. The third Sangam at Madurai was founded by Mudathirumaran. It was attended by a large number of poets who produced voluminous literature but only a few had survived. These Tamil literary works remain useful sources to reconstruct the history of the Sangam Age. Historians and Indologists regard the Sangam period as the ‘classical age’ of the Tamils analogous to the age of the classics in Greece and Rome and to that of the Renaissance of later period in Europe. Some even consider the Sangam age as the ‘Golden age’ of the Tamils, which marked a unique epoch in the history of the Tamilakam. The archaeological sources found from different explored or excavated sites throw light on the various aspects of the political, social, economic, religious and cultural life of the Sangam age people. However, the precious literary finds of this period discovered from various places in South India provide us with the significant information in this regard. In other words, the Sangam literature is the major source for the study of the Sangam age.

#### 4.3.2. The term ‘Sangam’

The term ‘Sangam’ literally means ‘confluence’. However, in the context of early South Indian history this term can be rendered into English as an assembly, a college or an academy of learned people, held under the patronage of the Pandyan kings, who were great lovers of literature and the fine arts. The Sangam was a voluntary organisation of poets. It was similar to a Round Table Conference, which allowed sitting room only to an authentic poet. This academy or assembly of learned people including the Sangam poets produced literary works of high quality.

#### 4.3.3. Period of Sangam Literature

There is controversy among the scholars regarding the chronology of the Sangam age. The main reason behind this is the lack of unanimity concerning the age of the Sangam works, which are of great historical value for the study of the Sangam age. On the basis of the composition of Sangam literature K.A.N. Sastri traces the Sangam age to the period A.D. 100-250. According to tradition, the *Tolkappiyam* is the oldest among extant Tamil works. M. Arokiaswami holds that as *Tolkappiar*, the author of *Tolkappiyam*, flourished sometime in the 4<sup>th</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> c.B.C., the same date can be assigned to this literary work. The sheet anchor of Sangam chronology lies in the fact that Gajabhagu II of Sri Lanka and Chera Senguttuvan of the Chera dynasty were contemporaries. This is confirmed by *Silappathigaram* as well as the *Dipavamsa* and *Mahavamsa*. Also the Roman coins issued by Roman emperors of the first century A.D were found in plenty in various places of Tamil

Nadu. The corroboration of the literary sources with archaeological data enables us to place the Sangam age in the chronological span of roughly about 600 years from c. 300 B.C to A.D 300.

#### **4.3.4. The Tradition of the three Sangams**

The theory of the three Sangams establishes that these were successive and not contemporary. The traditional accounts of Iraiyanar Ahapporul mention that there were three Sangams (I, II and III) held, which flourished for 9990 years at frequent intervals. These were attended by 8598 scholars. Sage Agastyar was the founding father. The Ahapporul commentary also mentions about their successive order and the deluges occurring during the intervals between them. These Sangams or academies were patronized by 197 Pandyan kings. According to the tradition, of the three successive Sangams the first two belong to prehistory. All the three were held in the capital of the Pandyas. As the capital was shifted from time to time, old Madurai was the headquarters of the first Sangam, and the second academy was held at Kapatapuram. Both these centres were washed away by the sea during successive deluges. The third Sangam was located in modern Madurai.

The date of the third Sangam can be established with more probability than the other Sangams. This date is taken to be the first two centuries of the Christian era and probably the century immediately preceding the Christian era. The age of Tolkappiar is believed to be in the second Sangam era and the third Sangam era coincides with the Indo-Roman trade with the contemporary Imperial Rome. This dating is based on the evidence available in the accounts of the Greek writers of the time. There are several references to the overseas trading activities between the Mediterranean world and Tamil region. The same is also attested by the Sangam literature. Thus, the third Sangam witnessed the production of numerous extant works. The Sangams can be compared to the French Academy in Europe in modern times, which aimed at maintaining the purity of the language and literary standards. In the beginning, admission to the Sangam was by co-option, but later it was by means of miraculous contrivance by the Lord Siva, who was the permanent president of this august body.

#### **4.3.5. The Corpus of Sangam Literature**

As mentioned earlier, the Sangam works contain mines of information for the study of early history of Tamilakam. They reflect the matter of great historical importance. Tolkappiyam, a treatise on Tamil grammar and poetics, composed probably during the second Sangam, is the oldest extant literary work in Tamil. Whereas, the earliest Tamil poetry now available, generally known as Sangam poetry, is said to have been produced during the period of the third Sangam.

Modern scholarship use the term 'Sangam Literature' for only those works in verse (prose is of much later origin), which are comprised in the Ettutogai (Eight collections), Pattupattu (Ten songs) and Patinenkilkanakku (The Eighteen Minor Works), which are judged to have been produced in that order during the period A.D 150-250. The so called 'Five Epics' ('the five great poems') include Jivakachintamani, Silappadikaram, Manimekalai, Valayapathi and Kundalakesi. These are assigned much later dates. Of these the last two are not extant. So, of the three 'great poems' that we now have, Silappadikaram and Manimekalai are called the 'twin epics' because they form a continuous story narrating the story of a single family-Kovalan (the rich merchant prince of Puhar), Kannagi (Kovalan's chaste wife), Madhavi (the dancer) with whom Kovalan lived in wedlock and Manimekalai, the child of this wedlock.

