

APPOLO



STUDY CENTRE

ANCIENT INDIA

NOVEMBER MONTHLY TEST - 1

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6th term - 1

Unit 1. What is History?

Tamilini enters her house from school. Her mother, who was reading a book, greets Tamilini with a hug. She collects her school bag and asks Tamilini to refresh herself. She

gives Tamilini some snacks to eat. She then asks Tamilini about the school activities of that day.

Mother: Tamilini, what subject did you study today?

Tamilini: History, ma.

Mother: Oh nice! Did you properly understand what history is?

Tamilini: Yeah! I understood something about history. Can you please tell me more about history?

History is the study of past events in chronological order.

Mother: What is your name?

Tamilini: Tamilini.

Mother: Tell me your mother's name.

Tamilini: Mrs. Sumathi.

Mother: Father's name?

Tamilini: Mr. Adhiyaman.

Mother: Tell me the name of your father's father?

Tamilini: You mean grandpa? Mr. Chidambaram.

Mother: Do you know the name of great grandpa. Mr. Chidambaram's father? **Tamilini:** Grandma always used to tell me about one 'great grandpa'. You want that great grandpa's name, amma? mmm...

The term history has been derived from the Greek word "Istoria" which means 'learning by enquiry'.

Mother: Yes, Your great grandpa's name is Mr. Ramasamy. OK. Often your father shows proudly a very old wooden pen and used to tell us that it was his grandpa's pen. Do you remember it?

Tamilini: Yes, amma! Normally he keeps it in a beautiful wooden case on his table. Is that the one?

Mother: You are right, Tamilini. We cannot write with that pen now. But, father has kept it as a treasure. If you ask your father about that, he will show you the diary written by your great grandpa with that old pen. From that diary, we come to know that your great grandpa was a literate, while most of his villagers were illiterates. Further, we can understand the lifestyle of that period and also about activities from his diary writings.

Tamilini: Can this small diary record so much of news, amma?

Mother: Yes, Tamilini. We understand the period and lifestyles of people of Old Stone Age from used stone tools, like what you understand about your grandpa and his time from his diary writing.

Tamilini:What are the other sources that help us understand the lifestyles of Stone Age people?

Mother:We came to know their hunting style through their paintings on the rocks and the walls of the caves.

Tamilini: Rock paintings? It sounds really surprising. Why did they draw these paintings?

Numismatics - The study of Coins Epigraphy- The study of inscription

Mother: Some would have stayed back, without joining the hunting team. So for their benefit, these pictures could have been drawn. They might have done it as a part of their passtime.

Tamilini: Certainly amma. That's how we identify their lifestyles. Isn't it, amma?

Mother: Well said, Tamilini. The period between the use of first stone tools and the invention of writing systems is prehistory. Stone tools, excavated materials and rock paintings are the major sources of pre-history.

- ❖ The most famous ruler of ancient India was Emperor Ashoka. It was during his period that Buddhism spread to different parts of Asia. Ashoka gave up war after seeing many people grieving death after the Kalinga war. He embraced Buddhism and then devoted his life to spread the message of peace and dharma. His service for the cause of public good was exemplary. He was the first ruler to give up war after victory. He was the first to build hospitals for animals. He was the first to lay roads. Dharma Chakra with 24 spokes in our national flag was taken from the Saranath Pillar of Ashoka.
- ❖ Even though Emperor Ashoka was great, his greatness had been unknown until 20th century. The material evidence provided by William Jones, James Prinsep and Alexander Cunningham revealed the greatness of Emperor Ashoka.
- ❖ Based on these accounts, Charles Allen wrote a book titled The Search for the India's Lost Emperor, which provided a comprehensive account of Ashoka. Many researches made thereafter brought Ashoka's glorious rule to light. These inscriptions were observed on the rocks, SanchiStupa and Saranath Pillar and helped to understand the greatness of Ashoka to the world.

Now one can understand the importance of historical research. But for the efforts of scholars, the greatness of Emperor Ashoka would not have come to light.

Mother: Do you know what proto history is?

Tamilini: That is the period between pre history and history.

Mother: Exactly. The period for which records in writing are available but not yet deciphered is called proto history. Today, we are leading a safe life with all modern equipment. But our ancestors did not live in such a safe environment. There might have been chances of wild animals entering their caves. But, they realised that dogs could help them prevent the entry of such dangerous animals by its sniffing skill. Hence they started domesticating dogs for their protection and hunting activities. From this, we also know how inscriptions, monuments, copper plates, accounts of foreigners or foreign travellers and folk tales play a vital role in constructing and reconstructing history.

Tamilini: Now, I completely understand what history is, amma. Thank you, amma.

'Dhamma' is the prakrit word for the sanskrit term 'dharma', which means religious duty.



Unit 2 Human Evolution

Tamilini, a school student of Class VI, visited a Science Centre accompanied by her grandmother. There they saw a time machine. The operator of the time machine explained the working of the machine.

Operator: If you press different buttons in the machine, it would take you to the chosen period of time. Why don't you enjoy the experience of watching different periods of time using this machine?

(After listening to the operator, both Tamilini and her grandmother were excited and decided to have the experience of the time machine.)

Tamilini: Can we go forward and see how 2200 CE would be, grandma?

Grandma: What is so interesting about our future, Tamil? Let's go backward and see how our past was like.

The story of human evolution can be scientifically studied with the help of archaeology and anthropology.

Tamilini: You sound right, grandma.

Grandma pushed the button to 1950 CE. They saw mostly people walking, a few riding bicycles and buses appearing rarely on the roads. Slowly they moved back to 1850. There were no buses or cycles. Carts pulled by mules and bullocks were seen on the roads. Horse-drawn cart was a rare occurrence.

Tamilini then turned the button to 8,000 years back. People were engaged in raising crops and livestock. She pushed the button to get a picture of life 18,000 years ago. She saw the humans living in caves. They were using tools made of stones and bones for hunting.

Tamilini was frightened by the hunting scene and pushed the button forward to return to the present.

Grandma: Are you afraid, Tamil?

Grandma urged Tamilini to go further backward to see the ancient humans who lived with the apes. But Tamilini was not inclined. So both of them left the spot.

Tamilini: Grandma, will you tell me the story of evolution of humans?

Grandma: Yes, certainly.

Grandma: Anthropologists have unearthed the footprints of humans in a country called Tanzania, which is in eastern Africa. They were found in rock beds submerged under the sand.

Archaeology is the study of pre historic humans remained materials used by pre historic humans. Excavated material remains are the main source for archaeological studies.

Anthropology is the study of humans and evolutionary history.

The word anthropology is derived from two Greek words: anthropos meaning "man" or "human"; and logos, meaning "thought" or "reason." Anthropologists attempt, by investigating the whole range of human development and behaviour, to achieve a total description of cultural and social phenomena.

Cromagnons learned to live in caves. Lascaux caves in France is the evidence for cave living of Cromagnons. They habitude to bury the dead.

Radio carbon dating was used to ascertain the period. It was found out that the foot prints of humans they had discovered were about 3.5 millions years old. When there is sudden change in nature, the living beings adapt themselves to the changes and survive. Humans have thus evolved over millions of years adapting themselves to the changing times.

People and their Habitat	
Australopithecus	East Africa
Homohabilis	South Africa
Homoerectus	Africa and Asia
Neanderthal	Eurasia (Europe and Asia)
Cro-Magnons	France
Peking	China
Homo sapiens	Africa
Heidelberg's	London

Migration of Homo sapiens from east Africa to other parts of the world.

Tamilini:Grandma, will you explain it in detail?

Grandma: Human evolution means the process through which the human kind changes and develops towards an advanced stage of life. See how the modern human has evolved.

1. Humans in erect position and walking on two legs happened much later.
2. Changes in thumb so that they can hold things tightly.
3. Development of brain.

‘Homo sapiens who migrated out of eastern Africa settled in different parts of the world. Their lifestyle also evolved and they made it suitable to the environs in which they lived. So humans in different places adopted different forms of lifestyle. Based on the weather, climate and nature of the living place, their physique and complexion also differed. This resulted in the formation of different races. Human procreation resulted in an increase in the population.

Tamilini:Grandma, it's fantastic.

Grandma: Yes, it is. I shall now explain to you in detail how the Homo sapiens engaged in hunting and gathering.

Hunting and Food Gathering

Tamil, you will be surprised to know that millions of years ago, our ancestors led a nomadic life. They lived in groups in a cave or a mountain range. Each group consisted of 30 to 40 people. They kept on moving in search of food. They hunted pig, deer, bison, rhino, elephant and bear for food. They also scavenged the animals killed by other wild animals like tiger. They learnt the art of fishing. They collected honey from beehives, plucked fruits from the trees and dug out tubers from the ground. They also collected grains from the forest. Once the food resource got exhausted in one area, they moved to another place in search of food. They wore hides of animals and barks of trees and leaves for protecting their bodies during winter. So humans began hunting to satisfy their need for food.

Grandma: Tamilini, do you know the weapons that the early humans used for hunting?

Tamilini: I have no idea, grandma. Can you tell me about hunting practices?

Grandma: Hunting was the main occupation of humans in the past. It was difficult for humans to kill a big animal with a stick or a stone. So they decided to use sharpened weapons.

The best stone for the making weapons was chikki - mukkikal (flint). It is known for its strength and durability. Humans spent many hours in search of a flint stone. They made sharp weapons and tools with the help of the stones and fitted them with wood to grip them. Humans created tools like axes with big stones.

Tamilini: Why were axes made, grandma?

Grandma: The axes were made to cut trees, remove barks, dig pits, hunt animals and remove the skin of animals.

Grandma: Tamil, do you know what the next stage was after making stone tools?

Tamilini: I don't know grandma. What would it be?

Grandma: Humans discovered the use of fire

Even today in the villages of Nilgiris district in Tamil Nadu, people have the habit of making fire without use of match box.

At first, humans were afraid of fire and lightning. Probably fire caused by lightning had killed many wild animals. Humans tasted the flesh of the killed animals, which was soft and tasty. This made humans aware of the effect of fire. They used flint stone to make fire and used it to protect them from predators, for cooking food and for creating light during night. Thus fire became important for man in olden times.

Tamilini: What next, grandma?

Grandma: You will be surprised to know that the next human invention was the wheel. This was the first scientific invention of humans using their brain and cognitive skills.

Invention of the Wheel

The invention of wheel by humans is considered to be the foremost invention. When humans saw the stones rolling down from the mountains, probably they would have got the idea of making the wheel.

Pot Making

Humans learned to make pot with clay. The invention of wheel made pot making easier, and the pots made were burnt to make it stronger. They decorated pots with lot of colours. The colour dyes were made from the extracts of roots, leaves or barks. These natural dyes were used in rock paintings.

Grandma: Can you identify what is in this picture?

Tamilini: Yeah. Some blurred tweaks are seen. Someone has drawn.

Grandma: No, this is our ancestor's handwork. In fact, it is the first art of humanity. Before the use of language, humans expressed their feelings through actions and also recorded it in rock paintings.

Ancient Rock Paintings

In India, we can see many paintings in rocks and caves. The rock paintings give some information about the past. Approximately there are 750 caves, in which 500 caves have paintings. There are many more undiscovered caves. The rock paintings depict hunting pictures of the male and the female, dancing pictures and pictures of children playing.

Tamilini: Oh! We are able to gain some knowledge about the past lifestyle through these paintings. Isn't it, Grandma?

Grandma: You said it rightly, Tamil. These rock and cave paintings tell us many stories about our ancestors.

Tamilini: Okay, grandma! Now tell me how humans reached the next stage.

Grandma: There were many dangers involved in hunting. Due to large-scale hunting in the mountain areas and in the forests, many animals became extinct. Non availability of meat forced the humans to look for fruits and vegetables for food.

Tamilini: Now they would have thought of producing food for themselves. Is it not grandma?

From Nomadic to Settled Life : The World's Earliest Farmers

Grandma: Very well said, Tamil. The seed of fruits and the nuts they ate were thrown into the soil. During rains, the soil gave it life. Some days later, the saplings sprouted from the soil. By observation and logic, they learn that:

- a. a plant grows from a single seed and yields lots of fruits and vegetables.
- b. seeds that fall in the river beds sprout easily.
- c. plants grow faster in water fed areas.
- d. alluvial soil is more suitable for plant growth than any other.

With the above knowledge they gained, they realised that with proper sowing and nurturing, they could increase the number of plants more than the ones that grew naturally. Thus agriculture and farming came into existence. They domesticated the animals and used them in their farming.

Breeding of animals now became an important part of their life. Oxen were used for ploughing. Oxen made the practice of agriculture easier. Life was becoming organised than it was, when they were hunting. It enabled them to settle down in a place. Now with settlement came the problem of utensils and vessels for cooking and storage. The potter's wheel and fire solved this problem.

The invention of plough helped the farming practices. Farming started with the clearing of land and burning the left-over shrubs. They ploughed the land, sowed seeds in them and harvested the produce. Once the fertility of the soil decreased, they moved to a new place. Initially agriculture was done for immediate food requirement. Later when they found out ways to increase production, they started storing the produce. The food products stored were used during the lean harvest periods. By their experience, they understood that land close to the river side was suitable for farming. So they decided to stay there permanently.

Tamilini: How about domestication of animals, grandma?

Grandma: Humans thought of ways to better their skills at hunting. They found out that the dogs could sniff other animals and chase them away. So humans found them useful for hunting. Thus dogs became the first animal to be domesticated by humans. Following the dogs, they started domesticating hen, goat and cow.

Tamilini: What next?

Grandma: Humans stayed on the plains for a long time. During this period, they have not only learnt agriculture, but slowly developed skills of handicraft. Permanent settlement in a place increased the yield of crops. Now they had grains in excess of what they consumed. The surplus grains were exchanged with other groups for the other things

they were in need of. This is called the barter system. Thus trade and commerce developed and towns and cities emerged.

Tamilini: Thank you, grandma. The information you have shared with me is very helpful, and I would share it with my friends at school tomorrow.

Grandma: Very good. Congratulations Tamilini!

6th term 1

Unit - 3 Indus Civilization

Why did people settle near rivers?

People preferred to settle near the rivers for the reasons given below.

- The soil is fertile.
- Fresh water is available for drinking, watering livestock and irrigation.
- Easy movement of people and goods is possible.

Discovery of a lost city - Harappa

The ruins of Harappa were first described by the British East India Company soldier and explorer Charles Masson in his book. When he visited the North-West Frontier Province which is now in Pakistan, he came across some mysterious brick mounds. He wrote that he saw a "ruined brick castle with very high walls and towers built on a hill". This was the earliest historical record of the existence of Harappa.

In 1856 when engineers laid a railway line connecting Lahore to Karachi, they discovered more burnt bricks. Without understanding their significance, they used the bricks for laying the rail road.

In the 1920s archaeologists began to excavate the cities of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro. They unearthed the remains of these long-forgotten cities. In 1924 the Director General of ASI, Sir John Marshall, found many common features between Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro. He concluded that they were part of a large civilization.

Some slight differences are found in the earthenwares of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro. This made the researchers conclude that Harappa was older than Mohenjo-Daro.

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) was started in 1861 with Alexander Cunningham as Surveyor. Its headquarters is located in New Delhi.

How do archaeologists explore a lost city?

- ✓ Archaeologists study the physical objects such as bricks, stones or bits of broken pottery (sherds) to ascertain the location of the city and time that it belong to.
- ✓ They search the ancient literary sources for references about the place.
- ✓ They look at aerial photographs of the excavation sites or cities to understand the topography.
- ✓ To see under the ground, they may use a magnetic scanner
- ✓ The presence and absence of archeological remains can be detected by RADAR and Remote Sensing Methods.

Sites in Indian borders

Archaeologists found major Harappan sites within Indian borders

Time Span of Indus Civilisation

Geographical range: South Asia

Period: Bronze Age

Time: 3300 to 1900 BCE (determined using the radiocarbon dating method)

Area: 13 lakh sq.km

Cities: 6 big cities

Villages: More than 200

Urban Civilisation

Harappan civilisation is said to be urban because of the following reasons

- Well-conceived town planning
- Astonishing masonry and architecture
- Priority for hygiene and public health
- Standardised weights and measures
- Solid agricultural and artisanal base.

Unique Features of Harappan Civilisation

Town planning is a unique feature of the Indus Civilisation. The Harappan city had two planned areas.

Mehargarh - the Precursor to Indus Civilisation

Mehargarh is a Neolithic site. It is located near the Bolan Basin of Balochistan in Pakistan. It is one of the earliest sites known. It shows evidence of farming and herding done by man in very early times. Archaeological evidence suggests that Neolithic culture existed in Mehargarh as early as 7000 BCE

Streets and Houses

- The streets are observed to have a grid pattern. They were straight running from north to south and east to west and intersected each other at right angles

- The roads were wide with rounded corners
- Houses were built on both sides of the street. The houses were either one or two storeys
- Most of the houses had many rooms, a courtyard and a well. Each house had toilets and bathrooms
- The houses were built using baked bricks and mortar. Sun-dried bricks were also used. Most of the bricks were of uniform size. Roofs were flat
- There is no conclusive evidence of the presence of palaces or places of worship.

why burnt bricks are used in construction?

They are strong, hard, durable, resistant to fire and will not dissolve in water or rain.

Bronze Age

It is a historical period characterised by the use of articles made of bronze

Drainage System

- Many of these cities had covered drains. The drains were covered with slabs or bricks.
- Each drain had a gentle slope so that water could flow.
- Holes were provided at regular intervals to clear the drains.
- House drains passed below many lanes before finally emptying into the main drains.
- Every house had its own soak pit, which collected all the sediments and allowed only the water to flow into the street drain.

The Great Bath

- The great bath was a large, rectangular tank in a courtyard. It may be the earliest example of a water-proof structure
- The bath was lined with bricks, coated with plaster and made water-tight using layers of natural bitumen
- There were steps on the north and south leading into the tank. There were rooms on three sides
- Water was drawn from the well located in the courtyard and drained out after use.

The Great Granary

- The granary was a massive building with a solid brick foundation
- Granaries were used to store food grain
- The remains of wheat, barley, millets, sesame and pulses have been found there.

A granary with walls made of mud bricks, which are still in a good condition, has been discovered in Rakhigarhi, a village in Haryana, belonging to Mature Harappan Phase

The Assembly Hall

The Assembly Hall was another huge public building at Mohenjo-Daro. It was a multi-pillared hall (20 pillars in 4 rows to support the roof).

Trade and Transport

- Harappans were great traders.
- Standardised weights and measures were used by them. They used sticks with marks to measure length
- They used carts with spokeless solid wheels
- There is evidence for extensive maritime trade with Mesopotamia. Indus Seals have been found as far as Mesopotamia (Sumer) which are modern-day Iraq, Kuwait and parts of Syria
- King Naram-Sin of Akkadian Empire (Sumerian) has written about buying jewellery from the land of Melukha (a region of the Indus Valley)
- Cylindrical seals similar to those found in Persian Gulf and Mesopotamia have also been found in the Indus area. This shows the trade links between these two areas.

A naval dockyard has been discovered in Lothal in Gujarat. It shows the maritime activities of the Indus people.

Dockyard at Lothal

Lothal is situated on the banks of a tributary of Sabarmati river in Gujarat.

Leader in Mohenjo-Daro

- A sculpture of a seated male has been unearthed in a building, with a head band on the forehead and a smaller ornament on the right upper arm.
- His hair is carefully combed, and beard finely trimmed.
- Two holes beneath the ears suggest that the head ornament might have been attached till the ear.
- The left shoulder is covered with a shawl-like garment decorated with designs of flowers and rings.
- This shawl pattern is used by people even today in those areas

Technology

- Indus people had developed a system of standardised weights and measures.
- Ivory scale found in Lothal in Gujarat is 1704mm (the smallest division ever recorded on a scale of other contemporary civilisations).

The word 'civilisation' comes from the ancient Latin word *civis*, which means 'city'.

This little statue was found at Mohenjo-Daro. When Sir John Marshall saw the statuette known as the dancing girl, he said, "When I first saw them I found it difficult to believe that they were pre-historic modeling. Such as this was unknown in the ancient worlds up to the age of Greece. I thought that these figures had found their way into levels some 3000 years old to which they properly belonged".

KVT Complex (Korkai-Vanji-Thondi) spread over Afghanistan and Pakistan has many places, names of those were mentioned in sangam literature. Korkai, Vanji, Tondi, Matrai, Urai and Kudalgarh are the names of places in Pakistan. Gurkay and Pumpuhar in Afghanistan are related to the cities and ports mentioned in the Sangam Age. The names of the rivers Kawri and Poruns in Afghanistan and the rivers Kaveri Wala and Phornai in Pakistan also occur in the Sangam literature.

Do you know The hidden treasures of the Indus civilisation

Inscriptions (written in a script of those times) can provide us information about customs, practices and other aspects of any place or time. So far, the Indus script has not been deciphered. Therefore, we must look for other clues to know about the Indus people and their lifestyle

Apparel

- Cotton fabrics were in common use.
- Clay spindles unearthed suggest that yarn was spun.
- Wool was also used.

Love and peace

- Settlements were built on giant platforms and elevated grounds
- The Indus Civilisation seems to have been a peaceful one. Few weapons were found and there is no evidence of an army
- They displayed their status with garments and precious jewellery
- They had an advanced civic sense.

Ornaments

- Ornaments were popular among men and women
- They adorned themselves with necklaces, armlets, bangles, finger rings, ear studs and anklets.
- The ornaments were made of gold, silver, ivory, shell, copper, terracotta and precious stones.

- Iron was unknown to people of Indus
- Copper was the first metal discovered and used by humans
- Indus people used the red quartz stone called Carnelian to design jewellery.

Who Governed them?

Historians believe that there existed a central authority that controlled planning of towns and overseas trade, maintenance of drainage and peace in the city.

Occupation

- The main occupation of the Indus Civilisation people is not known.
- However, agriculture, handicrafts, pottery making, jewellery making, weaving, carpentry and trading were practiced
- There were merchants, traders and artisans.
- Rearing of cattle was another occupation.
- People of those times knew how to use the potter's wheel
- They reared domesticated animals.

Pottery

- Pottery was practiced using the potter's wheel. It was well fired. Potteries were red in colour with beautiful designs in black.
- The broken pieces of pottery have animal figures and geometric designs on it.

Religious Belief

We don't have any evidence pointing to specific deities or their religious practices. There might have been worship of Mother Goddess (which symbolized fertility), which is concluded based upon the excavation of several female figurines.

Toy Culture

Toys like carts, cows with movable heads and limbs, clay balls, tiny doll, a small clay monkey, terracotta squirrels eating a nut, clay dogs and male dancer have been found. They made various types of toys using terracotta, which show that they enjoyed playing

The earliest form of writing was developed by Sumerians

What happened to Harappans?

By 1900 BCE, the Harappan culture had started declining. It is assumed that the civilisation met with

- repeated floods

- ecological changes
- invasions
- natural calamity
- climatic changes
- deforestation
- an epidemic

Archaeological site at Mohenjo-Daro has been declared as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO

Radiocarbon Dating Method: A Standard Tool for Archaeologists

Also known as C14 method, the radiocarbon method uses the radioactive isotope of carbon called carbon14 to determine the age of an object.

General Facts about Indus Civilisation

- It is among the oldest in the world.
- It is also the largest among four ancient civilisations
- The world’s first planned cities are found in this civilisation
- The Indus also had advanced sanitation and drainage system
- There was a high sense of awareness on public health.

Elsewhere in the World



The Great Pyramid of Giza built by king Khufu in 2500 BCE, built with lime stone (15 tons each)



Mesopotamia (Sumerian period) Ur Ziggurat built by king Ur Nammu in Honour of the Moon God Sin



Abu Simbel Site of two temples built by Egyptian king Ramises II

6th term II

Unit 1

Vedic Culture in North India and Megalithic Culture in South India

Vedic Age

The first phase of urbanisation in India came to an end with the decline of Indus Civilisation. A new era, called Vedic Age began with the arrival of Aryans.

Vedic Age – It is a period in the History of India between 1500 BC (BCE) – 600 BC (BCE). It gets its name from four ‘Vedas’.

Who were the Aryans?

The Aryans were Indo–Aryan language speaking, semi nomadic pastoralists.

They came from Central Asia in several waves of migration through Khyber Pass of Hindu Kush Mountains.

Though cattle rearing was their main occupation, they also practised slash and burn agriculture.

Slash and burn agriculture - It is a farming method that involves clearing the land by cutting and burning all the trees and plants on it. Cultivation is done there for a short time and then abandoned. People then move to a new piece of land for cultivation.

Time, Spread and Sources	
Geographical range	North India
Period	Iron Age
Time	1500 BC (BCE) – 600 BC (BCE)
Sources	Vedic Literature
Nature of Civilisation	Rural

Aryans and their Home in India

- Aryans of the Rig Vedic Period were semi- nomadic. They were basically pastoral people with cattle as their main source of wealth.
- In the Rig Vedic times, the Aryan homeland was the Punjab, which was at that time called Sapta Sindhu, the land of seven rivers.
- Around 1000 BC (BCE), Aryans in India moved eastward and settled in Indo-Gangetic Plain.
- Use of iron axes and ploughs became widespread.

Four Vedas 1. Rig 2. Yajur 3. Sama 4. Atharva

Sources

Vedic literature

Vedic literature can be classified into two broad categories.

1. Shrutis - The Shrutis comprise the four Vedas, the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas and the Upanishads. They are considered sacred, eternal, and an unquestionable truth. 'Shruti' means listening (or unwritten) ones that were transmitted orally through generations.

2. Smritis - A body of texts containing teachings on religion such as Ithihasas, Puranas, Tantras and Agamas. Smritis are not eternal. They are constantly revised. 'Smriti' means definite and written literature.

National Motto

"Satyameva Jayate" "(Truth alone triumphs)" is taken from Mundaka Upanishad.

Archaeological Sources

- Material remains such as iron implements and pottery from the archaeological sites in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan along the Indus and the Ganges.

Vedic Culture

Polity and Society

- The Rig Vedic polity was kinship - based. Kula (clan) was the basic unit of the polity. It was under a head called Kulapati. Several families joined together to form a Grama (village). Grama was headed by Gramani. A group of villages was called Vis (clan) and was headed by Vishayapati. Rajan was the head of the Jana (tribe) and he was addressed as Janasyagopa (guardian of the people). There were several tribal kingdoms (Rashtras) during Rig Vedic period (Bharatas, Matsyas, Puras).

King

- The main responsibility of the Rajan was to protect his tribe. His powers were limited by tribal assemblies namely Vidhata, Sabha, Samiti and Gana. Of these Vidhata, (the tribal assembly) was the oldest.

Sabha - a council of elders.

Samiti - assembly of people.

- The king appointed a purohit (chief priest) to assist him. In economic, political and military matters, the king was assisted by the Senani (army chief). Gramani was the leader of the village.
- When the Aryans moved east ward- into Ganges-Yamuna-Doab regions, the early settlements were replaced by territorial kingdoms. Hereditary kingship began to emerge. In the monarchical form of government, the power of the king increased and he performed various rituals and sacrifices to make his position strong.
- Many Janas or Tribes were amalgamated to form Janapadas or Rashtras in later Vedic period. The importance of Samithi and Sabha diminished and the Vidhata completely disappeared. New states emerged. Bali was a voluntary contribution of the people to the King. In the later Vedic period bali was treated as tax and collected regularly. The

Kuru and Panchala kingdoms flourished and large cities like Ayodhya, Indraprastha and Mathura also emerged during this period.

Bali - a tax consisting of 1/6 of the agricultural produce or cattle for a person.

Social Organization

- The Vedic family was patriarchal. The fair complexioned Aryans distinguished themselves from dark complexioned non-Aryans whom they called Dasyus and Dasas. Within the early Vedic Society there were three divisions (Treyi) ; the general public were called Vis, the warrior class was called Kshatriyas and the Priestly class was named Brahmanas. At a later stage, when the Aryans had to accommodate non-Aryan skilled workers in their social arrangement, a rigid four-fold Varna system was developed, i.e., the priestly Brahmanas, the warrior Kshatriyas, the land owning Vysyas and the skilled workers sudras. Thus a graded social order emerged.
- Although the Vedic Age is evidenced by good number of texts, it does not have adequate amount of material evidences.

Status of women

- In Rig Vedic society, women relatively enjoyed some freedom. The wife was respected as the mistress of the household. She could perform rituals along with her husband in their house. Child marriage and sati were unknown. There was no bar on the remarriage of widows. Nevertheless, the women were denied right to inherit property from their parents. They played no role in public affairs.
- In the later Vedic period the role of women in society, as well as their status, even within the family, declined. Women could no longer perform rituals in the family. The rules of marriage became much more complex and rigid. Polygamy became common. Widow remarriage was not encouraged. Education was denied to women. Intercaste marriages were spurned.

Economic Life

- Economy in the Vedic period was sustained by a combination of pastoralism and agriculture. Though occupation of Rig Vedic Aryans was cattle rearing, there were carpenters, chariot makers, potters, smiths, weavers, and leather workers. **Ochre Coloured Pottery (OCP)** was attributed to this period. Horses, cows, goats, sheep, oxen and dogs were domesticated.
- When Aryans permanently settled in Sindh and the Punjab regions they began to practise agriculture. The staple crop was yava (barley). There is no mention of wheat or cotton in the Rig-Veda, though both were cultivated by the Indus people. Two crops a year were raised.

- In the later Vedic period the Aryans tamed elephants, apart from cow, goat, sheep and horse. In addition to craftsmen of early Vedic period there were also jewellers, dyers and smelters. Pottery of this period was **Painted Grey Ware Culture**.
- Use of iron plough and axe helped to put more areas of land under cultivation. Crops of wheat, rice and barley were cultivated. With the growth of agriculture, the idea of private possession of land came into existence. New crafts and arts developed leading to surplus production of commodities for sale.
- Trade became extensive. Barter system was prevalent (exchange of goods). They used Nishka, Satmana (gold coins) and Krishnala (silver coins) for business transactions.

Metals Known to Rig Vedic People

- Gold (Hiranya)
- Iron (Shyama)
- Copper/ Bronze (Ayas)

Religion

- Rig Vedic Aryans worshipped mostly the earthly and celestial gods like Prithvi (Earth), Agni (fire), Vayu (wind), Varuna (rain), Indra (Thunder). There were also lesser female deities like Aditi (goddess of eternity) and Usha (appearance of dawn). Their religion was Yajna centered. The mode of prayer was recitation of Vedic hymns. People prayed for the welfare of Praja (children) Pasu (cattle) and Dhana (wealth). Cow was considered a sacred animal. There were no temples. Idol worship had not yet come into existence.
- Later on priesthood became a profession and a hereditary one. New gods were perhaps adopted from non-Aryans. Indra and Agni lost their importance. Prajapathi (the creator) Vishnu (the protector) and Rudra (the destroyer) became prominent. Sacrifices and rituals became more elaborate.

Education

Gurukula System of Education

- The gurukula system is an ancient learning method.
- The word Gurukula is a combination of the Sanskrit Word Guru (teacher or master) and Kula (family or home).
- The shishyas resided with their guru and served them and simultaneously learnt and gained knowledge.
- The students received education through oral tradition meaning rote learning, and were required to memorise everything.
- The subjects of the study included the four Vedas, Ithihasas, Puranas, grammar, logic, ethics, astrology, maths and military science.
- The students were also trained to lead a disciplined life.

- Only Dvijas could be Shishyas. No women could have formal education.

Age - based Ashramas

Towards the end of the later Vedic period, the concept of four stages in life (the four ashramas) developed.

- Brahmacharya (Student Life)
- Grihastha (Married Life)
- Vanaprastha (Going to the forest to meditate)
- Sanyasa (Leading a life of an ascetic so as to attain Swarga)

CONTEMPORARY CULTURE IN SOUTH INDIA AND TAMIL NADU

- The early Vedic culture in northern India coincided with Chalcolithic cultures that prevailed in other parts of the sub-continent. Since, people used copper (chalco) and stone (lithic), it was called Chalcolithic period.
- Though Chalcolithic culture of India was contemporary to the mature phase of Harappan culture, they continued to exist even after the decline of the latter.
- The later Vedic culture in north India and the Iron Age in south India belong to the same period.
- Towards the end of Iron Age, people stepped into what is known as Megalithic Culture (600 BC (BCE) and AD (CE) 100).
- Megalithic Period in ancient Tamilakam synchronised with the pre Sangam period. The Black and Red Ware Pottery became the characteristic of the Megalithic period.

MEGALITHIC / IRON AGE IN TAMILNADU

- The term 'Megalith' is derived from Greek. 'Megas', means great and 'lithos' means stone. Using big stone slabs built upon the places of burial is known as Megalith.

Some of the Megalithic / Iron Age Archaeological Sites in Tamil Nadu

Adichanallur - Thoothukudi District

- Among the artefacts unearthed were Urns, pottery of various kinds (Red Ware, Black Ware), iron implements, daggers, swords, spears and arrows, some stone beads and a few gold ornaments.
- Bronze objects representing domestic animals and wild animals like tiger, antelope and elephant have been unearthed.
- The people were skilful in making pottery and in working stone and wood.

Keezhadi – Sivagangai District

- The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) excavated an ancient town dating to Sangam Age in Keezhadi village at Tirupathur taluk. Excavations have produced evidence for brick buildings, and well laid - out drainage system. Tamil - Brahmi inscription on pottery, beads of glass, carnelian and quartz, pearl, gold ornaments and iron objects, shell bangles, ivory dice have been unearthed. In 2017, ASI sent two samples of these for Radio carbon dating to Beta Analytic, Florida, USA. They dated samples as 200 BC (BCE). The Roman artefacts found at the site add to the evidence of ancient Indo - Roman trade relations.

Periplus mentions the steel imported to Rome from Peninsular India was subjected to duty in the port of Alexandria.

Porunthal - Dindigul District

- **Finds** - Grave goods, glass beads (in red, white, yellow, blue and green), iron swords, pottery with Tamil Brahmi scripts, pots filled with rice, semi-precious metals such as quartz, carnelian, bangles made of glass and shell.
- The discovery of iron sickle, pike, and tip of ploughs provide evidences that they had the practice of rice cultivation in Tamil Nadu. A pot of rice from Porunthal site proves that rice was people's staple food.

Paiyampalli - Vellore District

- **Archaeological Finds** -Iron artefacts, along with Megalithic Black and Red Ware Pottery have been found.
- Evidence for iron smelting has come to light at Paiyampalli. The date of this culture, based on radio carbon dating, is 1000 BC (BCE).

Kodumanal - Erode District

- It is identified with the Kodumanam of Pathitrupathu. More than 300 pottery inscriptions in Tamil - Brahmi have been discovered there. Archaeologists have also discovered spindles, whorls (used for making thread from cotton) and pieces of cloth, along with tools, weapons, ornaments, beads, particularly carnelian.
- A Menhir found at burial site is assigned to the Megalithic period.

Megalithic Monuments in Tamil Nadu

- The people who lived during the last stages of the New Stone Age began to follow the Megalithic system of burial. According to this system, the dead body was placed in a

big pot along with burial goods. The Megalithic monuments bear witness to a highly advanced state of civilisation with the knowledge of iron and community living.

- **Dolmens** are Megalithic tombs made of two or more upright stones with a single stone lying across the burial site. Megalithic Dolmens have been found in Veeraraghavapuram village, Kanchipuram district, Kummalaruthupatti, Dindigul district, and in Narasingampatti, Madurai district.
- **Menhir**-In Breton Language 'Men' means "stone" and 'hir', "long." They are monolithic pillars planted vertically into the ground in memory of the dead.
- Menhir at Singaripalayam in Tirupur District and at Vembur in Theni District points to the existence of an ancient settlement along the banks of River Uppar. Menhirs are found at Narasingampatti, Madurai district, Kumarikalpalayam and Kodumanal in Erode district.
- **Hero Stones** - A Hero Stone is a memorial stone raised in remembrance of the honourable death of a hero in a battle or those who lost their lives while defending their village from animals or enemies. Hero stones are found at Maanur village near Palani, Dindigul district, Vellalankottai, Tuticorin district, and Pulimankombai, Dindigul district.

2. Great Thinkers and New Faiths

Intellectual Awakening

The Sixth Century BC (BCE) is regarded as an important period in the history of ancient India. As a land mark period in the intellectual and spiritual development in India, historian Will Durant has rightly called it the “shower of stars”.

Sources

Literary sources

Angas	-	Jain texts
Tripitakas and Jatakas	-	Buddhist texts

Causes for the Rise of Intellectual Awakening and the Birth of Buddhism and Jainism. There were several reasons for the rise of new intellectual awakening. Some of the exploitative practices that paved way for new faiths include:

- **The complex rituals and sacrifices advocated in the later Vedic period**
- **Expensive sacrificial ceremonies**
- **Superstitious beliefs and practices that confused the common man.**
- **Upanishads taught as alternative to sacrificial rites were too philosophical, which a layperson could not understand.**
- **Slavery, caste system, gender discrimination also contributed to the new awakening.**

Origin of Jainism

Jainism is one of the world’s oldest living religions. Jainism grounds itself in 24 Tirthankaras. A ‘Tirthankara’, is the one who revealed religious truth at different times. The first Tirthankara was Rishabha and the last one was Mahavira. Jainism gained prominence under the aegis of Mahavira, during the sixth century BC (BCE).

Mahavira (The Great Hero)

Vardhamana, meaning ‘prosperous’, was a kshatriya prince. However, at the age of 30, he renounced his princely status to adopt an ascetic life. He undertook intense meditation. After twelve and a half years of rigorous penance, Vardhamana attained omniscience or supreme knowledge, known as Kevala.

Thereafter, he became Jina meaning ‘one who conquered worldly pleasure and attachment’. His followers are called Jains. Mahavira reviewed the ancient Sramanic traditions and came up with new doctrines. Therefore he is believed to be the real founder of Jainism.

Original name	-	Vardhamana
Place of Birth	-	Kundhagrama near Vaishali, Bihar
Parents	-	Siddharth, Trishala
Place of Death	-	Pavapuri, Bihar

Unique Teachings of Jainism

- Jainism denies God as the creator of Universe.
- Basic philosophy of Jainism is Ahimsa or 'non -Violence'.
- Ultimate aim of Jainism is attaining moksha or ending the cycle of birth - death - rebirth.
- Jains reject the belief in Last judgement, where God, a supreme being, decides who goes to heaven or hell.
- Jainism advocates that the goodness or quality of one's life is determined by one's karma.

Tri-rathnas or Three Jewels

Mahavira exhorted the three - fold path for the attainment of moksha and for the liberation from Karma. They are:

- **Right Faith**
- **Right Knowledge**
- **Right action**

Jain Code of Conduct

Mahavira asked his followers to live a virtuous life. In order to live a life filled with sound morals, he preached five major principles to follow.

They are:

Ahimsa	-	not to injure any living beings
Satya	-	to speak truth
Asteya	-	not to steal
Aparigraha	-	not to own property
Brahmacharya	-	Celibacy

Digambaras and Svetambaras Jainism split into two sects.

Digambaras

- Digambaras are orthodox and conservative followers.
- Monks of the digambara sect, do not wear any clothing and live naked.
- They are forbidden to have any kind of possessions.
- Digambaras believe that women cannot achieve nirvana or liberation directly.

Svetambaras

- The Svetambaras are considered progressive.
- Monks of Svetambaras sect, wear white robes. They are permitted to have Rajoharana (broom with wollen threads), begging bowl and book.
- Svetambaras believe that women are equally capable of achieving liberation as men.
- Reasons for the Spread of Jainism

The following are the main reasons for the wide acceptance of Jainism in India

- Use of people's language.
- Intelligible teachings.
- Support from rulers and traders.
- Perseverance of Jain monks.
- Influence of Jainism (Samanam) in Tamil Nadu
- In ancient Tamil literature, Jainism is referred to as Samanam.
- There is a Samanar Hill or Samanar Malai in Keelakuyilkudi village, 15 km away from Madurai. The images of Tirthankaras created by Jain monks are found in the hill. It is a protected monument of Archaeological Survey of India.
- In Arittapatti, a small village 25 km from Madurai, on one side of Kalinjamalai hill there are Jain caves called Pandavar Padukkai. Pandavar Padukkai is the bed of Jain saints.
- There is a reference to Aravor Palli, place of living for Jain monks, in Manimegalai.
- According to Silapathikaram, when Kovalan and Kannagi were on their way to Madurai, Gownthiyadigal a female jain monk blessed the couple and accompanied them.
- Puhar, Uraiyur, Madurai, Vanchi (Karuvur), Kanchi all had Jain monasteries.
- Jina Kanchi - Thiruparthikundram, a village in Kanchipuram, has two ancient Jain temples. This village was once called Jina Kanchi.

Buddhism

Gautama Buddha

Gautama Buddha was the founder of Buddhism. His real name was Siddhartha. Like Mahavira, he was also a Kshatriya prince belonging to the ruling Sakya clan. When Siddhartha was only seven days old his mother died. So he was raised by his step mother Gautami.

Original name	-	Siddhartha
Place of Birth	-	Lumbini Garden, Nepal
Parents	-	Suddhodana, Maya devi
Place of Death	-	Kushi Nagar, UP

Four Great Sights

- At the age of 29, Siddhartha saw four sorrowful sights. They were:
- An uncared old man in rags with his bent back.
- An sick man suffering from an incurable disease.
- A man's corpse being carried to the burial ground by weeping relatives.

An ascetic

Enlightenment

Buddha, the Awakened or Enlightened One, realised that the human life was full of misery and unhappiness. So at the age of 29 he left his palace and became a hermit. He sacrificed six years of his life towards penance. Nonetheless deciding that self-mortification was not a path to salvation, Buddha sat under a Pipal tree and undertook a deep meditation near Gaya.

- **Buddha's Four Noble Truths**
- **Life is full of sorrow and misery.**
- **Desire is the cause of misery.**
- **Sorrows and sufferings can be removed by giving up one's desire.**

The desire can be overcome by following the right path (Noble eight-fold path)

Eight Fold Path

- **Right view**
- **Right Thought**
- **Right Speech**
- **Right Action**
- **Right Livelihood**
- **Right Effort**
- **Right Knowledge**
- **Right Meditation**

The teachings of Lord Buddha were simple and taught in a language which people used for communication. Since the teachings addressed the everyday concern of the people, they could relate to them. He was opposed to rituals and sacrifices.

Teachings of Buddha

- **Buddha's teachings are referred to as dhamma.**
- **Buddhism accepted the Theory of Karma - meaning that the quality of man's life depends on his deed.**
- **Buddha neither accepted nor denied the existence of God, but believed in the laws of universe.**
- **Buddha asserted that attaining nirvana is the ultimate aim of life.**

- Buddha advocated ahimsa or non-violence.
- Buddha had rejected the caste system.
- The Wheel of life - represents the Buddhist view of the world.

Buddhist Sangha

Buddha laid foundation for a missionary organization called Sangha, meaning 'association' for the propagation of his faith. The members were called bhikshus (monks). They led a life of austerity.

Buddhist Sects

Hinayana	Mahayana
• Did not ship idols or images of Buddha.	• Worshiped images of Buddha.
• Practiced austerity.	• Observed elaborate rituals
• Believed that Salvation of the individual as its goal.	• Believed that salvation of all beings as its objective
• Used Prakrit language.	• Used Sanskrit language
• Hinayana is also known as Theravada.	• Spread to Central Asiam Ceylon, Burma, Nepal, Tibet, China, Japan, where middle path was accepted.

Causes for the Spread of Buddhism

- Simplicity of the teachings of Buddha in local language appealed to people.
- Buddhism rejected elaborate religious customs whereas the practice of orthodox Vedic religion insisted on expensive rituals and sacrifices.
- Buddha's emphasis was on observance of Dhamma.
- Buddhist Sanghas played an important role in spreading the messages of Buddha.
- Royal patronage under Ashoka, Kanishka and Harsha also helped the causes of Buddhism.
- Viharas or the Buddhist monasteries became great centres of education. One such centre was Nalanda, where Hiuen Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim, studied for many years.

Jainism and Buddhism - Similarities and Dissimilarities		
Similarities	Dissimilarities	
	Jainism	Buddhism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both Mahavira and Buddha hailed from royal families. Yet they renounced royal privileges and chose to adopt an ascetic life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It followed extreme path. • It remained in India only. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It followed middle path. • It spread across many parts of

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Denied the authority of Vedas. • Taught in the language of the common people. • Admitted disciples from all the castes and from both the genders. • Opposed blood sacrifices. • Believed in the doctrine of Karma. • Emphasized on right conduct and right knowledge instead of performing religious ceremonials and rituals as the means to achieve salvation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It does not believe in the existence of god, but believes life in every living being. 	<p>the world.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It emphasise on ANATMA (no eternal soul) and ANITYA (impermanence).
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Influence of Buddhism in Tamilnadu

- Buddhism spread to Tamil Nadu much later than Jainism.
- Manimekalai, one of the epics of the post-Sangam age is a Buddhist literature.
- There is an elaborate description about Kanchipuram in classical epic Manimegalai.
- Kanchipuram was a famous Buddhist Centre, from where Dinnaga, the famous Buddhist logician, and Dharmapala, a great scholar of Nalanda University hailed.
- Hieun Tsang who visited Kanchipuram in the seventh century A.D(CE). noticed the presence of 100 feet stupa built by Ashoka there.

3. From Chiefdoms to Empires

Importance of Sixth Century BC (BCE)

During the sixth Century BC (BCE) many territorial states emerged. This Led to the transformation of socio - economic and political life of the people in the Gangetic plains. A new intellectual awakening began to develop in northern India. Mahavira and Gautama Buddha represented this new awakening.

