

MAHIS 1.1



M.A. HISTORY
SEMESTER - I

**(REVISED SYLLABUS
AS PER NEP 2020)**

**HISTORY OF EARLY
INDIA
(UP to 1000 CE)**

Prof. Ravindra Kulkarni

Vice-Chancellor,
University of Mumbai,

Prin. Dr. Ajay Bhamare

Pro Vice-Chancellor,
University of Mumbai,

Prof. Shivaji Sargar

Director,
CDOE, University of Mumbai,

- Programme Co-ordinator** : **Anil R. Bankar**
Associate Professor of History and
Head, Faculty of Humanities,
CDOE, University of Mumbai.
- Course Co-ordinator** : **Shivdas Changdeo Ghadge**
Assistant Professor, Dept. of History,
CDOE, University of Mumbai.
- Editor** : **Dr. Kishor Gaikwad**
Professor, Dept. of History & Ethnography,
Mizoram University : Tanhril, Aizawl,
Mizoram.
- Course Writer** : **Dr. Pradeep Waghmare**
Associate Professor and Head, Dept. of History,
Ramnarain Ruia Autonomous College,
Matunga, Mumbai.
- : **Dr. Samuel Wesley**
Professor, Dept. of History,
C. H. M. College, Ulhasnagar, Dist. Thane.
- : **Dr. Nisha Sawant**
Assistant Professor, Dept. of AIHC & Archaeology,
Deccan College, Pune.
- : **Dr. Gurudas Shete**
Assistant Professor, Dept. of AIHC & Archaeology,
Deccan College, Pune.

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Programme Name: M.A. Sem- I

Core Course I: 50111-History of Early India (upto 1000 CE)

Total Credits: 04

Total Marks: 100

Semester End Assessment: 50

Internal Continuous Assessment:50

Course outcomes

- a) To create comprehensive understanding of ancient indian history upto 1000 CE.
- b) To enable students to develop knowledge of various ideas and concepts of ancient India.
- c) To develop intellectual curiosity about the subject.

MODULE I: (2 Credits)

Unit 1: Sources

- a) Archaeological sources
- b) Literary Sources
- c) Foreign Accounts

Unit 2: Terms and Concepts:

- a) Social-Religion: Bharatvarsha, Sabha and Samiti, Vedanta, Purusharthas, Samskaras, Janapada, Doctrine of Karma, Dandaniti, Arthasastra, Saptanga, Dharmavijaya, Bodhisattva, Tirthankara, Alvars, Nayanars
- b) Architecture: Stupa, Chaitya, Vihara, Nagara, Dravida, Vesara
- c) Economics: Sreni, Bhumi-Chidra-Vidhana-nyaya, Kara-bhoga-bhaga, Vishti, Stridhana, Agraharas

MODULE II: (2 Credits)

Unit 3: Agriculture and Economic System

- a) Pastoralist, Settled Agriculture and Feudalism,
- b) Guild System, Iron technology, Trade and Craftsmanship
- c) Economy: Tax, Temple, Pilgrimage

Unit 4: Political Control

- a) Dominant Group and Kingship
- b) Formation of Janpadas and Mahajanapada
- c) Local, Provincial and Central Administration

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOURCES OF ANCIENT INDIAN HISTORY

Unit Structure :

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Archaeological Sources
 - 1.2.1 Importance of the Archaeological Sources
 - 1.2.2 Development of Archaeology in India
- 1.3 Inscriptions (Epigraphic Records)
 - 1.3.1 Types of Inscriptions
- 1.4 Numismatics
 - 1.4.1 Importance of Coins as a Source of History
- 1.5 Monuments Sculptures, Paintings, Pottery and other Antiquities.
 - 1.5.1 Monuments
 - 1.5.2 The sculptural Art
 - 1.5.3 Paintings
 - 1.5.4 Pottery
 - 1.5.5 Other Antiquities
- 1.6 Summary
- 1.7 Questions
- 1.8 Additional Reading

1.0 OBJECTIVES

In this chapter, a critical analysis of the archaeological sources for the study of Ancient Indian history has been done. At the end of this lesson, students will be able to –

- i) Understand the importance of Inscriptions as a source of Ancient Indian History.
- ii) Describe the contribution of Coins as a source of history.