Ilango Adigal was the author of Silappadikaram. In the epic, Ilango is mentioned as the brother of the reigning Chera king Senguttuvan. Manimekalai was written by Sathanar mainly to propound the Buddhist doctrine among Tamils. Nonetheless, these poetical works describe about the social, religious, economic and political conditions of Tamilakam with the focus on the cities like Madurai, Puhar (Poompuhar/ Kaveripattinam), Vanji (Karur) and Kanchi.

While the individual poems included in the above mentioned three groups may be taken to have been produced within the first three centuries of the Christian era, they were very probably collected and arranged in the order in which they are now found, at a much later date. Length of the poem was one of the very important basis for the classification into three broad divisions. The poems in the 'Eight collections' run from three to thirty one lines, whereas in the 'Ten Songs', the shortest poem runs to 103 lines and the longest has 782 lines. The 'Eighteen Minor Works' include the ethical and didactic literature. The didactic literature, which includes the world famous Tirukkural is mostly in stanzaic form, the stanza having from two to five lines.

The Sangam collections at present consist of 2279 poems of varying lengths from 3 lines to about 800 lines. Some of these works are attributed to a single author, while others like the Naladiyar, contain the contributions of many poets. This Sangam poetry available to us runs to more than 30,000 lines. These were composed by 473 poets including women besides 102 being anonymous. Among the poets nearly 50 were women poets. These works reflect fairly advanced material culture. They also show that by the Sangam age, Tamil as a language had attained maturity and had become a powerful and elegant medium of literary expression. The language is inevitably archaic, though not perhaps more difficult to understand for the modern Tamil.

The Sangam poems are of two varieties, though scholars have divided them into various categories on the basis of their subject matter. The two varieties are – the short ode and the long poem. For a historian the short odes are of greater value than the long lyrics. However, generally the historical value of these sources are irrespective of their length. The odes are collected in 9 anthologies. The anthologies in which these are collected include – Ahananuru, Purananuru, Kuruntogai, Narrinai, Kalittogai, Paripadal, Aingurunuru, and Patirrupattu. These are collectively called Ettutogai. The ten long lyrics or descriptive poems (10 idylls) known as Pattupattu is said to be the ninth group. These consist of – Tirumurugarruppadai, Sirupanarruppadai, Porunarruppadai, Perumbanarruppadai, Nedunalvadai, Kurinjippattu, Maduraikkanji, Pattinappalai, Mullaipattu and Malaipadukadam. Of these Tirumurugarruppadai is a devotional poem on Lord Muruga; Sirupanarruppadai deals with the generous nature of Nalliyakkodan who ruled over a part of the Chola kingdom; Perumbanarruppadai describes about Tondaiman Ilantiraiyan and his capital Kanchipuram; Porunarruppadai and Pattinappalai sings in the praise of Karikala, the great Chola king; Nedunalvadai and Maduraikkanji deal with Talaiyalanganattu Nedunjeliyan, the great Pandyan king; Kurinjippattu portrays the description of the hilly regions and hill life; and Malaipadukadam refers to the Chieftain Nannan and also to the music and songs to encourage the army, to celebrate the victory won by the king in a war, etc. Nevertheless, these works reflect the worth of the poets in Sangam age.

In addition to the Sangam literature, the Greek authors like Megasthenes, Strabo, Pliny and Ptolemy mention the commercial contacts between the West and South India. The Asokan inscriptions mention the Chera, Chola and Pandya rulers on the south of the Mauryan empire. The Hathikumbha inscription of Kharavela of Kalinga also mentions about Tamil kingdoms. The excavations at Arikamedu, Poompuhar, Kodumanal and other places reveal the overseas commercial activities of the Tamils.

#### **4.3.6. Political History**

The Tamil country was ruled by three dynasties namely the Chera, Chola and Pandyas during the Sangam Age. The political history of these dynasties can be traced from the literary references.

##### **4.3.6.1. Cheras**

The Cheras ruled over parts of modern Kerala. Their capital was Vanji and their important seaports were Tondi and Musiri. They had the palmyra flowers as their garland. The Pugalur inscription of the first century A.D refers to three generations of Chera rulers. *Padirrupattu* also

provides information on Chera kings. Perum Sorru Udhiyan Cheralathan, Imayavaramban Nedum Cheralathan and Cheran Senguttuvan were the famous rulers of this dynasty. Cheran Senguttuvan belonged to 2nd century A.D. His younger brother was Elango Adigal, the author of *Silappathigaram*. Among his military achievements, his expedition to the Himalayas was remarkable. He defeated many north Indian monarchs. Senguttuvan introduced the Pattini cult or the worship of Kannagi as the ideal wife in Tamil Nadu. The stone for making the idol of Kannagi was brought by him after his Himalayan expedition. The consecration ceremony was attended by many princes including Gajabhagu II from Sri Lanka.