Role of iron in a changing society

Iron played a significant role in this transformation of society. The fertile soil of the Gangetic Valley and the use of iron ploughshares improved agricultural productivity. In addition, iron facilitated craft production. Agrarian surplus and increase in craft products resulted in the emergence of trading and exchange centres. This in turn paved the way for the rise of towns and cities. Thus, knowledge in the use of iron gave Magadha an advantage over other Mahajanapadas. Thus the Magadha could establish an empire of its own. There were two kinds of government in north India during the sixth century BC (BCE)

Gana-Sanghas and Kingdoms.

- Gana - sanghas- non monarchical states.
- Kingdoms - monarchies

The term 'gana' means 'people of equal status'. 'Sangha' means 'assembly'. The gana - sanghas covered as small geographical areas are ruled by an elite group, the ganasanghas practiced egalitarian traditions.

A 'Kingdom' means a territory ruled by a king or queen. In a kingdom (monarchy), a family, which rules for a long period becomes a dynasty. Usually these kingdoms adhered to orthodox vedic traditions.

Janapadas and Mahajanapadas

Janapadas were the earliest gathering places of men. Later, Janapadas became republics or smaller kingdoms. The wide-spread use of iron in Gangetic plain created conditions for the formation of larger territorial units transforming the janapadas into Mahajanapadas.

Sixteen Mahajanapadas ("Great Countries")

Sixteen Mahajanapadas dotted the Indo- Gangetic plain in the sixth century BC (BCE). It was a transition from a semi - nomadic kinship - based society to an agrarian society with networks of trade and exchange. Hence an organized and a strong system of governance required a centralised state apparatus.

There were four major Mahajanapadas

- Magadha in Bihar
- Avanti in Ujjain
- Kosala in Eastern Uttar Pradesh and
- Vatsa in Kausambi, Allahabad.

Among the four Mahajanapadas, Magadha emerged as an empire.

The Causes for the Rise of Magadha

- Magadha was located on the lower part of the Gangetic plain. The plain was fertile which ensured the rich agricultural yield. This provided regular and substantial income to the state.
- The thick forests supplied timber for construction of buildings and elephants for army.
- Abundance of natural resources especially iron enabled them to equip themselves with weapons made of iron.
- Growing trade and commerce facilitated movement of people as well as settlement of people in centres of arts and crafts.

- The outcome was urbanization and emergence of Magadha as an empire.

Dynasties of Ancient Magadha:

Four dynasties ruled over Magadha Empire.

- The Haryanka dynasty
- The Shishunaga dynasty
- The Nanda dynasty
- The Maurya dynasty

Haryanka Dynasty

Magadha's gradual rise to political supremacy began with Bimbisara of Haryanka dynasty. Bimbisara extended the territory of Magadhan Empire by conquests and by matrimonial alliances with Lichchhavis, Madra and Kosala. His son Ajatasatru, a contemporary of Buddha, convened the first Buddhist Council at Rajagriha. Udayin, the successor of Ajatasatru, laid the foundation of the new capital at Pataliputra.

Shishunaga Dynasty

Haryanka dynasty was succeeded by the Shishunaga dynasty. Kalasoka, a king of Shishunaga dynasty, shifted the capital from Rajagriha to Pataliputra. He convened the second Buddhist Council at Vaishali.

Nanda Dynasty

Nandas were the first empire builders of India. The first Nanda ruler was Mahapadma. Mahapadma Nanda was succeeded by his eight sons. They were, known as Navanandas (nine Nandas). Dhana Nanda, the last Nanda ruler, was overthrown by Chandragupta Maurya.

Mauryan Empire

Archaeological sources	Punch Marked Coins.
Inscriptions	Edicts of Ashoka, Junagath Inscription
Secular Literature	Kautilya's Arthashastra Visakadatta's Mudrarakhasa Mamulanar's poem in Agananuru
Religious Literature	Jain, Buddhist texts and Puranas
Foreign Notices	Dipavamsa, Mahavamsa and Indica

Mauryan Empire – India’s First Empire

Capital	Pataliputra (present day Patna, Bihar)
Government	Monarchy
Historical era	c. 322 BC (BCE) – 187 BC (BCE)
Important Kings	Chandragupta, Bindusara, Ashoka

Chandragupta Maurya

The Mauryan Empire was the first largest empire in India. Chandragupta Maurya established the empire in Magadha. Bhadrabahu, a Jain monk, took Chandragupta Maurya to the southern India. Chandragupta performed Sallekhana (Jaina rituals in which a person fasts unto his death) in Sravanbelgola (Karnataka).

Bindusara

Real name of Bindusara was Simhasena. He was the son of Chandragupta Maurya. Greeks called Bindusara as Amitragatha, meaning ‘slayer of enemies’. During Bindusara’s reign Mauryan Empire spread over large parts of India. He appointed his son Ashoka as a governor of Ujjain. After his death, Ashoka ascended the throne of Magadha.

Ashoka

Ashoka was the most famous of the Mauryan kings. He was known as ‘DevanamPiya’ meaning ‘beloved of the Gods’. Ashoka fought the Kalinga war in 261 BC (BCE). He won the war and captured Kalinga. The horror of war was described by the king himself in the Rock Edict XIII.

Chandasoka (Ashoka, the wicked) to Dhammasoka (Ashoka the righteous)

After the battle of Kalinga, Ashoka became a Buddhist. He undertook tours (Dharmayatra) to different parts of the country instructing people on policy of Dhamma. The meaning of Dhamma is explained in Ashoka’s – Pillar Edict II. It contained the noblest ideas of humanism, forming the essence of all religions. He laid stress on

- Compassion
- Charity
- Purity
- Saintliness
- Self-control
- Truthfulness
- Obedience and respect for parents, preceptors and elders.

Ashoka sent his son Mahinda and Sanghamitta to Srilanka to propagate Buddhism. He also sent missionaries to West Asia, Egypt, and Eastern Europe to spread the message of Dhamma. The Dhamma-mahamattas were a new cadre of officials created by Ashoka. Their job was to spread dhamma all over the empire. Ashoka held the third Buddhist Council at his capital Pataliputra.

Edicts of Ashoka

The 33 Edicts on the pillars as well as boulders and cave walls made by the Emperor Ashoka, describe in detail Ashoka's belief in peace, righteousness, justice and his concern for the welfare of his people. The Rock Edicts II and XIII of Ashoka refer to the names of the three dynasties namely Pandyas, Cholas, the Keralaputras and the Sathyaputras.

Mauryan Administration

Centralized administration

King

The king was the supreme and sovereign authority of the Mauryan Empire. Council of ministers known as mantriparishad assisted the King. Assembly of ministers included a Purohit, a Senapathi, a Mahamantri and the Yuvaraja. King had an excellent spy system.

Revenue system

- The land was the most important source of revenue for the state. Ashokan inscription at Lumbini mentions bali and bagha as taxes collected from people. The land tax (bhaga) collected was 1/6 of the total produce.
- Revenue from taxes on forests, mines, salt and irrigation provided additional revenue to the government.
- Much of the State revenue was spent on paying the army, the officials of the royal government, on charities and on different public works such as irrigation project, road construction etc.

Judicial System

- The king was the head of the Judiciary. He was the highest court of appeal.
- King appointed many judges subordinate to him. The punishments were harsh.

Military Administration

The king was the supreme commander of the army. A board of 30 members divided into six committees with five members on each, monitored

- Navy
- Armoury (transport and supply)
- Infantry
- Cavalry
- The war chariots
- The war elephants

Municipal Administration (Cities and Towns)

- Board of 30 members divided into six committees. Each had 5 members to manage the administration of the city.
- Town administration was under Nagarika. He was assisted by Sthanika and Gopa.

Currency

Money was not only used for trade; even the government paid its officers in cash. The punch marked silver coins (panas) which carry the symbols of the peacock, and the hill and crescent copper coins called Mashakas formed the imperial currency.

Trade and Urbanization

Trade flourished particularly with Greece (Hellenic) Malaya, Ceylon and Burma. The Arthasastra refers to the regions producing specialized textiles – Kasi (Benares), Vanga(Bengal), Kamarupa (Assam) and Madurai in Tamilnadu.

Main exports	Main Imports
Spices	Horses
Pearls	Gold
Diamonds	Glassware
Cotton textiles	Linen
Ivory Shells	
Conch Shells	

Mauryan Art and Architecture

Mauryan art can be divided into two

- | | | |
|----------------|---|--------------------------------|
| Indigenous Art | - | Statues of Yakshas and Yakshis |
| Royal Art | - | Palaces and Public buildings |
| | - | Monolithic Pillars |
| | - | Rock cut Architecture |
| | - | Stupas |

A Stupa is a semi – spherical dome like structure constructed on brick or stone. The Buddha’s relics were placed in the centre of the dome.

Monolithic Pillar - Sarnath

The crowning element in this pillar is Dharma chakra. Rock - Cut Caves of Barabar and Nagarjuna Hills. There are several caves to the north of Bodh Gaya. Three caves in Barabar hills have dedicative inscription of Ashoka. And three in Nagarjuna hills have inscriptions of DasharathaMaurya (grand son of Ashoka).

Reasons for the Decline of the Mauryan Empire

- Ashoka's successors were very weak.
- Continuous revolts in different parts of the empire.
- Invasion by the Bactrian Greeks weakened the empire.
- Last Maurya ruler Brihadratha was killed by his commander Pushyamitra Sungha who established Sungha dynasty.

Ancient name	Its Modern name
Rajagriha	Rajgir
Pataliputra	Patna

Unit - 2 The Post-Mauryan India

Introduction

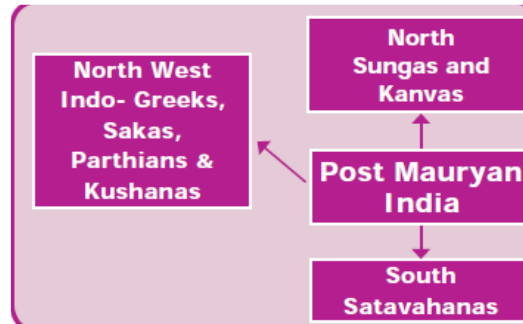
The break-up of Mauryan Empire resulted in the invasions of Sakas, Scythians, Parthians, Indo-Greeks or Bactrian Greeks and Kushanas from the north-west. In the south, Satavahanas became independent after Asoka's death. There were Sungas and Kanvas in the north before the emergence of Gupta dynasty. Chedis (Kalinga) declared their independence. It has to be noted here that, though Magadha ceased to be the premier state of India, it continued to be a great centre of Buddhist culture.

Sources

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- Inscription of Darius I



Coins

- Coins of Satavahanas
- Coins of Kadphises II
- Roman coins

Literary Sources

- Puranas
- Gargi Samhita
- Harshacharita of Banabhatta
- Mahabhasya of Patanjali
- Brihastkatha of Gunadhya
- Madhyamika Sutra of Nagarjuna
- Buddhacharita of Asvaghosha
- Malavikagnimitra of Kalidasa

Foreign Notice: Hiuen Tsang, the Chinese Buddhist monk and traveller

The Sungas and Kanvas in the North

The Sungas

The last Mauryan emperor, Brihadratha, was assassinated by his own general, Pushyamitra Sunga, who established his Sunga dynasty in Magadha. Pushyamitra made Pataliputra as his capital. Pushyamitra's kingdom extended westward to include Ujjain and Vidisha. He successfully repulsed the invasion of Bactria king, Menander. But Menander managed to keep Kabul and Sindh. Pushyamitra thwarted an attack from the Kalinga king Kharavela. He also conquered Vidarba. He was a staunch follower of Vedic religion. He performed two Asvamedha yagnas (horse sacrifices) to assert his imperial authority.

Pushyamitra was succeeded by his son Agnimitra. This Agnimitra is said to be the hero of Kalidasa's Malavikagnimitra. The drama also refers to the victory of Vasumitra, Agnimitra's son, over the Greeks on the banks of the Sindhu river. The weak successors of Sungas constantly faced threats from the Indo- Bactrians and Indo-Parthians. The Sunga dynasty lasted for about one hundred years. The last Sunga king was Devabhuti. He was

killed by his own minister Vasudeva Kanva. Vasudeva established the rule of Kanva dynasty in Magadha.

Importance of the Sunga Period

The Sungas played an important role in defending the Gangetic Valley from the encroachments of the Bactrian Greeks. Pushyamitra, and then his successors, revived Vedic religious practices and promoted Vaishnavism. Sanskrit gradually gained ascendancy and became the court language. Though Pushyamitra persecuted Buddhists, during his reign the Buddhist monuments at Bharhut and Sanchi were renovated and further improved. The Great Stupa of Sanchi and the railings, which enclose it, belong to the Sunga period.

The Kanvas

The Kanva dynasty produced four kings and their rule lasted only for 45 years. The history of Magadha after the fall of the Kanvas is devoid of any significance until the emergence of the Gupta dynasty.

The Kanva rulers were

- Vasudeva
- Bhumi Mitra
- Narayana
- Susarman

The last Kanva ruler Susarman was assassinated by his powerful feudatory chief of Andhra named Simuka, who laid the foundation of the Satavahana dynasty.

Satavahanas in the South

The Kushanas in the north and the Satavahanas (Andhras) in the south flourished for about 300 years and 450 years, respectively. Simuka, the founder of the Satavahana dynasty, is said to have ruled for twenty-three years. His successor was his brother Krishna. The latter and his nephew Satakarni ruled for ten years each, establishing an empire, holding control over a vast area stretching from Rajasthan in the northwest to Andhra in the southeast and from Gujarat in the west to Kalinga in the east. Satakarni is said to have performed two horse sacrifices (Asvamedha yagna), indicative of his imperial position.

Gautamiputra Satakarni was the greatest ruler of the family. In the Nasik prashasti, published by his mother Gautami Balasri, Gautamiputra Satakarni is described as the destroyer of Sakas, Yavanas (Greeks) and Pahlavas (Parthians). The extent of the empire is also mentioned in the record. Their domain included Maharashtra, north Konkan, Berar, Gujarat, Kathiawar and Malwa. His ship coins are suggestive of Andhras' skill in seafaring.

and their naval power. The Bogor inscriptions suggest that South India played an important role in the process of early state formation in Southeast Asia.

Contributions of Satavahanas

Literature : The Satavahana king Hala was himself a great scholar of Sanskrit. The Kantara school of Sanskrit flourished in the Deccan in second century B.C. Hala is famous as the author of Sattasai (Saptasati), 700 stanzas in Prakrit.

Art and Architecture:

The Satavahana rulers were great builders. They began constructing Buddhist stupas in Amaravati. A bronze statue of the standing Buddha discovered in Oc-Eo (an archaeological site in Vietnam) resembles the Amaravati style. The later Satavahana kings issued lead or bronze coins depicting ships with two masts. A stone seal discovered in NakhonPathom in Thailand has the same design. Gandhara, Madhura, Amaravati, Bodhi Gaya, Sanchi and Bharhut were known for splendid monuments and art. The Mathura School of Sculpture produced images and life-size statues of the Buddhist, Brahmanical and Jain deities.

Indo-Greeks, Indo-Parthians, Sakas and Kushanas

Indo-Greeks and Indo-Parthians

After the conquest of north-western India and the Punjab region, Alexander the Great left the conquered territories under provincial governors. Two of its eastern satrapies, Bactria and Parthia, revolted under their Greek Governors and declared their independence. The satrapy of Bactria became independent under the leadership of Diodotus I and Parthia under Arsaces.

After the decline of the Mauryan empire, the Greek rulers of Bactria and Parthia started encroaching into the northwestern border lands of India. The Bactrian and Parthian settlers gradually inter-married and inter-mixed with the indigenous population. This facilitated the establishment of Indo-Greek and Indo-Parthian colonies along the north-western part of India.

Rulers of Indo Greeks

Demetrius I - He was the son of Greco-Bactrian ruler Euthydemus. He was king of Macedonia from 294 to 288 BC (BCE). Numismatic evidence proves that Demetrius issued bi-lingual square coins with Greek on the obverse and Kharosthi on the reverse. Scholars are not able to decide which of the three, named Demetrius, was the initiator of the Yavana era, commencing from second century BC (BCE) in India.

Menander- He was one of the best known Indo-Greek kings. He is said to have ruled a large kingdom in the north-west of the country. His coins were found over an extensive area ranging from Kabul valley and Indus river to western Uttar Pradesh.

MilindaPanha, a Buddhist text, is a discourse between Bactrian king Milinda and the learned Buddhist scholar Nagasena. This Milinda is identified with Menander. Menander is believed to have become a Buddhist and promoted Buddhism.

Contributions of Indo-Greeks Coinage:

Indo-Greek rulers introduced a die system and produced properly shaped coins with inscription, symbols and engraved figures on them. Indians learnt this art from them.

Sculpture: The Gandhara School of Indian Art is heavily indebted to Greek influence. The Greeks were good cave builders. The Mahayana Buddhists learnt the art of carving out caves from them and became skilled in rock-cut architecture.

Sakas the Indo-Greek rule in India was ended by the Sakas. Sakas as nomads came in huge number and spread all over northern and western India. The Sakas were against the tribe of Turki nomads. Sakas were Scythians, nomadic ancient Iranians, and known as Sakas in Sanskrit. Saka rule was founded by Maos or Mogain in the Gandhara region and his capital was 'Sirkap'. His name is mentioned in Mora inscription. His coins bear images of Buddha and Siva.

Rulers of Indo-Parthians (Pahlavas)

Indo-Parthians came after the Indo-Greeks and the Indo-Scythians who were, in turn, defeated by the Kushanas in the second half of the first century AD (CE). Indo-Parthian kingdom or Gondopharid dynasty was founded by Gondopernes. The domain of Indo-Parthians comprised Kabul and Gandhara. The name of Gondopernes is associated with the Christian apostle St.Thomas. According to Christian tradition, St.Thomas visited the court of Gondopernes and converted him to Christianity. Rudradaman was the most important and famous king of Sakas. His Junagadh/Girnar inscription was the first inscription in chaste Sanskrit. In India, the Sakas were assimilated into Indian society. They began to adopt Indian names and practise Indian religious beliefs. The Sakas appointed kshatrapas or satrapas as provincial governors to administer their territories.

Kushanas

The Kushanas formed a section of the yueh-chi tribes, who inhabited north-western China in the remote past. In the first century BC(BCE), the yueh-chi tribes were composed of five major sections, of which the Kushanas attained political ascendancy over others. By the beginning of Christian era, all the yueh-chi tribes had acknowledged the supremacy of the Kushanas; they had shed their nomadic habits and settled down in the Bactrian and Parthian lands, adjacent to the north-western border of India. The Kushanas overran Bactria and Parthia and gradually established themselves in northern India. Their concentration was mostly in the Punjab, Rajaputana and Kathiawar. Kushana rulers were

Buddhists. Takshashila and Mathura continued to be great centres of Buddhist learning, attracting students from China and western Asia.

The Kushana Kings

Kanishka

Kanishka was the greatest of all the Kushana emperors. He assumed the sovereignty in 78 AD and proclaimed his rule by the foundation of a new era, which later became Saka era. The Kushana capital initially was Kabul. Later, it was shifted to Peshavar or Purushpura.

Rulers	Contributions
Kadphises I	He was the first famous military and political leader of the Kushanas. He overthrew the Indo - Greek and Indo - Parthian rulers and established himself as a sovereign ruler of Bactria. He extended his power in Kabul, Gandhara and up to the Indus.
Kadphises II	He maintained friendly relationship with the emperors of China and Rome encouraged trade and commerce with the foreign countries. Some of his coins contained the inscribed figures of Lord Siva and his imperial titles were inscribed in the Kharosthi language.

Conquests

Kanishka conquered and annexed Kashmir. He waged a successful war against Magadha. He also waged a war against a ruler of Parthia to maintain safety and integrity in his vast empire on the western and south-western border. After the conquest of Kashmir and Gandhara, he turned his attention towards China. He defeated the Chinese general Pan-Chiang and safeguarded the northern borders of India from Chinese intrusion. His empire extended from Kashmir down to Benaras, and the Vindhya mountain in the south. It included Kashgar, Yarkhand touching the borders of Persia and Parthia.

Religious Policy

Kanishka was an ardent Buddhist. Kanishka's empire was a Buddhist empire. Kanishka adopted Buddhism under the influence of Asvaghosha, a celebrated monk from Pataliputra. Though a great warrior and an empire-builder, Kanishka was as equal as the exponent and champion of Mahayanism. Kanishka made Buddhism as the state religion and built many stupas and monasteries in Mathura, Taxila and many other parts of his kingdom. He sent Buddhist missionaries to Tibet, China and many countries of Central Asia for the propagation of Buddha's gospel. He organised the fourth Buddhist Council at Kundalavana near Srinagar to sort out the differences between the various schools of Buddhism. It was only in this council that Buddhism was split into Hinayanism and Mahayanism.

Art and Literature

Kanishka was a great patron of art and literature. His court was adorned with a number of Buddhist saints and scholars, like Asvaghosha, Vasumitra and Nagarjuna. He founded the town of Kanishkapura in Kashmir and furnished the capital of Purushapura with magnificent public buildings. The Gandhara School of Art flourished during his time. The most favourite subject of the Gandhara artists was the carving of sculptures of Buddha. Buddhist learning and culture was taken to China and Mongolia from Takshashila. The great Asiatic culture mingled with Indian Buddhist culture during the Kushana's time. Kanishka's successors were weak and incompetent. Kushana empire rapidly disintegrated into number of small principalities.

NOTE

- During the Sunga period, stone was replaced by wood in the railings and the gateways of the Buddhist stupas as seen in Bharhut and Sanchi.
- Patanjali, the second grammarian in Sanskrit, was patronized by Pushyamitra
- King Kharavela of Kalinga was a contemporary of the Sungas. We get information about Kharavela from the Hathigumba Inscription.
- The world-famous life-size statues of Buddha at Bamyan valley on the mountains of the erstwhile northwestern frontiers of ancient India (currently in central Afghanistan and recently destroyed by the Talibans), were carved out of the solid rocks by the dedicated artists of the Gandhara School of Art during the post-Mauryan period.
- **Rulers of Indo-Parthians (Pahlavas):** Indo-Parthians came after the Indo-Greeks and the Indo-Scythians who were, in turn, defeated by the Kushanas in the second half of the first century AD (CE). Indo-Parthian kingdom or Gondopharid dynasty was founded by Gondopernes. The domain of Indo-Parthians comprised Kabul and Gandhara. The name of Gondopernes is associated with the Christian apostle St. Thomas. According to Christian tradition, St. Thomas visited the court of Gondopernes and converted him to Christianity.
- Asvaghosha was the celebrated author of the first Sanskrit play, Buddhacharita.
- Kushana Empire corresponded with the last days of the Roman Republic, when Julius Caesar was alive. It is said that Kushana Emperor sent a great embassy to Augustus Ceasar.

7. The Age of Empires: Guptas and Vardhanas

Introduction

By the end of the 3rd century, the powerful empires established by the Kushanas in the north and Satavahanas in the south had lost their greatness and strength. After the decline of Kushanas and Satavahanas, Chandragupta carved out a kingdom and establish his dynastic rule, which lasted for about two hundred years. After the downfall of the Guptas and thereafter and interregnum of nearly 50 years, Harsha of Vardhana dynasty ruled North India from 606 to 647 A.D (CE).

Sources

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- The Mehrauli Iron Pillar Inscription.
- Udayagiri Cave Inscription, Mathura Stone Inscription and Sanchi Stone Inscription of Chandragupta II.
- Bhitari Pillar Inscription of Skandagupta.
- The Gadhwa Stone Inscription.
- Madubhan Copper Plate Inscription
- Sonpat Copper Plate
- Nalanda Inscription on clay seal

Literary Sources

- Vishnu, Matsya, Vayu and Bhagavata Puranas and Niti Sastras of Narada
- Visakhadatta's Devichandraguptam and Mudrarakshasa and Bana's Harshacharita
- Dramas of Kalidasa
- Accounts of Chinese Buddhist monk Fahien who visited India during the reign of Chandragupta II.
- Harsha's Ratnavali, Nagananda, Priyadharshika
- Hiuen-Tsang's Si-Yu-Ki

Foundation of the Gupta Dynasty

Sri Gupta is considered to be the founder of the Gupta dynasty. He is believed to have reigned over parts of present-day Bengal and Bihar. He was the first Gupta ruler to be featured on coins. He was succeeded by his son Ghatotkacha. Both are mentioned as Maharajas in inscriptions.

Chandragupta I (c. 319-335 AD(CE))

Chandragupta I married Kumaradevi of the famous and powerful Lichchhavi family. Having gained the support of this family, Chandragupta could eliminate various small states in northern India and crown himself the monarch of a larger kingdom. The gold coins attributed to Chandragupta bear the images of Chandragupta, Kumaradevi and the legend 'Lichchhavayah'.

Samudragupta (c. 335-380)

Samudragupta, son of Chandragupta I, was the greatest ruler of the dynasty. The Prayag Prashasti, composed by Samudragupta's court poet Harisena was engraved on Allahabad Pillar. This Allahabad Pillar inscription is the main source of information for Samudragupta's reign.

Consolidation of Gupta Dynasty

Samudragupta was a great general and when he became emperor, he carried on a vigorous campaign all over the country and even in the south. In the southern Pallava kingdom, the king who was defeated by Samudragupta was Vishnugopa. Samudragupta conquered nine kingdoms in northern India. He reduced 12 rulers of the southern India to the status of feudatories and forced them to pay tribute. He received homage from the rulers of East Bengal, Assam, Nepal, the eastern part of Punjab and various tribes of Rajasthan.

Chandragupta II (C.380 - 415)

Chandragupta II was the son of Samudragupta. He was also known as Vikramaditya. He conquered western Malwa and Gujarat by defeating the Saka rulers. He maintained friendly relationship with the rulers of southern India. The iron pillar near Qutub Minar is believed to have been built by Vikramaditya. Fahien, a Buddhist scholar from China, visited India during his reign. Vikramaditya is said to have assembled the greatest writers and artists (Navaratna [Nine Jewels]) in his court. Kalidasa is said to be one among them. Chandragupta II was succeeded by his son Kumaragupta I, who built the famous Nalanda University.

Kumaragupta's successor Skandagupta had to face a new threat in the form of the invasion of Huns. He defeated them and drove them away. But after twelve years, they came again and broke the back of the Gupta Empire. The last of the great Guptas was Baladitya, assumed to have been Narasimha Gupta I.

Fahien

During the reign of Chandragupta II, the Buddhist monk Fahien visited India. His travel accounts provided us information about the socio-economic, religious and moral conditions of the people of the Gupta age. According to Fahien, the people of Magadha were happy and prosperous, that justice was mildly administered and there was no death

penalty. Gaya was desolated. Kapilavasthu had become a jungle, but at Pataliputra people were rich and prosperous.

He was himself attracted towards Buddhism. He was paying tribute to Mihirakula but was distressed by his hostility towards Buddhism. So he stopped paying tribute. Though Baladitya succeeded in imprisoning him, Mihirakula turned treacherous and drove away Baladitya from Magadha. After Baladitya, the great Gupta Empire faded away. The last recognised king of the Gupta Empire was Vishnugupta.

Gupta Polity

The divine theory of kingship (the concept that king is the representative of God on earth and so he is answerable only to God and not to anyone else) was practised by the Gupta rulers. The Gupta kings wielded enormous power in political, administrative, military and judicial spheres. The Gupta king was assisted by a council of mantris (ministers). The council consisted of princes, high officials and feudatories. A large number of officials were employed by the Gupta rulers to carry on the day-to-day administration of the country. High-ranking officials were called dandanayakas and mahadandanayakas.

The Gupta Empire was divided into provinces known as deshās or bhuktis. They were administered by the governors, designated as uparikas. The province was divided into districts such as vishyas and they were controlled by the officers known as vishyapatis. At the village level, there were functionaries such as gramika and gramadhyaksha. The extensive empire shows the important role of military organisation. Seals and inscriptions mentioned military designations as baladhikrita and mahabaladhikrita (commander of infantry and cavalry respectively). The system of espionage included spies known as dutakas.

Society and Economy

Land and Peasants

Nitisara, authored by Kamandaka, emphasises the importance of the royal treasury and mentions various sources of revenue. The military campaigns of kings like Samudragupta were financed through revenue surpluses. Land tax was the main revenue to the government. The condition of peasants was pathetic. They were required to pay various taxes. They were reduced to the position of serfs.

Classification of land during Gupta period	
Kshetra	Cultivable land
Khila	Waste land
Aprahata	Jungle or forest land
Vasti	Habitable land
Gapata Saraha	Pastoral land

Trade and Commerce

The contribution of the traders for the development of Gupta's economy was very impressive. There were two types of traders, namely Sresti and Sarthavaha.

Sresti	Sarthavaha
Sresti traders usually settled at a standard place	Sarthavaha traders were caravan traders who carried their goods to different places.

Trade items ranged from daily products to valuable and luxury goods. The important trade goods were pepper, gold, copper, iron, horses and elephants. Lending money at a high rate of interest was in practice during Gupta period. The Guptas developed roadways connecting different parts of the country. Pataliputra, Ujjain, Benaras, Mathura were the famous trade centres. Ports in western (Kalyan, Mangalore, Malabar) and eastern (Tamralipti in Bengal) coasts of India facilitated trade.

Nalanda University

- Nalanda University flourished under the patronage of the gupta Empire in the 5th and 6th centuries and later under emperor Harsha of Kanauj.
- At Nalanda, Buddhism was the main subject of study. Other subjects like Yoga, Vedic literature and Medicine were also taught.
- Hiuen Tsang spent many years studying Buddhism in the University.
- Eight Mahapatashalas and three large libraries were situated on the campus.
- Nalanda was ravaged and destroyed by Mamluks (Turkish Muslims) Under Bhaktiyar Khalji.
- Today, it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Metallurgy

- Mining and metallurgy were the most flourishing industries during the Gupta period.
- The most important evidence of development in metallurgy was the Mehrauli Iron Pillar installed by King Chandragupta in Delhi. This monolithic iron pillar has lasted through the centuries without rusting.

Society

The society that adhered to four varna system was patriarchal. According to laws of Manu, which was in force, women should be under the protection of their father, husband

or eldest son. Polygamy was widely prevalent. The kings and feudatory lords often had more than one wife. Inscriptions refer to Kubernaga and Dhrubaswamini as the queens of Chandragupta II. Sati was practised during the Gupta rule.

Slavery

Slavery was not institutionalised in India, as in the West. But there are references to the existence of various categories of slaves during the Gupta age.

Religion

There was revival of Vedic religion and Vedic rites. Samudragupta and Kumaragupta I performed Asvamedha Yagna (a horse sacrifice ritual). We notice the beginning of image worship and the emergence of two sects, namely Vaishnavism and Saivism, during the Gupta period. Buddhism also continued to flourish though it split into two sects, namely Hinayana and Mahayana.

Art and Architecture

The Guptas were the first to construct temples, which evolved from the earlier tradition of rock-cut shrines. Adorned with towers and elaborate carvings, these temples were dedicated to all Hindu deities. The most notable rock-cut caves are found at Ajanta and Ellora (Maharashtra), Bagh (Madhya Pradesh) and Udaygiri (Odisha). The structural temples built during this period resemble the characteristic features of the Dravidian style.

Two remarkable examples of Gupta metal sculpture are (i) a copper image of Buddha about 18 feet high at Nalanda and (ii) Sultanganj Buddha seven-and-a-half feet in height. The most important examples of the Gupta paintings are found on the Fresco of the Ajanta caves and the Bagh cave in Gwalior.

Literature

Though the language spoken by the people was Prakrit, the Guptas made Sanskrit the official language and all their epigraphic records are in Sanskrit. The Gupta period also saw the development of Sanskrit grammar based on the grammar of Panini and Patanjali who wrote Ashtadhyayi and Mahabhashya respectively. A Buddhist scholar from Bengal, Chandrogomia, composed a book on grammar titled Chandravyakaranam. Kalidasa's famous dramas were Sakunthala, Malavikagnimitra and Vikramoornvasiyam. Other significant works of Kalidasa were Meghaduta, Raghuvamsa, Kumarasambava and Ritusamhara.

Mathematics, Astronomy and Medicine

Invention of zero and the consequent evolution of the decimal system were the legacy of Guptas to the modern world. Aryabhata, Varahamihira and Brahmagupta were foremost astronomers and mathematicians of the time. Aryabhata, in his book Surya

Siddhanta, explained the true causes of solar and lunar eclipses. He was the first Indian astronomer to declare that the earth revolves around its own axis. Dhanvantri was a famous scholar in the field of medicine. He was a specialist in Ayurveda. Charaka was a medical scientist. Susruta was the first Indian to explain the process of surgery.

Vardhana Dynasty

The founder of the Vardhana or Pushyabhuti dynasty ruled from Thaneswar. Pushyabhuti served as a military general under the Guptas and rose to power after the fall of the Guptas. With the accession of Prabhakaravardhana, the Pushyabhuti family became strong and powerful.

Rajavardhana, the eldest son of Prabhakaravardhana, ascended the throne after his father's death. Rajavardhana's sister Rajayashri's husband, Raja of Kanauj, was killed by the Gauda ruler Sasanka of Bengal. Sasanka also imprisoned Rajayashri. Rajavardhana, in the process of retrieving his sister was treacherously killed by Sasanka. This resulted in his younger brother Harshavardhana becoming king of Thaneswar. The notables of the Kanauj kingdom also invited Harsha to take its crown. After becoming the ruler of the both Thaneswar and Kanauj, Harsha shifted his capital from Thaneswar to Kanauj.

Conquest of Harshavardhana

- The most popular king of the vardhana dynasty was Harshavardhana. Harsha ruled for 41 years. His feudatories included those of Jalandhar, Kashmir, Nepal and Valabhi. Sasanka of Bengal remained hostile to him.
- It was Harsha who unified most of northern India. But the extension of his authority in the south was checked by Chalukya king Pulikesin II. The kingdom of Harsha disintegrated rapidly into small states after his death in 648 AD (CE). He maintained a cordial relationship with the rulers of Iran and China.

Administration

The emperor was assisted by a council of ministers. The prime minister occupied the most important position in the council of ministers. Bhaga, Hiranya and Bali were the three kinds of tax collected during Harsha's reign. Criminal law was more severe than that of the Gupta age. Life imprisonment was the punishment for violation of the laws and for plotting against the king. Perfect law and order prevailed throughout the empire. Harsha paid great attention to discipline and strength of the army. Harsha built charitable institutions for the stay of the travellers, and to care for the sick and the poor.

Religious Policy

Harsha was the worshipper of Shiva in the beginning, but he embraced Buddhism under the influence of his sister Rajyashri and the Buddhist monk and traveller Hiuen Tsang. He belonged to Mahayana school of thought. Harsha treated Vedic scholars and Buddhist monks alike and distributed charities equally to them. He was the last Buddhist

sovereign in India. As a pious Buddhist, Harsha stopped the killing of animals for food. He was noted for his policy of religious toleration and used to worship the images of Buddha, Shiva and Sun simultaneously. He summoned two Buddhist assemblies, one at Kanauj and another at Prayag.

Art and Literature

Harsha, himself a poet and dramatist, gathered around him a best of poets and artists. Harsha's popular works are Ratnavali, Nagananda and Priyadharshika. His royal court was adorned by Banabhatta, Mayura, Hardatta and Jayasena.

Temples and monasteries functioned as centres of learning. Kanauj became a famous city. Harsha constructed a large number of viharas, monasteries and stupas on the bank of the Ganges. The Nalanda University, a university and monastery combined, was said to have had 10,000 students and monks in residence, when Hiuen Tsang visited the university.

9th book

1. Evolution of Humans and Society - Prehistoric Period

Introduction

We live in the age of Information Technology. The mobile phones have literally put the world on our finger tips. The all-encompassing knowledge that we possess now, which has helped in the development of powerful technology, did not emerge all of a sudden. The foundation for our modern life was facilitated by the development of the process of cognition among the human ancestors in the prehistoric age. Prehistoric people were the pioneers of creative knowledge. From the artefacts and the languages they developed, we are able to understand how intelligent they were.

Artefact is an object or tool made or modified by humans.

Cognition refers to the act of mind in which knowledge and understanding are acquired through thoughts, experiences and senses. Cognition is related to development of human thought.

Origin of the Earth and the Geological Ages

The history of humans is closely related to the history of the earth. The earth contains geological, archaeological and biological records of historical times in its upper layers. They are important for reconstructing the history of the earth and various living organisms. The fossil bones of the human ancestors are embedded in the earth's layers. Paleanthropologists and archaeologists excavate the soil and rock layers on the earth and extract evidence about human ancestors. These layers and the fossils are scientifically dated to study the various stages in human evolution and prehistory.

Through the gathered evidence, they attempt to understand the evolution of human history and developments in a chronological order.

Archaeology is the study of human past through the analysis and interpretation of material remains.

Palaeoanthropology is the study of the human ancestors and their evolution by the study of the fossil remains.

The earth was formed approximately 4.54 billion years ago. Gradually, conditions emerged for the growth of organisms. Ten plants and animals came into being, and thereby foundation was laid for the evolution of humans. The long span of time in earth's history is divided into eras, periods and epochs by the geologists.

The earliest trace of life in the form of microorganisms emerged 3.5 billion years ago. The primitive multi-cellular form of life first appeared in the Proterozoic era, about 600 to 542 million years ago. In the Palaeozoic era (542 to 251 million years ago), fish and reptiles along with various plants appeared. Dinosaurs existed in the Mesozoic Era (251 to 66 million years ago). Australopithecines (literally 'southern ape') appeared in the Cainozoic era, which commenced about 66 million years ago.

Australopithecines were the apes from which modern humans evolved. Now they are extinct, but they are considered to be the close relatives of humans.

1 billion = 100 crore
1 million = 10 lakh

Human Enquiries into the Past and Origin of the World

The Age of Speculation

Humans are the only species on earth concerned with understanding as well as explaining the world and the universe. In the course of evolution, humans became conscious and knowledgeable. They turned curious and began to think and ask questions about nature, organisms and the world around them. At first, they considered nature as God. They worshipped sun, moon and various natural forces about which they developed their own understanding, some of which is not scientific. The lack of scientific knowledge on the creation of the world is reflected in the ancient writings and religious literature.

BCE - Before Common Era
CE - Common Era

Scientific Foundations of Geology, Biology and Archaeology

The beginning of history writing can be traced to the ancient Greeks. Herodotus (484-425 BCE) is considered the Father of History, because the history he wrote was humanistic and rationalistic. In the middle Ages, people were preoccupied with religion; but the real scientific enquiries became stronger only around the 15th and 16th centuries

CE, with the Renaissance movement in Europe playing an influential role in rational thinking. Scientific enquiry was undertaken and scientific foundations for geology, biology, anthropology and archaeology were laid. Numerous ideas were articulated by various learned men in these fields during this period. Through their enquiry and observation, scholars believed that the evidence for the origin of the earth and the organisms lay in the upper layers of the earth. The rise of scientific enquiry into the origin of humans was possible because of

- ✓ **The interest in collection of archaeological remains and the opening of museums after the Renaissance Movement;**
- ✓ **The development of ideas of stratigraphy and geology;**
- ✓ **Darwin's theory of biological evolution;**
- ✓ **The discovery of human and animal fossils, stone tools, and artefacts of early civilizations; and**
- ✓ **The ability to decipher early scripts.**

Stratigraphy: The study of origin, nature and relationships of rock and soil layers that were formed due to natural and cultural activities.

Oldest Museum: The museum of Ennigaldi-Nanna in Mesopotamia was established in 530 BCE. The princess Ennigaldi was the daughter of the neo-Babylonian king Nabonidus. The Capitoline Museum in Italy is perhaps the oldest surviving museum (1471 CE) at present. Ashmolean Museum at Oxford University is the oldest university museum in the world. It was established in 1677 CE.

Herbert Spencer's (1820–1903 CE) and Charles Darwin's (1809–1882 CE) theory on biological evolution, concepts of natural selection and survival of the fittest contributed to the scientific understanding of human origins. Charles Darwin published the books *On the Origin of Species* in 1859 and *The Descent of Man* in 1871.

Natural selection: The processes by which organisms that are better adapted to their environment would survive and produce more offspring.

Survival of the fittest means "survival of the form that will leave the most copies of itself in successive generations."

Fossil": Prehistoric animal or plant that turns into stone over a period of time (millions of years) because of chemical and physical processes. Animal bones are preserved due to mineralization. Palaeontology is the study of fossils. The idea of the Three Age System proposed by C.J. Thomsen became the basis for understanding early human history. He classified the artefacts in the Danish National Museum, Copenhagen, into Stone Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age.

Stone Age: The period when stone was mainly used for making implements.

Bronze Age: The period when bronze metallurgy (extraction of metal from ores) developed.

Iron Age: The period when iron was smelted to produce implements.

Since the 19th century, scholars have used advanced scientific techniques and undertook systematic studies to contribute to the current state of knowledge on prehistory, human origins and the early civilisations. Now the theory of human evolution is widely accepted.

Prehistory: From Australopithecus through Homo erectus to Homo sapiens

The introduction of writing system is a hallmark of the human civilisation. The period before the introduction of writing is called prehistory. Prehistoric societies are treated as pre-literate. But pre-literate should not be taken to mean primitive. The prehistoric people developed language, made beautiful paintings and artefacts, and they were highly skilful.

**Who are we? What is the name of our species?
We are Homo sapiens sapiens**

Human Evolution and Migration

The chimpanzee, gorillas and orang-utans, along with humans, are collectively called the Great Apes. Among them, the chimpanzee is genetically the closest to humans. The ancestors to humans were called Hominines, and their origins have been traced to Africa. They evolved from those origins and then began to move to other parts of the world in due course of time. The Hominines emerged around 7 to 5 million years ago. Skeletons of Australopithecus, one of the early species of this tribe, have been found in Africa.

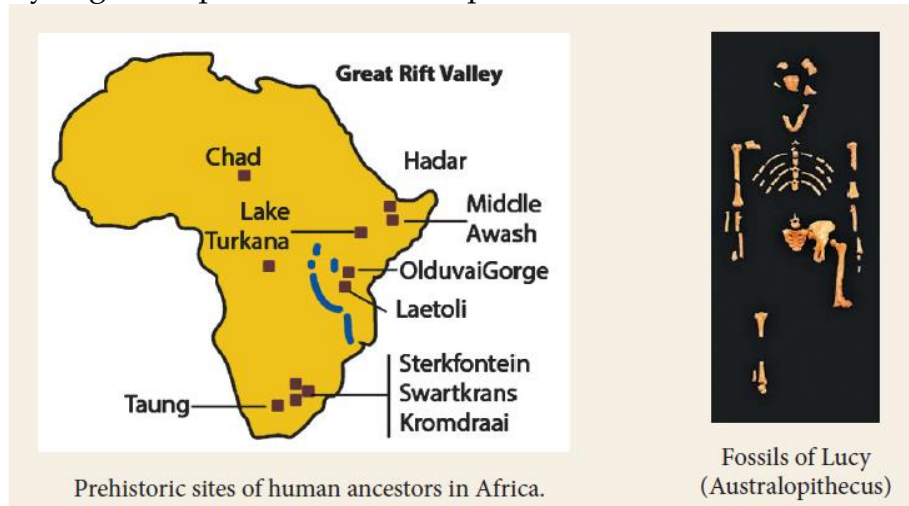
The Great Rift Valley in Africa has many sites that have evidence for the prehistoric period. The Great Rift Valley is a valleylike formation that runs for about 6,400 km from the northern part of Syria to Central Mozambique in East Africa. This geographical feature is visible even from the space, and many prehistoric sites are found in eastern Africa. Human ancestors are divided into various species according to their physical features.

Hominid: refers to all the species of the modern and extinct great apes, which also includes humans.

Hominines: (a zoological tribe) refers to the close relatives of human ancestors and their sister species including Homo sapiens (the modern humans) and the extinct members of Homo *neanderthalensis*, Homo erectus, Homo habilis and various species of Australopithecines. Humans are the only living species of this 'tribe'. They stand erect,

walk with two legs and have large brains. They can use tools and a few of them can communicate. It excludes the gorillas.

Homo habilis (handy human) was the earliest known human ancestors to make tools in Africa about 2.6 million years ago. Around 2 million years ago, the species of *Homo erectus/ergaster* emerged. This species made hand axes between 2 and 1 million years ago. They began to spread into various parts of Asia and Africa in time.



Anatomically, modern humans, called *Homo sapiens* (wise man), first appeared around 3,00,000 years ago in Africa. It is believed that these modern humans eventually migrated and dispersed into various parts of the world from around 60,000 years ago.

Prehistoric Cultures

While the fossil bones are classified as various species such as *Homo habilis*, *Homo erectus* and *Neanderthalensis*, based on the lithic tools, cultures are assigned names such as Earliest Lithic Assemblages, Oldowan Technology, Lower, Middle and Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic cultures.

Earliest Lithic Assemblages of Human Ancestors

The earliest tools made by human ancestors are found in Lomekwi in Kenya. They are dated to 3.3 million years. Oldowan tools occur in the Olduvai Gorge in Africa. They are 2 to 2.6 million years old. The human ancestors (*Australopithecines*) used hammer stones and produced sharp-edged flakes. The tools were used for cutting, slicing and processing food.

Lower Palaeolithic Culture in Tamil Nadu

One of the oldest Stone Age tools in the world made by human ancestors, called hominines, had been produced in Tamil Nadu. These stone tools are found near the Chennai region at several sites, especially at Athirampakkam. The archaeological excavations at this site and cosmic-ray exposure dating of the artefacts suggest that people lived here about 1.5 to 2 million years ago. The Kosasthalaiyar river is one of the major

cradles of human ancestors in the world. The people who lived here belonged to the species of Homo erectus.

Archaeological excavation: refers to digging undertaken to recover archaeological evidence such as stone tools, pottery, animal bones and pollens, in order to understand the past lifestyle of humans.