- iii) Realize the significance of Monuments in understanding the Culture of Ancient India.
- iv) Study the role of Artifacts and other Antiquities discovered during the excavations.
- v) Describe the Socio-Economic life with the help of Ancient Sculptures and Paintings.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

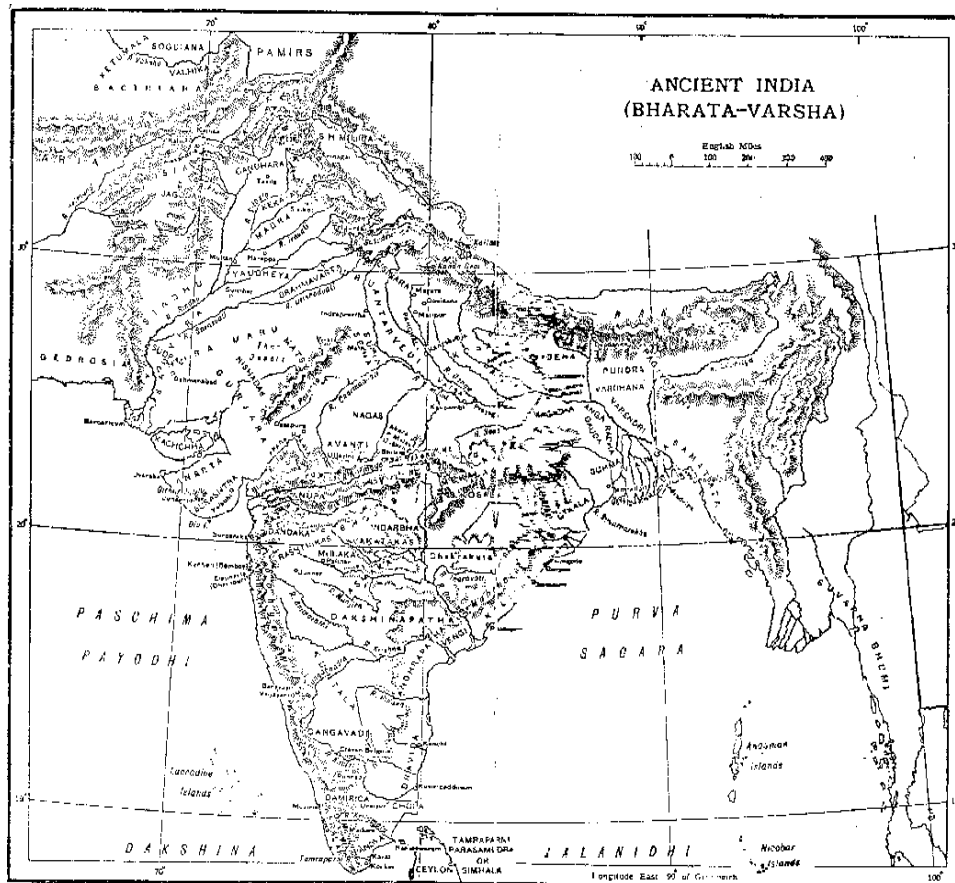
The word 'History' comes from the Latin word 'Historia' which means 'finding out', 'inquiry', or 'seeking knowledge'. History is a study of events in the past. It is a record of the achievements of man. For the reconstruction of history of any country or people, we should know the past events. These events are called as the 'historical facts'. The history of any people or society is known to us by the records left behind by them. These records are known as historical sources. Any piece of evidence, written or otherwise, which throws light on the past, can be considered as a source of History.

The study of Ancient Indian history is important as it tells us how in ancient times, the people of India developed their culture and civilization. The study of history is very much useful for:

- a) It helps us to know about our past.
- b) It helps us to understand our present in a better way.
- c) It helps us to learn some valuable lessons from our past mistakes.
- d) It also helps us to shape our future in a better way.
- e) It makes us broad minded and we learn to live in peace with people who have views different from us.

The History of any Ancient people civilization is largely conditioned by the authenticity of the source material. In broad terms, sources of Ancient Indian history are classified into two categories. They are:

- 1) Archaeological Sources
- 2) Literary Sources



In this lesson, we will be studying the Archaeological Sources for the study of Ancient Indian history and understand their importance.

1.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOURCES

Archaeology is the science of antiquities. The archaeological sources include Inscriptions, Coins, Structural remains, Monuments and other antiquities like Sculptures, Paintings, Pottery, Ornaments etc.