#### **4.3.6.2.Cholas**

The Chola kingdom of the Sangam period extended from modern Tiruchi district to southern Andhra Pradesh. Their capital was first located at Uraiyur and then shifted to Puhar. Karikala was a famous king of the Sangam Cholas. *Pattinappalai* portrays his early life and his military conquests. In the Battle of Venni he defeated the mighty confederacy consisting of the Cheras, Pandyas and eleven minor chieftains. This event is mentioned in many Sangam poems. Vahaipparandalai was another important battle fought by him in which nine enemy chieftains submitted before him. Karikala's military achievements made him the overlord of the whole Tamil country. Trade and commerce flourished during his reign period. He was responsible for the reclamation of forest lands and brought them under cultivation thus adding prosperity to the people. He also built Kallanai across the river Kaveri and also constructed many irrigation tanks.

#### **4.3.6.3.Pandyas**

The Pandyas ruled over the present day southern Tamil Nadu. Their capital was Madurai. The earliest kings of the Pandyan dynasty were Nediyan, Palyagasalai Mudukudumi Peruvaludhi and Mudathirumaran. There were two Nedunchelians. The first one was known as Aryappadai Kadantha Nedunchelian (one who won victories over the Aryan forces). He was responsible for the execution of Kovalan for which Kannagi burnt Madurai. The other was Talaiyalanganattu Cheruvenra (He who won the battle at Talaiyalanganam) Nedunchelian. He was praised by Nakkirar and Mangudi Maruthanar. He wore this title after defeating his enemies at the Battle of Talaiyalanganam, which is located in the Tanjore district. By this victory Nedunchelian gained control over the entire Tamil Nadu. *Maduraikkanji* written by Mangudi Maruthanar describes the socio-economic condition of the Pandya country including the flourishing seaport of Korkai. The last famous Pandyan king was Uggira Peruvaludhi. The Pandyan rule during the Sangam Age began to decline due to the invasion of the Kalabhras.

#### **4.3.6.4.Minor Chieftains**

The minor chieftains played a significant role in the Sangam period. Among them Pari, Kari, Ori, Nalli, Pegan, Ay and Adiyaman were popular for their philanthropy and patronage of Tamil poets. Therefore, they were known as Kadai Yelu Vallalgal. Although they were subordinate to the Chera, Chola and Pandya rulers, they were powerful and popular in their respective regions.

#### **4.3.7. Sangam Polity**

The Sangam poems present a sketch reflecting the evolution of the state system in South India for the first time. These works indicate the process of historical evolution in which we find the tribes decreasing in number but existing as well established units by the side of the king. So, the evidences suggest that state as an organised political structure had come into existence although it was not yet stable. Though the democratic conception of the state government had not yet become established the administration of the times partook of the character of the monarchy tempered by the best effects of the democratic principle.

#### **4.3.7.1.Kingship**

Of the three muventars (three crowned monarch) the Cholas controlled the fully irrigated fertile Cauvery (Kaveri) basin with their capital at Uraiyur, the Pandyas ruled over the pastoral and littoral parts with the capital at Madurai, and the Cheras had their sway over the hilly country in the west with Vanji (Karur) as the capital. The Sangam works mention the names of so many kings that ascertaining both their genealogy and chronology are highly problematical. However, the genealogy of the Chola kings Uruvaphrer Ilanjetchenni, his son Karikala and his two sons, Nalankilli and Nedunkilli have been confirmed to a great extent by the scholars. The kings of other two dynasties include Muthukudumi Peruvaludi, Ariyapadaikadantha Nedunjeliyan, Verrivercheliyan and Talayalankanathu Ceruvenra Nedunjeliyan among the Pandyas and Imayararamban Nedumceralatan, Cheran Senguttuvan and Mantaram Cheral Irumporai among the Cheras.

Monarchy was the prevalent form of government. The “king” was called ventan. He was the head of the society and government. As the head of the society, he took the lead in every event of social importance like the festival of Indra, inaugurations of dance performances, etc. The “king” assumed important titles at the time of coronation. He was equated with gods so as to provide divine sanctity. The ancient Tamils considered the drum, the sceptre and the white umbrella as the three great insignia of his office. According to the Sangam classics, kingship descended by heredity from father to son.

The king was responsible for maintaining the law and order in the state. He also looked after the welfare of his subjects, worked hard for their good and frequently toured the country to put things in order. The king also had recourse to advisers in the course of his administration. The literature frequently mentions them as surram which literally means the men who always surrounded the king giving him advice whenever needed.

#### **4.3.7.2.Chieftains**

This was not only a period of great kings but also of great chieftains who were subordinate to the kings. They are divided into two – velir and non-velir. Some of them were great patrons of letters. Some of the great chieftains of the period included Palayan Maran of Mohur (near modern Madurai), Nannan Venman and Villavan Kothai (both of the West Coast of the Peninsula), Nalliyakodan of Oimanadu (in modern South Arcot), Tithyan (Tinnevely region) and the whole band of Velir chieftains like Pari of Parambunad, Vel Pegan of the Palni region, Vel Evvi of Pudukottai region, Vel Avi and Irukkuvel of Kodumbalur and others. The later Sangam period witnessed greater consolidation of monarchical power with the reduction of the traditional chieftains to the position of royal officers. However, in the post-Sangam period the royal officers grew stronger and the centre became weak gradually.