Cosmic-ray exposure dating: A method in which exposure to cosmogenic rays is done for dating the samples.

In 1863, Sir Robert Bruce Foote, a geologist from England, first discovered Palaeolithic tools at Pallavaram near Chennai. They are the earliest finds of such tools in India. Hence, the hand axe assemblages were considered the Madras Stone Tool Industry. The tools that he discovered are now housed in the Chennai Museum. The Palaeolithic people hunted wild animals and gathered the naturally available fruits, roots, nuts and leaves. They did not have knowledge of iron and pottery making, which developed much later in history.

Hand axes and cleavers are the important tool types of the Lower Palaeolithic period. These tools fitted with a wooden and bone handle were used for cutting, piercing and digging. The people of this time also used hammer stones and spheroids. The quartzite pebbles and cobbles were chosen as raw materials. The tools are found in the soil deposits and also in the exposed river side. They occur at Pallavaram, Gudiyam cave, Athirampakkam, Vadamadurai, Erumaivettipalayam and Parikulam.

Lemuria and the Tamils

Some researchers relate the origin of the Tamils to the submerged continent of Lemuria. This theory of Lemuria continent was proposed in the 19th century. In the wake of advancements in plate tectonics theory, differing views are put forth by scholars. The available literary references point to the submergence of areas around Kanyakumari. Some parts of Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu were connected by land about 5000 years BCE.

It is possible that some land might have submerged near Kanyakumari and around the coast of India, because of the rising sea levels. Underwater surveys are necessary in this area. Archaeological research reveals that at least a section of people may have been living continuously in South India, including Tamil Nadu, from the Mesolithic and Neolithic times. The Lower Palaeolithic tools are also found in the North Arcot and Dharmapuri districts. The people belonging to this period used basalt rocks for manufacturing artefacts. However, the southern part of Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka do not have evidence of Lower Palaeolithic Culture.

Basalt rocks are igneous rocks: Igneous rocks are those formed from the molten lava from the earth.

The Lower Palaeolithic Culture is datable to about 2 - 1.5 million years at Athirampakkam. This cultural phase continued in other parts of India up to 300,000 years ago.

Middle Palaeolithic Culture in Tamil Nadu

In the course of time, the Middle Palaeolithic Culture emerged during 3,85,000 - 1,72,000 years ago. The tool types of this period underwent a change and smaller artefacts were used. Cores, flakes, scrapers, knives, borers, Levalloisian flakes, hand axes and cleavers are the artefact types of this period. Compared to the previous phase, these tool types became smaller in size.

Evidence for the Middle Palaeolithic Culture can be observed in some parts of Tamil Nadu. In the southern part of Tamil Nadu, at T. Pudupatti and Sivarakkottai, artefacts of the Middle Palaeolithic tools have been collected. Also near Tanjavur and Ariyalur, similar artefacts have been found.

Mesolithic Culture in Tamil Nadu

In many parts of the world, and in some parts of India, the Upper Palaeolithic Culture succeeded the Middle Palaeolithic Culture. There is no evidence for the Upper Palaeolithic Culture in Tamil Nadu. But the people who used microliths or small-stone artefacts lived in many parts of Tamil Nadu. Since this cultural period occurs between Palaeolithic and Neolithic Culture, it is known as Mesolithic Culture or Middle Stone Age. Evidence for the existence of Mesolithic hunter-gatherers is found at Chennai, North Arcot, Dharmapuri, Salem, Coimbatore, Ariyalur, Tiruchirappalli, Pudukkottai, Madurai, Sivagangai, Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari. The teri sites near Thoothukudi have evidence of microlithic artefacts. These sites have red sand dunes called teris.

Mesolithic people might have engaged in fishing activities. The micro lithic artefacts of southern Tamil Nadu are also found in the coastal regions of Sri Lanka. Geologists argue that the Tamil Nadu region and Sri Lanka remained connected before 5000 BCE when the sea level was low. The people of this period used small artefacts made of chert and quartz. The tool types are scrapers, lunates and triangles. These people hunted wild animals and gathered fruits, nuts and roots for their subsistence.

Scrapers are tools used for scraping the surfaces. Scrapers are similar to the tools used in the kitchen for removing skin of vegetables.

Triangles are tools in the shape of triangles.

Lunates are tools in the shape of a crescent.

Neolithic Culture in Tamil Nadu

The culture that domesticated animals and cultivated crops is called Neolithic. It is known as the New Stone Age. The Neolithic people used polished stone axes called celts. A cattle rearing was their main occupation. They lived in small villages with houses made of thatched roof and walls plastered with clay. Evidence of Neolithic village is found at Payyampalli in Vellore district and a few sites in the Dharmapuri region.

Payyampalli is a village in Vellore district of Tamil Nadu. The earliest evidence for the domestication of animals and cultivation of plants is found at this site, which was excavated by the Archaeological Survey of India. Evidence for pottery making and cultivation of horse gram and green gram has been found in this village. These Neolithic sites were part of the Southern Neolithic Culture of India. They are mainly concentrated in the Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka regions. The Neolithic people used stone axes fitted on a wooden handle. These polished stone axes are worshipped in many village temples of Tamil Nadu even today.

Iron Age/Megalithic period

The cultural period that succeeded the Neolithic is called the Iron Age. As the name suggests, people used iron technology. It preceded the Sangam Age. The Iron Age was a formative period and the foundation for the Sangam Age was laid in this time. During the Iron Age, many parts of Tamil Nadu were occupied by people. An exchange relationship developed among the people.

The people of this age had knowledge of metallurgy and pottery making. They used iron and bronze objects and gold ornaments. They used shell ornaments and beads made of carnelian and quartz. The evidence for Iron Age is found at many sites including Adhichanallur in Tirunelveli district, Sanur near Madhuranthakam and Sithannavasal near Pudukkottai. Megalithic burial sites are found in the whole of Tamil Nadu.

Megalithic Burial Types

The Iron Age is also known as megalithic, since people created burials with large stones for the dead people. Within these burials, the skeletons or a few bones of the dead persons were placed along with grave goods including iron objects, carnelian beads and bronze objects. Some of the burials do not have human bones and they have only the grave goods. They may be called memorial burials.

Grave goods are the objects placed in the burials along with the physical remains (bones) of the dead. People may have believed that these would be useful in the after-life. Egyptian pyramids also have similar artefacts.

Similar burials were also built in the early historic period or the Sangam Age. The Sangam literature mentions the various burial practices of the people. The megalithic burials are classified as dolmens, cists, menhirs, rock-cut caves, urn burials and sarcophagus. The burial types of Kodakkal (umbrella stone), Toppikkal (hatstone) and Paththikal (hoodstone) are found in Kerala. Dolmens, table-like stone structures, were

erected as funerary monuments. Cists are stone enclosures buried under the earth. They were created by placing four stone slabs on the sides, one on top of each other. The cists and dolmens have openings called portholes. Urns are pottery jars and were used for burying the dead. Sarcophagi are burial receptacles made of terracotta. They sometimes had multiple legs. Menhirs are pillar-like stones erected as part of the burials or memorials.

Portholes are holes found in the cists and dolmens on one side. They may have acted as the entrance to the burials. There is a view that they were meant for the movement of the soul or spirit.

Why did they build using numerous burial types? What is the basis of this variation? There could be several factors influencing the megalithic burial types. For example, social status or the importance of the individuals buried or simply the choice of the relatives of the dead could have been the reasons. Raw material availability is another reason. In the deltaic areas where stones are not available, people used the simple urns made by potters using clay. The menhirs may have been erected for the heroes in the Iron Age. The tradition of hero stones might have begun in the Iron Age or even before.

Agriculture and Pastoralism

The people in the Iron Age practiced agriculture, domesticated cattle and sheep, and some of the groups were still hunting and gathering. Millets and rice were cultivated. Irrigation management developed in this period, since many of the megalithic sites are found nearby rivers and tanks. In the deltaic regions, irrigation as a technology had developed. Evidence of rice is seen in the megalithic sites like Adhichanallur in Toothukudi district and Porunthal near Palani.

Iron Age Society and Polity

The Iron Age society had farming communities, pastoralists and hunter-gatherers. Craft specialists, potters and blacksmiths were the professionals during this period. The society had several groups of peoples (tribes). The size of the burials and the variations found in the burial goods suggests the existence of numerous social groups and their diverse practices. Some of them seem to have had organised chiefdoms. Cattle lifting leading to wars and encroachment and expansion of territories had also started taking place in this period.

Chiefdoms were stratified societies in which chiefs were selected based on kinship relations.

The Ashokan inscriptions datable to third century BCE refers to the Cheras, Cholas, Pandyas and Satyaputras outside his empire in Tamilagam. If the Cheras, Cholas, Pandyas and Satyaputras had been powerful political powers in the Mauryan period, they must have commenced their political rule in the Iron Age.

Pottery

Pottery is an important evidence found in the archaeological sites. The Iron Age and Sangam age people used the black and red colours to make black ware and red ware pottery. Potteries were used for cooking, storage and dining purposes. The black and red ware pottery has a black inside and a red outside, with lustrous surfaces.

Iron Technology and Metal Tools

The megalithic burials have abundant iron objects placed in the burials as grave goods. Weapons such as swords and daggers, axes, chisels, lamps and tripod stands are also found. Some of these objects were hafted to wooden or bone or horn handles and used. The iron tools were used for agriculture, hunting, gathering and in battles. Bronze bowls, vessels with stylish finials decorated with animals and birds, bronze mirrors and bells have also been found.



2. Ancient Civilisations

Introduction

Societies that adopted complex ways of life were more organised than the early hunter-gatherer and Neolithic farming societies. Urban societies had social stratification and well-planned cities. They practised crafts, engaged in trade and exchange, adopted science and technology and formed political organisation (early form of state). Hence the term 'civilisation' is used to distinguish them from the early forms of societies. However, they should not be considered superior to other forms of societies, since each culture or civilisation had its own unique features.

Early Societies and Early State Formation

Societies before the modern times are classified as bands, tribes, chiefdoms and proto-state by scholars. Early societies were organised as bands during the Pre-Mesolithic Age. Bands were small groups of people who were nomadic, making their living on hunting and gathering. As the Neolithic way of life came into practice, large groups of people were concentrated in the villages. They were organised as tribal communities with a sedentary or semi sedentary lifestyle. The tribal organisations that developed in the Mesolithic times were mostly egalitarian in nature.

The chiefdoms are political formations larger than the tribal-level formations. People under chiefdoms lived over a larger area than the areas covered by tribes. Social distinction existed among these groups in terms of wealth and authority. The cultural developments after the Neolithic period in certain regions that had a following river and rich and fertile alluvial soil gave rise to civilisations. In the post-Neolithic period, that is, in the Bronze Age societies, early form of state (proto-state) originated in the areas where agricultural surplus and population density was more.

These early states had a political system that controlled many smaller regions, chiefs and cities through conquests. The kings and royals occupied the higher position in the social hierarchy. Palatial buildings were built for their dwelling. Priests, king's officials and traders formed the middle strata. Craft persons and peasants formed the lower sections in this hierarchical social system. Taxes were collected from the peasants and artisans. Language was refined, literary texts were composed and script developed. Sciences, including mathematics and astronomy, emerged from research. The process of urbanisation began.

Early Civilisations

Civilisation is seen as an advanced, organised way of life. It instilled a way of life that could be considered as an adaptation to particular environmental and cultural contexts. When it became necessary for large numbers of people to live in close proximity, they brought in planning, organisation and specialisation. Settlements were planned and laid out, a polity emerged, society became organised and food production and craft

production were regulated. As civilisations began to take shape, huge buildings were built, the art of writing developed and science and technology contributed to the betterment of society. The surplus food production by the farmers in the fertile regions supported the livelihood of a large number of people. The people who did not cultivate crops engaged in artisanal activities such as making of bronze tools, ornaments and pottery.

Priests, scribes, nobles, rulers, administrators and craft persons became part of this civilisation. The Egyptian, Mesopotamian, the Chinese and the Indus were the important early civilisations. While these civilisations flourished in certain regions, people in other parts of the world lived as hunter-gatherers and pastoralists. The hunter-gatherers and pastoralists maintained their relationships with these civilisations through interactions. Their history is also equally important. During the time of these civilisations, South India witnessed the emergence of Neolithic agro-pastoral communities and Microlith form of life by hunter-gatherers.

Egyptian Civilisation: As one of the oldest civilisations, the Egyptian civilisation is known for its monumental architecture, agriculture, arts, sciences and crafts at a very early age.

Geography

Egypt lies in the north-eastern corner of the African continent. It is bounded by the Red Sea on the east and Mediterranean Sea in the north. Egypt is irrigated by the River Nile, which originates in Lake Victoria in the south and flows into the Mediterranean Sea in the north. Deserts are seen on both sides of the Nile River. The Egyptian civilisation depended solely upon the flow of Nile River, and hence Egypt was called as the Gift of Nile by the Greek historian Herodotus. The Nile also served as a means of transport.

The Nile valley is very rich and fertile as the river deposits fresh alluvium every year. This alluvium nurtured agriculture and helped to produce surplus of food grains, leading to the development of Egyptian civilisation. The dry regions on both the sides of the Nile, however remained deserts. The Egyptian kingdoms generally controlled the whole of Nile valley and when they became weak, the feudal lords and invaders dominated the region. Egypt was invaded by the Hyksos (around 1700 BCE), the Persians and the Greeks under the Alexander the Great, in 332 BCE, and later by the Romans. Ptolemies (Ptolemaic dynasty) ruled Egypt after Alexander's conquest. At the end of Ptolemaic rule, Roman influence became dominant. Cleopatra VII, Julius Caesar and Mark Antony dominated the political affairs of the pre-Roman Egypt. In 30 BCE, the Roman Empire annexed Egypt. After the conquest by the Romans, Egypt became intimately connected with the Sangam Age Tamilagam by the sea route.

The Hyksos were the rulers of the 15th dynasty of Egypt and they were probably from West Asia.

Persians are the people from the region of Persia, the ancient Iran.

Greek refers to the language and people of modern-day nation-state of Greece in Europe.

Rome refers to the ancient Roman Empire, which had as its capital the city of Rome in Italy.

Pharaohs, Society and Administration

The Egyptian king was known as the Pharaoh. The people treated pharaoh as a divine form. Under the pharaoh, there was a hierarchy of officials including viziers, the governors of provinces, local mayors and tax collectors. The entire social system was supported by the work and production of artisans including stone cutters, masons, potters, carpenters, coppersmiths and goldsmiths, peasants and workers. Land belonged to the king and was assigned to the officials. Slavery was not common, but captives were used as slaves.

Viziers were the high officials who administered territories under the direction of the Pharaohs.

The Egyptians believed in life after death. Therefore, they preserved the dead body. The art of preserving the dead body is known as mummification. Pyramids and tombs were built to preserve the body of pharaohs. The famous Egyptian pharaoh Tutankhamen's (who ruled from 1332 to 1322 BCE) tomb with a rich variety of offerings is located near Luxor in Egypt. The mask of his mummy made of gold and decorated with precious stones is an important artefact of the Egyptian civilisation.

Agriculture and Trade

The Egyptians cultivated wheat, barley, millets, vegetables, fruits, papyrus and cotton. Papyrus was used for making rope mats and sandals, and later for producing paper. They domesticated cattle, sheep, goat and pigs, and hunted wild animals. They had pets such as dogs, cats and monkeys. The Egyptians had trade relations with Lebanon, Crete, Phoenicia, Palestine and Syria. Gold, silver and ivory were imported, and they acquired the Lapis Lazuli, a precious stone of bluish colour, from Afghanistan.

Art and Architecture

The Egyptians excelled in art and architecture. Their writing is also a form of art. Numerous sculptures, painting and carvings attest to the artistic skills of Egyptians. The pyramids are massive monuments built as tombs of mourning to the Pharaohs. The great pyramids near Cairo are known as the Giza Pyramids. Pyramids are considered to be one of the wonders of the world, and they were built between 2575 and 2465 BCE. These monuments display the engineering, architectural and human resource management skills of the Egyptians.

The Great Sphinx of Giza is a massive limestone image of a lion with a human head. It is dated to the time of Pharaoh Khafre. It is one of the largest sculptures of the world and measures seventy three metres in length and twenty metres in height.

Religion

Egyptians practiced polytheism. Amon, Re, Seth, Thoth, Horus and Anubis are some of the gods of Egyptians. They worshipped many gods, but the Sun god, Re, was the predominant one. Later on, the Sun god was called Amon. Amon was considered to be the king of gods. Anubis is the god of death, related to embalming of the dead. He is considered the protector of the dead and depicted with a jackal head. Thoth was the god of writing and learning. He has the head of the bird, ibis.

Philosophy, Science and Literature

Egyptian civilisation excelled in science, literature, philosophy, astronomy, mathematics and the measurement system. Sundial, water clock and glass were developed by the Egyptians. They devised a solar calendar that consisted of twelve months of thirty days each, with five days added to the end of a year. This calendar was introduced as early as 4200 BCE. Literary works included treatises on mathematics, astronomy, medicine, magic and religion. The Egyptians also distinguished themselves in painting, art, sculpture, pottery, music and weaving.

Writing System

Egyptians are well known for their writing system. Their form of writing is known as hieroglyphic. Hieroglyphic was used in the inscriptions on seals and other objects. The heretic, an another form of writing, was used for common purposes. This form of writing used a pictogram-based system. It was developed around 3000 BCE and many texts and books were written using this script. The Egyptian writing system was deciphered by the French scholar, Francois Champollion (1822 CE). He used the Rosetta stone, a trilingual inscription, for deciphering the script. This inscription, which was written in Hieroglyphic, Demotic and Greek, was taken to France by Napoleon and from there it was taken to England. Now this inscription is on display in the British Museum London.

Characteristics and Contributions of the Egyptian Civilisation

- ✓ Egyptians developed a solar calendar system.
- ✓ The pyramids and their designs show their mathematical and surveying skills.
- ✓ Hieroglyphic writing system attests to their skills in handling symbols.
- ✓ Preservation of human body in the form of Mummies.
- ✓ They applied innovation in the use of science and technology.

Mesopotamian Civilisations

Mesopotamia refers to the region of Iraq and Kuwait in West Asia. Several kingdoms emerged around the city states of this region from the early third millennium BCE. The Sumerian, Akkadian, Babylonian and Assyrian civilisations flourished in Mesopotamia.

Geography

In the Greek language, meso means 'in between' and potamus means river. The Euphrates and Tigris flow here and drain into the Persian Gulf since this area is in between two rivers it is known as Mesopotamia. The northern part of Mesopotamia is known as Assyria, and the southern part is called Babylonia.

The Sumerians

The oldest civilisation in Mesopotamia belonged to the Sumerians. The Sumerians were the contemporaries of the people of Indus and Egyptian civilisations. These civilisations had trade connections. The Sumerians settled in the Lower Tigris valley around 5,000 to 4,000 BCE. They are believed to have originated from Central Asia. They founded many cities and Nippur was one of the important cities. They developed the cuneiform writing system. During the early phase of the Sumerian civilisation, kings acted as the chief priests. Their political domination came to an end by 2450 BCE.

The Akkadians

The Akkadians dominated Sumeria briefly from 2450 to 2250 BCE. The Sargon of Akkad was a famous ruler. Sargon and his descendants (ca. 2334–2218 BCE) ruled Mesopotamia for more than hundred years. In the cuneiform records of Akkadians, mention is made about the Indus civilisation. The documents of Sargon of Akkad (2334–2279 BCE) refer to the ships from Meluhha, Magan and Dilmun in the quay of Akkad.

The Babylonians

The Semitic people called Amorites from the Arabian desert moved into Mesopotamia. They were known as Babylonians as they established a kingdom and made Babylon its capital. By the time of the king Hammurabi, they extended their domination to the western part of Mesopotamia. The powerful states of Ur (2112 to 2004 BCE) and Babylon (1792 to 1712 BCE) controlled this region. The hero Gilgamesh referred to in the first ever epic on the earth may have been a king of Sumeria. Hammurabi, the sixth king of Babylon belonging to the first Amorite dynasty (1792–1750 BCE), attained fame as a great law-maker.

Assyrians

The Assyrian Empire was politically active in Mesopotamia around 1000 BCE. The Assyrian kings were the priests of Ashur, the chief deity of Assyria. The Assyrian government was controlled by the emperor and provincial governors were appointed by the emperor to administer provinces. Assur was the capital city of Assyria. Ashurbanipal was a popular ruler of the late or neo-Assyrian empire (ca. 668 to 627 BCE). He maintained a famous library of cuneiform records. Assyrians worshipped the deity of Lamassu for protection.

Society, State and Administration

The Sumerian civilisation had many city states. A typical Sumerian city was surrounded by cultivable lands. The fortified Sumerian cities had the temples called Ziggurats at its centre. The temple was controlled by the priests. Priests, scribes and nobles were part of the government. The rulers and priests occupied the top of the social hierarchy. The ruler performed the role of the chief priest. The scribes, merchants and artisans were placed next in the hierarchy. The scribes maintained the account of the taxes and the priests collected the taxes.

The temples acted as storehouses of the taxed commodities. Assemblies were created for the administration of the state. Cultivable lands were owned by the kings and the higher classes of people in the hierarchy. The peasants who remained attached to the temples in the earlier phase of Mesopotamian civilisation became free from that association in the later period. Not all people were allowed to live in the cities.

Food and Agriculture

Agriculture was the main occupation of the Mesopotamians. They had developed irrigation systems for ensuring the availability of water for agriculture and cultivated wheat, barley, onions, turnips, grapes, apples and dates. They domesticated cattle, sheep and goats. Fish was part of their diet.

Trade and Exchange

Trade was an important economic activity of the Mesopotamian society. Traders assisted in the exchange of goods procured from the potters and artisans. They traded with Syria and Asia Minor in the west, and in Iran and the Indus Valley civilisation in the east. They travelled in ships across the seas for trade. Their temples acted as banks and lent credit on their own account. The Mesopotamian documents have references to loan and repayment, with or without interest. Perhaps this is the first written evidence of charging an interest on borrowed money.

Cities and Town Planning

The Mesopotamian cities featured mud or baked brick walls with gates. Some people lived in reed huts outside the cities. The Ziggurats were at the city centre on a platform and appeared like steep pyramids, with staircases leading to the top. Around this temple were complexes of ceremonial courtyards, shrines, burial chambers for the priests and priestesses, ceremonial banquet halls, along with workshops, granaries, storehouses and administrative buildings.

Religion

Sumerian religion was polytheistic. They worshipped several gods and goddesses. Sumerians did not pay much attention to the life after death and so they did not build

pyramids like the Egyptians. The Sumerians prayed to Enlil, the god of sky and wind. The city of Nippur was centre of Enlil's worship. Ninlil was the Sumerian goddess of grain. The Babylonians worshipped Marduk, and Ashur was the supreme god of the Assyrians. Ishtar was goddess of love and fertility, Tiamat the god of the sea and chaos, and Sin, the moon god. The kings were seen as representatives of the gods on earth. The Mesopotamians developed a rich collection of myths and legends. The most famous of these is the epic of Gilgamesh, which is written in the cuneiform text. It contains a legend of the flood and has similarities with the account of Noah's Ark mentioned in the Bible and other myths in the Hindu puranas.

Hammurabi's Law Code

Hammurabi Code is an important legal document that specifies the laws related to various crimes. It has 282 provisions specifying cases related to family rights, trade, slavery, taxes and wages. It is carved on a stone, which portrays Hammurabi as receiving the code from the Sun god Shamash. It was a compilation of old laws based on retributive principles. The 'eye for eye' and 'tooth for tooth' form of justice is used in the Hammurabi Code.

Cuneiform: The Sumerian Writing System

Cuneiform is the Sumerian writing system. The shape of the letter is in the form of wedge and hence it is called cuneiform. Evolving around 3000 BCE, it is one of the earliest scripts of the world. The epic of Gilgamesh was written in this script. They used this script for commercial transactions and writing letters and stories. The clay tablets contain loads of information on the Sumerian civilisation.

Art

The Mesopotamian art included sculptures in stone and clay. A few paintings and sculptures from the Mesopotamian times have survived today. Mesopotamian sculptures portray animals, such as goats, rams, bulls and lions. Some mythological figures like lions and bulls with human head have also been found in their art. Massive sculptures were created at the time of Assyrian and Babylonian empires.

Science

The Mesopotamians excelled in mathematics, astronomy and medicine. They developed the concepts of multiplication, division and cubic equation. The numerical system based on 60 was conceived by them. They were the ones to formulate the 60-minute hour, the 24-hour day and the 360° circle. The Sumerian calendar had seven days in a week. Their numerical system had place values. They created the water clock and the lunar calendar based on the movement of the moon. They developed methods for measuring areas and solids. They also developed advanced weight and measurement systems.

They introduced the twelve month calendar system based on lunar months. Their ideas influenced Greek astronomy. They had developed a medicinal system as well. A text called the Diagnostic Handbook, dated to the 11th century BCE Babylon, lists symptoms and prognoses. This indicates their scientific understanding of herbs and minerals.

Contributions of the Mesopotamian Civilisation

- ✓ **The invention of the potter's wheel is credited to the Sumerians.**
- ✓ **They developed the calendar system of 360 days and divided a circle into 360 units.**
- ✓ **The cuneiform system of writing was their contribution.**
- ✓ **The Hammurabi's law code was another legacy of the Mesopotamians.**

The Chinese Civilisation

China has two major rivers. One is known as Huang He (Yellow River) and the other is called Yangtze River. The Yellow River is known as the Sorrow of China, since it changed its course and caused frequent floods. Evidence for the prehistoric Peking man (700,000 BP and 200,000 BP) and Yuanmou Man exists in China. Neolithic communities lived in China between 4500 and 3750 BCE. The Henan province in the Yellow and Yangtze river valley contain evidence for Neolithic villages. China had many city states and gradually these states became part of an empire.

Polity and Emperors

Shi Huangdi (Qin Shi Huang, which means the first emperor) founded the Qin (Chin) dynasty. The emperor had the title 'son of heaven'. He is considered to be the first emperor of China. The period between 221 and 206 BCE is known as the imperial era in China. He conquered other principalities in 221 BCE and remained the emperor till 212 BCE. He defeated the feudal lords and established a strong empire. He is credited with unifying China. Shi Huangdi destroyed the walled fortifications of different states and constructed the Great Wall of China to protect the empire from the invading nomadic people. He also built roads to integrate the empire.

The Han Empire (206-220 CE)

During this period, a written history of this empire was made available in China. The greatest of the Han emperors, Wu Ti (Han Wu the Great, 141 to 87 BCE), expanded the empire and built many public amenities, including irrigation tanks. He sent Zhang Qian as emissary to the West in 138 BCE and thereby paved the way for the opening of the Silk Road in 130 BCE to encourage trade activities. Because of the Silk Road and the resultant trade connections, China benefitted immensely during the rule of Emperor Zhang (75-88 CE). Chinese silk was much sought after by the Romans during the time of the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius in 166 CE. Some of the Chinese silk might have reached Rome through the ports of Tamilagam.

Philosophy and Literature

Chinese poets and philosophers such as Lao Tze, Confucius, Mencius, Mo Ti (Mot Zu) and Tao Chien (365-427 CE) contributed to the development of Chinese civilisation. Sun-Tzu, a military strategist, wrote the work called Art of War. The Spring and Autumn Annals is the official chronicle of the state at the time. The Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine is considered China's earliest written book on medicine. It was codified during the time of Han Dynasty.

- **Lao Tze (c. 604–521 BCE)** was the master archive keeper of Chou state. He was the founder of Taoism. He argued that desire is the root cause of all evils.
- **Confucius (551–497 BCE)** was famous among the Chinese philosophers. He was a political reformer. His name means Kung the master. He insisted on cultivation of one's own personal life. He said, "If personal life is cultivated, family life is regulated; and once family life is regulated, national life is regulated."
- **Mencius (372–289 BCE)** was another well-known Chinese philosopher. He travelled throughout China and offered his counsel to the rulers.

Chinese Script

Chinese developed a writing system from an early time. Initially it was a pictographic system and later it was converted into a symbol form.

Contribution of the Chinese Civilisation

- ✓ **Writing system was improved**
- ✓ **Invention of paper**
- ✓ **Opening of the Silk Road**
- ✓ **Invention of gun powder**

Indus Civilisation

The Indus civilisation, known also as the Harappan civilisation, covers an area of over 1.5 million square kilometres in India and Pakistan. Sutkagen-dor in the west on the Pakistan-Iran border; Shortugai (Afghanistan) in the north; Alamgirpur (Uttar Pradesh in India).in the east; and Daimabad (Maharashtra in India). in the south are the boundaries within which the Harappan culture has been found. Its main concentration is in the regions of Gujarat, Pakistan, Rajasthan and Haryana.

Planned Towns

Harappa (Punjab,Pakistan), Mohenjo-Daro (Sindh, Pakistan), Dholavira (Gujarat, India), Kalibangan (Rajasthan, India), Lothal (Gujarat, India), Banawali (Rajasthan,India., Rakhigarhi (Haryana, India) and Surkotada (Gujarat, India) are the major cities of the Indus civilisation. Fortification, well-planned streets and lanes and drainages can be observed in the Harappan towns. The Harappans used baked and unbaked bricks and

stones for construction. A civic authority perhaps controlled the planning of the towns. A few of the houses had more than one floor. The tank called the Great Bath at Mohenjo-Daro is an important structure, well paved with several adjacent rooms. Some unearthed structures have been identified as the granary. We do not know about the nature of the state or political organisation of the Harappans. But they must have had a political organisation at the level of an early form of state. A male image from Mohenjo-Daro has been identified as 'priest king', but we do not know about the accuracy of this interpretation. The structure identified as granary should be considered as archaeologists' interpretation.

Agriculture and Animal Domestication

The Harappans practiced agriculture. They cultivated wheat, barley and various types of millets. They adopted a double cropping system. Pastoralism was also known to them. They reared cattle, sheep and goats. They had knowledge of various animals including elephants but did not use horses. The Harappan cattle are called Zebu, and it is a large breed, often represented in their seals.

Pottery

The Harappans used painted pottery. Their potteries have a deep red slip and black paintings. The pottery has shapes like dish-on-stands, storage jars, perforated jars, goblets, S-shaped jars, plates, dishes, bowls and pots. The painted motifs, generally noticed on the pottery, depict pipal tree leaves, fish-scale designs, intersecting circles, zigzag lines, horizontal bands, and geometrical motifs, and floral and faunal patterns.

Metal, Tools and Weapons

The Harappans used chert blades, copper objects and bone and ivory tools. They did not possess knowledge about iron. The tools and equipment's such as points, chisels, needles, fishhooks, razors, weighing pans, mirror and antimony rods were made of bronze. The chisels made out of Rohri chert were used by the Harappans. Their weapons included arrows, spears, a chisel-bladed tool and axe. The bronze image of dancing girl from Mohenjo-Daro is suggestive of the use of lost-wax process.

Rohri chert refers to the chert raw material collected from Rohri in Pakistan. It was used by the Harappans for making blades. The Harappans used both stone and bronze tools.

Textiles and Ornaments

The Harappans used metal and stone adornments. They had knowledge of cotton and silk textiles. They made carnelian, copper and gold ornaments. Faience, stoneware and shell bangles were also used. Some of them had etched designs, and the Harappans exported them to the Mesopotamia.

Trade and Exchange

The Harappans had close trade links with the Mesopotamians. Harappan seals have been found in the West Asian sites, Oman, Bahrain, Iraq and Iran. The cuneiform inscriptions mention the trade contacts between Mesopotamia and the Harappans. The mention of 'Meluhha' in the cuneiform inscriptions is considered to refer to the Indus region. The Harappans developed a system of proper weights and measures. Since they engaged in commercial transactions, they needed standard measures. The cubical chert weights are found at the Harappan sites. The copper plates for weighing balances have also been found. The weights point to their knowledge of the binary system. The ratio of weighing is doubled as 1:2:4:8:16:32.

Seals, Sealing's and Scripts

The seals from various media such as steatite, copper, terracotta and ivory are found in the Harappan sites. They were probably used in the trade activities. The Harappan script is not yet deciphered. About 5,000 texts have been documented from the Harappan sites. Some scholars are of the view that the script is in Dravidian language.

Arts and Amusement

The terracotta figurines, paintings on the pottery and the bronze images from the Harappan sites suggest the artistic skills of the Harappans. 'Priestking' made of steatite and dancing girl made of bronze (both from Mohenjo-Daro) as well as stone sculptures from Harappa, Mohenjo-Daro and Dholavira are the important objects of art. Toy carts, rattles, wheels, tops, marbles and hop scotches made in terracotta suggest the amusement of the Harappan people.

Religion

The Indus people had a close relationship with nature. They worshipped pipal trees. Some of the terracotta figures resemble the mother goddess. Fire altars have been identified at Kalibangan. The Indus people buried the dead. Burials were done elaborately and evidence for cremation has also been found.

Original Inhabitants and their Culture

The authors of the Harappan civilisation are not known, since the script has not been deciphered. One school of thought argues that they spoke the Dravidian language. The archaeological evidence shows movement of the Harappans to the east and south after the decline of the Indus civilisation. It is probable that some of the Harappan people moved into different parts of India. Only the decipherment of the script can give a definite answer.

Indus civilisation had more than one group of people. Several groups including farmers, pastoralists and hunter-gatherers lived in the Indus region. The Indus region had

villages and large towns. The population was mixed. The periods of the civilisation has been divided into Early Harappan, starting around 3300 BCE and continuing to 2600 BCE and mature Harappan, are the last phase civilisations from 2600 to 1900 BCE. The later Harappan existed upto 1700 BCE.

Decline of Indus Culture

The Indus civilisation and its urban features started declining from about 1900 BCE. Changes in climate, decline of the trade with Mesopotamia and drying up or flooding of the river Indus, foreign invasion were some of the reasons attributed to the collapse of this civilisation and for the migration of people in the southern and eastern directions. It did not completely disappear. It continued as rural culture.

Indus Civilisation and Tamil Civilisation

The similarity of the graffiti found on the megalithic burial pots of South India with the Indus script and the identical place names of Tamil Nadu and Indus region of Pakistan are presented as arguments to establish the relationship between the Indus civilisation and Tamil culture. Researchers like Father Henry Heras, Asko Parpola and Iravatham Mahadevan find similarity between the Indus script and the Dravidian/ Tamil language.

Archaeological evidence points out that several groups of people have been living in Tamil Nadu and South India continuously from the Mesolithic period. A few groups from the Indus region might have migrated into southern India. Some of the ideas and technologies of the Indus civilisations had reached South India in the Iron Age. The carnelian beads, shell bangles and bronze mirrors found in the Megalithic/Early Historic sites of Tamil Nadu were first introduced by the people of the Indus civilisation. More research is needed to arrive at any definite conclusion in this matter.

The towns of ancient Tamilagam such as Arikamedu, Uraiyur and Keezhadi that flourished are part of the **second urbanisation** of India and these towns are much different from the Indus cities. These towns emerged approximately 1,200 years after the decline of the Indus civilisation.

4. Intellectual Awakening and Socio-Political Changes

Introduction

The discovery of iron marked the beginning of the second phase in the history of civilisations. The invention of smelting of iron transformed both production and warfare. Before iron, copper and its alloy, bronze, which were expensive, were employed in production. The copper or bronze edges became blunt quickly and so implements, whether weapons or ploughs, made of bronze could not be used effectively. Iron ore, in contrast, was available in abundance compared to copper or bronze. The effect of iron axe on agriculture was immense. The iron axe enabled cultivators to clear the jungles and the

iron plough was used to break the hardest soil. The Assyrian Empire, which made use of iron technology, was ascendant by the beginning of the seventh century BCE. Small kingdoms or city states emerged in China, Asia Minor (modern Turkey), Greece, Italy, Palestine, Lebanon and North Africa.

A new civilisation began to develop in northern India, with the revival of trade and urbanization during the sixth century BCE. In this period of major political and social changes in north India, Buddha and Mahavira were born. In the century following their death, Buddhism and Jainism took root as major religions in India. This meant that new religious orders were coming up with many followers, propagating new beliefs and philosophies. Similarly Zoroastrianism in Persia and Confucianism and Taoism in China became popular during this period.

Religion in the Sixth Century BCE

The new civilisations that emerged in the new Iron Age had certain common features. They were characterised by the proliferation of new crafts, growth of long-distance trade, building of cities and towns, rise of universalistic religions and evolution of a code of conduct. Sixth century BCE was, therefore, a period of exceptional development in all spheres of life such as material, cultural and intellectual. About this time, we find that a number of prominent men, great thinkers and founders of new religions lived, making it a period of great historical importance. Philosophical and religious thinkers such as Confucius in China, Zoroaster in Iran and Mahavira and Buddha in India gained popularity in sixth century BCE.

Confucius

In the sixth century BCE, two great thinkers were born in China: Confucius and Lao-Tse. They laid down the systems of morals and social behaviour for individuals and communities. But after their death, temples were built in their memory and the philosophy they taught was developed into a religion. Known as Confucianism and Taoism respectively, their books were held in great reverence in China. Confucianism exerted a big influence on not only the political class of China but also on the common people.

Confucius (551–478 BCE)

Confucius was born in the Shantung province of China in 551 BCE. He studied history, poetry, philosophy and music. He is the author of five important works:

1. The Book of Records, which is chiefly ethical, providing guidelines for the regulation of human society;
2. The Book of Odes, illustrating the sound principles of morality in songs;
3. The Book of Changes dealing with metaphysics;
4. The Spring and Autumn Annals, a code of political morality; and
5. The Book of History narrating the events and legends of the early religions of China.

Five Cardinal Principles of Confucius' Ethics

1. Humaneness
2. Righteousness
3. Propriety;
4. Wisdom
5. Trustworthiness

Confucius said that wisdom grows from the family, and that the foundation of society is the disciplined individual in an orderly family. The superior man, according to him, is not merely intelligent or scholarly, but his character should be exemplary. The superior man of Confucius possesses three virtues: intelligence, courage and goodwill. Though Confucius insisted on children obeying parents and wife her husband, he also clearly proposed that "when the command is wrong a son should resist his father and a minister should resist the prince." When asked about government, he said that there are three requisites for it: "That there should be sufficiency of food, sufficiency of military equipment and confidence of the people in their ruler."

The philosophy of Confucius gave the Chinese people an awareness about their political rights. It also clearly listed the government's duty towards the people. Confucius felt that the government should work with an ideal. In matters of national life, Confucius felt that the people in the nation are the actual and proper source of political sovereignty. He advised that the ruler must appoint persons of character in the government to govern the people impartially. Confucianism is often characterised as a system of social and ethical philosophy rather than as a religion.

Taoism

Lao-Tse, the greatest of the pre-Confucian philosophers, was 53 years older than Confucius. Lao-Tse was born in 604 BCE. Disgusted with the intrigues of politicians and the prevailing corruption of his time, he left China to live in a peaceful abode. Lao-Tse wrote a book in two parts, running into 5,000 words. He then disappeared from the place and no one knew where he died. His book Tao Teh Ching is a guide to the conduct of life.

Teachings of Lao-Tse (Taoism)

- ✓ The cause of human unhappiness in the world is human selfishness. Selfishness creates unlimited human desires, which can never be satisfied.
- ✓ Innature, all the things act in a natural way. The law of human conduct must correspond with nature.
- ✓ Humans live a life under the regulation of someone. This is because they have acquired knowledge and have not remained innocent. On the basis of their acquired knowledge, they have built up an urban civilisation and have made themselves unhappy.

Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrianism is one of the oldest of the revealed world religions. It remained as the state religion of three great Iranian empires, which flourished from the 6th century BCE and dominated much of the Near and Middle East. Zoroaster of Persia is the founder of Zoroastrianism. Zoroaster was pained to find his people worshipping primitive deities. He revolted against it and proclaimed to the world that there is one god, Ahura Mazda (the Lord of Light). The holy book of Zoroastrians is Zend Avesta. It is a collection of sacred literature of different epochs, containing religious hymns, invocations, prayers, confessions, laws, myths and sacred reminiscences. The doctrines and rituals of the Zoroastrians have much similarity to those of the Vedas.

The language of Avesta bears similarity to that of the Indo-Aryan. Linguists have established a close relationship between Indo-Aryan and the languages of West Asia, in particular Iran. The old Iranian language dates back to the second millennium BCE. Later, it incorporated languages of Dravidians and those of aboriginals of the Indian sub-continent. According to the historian Romila Thapar, the old Iranian and Indo-Aryan speakers originally belonged to a single group and later split up because of dissensions.

Teachings

Zoroaster taught that the great object of religion, state or society is the cultivation of morality. The highest religious conception is purity of thought, word and deed. He asserted that Ahura Mazda has seven qualities: (1) light; (2) good mind; (3) right; (4) dominion; (5) piety; (6) well-being; and (7) immortality. Ahura Mazda is omniscient (knows everything), omnipotent (all powerful) and omnipresent (is everywhere). In Zoroastrianism, sacrifice and image worship were discarded. Fire was worshipped as a symbol of the deity and considered the highest form of worship. Charity was made an essential part of religion, and service to the poor was particularly emphasised. Human virtues did not mean only prayer, meditation, sacrifices and rituals. It meant much more, such as fighting evil, making efforts for good and assisting the activity of Ahura Mazda.

This religion ceased to exist in its place of origin, as in the wake of Muslim conquest of Persia (Iran), many of the Zoroastrian families fled to different countries, including India between the eighth century and tenth century CE. With their dwindling numbers and in the face of coercive measures adopted by the Arabs to push through their new faith, as well as the incidents of destruction of fire temples and killing of priests, Zoroastrianism went into a decline. The Parsis, who came to India from Persia first as merchants and later in the wake of persecution, brought Zoroastrianism with them and they have been practicing it ever since.

Impact of Iron Technology in India

In the Gangetic valley, people learnt to produce crops more than that was required for subsistence. So, another section of people took up some professional crafts as their livelihood. Like the farmers, these craftsmen also had to rely on a group of people who collected raw materials and distributed the craft products. Early urbanisation happened in

two ways. One was as a result of some villages specialising in black smithy, pottery, carpentry, cloth weaving and the like. The other was on account of the congregation of specialised craftsmen in villages close to where the raw materials were available and where markets were present. Such a concentration enabled villages to evolve into towns and exchange centres. Vaisali, Shravasti, Rajagriha, Kausambi and Kashi were some significant commercial centres of the Gangetic plain.

Religion: Post-Rig Vedic

Three more Vedas – Yajur, Sama and Atharva – were composed after the Rig Veda. Manuals of rituals called Brahmanas, specifying rhyming words to be sung, and two commentaries on certain Rig Vedic hymns called Aranyakas, containing knowledge to be learnt secretly in the forest, and the Upanishads, were compiled in the upper Gangetic plain during 1000–600 BCE.

Post-Vedic

During the post-Vedic period, the Rig Vedic gods such as Varuna, Indra, Agni, Surya and Usha lost their importance. New gods like Siva, Vishnu and Brahma appeared on the religious firmament. Aryans developed the ideas of tapas (virtuous living) and brahmacharya (celibacy). Rites and rituals insisted on by Brahman priests overshadowed the true spirit of the religion. The sacrificial cult, supported by the wealthy and the elite, practised in accordance with the formulae prescribed in Brahmanas, were opposed by Buddha and Mahavira, who revolted against the existing practices and proposed their ethical teachings.

Jainism and Buddhism

In the Gangetic plain, iron plough agriculture required the use of bullocks. But the indiscriminate killing of cattle for Vedic rituals and sacrifices caused resentment. The founders of Jainism and Buddhism did not prescribe killing as a religious rite. They secured their livelihood mostly by alms. Celibacy and abstinence from holding property made the new teachers much more acceptable than the Brahman priests. The people's resentment about the expensive and elaborate Vedic rituals, animal sacrifice and the desire for wealth eventually took them towards Jainism and Buddhism.

Mahavira and Buddha lived a life of purity and exemplified simplicity and self-denial. They lived in the times of Bimbisara and Ajatashatru, the famous kings of Magadha. The commercial development of the northern cities like Kaushambi, Kushinagara, Benaras, Vaishali and Rajgir added importance to the Vaishyas who turned to Buddhism and Jainism in their eagerness to improve their social status.

Jainism

Mahavira: Birth and Life:

Vardhamana Mahavira was born in 599 BCE at Kundagrama near Vaishali. His mother was Trishala, a Lichchavi princess. He spent his early life as a prince and was married to a princess named Yashoda. The couple had a daughter. At the age of thirty, he left his home and became an ascetic. For over twelve years, Mahavira wandered from place to place, subjecting himself to severe penance and self-mortification. In the thirteenth year of his asceticism, he acquired the highest knowledge and came to be known as Jaina (the conqueror) and Mahavira (great hero). Jains believe that Mahavira came in a long line of Tirthankaras and he was the twenty fourth and the last of them. Rishabha was the first Tirthankara and Parshvanath the penultimate or the twenty third. Mahavira travelled extensively as a preacher in the kingdoms of Magadha, Videha and Anga. Magadha rulers Bimbisara and Ajatashatru were influenced by his teachings. Thousands of people became his followers. After 30 years of preaching, Mahavira died at Pawapuri in 527 BCE at the age of seventy two.

Teachings of Mahavira

The three principles of Jainism, also known as Tri-ratnas, are the following:

1. **Right faith** : Belief in the teachings and wisdom of Mahavira.
2. **Right knowledge** : Acceptance of the theory that there is no God and that the world existed without a creator.
3. **Right action** : It refers to the Mahavira's observance of the five great vows: (a) ahimsa, (b) honesty, (c) kindness, (d) truthfulness and (e) not coveting or desiring things belonging to others.