The archaeological sources are treated as more authentic than the literary sources because of their contemporaneity. These sources have provided immense information on many historical facts about which nothing was known previously. For example, Prehistoric cultures i.e. Palaeolithic, Neolithic and Megalithic Cultures and Protohistoric like the Indus valley civilization; where literary sources are absent (or not deciphered).

Archaeology recently has been developed scientifically and its evidence is regarded most trustworthy. In addition to the scrutiny and close examinations of the monuments such as temples, statues, ruins of the places etc., excavation has been adopted as a means to uncover ancient cultures. Valuable material concerning both prehistoric and historic civilizations has been discovered during various excavations such as Mohenjodaro, Harappa, Kot-Diji, Lothal, Kalibangan, Nalanda etc. Some of the sites that have been excavated in Maharashtra are Jorwe, Inamgaon, Diamabad, Paithan, Nevase, Ter, Brahmapuri, Pauni, Sopara etc.

1.2.1 Importance of the Archaeological Sources:

The knowledge of the history of any ancient society or people depends on authentic source materials. The archaeological sources are usually considered as the authentic source materials for the study of ancient history. The archaeological material is more authentic because it is based on actual discoveries of the then-contemporary periods. As a matter of fact, archaeological material is the only source of history for understanding the cultures of the 'Proto-historic' period. The best example of this kind is the Indus Valley Civilization. Archaeological sources play a vital role in understanding the people and their culture in the historic period. It serves as a valuable supplementary source for a particular period. Many times, the gaps found in the literary sources are filled by the archaeological sources. It corroborates the historical facts mentioned in the literary sources and also reveals the historical facts.

The archaeological sources are treated as more authentic because of their contemporaneous nature and they are not tampered with in the course of time. These are undying witnesses or the evidence of the history and have helped to reconstruct the history of Ancient India.

1.2.2 Development of Archaeology in India:

Recently archaeology has developed scientifically in India, and its evidence is regarded as most trustworthy. It was during the British Period that a systematic study of archaeology in India began. From the 18th Century onwards, the officers of the British East India Company began to take keen interest in the Antiquarian wealth of India. In the year 1784, under the guidance of Sir William Jones, a Judge of the Supreme Court, the 'Asiatic Society of Bengal' was established in Calcutta for the study of history, the antiquities, sciences and literature of Asia. Due to the efforts made by the European scholars such as Sir William Jones, Dr. Buchanan, Hamilton, James Princep, Sir Alexander Cunningham, James Burgess, Sir John Marshall, Aural Stein, Mortimer Wheeler, M.S. Vats, and Hargreaves and Indian archaeologists such as Rakhaldas Banerjee, S.R. Rao, H.D. Sankhalia and others have contributed a lot to the development of Indian archaeology. Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) was established in 1861 and Alexander Cunningham was appointed as first surveyor and later as first Director General of ASI. Number of historical sites and places were explored and excavated by them.

The British and Indian archaeologists over the past century and more have collected an extensive range of architectural, iconographic and inscriptional materials related to the history of Mauryas, Satavahanas, Guptas, Chalukyas, Pallavas, Cholas, Pandyas, Palas and Senas and other dynasties. These archaeological sources offer us a wealth of information on Political and even more on Religious, Social, Economic and Cultural history of India.

Let us study all archaeological sources in detail and understand their historical importance.

1.3 INSCRIPTIONS (EPIGRAPHIC RECORDS)

An inscription means an old engraved record on stone, rock or metal (other than a paper). It is also known as 'Epigraph' and therefore, the study of inscriptions is known as Epigraphy. In other words, 'Epigraphy is the study of inscriptions and inscriptions literally mean any writing engraved on some object'. Epigraphy forms a branch of archaeology. These are written records on some hard substance.

The objects which were used for engraving inscriptions in India were of various types such as lithic, metallic (mainly on copper plates), earthen and wooden objects, pottery, bricks, shells, ivory plaques and other objects. The term inscription also includes in it the writing in relief such as legends on coins and seals which are usually produced out of moulds or dies. Even the records painted on the walls or written in ink or on wooden tables are also regarded as inscriptions, although here the letters are not actually engraved but painted.

Inscriptions are found all over the country. Their number runs into thousands. Perhaps, many are waiting to come to light. The earliest records in writing in India are attributed to the Indus Valley people. They certainly knew the art of writing as is seen from their seals and pottery. However, this script is still undeciphered. Many scholars and historians are making serious efforts to decipher the Indus Script. If deciphered successfully, the beginning of Indian epigraphy will be pushed back by about three thousand years.