#### **4.3.7.3.Administration**

Now, let us discuss the administrative machinery as described by the Sangam texts. The policies of the king were controlled by a system of checks and balances in the councils. Silappadikaram refers to the two types of councils — Aimperunkulu and Enperayam. The aimperunkulu or the council of five members was the council of the ministers. The enperayam or the great assembly (perayam) consisted of 8 members (government officers). This worked as an administrative machinery of the state. These two assemblies that of the Five and that of the Eight functioned as administrative bodies, though their function was generally advisory in character. However, their advice was rarely rejected by the king. Their important function was judicial though the aimperunkulu seems to have been solely in charge of it as described by Maduraikkanji.

It is important to note that in spite of all the glory attached to the ancient king, the ethos of Indian administration has been in the direction of limited or popular monarchy. This can be observed in South India from very early times even more than in the north and each followed its

own model of administration. Every local unit, however small and in whatever corner it was situated, was administered by a local assembly. The avai and the manram are the terms used for this unit in Sangam works. Such assembly is commonly referred to as arankuravaiyam, which were known for its just decision. These can be taken to be the forerunner of our modern panchayat.

#### **4.3.7.4. Defence**

Major ruling dynasties and chieftains maintained large standing army. The wars were frequent and were fought not only for defence but also with a desire to extend one's territories or to save suffering people of neighbouring kingdoms from tyranny or misrule. Sometimes the wars occurred for matrimonial alliances. Such was the mental state of the people that almost everyone trained himself for war and besides the army maintained by the kings potential soldiers were all over the country to join the royal force in times of need. Even kings trained themselves in such activities.

The king maintained all the four kinds of armies mentioned in Sangam literature — the chariot, the elephant, the cavalry and the infantry. There are references to the navy of the Chera that guarded the sea-port so well that other ships could not enter the region. The Sangam texts also mention about the army camp on the battle field. The king's camp was well made and even in camp he slept under his white umbrella and many soldiers slept around him mostly without sword. The camps of ordinary soldiers were generally built with the sugarcane leaves on the sides and cut paddy crop on the top with paddy hanging from it. Generals and officers of high rank were accompanied by their wives on the campaign and stayed in the special camps built for the officers. The king frequently visited the camp of soldiers and officers to enquire about their welfare. He did so even in the night and in pouring rain.

Tamil people had a great respect for the warrior and particularly the hero who died in the battle field. Suffering a back-wound was considered as highly disreputable as there are instances of kings who died fasting because they had suffered such a wound in battle. The herostones were erected to commemorate heroes who died in war. There was the provision for the prison which indicate the coercive machinery of the state.

Sangam polity was influenced by the North Indian political ideas and institutions in many aspects. Many rulers sought their origin and association with deities like Siva, Vishnu and ancient sages. Many kings are said to have participated in the Mahabharata war like their North Indian counterparts. The rulers of Sangam age were also the patrons of art, literature and performed yajnas (sacrifices).

#### **4.3.8. Sangam Society**

The earliest phase of Sangam society as described by Tolkappiyam was based on the fivefold classification of the land — the hill, the pastoral, the agricultural, the desert and the coastal. Different kinds of people inhabited these various classified lands and developed certain fixed customs and ways of life as a result of their interaction with respective environment. The ecological variations also determined their occupations such as hunting, cultivation, pastoralism, plunder, fishing, diving, sailing, etc.

##### **4.3.8.1. Social Composition**

Anthropological studies have shown that the earliest social element consisted of Negroid and Australoid groups with mixture of another racial stock which migrated from the earliest Mediterranean region. In its early phase these societies had small population and social classes were unknown. As a result there existed great unity among the people of each region, who moved freely among themselves and their ruler. The only classification Tamil society knew at this time was that of the arivar, ulavar, etc. based on their occupation such as the soldiers, hunters, shepherds, ploughmen, fishermen, etc.



The existence of numerous tribes and chieftains was seen in the later half of the Sangam age. The four Vedic varnas were distinctly of a later period. But it is interesting to note that though the varna system was brought in by the immigrating Brahmanas (1st c.A.D), it did not include Kshatriyas as in the north. Only the brahmins were the dvijas (twice born) who qualified for the sacred thread. There are references to the slaves known as adimai (one who lived at feet of another). The prisoners of war were reduced to slavery. There existed slave markets.

#### **4.3.8.2.Women**

The women like men, enjoyed certain freedom and went around the town freely, played on the seashore and river beds and joined in temple festivals as depicted in Sangam poems such as Kalittogai. However, the status of women was one of subordination to men, which was an aspect of the general philosophy of the contemporary period. This is well reflected in Kuruntogai which mentions that the wife was not expected to love the husband after evaluating his qualities but because of the fact of his being her husband. In other words, it was not possible for a wife to estimate her husband. Though there are references to women being educated and some of them becoming poetesses, this can not be applied to the general mass. They had no property rights but were treated with considerations. Women remained a widow or performed sati, which was considered almost divine. Marriage was a sacrament and not a contract. Tolkappiyam mentions eight forms of marriage of which the most common was the Brahma marriage. However, there are references to wooing or even elopements, which were followed by conventional marriage. Prostitution was a recognised institution. However, the prostitutes were taken to be the intruders in peaceful family life. But they figure so prominently in the poems and enjoy such a social standing that there could be no doubt that the harlots of the Sangam age were not the degraded prostitutes of the modern times. Though texts like Kuruntogai refer to the harlots challenging wives and their relations, seducing men, the harlots gave their companions more of a cultural enjoyment than anything else.