Spread of Jainism

In order to spread his new faith, Mahavira founded monasteries and engaged munis (Jaina monks) who led a very austere life. In North India, this new faith was patronised by rulers such as Dhana Nanda, Chadragupta Maurya and Kharavela. There was a notable following for Jainism in Karnataka and western India during the 4th century BCE. Jainism encouraged the public spirit among all who embraced it. Varna system practiced by Brahmans was challenged. People were spared from the costly and elaborate rituals and sacrifices. Mahavira believed that all objects, both animate and inanimate, have souls and various degrees of consciousness. They possess life and feel pain when they are injured.

Split in Jainism

In course of time, Jainism split into two branches, namely the Digambaras (sky-clad) and the Svetambaras (white-clad). The Digambaras were the orthodox followers of Mahavira. The Digambara rejected clothes altogether. Svetambara wore a white dress from head to toe.

Decline of Jainism

The lack of royal patronage, its severity factionalism and spread of Buddhism led to the decline of Jainism in India.

Buddhism

Gautama Buddha: Birth and Life:

Gautama Buddha was the son of Suddhodana, the chief of a Kshatriya clan of the Sakyas of Kapilavastu in present-day Nepal. His given name was Siddhartha. As he belonged to the Sakya clan, he was also known as 'Sakya Muni'. He was born in 567 BCE in Lumbini Garden, near Kapilavastu. His mother, Mayadevi (Mahamaya), died after a few days of his birth and he was brought up by his step - towards worldly affairs, his father got him married at the age of sixteen to a princess called Yashodhara. He led a happy married life for some time and had a son by name Rahula.

One evening, while Siddhartha was passing through the city, he came across an old man who had been abandoned by his relatives, a sick man crying with pain and a dead body surrounded by weeping relatives. Siddhartha was deeply moved by these sights. He also saw an ascetic who had renounced the world and found no sign of sorrows. These 'Four Great Sights' prompted him to renounce the world and search for the cause of suffering. In 537 BCE, he left his palace and went into the forest in search of truth. In the course of his wanderings, he sat under a peepal tree for several days until he attained enlightenment. The place where he attained enlightenment, the Mahabodhi temple, still exists in Bodh Gaya (Bihar). After his enlightenment, Buddha decided to impart his knowledge to the people. He went to Varanasi and gave his first sermon at Saranath. He preached in the kingdoms of Magadha and Kosala. A large number of people became his followers including his own family. After forty five years of preaching, he breathed his last in 487 BCE at Kushinagar (near Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh) at the age of eighty.

Teachings of Buddhism

- i. **Four Great Truths:** 1. there is suffering and sorrow in this world. 2. The cause of human suffering is desire and craving. 3. This pain or sorrow can be removed by suppressing desire and craving. 4. This is to be achieved by leading a disciplined life or by following what Buddha called the 'Noble Eight-fold Path'.
- ii. **Attainment of Nirvana:** According to Buddha, a person should aim at attainment of nirvana or the highest bliss, and it could be achieved by any person by leading a virtuous life and by following the Noble Eight-fold Path.
- iii. **The Noble Eight-fold Path:** Buddha preached a new path to attain the purest state of mind: **1. right views, 2. right aspirations, 3. right speech, 4. right action, 5. right livelihood, 6. right effort, 7. right mindfulness and 8. right contemplations or meditation.** Buddha preached that he who practices the eight-fold path can attain the highest and purest state of mind.

- iv. **Middle Path and Salvation:** Buddha advised his followers neither to indulge in material pleasures and luxuries nor to practice austere penances. He said that by following the 'Middle Path', people could attain moksha or salvation, that is freedom from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth.
- v. **Ahimsa or Non-violence** was another fundamental belief of Buddha. He condemned bloody sacrifices in the yajnas. According to him, love for all living beings was an essential disposition for a good practitioner of Buddhism.
- vi. **Emphasis on Morality:** Buddha advised his followers to do good deeds and lead a moral and disciplined life. He appealed to them to refrain from lying, from killing living beings, from taking intoxicants, from stealing and from leading a sensual life.

Spread of Buddhism

Buddha, in order to carry his message to different parts of India, established the Buddhist sangha or the Holy Order of Monks. The bikshus (monks) and the bikshunis (nuns) were enlisted for spreading the faith and they were required to lead a life of purity and poverty. Buddhism spread to Central Asia, Sri Lanka, Tibet, Southeast Asia, as well as the eastern countries of China, Mongolia, Korea, Japan and Vietnam.

The Split in Buddhism

During the reign of Kanishka, the Buddhist monk Nagarjuna initiated reforms in the way Buddhism was being followed. As a result, Buddhism was split into two as Hinayana and Mahayana.

- i. The *Hinayana* (Lesser Vehicle) was the original creed preached by Buddha. The followers of this form regarded Buddha as their guru and did not worship him as God. They denied idol worship and continued with the people's language, Pali.
- ii. In *Mahayana* (Greater Vehicle), Buddha was worshipped as God and Bodhisattava as his previous avatar. The followers made images and statues of Buddha and Bodhisattava and offered prayers, and recited hymns (mantras) in their praise. Later, they wrote their religious books in Sanskrit. This form of Buddhism was patronised by Kanishka.

Decline of Buddhism

Buddhism declined in India due to the following reasons:

1. Buddhism was popular in the beginning because it was preached in people's language (Pali). The later texts were written in Sanskrit, which was difficult for the common people to understand.

2. The split in Buddhism into Hinayana and Mahayana was another vital reason. Image worship in Mahayana made no difference between Hinduism and Buddhism.
3. Buddhism lost its royal patronage during the reign of Guptas.
4. Further, the invasions of Huns and Turks almost wiped out Buddhism.

Other Heterodox Sect

Ajivika

The period that produced Buddhism and Jainism also witnessed the birth of a sect known as Ajivika. Its founder was Gosala (Maskariputra Gosala), a friend of Mahavira. For some time, they were together. Later, Gosala moved away and founded the Ajivika sect. As an atheistic sect, Ajivikas rejected the karma theory, which postulated that the condition of men is determined by their past actions. Gosala argued that acts of charity and piety can, in no way, influence this finality. Ajivikas had a small presence in southern India. Under the Cholas, a special tax was levied on them. Three Tamil texts, the Manimekalai of Buddhists, the Nilakesi of Jains and the Sivajnanasiddhiyar of Saivites, contain the outlines of Ajivika doctrine.

Political Organisation: Pre-Mauryan

The spread of Aryans in the east led to the establishment of new settlements in the Gangetic region. One important result of introduction of iron tools was the easy removal of dense forest cover from the banks of the Ganges. Sedentary agriculture had resulted in a permanent settlement of a clan in a particular area, thereby giving it a geographical identity. Retaining their acquired land required political organisation. The emergence of gana-sangha, chiefdom, has to be seen in this context. The clusters where particular clansmen were dominant came to be known as janapadas.

Gana-sanghas

There were two distinct forms of government at the time of Mahavira and Buddha: monarchical kingdom and clan oligarchies or Gana-sanghas. The Gana-sanghas provided a polity alternative to the kingdoms. Vedic rituals and the rules of varna were not followed. The Gana-sanghas consisted of either a single clan, such as the Shakyas, Koliyas and Mallas, or a confederacy of clans, such as the Vrijjis and the Vrishnis (a confederacy located at Vaisali). The Gana-sanghas had only two strata: the Kshatriya rajakula, ruling families, and the dasa-karmakara, the slaves and labourers. The dasa-karmakaras had no representation in the Assembly. The presence of various other popular religious cults in Gana-sanghas is in contrast to the socio-cultural system prevailing in kingdoms.

In Gana-sanghas, the head of the clan presided over the Assembly, comprising the heads of families. The clan's head was not chosen following heredity. This Assembly discussed the matters relating to the affairs of the Gana-sanghas and if a unanimous decision was not possible, it was put to vote. There were advisers to the head of the clan.

In later days, elaborate judicial procedures also evolved. The income of the Gana-sanghas was drawn from agriculture and cattle rearing, which was confined only to the Punjab and the doab, and to some extent from trade. For the chieftains of the north-west, the income primarily came from trade. Land was owned in common by the clan. They were cultivated by dasa-karmakara. There was only domestic slavery. The use of slaves in production was absent.

Rise of Kingdoms

The 6th century BCE witnessed the establishment of kingdoms, oligarchies and chiefdoms as well as the emergence of towns. From the largest of the chiefdoms emerged kingdoms. Many tribes of Rig Vedic period such as Bharatas, Pasis, Tritsus and Turvasas passed into oblivion and new tribes such as the Kurus and Panchalas rose into prominence. Sixteen mahajanapadas are listed in the Buddhist texts. Linguistic and cultural commonality prevailed in the janapadas, whereas in the mahajanapadas, different social and cultural groups lived. With the emergence of kingdoms, the struggle for supremacy among different states occurred frequently. Sacrifices such as Rajasuya and Asvamedha were performed to signify the imperial sway of monarchs over their rivals. The Rig Vedic title of 'Rajan' was replaced by impressive titles such as Samrat, Ekkrat, Virat or Bhoja.

Growth of Royal Power

The king enjoyed absolute power. The sabha of the Rig Vedic period ceased to exist. The king sought the aid and support of the samiti on matters like war, peace and fiscal policies. However, in spite of the existence of the assemblies, the power of the king kept increasing. The Satapatha Brahmana describes the king as infallible and immune from all punishments. The growth of royal power was reflected in the enlarged administrative structure. The king was now assisted by a group of officers such as Bhugadugha (collector of taxes), Suta (charioteer), the Aksharapa (superintendent of gambling), Kshattri (chamberlin), Gorikartana (king's companion in the chase), Palogola (courtier), Takshan (carpenter) and Rathakara (chariotmaker). In addition, there were the ecclesiastical and military officials like the Purohita (chaplain), the Senani (army general) and the Gramani (leader of the village). In the later Vedic period, Gramani, who acted both a civil and military officer, was the link through which the royal authority was enforced in the village. The king administered justice and occasionally delegated his judicial power to Adhyakshas (royal officials). In the villages, Gramyavadin (village judge) and Sabha (court) decided the cases. Punishments for crimes were severe.

The Rise of Magadha Kingdom

The polity followed in kingdoms was different from that of gana-sanghas. Kingdoms operated with a centralised government. Political power was concentrated in the ruling family, which had become a dynasty, with succession becoming hereditary. There were advisory bodies such as parishad (ministers) and sabha (advisory council). The sabha collected the revenue and remitted it to the treasury in the capital of the kingdom,

from where it was redistributed for the public expenses, such as maintenance of army and salaries to state officials. Of the kingdoms mentioned in the literature of the period, Kashi, Kosala and Magadha are considered to be powerful. The only republic that rivalled these kingdoms was the Vrijjis, whose capital was Vaisali. In the struggle for control for the Gangetic Plain, which had strategic and economic advantages, the Magadha kingdom emerged victorious.

Bimbisara was the first important king of Magadha. Through matrimonial alliances with the high-status Lichchavi clan of Vaishali and the ruling family in Kosala, Bimbisara went on to conquer Anga (in West Bengal now), thereby gaining access to the Ganges delta. Bimbisara succeeded in establishing a comprehensive structure of administration. Village was the basic unit of his administrative system. Apart from villages (gramas), there were fields and pastures as well as wasteland and the forests (aranya, khetra and vana). Each village was brought under a gramani (headman), who was responsible for collecting taxes and remitting them to the state treasury. Officers appointed to measure the land under cultivation and assess the value of crop were to assist the gramani in his task. Land tax (bali) was the main source of revenue to the kingdom and the share of the produce (bhaga) was determined proportionate to the extent of land cultivated.

The term shadbhagin - one who is entitled to a share of one-sixth - referred to the king. Thus, a peasant economy came into being at Magadha. Ajatashatru, the son of Bimbisara, is said to have murdered his father and ascended the throne in 493 BCE. He continued his father's policy of expansion through military conquests. The capital city of Magadha was Rajagriha, which was surrounded by five hills, providing protection to the kingdom from external threats. Ajatashatru strengthened the Rajagriha fort and also built another fort at Pataligrama on the Ganges. It served as the exchange centre for the local produce and later became the Mauryan capital of Pataliputra. Ajatashatru died in 461 BCE and he was succeeded by five kings. All of them followed the example of Ajatashatru by ascending the throne by killing their parent. Fed up with such recurring instances, people of Magadha appointed the last ruler's viceroy Shishunaga as the king.

After ruling nearly for half a century, the Shishunaga dynasty lost the kingdom to Mahapadma Nanda who founded the Nanda dynasty. The Nandas were the first of non-kshatriya dynasties to rule in northern India. Nandas extended the Magadhan Empire still further. Nandas gave importance to irrigation, with the canals they built touching even the Kalinga (Odisha) kingdom. During their period, officials were regularly appointed to collect the taxes which became a part of the administrative system. Nandas' attempt to build an imperial structure was cut short by Chandragupta Maurya who founded the Mauryan kingdom in 321 BCE.

North-West India and Alexander

Historically, the north-west part of India remained a region under varying suzerainties such as north India, Afghanistan and Persia (Iran). During 6th century BCE, it was part of the Achaemenid empire founded by Cyrus II of Persia. The Indian region had since been providing mercenaries for the Persian armies in their fight against the Greeks.

Takshashila or Taxila, as the Greeks called it, was a prominent city in the northwest. It turned out to be a centre for intermixing of Iranian and Indian culture and learning. The ascendancy of Achaemenid empire in north-west ended with the conquest of that empire by Alexander of Macedonia. While marching on the territories of the Achaemenid Emperor Darius III. Alexander, the Greek Emperor entered the Indian provinces in 326 BCE. His campaign in northern India lasted for two years.

The king of Jhelum region, Porus, fought him heroically in the battle of the Hydaspes (Jhelum). Though Porus lost the battle, he was restored to the throne only to be killed by one of Alexander's generals after Alexander's death. Alexander had left his governors in India. But his sudden death at the age of thirty three prompted his governors to leave north-west India to seek their fortune in West Asia. Alexander was a great general and a world conqueror. After his death, his great empire fell to pieces. Ptolemy took Egypt with its capital Alexandria, while Seleucus had Persia and Mesopotamia and part of Asia Minor as his share. Alexander's death, however, cleared the way for the founding of a great empire, the Mauryan empire in India.

Mauryan Empire: State and Society

Mauryan Kings

Vishnugupta, who was later known as Chanakya or Kautilya, fell out with the Nanda king and vowed to dethrone him. Chandragupta perhaps inspired by Alexander of Macedonia, was raising an army and looking for opportunities to establish a kingdom of his own. On hearing the news of Alexander's death, Chandragupta stirred up the people and with their help drove away the Greek garrison that Alexander had left at Taxila. Then he and his allies marched to Pataliputra and defeated the Nanda king in 321 BCE. Thus began the reign of the Mauryan dynasty. During Chandragupta's reign, Seleucus, the general of Alexander, who had control over countries from Asia Minor to India, crossed the Indus only to be defeated by Chandragupta. Seleucus's envoy, Megasthenes, is said to have remained in India and his account titled Indica is a useful record about Mauryan polity and society.

After gaining control over the Gangetic plain, Chandragupta turned his attention to north-west to take advantage of the void created by Alexander's demise. These areas comprising the present-day Afghanistan, Baluchistan and Makran surrendered without any resistance. Thereupon Chandragupta moved to Central India. According to Jaina tradition, towards the end of his life, Chandragupta, who had by now become an ardent follower of Jainism, abdicated his throne in favour of his son Bindusara. Bindusara, during his rule, succeeded in extending the Mauryan Empire upto Karnataka. At the time of his death, a large part of the subcontinent had come under Mauryan suzerainty.

Ashoka succeeded Bindusara in 268 BCE. Desirous of bringing the remaining parts of South India into his empire, Ashoka waged a war against Kalinga in the eighth year of his reign. The people of Kalinga fought bravely, but they were defeated after a large-scale slaughter. This war and slaughter affected Ashoka so much that he decided to give up war.

Ashoka became an ardent Buddhist after meeting the Buddhist monk Upagupta and propounded his Dharma. The only true conquest, he proclaimed, is the conquest of self and the conquest of men's hearts by the dhamma (Pali) or dharma (Sanskrit). He issued edicts, which were carved out in the rock.

In one of his Kalinga edicts, he tells us his horror and sorrow over the deaths which the war and conquest caused. In yet another edict, he makes it known that Ashoka would not tolerate any longer the death or captivity of even hundredth or thousandth part of the number killed and made captive in Kalinga. Ashoka's passion for protecting life extended to animals as well. Hospitals were constructed for them and animal sacrifice was forbidden. Ashoka sent his son Mahendra and his daughter Sanghamitra to Ceylon to spread his message of Dharma there. Ashoka died after ruling for 38 years.

Mauryan Administration

The Mauryan state in its early years undertook some measures that were positive for the development of society. The state raised taxes to finance a huge standing army and a vast bureaucracy. The Mauryans had evolved a very efficient system of governance. The king, as the head of the administration, was assisted by a council of ministers. There were mahamatriyas, who functioned as secretaries to the ministers. The person in charge of revenue and expenditure was samaharta. The empire was divided into four provinces and these provinces were administered by governors, who were usually princes or from the royal family.

The district was under a sthanika, while gopas were in charge of five to ten villages. The urban administration was under a nagaraka. Six committees with five members each carried on their duties under him. They were to take care of the foreigners, to register the birth and death of the citizens, to look after trade and commerce, to supervise different manufactures and to collect excise duties and custom duties respectively. Like the city or town administration, the military department was also managed by a board of 30 members, split into six committees, with five members in each of them. At the village level, there was gramani, whose responsibility was maintaining the boundaries, keeping the records of land and a census of population and livestock. In order to keep a vigil over the entire administration, including the conduct of officers, a well-knit spy system was evolved and put in place. Justice was administered through well-established courts in all major towns and cities. Punishment for crimes was severe.

The state used the surplus appropriated for the development of the rural economy by founding new settlements, granting land and encouraging the people to settle as farmers. It also organised irrigation projects and controlled the distribution of water. There was state control of agriculture, mining, industry and trade. The state discouraged the emergence of private property in land and banned its sale. The Mauryan state gave further boost to urban development. It secured land trade routes to Iran and Mesopotamia, as well as to the kingdoms of northern China. Arthashastra refers to Kasi (Benares), Vanga (Bengal), Kamarupa (Assam) and Madurai as textile centres. The distribution of black polished ware of northern India as far as South India is indicative of the extent of trade

during the Mauryan rule. Trade contributed to urbanisation in a big way. New cities such as Kaushambi, Bhita, Vaishali and Rajagriha had sprung up in the doab region.

Educational Centres

Monasteries and temples served the purpose of imparting education. Nalanda was a great monastery built by the Magadha Empire. Educational centres offered Buddhist and Vedic literature, logic, grammar, medicine, philosophy and astronomy. Even the science of war was taught. Nalanda became the most renowned seat of learning in course of time. It was supported by the revenues of 100 villages. No fees were charged to the students and they were provided free board and lodging.

11th History Volume - 1

Lesson 1

Early India: From the Beginning to the Indus Civilisation

Introduction

India experienced an early development of cultures and civilisations. Since the Old Stone Age, several groups in India had migrated multiple times and made cultural adaptations to diverse eco-zones. Each group evolved its own culture responding to their living experiences in each place, which eventually led to pluralistic beliefs and systems. From a life of foraging through nomadic pastoralism, the settlers in Indus region reached a matured stage of living in the Bronze Age. This chapter focuses on the history of India from the first settlement of humans in the Stone Age, up to the decline of the Indus Civilisation. It dwells on the Neolithic cultures as well.

Sources

Archaeological sources form the bedrock of information for us to understand this long span of time in Indian history. They include archaeological sites, geological sediments, animal bones and fossils, stone tools, bone tools, rock paintings and artefacts. There is no written evidence for this period. Although the Harappans used a script, it is yet to be deciphered.

The faunal (animal) and floral (plant) sources are important for understanding the relationship of the Stone Age people with their environment. Floral evidence found in the form of charred seeds, pollens and phytoliths (plant stones) helps us to gain knowledge of farming practiced by Stone Age people.

The human genes also constitute an important source for understanding prehistoric migrations. The mitochondrial DNA (mt-DNA) studies provide information on

pre-historic migrations. Scientists are trying to extract ancient DNA from the bones of the pre-historic era to understand human dispersals.

Language is another important source of history. Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Austro-Asiatic and Tibeto-Burman language families have flourished in India. These languages developed and evolved during the various phases of migrations in Indian history.

Pre-historic India

The period before the development of script is called the pre-historic times. It is also referred to as the Stone Age. When we talk about the Stone Age, we include the entire South Asia, the region covering India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh, as a whole.

Human ancestors are likely to have first evolved in Africa and later migrated to different parts of the world. The earliest human ancestor species to migrate out of Africa was the *Homo erectus*. Till the end of the 20th century, the pre-history of India was considered to have begun within the time span of one million years (MYR) ago. But, recent investigations have produced evidence for the presence of human ancestors in India between two million and one million years ago.

Generally, the period before the invention of script is broadly divided into Stone Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age. Hence, the names of materials that they used (for example, painted greyware culture or Iron Age culture) or the geographical region (Indus) or the first site to be identified (for example, Acheulian or Harappan) are used to name the cultures.

The earliest age in history is called Old Stone Age or Palaeolithic. This period is divided into

- **Lower Palaeolithic culture**
- **Middle Palaeolithic culture**
- **Upper Palaeolithic culture.**

The period after the Old Stone Age (Palaeolithic) is called the Mesolithic Age. The period that followed the Mesolithic is called the Neolithic Age. This is the age in which animal and plant domestication developed, leading to food production. The classification of these cultures is done on the basis of stratigraphic, chronological and lithic (stone tool) evidence.

Lower Palaeolithic Culture.

The earliest lithic artefacts come from different parts of the Indian subcontinent. During the Lower Palaeolithic cultural phase, human ancestor species of *Homo erectus* is believed to have lived in India. The

Wild and Domestic

Wild plants and animals grow naturally and independently. When they are domesticated, their lifestyle and physical characteristics (such as self-propagation) change. Consequently, the seeds of domestic plants become smaller in size. In the case of domesticated animals, they lose their ferociousness.

First Palaeolithic tools were identified at the site of Pallavaram near Chennai by Robert Bruce Foote in 1863. He found many prehistoric sites when he extensively surveyed different parts of South India. Since then, numerous Palaeolithic sites have been identified and excavated all over India.

Lithic Tools

The study of pre-history mainly depends upon lithic tools. Pre-historic sites are identifiable based on the presence of stone tools. Human ancestors made large stone blocks and pebbles and chipped tools out of them, using another strong stone. Handaxes, cleavers, choppers and the like were designed in this way by flaking off the chips.

The tools show well thought-out design and physical symmetry, and convey high quality cognitive (perception) skills and capabilities of pre-historic humans. They used the tools for hunting, butchering and skinning the animals, breaking the bones for bone marrow and to recover tubers and plant foods, and for processing food.

The industries of Palaeolithic cultures are divided into the Early, Middle and Late Acheulian Industries. The early Acheulian tools include polyhedrons, spheroids, handaxes, cleavers and flake tools.

The Acheulian tradition is absent in the Western Ghats, coastal areas and north-eastern India. Heavy rainfall is attributed to its absence. Uncongenial conditions and lack of raw materials might have prevented

Acheulian and Sohanian

Based on research, two independent cultural traditions of hand axe (Acheulian) and pebble-flake (Sohanian) industries were confirmed in India. Acheulian industry mainly had hand axes and cleavers. The Sohan industry is considered to have used only chopper and chopping tools. The Sohan industry gets its name from the Sohan river valley of Pakistan. These two cultural traditions are not considered distinct any longer. Recent studies argue that there was no independent Sohan tradition as Acheulian tools are found in the Sohan industry as well.

the occupation of these areas. Perhaps there was no necessity for the pre-historic people to move into these areas. These sites are found more in Central India and in south-eastern part of India (near Chennai). These areas receive high rainfall and are therefore endowed with thick green cover and rich resources.

Distribution

Lower Palaeolithic tools are found in most parts of India, except in a few regions of the Ganges valley, southern Tamil Nadu and in the hilly areas of the Western Ghats. Athirampakkam, Pallavaram and Gudiyam near Chennai, Hunsgi valley and Isampur in Karnataka, and Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh are some important Palaeolithic sites where the Acheulian tools are found.

Chronology

Recent research places the beginning of lower Palaeolithic around two million years ago. This culture continued up to 60,000 years ago.

Hominin and Animal Fossils

Unlike Africa, evidence of hominin [immediate ancestor of Homo Sapiens] fossil is rare in India. There is a report of a fossil fragment discovered by Robert Bruce Foote from Athirampakkam. Its whereabouts are not known now. The only well-known hominin fossil of India was found at Hathnora near Hoshangabad in Madhya Pradesh. The cranium is named Narmada human. A partly preserved hominid skull cap was found in a basal conglomerate deposit in 1982. It is considered to represent the Archaic Homo sapiens. It is the only existing fossil find of human ancestors in India.

Animal fossils are useful to understand the palaeo-environmental context in which people lived. In the Narmada valley, animal fossils of *Elephas namadicus* (giant tusked pre-historic elephant), *Stegodon ganessa* (a giant pre-historic elephant), *Bos namadicus* (wild cattle) and *Equus namadicus* (extinct great horse like animal) have been recovered.

Teeth of *Equus*, evidence of water buffalo and nilgai as well as 17 animal hoof prints have been uncovered at Athirampakkam. They suggest an open, wet landscape near the Chennai region in the pre-historic period.

Equus refers to the genus of animals including horses, asses and zebras.

Way of Life

The people of Lower Palaeolithic culture hunted animals and gathered roots, nuts and fruits. They fed on the flesh and bones of animals killed by predators. They lived in open air, river valleys, caves and rock shelters, as seen from evidence in Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh and Gudiyam near Chennai. The pre-historic human ancestors, who belonged to the species of *Homo erectus*, did not have a complex language culture like us, the *Homo sapiens*. They may have expressed a few sounds or words and used a sign language. They were intelligent enough to select stones as raw material and used the hammer stones to carefully flake the rocks and design tools.

Middle Palaeolithic Culture

After about 4,00,000 years BP (Before Present), changes took place in the lithic technology and the species of human ancestors diverged. The species of *Homo erectus* existed in this period. Some of the Middle Palaeolithic tools are attributed to behavioural modernity. Anatomically modern humans are said to have emerged around 3,00,000 years ago. In India, the Middle Palaeolithic phase was first identified by H.D. Sankalia on the Pravara River at Nevasa. After this discovery, several sites of this period have been identified. Recently, the Middle Palaeolithic of Athirampakkam is dated to be around 3.85-1.72 lakh years BP. Indian Middle Palaeolithics probably maybe as old as the African Middle Palaeolithic culture.

Industries and Tool Types

The tool types of the Middle Palaeolithic period are hand axes, cleavers, choppers, chopping tools, scrapers, borers and points, projectile points or shouldered points, and knives on flakes. Flake industry was predominant in the Middle Palaeolithic period and tools such as scrapers, points and borers were made. Scrapers were used for wood and skin working.

Chronology

The Middle Palaeolithic culture in India is dated between 3,85,000 and 40,000 BCE. While the African Middle Stone Age is associated with the *Homo sapiens*, it is associated with the Neanderthals in Europe. No hominin fossil bones of this species have been found in India.

Distribution

The Middle Palaeolithic sites are found in Narmada, Godavari, Krishna, Yamuna and other river valleys.

Ways of Life and Main Characteristics

The Middle Palaeolithic people occupied open-air, cave and rock shelter sites. They were hunter-gatherers. The main features of the Indian Middle Palaeolithic period include the following:

- **The tools became smaller.**
- **The decrease in the use of hand axes in relation to other tools.**
- **Use of core preparation techniques in stone tool production.**
- **Use of chert, jasper, chalcedony and quartz as raw materials.**

Upper Palaeolithic Culture

The cultural phase that followed the Middle Palaeolithic is called Upper Palaeolithic. This period is marked by innovation in tool

An Upper Palaeolithic Shrine An interesting find is of a possible shrine, indicated by a block of sandstone surrounded by a rubble circle, similar to the contemporary shrines. Found at Baghor in Uttar Pradesh, it is the earliest known evidence of a shrine in India.

technology and increased cognitive capability of humans. The modern humans, who first evolved in sub-Saharan Africa, sometime before 300,000 years ago, migrated to and occupied various parts of Asia around 60,000 years ago. They probably replaced the earlier populations. There is a possibility that these new groups were responsible for the Upper Palaeolithic culture of India.

Lithic Tools and Industries

The lithic industry of the Upper Palaeolithic period is based on blade and bone tool technologies. Microliths (tiny stone tools) were introduced in the Upper Palaeolithic Period and these tools were made using different varieties of silica-rich raw materials. Bone tools and faunal remains have been found in Kurnool caves in Andhra Pradesh.

Chronology

The Upper Palaeolithic culture is represented in India at several sites. A time bracket of c.40,000 years to 10,000 years BP is suggested for this period.

Distribution

The people of this period used caves as well as the open air space for living. Meralbhavi in Karnataka, Kurnool caves and Godavarikhani in Telangana, Baghor I and Baghor III of Son Valley in Madhya Pradesh and Patne in Maharashtra are some of the Upper Palaeolithic sites of India. Sri Lanka has evidence of microliths and hominin fossils. Incised ostrich eggshell, and shell and stone beads have been found at Jwalapuram in Andhra Pradesh, Patne in Maharashtra and Batadomba-Lena and Fa Hien Cave in Sri Lanka.

Ostrich Egg Shells

Evidence of ostrich has been found in some pre-historic sites of India. The egg shell of this bird had been used as beads and those from Patne have been dated to 25,000 BP. They are found in Bhimbetka and Patne.

Ways of Life and Main Characteristics

Evidence of art in the Upper Palaeolithic period appears in the form of paintings. Beads and ornaments of this period have also been found. The lithic blade industry advanced in this period. Some of the green colour paintings of Bhimbetka are dated to Upper Palaeolithic period based on style and archaeological evidence.

Mesolithic Culture

Mesolithic sites are found in most parts of India. They occur in all eco-zones from the coasts to the hills: sand dunes, rock shelters, deltaic regions, lake areas, forested territories, hilly and mountainous areas, rocky terrain and coastal environments.

Mesolithic sites in India are found in Paisra (Bihar), Langhnaj (Gujarat), Baghor II, Chopani Mando, Sarai Nahar Rai, Mahadaha and Damdama (all in Uttar Pradesh), Sankanakallu and Kibbanahalli (Karnataka). Rock shelter sites are found in Lekhakhia, Baghai Khor, Adamgarh and Bhimbetka.

Coastal sites are seen at Mumbai, Teri sites of Thoothukudy in Tamil Nadu and Vishakapatnam, which have microlithic evidence.

Teri

A coastal landscape caused by sand dunes. These soils may have originated in the Pleistocene epoch of the Quaternary period.

Climate

After the Ice Age, with the advent of global warming, human groups became highly mobile and began to occupy various ecozones. The monsoon pattern had already emerged. Some regions witnessed high rainfall. At Didwana in western Rajasthan, fresh water lakes were known to exist between 10,000 and 3500 BP. The animal bones from this period suggest a dry deciduous type of forest during the Mesolithic period.

Chronology

The date of the Mesolithic culture varies in different parts of the world. This culture is assigned to pre-agricultural times in certain areas. In Levant (Eastern Mediterranean), they are dated between 20,000 and 9500 BCE. In India, Mesolithic cultures appeared around 10,000 BCE. In certain parts of India including Kerala and Tamil Nadu, it continued up to 1000 BCE, till the beginning of the Iron Age. In Sri Lanka, the microliths appeared about 28,500 years BP.

Economy

Hunting wild animals and gathering plant food and fishing were people's main occupation during this age. Agriculture was not practised in the early stages. At the end of the Mesolithic period, humans domesticated animals and paved the way for the Neolithic way of life. The rock paintings of Central India depict hunting, trapping, fishing and plant food collection.

The faunal evidence from this period shows that people belonging to this period hunted cattle, gaur, buffalo, barasingha, porcupines, sambar, chital, gazelle, hogdeer, nilgai, jackal, turtle, fish, wild hare, lizard fox and monitor lizard. Bones

of rhinoceros and elephant have also been found. They used spears, bow and arrow and traps. The paintings of Bhimbetka show that various animals were hunted and for this men and women went together.

The people used fire and perhaps roasted food. Domestic animal bones of cattle, sheep, goats, pig and dog have been found at Kanewal, Loteswar and Ratanpur, and from Adamgarh and Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh sites. Camel bones have been found from Kanewal.

Camps and Houses

The Mesolithic people were highly mobile. They moved in search of animals and plant foods. They made temporary huts and also used caves and rock shelters. Circular huts with postholes and burnt clay lumps bearing reed impressions have been found. Many of caves and shelters feature paintings. Circular huts are seen in rock paintings. The temporary huts were built using perishable materials. Traces of oval and circular huts and possible wattle daub are found in Chopani Mando and Damdama in Uttar Pradesh and Bagor and Tilwara in Rajasthan.

Burials

The Mesolithic people buried the dead, which suggests their beliefs and human relationships. Human skeletons have been found in Mahadaha, Damdama and Sarai Nahar Rai in Uttar Pradesh. At Mahadaha, a man and a woman were buried together. One burial had an ivory pendant as the grave good.

Art

Art is an integral part of human existence. While evidence of art is found in Europe in large volume, they are found only at a few sites in India. A chert stone used as a core had geometric engravings from Chandravati in Rajasthan, bone objects from Bhimbetka and human teeth engraved with geometric design. Rock paintings are found in the rock shelters of Madhya Pradesh and Central India. They show people hunting, trapping animals and fishing and dancing. Bhimbetka near Bhopal, Raisen and Pachmarhi in Madhya Pradesh and South Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh are some of the sites. Haematite, an iron-rich stone with traces of rubbing, has been found. These people might have decorated themselves with flowers and leaves.

Hunter and gatherers of a Historical Period

The hunter and gatherers using microlithic tools continued to live in the later period, even after the development of Neolithic, Iron Age and historical periods. Perhaps they became part of the marginalised communities, when the people who lived in the cities acquired more wealth. Some of the people who live in the forests even today in some remote areas and also in the Andaman region could be considered as those people who prefer to live by hunting and gathering. Many such groups lived in the 19th and 20th century, as recorded in the Edgar Thurston's Castes and Tribes of Southern India. Describing them

as primitive is incorrect. They should be considered as people who preferred to live by hunting and gathering. When the Indus Civilisation was in its peak, Tamil Nadu had microlithic hunter-gatherers. The Andhra-Karnataka region had the agro-pastoralists of the Neolithic period.

Characteristics of the Mesolithic Cultures

- **The Mesolithic people lived in semipermanent and temporary settlements.**
- **They occupied caves and open grounds.**
- **They buried the dead.**
- **They had artistic skill.**
- **They were spread over wider geographical regions.**
- **Cultural continuity is noticed in many parts of India from this period.**
- **Their microlithic tools enabled them to hunt smaller animals and birds.**

Early Neolithic Cultures and the Beginning of Agriculture

The Neolithic period marked the beginning of agriculture and animal domestication. It is an important phase in Indian history. Early evidence of Neolithic culture is found in the Fertile Crescent region of Egypt and Mesopotamia, the Indus region, the Ganges valley of India and also in China. Between 10,000 BCE to 5000 BCE, agriculture emerged in these regions, which led to several cultural developments.

The introduction of domestication of animals and plants resulted in the production and supply of a large quantity of grains and animal food. The fertile soil deposited by the rivers enhanced the growth of agriculture, generating a surplus of grains. Surplus food production played a major role in the rise of early civilisations. Large villages came to exist and pottery developed. Permanent residences were built. Hence, the cultural developments of this period are called Neolithic revolution.

The Neolithic cultures of India are divided into various regional cultures and they flourished in different time periods. In the north-western part of India and Pakistan, it began at a very early date. In north-eastern India, Neolithic cultures appeared at a very late date, around the early historic time.

The Neolithic Culture of North-Western India

The Neolithic culture of north-western India is the earliest to have evidence of plant and animal domestication in India. Mehrgarh, Rana Ghundai, Sarai Kala and Jalilpur are some of the Neolithic sites. These sites are now situated in Pakistan.

The site of Mehrgarh has produced evidence of early Neolithic times, dating to c. 7000 BCE. Wheat and barley were cultivated and sheep, goat and cattle were domesticated.

This culture preceded the Indus Civilisation. The first cultural period (I) of the Neolithic age at Mehrgarh dates from c. 7000 to 5500 BCE. The people belonging to this

Early Dentistry in the Neolithic Mehrgarh

The human ancestors had knowledge of medicinal herbs and were capable of taking care of health for survival from the pre-historic times. As their ways of life changed, new diseases appeared and they had to find remedies. From the Neolithic period, people began to eat ground grain and cooked food, which caused dental and other health problems. The earliest evidence for drilling a human tooth (of a living person) has been found at Mehrgarh. It is seen as a prelude to dentistry.

They did not use pottery, but cultivated six-row barley, emmer and einkorn wheat, jujube, ilanthai and dates, and also domesticated sheep, goat and cattle. They were semi-nomadic, pastoral groups. They built their houses with mud and buried the dead. They used ornaments of sea shell, limestone, turquoise, lapis lazuli and sandstone.

The period II at Mehrgarh dates from c. 5500 to 4800 BCE and the period III from 4800 to 3500 BCE. There is evidence for pottery during these periods. Terracotta figurines and glazed faience beads have been found. Evidence for ornaments on women has been uncovered. Long distance trade was practiced, as revealed by Lapis Lazuli, which is available only in Badakshan. The town was abandoned after the rise of mature phase of the Indus Civilisation.

The Neolithic Culture of Kashmir

Neolithic culture in Kashmir region was contemporary to the Harappan civilisation. Burzahom, an important site of this culture, provides evidence for the Megalithic and Early Historic Periods. In this place, people lived in pit houses (about four metres in depth) in order to escape the cold weather. The houses were oval in shape, wide at the

bottom and narrow on the top. Postholes used for constructing a thatched structure were found around the pit houses. The Neolithic period of Kashmir had domestic sheep, goat and cultivated plants. The

Neolithic people of Burzahom traded with the people of the Harappan Civilisation. They used handmade pottery. They used tools such as stone axes, chisels, adzes, pounders, maceheads, points and picks. Awls were used for stitching skins into clothes to beat the weather. Scrapers were used for working the skins.

Two phases of Neolithic culture have been identified. They are termed as ceramic and non-ceramic phases. The non-ceramic phase did not have evidence of ceramics. The ceramic phase shows evidence for the existence of pottery. In the ceramic phase, people built mud houses. They used copper arrowheads. They also used black ware pottery, beads of agate and carnelian and painted pottery. A burial at this site produced wild dog bone and antler horn. An engraving of a hunting scene is depicted on a stone here with dog and sun.

Seeds of wheat, barley, common pea and lentil have been recovered from the excavations. People domesticated animals include cattle, sheep, goat, pig, dog and fowl. Bones of wild animals such as red deer, Kashmir stag, ibex, bear and wolf suggest that they hunted animals.

There is evidence of menhirs and the use of redware pottery and metal objects in the megalithic culture. The use of lentils suggests that contacts had been established with Central Asia. These people had interactions with Harappan Civilisation.

The Neolithic Culture of Ganges Valley and Central India

In the Ganges Valley, and in Central India Neolithic sites are found at Lehuradeva, and Chopani Munda. The site of Lehuradeva has produced early evidence of rice cultivation dated to c. 6500 BCE.

These sites are characterised by cord-marked pottery. Koldiwa, Chirand, Senuwar and Mahagara are important Neolithic sites in this region. These sites also have evidence of pottery and plant and animal domestication.

Evidence for the cultivation of hulled and six-rowed barley, several types of wheat, rice, pea, green gram, and gram/chickenpea, mustard, flax/linseed and jackfruit have been found at the sites of Central India. Sheep, goat and cattle bones have been found besides bones of wild animals. The Neolithic people used a type of pottery with cord impression on the surfaces. They used microliths, bone and antler tools and terracotta objects. These sites perhaps flourished till about the middle of the second millennium BCE.

The Neolithic Culture of Eastern India

The Neolithic sites are found at many sites in Bihar and West Bengal. Birbhanpur and Chirand are some of the prominent Neolithic sites in this region along with Kuchai, Golbaisan and Sankarjang. These cultures show similarities with the Neolithic complexes of east and Southeast Asia. Pointed butt celts, chisel and shouldered axes have been found in the region from the Neolithic era.

Neolithic Culture of South India

The Neolithic cultures of South India have been found mainly in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka and the north-western part of Tamil Nadu. These sites have ash mounds in the centre with settlements around them. More than 200 Neolithic sites have been identified as part of the Neolithic complex. These sites are found near the granite hills with water sources. These sites have been spotted in the river valleys of Godavari, Krishna, Pennaru, Tungabhadra and Kaveri. Sanganakallu, Tekkalakota, Brahmagiri, Maski, Piklihal, Watkal, Hemmige and Hallur in Karnataka, Nagarjunakonda, Ramapuram and Veerapuram in Andhra Pradesh and Paiyyampalli in Tamil Nadu are the major Neolithic sites in South India.

Some early Neolithic sites have ash mounds. Utnur and Palvay in Andhra Pradesh and Kodekal, Kupgal and Budihal in Karnataka feature ash mound sites. Soft ash and decomposed cow dung layers are also found at this site. The evidence of habitation in the form of houses and burials are found around the ash mounds.

Neolithic Culture of North-eastern India

In north-eastern India, Neolithic culture appears at to a very late period. The Neolithic cultures of north-eastern India generally date from 2500-1500 BCE or even later. Shouldered axes and splayed celts have been found at the sites in Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. Daojali Hading and Sarutaru are the Neolithic sites in the Assam region. This region bears evidence for shifting cultivation. Cultivation of yams and taro, building stone and wooden memorials for the dead, and the presence of Austro-Asiatic languages are the marked features of this region, which shows cultural similarities with South-east Asia.

The Indus Civilisation

The Indus Civilisation represents the first phase of urbanisation in India. While the civilisation was in its peak, several cultures, namely, Mesolithic and Neolithic cultures that we discussed earlier in the chapter, prevailed in other parts of India.

Nomenclature, Phases and Chronology.

The civilisation that appeared in the northwestern part of India and Pakistan in third millennium BCE is collectively called the Indus Civilisation. Since Harappa was the first site to be identified in this civilisation, it is also known as Harappan Civilisation. This civilisation did not appear all of a sudden. The beginnings of the Neolithic villages in this region go back to about 7000 BCE at the Neolithic site of Mehrgarh. Harappan culture is divided into various phases:

Early Harappan 3000-2600 BCE

Mature Harappan 2600-1900 BCE

Late Harappan 1900-1700 BCE

The urban phase was prevalent in the mature Harappan period and began to decline afterwards.

The Indus valley site of Harappa was first visited by Charles Mason in 1826, and Amri by Alexander Burnes in 1831. The site of Harappa was destroyed for laying the railway line from Lahore to Multan. The seal from this site reached Alexander Cunningham, the first surveyor of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). Alexander Cunningham visited the site in 1853, 1856 and 1875. But the importance of the site and the associated civilisation were not realised until Sir John Marshall took over as the Director General of ASI and initiated research at the site.

Sir John Marshal played an important role in the development of archaeology in India. Later in the 1940s, Mortimer Wheeler excavated the Harappan sites. After the partition of the Indian subcontinent, many of the Harappan sites went to Pakistan and thus archaeologists were keen to trace the Harappan sites on the Indian side. Kalibangan, Lothal, Rakhi Garhi and Dholavira are the Indian sites that have been since excavated. The explorations and excavations conducted after the 1950s have helped to understand the Harappan Civilisation and its nature.

Geographical Area and the Settlements

The Indus Civilisation and the contemporary cultures covered nearly 1.5 million sq. km area in India and Pakistan. The settlements of Sutkagen-dor in the west on the Pakistan-Iran border; Shortugai (Afghanistan) in the north; Alamgirpur (Uttar Pradesh, India) in the east and Daimabad (Maharashtra, India) in the south are the boundaries of this civilisation. Its core area was in the regions of Pakistan, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Haryana.

The Early Beginnings

The Indus region (Mehrgarh) is one of the areas of the world where agriculture and animal domestication began very early. We do not know if there is any continuity between the Neolithic cultures of the Indus region and the later urban civilisation. The early Harappan phase saw the development of villages and towns in the entire region. In the Mature Harappan phase, urban centres developed.

Planned Towns

Harappa (Punjab, Pakistan), Mohenjo-Daro (Sindh, Pakistan), Dholavira, Lothal, and Surkotada (Gujarat, India), Kalibangan and Anawali (Rajasthan, India), and Rakhigarhi (Haryana, India) are the major cities in the Harappan period. Fortification, well-planned streets and lanes and drainages are noticed in the Harappan towns. A civic authority perhaps controlled the planning of the towns. The Harappans used baked and unbaked bricks, and stones for construction. The towns had a grid pattern and drainages were systematically built. The houses were built of mud bricks while the drainages were built with burnt bricks. Houses had more than one floor.

The site of Mohenjo-Daro had a planned town, built on a platform. It has two distinct areas. One is identified as a citadel and another as the lower town. The houses had bathrooms paved with burnt bricks and proper drains. Some houses had stairs indicating the existence of an upper floor. The houses had multiple rooms. Many of the houses had a central courtyard with rooms all around.

The citadel area had important residential structures that were either used by the public or select residents.

In Mohenjo-Daro, a building has been identified as a warehouse.

The Great Bath is a tank situated within a courtyard. The corridors were present on all four sides and stairs are seen on the northern and southern sides. It was well paved with several adjacent rooms. Some structures are identified as granary. The bricks were laid watertight with gypsum mortar. It had drainage. It is associated with a ritual bath.