Most of the earliest inscriptions are in Brahmi and Kharosthi Scripts. Inscriptions in Sanskrit, Prakrit, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and other languages have been discovered. Brahmi Script is written from left to right. Brahmi is the oldest Indian script and dates back between the 3rd Century B.C. to 7th A.D. It remained the main script of writing in India for nearly for one thousand years. During the reign of Ashoka, we get clear evidence of engraved records, incised on imperishable rock or stone surfaces in either Brahmi or Kharoshthi script. During the period between the 3rd Century B.C. and the 7th Century A.D., Brahmi script underwent some paleographic changes every two hundred years and hence, the script of different periods came to be known by different terms such as —

- a) Ashokan Brahmi (e.g. Ashokan rock edicts)
- b) Satavahana Brahmi (e.g. Inscriptions of the Satavahanas)
- c) Gupta Brahmi (e.g. Inscription of the Guptas) etc.

Broadly speaking the inscription can be classified into two main groups:

- i) The inscriptions issued by a ruling authority or issued on its behalf. For example, inscriptions of Ashoka, King Kharavela, Satavahanas, Chalukyas etc.
- ii) Inscriptions issued by private individuals or private organizations. In

this category, the largest number of inscriptions record the donations (endowments) made in favor of religious establishments or installation of images for worship.

1.3.1 Types of Inscriptions:

In general, when we analyze the inscriptions on the basis of their contents, we come across many of its types such as:

1] Commercial Inscriptions:

The Commercial type of inscriptions provides valuable information to our historical knowledge. The seals of the Indus valley civilization are the best example of this type.

2] Magical Inscriptions:

The magical inscriptions are found on the seals of the Indus valley. They were used as amulets and contained some magical formulae on them.

3] Religious and Didactic inscriptions:

These inscriptions deal with religious and moral matters. For example, the inscriptions of Ashoka are the best specimens of this type. His edicts relate to ethical aspects of Buddhism and contain the doctrines of his 'Dhamma' or the Moral Codes.

4] Donative and Dedicative Inscriptions:

These inscriptions record the donations or endowments made to the religious establishments. Most of these dedicative inscriptions are engraved on the walls of a temple or religious establishments and the pilgrim centres such as inscriptions found in Buddhist Monasteries at Kanheri, Kuda, Mahad, Sanchi, Vidisha, Nalanda and temples at Bhubaneswar, Kanchipuram, Thanjavur, Aihole etc. give an account of the endowments made by either royal persons or private individuals and organizations.

5] Administrative Inscriptions:

These inscriptions provide us information about the administrative system of the Ancient Indians. For example, some of the edicts of Ashoka throw light on his provincial administration. From these inscriptions, we come to know that during the time of Ashoka, there were at least four provinces in his empire and their capitals were Taxila, Ujjain, Toshali and Suvarnagiri. Besides, there is a reference to certain officers of the state in these inscriptions, Antamahamatras and Dharmamahamatras. These inscriptions provide valuable information regarding the Mauryan Administration.

6] Eulogistic Inscriptions:

The eulogistic compositions are called 'Prashasti'. Usually, these inscriptions contain the name and genealogy of the issuing ruler, the early life of a king, his personal accomplishments, and his political, military and administrative achievements. Some of the examples of this type are-

- i) Eulogy of Gautamiputra Satakarni in the Nasik cave Inscription.
- ii) Eulogy of Samudragupta on Allahabad Pillar Inscription.
- iii) Eulogy of Pulakesin II on Aihole Inscription.
- iv) Eulogy of king Kharavela in Hathigumpha Inscription. etc.

7] Miscellaneous Inscriptions:

Besides the above-mentioned types of inscriptions, there are a number of inscriptions mostly found in South India, conveying laws and legal institutions, crimes and punishment, elections, trade and commerce and music and dance. These are of the miscellaneous type and throw light on various aspects of the life of ancient people.

Thus, inscriptions are of various types and they throw light on various historical facts. They provide detailed information about the political conditions of their times. They give us information about the issuing ruler, his achievements, inter-state relations, political ideas and institutions, and the administrative setup.