#### **4.3.8.3.Dress, Ornaments and Fashion**

The upper strata of society used dress of fine muslin and silk. Except for nobles and kings, men were satisfied with just two pieces of cloth — one below the waist and another adorning the head like a turban. Women used cloth only to cover below the waist. The tribal population was not in a position to do that even. The tribal women used leaves and barks to cover themselves.

The men and women of Sangam age were fond of using oil, aromatic scents, coloured powders and paints, while the sandal paste was heavily applied on their chests. According to Silappadikaram women had pictures drawn on their bodies in coloured patterns and had their eyelids painted with a black pigment. The ornaments were worn round the neck and on arms and legs by both, the men and women. The chiefs and nobles wore heavy armlets and anklets while the ordinary women wore various other kinds of jewels. Valuable ornaments of gold and precious stones were used for decoration by men and women of upper strata whereas the poor class used bracelets made of conch-shell and necklaces made of coloured beads. Silappadikaram refers to a ceremonial hot bath in water heated with five kinds of seeds, ten kinds of astringents and thirty two kinds of scented plants, the drying of the hair over smoke of akhil and the parting of it into five parts for dressing. Men also grew long hair and wore the tuft tied together with a knot which was sometimes surrounded by a string of beads. Tamils were very much fond of flowers and women used to decorate their hair with flowers, especially water lily as described by Kuruntogai.

#### **4.3.8.4.Dwellings**

People lived in two kinds of houses – those built of mud and the others built of bricks. According to the Sangam texts the second category of houses were built of suduman, which literally means burnt mud. The poor lived in thatched houses covered with grass or leaves of the coconut or

palmyra. Windows were generally small and made like the deer's eye. The literary works describe the well-built storeyed houses of the rich people, which had gopurams for the entrance and iron gates with red paint to prevent from rusting. Silappadikaram mentions that these houses were lighted with beautiful artistic lamps often from Greece and Rome. They were burned with oil extracted from fish.

#### **4.3.8.5. Food and Drinks**

Non-vegetarianism was the main food habit though brahmin ascetics preferred vegetarian food. The food was very plain and consisted of rice, milk, butter, ghee and honey. Meat and liquor were freely used. Curd was in popular use. Kuruntogai mentions various kinds of sweets made with curd, jaggery, puffed rice, milk and ghee. Spicing of curry and rice is also referred to in the Sangam texts. On the whole the upper class consumed high quality of rice, the choicest meat, imported wine, etc. The brahmins preferred vegetarian food and avoided alcoholic drinks. In urban area, the public distribution of food was made by the charitable institutions.

Feasts were organised for collective entertainment. The custom of feeding guests was a common custom and eating without a guest to partake of the food was considered unsatisfying. Poets and learned were always considered as honoured guests and red rice fried in ghee was given to them as a mark of love and respect.

#### **4.3.8.6. Entertainments**

There were numerous amusements and plays in which people participated for entertainment. The sources of entertainment included dances, musical programmes, religious festivals, bull-fights, cock-fights, marble-game, hunting, dice, wrestling, boxing, acrobatics, etc. Women amused themselves with the religious dances, playing the dice and varippanthu or cloth ball. Playing in swings made of palmrya fibres was common among girls. Narrinai refers to the games played with decorated dolls. Kuruntogai mentions about children playing with toy-cart and with the sand houses made by them on the seashore.

Dance and music were other popular sources of entertainment. The Sangam poems mention various kinds of dances. Silappadikaram mentions eleven kinds of dances, which are divided into seven groups. It also gives minute details about music. There are further references to the different kinds of musical instruments such as the drums, flute and yal sold in shops at Puhar and Madurai. The performing arts also included the art of drama. The dramas were mostly religious in character but sometimes these were enacted to commemorate great event or persons. Bardism and the system of wandering minstrels going from place to place with their musical instruments singing the glory of either a person or a great event commanded great popularity in the Sangam age. Initially, the bard (porunar) began as an individual to whip up the martial spirit of the soldiers engaged in war and to sing of their victory when the battle was won. However, their activities were not confined to encourage the soldiers in the battle-field alone but also to carry messages from there to the people at home. They had high respect in society and were even honored by the kings. Besides the porunar were the panar who performed for the common people.

#### **4.3.8.7. Fine Arts**

Poetry, music and dancing were popular among the people of the Sangam age. Liberal donations were given to poets by the kings, chieftains and nobles. The royal courts were crowded with singing bards called Panar and Viraliyar. They were experts in folk songs and folk dances. The arts of music and dancing were highly developed. A variety of Yazhs and drums are referred to in the Sangam literature. Dancing was performed by Kanigaiyar. Koothu was the most popular entertainment of the people.