The structures identified as granary or Great Bath should be seen as archaeologists' interpretations.

Subsistence and Economic Production

Agriculture was an important source of subsistence for the Harappans. The Harappans cultivated diverse crops such as wheat, barley, lentil, chickpea, sesame and various millets. Agricultural surplus was an important stimulus for a number of developments. They adopted a double cropping system.

The Harappans used ploughs. They perhaps ploughed the land and then sowed the seeds. Ploughed fields have been found at Kalibangan. They used both canal and well irrigation.

Archaeobotanists study ancient agriculture, and human and environmental relationships.

Animal Domestication

Pastoralism was also practised by the Harappans. They domesticated sheep, goat and fowl. They had knowledge of various other animals including buffalo, pig and elephant. But horse was not known to them. The Harappan cattle are called Zebu. It is a large breed, often represented in their seals. They also ate fish and birds. Evidence of boar, deer and gharial has been found at the Harappan sites.

Craft Production

Craft production was an important part of the Harappan economy. Bead and ornament making, shell bangle making and metal working were the major crafts. They made beads and ornaments out of carnelian, jasper, crystal, and steatite, metals like copper, bronze and gold and shell, faience and terracotta or burnt clay. The beads were made in innumerable designs and decorations. They were exported to Mesopotamia and the evidence for such exported artefacts have been found from the excavations in Mesopotamian sites.

Certain Harappan sites specialised in the production of certain craft materials. The following table is present

Material	Site or Source
Shell	Nageshwar and Balakot

Lapis lazuli	Shortughai
Carnelian	Lothal
Steatite	South Rajasthan
Copper	Rajasthan and Oman

Pottery

The Harappans used diverse varieties of pottery for daily use. They use well-fired pottery. Their potteries have a deep red slip and black paintings. The pottery are shaped like dish-on-stands, storage jars, perforated jars, goblets, S-shaped jars, plates, dishes, bowls and pots. The painted motifs, generally noticed on the pottery, are pipal leaves, fish-scale design, intersecting circles, zigzag lines, horizontal bands and geometrical motifs with floral and faunal patterns. The Harappan pottery is well baked and fine in decorations.

Metal, Tools and Weapons

The Harappan civilisation belongs to the Bronze Age civilisation and Harappans knew how to make copper bronze tools. Although they produced bronze implements, they needed various kinds of tools for agriculture and craft production. The Harappans used chert blades, copper objects, and bone and ivory tools. The tools of points, chisels, needles, fishhooks, razors, weighing pans, mirror and antimony rods were made of copper. The chert blades made out of Rohri chert was used by the Harappans. Their weapons include arrowheads, spearhead, celt and axe. They did not have the knowledge of iron.

Rohri chert

The chert, a fine grained sedimentary rock, was found in the region of Rohri in Pakistan. It was used by the Harappans for making stone blades and tools.

Textiles and Ornaments

The Harappans wore clothes and used metal and stone ornaments. They had knowledge of cotton and silk. The image identified as a priest is depicted wearing a shawl-like cloth with flower decorations.

The terracotta images of women are shown wearing different types of ornaments. The image of dancing girl found at Mohenjo-Daro is shown wearing bangles in large numbers up to the upper arm. They made carnelian, copper and gold ornaments. Some of them had etched designs and they exported them to the Mesopotamian world. Faience, stoneware and shell bangles were also used. The ornaments produced were either sold or exchanged as part of the trade activities.

Trade and Exchange

One of the sources of Harappan economy was trade and exchange activities. Harappans had close trade contacts with the Mesopotamians and also with various cultures of India. The Harappan seals and materials have been found in the Sumerian sites in Oman, Bahrain, and Iraq and Iran. The cuneiform inscriptions mention the trade contacts between Mesopotamia and Harappans. The mention of "Meluhha" in the cuneiform inscriptions refers to the Indus region. A Harappan jar has been found in Oman. Harappan seals, weights, dice and beads are found in Mesopotamia. Carnelian, lapis lazuli, copper, gold and varieties of wood were exported to Mesopotamia. Harappans also interacted with various regions of India and acquired raw materials and processed them.

Weights and Measures

Harappans had developed proper weights and measures. Since they were involved in commercial transactions, they needed standard measures. Cubical chert weights have been unearthed from Harappan sites. The weights exhibit a binary system. The ratio of weight is doubled as 1:2:4:8:16:32. The small weight measure of 16th ratio weighs 13.63 grams. They also used a measuring scale in which one inch was around 1.75 cm. Weights made of chert were cubical. They used binary numbering system (1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, etc.). They might have been used for weighing jewellery and metal.

Seals, Sealings and Scripts

The seals from various media such as steatite, copper, terracotta and ivory are frequently found in the Harappan sites. The Harappan script has not yet been convincingly deciphered. About 5,000 texts have been documented from the Harappan sites. The longest text has about twenty six signs. Some scholars are of the view that it is Dravidian. Seals might have been used as an identity marker on the materials that were transported. They might have indicated the ownership.

Arts and Amusement

The terracotta figurines, the paintings on the pottery, and the bronze images from the Harappan sites suggest the artistic nature of the Harappans. "Priestking" of steatite, dancing girl of copper (both from Mohenjo-Daro), and stone sculptures from Harappa, Mohenjo-Daro and Dholavira are the important objects of art. Toy carts, rattles, wheels, tops, marbles and hopscotches exhibit the amusement of the Harappan people.

Faith and Belief System

The Indus people worshipped nature. They worshipped the pipal tree. Some of the terracotta figures appear to be mother goddess. Fire altars have been identified at Kalibangan. They buried the dead. Burials were made elaborately and evidence of cremation is also reported. The Harappan burials have pottery, ornaments, jewellery, copper mirrors and beads. These suggest their belief in an afterlife.

Polity

Uniformity in pottery, seals, weights and bricks reveals the existence of a polity. Labour mobilisation may also suggest the existence of a political system. Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro might have had a city-state like polity. The uniformity in the cultural materials and measurement units point to a central authority during the Harappan times.

Authorship and the Making of Indian Culture

One school of thought argues that the authors of Harappan Civilisation were speakers of the Dravidian languages. The archaeological evidence shows movement of the Harappans to the east and the south after the decline of their civilisation. Some of the Harappan people could have moved into different parts of India. However, only the decipherment of the script would give us a definite answer.

Contemporary Cultures of the Indus Civilisation

Several groups including pastoral people, farmers and hunter-gatherers lived in the Indus region. The Indus region had villages and large towns. The population of that time was mixed. Innumerable communities of hunters-gatherers, pastoral people and farmers, from Kanyakumari to Kashmir and Gujarat to Arunachal Pradesh could have existed during this period. Their history is also equally important, as cultural and ecological knowledge of all these groups contributed to Indian culture.

While the Indus Civilisation was flourishing in the north-western part of India, several cultures were developing in different parts of India. In the southern part of the subcontinent, Kerala and Sri Lanka were given to hunting and gathering. The Harappans who had knowledge of watercrafts might have had connections and interactions with South India, but no clear archaeological evidence on this is available. The northern part of South India, i.e. the Karnataka and Andhra region, had Neolithic cultures, engaged in pastoralism and plough agriculture. Similarly, the Chalcolithic cultures were prevalent in Deccan and western India, while Neolithic cultures permeated northern India including Kashmir, Ganges valley and central and eastern India. Thus India was a cultural mosaic during the time of the Harappans.

Decline

The Indus Valley Civilisation declined from about 1900 BCE. Changes in climate, decline of the trade with the Mesopotamia, and the drying of the river and water resources due to continuous drought are some of the reasons attributed by historians for the decline. Invasions, floods and shifting of the river course are also cited as reasons for the ruin of Indus civilisation. In course of time, the people shifted to the southern and eastern directions from the Indus region.

Indus Civilisation and Tamil Civilisation

- The Indus Civilisation represents the first urbanisation of Indian history. The origin and authorship of the Indus Civilisation are keenly debated historical questions. The Indus script has not yet been conclusively deciphered and hence the authorship is not certain. The graffiti found on the megalithic burial pots of South India and the place names presented are cited to establish the relationship between Indus and Tamil cultures.
- The archaeological evidence points to several groups of people living in Tamil Nadu and South India continuously from the Mesolithic period. One cannot rule out the migration of a few groups from the Indus region. More research is necessary before arriving at any definite conclusion.
- The towns of ancient Tamizhagam such as Arikamedu, Keezhadi and Uraiyur that flourished are part of the second urbanisation of India and these towns are quite different from the Indus cities.

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Unit - 2

Early India: The Chalcolithic, Megalithic, Iron Age and Vedic Cultures

Introduction

- A conventional view of the timeline of Indian history would simply shift its themes from the Indus Civilization through the Vedic Culture to the Age of the Mahajanapadas. But, if we consider the time after the decline of the Indus Civilization, covering from c. 2000 BCE to 600 BCE and the space stretching from Kashmir to Kanyakumari and Arunachal Pradesh to Gujarat, it is clear that diverse cultures and people who spoke different languages lived in ancient India. This chapter focuses on the Late Harappan, Chalcolithic, Iron Age and Vedic Cultures and the Aryans, except for the Indus Civilization which was covered in the previous lesson. Essentially, it deals with the history of India from about 3000 BCE, up to the emergence of the Mahajanapadas, with a focus on social and economic changes.

Sources

- The history of India, after the decline of the Indus Civilization around 1900 BCE, is characterised by the presence of nomadic microlith-using hunter-gatherers and pastoral, semi-sedentary and sedentary agro-pastoral communities of the Neolithic, Chalcolithic, Iron Ages and Vedic Cultures. We have two main types of sources for this long span of time (c. 3000 to 600 BCE) in Indian history. One source is the archaeological sites and material culture including pottery, plant remains and metal

objects. The other is Vedic literature. There are no written documents for this period, since the Vedic texts were transmitted orally. At this point of time, people had not developed a script in India, except the symbols of the Indus script which are yet to be deciphered. Correlating the archaeological cultures and the information related to various groups of people from the Vedic texts is not an easy task. There are various theories on the identity of the originators of the Indus Civilization, and various other archaeological cultures. We are dealing with diverse cultures and communities with different modes of living in this space-time unit.

- The Early Vedic culture is correlated with some of the Chalcolithic cultures of India, while the Later Vedic culture is correlated with the Painted Grey Ware Culture of the Iron Age in North India.
- Unlike the age of Indus Civilization, when the urban sites and farming cultures were in a limited area, we notice cultural, agricultural and technological expansion and developments in many parts of India in this period accompanied by the growth of craft production and population. A strong cultural foundation was laid across India during this period, which finally culminated in the Early Historic period. The extensive foundations for the village settlements of India were laid during this period.

Literature of the Vedic Age

- The Vedas (*Vid* = to know, *Vidya*) are one of the earliest known texts to have been composed in India. The language of the Vedas is described as Vedic Sanskrit. The Vedas are four: *Rig* is the oldest, and the others being *Yajur*, *Sama* and *Atharva*. The Vedic texts were memorized and orally transmitted by Brahmins from generation to generation. They were written down in the later period, after the introduction of writing. The earliest known written manuscripts of the Vedas date to the 10-11th century CE. They contain information about the polity, society, religion and philosophy, and hence they are a source for writing history
- The main collections of Vedic hymns are called *samhitas*. The *Rig Vedic samhita* is the earliest text. The *Rig Veda* is dated to between 1500 and 1000 BCE. The *Rig Veda* contains 10 books. Books 2 to 7 are the earliest and the Books 1, 8, 9 and 10 are assigned to a later period. *Samhitas* are ritualistic texts, and they explain the social and religious importance of rituals. Each *samhita* has added texts called *brahmanas*, which have commentaries on the hymns and rituals. Each *brahmana* has an *aranyaka* (forest text) and an *upanishad*. The *aranyakas* contain mystical ritual instructions to be undertaken in secret by the sages who live in the forests. *Upanishads* deal with philosophical enquiries.
- The *Yajur*, *Sama* and *Atharva Vedas* are dated to a slightly later period. The *samhitas* of the *Sama*, *Yajur* and *Atharva Vedas*, and the *brahmanas*, *aranyakas* and *upanishads* attached to the Vedas are the Late Vedic texts. The *Sama Veda* was composed in musical notes which are considered to constitute the basis of Indian music. The *Yajur Veda* has rituals and hymns. The *Atharva Veda* contains charms and magical spells.

Pre-Aryan, Late Harappan and Chalcolithic Cultures of India

- The Pre-Harappan cultures are the earliest Chalcolithic cultures of India, and they are found in the time before the beginning of the mature phase of the Harappan culture, and continued to exist in the later period. The other Chalcolithic cultures of India are more or less contemporary to this phase of Harappan culture and they continued even after its decline. Unlike the mature urban phase of the Harappan civilization, Chalcolithic cultures were pastoral and based on farming, generally rural in nature. They used copper and stone blades and pottery and also low grade iron in the later period. Their settlements were sedentary or semi-sedentary. In the northwestern and western regions of India, the early farming cultures are associated with the Chalcolithic cultures rather than the Neolithic cultures.
- The Chalcolithic people also began to domesticate animals in addition to agriculture. They had cattle, sheep, pigs and goats and buffaloes. Evidence has been found of turtles and fowls in their settlements. The houses were made of stone, mud bricks, mud and perishable wooden materials, and built on a stone foundation. Silos (well prepared pits) meant for storage of grains have also been found. The walls were made with bamboo frames. People used black and red ware and black on red ware pottery. These sites have produced a large quantity of copper objects. They used copper objects such as flat axes, bangles rings, antimony rods, knives, blades, socket-less axes, barbed and tanged arrow heads, choppers and chisels.

Ochre Coloured Pottery Ware Culture

- Ochre Coloured Pottery Ware culture is found in northern India dating to the Chalcolithic period. The OCP pottery has red slip and appears ochre in colour (the ochre colour comes off when the pottery is touched) and hence, it is called Ochre Coloured Pottery. It has black painted designs. The OCP comes in the form of jars, storage jars, bowls, and basins. The OCP culture dates to 2600- 1200 BCE and is found in the Indo- Gangetic plain and may have had some associations with early Vedic culture.
- The OCP culture is seen as an impoverished Harappan culture and some scholars see it as unrelated to the Harappan culture. The OCP sites produced copper figures and objects and therefore it is also known as “copper hoard culture.” It is a rural culture and has evidence of the cultivation of rice, barley, and legumes. They also had pastoralism with evidence of cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, horses, and dogs. The villages had wattle-and-daub houses. They used copper and terracotta ornaments. Animal figurines have also been found.

Chalcolithic Cultures of South India

- The southern part of India has not produced cultural evidence of a full fledged chalcolithic culture. Perforated and spouted vessels have been found in some sites.

Copper bronze tools like chisels and flat axes occur at these sites. Stone tools continued to be used in this area. Black on red ware pottery is found. These people survived through animal rearing and agriculture. Millets, pulses and horse gram were cultivated, and fruits, leaves and tubers were collected.

Iron Age in North India

- The Iron Age in North India coincides with the painted Grey Ware culture. The painted grey ware is dated to from. 1100 to 800 BCE. More than 1000 sites have been identified with painted grey ware pottery in northern India, with a major concentration in the Ganga-Yamuna valley. These ceramics succeeded the Black and Red Ware Culture in the eastern Ganga valley and Central India. The pottery was fine grey in colour with painted geometric designs. The painted grey ware laid the foundation of the early political formations. It correlates with the Kuru-Panchala kingdom known from the Vedic texts. The Painted Grey Ware cultural phase is followed by Northern Black Polished Ware culture (NBPW), which is associated with the Mahajanapada and Mauryan periods. The Painted Grey ware sites reveal the development of agriculture and pastoralism, and the settlements of this period grew in dimension. They show a large scale population increase in the northern part of India. The Iron Age in North India was coeval with Painted Greyware Culture, and in South India it was associated with Megalithic burial mounds.

Megalithic/ Iron Age in Tamilnadu

- The burial system followed by the people of Neolithic period continued into the Megalithic period. A circular tomb using big stone slabs built upon the place of burial is known as a megalith. Such megaliths have been found in many parts of Tamilnadu. The urn burial system was another type of practice and is evidenced in Adichanallur (present Thoothukudi district). Black-ware is peculiar to burial sites in Tamilnadu. Interestingly, black-ware is found mostly in burial mounds and not in human habitations. In a majority of urn burials, the use of stone is almost non-existent. However, urn burials are grouped under megalithic because the materials - the pottery, iron objects, beads of semi-precious stones kept in them - are identical to those found in the stone burials.
- The end of Megalithic burial practice is assigned to third-second centuries CE. During this period Brahmi writing akin to Ashokan Brahmi has been discovered in Kodumanal (Erode District). There is also evidence of the megalithic tradition continuing into later centuries. During the Sangam period people still remembered urn burials. The four primitive hero-stones with Tamil Brahmi inscriptions, datable to third to second centuries BCE found in the upper part of the Vaigai valley, support the authenticity of the hero stone tradition described in the Sangam Tamil literature in the context of cattle raids. Scholars infer, based on such evidence, that some of the Sangam poems could be assigned to the early first century BCE or a little earlier. The tradition of erecting hero stones in memory of dead warrior-heroes is considered to be an extension of the menhir type of megalithic tradition. Menhirs, upright monumental

stones, and dolmens made of big slabs or boulders are megalithic tombs found in Tamilnadu.

Black and red ware, along with partial human remains and iron objects, were unearthed recently at Vadamalkunda in Krishnagiri, Tamilnadu. A few stone slabs were also found at the site. A centuries-old menhir at Singaripalayam excavated near Kundadam in Tiruppur district points to the existence of an ancient settlement along the banks of River Uppar.

Megalithic Sites in Tamilnadu Adichanallur

- Adichanallur, 22 km from Tirunelveli, is located in Thoothukudi district. In 1876, a German ethnologist and naturalist, Andrew Jagor conducted an excavation at Adichanallur. He carried with him samples of backed earthenware, utensils of all sizes and shapes, a considerable number of iron weapons and implements, and great quantities of bones and skulls. These are now housed in a Berlin Museum. Burial Site- Adichanallur The then district Collector of Tirunelveli A.J. Stuart and the famous linguist Bishop Robert Caldwell visited Adichanallur subsequently, found it was a quartz site. Quarrying was immediately banned and archaeological excavation commenced under the supervision of Alexander Rea. Rea prepared a comprehensive account of his findings, illustrated by photographs, and was published in the annual report of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), 1902-03. Nearly a hundred years later, the ASI carried out another excavation and brought out more information. The report is awaited.

The burial mound at Adichanallur yielded the following:

- **Urns and pottery of various kinds in large numbers.**
- **Iron implements, including spades and weapons (daggers, swords, spears and arrows). Some stone beads and a few gold ornaments**
- **Bronze objects representing the domestic animals such as buffalo, goat or sheep and cock, and wild animals like tiger, antelope and elephant.**
- **Traces of cloth and wood.**
- The engraving of animals on bronze and on ornaments is indicative of the primitive workmanship. (Caldwell could stumble upon a copper bangle during his inspection at the site.) The people were evidently skilful in moulding pottery, in casting or brassing metals, inweaving and in working stone and wood. The presence of husks of rice and millet indicates domestication of these grains. Iron weapons were used for both war, and for animal sacrifices. The discovery of sacrificial implements prompted Caldwell to conclude that the people of Adichanallur were not adherents of Vedic religion.

Paiyampalli

- Paiyampalli is a village in Tirupathur taluk, Vellore district. The Archaeological Survey of India carried out an excavation in the 1960s and unearthed black and red ware pottery in this megalithic site. A large number of urn burials were also found in this region. The date of this culture, based on radio carbon dating, is 1000 BCE.

Kodumanal

- Kodumanal, 40 km from Erode, is located on the northern bank of Noyyal river, a tributary of the Cauvery. A series of excavations were carried out during the 1980s and 1990s. The most recent was in 2012. In habitation trenches and megalithic burials of Kodumanal, the goods unearthed included pots, weapons, tools, ornaments, and beads, particularly carnelian, akin to those found at Mohenjodaro. Since carnelian was not known to this region in ancient times, it may have been brought to Kodumanal from outside.
- In the Sangam work Pathitru Pathu, a place called Kodumanam belonging to the Chera king, is praised for gemstones and therefore some archaeologists argue that Kodumanam is the ancient name of Kodumanal. Hoards of Roman coins have been discovered and it is believed that this is a result of the export of gemstones to the Roman world, resulting in return a huge inflow of gold from the latter into the region. Conches and bangles, remnants of furnaces, a kiln floor filled with ash soot, and potsherds with Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions are other finds in the site. Pit burials, urn burials and chamber tombs of different types excavated at Kodumanal and the names inscribed on potsherds may indicate habitation by multi-ethnic groups. The graffiti etched on potsherds give a lot of information about the people and their activities. A menhir found at a burial site is assigned to the Megalithic period. According to Y. Subbarayalu, Kodumanal is coeval the Sangam anthologies (second century BCE to second century CE).

The Aryans and Rig Vedic Society

- So far we have considered the Late Harappan Cultures, Chalcolithic and Painted Grey ware Cultures. Let us now turn to the evidence from the Vedic texts, which, unlike the archaeological evidence that tell us only about the material culture, throw light on the ethnic and cultural identities of people. Because of the references found in the Vedas, the Aryan question is one of the important issues concerning the early history of India.

The Aryans

- The attempt to write a history of India began when the Europeans colonised India. They compiled the archaeological and literary sources, as well as oral traditions. Certain notions, for example the Aryans, were developed and used in the colonial context, when many parts of Asia and Africa were under the influence of the European powers. The concept of race was widely prevalent at that time to classify and categorize people. Some of the views reflect the racist ideas of colonial times. The

Aryan theory was linked to the blue-eyed white race and its connection with Europeans. Nazis used the Aryan concept for their political agenda, ultimately leading to the Holocaust. The recent studies have established that the word Aryan does not denote race, but only refers to the original speakers of Indo-Aryan languages.

Philologists study language in oral and written forms of languages based on historical evidence. They use etymology, comparative linguistics, literary criticism, history, and linguistics in their studies.

- Though the *Rig Veda* is in Sanskrit, about 300 words of the Munda and Dravidian languages have been identified in it, suggesting cultural mix with earlier inhabitants. From the Vedas it is evident that Aryans used domesticated horses and chariots. Their chariots had spoked wheels and they used bows and arrows. They practiced agriculture and pastoralism. They buried and also cremated the dead. The cult of fire and the use of soma drink were prevalent among the speakers of the Indo-Aryan languages.
- The home of Indo-Europeans and Indo-Aryans is still a matter of debate. Many scholars are of the view that the Aryans came to India as migrants from Central Asia. It is also believed that several waves of Indo-Aryan migration might have happened. There are several factors which support this hypothesis. The traits of the culture of Aryans cover Eastern Europe and Central Asia which is geographically interlinked with India and West Asia and Europe. One of the accepted areas of the Aryan home is Eastern Europe Central Asia, north of the Black Sea. The Bactria-Margina Archaeological Complex is closely related to Aryan culture dated to 1900 BCE-1500 BCE. Ceramics of South Central Asian archaeological sites resemble those found in the Swat valley.
- References to the names of Indo-European languages are found in an inscription dated to 2200 BCE discovered in modern Iraq. Anatolian inscriptions of 1900-1700 BCE and Kassite inscriptions of 1600 BCE (Iraq) and Mittani inscriptions of 1400 BCE (Syria), Boghazkoi inscriptions referring to names similar to the Vedic gods (1400 BCE) have the common features of the Indo-European languages, but no such inscriptions are found in India.
- The term *asva* and several other terms in *Rig Veda* have common roots in various Indo-Aryan languages. In the *Rig Veda*, the term *asva* (horse) occurs 215 times and *vriṣabha* (bull) 170 times. Tiger and rhinoceros, which are tropical animals, are not mentioned in the *Rig Veda*. There is no trace of the urban way of life in the *Rig Veda*. Hence, the identity of Aryans is not correlated with the Harappan culture, where there is no evidence for horse. Nowadays, DNA studies are also used for understanding ancient migrations. M17 a genetic marker (DNA) is said to have been found among the speakers of Indo-Europeans.

Rig Vedic Culture

- Rig Vedic Samhita is the earliest text that relates to the Early Vedic period. The Early Vedic culture is placed between 1500 BCE and 1000 BCE. The political, social and economic aspects of life of this period are reflected in the Rig Vedic hymns.

Geography

- In the Indian subcontinent, the early Aryans lived in the area of eastern Afghanistan, Pakistan, Punjab and fringes of Western Uttar Pradesh.

Dasas and Dasyus

- The Rig Vedas speak about not only the Aryans, but also about the non-Aryan people, whom the Aryans encountered in India. When the Rig Vedic people moved into India they came into conflict with people whom they referred to as Dasyus or Dasas. Evidently the Aryans differentiated themselves from the dark native people who had different cultural practices, and sought to maintain their distinction. The Rig Veda has references to several other groups. Simyu and Kikata are grouped with the *dasyus*. Sambara son of Kulitara is mentioned as a chief with 90 forts or settlements. Varchin was another chief with many troops. The *Rig Veda* mentions the defeat of a chief called Sambara by Divodasa of the Bharata clan.

Polity and Political Clashes

- The concept of polity developed in the Rig Vedic time. Various units of habitation and divisions such as the *janas*, *vis*, *gana*, *grama* and *kula* are referred to in the *Rig Veda*. The Vedas speak about the Aryans and their enemies and the battles they fought with them. The battles were fought more for cattle and material wealth and the war booty acquired was shared. They not only fought with the non-Aryans, but also fought among themselves. They invoked the support of the gods in their battles. They strongly believed that prayers, sacrifices and rituals could offer support in their mundane life. The god Indra is called *Purandara*, which means destroyer of settlements, which were perhaps fenced or planned townships.

The term Jana means tribe

- The Bharatas and Tritsu were the ruling Aryan clans who were supported by Vasishta, the priest. The region of India was named Bharata Varsha after the tribe of Bharatas. The Bharata clan was opposed by ten chiefs and five out of them were Aryans. This battle was known as the Battle of Ten Kings. The battle took place on the banks of the river Paurushni, identified with the river Ravi. In this battle, Sudas won and he became important leading to the dominance of Bharata clan. The Purus were one of the defeated clans. The Purus and Bharatas formed an alliance and later they formed Kuru clan. Later the Kurus allied with Panchalas and established their control over the Upper Ganga Valley.

Social Divisions

- The Vedic people distinguished themselves from the non-Aryan people. Varna was the term used by Aryans to refer to colour and category. The *Rig Veda* refers to Arya *varna* and Dasa *varna*. The Dasas and Dasyus were conquered and treated as slaves. They came to be considered sudras in the later period. Social classes were classified as warriors, priests and common people. Sudras as a category of people appeared at the end of the *Rig Vedic* period. Slavery was common and slaves were given as gifts to the priests, but there is no reference to wage labour. Horse-drawn chariots and bronze objects were possessed by a few, suggesting social distinction. Vedic society was largely egalitarian initially, and social distinctions emerged later. According to the *Purusha Sukta* of the *Rig Veda* the various varnas emerged thus: Brahmanas from the mouth, the kshatriya from the arms, the vaisya from the thighs and the sudra from the feet of *Purusha*, when he was sacrificed. These social divisions are considered to have arisen towards the end of the early Vedic period. Various professional groups such as warriors, priests, cattle-keepers, farmers, barbers are also mentioned. *Panis* were itinerant traders or perhaps caravan traders. *Panis* are also seen as enemies in some verses.

Tribe and Family

- Kinship was the basis of the social structure of Rig Vedic society. People were identified with specific clans and the clans formed the tribe or *jana*. The term *jana* occurs in the *Rig Veda* 21 times but *janapada* does not occur even once. The term *vis*, which refers to the common people, occurs 170 times and they lived in *gramas* (villages). The family (*griha*) was the main social unit within the tribe. It was headed by the *grihapati* and his wife was known as *sapatni*. And the family at that point of time was perhaps a joint family.

Women

- Women had a respectable position but it is not possible to generalise about this. Society was essentially patriarchal with a preference for male children and cattle. The birth of a son was preferred perhaps because of the martial nature of the society, which required male members for their clashes to establish do over the territories. Having ten sons was considered as a blessing. Women attended assemblies and offered sacrifices. Marriage was common but primitive were also continued. Polyandry seems to have existed, and widow remarriage was also known. People married at the age of 16-17, according to scholars, and there is little evidence of child marriage.

Economy: Agriculture

- Archaeological evidence points to the development of agriculture among the Rig Vedic people. The ploughshare is mentioned in the Rig Vedas. The field was known as *kshetra* and the term *krishi* referred to ploughing. The terms *slangla* and *sura* referred to plough and the term *sita* meant the furrow created by ploughing.

Water for irrigation was probably drawn from wells by cattle-driven water-lifts using pulleys. They had knowledge of different seasons, sowing, harvesting and thrashing. They cultivated barley (*yavam*) and wheat (*godhuma*).

Pastoralism

- Cattle rearing was an important economic activity for the Aryans, although they practiced agriculture. Cattle were considered wealth. The term for war in the Rig Veda was *gavishthi* which means search for cows (which is the contemporary term (*goshti*) for factions as well). The donations to the priests were mainly cows and women slaves but not land, which reveals the importance of pastoralism. There was no private property in land.

Craft Production

- The Rig Veda mentions artisans such as carpenters, chariot-makers, weavers and leather-workers. Copper metallurgy was one of the important developments of this period. The term *ayas* in the Rig Veda refers to copper and bronze. *Karmara*, smith, is mentioned in the *Rig Veda*. Likewise, there are references to *siri* or yarn, indicating spinning which was done by women and to carpenters, *takshan*. Weaving of clothes of wool is also referred to and obviously it was necessary in the cold weather. Some of the crafts were full-time crafts, involving specialists.

Trade, Exchange and Redistribution

- Trading activities were limited though traders were present during the Early Vedic period. *Panis* are referred to as traders and they were perhaps caravan traders. The word *pan* means barter, which was a mode of exchange. *Nishka* was a gold or silver ornament used in barter. A priest received 100 horses and 100 *nishka* as fee for sacrifices. The *danas* and *dakshinas* offered to people were means of redistributing resources. The *dakshina* was both a fee for a specific service and also a means of distributing wealth. The distribution of cows helped spread pastoral activities and economic production.

Transport

- Bullock carts, horses and horse-drawn chariots were used for transport. There are references to the sea (*samudra*) and boats (*nau*). Boats driven by 100 oars are mentioned.

Polity and Administration

- The polity of the Rig Vedic period was that of a tribal society. The chief of the tribe was the main political head and he was called *rajan*. The kings lived in multi-pillared palaces. They offered gifts of cattle, chariots and horse ornaments and gold to the priests. *Rajan* was a hereditary chief. He was perhaps elected by the assembly called

samiti. The main duty of the king was to protect the tribe. He protected wealth, fought wars, and offered prayers on behalf of gods. The king had authority over the territory and people.

- Vedic society was militaristic. Bows, daggers, axes and lances were the main weapons of war. Tributes and booty collected from war were redistributed by the king. There are also references to gift of *dasas* or slaves. The king *Trasadasyu*, the chief of the *Purus*, gave away 50 women as a gift. The chief was known as *gopa* or *gopati* which means, chief of cattle.
- The assemblies called *sabha*, *samiti*, *vidhata* and *gana* are mentioned in the *Rig Veda*. *Sabha* was the assembly of elders or the elites, *samiti* was an assembly of people, and *vidhata* was the assembly of tribe. They performed military and religious functions. Women attended the *sabhas* and *vidhatas*. The king sought the support of the *samiti* and *sabha* for his activities. There are debates about the exact nature of these assemblies and functions. Most of our understanding of the conditions of Vedic society depends upon the interpretations of various terms.
- Sometimes it is hard to reconstruct the original meaning. *The purohita* or priest offered advice to the king. Vedic priests advised the kings, inspired them and praised their deeds. In turn they received rewards for their services. *Senani* was the chief of army. There is no evidence of tax collecting officers. Perhaps people made voluntary contribution called *bali* to the king. Some scholars say that *bali* was an imposed tax, and not voluntary. There is no reference to the administration of justice. The officer who controlled the territory was called *Vrajapati*. He helped the *kulapas* or heads of fighting groups called *gramini*. *Gramini* was the head of the village and fighting

Vedic Religion and Rituals

- Religion and rituals played an important role in Vedic society. In the *Rig Veda*, the natural forces sun, moon, rivers, mountains and rains were defined as divinities. The religion was naturalistic and polytheistic. *Indra* was the most important god and he was called *Purandara*. *Agni* was seen as intermediary between god and people. *Surya* was a god who removed darkness. *Ushas* was the goddess of dawn. *Aditi*, *Prithvi* and *Sinivali* are other goddesses. *Varuna*, the god of water was next in importance. This god was the upholder of natural order. *Soma* was the god of plants and the drink was named after him. *Soma* drink was part of the ritual and the preparation of this intoxicating drink is explained in many hymns. *Maruts* was the god of strength. Interestingly there are few references to *Rudra* or *Siva*. Rituals were adopted as a solution to many issues and the problems of day-to-day life and thus the priests had an important role in the society.

Characteristics of Society

- In the early Vedic period lineage and tribes constituted society, and the king had limited power. The various tribal groups of Aryans and non-Aryans fought to

control the territories. Social divisions did not take deep root, although the concept of varna and Aryan identities existed. Pastoralism was predominant and cattle centred clashes were common, although agriculture did play an important role. The archaeological sites suggest different types of craft production including metal, carpentry, pottery and clothes.

Later Vedic Culture

- The Later Vedic culture is dated to the period between 1000 BCE and 700-600 BCE. The Painted Grey Ware Culture of the Iron Age, which has been identified by archaeologists at many excavated sites, is associated with the Later Vedic culture. This period witnessed political, social, economic complexity and developments.

The Late Vedic Texts

- The Later Vedic texts were composed after the Rig Veda Samhitas. The Yajur, Sama and Atharva Vedas were composed after the *Rig Veda*.

Eastward Expansion of the Aryans

- The Aryan speakers expanded from the Punjab to Western Uttar Pradesh in the Ganga Yamuna doab in the Later Vedic period. The history of ancient India was thus marked by the movement of cultures, and interactions and battles among various groups for territories and resources. It has been suggested that while the Aryans migrated to the region of eastern part of the Ganga valley, the Indo-Iranians migrated from the region of Iran to the region of Punjab. The later Vedic texts speak about the region of Kuru Panchala which falls in the Indo- Gangetic divide and the Upper Ganga Valley. The area mentioned as the southeastern boundary of the Aryans in Rig Veda is listed in *Aitreya Brahmana* as the midland, which indicates the movement of Aryans into the Ganga valley in the Later Vedic period. Perhaps this expansion was induced by the need for water and land resources, fresh, less occupied territories and population pressures.
- The Kurus, Panchalas, Vashas and Ushinaras are the tribes of this period. References to the Saraswati and Dhrstavati rivers occur in the later Vedic texts also. Around 1000 BCE, the Vedic Aryans moved towards Kosala region in eastern Uttar Pradesh and Videha in North Bihar, where the Vedic people encountered the local people following Chalcolithic material culture. In the Upper Ganga valley, the Vedas acquired Munda words indicating that Munda speaking-people lived in the Ganga valley. The region of Kosala and Videha were the easternmost territories of the Aryan expansion during this period. By the end of the Vedic period Panchala and Videha were Aryanised. The area beyond this region in the east was seen as an alien territory. In the *Atharva Veda*, the people of Anga and Magadha (Bihar) were seen as enemies. Similarly, the Pundras of Bengal and the Andhras were seen as outside the Aryan identity in the *Aitreya Brahmana*. This suggests that these regions were not influenced

by Aryan culture. What we gather is that the process of Aryanization gradually spread from the north-west to the south-east mainly into the Ganga Valley.

Later Vedic Culture and Iron

- Iron was an important metal used for implements in this period. It was called *syama-ayas* or *krishna-ayas* or the dark metal. Iron is believed to have played an important role in the conversion of the forests of the Ganga Valley into agricultural lands. By the end of Vedic period, the knowledge of iron had reached eastern Uttar Pradesh and Videha. Earlier it was believed that iron originated around 700 BCE, but recent research dates the beginning of iron to around 1200 BCE or even earlier. The early views gave excessive emphasis to iron to the colonization of the Ganga Valley, but new scholarship argues that iron was not the only factor behind the expansion of the population.

Settlements and territories

- With the intensification of agriculture, the Later Vedic people led a settled life leading to formation of territorial units. The term *janapada*, referring to territory, is found in the *Brahmanas* dated to ca. 800 BCE. There are more than 1000 sites of painted Grey Ware culture in this area, suggesting that new settlements came up and the Upper Ganga Valley was densely populated. People lived either in mud-brick houses or houses with wattle and daub walls. The foundations for the towns must have emerged during the later Vedic period. This was a period of intense interactions. The term *nagara*, referring to commercial quarters, is found in the later Vedic texts. However, large towns appeared only at the end of the Vedic period. The sites of Hastinapura and Kausambi are considered proto urban (urban-like) settlements. The material culture of this period shows more diversity and is an improvement over the Early Vedic period. It can be surmised that there was surplus production to support various classes such as chiefs, princes and priests.

Political Organization

- In the Early Vedic Age tribal polities were dominant. The king was elected by assemblies. In the Later Vedic period the assemblies became less important and the power of the king increased. The influence of assembly called *vidhata* disappeared, while *samiti* and *sabha* continued in the period. The development of large kingdoms reduced the power of the assemblies. The Rajan was the leader who led the army in the battle. The concepts of *Samrat/Samrajya* developed and they suggest the increase in the power and ambition of the king. The legitimization of kingship became important with the performance of various sacrifices such as *vajapeya* and *rajasuya*. The king developed more control over the territory, people and resources. *Purohita*, which means 'one who places the king in the forefront', became important in the establishment of polity and kingship. Monarchy developed.

- The Rajan became the controller of the social order. *Srauta* sacrifices (sacrifices to achieve some benefits) were carried out to control the resources. The kings presented cows, horses, chariots, gold, clothes and female slaves to the priest. The *Aitreya Brahmana* says that king has to provide 1000 pieces of gold and cattle to the Brahmana who anoints him. Thus the priest became important in the formation of polity and royalty.
- The terms such as *rashtra*, to denote a territory, and *rajya*, meaning sovereign power appeared. The king received voluntary or compulsory contribution called *bali* from the people (*vis*). Such voluntary contributions became tributes. The Mahabharata offers clues to historical development and is suggestive of the power struggle to control the territories. The *Ramayana* too is suggestive of the Aryan expansion and the encounters with native people in the forest.
- The territorial formations and the development of lineages became stronger during the Later Vedic period. Romila Thapar characterises the developments in the first millennium BCE as the movement from lineage to state. The development of state level political organization emerged only after 500 BCE, and the Later Vedic society was therefore in transition. Several lineages became more territorial and settled in the Later Vedic Age. This is evidenced by the term *janapada*, as we saw earlier. The mid-first millennium BCE had political organisations such as *rajya* and *ganasanghas* (oligarchies) and these institutions developed in the later Vedic period.
- As we saw earlier, the clans of Bharatas and Purus combined to form the Kurus, and along with the Panchalas they occupied the central part of the Ganga-Yamuna doab. Panchala territory was in north-western Uttar Pradesh. The Kuru-Panchalas became one major ethnic group and Hastinapur became their capital. The war between the Kauravas and Pandavas was the theme of the Mahabharata and both of them belonged to the clan of Kurus. Traditions say that Hastinapur was flooded and the Kuru clan moved to Kausambi near Allahabad.
- Sacrifices and rituals gained importance in the Later Vedic society. The king became more independent. Rituals dominated kingship, and this increased the power and influence of the *Rajanyas* and the *Brahmanas*, while distancing the king from the *vis*. The *Asvamedha-yaga* involved letting a horse loose into areas where it moved freely; this was an assertion that the authority of the king was recognized, and a battle ensued when the horse was challenged. The *vajapeya* ritual involved a chariot race. Such innovative modes of rituals helped to increase the power of the king. The formation of social, distinctions became prominent.

Social Organization

- The social transformation in the Later Vedic Period is much more clearly reflected in the references in the Vedic texts. The social divisions of varna became more established. Teaching was seen as the occupation of the Brahmanas. The wives of Brahmanas and cows were given important status. Rajanya refers to kshatriyas and

they were the warriors and rulers who received bali as tax. Striking changes took place in the Varna System. There was an increase in the privileges of the two higher classes, the Brahmanas and the Kshatriyas at the cost of the Vaisyas and Sudras. In the Panchavimsa Brahmana, the Kshatriya is placed first, higher than the Brahmana but in the Satapatha Brahmana, the Brahmana is placed higher than Kshatriya. In later Vedic society the importance of the purohita (priest) is stressed, as mentioned in the Vedic texts. The Kshatriyas challenged Brahmanical supremacy and their exclusive privilege of entering the asramas, a regulated four stage life namely brahmacharya, grihasta, vanaprastha and sanyasa. The outcome of this was the birth of Jainism, Buddhism and Ajivakam.

- The system of four Varnas had taken deep root and became rigid in the course of time. The popularity of rituals helped the Brahmanas to attain power. Brahmanas became important and the kings supported them, although they had conflicts with Rajanyas, the warrior nobles. The concept of dvija (twice-born) developed and the upanayana (sacred thread) was limited to the upper sections of the society. This ceremony marked the initiation for education. The fourth varna was denied this privilege and the Gayatri mantra could not be recited by the Sudras. Women were also denied upanayana and Gayatri mantra. The king asserted his authority over the three varnas. The Aitreya Brahmana refers to the Brahmana as the seeker of support and he could be removed by king from his position.
- Certain craft groups managed to attain higher status. For example, the Rathakaras, the chariot makers, had the right to wear the sacred thread. Vaisya referred to the common people. They were involved in agriculture, cattle breeding and artisans. Later they became traders. Vaisyas paid tax to the kings. Some social groups were placed in ranking even below the Sudras. However, cross varna marriages did happen.
- The idea of gotra emerged in the later Vedic period. Gotra literally meant 'cowpen' and it referred to a group of people from a common ancestor. Persons of the same *gotra* were considered as brothers and sisters and could not therefore intermarry. Several unilineal descent groups existed with common ancestors. Several related clans formed the tribe.

Family

- The household became more structured, which means it became more organised. The family was an important social unit. The family was patriarchal with patrilineal descent. The relations within the family were hierarchical. Polygyny (taking many wives) was prevalent. Several household rituals were also developed for the welfare of the family. The married man with his wife was the yajamana.
- The concept of asramas, referring to various stage of life, was not well established in this time. While brahmacharya, grihasta and vanaprastha are mentioned, sanyasa had not developed.

Women

- The status of women declined as the society became more structured and the patriarchal family became more important. In the family the father was the head. The right of primogeniture was strong. Though women had participated in rituals in the Rig Vedic period, they were excluded in the later Vedic period. Daughters are spoken of as a source of trouble. Their work was to look after the cattle, milking animals and fetching water.

Economy

- The economic activities of this period were quite diversified. Agriculture, pastoralism, craft production and trade contributed to the economic development.

Agriculture

- Agricultural activities increased during the Late Vedic period. The Satapatha Brahmana mentions rituals related to ploughing undertaken by the kings. This suggests the importance given to cultivation by the rulers, and the shift to agriculture to support the increasing population. The god Balarama is depicted with a plough, which suggests the importance of cultivation. The Vedic people cultivated barley and rice, and wheat. Wheat was the staple food of Punjab region. The Vedic people began to use rice in the Ganga- Yamuna doab. The use of rice, rather than wheat, is noticed in the Vedic rituals.

Pastoralism

- Pastoralism continued to be important. Cattle were considered sacred. They became part of exchange and redistribution. The offering of cattle as part of *dakshina* continued. Pastoralism supplemented agriculture.

Craft Production

- Arts and crafts proliferated during the Later Vedic age and craft specialization took deep roots, when compared to early Vedic period, since more occupational groups are mentioned in this period. Evidence of iron work is noticed from about 1200 BCE. Metals such as copper, tin, gold, bronze and lead are mentioned. These metals were smelted and worked by specialized groups. The copper objects were used for making weapons for war and hunting. Weaving was undertaken by women. Leatherwork, pottery and carpentry were well known. Terms such as *kulala* referring to potters and *urna sutra* referring to wool appear. Bow makers, rope makers, arrow makers, hide dressers, stone breakers, physicians, goldsmiths and astrologers are some of the specialized professional groups mentioned in the texts. Professions such as physicians, washerman, hunters, boatman, astrologer and cook are mentioned. References to the elephant are often found in the Atharva Veda, along with the elephant keeper. The increase in references to such groups indicates a society in transformation. The

performers of Vedic sacrifices were also a type of service providers. The priest played an important role in legitimizing the role of king through various rituals. Wealth was measured in terms of cattle and animals. There is a mention of offerings of 20 camels, 100 gold necklaces, 300 horses and 10,000 cows as dakshina.

Trade and Exchange

- Trade and exchange had developed in the Later Vedic age. The material culture found in the archaeological sites reveals the movement of commodities and materials. Specialised caravan traders existed. No evidence of coins has been found and therefore barter must have been the medium of exchange. The introduction of coins took place after about 600 BCE.

Religious Faith and Belief System

- During the Later Vedic period the upper Ganga Doab was the centre of the Aryan culture. This region is described as the land of Kuru-Panchalas. The Vedic gods Agni and Indra lost their importance. Prajapati became the main deity. Rudra, the god of rituals, identified with Siva, became important. The Satapatha Brahmana lists the names of Rudra as Pasunampatih, Sarva, Bhava and Bahikas. Vishnu was conceived as the protector of people. There is no reference to Vishnu's incarnations. Each varna had its own deities.