Importance of Epigraphy

The study of inscriptions is of immense value in relating to the social conditions of the times. They provide us with information about the social life of the people, especially pointing out the caste system, the Joint family system, the different clans (Gotras) as well as innumerable existing communities, etc. A large number of inscriptions throwing light on the economic life of the people have been discovered in almost all parts of India. Different mercantile professions are recorded in the inscriptions such as Sethi, Nigama and Vanija. Trade and industrial guilds were a common feature of economic life since very early times. Reference to such organizations functioning during the ancient period is found in a number of inscriptions. Even for understanding the religious life of the ancient Indian people, inscriptions have proved to be an important historical source. They are called 'dedicative inscriptions' as seen earlier. There are a number of inscriptions throwing light on Jainism.

Inscriptions in general, throw a light on the history of languages and palaeography. They help us mainly for the study of cultural history. Indian inscriptions found in many of the Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand, Burma, Java, and Sumatra, certainly give evidence of India's cultural expansion in these countries. Moreover, the epigraphical sources are more authentic because they are permanent and cannot be tampered with. Thus, it is for these authentic historical evidences, that the study of ancient Indian history would remain incomplete for want of sufficient information.

Check Your Progress:

1. Explain in brief Importance of Inscription as an important source for the study of Ancient Indian history.

1.4 NUMISMATICS

The coins form another important archaeological source for the study of history. The study of coins of the ancient period gives us valuable information. Such evidence is called Numismatic evidence.

Numismatics means 'the study of coins as historical objects, as a source of history'. Numismatics form an important branch of archaeology. It contributes a wealth of information to our understanding of the past. Coins as a source of history, throw light on various aspects of history. Thousands of ancient Indian coins have been discovered from which an idea about the contemporary economic condition, currency system, and development of metallurgical art can be obtained.

Approximately 2500 years ago, coins were struck in India for the first time. They were used as a symbol and token of value. With the use of coins, the obsolete system of barter exchange was now replaced with coin currency. The stage of minting coins was reached only in the 6th century B.C. These coins have been discovered in large hoards in almost all parts of India. In ancient Indian literary works, instances of transactions in terms such as 'Vimsatika', 'Trimsatika', 'Sana' and 'Karshapana' are mentioned.

However, the earliest specimens of the coins are found from the 6th century B.C. They are made of Silver. These coins bear the stamps of one to five punches. More than one punch was used to stamp the coins. It is because of its manufacturing techniques that these coins are called 'Punch Marked Coins'. These Punch-marked coins have been found in almost all parts of India and even in Afghanistan, and Pakistan. They are found from Kabul-Qandahar region in Afghanistan to Bengal in the east, and Coimbatore in the South. It means that there was a common currency almost throughout India before the Maurya.

The earliest die struck coins have been assigned to the 4th Century B.C. These are found at Taxila and only one side of a coin was used. The other side was plain. Later on, the double die coins were struck by the rulers since 2nd Century B.C. These coins are found at Ayodhya, Kaushambi, Mathura etc. Some of these coins bear some inscription in Brahmi script.

The Indo Greek rulers also issued the coins of their own in India. They followed the Greek model of the coin initially issued by Alexander, to commemorate his victories in 4th Century B.C. The Indo Greeks, the Shakas and the Pahalavas also followed the Greek model and improved upon the coins. The Indo-Greek coins bear figures of the reigning chief with their name and legend. These coins obviously are helpful for understanding the history of Indo-Greek rulers.

At the beginning of the Christian era, the Kushan rulers became predominant in North India and Afghanistan. For the first time, gold coinage with legends in Greek, Brahmi and Kharosthi scripts was introduced by the Kushans. Most of the Kushan coins are bilingual, having Greek inscriptions on the obverse and Kharosthi inscriptions on the reverse side.

The Gupta rulers followed the Kushan coin pattern. The Gupta dynasty founded their empire in the first quarters of the 4th Century A.D. Almost all Gupta rulers issued their own coins. (We are going to study Gupta coins in the later topic). These coins are very useful for the reconstruction of their history. They issued Gold, Silver, Copper and also Lead coins. The other dynasties such as the Satavahanas, the Shaka–Kshatrapas, the Chalukyas of Badami, the Gurjara Pratiharas, the Rashtrakutas, the Cholas, the Cheras etc. also issued their own coins.

1.4.1 Importance of Coins as a Source of History:

Coins are an important and authentic source of history as the inscriptions. By the study of different types of coins, symbols, inscriptions, portraiture etc. found on coins, we can gather a wealth of information about historical facts. This data is extremely valuable for the study of ancient Indian Political history as well as economic and cultural history.