#### **4.3.9. Religion : Beliefs and Rituals**

The literary evidence presents a picture of elaborate religious development in the Sangam age. The faiths like Brahmanism, Jainism and Buddhism coexisted in the Tamil region during this

period. Buddhism and Jainism entered the region in the first centuries of the Christian era. The sects of Brahmanism such as Saivism and Vaishnavism were also well-known religions during the period.

The advent of Vedic people and the interaction of their faith with that of the Tamils is well reflected by the Sangam works. Silappadikaram mentions about the “triple sacred fire” the “twice born nature” the “six duties” and other ideas associated with the Brahmanas. Tolkappiyam also refers to the six Brahmanic duties. Brahmanical rites and ceremonies were very much in practice. For example, the Pandyan king is described as “having various sacrificial halls” in many Sangam poems.

The four important deities as mentioned by Tolkappiyam were—Murugan, Tirumal, Vendan (Indra) and Varunan. Indra was worshipped as the rain god and a festival in his honour was celebrated every year. In Pattinappalai worship of Muruga is mentioned. Muruga is the son of Siva. Besides these deities, Lakshmi (the goddess of prosperity), Mayon (later Vishnu) as guardian of the forest region, Baladeva, Kaman (the god of love), the moon-god, sea-god and other divinities were also worshipped.

The people of Sangam age also believed in ghosts and spirits. There is the mention of the “bhuta” in Silappadikaram. Many believed in demons residing on tress, battle-fields and burning ghats “drinking blood and combing their hair with hands soaked in blood.” The same text also refers to minor deities like guardian deities of Madura and Puhar. They also believed in the village gods, totemic symbols and bloody sacrifices to appease ferocious deities. Animism is clearly reflected in their tradition of worshipping the deities believed to be residing in trees, streams and on hill tops. The dead heroes, satis and other martyrs were also defied.

The advent of Buddhism and Jainism in the first centuries of the Christian era influenced the philosophical thoughts of the Tamils in the Sangam age. These ideologies placed knowledge before matter. The Buddhists and Jains called on people to look to the world beyond matter. Many scholars have expressed their views that the two great epics of the period, Silappadikaram was Jain and Manimekalai was Buddhist.

Saivism and Vaishnavism were also important faiths. The term Saivism is mentioned only in Manimekalai. Though Siva as a deity is not mentioned in other texts, he is referred to by his attributes like – “the ancient first Lord”, “the Lord with the blue beautiful throat” and “the god under the banyan tree”. So, in early times both Saivism and Vaishnavism seem to have existed in the Tamil region only in principle and not by name. Though Tolkappiyam refers to the god Muruga (son of Siva) and Mayon (earlier name of Vishnu), there is no clear reference to Saivism and Vaishnavism. Probably, the transition of these cults to these two different sects was taking place during the Sangam age.

The Sangam age people also believed in dreams and influence of planets on human life. Certain ominous signs were popularly observed. For example, the cawing of the crow was considered as an omen of the coming guest, who was eagerly waited. Kuruntogai mentions that the crow was considered a good harbinger and was fed with rice and ghee. Sneezing was held inauspicious.

The sophisticated aspect of the Sangam religion was the worship of gods and goddesses in temples. Temple dedicated to Siva, Muruga, Baladeva, Vishnu, Kaman and moon-god are clearly mentioned in various Sangam texts. Manimekalai refers to a very big brick called Cakravahakottam. However, in many cases, as till today, the deities were often set up under trees. The method of worship generally consisted of dancing and offering flowers, rice and meat to the gods. Silappadikaram mentions about the stone images of gods. This is also attested by the archaeological discovery in the form of the lingam dating to the centuries B.C by T.A. Gopinatha

Rao. The Tamils of Sangam age believed in the ritual uncleanliness on occasions of birth and death. Dead were disposed either by cremation, burial or by being left in open to vultures or jackals. Burning grounds are mentioned in Manimekalai where dwelled different kinds of spirits.

#### **4.3.10. Economy of the Sangam Age**

The vast corpus of Sangam literature along with some classical literature such as Periplus of the Erythrean Sea as well as archaeological sources inform us about the prosperous economic condition of South India during Sangam Age.

##### **4.3.10.1. Agriculture**

The prosperity of people in the Sangam age was rooted in the fertility of agriculture and expansion of trade. The Maduraikkanji refers to the agriculture and trade as the main forces of economic development. Agriculture was the main source of revenue for the state. The importance attached to cultivation is also seen in the interest people showed in cattle rearing. The Sangam poems frequently refer to milk and milk-products such as curd, butter, ghee and butter milk. The importance of cattle is also attested by the cattle raids on enemy country mentioned in the literary works. One of the primary duties of the king was to protect the cattle of his kingdom. The cattle wealth in turn enhanced the wealth of the farmer. Silappadikaram also relates the happiness and prosperity of the people to the agriculture.

The paddy and sugarcane were the two important crops cultivated in a large quantity. Besides these chief crops, other varieties of crops and fruits included gram, beans, roots like Valli (a kind of sweet potato), jack-fruit, mango, plantain, coconut, arecanut, saffron, pepper, turmeric, etc.

Tolkappiyam refers to the five-fold division of lands- Kurinji (hilly tracks), Mullai (pastoral), Marudam (agricultural), Neydal (coastal) and Palai (desert). The people living in these five divisions had their respective chief occupations as well as gods for worship.