Rituals

- Rituals became important in society. It was believed that rituals and sacrifices could solve many problems. The rituals became more complex, required more resources, and took longer time. This indirectly reflects the demand for rituals and the formation of elite groups who could spend more resources on rituals and sacrifices. The correct performance of rituals was stressed. Stress was laid on paying dakshina. Numerous rituals were prescribed for solving all kinds of day to day problems. The resort to rituals and sacrifices as a solution for problems led to the view that material wealth could achieve anything. The ideas in the Upanishads argue against such a view, and stress the importance of realising the atman or inner self. Such degeneration of rituals and the material-oriented nature of the priests created dissension and led to the development of heterodox faiths such as Buddhism and Jainism which emphasized correct human behaviour and discipline.

Philosophy and Education

- The disciplines of philosophy, literature and science developed in this period. Various branches of learning such as literature, grammar, mathematics, ethics and astronomy developed. Education was limited to males. Teacher-pupil relationship was cultivated through person-oriented training. The development of Vedic texts and the importance given to pronunciation, grammar and oral transmission suggest training in utterances and memorization, as part of the Vedic system of education. The development of various types of texts could be considered as developing solutions for certain

mundane issues and a quest for knowledge. Aranyakas are concerned with priests who were in the forests.

- Upanishads (which means to sit nearby) texts with philosophical enquiries, were composed during this period. They were also referred to as *Vedanta*, since they were attached as the last part of the Vedic texts.
- They lay stress on knowledge and the realization of the self or *atman* and *Brahman* (the Supreme Being), meditation, cycle of birth and death. They convey the ideas of karma, and good conduct, self-restraint, mercy and generosity as virtues. Despite the ritual dominated aspects of Vedic life, some seers were in pursuit of knowledge and virtuous conduct.

Dara Shukoh, the Mughal prince, translated the Upanishads into Persian in 1657, much before the colonial scholars developed any interest in ancient Indian literature.

Other aspects of Life

- The Late Vedic culture has evidence of music and fine arts. Music instruments such as lute, flute and drum are referred to in the texts. With the development of cultivation and pastoralism, different types of food and drinks made of grains, milk and ghee and plants were consumed. Evidence of the use of silk and ornaments of metal, gold and copper is found. Metal mirrors were also used. The archaeological sites have uncovered beads and ornaments and the fabrication of glass beads was also developed in the later part of the Vedic period.

Characteristics of Later Vedic Society

- Later Vedic period is marked by lineages of clans, and small kingdoms developed in many parts of the Ganga valley, leading to the development of the state after 600 BCE. The idea of janapada and rashtra as territorial units had developed. The raja wielded much power and the social divisions began to strike deep roots. The varna system had developed well and Sudra identity became more marked during this period.

Lesson III

Rise of Territorial Kingdoms and New religious Sects

Introduction

Aryans began migrating eastwards from about 1000 BCE. As they moved eastwards, they encountered thick forests. Iron played a significant role in the clearing of the forest. The fertile soil of the Gangetic valley and the use of iron ploughshares improved agricultural productivity. Iron also played a big role in improving craft production such as pottery, carpentry and metal working. This in turn paved the way for urbanization. In the meantime, a spirit of scepticism began to pervade questioning every custom and orthodoxy in the belief system in the society leading to rise of new ideas and faiths. Of

these several competing alternate beliefs, only Jainism and Buddhism touched the ears of the people. In this lesson we focus on the territorial identities and the new heterodox religious sects that emerged during this period.

Impact of Iron Technology: Differing Views

The movement of the Indo-Aryans towards the east was aimed at accessing the iron ore of south Bihar and gaining a near monopoly over it. The iron ore was responsible for the political dominance

attained by the state of Magadha. -D.D. Kosambi.

Iron axes and iron ploughs led to the expansion of area under cultivation in the Ganges valley. -R.S. Sharma.

That the use of iron axe and iron plough facilitated clearing of forests and generation of agricultural surplus is a myth because even as late as 16th and 17th centuries the Gangetic plain was heavily forested. -Makkhan Lal.

The forests of Ganges region could have been cleared by means of fire. -A. Ghosh and Niharjan Ray.

Sources

The epics Mahabharata and Ramayana, the dharmasastras, Buddhist texts such as the Tripitakas and Jatakas, Jaina texts and Greek accounts such as that of Arrian constitute literary sources for the period. Archaeological excavations have corroborated the literary evidences.

- **Iron objects such as hoes, sickles, knives, hooks, nails, arrowheads, vessels and mirrors confirm the widespread use of iron technology.**
- **Textiles, beads, pottery, ivory objects, ceramics and glassware and artefacts of other metals are found.**
- **A large number of terracotta artefacts have also been found. Some of the urban features revealed by excavation of the various cities are as follows:**
- **Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW), considered luxury-ware and “urban hallmark” have been excavated.**
- **The towns were enclosed by a moat and sometimes they were fortified.**
- **Houses were built with mud bricks and in some cases with burnt bricks.**
- **Facilities such as drains, ring wells and soak-pits are found, confirming the second urbanisation in the Gangetic plains.**

Developments in Gangetic plain

Agriculture improved during this phase of development in the middle Gangetic plains. Wet rice cultivation began to yield more produce of rice than other

crops, thus creating the necessary agrarian surplus. Protected irrigation alone was not responsible for the surplus production of rice. Iron technology also played a crucial role. While it is debated whether iron aided clearing of the forests or whether iron ploughshare increased agricultural yield, there can be no two opinions that it played a critical role in improving the production of artefacts. The impact of iron technology is better understood if one considers "the technical changes which the introduction of iron implements would have brought about in various craft activities". Leisure time provided by agricultural surplus and technology led to growth of crafts, which in turn aided vibrant trade.

Second Urbanisation

Agricultural surplus, the growth of crafts and trade, and the growing population led to the emergence of towns in the Gangetic plains. This is called the second urbanisation in Indian history after the first urbanisation evident in the Harappan Civilization. Different types of towns came into being:

- **Political and administrative centres such as Rajgriha, Shravasti, Kaushambi and Champa**
- **Centres of trade and commerce such as Ujjain and Taxila**
- **Holy centres such as Vaishali.**

Janapadas to Mahajanapadas

The Later Vedic period (900–600 BCE) witnessed the transition from a tribal polity based on lineage to a territorial state. The janas who migrated eastwards began to settle down in various regions. The loyalty of the people shifted from jana (tribe or clan) to janapada (territory). Janapada literally meant 'the place where the tribe sets its foot upon.' The janapadas fought with one another for resources and political dominance. Some janapadas extended their territories and brought various janas within their jurisdiction. Such janapadas grew into mahajanapadas.

Territory, people, government and sovereignty are important elements of a state. All these elements were found in some of the mahajanapadas. The mahajanapadas represented the emergence of territorial kingdoms that ruled over people (jana). The king headed the government aided by a centralised administration. The king was also the sovereign ruler. The king levied taxes out of agricultural surplus and redistributed it and ensured maintenance of law and order in a hierarchical society by force and coercion. These features marked the formation of state in the Gangetic plains.

Sixteen Mahajanapadas

According to Puranic, Buddhist andJaina traditions, there were sixteenmahajanapadas.

- Gandhara
- Kamboja
- Assaka
- Vatsa
- Avanti
- Shurasena
- Chedi
- Malla
- Kuru
- Panchala
- Matsya
- Vajji (Vrijji)
- Anga
- Kasi
- Kosala
- Magadha

The mahajanapadas are classified asgana-sanghas and chiefdoms based on thenature of their polity.

Gana-Sanghas

The proto-states of the Gangetic regionwere known as janapadas and comprisedchiefdoms, republics and small kingdoms.Sixteen mahajanapadas find mentionin the early texts. There were also ganasanghasor oligarchies, which werecentred on clans. The Vrijjis were oneof the best known of the gana-sanghas,and Vaishali was their capital in theMithila region. These kingdoms did notcome under the single decision-makingauthority of a king but decisions weretaken on a collective basis by the headsof the different clans together. There werealso smaller kingdoms such as Kosalaand Kasi. It is interesting to note that thenames of the clans, such as Ikshvaku andVrishni, as well as these early kingdoms,are all mentioned in the two epics,Ramayana and Mahabharata.

Monarchies or Kingdoms

The mahajanapadas on the Gangetic plainswere all monarchies. Vedic orthodoxy wasan established practice in these kingdoms.The priestly class enjoyed a preeminentstatus in the mahajanapadas unlike inthe gana-sanghas. The kingdoms wereregoverned by kings and the administrationwas centralised. The brahman priestsprovided legitimacy to the king throughvarious rituals. The kingship washereditary and the succession was in mostcases based on the law of primogeniture.The king was assisted by councils calledparishad and sabha. The councils wereadvisory in nature. The king appropriatedthe agricultural surplus through landrevenue apart from a few other taxes. Baliwas a tax imposed based on the area ofcultivable land. Bhaga was obtained asa

share of the produce. Kara and Shulkawere some of the other taxes collected during this period. Thus the king raised revenue through taxes to maintain an elaborate administrative structure and an army.

The richer landowners were called grihapatis. These landowners employed labourers called dasas or karmakaras. The smaller landowners were known as kassakas or krishakas. The society was stratified on the basis of varna. It emerged as a marker of status. Cultivators and artisans were identified as the shudras. A new social category that emerged during this period was placed below the shudras in the social hierarchy and considered untouchables. They were forced to live on the fringes of the settlements and subsisted on hunting and gathering their food. They were marginalised and given only menial jobs as urbanisation was on the rise. They had their own language, which was different from that spoken by the Indo-Aryans.

Emergence of Heterodox Thinkers

In the sixth and fifth centuries before the Common Era, north India underwent a remarkable intellectual awakening that profoundly impacted India and influenced its culture in subsequent millennia as well. The impact also swept across South Asia. This awakening was the outcome of questioning the existing philosophy by a host of heterodox thinkers. Gosala, Gautama Buddha, Mahavira, Ajita Kesakambalin and other thinkers renounced the world and wandered across the Gangetic plains, contemplating and reflecting on the social and cultural scenario of their times. It was not uncommon to see ascetics crisscrossing the Gangetic plains, propounding new ideas. The teachings of these ascetics addressed the needs of a rapidly changing society, which saw the emergence of new polity, the coming into being of urban centres, development of crafts, and an increase in long-distance trade. These thinkers questioned the Vedic ideas of soul, mind and body, thereby paving the way for the rise of new religious sects. Even though all of them questioned the Vedic religion, there was rivalry among them. Eventually Buddhism and Jainism emerged as popular faiths.

Causes of Intellectual Awakening

Sixth century BCE was a period of intense intellectual ferment. There are several reasons for the emergence of this ferment.

1. State formation and the rigidity of the Vedic religion constrained the liberty of thought and action. A revolt against religious practice of following dogmas found its articulation in heterodox sects.

“When attempts are made to smother the intellectual curiosity of people, the mind of man rebels against it, and the inevitable reaction shows itself in an impatience of all formal authority and a wild outbreak of the emotional life long repressed by the discipline of the ceremonial religion”. -Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the philosopher President of India.

2. The emergence of territorial identities accelerated the process of socio-political and economic changes. The elite class, disillusioned with the system in place, began to move in protest towards the heterodox religions blossoming in Magadha or middle Ganges plains.
3. As the Vedic religion was not fully organised, its reach did not permeate into the society and hence people did not find it difficult to follow the newly emerging religious sects.
4. With urbanisation and expansion of trade, new classes of merchants and bankers such as these sought higher social status appropriate to their economic status.
5. The grievance of Kshatriyas was that they were denied a staged life of ashramas, a privilege permitted only to Brahmins in the Vedic texts.

Heterodox Sects

The ascetic wanderers and teachers attracted groups of followers and established various sects. Their philosophies encompassed antinomian (belief that divine grace takes away the necessity of obeying moral law), materialist and fatalist elements. They were heterodox sects that rivalled the orthodox Vedic religion and many of them came into existence during this time. A Buddhist text, Samannaphala Sutta, while making a reference to Ajatashatru of Magadha meeting Gautama Buddha, mentions that before his meeting, the former had a philosophical discourse with the leaders of the various sects such as Purana Kassapa, Makkhali Gosala, Ajita Kesakambalin, Pakudha Kachchayana, Sanjaya Belatthiputta and Nigantha Nataputta (Mahavira). They are described as "homeless wanderers" of long standing (chira-pabbajito), founders of sects (tithakaro) and leaders of their orders (ganachariyo). These sects were the key rivals of Buddhism. Their doctrines were shown unsatisfactory while that of Buddha was acceptable to Ajatashatru.

Ajivikas

The Ajivikas are believed to have evolved from one of the many ascetic groups of the times. According to Buddhist records, Nanda Vaccha was considered the founder of the Ajivika sect. He was succeeded by Kisa Samkicca, followed by Makkhali Gosala, who was the third and the greatest of the Ajivikas. Gosala met Mahavira for the first time in Nalanda and their friendship lasted for six years. They separated due to doctrinal differences. Gosala then went to Sravasti, where he was patronised by a rich potter woman called Halahala. He believed in the doctrine of reanimation, and criticised and ridiculed the severe austerities of the Vedic ascetics. Being rival sects, both the Buddhist and Jaina accounts portray Gosala as a person of vicious character. Sravasti was the headquarters of the Ajivika sect. The Ajivikas were naked ascetics. The basic principle of the Ajivikas was niyati or fate: they believed that nothing in this world could be changed as everything was predetermined. Everyone has to pass through a series of transmigrations to put an end to pain. According to Ajivikas, there were six inevitable factors in life, viz. gain and loss, joy and sorrow, and life and death. Two other preachers, Purana Kassapa and Pakudha Kachchayana, joined the Ajivikas after the death of Gosala and infused new life to it.

Purana Kassapa held the view that actions did not have any merit or demerit. No evil is caused by torture, hurting and killing others. Similarly, no merit is acquired by

generosity, self-control and truthful speech. Humans cannot change anything by action as everything is predetermined. According to him, nonaction is the way out of life. Pakudha Kacchayana believed that the world was made of seven substances that were “unmade, irreducible, uncreated, barren, stable as a mountain peak, standing firm like a pillar – that do not alter, do not change, do not interfere with one another, are incapable of causing one another pleasure, pain or both pleasure and pain”.

The Ajivikas had rich lay disciples such as potters and bankers. The Ajivika sect spread across the length and breadth of the country, though their influence was much less compared to that of Buddhism and Jainism.

Ajivikas in Tamil Land Manimekalai, Nilakesi and Sivagnanasiddhiyar have references to Ajivika doctrine. Nilakesi’s quest for truth takes her to Buddha and Puranan. Puranan was the leader of the Ajivika sect. The Cholas are known to have levied a tax on the Ajivikas.

Ajita Kesakambalin (Ajita of the Hair Blanket) was a materialist. He believed that every human was made of four primary elements: fire, water, wind and sense. After death, these elements return to the earth. There is no life after death. He said, “Generosity is taught by idiots. The words of those who speak of existence after death are false, empty chatter. With the breakup of the body, the wise and the foolish alike are annihilated, destroyed. They do not exist after death.”

Lokayata and Carvaka

The term “lookayata” signifies materialist thought. Indian materialism has also been named Carvaka after one of the two founders of the school. Carvaka and Ajita Kesakambalin are said to have established Indian materialism as a formal philosophical system. Carvakas developed the concept of scepticism and believed in the pursuit of knowledge through experience. They questioned the authority of Vedas.

Rivalry among Heterodox Sects

There was intense rivalry among the various heterodox sects. This is evident from the various religious accounts of the period. Buddhist and Jaina texts not only mention other heterodox sects but also belittle them. For example, Bhagavatisutra, a Jaina text, provides a poor account of Makkhali Gosala. He is described as born to a poor mendicant in a cowshed. It accuses Gosala becoming a disciple of Mahavira for material comfort as the latter had many wealthy patrons. It describes “the greatest Ajivika teacher as a person of most contemptible character, a man of low parentage, and (sic) of low profession”. Buddhagosa also ridicules Gosala in his commentaries. He describes Gosala as a servant fleeing naked from his master on committing a mistake even disregarding the fact that his garment had fallen. A Buddhist Jataka story “compares the heretics with the fire-flies, whose faint light faded before the rising glory of the sun, i.e., the Buddha”.

Jainism

Among the various sects, the sect led by Vardhamana Mahavira (referred to as Nigantha Nataputta by Buddhist texts) bloomed into a religion called Jainism. It was earlier known as Nirgrantha (free from bonds). Mahavira was known as Jina (conqueror) of the soul and hence his sect came to be known as Jainism. According to Jain tradition, Mahavira was not the founder of Jainism, but the last of the 24 Tirthankaras or 'maker of fords' (ford means a shallow place in river or stream to allow one to walk across). According to Jain tradition, Risabha was the founder of the sect. He is considered the first Tirthankara. Yajur Veda mentions three of the Tirthankaras, viz., Risabha, Ajitanatha and Aristanemi. Mahavira organised his members into monastic and lay followers.

Life of Mahavira

Vardhamana was born around 540 BCE in Kundagrama, a suburb of Vaishali. He was a member of the ruling family of agana-sangha and his father Siddhartha was the chief of the Jnatrika clan. His mother Trishala was a Lichchavi princess and sister of its chief Chetaka. Mahavira was closely connected to rulers of Magadha, Anga and Videha through his mother. From his childhood, he was attracted to spiritual life. After the death of his parents, he left his home at the age of 30 and wandered about as a mendicant for 12 years in search of true knowledge. He practiced severe austerities and discarded his garments. During the course of his wanderings, he met Gosala and spent six years with him before they parted due to differences. In the 13th year of his wandering, at the age of 42, Vardhamana attained enlightenment or Nirvana. He then became a Tirthankara and came to be called a Jina or Mahavira (the Great conqueror). He preached for 30 years and was patronised by the rich and the elite. He died about 468 BCE at the age of 72 in Pavapuri near Rajgriha. He fasted unto death according to Jain ideals. His death or final liberation was a joyous event for the Jains.

Mahavira had a huge following. In the early stages, his followers were drawn from different sections of the society. However, in course of time, Jainism was confined to the trading and money-lending community. Jainism's insistence on non-violence closed other occupations, including agriculture, as it prescribed refraining from intended or unintended killing. About 500 years after Mahavira's death, in about 79 or 82 CE, a schism occurred in Jainism. Magadha was affected by severe famine and some of the Jain monks under Bhadrabahu went south to maintain their strict discipline. They remained without garments and were known as Digambaras (space-clad or naked). Others stayed back under the leadership of Sthulabhadra and adopted a white garment and were known as Svetambaras (white-clad). The schism weakened Jainism in Magadha, but it found ardent followers in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Karnataka. On the death of Bhadrabahu, Sthulabhadra held a Great Council at Pataliputra, which compiled the Jain canon. It consisted of 12 angas (limbs). Another council was held in Valabhi, Gujarat, in the 5th century CE. It added 12 upangas (minor sections). The Jain monks not only wrote religious treatises but also promoted secular literature. Acharrangasutra, Sutrakritanga, and Kalpasutra are the earliest Jain texts. Most of the early Jain texts were written in Ardha-Magadhi, the language of the common people.

Tenets of Jainism

The central tenet of Jainism is non-violence. No other religion lays as much emphasis on non-violence as does Jainism. It also criticises human emotions. Jainism denies the existence of God. In its early stages, deity was not worshipped in Jainism. It emphasises that salvation cannot be attained by worshipping god or by sacrifices. It stipulates that one can escape misery only by performing austerities.

Mahavira rejected Vedic authority. Hence, Jainism is an unorthodox religion. According to Jainism, the world has no beginning or end. It goes through a series of progress and decline according to an eternal law. Jainism advocated dualism: the world is made of soul (jiva) and matter (ajiva), which are eternal. The coming together of jiva and ajiva creates karma (action), which leads to an endless cycle of birth and rebirth. To free oneself from karma, one has to practice severe austerities and self-mortification. Therefore, in Jainism, only monks could achieve liberation from the cycle of birth and rebirth.

Triratnas

Jain discipline requires adherence to certain rigorous rules. The Jains are required to follow three principles called Triratnas or Three Gems.

- (1) Right faith (samyag-darshana);
- (2) Right knowledge (samyag-jnana);
- (3) Right conduct (samyag-mahavrata)

Five Great Vows

The monks have to undertake the five great vows (pancha-mahavrata):

- (1) **Not to kill or injure (ahimsa);**
- (2) **Not to steal (asteya);**
- (3) **Not to lie (satya);**
- (4) **Celibacy (brahmacharya);**
- (5) **Not to possess property (aparigraha)**

Non-Violence

The five vows are common to both the monks and lay followers. The monks were to observe the vows more rigorously than the lay followers. As Jainism placed great emphasis on non-violence, strict observers of the faith wear a muslin cloth around their mouth and nose so that they would not inhale small insects even by mistake. To avoid trampling on ants and other insects, Jain monks used feathers to sweep the path before walking. Jains could not practice agriculture or other crafts that involve killing or injury to living organisms. Hence they took to trading and money-lending and excelled in it. As a result, they were closely associated with urbanisation.

Jainism is an egalitarian religion. It does not sanction any inequality based on birth. It is one's deeds that determine one's status in society and not birth. Jainism believes that "by one's action one becomes a Brahmin, a Kshatriya, or a Vaishya, or a Sudra." Pride based on birth is considered as sin. Women were admitted into the monastic order. However, as a woman one cannot attain salvation. By accumulating merit by good deeds, a woman could be reborn as a man and then strive to attain salvation.

Jainism in Tamilnadu

Jainism spread to Tamil Nadu from about the third century CE. Jain rock shelters are found in large numbers around Madurai and other places. The mention of death of Kopperuncholan by fasting in chol Purananuru is considered by some to be similar to Jain practice of sallekhana. Jain influence is strong in early Tamil literature. Naladiyar, Palamoli, Jivaka Chinthamani, Yapperunkalam Karikai, Neelakesi are some of the prominent Jain works in Tamil. As early as c. 470 CE a Jain Dravida Sangha was established in Madurai by Vajranandi, a disciple of Boojya Padha. Jainism has survived in Tamil Nadu and there are several Jain temples. One of the Jain temples is at Tiruparuthikunram near Kanchipuram with beautiful ceiling paintings. This part of Kanchipuram was known as Jain Kanchi.

Decline of Jainism in India

Absence of royal patronage, split amongst Jains as Digambaras and Svetambaras, lack of missionary zeal, factionalism and the severity of practices, and spread of Buddhism as a rival faith led to the decline of Jainism in India.

Buddhism

Among the heterodox sects, Buddhism was the most popular. It went on to emerge as a powerful religion patronised by various rulers. It was so influential that its ideas were adopted by Asoka as a state policy. Though it virtually disappeared from India for nearly a millennium, it spread far and wide and is widely followed even today in the South-east and East Asian countries. In the mid-twentieth century it was revived in India by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

Life of Buddha

Gautama Buddha was born as Siddhartha in the Sakya clan to its king Suddhodhana and his chief queen Mahamaya. His mother Mahamaya dreamt of a white elephant with six tusks entering her womb when she was pregnant. Learned men prophesied that the child would either become 'a Universal Emperor or a Universal Teacher'. While Mahamaya was going to her parents' home, Siddhartha was born in a park in Lumbini near Kapilavastu. Siddhartha grew in luxury as a royal prince. He married Yashodhara and had a son named Rahula. When he was riding on his chariot with his charioteer one day outside the palace, he saw an old man, a sick man, a corpse and finally a

religious mendicant. Overcome by remorse at the misery of people, he left his palace in the dead of night in search of eternal truth. Herod in his chariot pulled by his favourite horse Kanthaka and driven by his charioteer Channa far away from the city. He cut his hair and sent it along with his discarded garments and jewellery to his father. This is known as Mahabharaskramana or the Great Going Forth.

Siddhartha wandered about and joined Alara Kalama as a disciple for a brief period. He also sought guidance from a hermit Uddaka Ramaputta. Siddhartha was not satisfied with their path and practised severe austerities, which left him nearly dead. One day, he ate rice boiled in milk given by a milkmaid named Sujata and began meditation under a pipal tree in Bodhgaya. After 49 days of meditation, he attained enlightenment, at the age of 35. Thereafter, he came to be called Buddha or the Enlightened. He then delivered his first sermon in a deer park in Sarnath near Varanasi. This event is described as Dharmachakra-parivartana or 'wheel of the great law'. He spoke about the Four Noble Truths and the Middle Path. He established Sangha and spread his ideas far and wide. Buddha and his followers travelled for eight months of the year and stayed at a place for four months of the rainy season. At the age of 80, he passed away in Kusinagara. This is known as Parinirvana. The prominent disciples of Buddha were Sariputta, Mahamoggallana, Mahakaccayana and Ananda. Buddha had a huge following among both the royalty and lay persons.

Buddhist Councils

After the death of Buddha, the tenets and other aspects of Buddhism were decided upon in the councils of Buddhist monks. Over a period of time, four Buddhist councils were held. The First Buddhist Council was held at Rajgriha after Buddha's death. It was headed by Upali. In this council, Upali recited the Vinaya Pitaka. Ananda recited Sutta Pitaka. The Second Buddhist Council met at Vaishali a century after Buddha's death. The Buddhist Order split into two later. One was called the Sthaviravadins or 'Believers in the Teachings of the Elders' and the other known as Mahasanghikas or 'Members of the Great Community'. The Third Buddhist Council was held at Pataliputra. It was convened by Asoka. The Sthaviravadins established themselves strongly and expelled the heretics. The last section called "Kathavatthu" was added to Abhidhamma Pitaka. The Fourth Buddhist Council was held at Kashmir during the reign of Kanishka. Sarvastivadins were an important sect of Buddhism. Its doctrines were compiled in Mahavibhassa.

Buddhist Sects

In course of time, Sthaviravadins, Mahasanghikas and Sarvastivadins emerged as major sects of Buddhism. New ideas emerged among the Sarvastivadins and Mahasanghikas. It led to the emergence of Mahayana and Hinayana (the Great and Lesser Vehicles) in Buddhism. Mahayana or the Great Vehicle became popular and influential in India. Nalanda University was an important centre of Buddhist learning and was patronised by the Palas. It spread to China and Japan. Hinayana or the Lesser Vehicle became popular in Sri Lanka,

Burma, Thailand and other South-east Asian countries. By the end of the Gupta period, Vajrayana or the Vehicle of the Thunderbolt emerged. It was popular in Bengal and Bihar. It was influenced by primitive local cults and spread to Tibet in the 11th century CE. The Vikramasila University in Bihar was an important centre of Vajrayana Buddhism. Buddhism in India began to decline with the onset of the Bhakti movement. Slowly Buddhism came to be influenced by Hindu practices. Soon, Buddhism was incorporated into Hinduism, and Buddha came to be considered as an avatar of Vishnu in some traditions.

Buddhist Literature

The Buddhist texts were compiled in Pali. The Pali canons are called as the Tripitakas (Three Baskets). They are Vinaya Pitaka, Sutta Pitaka and Abhidhamma Pitaka. Vinaya Pitaka deals with monastic rules and moral disciplines. Sutta Pitaka dwells upon discourses and teachings of Buddha. Abhidhamma Pitaka expounds Buddhist philosophy. The Sutta Pitaka, which contains the teachings of Buddha, is divided into five groups or Nikayas. They contain popular works such as Theragatha and Therigatha (Hymns of the Elder Monks and Nuns) and Jataka tales (Buddha's deeds in previous births as Bodhisattva). Other important Buddhist works include Milinda Panha, a discussion

between Greco-Bactrian king Menander and Buddhist monk Nagasena, and Ceylonese chronicles Dipavamsa (Island Chronicles), Mahavamsa (Great Chronicle) and Culavamsa (Lesser Chronicle).

The Starving Tigress:

A Jataka Tale Born in a family renowned for purity of conduct and great spiritual devotion, the Bodhisattva became a great scholar and teacher. With no desire for wealth, he went to a forest and led a life of an ascetic. It was in this forest he encountered a starving tigress, which after giving birth to cubs was about to eat her own new born cubs for survival. With no food in sight, the Bodhisattva offered his body as food to the tigress out of compassion

Four Noble Truths of Buddha

The four noble truths prescribed by Buddha are as follows:

- **The Noble Truth of Suffering: Birth, age, death, unpleasantness, separation, unfulfilled wish.**
- **The Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering: thirst for pleasure, power, long life, etc. are the causes for sorrow.**
- **The Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering (Nirvana): complete stopping or release from sorrow.**
- **The Noble Truth of the Path Leading to Cessation of Suffering: the Noble Eight fold Path or the Middle Path.**

Buddhism believed in karma and the doctrine of rebirth. Past actions determine one's condition in this birth. To be free from karma or the cycle of rebirth is to attain nirvana. It can be attained by following the Middle Path.

Buddha's Middle or Eightfold Path

(1) Right Views; (2) Right Resolve; (3) Right Speech; (4) Right Conduct; (5) Right Livelihood; (6) Right Effort; (7) Right Recollection; (8) Right Meditation.

Hence Buddha did not mention or talk about God. He neither accepted nor denied the existence of God. Buddhism advocated equality. It preached non-violence or ahimsa and love towards all. However, it was a moderate religion compared to Jainism's insistence on ahimsa. It promoted trade and capitalism as it was against waste and advocated frugality. Jobs involving any form of killing were forbidden. Trade in weapons, living beings, meat, liquor and poison were not permitted.

Buddhism in Tamilnadu

Buddhism spread to Tamil Nadu from about third century BCE. Asokan inscriptions found in the Deccan region vouch for the spread of Buddhism to southern parts of India. Archaeological evidences also reveal the existence of a Buddhist complex of the fourth century CE in Kaveripattinam. Quoting Pattinapalai, Noboru Karashima refers to merchants in Kaveripattinam who as vegetarians were opposed to animal sacrifice. From this one could presume the influence of Buddhism in Tamil country. Manimekalai by Sattanar one of the twin epics of the post-Sangam age is a Buddhist literature. Similarly the now extinct Kundalakesi is a Buddhist epic. Kanchipuram in the early Christian era was a flourishing Buddhist centre. Dinnaga and Dhammapala who headed the famous Nalanda University were renowned Buddhist scholars from Kanchipuram. Hiuen Tsang who visited Tamil country mentions in his travel accounts about several Buddhist Stupas built by Asoka in Kanchipuram.

A Buddhist temple was built in Nagapattinam at the request of a Chinese ruler during the reign of Pallava king Narasimhavarman II (CE 695-722). Chinese monk Wu-hing visited the monastery. In CE 1006, during the reign of Rajaraja I, Srivijaya King Marawijayottunga-varman built a Buddhist temple in Nagapattinam. It is called the Soolamani-varma-vihara.

Decline of Buddhism in India

Buddhism faced divisions from time to time. Division into various splinter groups like 'Hinayana', 'Mahayana', 'Vajrayana', 'Tantrayana' and 'Sahajayana' led Buddhism to lose its originality. Pali and Prakrit were the spoken languages of people of north India and it was through these languages the message of Buddhism was spread. But ever since the times of Fourth Buddhist Council held during the reign of Kanishka, Sanskrit had come to be adopted. Buddhism thereupon became unintelligible to common people.

Buddhism also lost its royal patronage after Harshavardhana. In contrast, the Vedic religion got royal patronage first from Pushyamitra Sunga and later from imperial Guptas. The role of the exponents of Bhakti movement like Ramanuja, Ramananda also helped to restore the glory of Vedic religion.

The invasion of Huns gave a deathblow to Buddhism. Toramana and Mihirakula, the two Hun chiefs had a deep-seated hatred for the Buddhists and they almost liquidated the Buddhists living in the north-west India. To make matters worse, the Rajput rulers who could not reconcile to the Buddhist concept of nonviolence, and as ardent advocates of Vedic religion started persecuting the Buddhists. Finally the invading Arabs and Turks forced the Buddhist monks to flee from India and seek asylum in Nepal, Tibet and Ceylon. In consequence Buddhism faded away in India.



Lesson 4

Emergence of State and Empire

Introduction

From the sixth century to the third century BCE, North India passed through major political and social changes. Buddhism and Jainism emerged as prominent religions having a large number of followers. Referred to as sramanic religions (from the word sramana in Sanskrit, meaning a teacher), these two religious systems were antithetical to the mainstream Vedic religion. As a consequence of new beliefs and ideas propounded by Jainism and Buddhism, the social order largely centred on Vedic rituals underwent a significant change, as people of many religious faiths were part of the emerging society. On the political front, minor states and federations of clans were merged through conquests to create an empire during this period, resulting in a large state, ruled by a chakravartin or ekarat (emperor or one supreme king). The rise of a centralised empire in the Gangetic plains of present-day Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh changed the social, economic and administrative fabric of the region.

The fat plains and the availability of plentiful water from the perennial rivers, such as the Ganga and its many tributaries, were among the favourable ecological conditions which promoted the rise of a large state in this particular region. Rivers also acted as major waterways for trade and travel. Bimbisara, who was a contemporary of Buddha, started the process of empire building. It was strengthened by his son Ajatashatru and then by the Nandas. The empire reached its glory and peaked with the advent of the Mauryan Empire founded by Chandragupta Maurya. The first three Mauryan emperors, Chandragupta, Bindusara and Ashoka, were the best known. After Ashoka, the Mauryan Empire went into decline.

Sources

The names of Chandragupta and his two successors in the Mauryan period are well known now. But reconstructing their lives and careers was a laborious and difficult process for the earlier historians. There are hardly any comprehensive contemporary accounts or literary works which refer to the Mauryan emperors though they are mentioned in various Buddhist and Jain texts as well as in some Hindu works like the brahmanas. The Mahavamsa, the comprehensive historical chronicle in Pali from Sri Lanka, is an important additional source. The scattered information from these sources has been corroborated by accounts of Greek historians who left their accounts about India following Alexander's campaign in north-western part of the country.

Archaeology and epigraphy are the tools that provide rich information for the historian to understand earlier periods of history. Archaeology is particularly important because excavations reveal the nature of urban morphology, that is, layout of the city and construction of buildings. They also provide concrete information about the material culture of people in the past, such as the metals that were known, materials and tools they

used, and the technology they employed. The archaeological finds in the Gangetic regions give us solid proof about the nature of the urban centres established in the region in course of time. Epigraphical evidence is scanty for the period. The most widely known are the edicts of Ashoka, which have been discovered in many parts of the country. In fact, the reconstruction of the Mauryan period to a great extent became possible only after the Brahmi script of the inscriptions at Sanchi was deciphered by James Prinsep in 1837. Information about other edicts in other parts of the country also became available at that time. It must be remembered that these were the oldest historical artefacts found in India in the nineteenth century, until archaeological excavations unearthed the Indus valley towns of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro in the twentieth century. All the edicts began with a reference to a great king, "Thus spoke devanampiya (beloved of the gods) piyadassi (of pleasing looks)", and the geographical spread of the edicts make it clear that this was a king who had ruled over a vast empire. But who was this king? Puranic and Buddhist texts referred to a chakravartin named Ashoka. As more edicts were deciphered, the decisive identification that devananampiya piyadassi was Ashoka was made in 1915. One more edict when deciphered, which referred to him as devanampiya Ashoka, made reconstruction of Mauryan history possible.

Let us now turn to two later sources. The first is the rock inscription of Junagadh, near Girnar in Gujarat. This was carved during the reign of Rudradaman, the local ruler and dates back to 130–150 CE. It refers to Pushyagupta, the provincial governor (rashtra) of Emperor Chandragupta. This is of importance for two reasons: (i) it indicates the extent of the Mauryan Empire, which had expanded as far west as Gujarat and (ii) it shows that more than four centuries after his death, the name of Chandragupta was still well known and remembered in many parts of the country. A second source is a literary work. The play *Mudrarakshasa* by Visakhadatta was written during the Gupta period, sometime after the 4th century CE. It narrates Chandragupta's accession to the throne of the Magadha Empire and the exploits of his chief advisor Chanakya or Kautilya by listing the strategies he used to counter an invasion against Chandragupta. This play is often cited as a corroborative source since it supports the information gathered from other contemporary sources about Chandragupta. It is important to note from both these sources that the fame of Chandragupta had survived long after he was gone and became imbedded in popular lore and memory. They thus attest to the significance of oral traditions, which are now accepted as an additional valid source of history.

Rise of Magadha under the Haryanka Dynasty

Among the 16 mahajanapadas, Kasi was initially powerful. However, Kosala became dominant later. A power struggle broke out between Magadha, Kosala, Vrijji and Avanti. Eventually Magadha emerged as the dominant mahajanapada and established the first Indian empire. The first known ruler of Magadha was Bimbisara of the Haryanka dynasty. He extended the territory of Magadhan Empire by matrimonial alliances and conquests. By marrying off his sister to Prasenajit, ruler of Kosala, he received Kasi as dowry. He also married the princesses of Lichchhavis and Madra. He maintained friendly relations with Avanti but annexed Anga by military might. Thus, Magadha became a

powerful and prominent power. During his reign, Bimbisara patronised various religious sects and their leaders. He had an encounter with Buddha as well.

His son Ajatashatru ascended the throne by killing his father. King Prasenajit immediately took back Kasi, which he had handed out as dowry to Bimbisara. This led to a military confrontation between Magadha and Kosala. The struggle lasted until Prasenajit was overthrown and died at Rajgriha, the capital of Magadha Empire. Kosala was then annexed to Magadha. Ajatashatru also fought and won the battle against the Licchavis. He defeated the Licchavis and the Mallas. Ajatashatru is also believed to have met Buddha in his lifetime. By the time Ajatashatru died in 461 BCE Magadha had become undisputedly the strongest power.

The Haryanka dynasty was succeeded by the Shishunaga dynasty. Shishunaga, a viceroy of Benaras, deposed the last Haryanka king and ascended the throne. The Shishunagas ruled for fifty years before the throne was usurped by Mahapadma Nanda.

Nandas: The First Empire Builders of India

About a hundred years after Ajatashatru's demise, the Nandas became the emperors of Magadha in 362 BCE. The first Nanda ruler was Mahapadma. It is believed that he usurped the throne by murdering the last of the Shishunaga kings. Under the Nandas, the empire expanded considerably, and the wealth and power of the Nandas became widely known and feared. Mahapadma Nanda was succeeded by his eight sons, and they were together known as the Navanandas or the nine Nandas. During the process of empire building, Nandas exterminated many Kshatriya clans and subjugated Kshatriya-ruled kingdoms, which had still retained a degree of autonomous authority, thus creating a centralised state. An inscription known as the Hathigumpha (elephant cave) from Udayagiri near Bhubaneswar, Odisha, records the aqueduct built by King Nanda three hundred years earlier. This is also indicative of the geographical extent of the Nanda Empire. Though the Nandas were able administrators and had strengthened the Magadha Empire, they were not popular among the people.

A centralised state required a new administrative framework to govern an extensive territory, the creation of a bureaucracy, resources of money and men for managing the administration and the army. A system of revenue administration had to be developed to raise the funds needed for the state through taxation. Such a political formation led to the development of cities as administrative centres, distinct from villages and rural areas. A large standing army was required for expanding and retaining the empire.

Persians and Macedonian Invasions

The period from the sixth century witnessed close cultural contact of the north-west of India with Persia and Greece. It might be surprising to know that Gandhara and its adjoining regions on the Indus were part of the Achaemenid Empire of Persia. Cyrus, the emperor of Persia, invaded India around 530 BCE and destroyed the city of Kapisha.

According to Greek historian Herodotus, Gandhara constituted the twentieth and the richest satrapy of the Achaemenid Empire. The region continued to be part of the Persian Empire till the invasion of Alexander the Great. The inscriptions of Darius I mention the presence of the Persians in the Indus region and include “the people of Gadara, Haravati and Maka” as subjects of the Achaemenid Empire.

The word “Hindu” appears for the first time in an inscription of Darius I at Persepolis, Iran. Darius lists “Hindu” as part of his empire. The word “Sindhu”, denoting a river in general and Indus in particular, became “Hindu” in Persian. The Greeks dropped the S and called it Indu, which eventually came to be called Hindu and later India.

Taxila

Takshashila or Taxila is situated in present-day Pakistan. Between the fifth century and fourth century BCE, it was part of the Achaemenid Empire of Persia. Because of its strategic location on the trade route between the East and the West, it emerged as an important centre of learning and culture. Students came from far and wide to Taxila in search of knowledge. The city was brought to light by the excavation carried out in the 1940s by Sir John Marshall. Taxila is considered “one of the greatest intellectual achievements of any ancient civilization”. Panini seems to have compiled his well-known work, *Ashtadhyayi*, here.

Impact of Persian Contact

As the north-western part of India came under the control of the Persian Empire from about middle of the sixth century, the region became a centre of confluence of Persian and Indian culture. The Persian contact left its impact on art, architecture, economy and administration of ancient India. The cultural impact was felt most in the Gandhara region. The most significant impact was the development of the Kharosthi script, used in the north-western part of India. It was used by Ashoka in his inscriptions in the Gandhara region. The Kharosthi script was derived from Aramaic used widely in the Achaemenid Empire of Persia.

Like Aramaic, Kharosthi was written from right to left. Persian sigloi (silver coin) is an imitation from the region. The earliest coins in India are traced to the period of the mahajanapadas. The Indian word for coin *karsa* is of Persian origin. The coins might have been inspired by the Persian coins. The existence of coins in that period suggests trade links between India and Persia. The Ashokan edicts might have been inspired by the edicts of the Achaemenid king Darius. The Ashokan edicts use the term *lipi* instead of the Iranian term *dipi*.

The Mauryan art and architecture show traces of Persian influence. Mauryan columns of the Ashokan Pillar are similar to the columns found in the Achaemenid Empire. The bell-shaped capital of the columns, especially the lion capital of Sarnath pillar and the bell capital of Rampurval pillar, show resemblance to designs found in the

Achaemenid columns. Similarly, the pillared remains of the Palace in Pataliputra display a remarkable similarity to the pillared hall in the Achaemenid capital. However, the craftsmen, though inspired by the Persian art and architecture, gave a definite Indian character to their work.

Connection between Persian and Sanskrit

There are linguistic similarities between Rig Veda and Avesta. The term Aryas was also used by the ancient Persians. According to Indologist Thomas Burrow, only phonetic change had occurred overtime. The Bogaz Koi (in North-East Syria) Inscription dating back to 1380 BCE records a treaty between a Hittite and a Mitanni King. It mentions the names of a few Rig Vedic gods such as Indara, Uruvna (Varuna), Mitira and Nasatiya (Ashvins).

Alexander's Invasion

During Dana Nanda's reign, Alexander invaded north-west India (327–325 BCE). In many ways, the invasion by Alexander is a watershed in Indian history. It marked the beginning of the interaction between India and the West, which spanned many centuries to follow. Greek historians began to write about India, and Greek governors and kings ruled in the north-western region of India, which introduced new styles of art and governance. After his conquests in the Punjab region, Alexander expressed his desire to march further east to attack the Magadha Empire. However, his already tired troops had heard about the great emperor in the east (Nanda) and his formidable army and refused to be engaged in a war against such a powerful adversary.

In 326 BCE when Alexander entered the Indian subcontinent after defeating the Persians, Ambhi, the ruler of Taxila, surrendered and accepted the suzerainty of Alexander. The most famous of Alexander's encounters was with Porus, ruler of the region between Jhelum and Beas. The two armies met in the battle of Hydaspes in which Porus was imprisoned. Later, impressed by the Porus's dignity, Alexander restored his throne on the condition of accepting his suzerainty. His battle-weary soldiers refused to march further. Alexander did not want to proceed against the reluctance of his army. During his return, Alexander died of typhoid in Babylon.

The Impact of Alexander's Invasion

Alexander's invasion led to the establishment of Greek satrapies in the north-western region of the Indian subcontinent. Trade routes opened up with the West. There were four different trade routes in use, which facilitated the movement of Greek merchants and craftsmen to India, establishing direct contact between India and Greece. As trade contact increased, many Greek settlements were established in the northwest of India. Alexandria near Kabul, Boukephala near Peshawar in Pakistan and Alexandria in Sindh were some of the prominent Greek settlements.

The Greek accounts of India provide valuable information but with a bit of exaggeration. Alexander's death created a void in the north-west, facilitating the accession

of Chandragupta Maurya to the throne of Magadha. It also helped him to conquer the numerous small chiefdoms in the north-west and bring the region under his empire.

Mauryan Empire

Contemporary accounts by Greek historians show that Chandragupta was a youth living in Taxila when Alexander invaded India. Greek historians have recorded his name as "Sandrakottus" or "Sandrakoptus", which are evidently modified forms of Chandragupta. Inspired by Alexander, Chandragupta led a revolt against the Nandas years later and overthrew them. Chandragupta achieved it either by inciting the people to rise against an unpopular monarch, or by soliciting their support in overthrowing an unpopular king. Chandragupta established the Mauryan Empire and became its first emperor in 321 BCE.

We know from the Junagadh rock inscription (referred to earlier) that Chandragupta had expanded his empire westward as far as Gujarat. One of his great achievements, according to local accounts, was that he waged war against the Greek prefects (military officials) left behind by Alexander and destroyed them, so that the way was cleared to carry out his ambitious plan of expanding the territories. Another major event of his reign was the war against Seleucus, who was one of Alexander's generals. After the death of Alexander, Seleucus had established his kingdom extending up to Punjab. Chandragupta defeated him in a battle some time before 301 BCE and drove him out of the Punjab region. The final agreement between the two was probably not too acrimonious, since Chandragupta gave Seleucus 500 war elephants, and Seleucus sent an ambassador to Chandragupta's court. This ambassador was Megasthenes, and we owe much of the information that we have about Chandragupta to India, the account written by Megasthenes. The original of this work is lost, but many Greek historians had reproduced parts of his account describing the court of Chandragupta and his administration.