Coins reveal the names of unknown kings. For example, most of the Indo-Greek Kings, who ruled in India are known from their coins. Many rulers of the Kushan dynasty and Satavahana dynasty are also known from their coins only. Coins sometimes give us information about the titles of the kings. The Coins help us to fix up the chronology. The location of the coins helps us to determine the extent of the territory of a king. The coins are of great value for the study of the constitutional and administrative history of scripts and languages of the ancient people.

From the social, economic and cultural point of view coins are also most valuable. They throw light on several aspects of economic history. The coins sometimes give a clear picture of the royal amusements, hobbies, furniture, house materials, weapons of war and hunting. The aspects of cultural life such as dress, ornaments, hairstyle etc. also can be studied with the help of coins. Numismatic evidence furnishes valuable material for religious history. The depiction of deities and symbols on coins helps us in determining the association of different cults with different religions. Coins are of great help in the study of art and chronology.

Thus, the coins are useful and authentic sources because they provide detailed information about the Socio-economic cultural, religious and other aspects of the life of the people of Ancient India.

Check Your Progress:

1. Explain in brief Coins as an important source of Ancient India.

1.5 MONUMENTS, SCULPTURES, PAINTINGS, POTTERY AND OTHER ANTIQUITIES

The structural remains which are seen above the surface of the earth or underground are monuments and are visible creations of the people of ancient India.

1.5.1 Monuments :

Monuments such as stupas, palaces, tombs, buildings, temples etc. are important sources of the history of architectural and artistic development in Ancient India. The ornamental work on the walls, pillars, and sculptural

remains on the walls of palaces, temples etc. give us an idea of the artistic skill of the time. For example, the pillars of Ashoka, rock-cut architecture such as the caves, stupas, chaityas and viharas, Gupta temples, Chalukya, Pallava and the Rashtrakuta temples pay glowing tribute to the aesthetic and architectural sense of the creators.

Since the 18th and 19th centuries, for the systematic study and close examination of the monuments (which are found above the ground) as mentioned earlier, excavation has been adopted as a means to uncover ancient cultures. Valuable material concerning both prehistoric and historic civilizations has been discovered in these excavations.

The source material i.e., the archaeological artefacts, pottery, weapons and tools of the ancient people etc. is very valuable, particularly for the prehistoric period. In India, a number of such sites have been excavated. These sites as mentioned earlier, have yielded a wealth of historical material which throws light on various aspects of ancient civilization.

1.5.2 The Sculptural Art:

Sculptural art or *Shilpakala* was a branch of the arts which reached excellent heights in Ancient India. The people of Indus Valley also knew sculptural art as is evident from their stone and bronze sculptures. Ancient sites of Pataliputra, Mathura etc. have fielded numerous terracotta figurines. The sculptural art, from the time of the Indus Valley to the massive sculptures of later days is the tremendous progress registered by the Indians. In fact, religious zeal combined with artistic talents, resulted in the creation of beautiful images (i.e. Sculptures). These sculptures depict the religious or philosophical concepts of the time.

Sculptures are made of various materials such as bronze, terracotta, copper, gold, ivory, wood etc. Mauryan Sculptures, shunga sculptures, Andhra-Satavahana sculptures, Gupta sculptures etc. are important.

There are various schools of sculptural art flourished in India such as Gandhara School, Mathura School of Art, Amaravati School of Art etc.

In south India, highly skilled craftsmen and artisans made extremely beautiful images. The small images were for Private worship and the larger images were installed in the temples. The fine example of the Indian bronze casting was made under the God Shiva as Nataraja. i.e. lord of the Dance.

Study of the images of various deities such as Buddha, Jain Tirthankaras, Vedic gods such as Vishnu, Shiva, Kartikeya, Goddesses such as Laxmi, Durga, Uma and other deities throw light on the religious history of the Ancient Indian people.

1.5.3 Paintings:

Painting is the art of producing a picture on a flat surface of wood, Paper, Canvas, Textile, Rock etc. in lines and colours. It is a visual art and forms the art of specialized study of Ancient Indian history and culture.