- Kurinji - chief deity was Murugan- chief occupation, hunting and honey collection.
- Mullai- chief deity Mayon (Vishnu)- chief occupation, cattle-rearing and dealing with dairy products.
- Marudam- chief deity Indira- chief occupation, agriculture. · Neydal- chief deity Varunan – chief occupation fishing and salt manufacturing.
- Palai- chief deity Korravai – chief occupation robbery.

The kings of the Sangam age took great measures for the development of agriculture. It is well-known that Karikala Chola dug tanks for irrigation and his embankment of the river Cauvery (Kaveri) proved to be very useful for agriculture. Tank irrigation helped in feeding agriculture as mentioned in many poems. For example, Maduraikkanji mentions “rivers filling the tanks as they run towards the eastern ocean”. From the sources it is very evident that the prosperity of the king very much depended on the prosperity of the land.

##### **4.3.10.2. Industry**

The Sangam age also witnessed the industrial activities on a large scale. The poems refer to various kinds of craftsmen including the goldsmith, the blacksmith, the coppersmith, the potter, the sculptor, the painter and the weaver. Manimekalai mentions the collaboration of architects from Maharashtra, blacksmiths from Malwa, carpenters from Greece and Rome and jewellers from Magadha with their counterparts of the Tamil region. The occupation or profession was generally hereditary or handed down from father to the son. According to Silappadikaram, men of different occupation lived in different streets. This led to progress in various trades and industries and also resulted in making these men skilled in their art.

The art of building reached a high level during this period. In this context the works of carpenters are noteworthy. This can be observed in the use of boats with face of the horse, elephant and lion mentioned by Silappadikaram. Moreover, the thriving trading activities with the

Mediterranean world and other distant lands could have been facilitated only with well-built and highly seaworthy ships. Other building activities included the construction of moats, bridges, drainage, lighthouse, etc.

The painter's art was commonly practised and appreciated by people. Paripadal refers to the existence of a museum of paintings in Madura (Madurai) and the sale of pictures is mentioned by Silappadikaram. The walls of houses, roofs, dress, bed-spreads, curtains and many other articles of day-to-day use were painted and were in great demand. The art of weaving, however, commanded popularity not only among the Tamils but also among the foreigners. Garments with woven floral designs are frequently mentioned in Sangam literature. Dresses were woven not only from cotton, silk and wool but also from rat's hair and colouring yarn was known. The Indian silk, for its fineness, was in great demand by the Roman merchants. However, the weaving industry was a domestic industry in which all the members of the family, especially women, took part.

The leather-workers, potters and other craftsmen also contributed to the industrial development. But one of the most noteworthy fact in this regard is the introduction of Greek sculpture and other foreign workmanship into South India during this period. Literary works like Nedunalvada, Mullaippattu and Padiruppattu refer to the beautiful lamps made by the foreigners, Roman pots and wine jars etc. The Graeco-Roman influence in the contemporary period can also be seen in the sculptures of Amaravati (Andhra Pradesh) and Ceylon.

#### **4.3.10.3. Trade**

The Tamils of the Sangam age had trading contacts with the Mediterranean world (Greece and Rome), Egypt, China, Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka. The literary works like Silappadikaram, Manimekalai and Pattinappalai frequently refer to the contact with the Greek and Roman traders. This period marked the height of the Indo-Roman trade. The Periplus of Erythrean Sea and other accounts of foreigners such as those of Pliny, Ptolemy, Strabo and Petronius mention various ports and the articles traded during the period. The archaeological excavations and explorations at various sites have also yielded the artefacts confirming to the trading relations between the Tamil regions and other countries. The discovery of coin hoards at many places also attest this fact.

The Sangam texts mention prominently only the ports of Musiri, Puhar (Kaveripattinam) and Korkai, the three great ports of the three great rulers of the times. However, the Periplus refers to the ports of Tondi, Musiri and Comari (Cape Comorin / Kanyakumari), Colchi (Korkai), Poduke (Arikamedu) and Sopatma. According to Periplus there were three types of vessels in use in South India. These included small coasting vessels, large coasting vessels and ocean-going ships. There is also the mention of large vessels called Colandia sailing from the Tamil Coast to the Ganges.

The commodities exported to Rome fetched high returns. Living animals like tiger, leopard, monkeys and peacocks were exported to Rome. The chief animal products of export included ivory and pearl. Plant products like aromatics and spices (pepper, ginger, cardamom, cloves, nutmegs, etc.), coconut, plantain, jaggery, teak wood, sandal wood, cotton cloth of special variety called argaru (from Uraiyur) were also among the chief exports. Mineral products like diamonds, beryl, steel, semiprecious stones, etc. were also exported from South India.