Chandragupta

Chandragupta was obviously a great ruler who had to reinvent a strong administrative apparatus to govern his extensive kingdom. (The system of governance and polity is discussed in the next section.) Chandragupta was ably advised and aided by Chanakya, known for political manoeuvring, in governing his empire. Contemporary Jain and Buddhist texts hardly have any mention of Chanakya. But popular oral tradition ascribes the greatness of Chandragupta and his reign to the wisdom and genius of Chanakya. Chanakya, also known as Kautilya and Vishnugupta, was a Brahmin and a sworn adversary of the Nandas. He is credited with having devised the strategy for overthrowing the Nandas and helping Chandragupta to become the emperor of Magadha. He is celebrated as the author of the Arthashastra, a treatise on political strategy and governance. His intrigues and brilliant strategy to subvert the intended invasion of Magadha is the theme of the play, Mudrarakshasa.

Bindusara

Chandragupta's son Bindusara succeeded him as emperor in 297 BCE in a peaceful and natural transition. We do not know what happened to Chandragupta. He probably renounced the world. According to the Jain tradition, Chandragupta spent his last years as an ascetic in Chandragiri, near Sravanabelagola, in Karnataka. Bindusara was clearly a capable ruler and continued his father's tradition of close interaction with the Greek states of West Asia. He continued to be advised by Chanakya and other capable ministers. His sons were appointed as viceroys of the different provinces of the empire. We do not know much about his military exploits, but the empire passed intact to his son, Ashoka.

Bindusara ruled for 25 years, and he must have died in 272 BCE. Ashoka was not his chosen successor, and the fact that he came to the throne only four years later in 268 BCE would indicate that there was a struggle between the sons of Bindusara for the succession. Ashoka had been the viceroy of Taxila when he put down a revolt against the local officials by the people of Taxila, and was later the viceroy of Ujjain, the capital of Avanti and a major city and commercial centre. As emperor, he is credited with building the monumental structures that have been excavated in the site of Pataliputra. He continued the tradition of close interaction with the Greek states in West Asia, and there was mutual exchange of emissaries from both sides.

Ashoka

The defining event of Ashoka's rule was his campaign against Kalinga (present-day Odisha) in the eighth year of his reign. This is the only recorded military expedition of the Mauryas. The number of those killed in battle, those who died subsequently, and those deported ran into tens of thousands. The campaign had probably been more ferocious and brutal than usual because this was a punitive war against Kalinga, which had broken away from the Magadha Empire (the Hathigumpha inscription speaks of Kalinga as a part of the Nanda Empire). Ashoka was devastated by the carnage and moved by the suffering that he converted to humanistic values. He became a Buddhist and his new-found values and beliefs were recorded in a series of edicts, which confirm his passion for peace and moral righteousness or dhamma (dharma in Sanskrit).

Edicts of Ashoka

The edicts of Ashoka thus constitute the most concrete source of information about the Mauryan Empire. There are 33 edicts comprising 14 Major Rock Edicts, 2 known as Kalinga edicts, 7 Pillar Edicts, some Minor Rock Edicts and a few Minor Pillar Inscriptions. The Major Rock Edicts extend from Kandahar in Afghanistan, Shahbazgarhi and Mansehra in northwest Pakistan to Uttarakhand district in the north, Gujarat and Maharashtra in the west, Odisha in the east and as far south as Karnataka and Kurnool district in Andhra Pradesh. Minor Pillar Inscriptions have been found as far north as Nepal (near Lumbini). The edicts were written mostly in the Brahmi script and in Magadhi and Prakrit. The Kandahar inscriptions are in Greek and Aramaic, while the two inscriptions in north-west Pakistan are in Kharosthi script.

The geographical spread of the edicts essentially defines the extent of the vast empire over which Ashoka ruled. The second inscription mentions lands beyond his borders: "the Chodas (Cholas), the Pandyas, the Satiyaputa, the Keralaputa (Chera), even Tamraparni, the Yona king Antiyoka (Antiochus), and the kings who are the neighbours of this Antioka". The edicts stress Ashoka's belief in peace, righteousness and justice and his concern for the welfare of his people. By rejecting violence and war, advocating peace and the pursuit of dhamma, Ashoka negated the prevailing philosophy of statecraft that stressed that an emperor had to strive to extend and consolidate his empire through warfare and military conquests.

Third Buddhist Council

One of the major events of Ashoka's reign was the convening of the Third Buddhist sangha (council) in 250 BCE in the capital Pataliputra. Ashoka's deepening commitment to Buddhism meant that royal patronage was extended to the Buddhist establishment. An important outcome of this sangha was the decision to expand the reach of Buddhism to other parts of the region and to send missions to convert people to the religion. Buddhism thus became a proselytizing religion and missionaries were sent to regions outlying the empire such as Kashmir and South India. According to popular belief, Ashoka sent his two children, Mahinda and Sanghamitta, to Sri Lanka to propagate Buddhism. It is believed that they took a branch of the original bodhi tree to Sri Lanka.

Ashoka died in 231 BCE. Sadly, though his revolutionary view of governance and non-violence found a resonance in our contemporary sensibilities, they were not in consonance with the realities of the times. After his death, the Mauryan Empire slowly disintegrated and died out within fifty years. But the two centuries prior to Ashoka's death and the disintegration of the Mauryan Empire were truly momentous in Indian history. This was a period of great change.

The consolidation of a state extending over nearly two-thirds of the sub-continent had taken place with formalised administration, development of bureaucratic institutions and economic expansion, in addition to the rise of new heterodox religions and philosophies that questioned the established orthodoxy.

The Mauryan State and Polity

The major areas of concern for the Mauryan state were the collection of taxes as revenue to the state and the administration of justice, in addition to the maintenance of internal security and defence against external aggression. This required a large and complex administrative machinery and institutions. Greek historians, taking their lead from Megasthenes, described the Mauryan state as a centralised state. What we should infer from this description as a centralised state is that a uniform pattern of administration was established throughout the very large area of the empire. But, given the existing state of technology in communications and transport, a decentralised administrative system had to be in place.

This bureaucratic set-up covered a hierarchy of settlements from the village, to the towns, provincial capitals and major cities. The bureaucracy enabled and required an efficient system of revenue collection, since it needed to be paid out of taxes collected. Equally, the very large army of the Mauryan Empire could be maintained only with the revenue raised through taxation. The large bureaucracy also commanded huge salaries. According to the Arthashastra, the salary of chief minister, the purohita and the army commander was 48,000 panas, and the soldiers received 500 panas. If we multiply this by the number of infantry and cavalry, we get an idea of the enormous resources needed to maintain the army and the administrative staff.

Arthashastra

Perhaps the most detailed account of the administration is to be found in the Arthashastra (though the work itself is now dated to a few centuries later). However, it must be remembered that the Arthashastra was a prescriptive text, which laid down the guidelines for good administration. If we add to this the information from Ashoka's edicts and the work of Megasthenes, we get a more comprehensive picture of the Mauryan state as it was.

Provincial Administration

At the head of the administration was the king. He was assisted by a council of ministers and a purohita or priest, who was a person of great importance, and secretaries known as mahamatriyas. The capital region of Pataliputra was directly administered. The rest of the empire was divided into four provinces based at Suvarnagiri (near Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh), Ujjain (Avanti, Malwa), Taxila in the northwest, and Tosali in Odisha in the southeast. The provinces were administered by governors who were usually royal princes. In each region, the revenue and judicial administration and the bureaucracy of the Mauryan state was replicated to achieve a uniform system of governance. Revenue collection was the responsibility of a collector-general (samaharta) who was also in charge of exchequer that he was, in effect, like a minister of finance. He had to supervise all the provinces, fortified towns, mines, forests, trade routes and others, which were the sources of revenue. The treasurer was responsible for keeping a record of the tax revenues. The accounts of each department had to be presented jointly by the ministers to the king. Each department had a large staff of superintendents and subordinate officers linked to the central and local governments.

District and Village Administration

At the next level of administration came the districts, villages and towns. The district was under the command of a sathanika, while officials known as gopas were in charge of five to ten villages. Urban administration was handled by a nagarika. Villages were semi-autonomous and were under the authority of a gramani, appointed by the central government, and a council of village elders. Agriculture was then, as it remained down the centuries, the most important contributor to the economy, and the tax on agricultural produce constituted the most important source of revenue. Usually, the king

was entitled to one-sixth of the produce. In reality, it was often much higher, usually about one-fourth of the produce.

Source of Revenue

The Arthashastra, recommended comprehensive state control over agricultural production and marketing, with warehouses to store agricultural products and regulated markets, in order to maximise the revenues from this most important sector of the economy. Other taxes included taxes on land, on irrigation if the sources of irrigation had been provided by the state, taxes on urban houses, customs and tolls on goods transported for trade and profits from coinage and trade operations carried on by the government. Lands owned by the king, forests, mines and manufacture and salt, on which the state held a monopoly, were also important sources of revenue.

Judicial Administration

Justice was administered through courts, which were established in all the major towns. Two types of courts are mentioned.

The dharmasthiya courts mostly dealt with civil law relating to marriage, inheritance and other aspects of civil life. The courts were presided over by three judges well-versed in sacred laws and three amatyas (secretaries). Another type of court was called kantakasodhana (removal of thorns), also presided over by three judges and three amatyas. The main purpose of these courts was to clear the society of anti-social elements and various types of crimes, and it functioned more like the modern police, and relied on a network of spies for information about such antisocial activities. Punishments for crimes were usually quite severe. The overall objective of the judicial system as it evolved was to extend government control over most aspects of ordinary life.

Ashoka's Dharmic State

Ashoka's rule gives us an alternative model of a righteous king and a just state. He instructed his officials, the yuktas (subordinate officials), rajjukas (rural administrators) and pradesikas (heads of the districts) to go on tours every five years to instruct people in dhamma (Major Rock Edict 3). Ashoka's injunctions to the officers and city magistrates stressed that all the people were his children and he wished for his people what he wished for his own children, that they should obtain welfare and happiness in this world and the next. These officials should recognise their own responsibilities and strive to be impartial and see to it that men were not imprisoned or tortured without good reason. He added that he would send an officer every five years to verify if his instructions were carried out (Kalinga Rock Edict 1).

Ashoka realised that an effective ruler needed to be fully informed about what was happening in his kingdom and insisted that he should be advised and informed promptly wherever he might be (Major Rock Edict 6). He insisted that all religions should co-exist and the ascetics of all religions were honoured (Major Rock Edicts 7 and 12). Providing medical care should be one of the functions of the state, the emperor ordered hospitals to

be set up to treat human beings and animals (Major Rock Edict 2). Preventing unnecessary slaughter of animals and showing respect for all living beings was another recurrent theme in his edicts. In Ashoka's edicts, we find an alternative humane and empathetic model of governance. The edicts stress that everybody, officials as well as subjects, act righteously following dhamma.

Economy and Society

Agriculture

Agriculture formed the backbone of the economy. It was the largest sector in terms of its share in total revenue to the state and employment. The Greeks noted with wonder that two crops could be raised annually in India because of the fertility of the soil. Besides food grains, India also grew commercial crops such as sugarcane and cotton, described by Megasthenes as a reed that produced honey and trees on which wool grew. These were important commercial crops. The fact that the agrarian sector could produce a substantial surplus was a major factor in the diversification of the economy beyond subsistence to commercial production.

Crafts and Goods

Many crafts producing a variety of manufactures flourished in the economy. We can categorise the products as utilitarian or functional, and luxurious and ornamental. Spinning and weaving, especially of cotton fabrics, relying on the universal availability of cotton throughout India, were the most widespread occupations outside of agriculture. A great variety of cloth was produced in the country, ranging from the coarse fabrics used by the ordinary people for everyday use, to the very fine textures worn by the upper classes and the royalty. The Arthashastra refers to the regions producing specialised textiles – Kasi (Benares), Vanga (Bengal), Kamarupa (Assam), Madurai and many others. Each region produced many distinctive and specialised varieties of fabrics. Cloth embroidered with gold and silver was worn by the King and members of the royal court. Silk was known and was generally referred to as Chinese silk, which also indicates that extensive trade was carried on in the Mauryan Empire.

Metal and metal works were of great importance, and the local metal workers worked with iron, copper and other metals to produce tools, implements, vessels and other utility items. Iron smelting had been known for many centuries, but there was a great improvement in technology after about 500 BCE, which made it possible to smelt iron in furnaces at very high temperatures. Archaeological finds show a great qualitative and quantitative improvement in iron production after this date. Improvement in iron technology had widespread implications for the rest of the economy. Better tools like axes made more extensive clearing of forests possible for agriculture; better ploughs could improve agricultural processes; better nails and tools improved woodwork and carpentry as well as other crafts. Woodwork was another important craft for ship-building, making carts and chariots, house construction and so on. Stone work—stone carving and polishing—had evolved as a highly skilled craft. This expertise is seen in the stone sculptures in the stupa at Sanchi and the highly polished Chunar stone used for Ashoka's pillars.

Sanchi Stupa

A whole range of luxury goods was produced, including gold and silver articles, jewellery, perfumes and carved ivory. There is evidence that many other products like drugs and medicines, pottery, dyes and gums were produced in the Mauryan Empire. The economy had thus developed far beyond subsistence production to a very sophisticated level of commercial craft production.

Crafts were predominantly urban-based hereditary occupations and sons usually followed their fathers in the practice of various crafts. Craftsmen worked primarily as individuals, though royal workshops for producing cloth and other products also existed. Each craft had a head called *pramukha* (pramukha or leader) and a *jettha* (jyeshtha or elder) and was organised in a *seni* (senior a guild), so that the institutional identity superseded the individual in craft production. Disputes between *senis* were resolved by a *mahasetthi*, and this ensured the smooth functioning of craft production in the cities.

Trade

Trade or exchange becomes a natural concomitant of economic diversification and growth. Production of a surplus beyond subsistence is futile unless the surplus has exchange value, since the surplus has no use value when subsistence needs have been met. Thus, as the economy diversified and expanded, exchange becomes an important part of realising the benefits of such expansion. Trade takes place in a hierarchy of markets, ranging from the exchange of goods in a village market, between villages and towns within a district, across cities in long-distance overland trade and across borders to other countries. Trade also needs a conducive political climate as was provided by the Mauryan Empire, which ensured peace and stability over a very large area. The rivers in the Gangetic plains were major means for transporting goods throughout northern India. Goods were transported further west overland by road. Roads connected the north of the country to cities and markets in the south-east, and in the south-west, passing through towns like Vidisha and Ujjain. The north-west route linked the empire to central and western Asia. Overseas trade by ships was also known, and Buddhist Jataka tales refer to the long voyages undertaken by merchants. Sea-borne trade was carried on with Burma and the Malay Archipelago, and with Sri Lanka. The ships, however, were probably quite small and might have hugged the coastline.

We do not have much information about the merchant communities. In general, long-distance overland trade was undertaken by merchant groups travelling together as a caravan for security, led by a caravan leader known as the *maha-sarthavaha*. Roads through forests and unfavourable environments like deserts were always dangerous. The *Arthashastra*, however, stresses the importance of trade and ensuring its smooth functioning. Trade has to be facilitated through the construction of roads and maintaining them in good condition. Since tolls and *octroi* were collected on goods when they were transported, toll booths must have been set up and manned on all the trade routes. Urban markets and craftsmen were generally closely monitored and controlled to prevent fraud. The *Arthashastra* has a long list of the goods – agricultural and manufactured – which were

traded in internal and foreign trade. These include textiles, woollens, silks, aromatic woods, animal skins and gems from various parts of India, China and Sri Lanka. Greek sources confirm the trade links with the west through the Greek states to Egypt. Indigo, ivory, tortoiseshell, pearls and perfumes and rare woods were all exported to Egypt.

Coins and Currency

Though coinage was known, barter was the medium of exchange in pre-modern economies. In the Mauryan Empire, the silver coin known as *pana* and its sub-divisions were the most commonly used currency. Hordes of punch-marked coins have been found in many parts of north India, though some of these coins may have been from earlier periods. Thus while coins were in use, it is difficult to estimate the extent to which the economy was monetised.

Process of Urbanisation

Urbanisation is the process of the establishment of towns and cities in an agrarian landscape. Towns can come up for various reasons – as the headquarters of administration, as pilgrim centres, as commercial market centres and because of their locational advantages on major trade routes. In what way do urban settlements differ from villages or rural settlements? To begin with, towns and cities do not produce their own food and depend on the efficient transfer of agricultural surplus for their basic consumption needs. A larger number of people reside in towns and cities and the density of population is much higher in cities. Cities attract a variety of non-agricultural workers and craftsmen, who seek employment, thereby forming the workforce for the production of manufactured goods and services of various kinds. These goods, in addition to the agricultural products brought in from the rural countryside, are traded in markets. Cities also tend to house a variety of persons in service-related activities. The *sangam* poetry in Tamil and the Tamil epics provide vivid pictures of cities like Madurai, Kanchipuram and Poompuhar as teeming with people, with vibrant markets and merchants selling a variety of goods, as well as vendors selling various goods including food door to door. Though these literary works relate to a slightly later period, it is not different in terms of the prevailing levels of technology, and these descriptions may be taken as an accurate depiction of urban living. The only contemporary pictorial representation of cities is found in the sculptures in Sanchi, which portray royal processions, and cities are seen to have roads, a multitude of people and multi-storeyed buildings crowded together.

Urbanisation in Sixth Century BCE

One of the first pre-requisites for urbanisation is the development of an agricultural base. This had evolved in the Indo-Gangetic plain and from very early on there are references to cities like Hastinapura and Ayodhya. By about sixth century BCE, urbanization had spread to the doab and many new city centres like Kaushambi, Bhita, Vaishali and Rajagriha, among others, are mentioned in the region. Buddhist texts about Buddha's preaching were always located in urban centres. Cities developed primarily because of the spread of agriculture and wet rice cultivation, in particular in the doab

region, after the marshy land was drained and reclaimed for cultivation. The fertile soil and plentiful availability of water from the perennial rivers made it possible to raise even two crops of rice, and the production of a large agricultural surplus to feed the cities. The improvements in iron technology also had an impact on economic life both in rural and urban areas. As Magadha grew, many regional centres like Ujjain were also incorporated into the empire.

Housing and Town Planning

Towns were often located along the rivers, presumably for ease of access to transportation. They were surrounded by moats and a rampart to provide defensive protection. They were always open to attacks since treasuries holding government revenue were housed in them, in addition to the fact that as trading centres, the local people and merchants were also wealthy. As the towns became more prosperous, the quality of the houses, which were built of mud brick and even of fired brick, improved. Towns also had other facilities like drains, ring wells and mud pits, testifying to the development of civic amenities and sanitation. Excavations from the Mauryan period show that the standard of living had improved as compared to the earlier period. The houses were built of brick, and the cities had ring wells and soak pits. There was a quantitative increase in the use of iron and the variety of iron artefacts.

City of Pataliputra

Pataliputra was the great capital city in the Mauryan Empire. It was described as a large and wealthy city, situated at the confluence of the Ganga and Son rivers, stretching in the form of a parallelogram. It was more than 14 kilometres in length and about 2Vi kilometres wide. It was protected by an outer wall made of wood, with loopholes for shooting arrows at enemies. There were 64 gates to the city and 570 watch towers. There was a wide and deep moat outside the wall, which was fed by water from the river, which served both as a defence and an outlet for sewage. There were many grand palaces in the city, which had a large population. The city was administered by a corporation of 30 members. Ashoka added to the magnificence of the city with the monumental architecture that he added to the capital, like the many-pillared hall.

Art and Culture

Most of the literature and art of the period have not survived. Sanskrit language and literature were enriched by the work of the grammarian Panini (c. 500 BCE), and Katyayana, who was a contemporary of the Nandas and had written a commentary on Panini's work. Buddhist and Jain texts were primarily written in Pali. Evidently many literary works in Sanskrit were produced during this period and find mention in later works, but they are not available to us.

The Arthashastra notes the performing arts of the period, including music, instrumental music, bards, dance and theatre. The extensive production of crafted luxury

products like jewellery, ivory carving and wood work, and especially stone carving should all be included as products of Mauryan art.

Many religions, castes and communities lived together in harmony in the Mauryan society. There is little mention of any overt dissension or disputes among them. As in many regions of that era (including ancient Tamil Nadu), courtesans were accorded a special place in the social hierarchy and their contributions were highly valued.

Lesson VI

Polity and Society in Post - Mauryan Period

Introduction

In the four centuries following the death of Emperor Asoka and the resulting decline of the Mauryan Empire, parts of India were subject to the invasion of the Indo-Greeks, Sakas and Kushanas from West and Central Asia. All of them established themselves as rulers over large parts of India. This strengthened the process of acculturation and the assimilation of foreign cultures and art forms into Indian society. It also resulted in the integration of India with the Mediterranean world and Central Asia and China through extended trade linkages.

Indo - Greek Realties

The Beginnings

India's interaction with the Greeks began with the invasion of north-western India by Alexander (327-325 BCE) and his conquest of the Punjab region. When he began his return march to the West, he left the conquered territories under provincial governors. One of Chandragupta Maurya's early military expeditions was against these foreign intruders.

Seleucus Nicator, one of Alexander's most capable generals, succeeded in making himself the master of a vast territory from Phrygia (Turkey) to the river Indus after 311 BCE. Within a few years, probably around 305 BCE, Chandragupta waged a war against Seleucus and defeated him. However, this was not the savage defeat that happened to Alexander's governors. Instead, Chandragupta made a peace treaty with Seleucus. Seleucus surrendered the land he had conquered up to the Indus and received 500 war elephants in return. There is also mention of a marriage agreement. The treaty also led to the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Greeks and the Mauryan emperor. Megasthenes was sent to the Mauryan capital Pataliputra as the Greek ambassador.

Bindusara, Chandragupta's son, continued to maintain friendly ties with the Greek kingdoms in West Asia. Greek historians refer to ambassadors sent by Ptolemy II of Egypt

and to Bindusara's correspondence with Antiochus of Syria. Asoka also continued the tradition of friendly relations with the Greek kingdoms. His Rock Edict (13) mentions five yona kings, identified as Antiochus II Theos of Syria, Ptolemy II Philadelphus of Egypt, Antigonus Gonatas of Macedonia, Magas of Cyrene and Alexander of Corinth. This also indicates that the relations of Asoka with the Greeks extended beyond West Asia well into the heartland of Greece.

We now come across the term yavana (or yona) for Greeks, which was used throughout India. The word was derived from the Persian word yauna, which referred to Greeks. In India the term yavana was used to denote all persons of Greek origin, including those of mixed race and even the Phoenicians.

This regular interchange of ambassadors and correspondence, as well as the extension of the Mauryan Empire till Afghanistan, facilitated regular trade from India to the West as far as Egypt. Trade was carried on by the overland route via north-west Afghanistan (Bactria) and also partly by the coastal route along the Persian Gulf and Red Sea. A variety of luxury goods, including ivory, tortoise shell, pearls, indigo and other dyes, aromatic substances like spikenard or nard (a fragrant oil from the Gangetic region) and malabathrum (leaf of cinnamon, used as an aromatic) and rare woods were exported from India.

The cultural influence of the Greeks is evident from the capitals of monuments at Pataliputra. Many historians argue that the elaborate administrative institutions of the Mauryan Empire drew inspiration from the administrative systems of the Persians and Greeks. The eventual rise of Indo-Greek kingdoms in western India strengthened these cross-cultural influences and gave rise to a distinct school of art.

Indo-Greek kings

The Seleucid Empire, which extended from northern Afghanistan (Bactria) to Syria, began to weaken and disintegrate after 250 BCE. The governor of Bactria, Diodotus, revolted against Antiochus II and became the independent ruler of Bactria. In 212 BCE, the king of Bactria was a Greek named Euthydemus. The Seleucid emperor Antiochus III was unable to subjugate Euthydemus and agreed to negotiate a settlement with him, since Antiochus himself needed to turn his attention to his dominions in the West. But Antiochus III did come down the Kabul river and managed to defeat the local Indian king, known as Subhagasena. Nothing much is known about this king. It can be inferred that the mention of an independent king in the region might be an indication of the weakening of the central authority of the Mauryan Empire after Asoka's death in 236 BCE.

Demetrius

Euthydemus's son Demetrius succeeded him (c. 200 BCE), and another Demetrius, probably Demetrius II, was the first known Indo-Greek king (c. 175 BCE). The distinguishing feature of the reign of the Indo-Greek kings was their exquisite coinage. Minted in the same style as Greek coins of silver, they carried the portrait of the reigning

king on one side with his name. The coins thus give us a visual picture of the kings, who are represented in various kinds of headgear and with distinctive facial and physical features. Extensive collections of these coins have been found from the period, which makes it possible to reconstruct the lineage of the Indo-Greek kings with certainty.

Indian accounts of the period refer to the yavana invasion of Ayodhya (Saketa) and further east into the Magadha territory. However, since the Greeks seem to have been beset by internal dissensions, they did not retain any of this territory. They ceded land to Pushyamitra, the Sunga emperor who had usurped the throne after the last Mauryan ruler. Numismatic evidence also proves Demetrius's association with India. He issued bi-lingual square coins with Greek on the obverse and Kharoshti (the local language of north-western Pakistan) on the reverse.

At about 165 BCE, Bactria was lost to the Parthians and Sakas. After this, the yavanas continued to rule in central and southern Afghanistan and north-western India. The Greeks continued to be beset with internal squabbles among many claimants to power, and the names of more than thirty kings can be identified from their coins. It is possible that they all ruled small pockets as autonomous rulers and issued their own coinage.

Menander

Menander (c.165/145–130 BCE) was the best known of the Indo-Greek kings. He is said to have ruled a large kingdom in the north-west of the country. His coins have been found over an extensive area ranging from the valleys of the Kabul and Indus rivers to as far as western Uttar Pradesh. This gives a good indication of the extent of his kingdom. Though he does not look like a great and heroic conqueror as seen in his coins, he is said to have raided the Gangetic region along with the kings of Panchala and Mathura. King Kharavela of Kalinga mentioned in the Hathigumpā inscription, was not able to stop him. Menander successfully attacked Pataliputra, but retreated without consolidating his conquest. Interestingly, in his coins, he is described as “king” and “soter” or saviour, and not as a great conqueror.

Menander is mainly remembered as the eponymous hero of the Buddhist text, *Milinda-piṇḥa* (questions of Milinda), in which he is engaged in a question-and-answer discussion on Buddhism with the teacher Nagasena. He is believed to have become a Buddhist and promoted Buddhism.

Another Indo-Greek king whose name is remembered is Antialcidas (or Antialkidas), c. 110. He is known to us primarily because his emissary, Heliodorus, who was sent to the court of King Bhagabhadra erected a pillar or garuda-dhvaja with its capital adorned by a figure of Garuda, in honour of God Krishna (Vasudeva). Heliodorus had evidently become a follower of Vishnu. (The pillar stands in isolation in the middle of an open ground in Vidisha, Madhya Pradesh.)

Indian interactions with the Greeks was not limited to the Indo-Greek kings. Greeks were becoming known and their presence recorded throughout the sub-continent.

Merchants, sailors and many others of Greek origin were travelling to India, so there was a continued interaction with the Greeks.

Sakas, Parthians and Kushanas

The Indo-Greek kingdoms in north-western India were ousted by various nomadic tribes from Central Asia, known as the Sakas (Scythians), Parthians (Pahlavis) and Kushanas (yueh-chi or yuezhi tribes in Chinese). In spite of the fact that they followed the Greek practice of issuing vast amounts of coinage with their names and titles (mostly “king of kings”), this is a very confusing period in our history. It is a daunting task to try and work out the lineage of various ruling clans and dynasties that came into India.

The first question that arises is: why and how did nomadic tribes turn to war and conquest? The advent of these tribes in India arose as a result of a complex sequence of migrations and political developments in Central Asia. In the eastern part of Central Asia, the Yueh-chi were being pushed westward by the Chinese who had built the Great Wall to keep out nomads and to protect their villages and agriculture from their raids. The Yueh-chi, in turn, turned westward and pushed the Sakas towards eastern Iran, where the Parthians had become rulers following the collapse of the Seleucid empire. As a curious historical event, in 58 BCE, the independent Parthian kingdom of eastern Iran was established by the Parthian Vonones (or Azes, according to some historians). This year was taken to denote the start of the Vikram samvat era, the Indian calendar.

Sakas

The Sakas were pushed back from eastern Iran by the Parthian ruler Mithradates (188–123 BCE), and they then turned to north-western India and finally settled in the region between the Indus valley and Saurashtra. The first Saka ruler in India was Maues or Moga/Moga (20 BCE to 22 CE). He occupied Gandhara, driving a wedge into the Indo-Greek kingdoms, but it was his successor Azes who finally destroyed the last remnants of the Indo-Greek kingdoms and extended Saka rule as far as Mathura.

In India, the Sakas became assimilated into Hindu society. They began to adopt Hindu names and religious beliefs, so much so that their coins had representations of Hindu gods on one side. The Sakas appointed kshatrapas or satrapas as provincial governors to administer their territories. Many of the kshatrapas titled themselves mahakshatrapas and were virtually independent rulers.

One of the most famous of the Saka kshatrapas was Rudradaman (130–150 CE). His exploits are celebrated in the famous rock inscription of Junagadh (in Gujarat). According to this inscription, he had even defeated the Satavahanas in battle. His name indicates that the process of assimilation into Indian society was complete by that time.

Kushanas

The Sakas were displaced by the Parthian Gondophernes, who first conquered Kabul (c. 43 CE). He lost the Kabul valley to the Kushanas, but he was successful against the Sakas in India. Records of his rule have been discovered in Peshawar district. The Sakas approached the Kushanas (yueh-chi) for war help against the Parthians. The first Kushana king who conquered Afghanistan was Khujula Kadphises, followed by Wima Kadphises. The two kings extended Kushana territory to Gandhara, Punjab and as far to the east as the Ganga-Jumna doab till Mathura.

Kanishka

The best known of the Kushana kings was Kanishka, who is thought to have ruled from 78 CE till 101 or 102 CE. Ironically, 78 CE is held to be the beginning of the "Saka era" in the Indian calendar. Historians are, hence, divided about Kanishka's period. His rule is said to have started anywhere between 78 and 144 CE. Kanishka was an ardent follower of Buddhism and hosted the fourth Buddhist mahasangha or council (the third council had been held in Pataliputra during Asoka's reign). By now Mahayana Buddhism had become the dominant sect, and Kanishka supported the missions sent to China to preach Buddhism.

Kushana coins were of the highest quality and conformed to the weight standards of Roman coins. In the coins, Kushana rulers are referred to as "king of kings", "Caesar", "lord of all lands" and by other such titles. Unfortunately, the titles did not leave much room on the coins for the actual name of the ruler. Hence our information on the Kushana kings tends to be very uncertain. Kanishka's coins as well as his statue found near Mathura show him dressed in a belted tunic along with overcoat and wearing boots, testifying to his Central Asian origins.

The Karakoram highway, a joint project between China and Pakistan, which was completed in 1979, has yielded great dividends for archaeologists and historians. The rock of Hunza mentions the first two Kadphises and the Kusanadevapura (son of God) Maharaja Kaniska. This inscription confirms that Kanishka's empire stretched from Central Asia till eastern India. Buddhist sources record that he had conquered Magadha and Kashmir and Khotan in Sinkiang.

The artefacts found along the Karakoram highway also establish that this was the route taken by Buddhist monks travelling to China on their mission to spread Buddhism. Merchants followed the missionaries, so this became a major commercial route for the import of Chinese silk and horses from the West into India. Indian merchants established themselves in various towns in Central Asia and seized the opportunity to become intermediaries in the luxury trade between China and the Roman Empire, since merchants from the West did not want to venture further east beyond Central Asia.

Kushana kings, mostly with their names ending with -shka (among them Huvishka and Vasishka as well as later Kanishkas and even Vasudeva), ruled for at least one century more, but nothing much is known about them. Clearly the empire was beginning to break down, and the satraps (the Kushanas also continued the practice of appointing satraps to

govern the provinces) were able to set themselves up as independent rulers in various regional capitals.

Art and Literature

During the reign of Kushanas, there was great creative energy when art and literature flourished. This was partly due to royal patronage and partly due to other factors, like the growing ascendancy of Mahayana Buddhism, which allowed the representation of the person of Buddha in human form. The Greek influence led to an Indo-Greek style of sculpture and art commonly referred to as Gandhara art. Statues of Buddha, sculpted particularly in Taxila and the north-western regions, show him in graceful garments, surrounded by cherubs and leaves inspired by the Greek tradition. But mention must also be made of the red sandstone sculpture with intricate carving produced near Mathura.

The Buddhists began to carve out rock caves in the hills of western India, which served as religious centres with chaityas and viharas, stretching from the Ajanta caves to the Kanheri caves in Mumbai. Large statues of Buddha were sculpted in these caves as a part of the Mahayana tradition, and in later centuries, they were further embellished with murals of extraordinary beauty, as seen in the Ajanta caves.

Kanishka was the patron of Buddhist philosophers such as Asvaghosha, Parsva and Vasumitra, as well as the great Buddhist teacher Nagarjuna. Asvaghosha is known for his Buddhacharita and is celebrated as the author of the first Sanskrit play, Sariputraprakarana, in nine acts. The great dramatist Bhasa, whose plays were re-discovered only about a hundred years ago in South India, most probably belonged to this period. Among the Hindu treatises, we find the Manusmriti, Vatsyayana's Kamasutra and Kautilya's Arthashastra taking final shape by the second century CE.

Gandhara Art

Situated in the cross-roads of cultural influences, Gandhara region was influenced by Greek and Roman culture. Gandhara school of art developed in the first century Common Era. During the time of Kushana Empire, in view of its contact with Rome, the techniques of Roman art were assimilated and applied in north-western India. The Gandhara art is famous for the portrayal of Buddha in a spiritual state, eyes half-closed in meditation.

Lesson VII

The Guptas

Introduction

After the Mauryan empire, many small kingdoms rose and fell. In the period from c. 300 to 700 CE, a classical pattern of an imperial rule evolved, paving the way for state

formation in many regions. During this period, the Gupta kingdom emerged as a great power and achieved the political unification of a large part of the Indian subcontinent. It featured a strong central government, bringing many kingdoms under its hegemony. Feudalism as an institution began to take root during this period. With an effective guild system and overseas trade, the Gupta economy boomed. Great works in Sanskrit were produced during this period and a high level of cultural maturity in fine arts, sculpture and architecture was achieved.

The living standards of upper classes reached a peak. Education, art and study of science progressed, but the feudal system of governance put people in some form of hardship. Although some historians proclaim that Gupta period was a golden age, it is not entirely accurate. Many scholars would, however, agree that it was a period of cultural florescence and a classical age for the arts.

Sources

There are three types of sources for reconstructing the history of the Gupta period.

I. Literary sources

- Narada, Vishnu, Brihaspati and Katyayana smritis.
- Kamandaka's Nitisara, a work on polity addressed to the king (400 CE)
- Devichandraguptam and Mudrarakshasam by Vishakadutta provide details about the rise of the Guptas.
- Buddhist and Jaina texts
- Works of Kalidasa
- Accounts of the Chinese traveller Fahien

II. Epigraphical Sources

Mehrauli Iron Pillar inscription -achievements of Chandragupta I.

Allahabad Pillar inscription -describing Samudragupta's personality and achievements in 33 lines composed by Harisena and engraved in Sanskrit in Nagari script.

III. Numismatic Sources

Coins issued by Gupta kings contain legends and figures. These gold coins tell us about the titles the Guptas assumed and the Vedic rituals they performed.

Origins of the Gupta Dynasty Evidence on the origin and antecedents of the Gupta dynasty is limited. The Gupta kings seem to have risen from modest origins. Chandragupta I, who was the third ruler of the Gupta dynasty married Kumaradevi, a Lichchavi prince. The marriage is mentioned in the records of his successors with pride indicating that that royal connection would have contributed to the rise of Guptas. Lichchavi was an old, established gana-sangha and its territory lay between the Ganges and the Nepal Terai. According to Allahabad pillar inscription Samudragupta, the illustrious son of Chandragupta I, had conquered the whole fertile plains west of Prayag to Mathura and launched a spectacular raid through Kalinga into the south as far as Kanchipuram, the

Pallava capital. The Puranas mention Magadha, Allahabad and Oudh as the Gupta dominions.

The first ruler of the Gupta Empire was Sri Gupta (240–280 CE) who was succeeded by his son Ghatotkacha (280–319 CE). Both Sri Gupta and Ghatotkacha are mentioned as Maharajas in inscriptions. Chandragupta I, the son of Ghatotkacha, ruled from 319 to 335 CE and is considered to be the first great king of the Gupta Empire. Chandragupta held the title of maharaja-adhiraja (great king over other kings). His imperial position is inferred from the records of others. No inscriptions or coins have survived from his reign.

Chandragupta I appointed his son Samudragupta to succeed him in 335 CE. A lengthy eulogy on him, inscribed on an Ashokan pillar, suggests that he was claiming the legacy of the Mauryan kingdom. This inscription gives an impressive list of kings and regions that succumbed to Samudragupta's march across the country.

Four northern kings were conquered mainly in the area around Delhi and western Uttar Pradesh. The kings of the south and the east were forced to pay homage, and from the places mentioned, it appears that Samudragupta campaigned down the eastern coast as far as Kanchipuram. Nine kings of the western half of the Ganges Plain were violently uprooted. The forest kings (tribal chiefs of Central India and the Deccan) were forced to pay tribute. The kings of Assam and Bengal in eastern India and those of small kingdoms in Nepal and the Punjab also paid tribute by submission. Nine Republics in Rajasthan, including the Malavas and Yaudheyas, were forced to accept Gupta's suzerainty. In addition, foreign kings, such as the Daivaputra Shahanushahi (a Kushana title), the Sakas and the king of Lanka also paid tribute, as mentioned in the eulogy.

Though this statement is exaggerated, it is undeniable that the southern kings paid tribute, while the northern kingdoms were annexed to the Gupta Empire under Samudragupta. His direct control was confined to the Ganges valley, since the Sakas remained unconquered in western India. The tribes of Rajasthan paid tribute, but the Punjab was outside the limits of his authority. Samudragupta's campaign broke the power of the tribal republics in those regions that led to repeated invasions from the Huns.

The relationship with Kushanas is not certain, but with regard to Lanka, its ruler Meghavarman sent presents and requested permission from Samudragupta to build a Buddhist monastery at Gaya. Samudragupta's reign lasted for about

40 years, which must have given him ample time to plan and organise these campaigns. He performed the horse-sacrifice ritual to proclaim his military conquests.

Samudragupta patronised scholars and poets like Harisena and thus promoted Sanskrit literature. Though an ardent follower of Vaishnavism, he also patronised the great Buddhist scholar Vasubandhu. As a lover of poetry and music, he was given the title "Kaviraja". His coins bear the insignia of him playing the vina (lute).

Named after his grandfather, Chandragupta II was a capable ruler, who ruled for 40 years from c. 375 to 415 CE. He came to power after a succession struggle with his brother Rama Gupta. He is also known as Vikramaditya. With the capital at Pataliputra, Chandragupta II extended the limits of the Gupta Empire by conquest and matrimonial alliances. He married off his daughter Prabhavati to a Vakataka prince, who ruled the strategic lands Chandragupta II of Deccan. This alliance was highly useful when he proceeded against the Saka rulers of western India. Chandragupta II conquered western Malwa and Gujarat by defeating the Saka rulers who had reigned for about four centuries in the region.

The kingdom's prosperity grew out of its trade links with Roman Empire. After establishing himself in eastern and western India, Chandragupta II defeated northern rulers like the Huns, Kambojas and Kiratas. He was a great conqueror and an able administrator as well. His other names (as mentioned in coins) include Vikrama, Devagupta, Devaraja, Simhavikrama, Vikramaditya and Sakari. His court had nine jewels or navaratnas, that is, nine eminent people in various fields of art, literature and science. This included the great Sanskrit poet Kalidasa, the Sanskrit scholar Harisena, the lexicographer Amarasimha, and the physician Dhanvantari. Fahien, the Buddhist scholar from China, visited India during his reign. He records the prosperity of the Gupta Empire. Chandragupta II was the first Gupta ruler to issue silver coins. His rule thus formed the peak period of Gupta's territorial expansion.

Chandragupta II was succeeded by his son Kumara Gupta I, who founded the Nalanda University. He was also called Sakraditya. The last great king of the Gupta dynasty, Skanda Gupta, was the son of Kumara Gupta I. He was able to repulse an attack by the Huns, but the recurrence of Huns' invasion strained his empire's coffers. The Gupta Empire declined after the death of Skanda Gupta in 467 CE. He was followed by many successors who hastened the end of the Gupta Empire. The last recognised king of the Gupta line was Vishnu Gupta who reigned from 540 to 550 CE.

The King

During the Gupta age, political hierarchies can be identified by the titles adopted. Kings assumed titles such as maharajadhiraja, parama-bhattaraka and parameshvara. They were also connected with gods through epithets such as parama-daivata (the foremost worshipper of the gods) and parama-bhagavata (the foremost worshipper of Vasudeva Krishna). Some historians have suggested that the Gupta Kings claimed divine status. For example, Samudragupta is compared to Purusha (Supreme Being) in the Allahabad inscription. These assertions can be seen as reflections of an attempt to claim divine status by the king.

Ministers and other Officials

Seals and inscriptions make a mention of official ranks and designations, whose precise meaning is often uncertain. The term "kumaramatyā" occurs in six Vaishali seals, which suggests that this title represented a high-ranking officer associated with an office

Fahien's account on Mathura and Pataliputra

At Mathura, the people are numerous and happy; they do not have to register their household. Only those who cultivate the royal land have to pay a portion of the grain from it. Criminals are fined both lightly and heavily depending on the circumstances.

In the case of repeated rebellion, their right hands are cut off. Throughout the whole country, the people do not kill any living creatures or drink any intoxicant.

The inhabitants of Pataliputra are rich and prosperous and vie with one another in the practice of benevolence. In the cities, the Vaisya families establish houses for dispensing charity and medicines. All the poor and destitute, orphans, widows and childless, maimed and cripples are provided with every kind of help.

(adikarana) of his own. The designation "amatya" occurs on several Bita seals, and the "kumaramatya" seems to have been pre-eminent among amatyas and equivalent in status to princes of royal blood. Kumaramatyas were attached to the king, crown prince, revenue department or a province. One of the Vaishali seals refers to a kumaramatya who seems to have been in charge of the maintenance of the sacred coronation tank of the Lichchavis.

Individuals holding the ranks of kumaramatya sometimes had additional designations as well, and such ranks were hereditary. For example, Harisena, composer of the Allahabad prashasti (inscriptions of praise), was a kumaramatya, sandhivigrahika and mahadandanayaka, and was the son of Dhruvabhuti, a mahadandanayaka.

The origin of Huns is not definitely known. According to Roman historian Tacitus, they were a barbarian tribe living near Caspian Sea and contributed to the fall of Roman Empire. They organised under Attila and were known for their savagery and bestiality in Europe. One branch of Huns, known as white Huns, moved towards India from Central Asia and their invasion began about a hundred years after the Kushanas.

Council of Ministers

The Gupta king was assisted by a council of mantrins (ministers). The Allahabad prashasti refers to an assembly or council, presumably of ministers, which was known as the Sabha. The various high-ranking functionaries included the sandhivigrahika or mahasandhivigrahika (minister for peace and war), who seems to have been a high-ranking officer in charge of contact and correspondence with other states, including initiating wars and concluding alliances and treaties.

High-ranking officials were called dandanayakas, and mahadandanayakas were high-ranking judicial or military officers. One of the seals mentions a mahadandanayaka named Agnigupta. The Allahabad prashasti refers to three mahadandanayakas. All these suggest that these posts were hereditary by nature. Another person had a designation mahashvapati (commander of the cavalry), indicating military functions.

Division of the Empire

The Gupta Empire was divided into provinces known as *deshas* or *bhuktis*. They were administered by governors who were usually designated as *uparikas*. The *uparika* was directly appointed by the king and he, in turn, frequently appointed the head of the district administration and the district board. *Uparika* carried on the administration “with the enjoyment of the rule consisting of elephants, horses and soldiers”, indicating his control over the military machinery as well. The fact that the *uparika* had the title *maharaja* in three of the Damodarpur plates indicates his high status and rank in the administrative hierarchy. The Eran pillar inscription of Budhagupta, dated Gupta year 165 CE, refers to *maharaja* Surashmichandra as a *lokpala*, governing the land between the Kalinndi and Narmada rivers. *Lokpala* here seems to refer to a provincial governor.

The provinces of the Gupta Empire were divided into districts known as *visayas*, which were controlled by officers known as *vishyapatis*. The *vishyapatis* seems to have been generally appointed by the provincial governor. Sometimes, even the kings directly appointed the *vishyapatis*. Prominent members of the town assisted the *vishyapati* in administrative duties.

Administrative Units below the District level

The administrative units below the district level included clusters of settlements known variously as *vithi*, *bhumi*, *pathaka* and *peta*. There are references to officials known as *ayuktakas* and *vithi-mahattaras*. At the village level, villagers chose functionaries such as *gramika* and *gramadhyaksha*. The Damodarpur copper plate of the reign of Budhagupta mentions an *ashtakula-adhikarana* (a board of eight members) headed by the *mahattara*. *Mahattara* has a range of meanings including village elder, village headman, and head of a family community. The Sanchi inscription of the time of Chandragupta II mentions the *panch-mandali*, which may have been a corporate body.

Army

Seals and inscriptions mention military designations such as *baladhikrita* and *mahabaladhikrita* (commander of infantry and cavalry). The standard term “**senapati**” does not occur in Gupta inscriptions, but the term could be found in some Vakataka epigraphs. A Vaishali seal mentions the *ranabhandagar-adhikarana*, which is the office of the military storehouse. Another Vaishali seal mentions the *adhikarana* (office) of the *dandapashika*, which may have been a district-level police office.