The earliest paintings that are painted on the rock at Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh and Mirzapur and Banda in Uttar Pradesh, give glimpses of the

performance of the proto-historic artists. Indus Valley people also developed the art of painting as seen from the Paintings on their Pottery. Excellent Paintings from Ajanta, also add to our knowledge. Paintings give us information on the hairstyle, Dress style, ornaments, jewellery, weapons, flora and fauna etc. of the Ancient people. The Bagh Cave paintings near Gwalior can be termed Buddhist art as well. They are more simple and plain as compared to Ajanta cave paintings. Naturally, they are very useful sources for the study of Ancient people and cultures.

1.5.4 Pottery:

During Ancient times, most of the people used earthen utensils in their day-to-day life. Pottery types like bowls, lids, Plates, Jars and Urns etc. can be found in the excavations. The pottery of the earlier period was coarse, but later on it became more and more sophisticated. During the Mauryan period, the refined pottery known as Northern Black Pottery (NBP) was used throughout north India. During the Andhra-Satavahana period, Indians imported refined Roman pottery. The discovery of this pottery on a very large scale in India throws light on the brisk trade relations between the Indians and the Romans. In the absence of any other evidence, pottery helps to ascertain the chronology of a particular culture. The beautiful varieties of pottery and paintings and carvings on them reflect contemporary technical and artistic skill. We can understand the chronology of ancient periods through the ceramic study. Pottery thus is regarded as the main archaeological source for the study of Ancient history and culture.

1.5.5 Other Antiquities:

Archaeology studies a wide variety of artefacts or material remains of human civilization such as pottery and other antiquities like tools, seals, weapons, toys, clay articles, beads and precious metals, seals, ornaments and jewellery etc. They speak of the ways of living of the people with the help of these sources we can reconstruct the history of these peoples and cultures and therefore are regarded as the most valuable sources of history. They are considered as the prime source of knowledge for the study of common man's history.

Thus, we can understand the evolution of human culture and civilization through the study of archaeological sources.

Check Your Progress:

1. Explain in brief the significance of Monuments and Pottery for the study of Ancient Indian history.

1.6 SUMMARY

The sources of history of Ancient India are broadly classified in two main categories: Archaeological Sources and Literary Sources.

In this lesson, we have studied the types of archaeological sources viz. The inscriptions, Numismatics, and the monuments and other antiquities discovered in excavations. We have also studied the importance of these sources for the study of Ancient Indian history and culture.

1.7 QUESTIONS

1. Critically examine the archaeological sources for the study of Ancient Indian history.
2. Explain the importance of inscriptions as an important source of Ancient Indian history.
3. Examine the role of coins and monuments as the sources of Ancient Indian history.
4. Write short notes:
 - a) Inscriptions as the source of history.
 - b) Numismatics as the source of history.

1.8 ADDITIONAL READING

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LITERARY SOURCES AND FOREIGN ACCOUNTS

Unit Structure :

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Classification of the Sources
 - 2.2.1 Indian literature
- 2.3 The Sacred Literature
 - 2.3.1 The Vedic Literature
 - 2.3.2 The Buddhist Religious Texts
 - 2.3.3 The Jain Literature
- 2.4 The Secular Literature
- 2.5 The Greek and Roman Accounts
- 2.6 Accounts of the Chinese Travellers
- 2.7 Tibetan Accounts
- 2.8 Arab and Persian Accounts
- 2.9 Summary
- 2.10 Questions
- 2.11 Additional Reading

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The literary works of the ancient period form an important source for the study of ancient Indian history. Ancient Indian literature is an indirect but important source of the history of the ancient period. Ancient Indians have left a rich storehouse of religious and secular literature in Sanskrit and Prakrit languages. In this lesson, a close examination of the literary sources has been done. At the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- i) Understand the types and importance of Literary Sources.
- ii) Study various categories of the sacred i.e. religious texts.
- iii) Describe the importance of secular literature.

In broad terms, sources of ancient Indian history are classified into two main categories viz. 1) The Archaeological and 2) The Literary Sources

The Literary sources are divided into two groups i.e. Indian Literature and Foreign Literature. In this lesson, a review of foreign literary sources has been done. Among these, the Greek, Roman, Persian, Chinese Tibetan and Arab writers were prominent who wrote their accounts on India.