The main articles of import from Rome consisted of the coins, coral, wine, lead, tin and jewellery. The beads manufactured at many sites in South India in the contemporary period have been found at several sites of Southeast Asia. This suggests the maritime contacts between the two regions. There were settlements of the foreign traders in many towns. However, it was not only the external trade, which added to the prosperity of the Tamils. Internal trade also flourished in the region with local networks of trade connecting different urban centres. Silappadikaram refers to the bazaar (marked) streets of Puhar while Maduraikkanji describes the market at Madurai, the Pandyan capital. Besides the coastal ports or towns, the Tamil region also witnessed the growth of urban centres in the inland regions. The prominent among these were Madurai, Karur, Perur, Kodumanal,

Uraiyur, Kanchipuram and others. While Korkai on the East Coast was famous for pearl fishing, Kodumanal in the interior part was known for its beryl. However, the trade was not confined to cities alone. The remotest villages were also linked with the trading network. The carts were the important mode of transport for inland trade. These were in use for either carrying goods or people including the traders.

The trade was mostly conducted through barter. The geographical diversity of the Tamil region necessitated the exchange of goods/products between the different regions. However, the use of coins for trading purpose can not be ruled out even in the context of internal trade. Trade was a very important source of the royal revenue. Transit duties were collected from merchants who moved from one place to another. Spoils of war further added to the royal income. But the income from agriculture provided the real foundation of war and political set-up. However, the share of agricultural produce claimed and collected by the king is not specified.

#### **4.3.11. End of the Sangam Age**

Towards the end of the third century A.D., the Sangam period slowly witnessed its decline. The Kalabhras occupied the Tamil country for about two and a half centuries. We have little information about the Kalabhra rule. Jainism and Buddhism became prominent during this period. The Pallavas in the northern Tamil Nadu and Pandyas in southern Tamil Nadu drove the Kalabhras out of the Tamil country and established their rule.

#### **4.3.12. Conclusion**

Thus, the picture that emerges from the study of Sangam literature reflects that the period witnessed the conception of state for the first time in South India. However, it was still in the process of crystallisation. Sangam polity was characterised by the patriarchal and patrimonial systems in which the administrative staff system and various offices were directly controlled by the rulers. We also notice social inequalities with the dominance of the Brahmanas. But the acute class distinction, which appeared in later times, were lacking in Sangam age. Agriculture was the backbone of Sangam economy. The trading activities, especially trade relations with the Mediterranean World enriched their economy. The foreign elements also influenced the socioeconomic and cultural life of people. The beliefs and customs practised by Sangam people suggest the complex nature of their religion. Both, animism and idol worship, were followed during the Sangam age. Many of the traditions of the age continued and survived in the later periods and some exist even till today.

#### **4.3.13. Summary**

- *The Sangam Age constitutes an important chapter in the history of South India.*
- *According to Tamil legends, there existed three Sangams (Academy of Tamil poets) in ancient Tamil Nadu popularly called Muchchangam. These Sangams flourished under the royal patronage of the Pandyas.*
- *The first Sangam, held at Then Madurai, was attended by gods and legendary sages but no literary work of this Sangam was available.*
- *The second Sangam was held at Kapadapuram but the all the literary works had perished except Tolkappiyam.*
- *The third Sangam at Madurai was founded by Mudathirumaran. It was attended by a large number of poets who produced voluminous literature but only a few had survived. These Tamil literary works remain useful sources to reconstruct the history of the Sangam Age.*
- *The corpus of Sangam literature includes Tolkappiyam, Ettutogai, Pattuppattu, Pathinenkilkanakku, and the two epics-Silappathigaram and Manimegalai.*

- *Tolkappiyam* authored by Tolkappiyar is the earliest of the Tamil literature. It is a work on Tamil grammar but it provides information on the political and socioeconomic conditions of the Sangam period.
- The *Ettutogai* or *Eight Anthologies* consist of eight works-Aingurunooru, Narrinai, Aganaooru, Purananooru, Kuruntogai, Kalittogai, Paripadal and Padirrupattu. The *Pattuppattu* or *Ten Idylls* consist of ten works-Thirumurugarrupadai, Porunararrupadai, Sirupanarrupadai, Perumpanarrupadai, Mullaippattu, Nedunalvadai, Maduraikkanji, Kurinjippattu, Pattinappalai and Malaipadukadam.
- Both *Ettutogai* and *Pattuppattu* were divided into two main groups-Aham (love) and Puram (valour).
- *Pathinenkilkanakku* contains eighteen works mostly dealing with ethics and morals. The most important among them is *Tirukkural* authored by Thiruvalluvar.
- *Silappathigaram* written by Elango Adigal and *Manimegalaiby Sittalai Sattanar* also provides valuable information on the Sangam polity and society.
- The most probable date of the Sangam literature has been fixed between the third century B.C. to third century A.D. on the basis of literary, archaeological and numismatic evidences.
- The Tamil country was ruled by three dynasties namely the Chera, Chola and Pandyas during the Sangam Age. The political history of these dynasties can be traced from the literary references.
- Towards the end of the third century A.D., the Sangam period slowly witnessed its decline. First the Kalabhras occupied the Tamil country for about two and a half centuries later the Pallavas in the north and Pandyas in the south established their rule. Jainism and Buddhism became prominent during this period.

#### 4.3.14. Exercise

- Write an essay on the Sangam literature and date of the Sangam age.
- Write a note on the Political condition of south India during Sangam period.
- Give an account of the religious condition of the Sangam period.
- Discuss the socio-economic condition of ancient Tamil Nadu during Sangam age.
- Assess the significance of the overseas commerce during the Sangam age.

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