The officials connected specifically with the royal establishment included the *mahapratihara* (chief of the palace guards)

and the *khadyatapakita* (**superintendent of the royal kitchen**). A Vaishali seal mentions a person both as a *mahapratihara* and a *taravara*. The top layer of the administrative structure also included *amatyas* and *sachivas*, who were executive officers in charge of various departments. The system of espionage included spies known as *dutakas*. The *ayuktakas* were another cadre of high-ranking officers.

Economic Condition

Nitisara, written by Kamandaka, is a text like Arthasastra. It emphasises the importance of the royal treasury and mentions various sources of revenue. The many ambitious military campaigns of kings like Samudragupta must have been financed through revenue surpluses. Gupta inscriptions reveal some details about the revenue department. The akshapataladhikrita was the keeper of royal records. Gupta inscriptions mention the terms klipta, bali, udranga, uparikara, and iranyavesti meant forced labour.

Agriculture and Agrarian Structure

Agriculture flourished in the Gupta period due to establishment of irrigation works. Apart from the state and individual cultivators, Brahmins, Buddhists and Jain sanghas brought waste lands under cultivation when they were donated to them as religious endowments. Cultivators were asked to maintain their crops properly from damages and those who indulged in damaging the crops were punished. Likewise, crops and fields were fenced.

The crops cultivated during the Gupta period were rice, wheat, barley, peas, lentils, pulses, sugarcane and oil seeds. From Kalidasa, we come to know that the south was famous for pepper and cardamom. Varahamihira gives elaborate advice on the plantation of fruit trees.

The Paharpur copper plate inscription indicates that the king was the sole proprietor of the land. Even when he made land grants, he reserved his prerogatives over it. The location and boundaries of individual plots were marked out and measured by the record keepers and influential men in the locality. As stated in Paharpur plates, an officer called ustapala maintained records of all the land transactions in the district and the village accountant preserved records of land in the village. During the Gupta period, the land was classified as detailed below.

Kshetra	Cultivable land
Khila	Waste land
Aprahata	Jungle or waste land
Vasti	Habitable land
Gapata Saraha	Pastoral land

Types of tenures	Nature of Holding
Nivi dharma	Endowment of land under a kind of trusteeship was prevalent in North and Central India and Bengal.
Nivi dharma aksayana	A perpetual endowment. The recipient could make use of income derived from it.
Aprada dharma	Income from land could be enjoyed, but the recipient is not permitted to

	gift it to anyone. The recipient has no administrative rights either.
Bhumi chchidranyaya	Right of ownership acquired by a person making barren land cultivable for the first time. This land was free from any rent liability.

Other Land Grants

Agrahara grants	Given to Brahmins, it was perpetual, hereditary and tax free.
Devagrahara grants	A land grant in favour of a Brahmin as well as gifts to merchants for the repair and worship of temples.
Secular grants	Grants made to feudatories of Guptas.

Irrigation

The importance of irrigation to agriculture was recognised in India from the earliest times. From the Narada Smriti, we understand that there were two kinds of dykes: the bardhya, which protected the field from floods, and the khara, which served the purpose of irrigation. To prevent inundation, jalanirgamah (drains) were constructed, which is mentioned by Amarasimha.

Canals were constructed not only from rivers but also from tanks and lakes. The most famous lake was the Sudarsana lake at the foot of Girnar Hills in Gujarat.

Position of Peasantry

The position of peasantry was undermined. They were reduced to the position of serfs due to the caste classification and also due to the granting of various privileges and lands to others. The practice of lease-holding reduced the permanent tenants to tenants at will (which means tenants could be evicted without notice). The farmers were required to pay various taxes.

Tax	Nature
Bhaga	King's customary share of the produce normally amounting to one-sixth of the produce paid by cultivators
Bhoga	Periodic supply of fruits, firewood, flowers, etc., which the village had to provide to the king
Kara	A periodic tax levied on the villagers (not a part of the annual land tax)
Bali	A voluntary offering by the people to the king, but later became compulsory. It was an oppressive tax.

Udianga	Either a sort of police tax for the maintenance of police stations or a watertax. Hence, it was also an extra tax.
Uparikara	Also an extra tax. Scholars give different explanations about what it was collected for.
Hiranya	Literally, it means tax payable on gold coins, but in practice, it was probably the king's share of certain crops paid in kind.
Vata-Bhuta	Different kinds of cess for maintenance of rites for the winds (vata) and the spirits (bhuta)
Halivakara	A plough tax paid by every cultivator owning a plough
Sulka	A royal share of merchandise brought into a town or harbour by merchants. Hence it can be equated with the customs and tolls.
Klipta and Upakilpta	related to sale and purchase of lands.

Industry: Mining and Metallurgy

Mining and metallurgy was one of the most flourishing industries during the Gupta period. Amarasimha, Varahamihira and Kalidasa make frequent mention of the existence of mines. The rich deposits of iron ore from Bihar and copper from Rajasthan were mined extensively during this period.

The list of metals used apart from iron were gold, copper, tin, lead, brass, bronze, bell-metal, mica, manganese, antimony, red chalk (sanssilajata) and red arsenic.

Blacksmiths were next only to agriculturists in importance in the society. Metal was used for the manufacture of various domestic implements, utensils and weapons. The improvement in the ploughshare, with the discovery of iron, for deep ploughing and for increasing cultivation happened during this period.

The most important and visible evidence of the high stage of development in metallurgy is the Mehrauli Iron Pillar of King Chandra in the Qutb Minar Complex in Delhi, identified with Chandragupta II. This monolith iron pillar has lasted through the centuries without rusting. It is a monument to the great craftsmanship of the iron workers during the Gupta period. Coin casting, metal engraving, pottery making, terracotta work and wood carving were other specialised crafts.

A significant development of the period in metal technology was the making of the seals and statutes of Buddha and other gods. It was laid down that the people had to pay for the loss arising out smelting of iron, gold, silver, copper, tin and lead.

Trade and Commerce

The contribution of traders to the soundness of the Gupta economy is quite impressive. Two distinctive types of traders called *sresti* and *sarthavaha* existed. *Sresti* was usually settled at a particular place and enjoyed an eminent position by virtue of his wealth and influence in the commercial life and administration of the place. The *sarthavaha* was a caravan trader who carried his goods to different places for profitable sale.

Trade items ranged from products for daily use to valuable and luxury goods. They included pepper, sandalwood, elephants, horses, gold, copper, iron and mica. The abundant inscriptions and seals mentioning artisans, merchants and guilds are indicative of the thriving crafts and trade. (Guild is a society or other organisation of people with common interests or an association of merchants.) There are several references in several sources to artisans, traders and occupational groups in the guilds. Guilds continued as the major institution in the manufacture of goods and in commercial enterprise. They remained virtually autonomous in their internal organisation, and the government respected their laws. These laws were generally drafted by a larger body, the corporation of guilds, of which each guild was a member.

The *Narada* and *Brihaspati Smritis* describe the organisation and activities of guilds. They mention that the guild had a chief and two, three or five executive officers. Guild laws were apparently laid down in written documents. The *Brihaspati Smriti* refers to guilds rendering justice to their members and suggests that these decisions should, by and large, be approved by the king. There is also mention of the philanthropic activities of guilds, for instance, providing shelter for travellers and building assembly houses, temples and gardens. The inscription also records that the chief of the guilds played an important role in the district-level administrative bodies. There is also mention of joint corporate bodies of merchant-bankers, caravan merchants and artisans. The guilds also acted as banks. The names of donors are mentioned in this inscription.

Usury (the lending of money at an exorbitant rate of interest) was in practice during the Gupta period. The detailed discussion in the sources of that period indicates that money was used, borrowed and loaned for profit. There were many ports that facilitated trade in the western coast of India such as *Calliena* (Kalyan), *Chaul* port in ruin sixty kilometres south of Mumbai, and the markets of *Male* (Malabar), *Mangarouth* (Mangalore), *Salopatana*, *Nalopatana* and *Pandopatana* on the Malabar coast. *Fahien* refers to *Tamralipti* in Bengal as an important centre of trade on the eastern coast. These ports and towns were connected with those of Persia, Arabia and Byzantium on the one hand and Sri Lanka, China and Southeast Asia on the other. *Fahien* describes the perils of the sea route between India and China. The goods traded from India were rare gems, pearls, fine textiles and aromatics. Indians bought silk and other articles from China.

The Guptas issued many gold coins but comparatively few silver and copper coins. However, the post-Gupta period saw a decline in the circulation of gold coins.

Cultural Florescence

Art and Architecture

By evolving the Nagara and the Dravid styles, the Gupta art ushers in a formative and creative age in the history of Indian architecture with considerable scope for future development.

Rock-cut and Structural Temples

The rock-cut caves continue the old forms to a great extent but possess striking novelty by bringing about extensive changes in the ornamentation of the facade and in the designs of the pillars in the interior. The most notable groups of the rock-cut caves are found at Ajanta and Ellora (Maharashtra) and Bagh (Madhya Pradesh). The Udayagiri caves (Orissa) are also of this type.

The structural temples have the following attributes: (1) flat-roofed square temples; (2) flat-roofed square temple with a vimana (second storey); (3) square temple with a curvilinear tower (shikara) above; (4) rectangular temple; and (5) circular temple.

The second group of temples shows many of the characteristic features of the Dravida style. The importance of the third group lies in the innovation of a shikhara that caps the sanctum sanctorum, the main feature of the Nagara style.

Stupas

Stupas were also built in large numbers but the best are found at Sarnath (Uttar Pradesh), Ratnagiri (Orissa) and Mirpur Khas (Sind).

Sculpture: Stone Sculpture

A good specimen of stone sculpture is the well-known erect Buddha from Sarnath. Of the puranic images, perhaps the most impressive is the great Boar (Varaha) at the entrance of a cave at Udayagiri.

Metal statues

The technology of casting statues on a large scale of core process was practised by the craftsmen during the Gupta period with great workmanship. Two remarkable examples of Gupta metal sculpture are (1) a copper image of the Buddha about eighteen feet high at Nalanda in Bihar and (2) the Sultanganj Buddha of seven-and-a-half feet in height.

Painting

The art of painting seems to have been in popular demand in the Gupta period than the art of stone sculptures. The mural paintings of this period are found at Ajanta, Bagh, Badami and other places.

From the point of technique, the surface of these paintings was perhaps done in a very simple way. The mural paintings of Ajanta are not true frescoes, for frescoes are painted while the plaster is still damp and the murals of Ajanta were made after it had set. The art of Ajanta and Bagh shows the Madhyadesa School of painting at its best.

Terracotta and Pottery

Clay figurines were used both for religious and secular purposes. We have figurines of Vishnu, Karttikeya, Durga, Naga and other gods and goddesses.

Gupta pottery remains found at Ahchichhatra, Rajgarh, Hastinapur and Basharford proof of excellence of pottery. The most distinctive class of pottery of this period is the "red ware".

Sanskrit Literature

The Guptas made Sanskrit the official language and all their epigraphic records were written in it. The period saw the last phase of the Smriti literature.

Smritis are religious texts covering a wide range of subjects such as ethics, politics, culture and art. Dharmasastras and puranas form the core of this body of literature.

Sanskrit Grammar

The Gupta period also saw the development of Sanskrit grammar based on Panini who wrote Ashtadhyayi and Patanjali who wrote Mahabhashya on the topic. This period is particularly memorable for the compilation of the Amarakosa, a thesaurus in Sanskrit, by Amarasimha. A Buddhist scholar from Bengal, Chandrogomia, composed a book on grammar named Chandravakyakarana.

Puranas and Ithihasas

The Puranas, as we know them in their present form, were composed during this time. They are the legends as recorded by the Brahmins. They were originally composed by bards (professional storytellers), but now, having come into priestly hands, they were rewritten in classical Sanskrit. Details on Hindu sects, rites and customs were added in order to make them sacrosanct religious documents. The succession of dynasties was recorded in the form of prophecies. Thus what began as popular memories of the past were revived and rewritten in prophetic form and became the Brahmanical interpretation

of the past. The Mahabharata and the Ramayana also got their final touches and received their present shape during this period.

Eighteen major puranas are listed. Of them the well known are: Brahma Purana, Padma Purana, Vishnu Purana, Skanda Purana, Shiva Maha Purana, Markendeya Purana, Agni Purana, Bhavishya Purana, Matsya Purana and Shrimad Bhagavat Purana.

The earliest Buddhist works are in Pali, but in the later phase, Sanskrit came to be used to a great extent. Most of the works are in prose with verse passages in mixed Sanskrit. Arya Deva and Arya Asanga of the Gupta period are the most notable writers. The first regular Buddhist work on logic was written by Vasubandhu. Vasubandhu's disciple, Dignaga, was also the author of many learned works.

Jaina Literature

The Jaina canonical literature at first took shape in Prakrit dialects. Sanskrit came to be the medium later. Within a short time, Jainism produced many great scholars and by their efforts the Hindu itihasa and puranas were recast in Jaina versions to popularise their doctrines. Vimala produced a Jaina version of Ramayana. Siddasena Divakara laid the foundation of logic among the Jainas.

Secular Literature

Samudragupta himself had established his fame as Kaviraja. It is widely believed that his court was adorned by the celebrated navaratnas like Kalidasa, Amarasimha, Visakadatta and Dhanvantri. Kalidasa's famous dramas are Sakunthalam, Malavikagnimitram and Vikramaurvashiyam. The works of Sudraka (Mrichchhakatika), Visakhadatta (Mudraraksasa and Devichandraguptam) and the lesser known dramatists and writers also contributed to the literary and social values in the classical age. An interesting feature of the dramas of this period is that while the elite spoke in Sanskrit, the common people spoke Prakrit.

Prakrit Language and Literature

In Prakrit, there was patronage outside the court circle. The Gupta age witnessed the evolution of many Prakrit forms such as Suraseni used in Mathura and its vicinity, Ardha Magadhi spoken in Awadh and Bundelkhand and Magadhi in modern Bihar.

Nalanda University

Nalanda was an acclaimed Mahavihara, a large Buddhist monastery in the ancient kingdom of Magadha in India. The site is located about ninety five kilometres southeast of Patna near the town of Bihar Sharif and was a centre of learning from the fifth century CE to c. 1200 CE. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The highly formalised methods of Vedic learning helped inspire the establishment of large teaching institutions such as Taxila, Nalanda and Vikramashila, which are often characterised as India's early universities. Nalanda flourished under the patronage of the Gupta Empire in the fifth and sixth centuries and later under Harsha, the emperor of Kanauj. The liberal cultural traditions inherited from the Gupta age resulted in a period of growth and prosperity until the ninth century. The subsequent centuries were a time of gradual decline, a period during which Buddhism became popular in eastern India patronised by the Palas of Bengal.

At its peak, the Nalanda attracted scholars and students from near and far with some travelling all the way from Tibet, China, Korea and Central Asia. Archaeological findings also confirm the contact with the Shailendra dynasty of Indonesia, one of whose kings built a monastery in the complex.

Nalanda was ransacked and destroyed by an army of the Mamluk dynasty of the Delhi Sultanate under Bakhtiyar Khalji in c. 1200 CE. While some sources note that the Mahavihara continued to function in a makeshift fashion for a little longer, it was eventually abandoned and forgotten. The site was accidentally discovered when the Archaeological Survey of India surveyed the area. Systematic excavations commenced in 1915, which unearthed 11 monasteries and 6 brick temples situated on 12 hectares (30 acres) of land. A trove of sculptures, coins, seals and inscriptions have also been discovered since then and all of them are on display in the Nalanda Archaeological Museum situated nearby. Nalanda is now a notable tourist destination and a part of the Buddhist tourism circuit. Recently, the government of India, in cooperation with other South and South-east Asian countries, has revived this university.

Gupta Sciences Mathematics and Astronomy

The invention of the theory of zero and the consequent evolution of the decimal system are to be credited to the thinkers of this age. In the Surya Siddhanta, Aryabhatta (belonging to late fifth and early sixth century CE) examined the true cause of the solar eclipses. In calculation of the size of the earth, he is very close to the modern estimation. He was the first astronomer to discover that the earth rotates on its own axis. He is also the author of Aryabhattiyam, which deals with arithmetic, geometry and algebra.

Varahamihira's Brihat Samhita (sixth century CE) is an encyclopaedia of astronomy, physical geography, botany and natural history. His other works are Panch Siddhantika and Brihat Jataka. Brahmagupta (late sixth and early seventh century CE) is author of important works on mathematics and astronomy, namely Brahmasphuta-siddhanta and Khandakhadyaka.

Medical Sciences

Metallic preparations for the purpose of medicine and references to the use of mercury and iron by Varahamihira and others indicate that much progress was made in chemistry. The Navanitakam was a medical work, which is a manual of recipes, formulation and prescriptions. Hastayurveda or the veterinary science authored by Palakapya attests to the advances made in medical science during the Gupta period.

Decline of the Gupta Empire

The last recognised king of the Gupta line was Vishnugupta who reigned from 540 to 550 CE. Internal fighting and dissensions among the royal family led to its collapse. During the reign of a Gupta king, Budhagupta, the Vakataka ruler Narendrasena of western Deccan, attacked Malwa, Mekala and Kosala. Later on, another Vakataka king Harishena conquered Malwa and Gujarat from the Guptas. During Skanda Gupta's reign, the grandson of Chandragupta II, the Huns invaded northwest India. He was successful in repulsing the Huns, but consequently his empire was drained of financial resources. In the sixth century CE, the Huns occupied Malwa, Gujarat, Punjab and Gandhara. As the Hun invasion weakened the Gupta hold in the country, independent rulers emerged all over the north like Yasodharman of Malwa, the Maukharis of Uttar Pradesh, the Maitrakas in Saurashtra and others in Bengal. In time, the Gupta Empire came to be restricted to only Magadha. They did not focus on empire building and military conquests. So, weak rulers along with incessant invasions from foreign as well as native rulers caused the decline of the Gupta Empire. By the beginning of the sixth century, the empire had disintegrated and was ruled by many regional chieftains.

Feudalism

The social formation of feudalism was the characteristic of the medieval society in India. Feudal features listed by historian R.S. Sharma are: royal grants of land; transfer of fiscal and judicial rights to the beneficiaries; the grant of their rights over peasants, artisans and merchants; an increased incidence of forced labour; appropriation of surplus by the state; a decline in trade and coinage; payment of officials through land revenue assignments; and the growth of the obligations of the samantas (subordinate or feudatory rulers).

Lesson - 8

Harsha and Rise of Regional Kingdoms

I Harsha

Introduction

North India splintered into several warrior kingdoms after the downfall of the Gupta Empire. Excepting in the areas that were subdued by the Huns (modern Punjab, Rajasthan and Malwa), regional identity became pronounced with the emergence of many small states. Maithriyas had organised a powerful state in Sourashtra (Gujarat), with Valabhi as their capital. Agra and Oudh were organised into an independent and sovereign state by the Maukharis. The Vakatakas had recovered their position of ascendancy in the western Deccan. Despite political rivalry and conflict among these states, Thaneshwar, lying north of Delhi between Sutlej and Yamuna, was formed into an independent state by Pushyabhutis. It rose to prominence under Harsha. Harsha ruled the kingdom as large as that of the Guptas from 606 to 647 CE.

Sources

Literary sources

Bana's Harshacharita
Hieun Tsang's Si-Yu-ki

Epigraphical sources

- Madhuban copper plate inscription
- Sonpat inscription on copper seal
- Banskhera copper plate inscription
- Nalanda inscription on clay seals

Bana's Harshacharita was the first formal biography of a king. It inaugurated a new literary genre in India.

Pushyabhutis

The founder of the Vardhana dynasty was Pushyabhuti who ruled from Thaneshwar. He served as a military general under the imperial Guptas and rose to power after the fall of the Guptas. With the accession of Prabakara Vardhana (580–605 CE), the Pushyabhuti family became strong and powerful. Prabakara Vardhana fought against the Gurjaras and the Huns and established his authority as far as Malwa and Gujarat. He gave his daughter Rajyasri in marriage to the Maukhari king, Grahavarman, of Kanauj (near modern Kanpur), thus making Kanauj his ally. Prabakara Vardhana's dream of building an empire was eventually realised by his younger son Harsha-vardhana.

Rajavardhana (605-606 CE), the eldest son of Prabhakaravardhana, ascended the throne after his father's death. He was treacherously murdered by Sasanka, the Gauda ruler of Bengal. This resulted in his younger brother Harsha-wardhana becoming the king of Tanesar. Harsha had known the weakness of a group of small kingdoms and conquered his neighbours to integrate them into his empire. As Tanesar was too close to the threats from the northwest, Harsha shifted his capital from Tanesar to Kanauj. Kanauj was located in the rich agricultural region of the western Ganges Plain.

Harsha as King of Kanauj

The magnates of Kanauj (the capital of Maukhari kingdom), on the advice of their minister Poni, invited Harsha to ascend the throne. A reluctant Harsha accepted the throne on the advice of Avalokitesvara Bodhisatva with the title of Rajputra and Siladitya. Thus the two kingdoms of Taneswar and Kanauj became united under Harsha's rule. Consequently, Harsha transferred his capital to Kanauj.

Harsha's Military Conquests

On his accession in 606 CE Harsha focused his attention on the affairs of his sister Rajyasri who had fled to Vindhya mountains to escape from the evil design of Deva Gupta of Malwa to covet her. Harsha went to Vindhya mountain ranges and succeeded in saving his sister who was about to burn herself after killing Deva Gupta. Harsha consoled Rajyasri and brought her back to the kingdom of Kanauj. Later Rajyasri took to Buddhism and was instrumental in converting Harsha to Buddhism.

According to Bana, Harsha, in an effort to build an empire, sent an ultimatum to the following kings to either surrender or be prepared for a battle:

- 1. Sasanka, the Gauda ruler of Bengal.**
- 2. The Maitrakas of Valabhi and Gurjara of Broach region.**
- 3. The Chalukya king, Pulikesin II, in the Deccan**
- 4. Rulers of Sindh, Nepal, Kashmir, Magadha, Odra (northern Odisha)**
- 5. and Kongoda (another geographical unit in ancient Odisha).**

Harsha's immediate task was to take revenge on Sasanka. Harsha entered into an alliance with the king of Kamarupa (Pragiyatisha), which is today the modern Assam. But there is hardly any detail of the war between Harsha and Sasanka. However, Harsha seems to have successfully subjugated the Gauda Empire, which included Magadha, Gouda, Odra and Kongoda only after the death of Sasanka.

The hostilities between Harsha and the Maitrakas ended in the marriage of Dhruvabhatta with the daughter of Harsha. Soon, Valabhi became a subordinate ally of Harsha.

Pulikesin II, the Chalukya King

Harsha sought to extend his authority southward into the Deccan. However the Chalukya king Pulikesin II, who controlled the region, humbled Harsha. In commemoration of his victory over Harsha, Pulikesin assumed the title of "Parameswara". Inscriptions in Pulikesin's capital Badami attest to this victory.

Extent of Harsha's Empire

Harsha ruled for 41 years. His feudatories included those of Jalandhar (in the Punjab), Kashmir, Nepal and Valabhi. Sasanka of Bengal remained hostile to him. Though it is claimed that Harsha's Empire comprised Assam, Bengal, Bihar, Kanauj, Malwa, Odisha, the Punjab, Kashmir, Nepal and Sindh, his real sway did not extend beyond a compact territory between the Ganges and Yamuna rivers. The kingdom of Harsha disintegrated rapidly into small states after his death.

Harsha's Relations with China

Harsha had cordial relations with China. The contemporary T'ang emperor, Tai Tsung, sent an embassy to his court in 643 and again in 647 CE. On the second occasion, the Chinese ambassador found that Harsha had recently died. On learning that the throne had been usurped by an undeserving king, the Chinese ambassador rushed to Nepal and Assam to raise a force to dislodge the usurper. Later, the king who had usurped the throne was taken to China as a prisoner.

Administration

According to historian Burton Stein, a centralised administration did not even exist under the powerful Guptas. It was restricted only to the central part of the Gangetic plain between Pataliputra and Mathura. Beyond that zone, there was no centralised authority. The only difference between Guptas and Vardahanas is that the former had formidable enemies like Huns, while the latter had no such opponents. The copper plates of 632 CE record a gift of land to two Brahmans. The names of certain political personages with state power, as protectors of the gift, are mentioned in them. Some were mahasamantas, allied to the king but of a subordinate status. Others were independent maharajas but acknowledged feudatories of Harsha. There was yet another category of rulers who pledged their loyalty to Harsha and professed to be at his service. This is the characteristic of Harsha's imperial authority in North India.

Council of Ministers

It appears that the ministerial administration during the reign of Harsha was the same as that of the imperial Guptas. The emperor was assisted by a council of ministers (Mantri Parishad) in his duties. The council played an important role in the selection of the king as well as framing the foreign policy of the empire. The prime minister was of the most important position in the council of ministers.

Key Officials

1. Avanti - Minister for Foreign Relations and War
2. Simhananda - Commander in chief
3. Kuntala - Chief Cavalry Officer
4. Skandagupta - Chief Commander of Elephant force
5. Dirghadhvasas - Royal Messengers
6. Banu - Keeper of records
7. Mahaprathihara - Chief of the Palace Guard
8. Sarvagata - Secret Service Department

Revenue Administration

Bhaga, Hiranya and Bali were the three kinds of tax collected during Harsha's reign. Bhaga was the land tax paid in kind. One-sixth of the produce was collected as land revenue. Hiranya was the tax paid by farmers and merchants in cash. There is no reference to the tax Bali. The crown land was divided into four parts.

- Part I - for carrying out the affairs of the state
- Part II - for paying the ministers and officers of the crown
- Part III - for rewarding men of letters
- Part IV - for charity to religious institutions

Administration of Justice

Criminal law was more severe than that of the Gupta age. Mimamsakas were appointed to dispense justice. Banishment and the cutting of limbs of the body were the usual punishments. Trial by ordeal was in practice. Life imprisonment was the punishment for the violations of the laws and for plotting against the king.

Hieun Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim, spent nearly 13 years in India (630-643 CE), collecting sacred texts and relics which he took back to China. He was known as the "prince of pilgrims" because he visited important pilgrim centres associated with the life of Buddha. His Si-Yu-Ki provides detailed information about the social, economic, religious and cultural conditions during the reign of Harsha.

According to Hieun Tsang, perfect law and order prevailed throughout the empire, as the law-enforcing agencies were strong. The pilgrim records the principal penalties and judicial ordeals practised in India at that time. Corporal punishment for serious offences was in practice. But the death penalty was usually avoided. Offences against social morality and defiance of law were punished by maiming. Harsha travelled across the kingdom frequently to ensure his familiarity with his people. He was accessible to people and kept a closer watch on his tributary rulers.

Administration of Army

Harsha paid great attention to discipline and strength of the army. The army consisted of elephants, cavalry and infantry. Horses were imported. Ordinary soldiers

were known as Chatas and Bhatas. Cavalry officers were called Brihadisvaras. Infantry officers were known as Baladhikritas and Mahabaladhikritas. Hieun Tsang mentions the four divisions (chaturanga) of Harsha's army. He gives details about the strength of each division, its recruitment system and payment for the recruits.

Division of the Empire

The empire was divided into several provinces. The actual number of such provinces is not known. Each province was divided into Bhuktis. And each Bhukti was divided into several Vishayas. They were like the districts. Each vishaya was further divided into Pathakas. Each such area was divided into several villages for the sake of administrative convenience. Harsha Charita refers to a number of officials who took care of the local administration. Only their titles are known. What they did isn't available in Harsha Charita. We learn that bhogapathi, ayuktha, pratpalaka-purusha and the like looked after the local administration.

Cities and Towns

Hieun Tsang describes the structure, aesthetics and safety measures of the cities, towns and villages of India. In his view, India was the land of innumerable villages, numerous towns and big cities like China. He pointed out that Pataliputra lost its prominence and its place was taken by Kanauj. The elegance of Kanauj with its lofty structures, beautiful gardens and the museum of rare collections is described. The refined appearance of its residents, their costly dressings and love for learning and art are also pointed out in his account.

Most of the towns, according to Hieun Tsang, had outer walls and inner gates. Though the walls were wide and high, the streets and lanes were narrow. Residential houses had balconies made of wood and coated with lime mortar. Floors were smeared with cow dung for the purpose of purity and hygiene. Big mansions, public buildings and Buddhist monasteries and viharas were magnificent multi-storeyed structures. They were built of kiln-fired bricks, red sandstone and marble. Harsha constructed a large number of viharas, monasteries and stupas on the bank of the Ganges.

Harsha built charitable institutions for the stay of the travellers, and to care for the sick and the poor. Free hospitals and rest houses (dharmasalas) in all the towns were constructed where the travellers or the outsiders could stay. Hospitals were built to provide medical treatment free of charge.

Religious Policy

Harsha was a worshipper of Siva at least up to 631 CE. But he embraced Buddhism under the influence of his sister Rajyasri and the Buddhist monk Hieun Tsang. He subscribed to the Mahayana school of thought. Yet he held discourses among learned men of various creeds. Slaughter of animals and consumption of meat was restricted. Harsha summoned two Buddhist assemblies (643 CE), one at Kanauj and another at Prayag.

The assembly at Kanauj was attended by 20 kings including Bhaskaravarman of Kamarupa. A large number of Buddhist, Jain and Vedic scholars attended the assembly. A golden statue of Buddha was consecrated in a monastery and a small statue of Buddha (three feet) was brought out in a procession. The procession was attended by Harsha and other kings.

Buddhist Assembly at Prayag

Harsha convened quinquennial assemblies known as Mahamoksha Parishad at Prayag (at the confluence of the Ganges and Yamuna). He distributed his wealth among Buddhists, Vedic scholars and the poor people. Harsha offered fabulous gifts to the Buddhist monks on all the four days of the assemblage.

Hieun Tsang observed that the principles of Buddhism had deeply permeated the Hindu society. According to him, people were given complete freedom of worship. Social harmony prevailed among the followers of various creeds. Harsha treated the Vedic scholars and the Buddhist bikshus alike and distributed charities equally to them.

Caste System

Caste system was firmly established in the Hindu society. According to Hieun Tsang, the occupations of the four divisions of

Hieun Tsang, hailed as the prince of pilgrims, visited India during the reign of Harsha. Born in China in 612 CE he became a Buddhist monk at the age of twenty. During his travels, he visited various sacred places of northern and southern India. Hieun Tsang spent about five years in the University of Nalanda and studied there. Harsha admired him for his deep devotion to Buddha and his profound knowledge of Buddhism. Hieun Tsang carried with him 150 pieces of the relics of Buddha, a large number of Buddha image in gold, silver, sandalwood and above all 657 volumes of valuable manuscripts.

society continued to be in practice as in the previous times. People were honest and not deceitful or treacherous in their conduct. The butchers, fishermen, dancers and sweepers were asked to stay outside the city. Even though the caste system was rigid, there was no social conflict among the various sections of the society.

Status of Women

Hieun Tsang's account also provides us information on the position of women and the marriage system of the times. Women wore purdah. Hieun Tsang, however, added that the purdah system was not followed among the higher class. He pointed out that Rajyasri did not wear purdah when listening to his discourse. Sati was in practice. Yasomatidevi, wife of Prabhakara Vardhana, immolated herself after the death of her husband.

Lifestyle

The life pattern of the people of India during the rule of Harsha is known from the accounts of Hieun Tsang. People lived a simple life. They dressed in colourful cotton and silk clothes. The art of wearing fine cloth had reached perfection. Both men and women adorned themselves with gold and silver ornaments. The king wore extraordinary ornaments. Garlands and tiaras of precious stones, rings, bracelets and necklaces were some of the ornaments used by the royalty. The wealthy merchants wore bracelets. women used cosmetics.

Dietary Habits

Hieun Tsang also noted that Indians were mostly vegetarians. The use of onion and garlic in the food preparation was rare. The use of sugar, milk, ghee and rice in the preparation of food or their consumption was common. On certain occasions, fish and mutton were eaten. Beef and meat of certain animals were forbidden.

Education

Education was imparted in the monasteries. Learning was religious in character. Much religious literature were produced. Te Vedas were taught orally and not written down. Sanskrit was the language of the learned people. An individual took to learning between 9 and 30 years of age. Many individuals devoted their whole life to learning. Te wandering bhikshus and sadhus were well known for their wisdom and culture. Te people also paid respect to such people of moral and intellectual eminence.

Harsha as a Patron of Art and Literature

Harsha patronised literary and cultural activities. It is said the state spent a quarter of its revenue for such activities. Bana, the author of Harshacharita and Kadambari, was a court poet of Harsha. Te emperor himself was a renowned litterateur, which is evident from the plays he wrote such as Priyadarsika, Rathnavali and Nagananda. Harsha gived liberally for the promotion of education. Temples and monasteries functioned as centres of learning. Renowned scholars imparted education in the monasteries at Kanauj, Gaya, Jalandhar, Manipur and other places. Te Nalanda University reached its utmost fame during this period.

Nalanda University

Hieun Tsang recorded the fame of the Nalanda University. Students and scholars from the Buddhist countries like China, Japan, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Tibet and some other countries of Central and Southeast Asia stayed and studied in the university. Shilabhadra, a reputed Buddhist scholar, who probably hailed from Assam, was the head of the University during the visit of Hieun Tsang. As an educational centre of international fame, Nalanda had 10,000 students on its rolls. Dharmapala, Chandrapala, Shilabhadra,

Bhadrihari, Jayasena, Devakara and Matanga were important teachers in the university receiving royal patronage.

II The Palas

Afer the death of Harsha, the Pratiharas (Jalore-Rajasthan), the Palas (Bengal) and the Rashtrakutas (Deccan) engaged in a triangular contest for the control of the Ganga-Yamuna doab and the lands adjoining it. Te Palas controlled vast areas of the eastern Gangetic Plain. Apart from earning revenue from agriculture, Palas also derived income from their wide commercial contacts in South-east Asia. Buddhism in Bengal provided a link between eastern India and Java and Sumatra.

Establishment of Pala Rule in Bengal

Sashanka, the Gauda ruler, believed to have ruled between 590 and 625 CE, is considered the frst prominent king of ancient Bengal. Afer the fall of the Gauda kingdom, there was no central authority, which led to recurring wars between petty chiefains. So, in 750 CE, a group of chiefs met and decided on a “Kshatriya chief” named Gopala to be their ruler. Tere is a story that Gopala was elected because of his ability to kill a “demoness” that had killed those who were previously elected like him. Tough Gopala did not have royal antecedents, he succeeded in acquiring a kingdom. Gopala’s political authority was soon recognised by several independent chiefs. His original kingdom was in Vanga or East Bengal.

The Palas ruled eastern India from Pataliputra between the ninth and the early twelfth centuries. Sanskrit, Prakrit and Pali were the languages in use in their kingdom. Palas followed Mahayana Buddhism.

Pala Rulers

Gopala I was succeeded by his son Dharmapala (770–815 CE) who made the Pala kingdom a force to reckon with. Bengal and Bihar were directly ruled by him. Kanauj was ruled by his nominee. The rulers of the Punjab, Rajaputana, Malwa and Berar accepted his suzerainty. He assumed titles like Paramesvara, Parambhattaraka and Maharajadhiraja.

Dharmapala proved to be a great patron of Buddhism. He founded the Vikramasila monastery in Bhagalpur district in Bihar, which developed into a great centre of Buddhist learning and culture. He built a grand vihara at Somapura in modern Paharapura (present-day Bangladesh). Dharmapala also built a monastery at Odantapuri in Bihar. He patronised Harisbhadra, a Buddhist writer.

Dharmapala’s son Devapala extended Pala control eastwards up to Kamarupa (Assam). He defeated Amoghavarsha, the Rashtrakuta ruler, by allying with all the states that regarded the Rashtrakutas as their common enemy. Devapala was also a great patron of Buddhism. He granted five villages to Balaputradeva, the king of the Sailendra dynasty

of Suvarnadipa (Sumatra), to maintain a monastery built by him at Nalanda. Nalanda continued to flourish as the chief seat of Buddhist learning even during the Pala reign.

Devapala was succeeded by Vigramapala, who abdicated his throne after ruling for a few years and went to lead an ascetic life. Narayanapala, son of Vigramapala, was also a man of pacific and religious disposition. The Rashtrakutas and the Pratiharas took advantage of Narayanapala's disposition and defeated the Palas. The rise of the Pratiharas in Jalore under Mihira Bhoja and the advance of the Rashtrakutas into Pala territories inevitably brought about the decline of the Palas. The petty chiefs, who formerly owed allegiance to the Palas, also started asserting their independence.

The slide of the Pala dynasty was accelerated during the rule of his three successors – Rajyapala, Gopala III and Vigramapala II. The fortunes of the dynasty, however, were revived by Mahipala I, son of Vigramapala II. The most important event of his period was the invasion of northern India by Rajendra Chola sometime between 1020 and 1025 CE. However, the advance of the Cholas beyond the Ganges was checked by Mahipala I.

After 15 years of Mahipala's rule, four insignificant rulers followed. Ramapala was the last ruler who tried to recover the lost glory of the dynasty. He ruled for about 53 years and after his death, the presence of Pala dynasty was confined to only a portion of Magadha (Bihar) and continued to exist only for a short period. Vijayasena of the Sena dynasty who had become powerful by then in northern Bengal expelled the last ruler Madanapala (1130–1150 CE) from Bengal and established his dynastic rule.

Religion

The Palas were great patrons of Mahayana Buddhism. The Buddhist philosopher Haribhadra was the spiritual preceptor of Dharmapala, the founder of the Pala kingdom. Bengal remained one of the few places where Buddhist monasteries continued to exist. The kingdom as well as Buddhism soon suffered decline because of large-scale conversion of merchants and artisans to Islam.

Art and Architecture

Two artists of this period were Dhiman and his son Vitapala. They were great painters, sculptors and bronze statue makers. The Pala school of sculptural art was influenced by the Gupta art. Mahipala I constructed and repaired several sacred structures at Saranath, Nalanda and Bodh Gaya. Gopala founded the famous monastery at Odantapura (Bihar). Dharmapala established the Vikramashila and the Somapura Mahaviharas (Bangladesh).

Literature

The prominent Buddhist scholars of Vikramashila and Nalanda universities were Atisha, Saraha, Tilopa, Dansheel, Dansree, Jinamitra, Muktimitra, Padmanava, Virachan and Silabhadra. The notable Pala texts on philosophy include Agama Shastra by

Gaudapada, and Nyaya Kundali by Sridhar Bhatta. Many texts on medicine were compiled by Chakrapani Datta, Sureshwar Gadadhara Vaidya and Jimutavahana. The Palas also patronised Sanskrit scholars. Many Buddhist tantric works were authored and translated into Sanskrit. The original tantric works comprise a varied group of Indian and Tibetan texts. The “Mahipalageet” (songs on Mahipala), a set of folk songs, are still popular in the rural areas of Bengal. Sandhyakar Nandi’s epic Ramacharitam, a biography of a later Pala ruler Ramapala, describes how forest chiefs were brought into their alliance through lavish gifts.

III The Rashtrakutas

The rivalry between the Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas proved to be destructive to both the dynasties. The Arab traveller Al-Masudi who visited Kanauj recorded the enmity between the two ruling dynasties. The Rashtrakutas who were biding their time to capture Kanauj from Pratiharas succeeded in their motive and continued to rule until 10th century CE. They claimed descent from the Rastikas or Rathikas, an important clan domiciled in the Kannada-speaking region and mentioned in the edicts of Ashoka.

Rise of the Dynasty

The Rashtrakutas were originally known to be the feudatories of the Western Chalukyas of Vatapi. Though Rashtrakutas were early rulers, the greatest ruler of the dynasty was Dandidurga. Ruling from a smaller part of Berar, Dandidurga built his career of territorial conquest after the death of Vikramaditya II (733–746 CE), the Chalukya ruler. He captured Gurjara Kingdom of Nandipuri, Malwa and eastern Madhya Pradesh and the whole of Berar. By 750 CE, he had become the master of central and southern Gujarat and the whole of Madhya Pradesh and Berar.

After consolidating his position, and after defeating Kirthivarman II (746–753 CE), the last Chalukya ruler of Vatapi, Dandidurga assumed the titles of Maharajadhiraja, Parameshwara and Paramabhattaraha. He developed relationships with the Pallava ruler Nandivarman II by giving his daughter in marriage to the Pallava king. After Dandidurga’s death in 758 CE, his uncle (father’s brother) Krishna I ascended the throne.

Krishna I and His Successors

Krishna I (756–775 CE) defeated the Gangas of Mysore. His eldest son Govinda II succeeded him in 775 CE. He defeated the Eastern Chalukyas. He left the affairs of country to his brother Dhruva who eventually crowned himself as the ruler. During the reign of Dhruva (780–794 CE), the Rashtrakuta power reached its zenith. After humbling the western Ganga king, Dhruva defeated Dantivarman, the Pallava king. The ruler of Vengi (modern Andhra) also had to accept his suzerainty. After establishing his hegemony in the south, Dhruva turned his attention towards the regions around Kanauj. Vatsarya, the Pratihara king, and Dharmapala, the Pala ruler, who were contenders for supremacy in the region, were defeated by Dhruva. He nominated his third son Govinda III as the heir-apparent.

The accession of Govinda III (794–814 CE) to the throne heralded an era of success like never before. Dantika, the Pallava king, was subdued by Govinda III. Vishnuvardana, the ruler of Vengi, turned out to be his maternal grandfather and so he did not challenge his authority. Thus Govinda III became the overlord of the Deccan. The Rashtrakuta Empire reached its height of glory.

Govinda III was succeeded by his son Amoghavarsha (814–880 CE). Amoghavarsha ruled for 64 years and his first twenty years of the rule witnessed endless wars with the Western Gangas. Peace returned when Amoghavarsha gave his daughter in marriage to a Ganga prince. Amoghavarsha was a patron of literature and he patronised the famous Digambara acharya Jinasena, Sanskrit grammarian Sakatayana and the mathematician Mahaviracharya. Amoghavarsha was himself a great poet and his Kavirajamarga is the earliest Kannada work on poetics. After Amoghavarsha, his successors were able to sustain the vast empire, but the ablest among them was Krishna III (939–968 CE).

Krishna III was the last great ruler of the Rashtrakuta dynasty. Soon after his accession, he invaded the Chola kingdom along with his brother-in-law Butunga. Kanchi and Thanjavur were captured in 943 CE. His army remained in effective control of Thondaimandalam, consisting of Arcot, Chengalpattu and Vellore. In 949 CE, he defeated the Chola army of Rajadithya in the battle of Takkolam (in present day Vellore district). Krishna III marched upto Rameshvaram where he built a pillar of victory. Thus he succeeded in establishing his suzerainty over the entire Deccan region. It was under him the Rashtrakutas joined the contest that was held then among the northern ruling dynasties for control of Kanauj. The continued conflict over the possession of Kanauj emboldened some of the local rajas to assert their independence. Their defiance destroyed the possibility of a single kingdom ruling northern India with its centre at Kanauj. Invasions from the north-west also prevented any such attempts to create a powerful state. But the successors of Krishna III were too weak to save the kingdom from its decline.

Hiranyagarbha literally means golden womb. A person coming out of this golden womb, after elaborate rituals performed by priests, is declared as reborn possessing a celestial body. The Satavahana king Gautamiputra Sathakarni performed this ritual to claim kshatriya status.

Religion

The worship of Shiva and Vishnu was popular during the Rashtrakuta reign. The famous rock-cut Shiva temple at Ellora was built by Krishna I. The seals have the pictures of Garudavahana of Vishnu or of Shiva seated in yogic posture. Dantidurga performed the Hiranyagarbha ritual at Ujjayini. There are references to Tula-danas gift or offer of gold equal to one's own weight to temple deities.

Jainism was patronised by later rulers such as Amoghavarsha I, Indra I V, Krishna II and Indra III. Buddhism had declined and its only important centre was at Kanheri.

Literature

The Rashtrakuta rulers were great patrons of learning. Kannada and Sanskrit literature made great progress during their reign. Amoghavarsha I was the author of *Prasnottaramalika*, a Sanskrit work, and *Kavirajamarga*, a Kannada work. Jinasena wrote the *Adipurana* of the Jains. Krishna II's spiritual guide, Gunabhadra, wrote the *Mahapurana* of the Jains. The three gems of ancient Kannada literature – Kavichakravarthi Ponna, Adikavi Panpa and Kavichakravarti Ranna – were patronised by Rashtrakuta king Krishna III, as well as by Tailapa and Satyashraya of Western Chalukyas.

Architecture

The Rashtrakutas made splendid contributions to Indian art. The rock-cut shrines at Ellora and Elephanta located in present-day Maharashtra belong to their period. The Ellora cave complex contains the features of Buddhist, Hindu and Jain monuments and art work. Amoghavarsha I espoused Jainism and there are five Jain cave temples at Ellora ascribed to his period.

The most striking structure at Ellora is the creation of the Monolithic Kailasanath Temple. The temple was hewn out of a single rock during the time of Krishna I in the 8th century. It is similar to the Lokeshvara temple at Pattadakal, in Karnataka, built by Chalukya king Vikramaditya II to commemorate his victory over the Pallavas. The sculptured panels of Dasavatara Bhairava, Ravana shaking the Mount Kailasa, dancing Shiva and Vishnu, and Lakshmi listening to music are the best specimens of sculpture inside the temple.

The main shrine at Elephanta is artistically superior to the shrines at Ellora. The sculptures such as Nataraja and Sadashiva excel even that of the Ellora sculptures in beauty and craftsmanship. Ardhanarishvara and Maheshamurti are the other famous sculptures. The latter, a three-faced bust of Lord Shiva, is 25 feet tall and considered one of the finest pieces of sculpture in India. The paintings are still seen in the porch of the temple of Kailasa and ceilings of the Maheshamurti shrine at Ellora.