Therefore, at the end of this lesson, you will be:

- 1) Able to identify religious and non-religious literary sources.
- 2) Able to know about these foreign travellers and their observations.
- 3) Able to study their Accounts and their importance as a source of history.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Although the ancient Indians produced vast and rich literature, they did not produce any regular historical chronicles. According to R.C. Majumdar, "One of the greatest defects of Indian culture which defy rational explanation is the aversion of Indians to writing history. They applied themselves to all conceivable branches of literature and excelled in many of them, but they never seriously took to the writing of history." Al-beruni was also of the opinion that, "the Hindus did not pay much attention to the historical order of things. They were very careless in relating the chronological succession of the kings, and when they were pressed for information and were of a loss not knowing what to say, they invariably took tale-telling." Some writers have gone to the extent of maintaining that 'the people of ancient India had no historical sense in them. However, this view is now being given up and it is accepted even by European scholars like Dr Keith that "there is a certain amount of writing and number of facts attesting a degree of sense of history. Given the antiquity and the developed character of Indian civilization, it would indeed be ridiculous to expect to find India destitute of historical sense.

However, when we analyse and carefully study the available literary works of the ancient period, we find that the ancient Indians did not lack in historical sense. The religious literature such as the Vedic texts, as well as writings of the Buddhists, Jains and other religious sects is very useful for the study of Ancient Indian History.

As we have seen in the previous chapters, the literary sources are divided into two main categories viz.

1. The sacred or religious texts and
2. The secular or non-religious literary works.

The secular literary works are further divided into two parts. They are:

- a) The secular Indian literature that is written by Indians.
- b) The accounts of the Foreign Travellers.

We have taken a review of secular Indian literature in the previous unit. In this unit, we are going to study the foreign traveller's accounts and their importance as the sources of ancient Indian history.

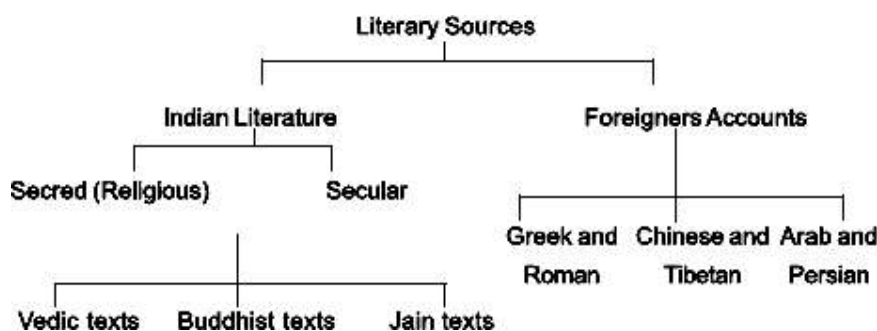
The foreign traveller's accounts form an interesting source and have considerable historical value with respect to ancient times of India. Many foreign writers have left their accounts in India. Since ancient times, there has been close contact between India and her neighbours such as the Greeks and the Persians in the west, the Chinese in the east and other countries in South-East Asia. Travellers from these countries have left records of their personal experiences and their observations about India. There are also writings of the foreigners, not travellers which contain observations on Indian subjects. Some foreigners did not visit India, but still wrote about India. Their writings were based on hearsay, and very few of such records have remained intact. Only a few fragments and portions quoted by later writers are available. Yet, they are equally valuable as they supplement the evidence of our own literary and other sources of history.

Among the foreign writers, the Greeks, the Chinese and the Arabs are prominent. This literature is more valuable as the source of history, perhaps more than the Indian literature because these writers had recorded their observations on factual evidence and they had a historical outlook.

2.2 CLASSIFICATION OF THE SOURCES

Whatsoever the controversy regarding the historical sense of the ancient Indians, the fact is that the ancient Indians produced varied and rich literature. This literature is an indirect but important source of the history of the ancient period. These literary sources are classified mainly into two groups i.e.

- 1) Indian Literature and
- 2) Foreign Literature (Foreigners' Accounts)



2.2.1 The Indian literature:

Indian literature is further divided into two sub-categories i.e.

- a) The Sacred Literature (Religious literature)
- b) The Secular Literature (Non-Religious literature)

The Sacred or Religious literature is further divided into three parts i.e. Vedic or Brahmanical texts, Buddhist texts and Jain texts.

2.3 THE SACRED LITERATURE

Sacred or religious literature is not precisely historical in content. But, if studied carefully, they do give us information on the social, religious, economic, cultural, and intellectual aspects of the life of the ancient Indian people. The sacred or religious literature is classified under three categories, i.e. Brahmanical or Vedic, Buddhist and Jain.

2.3.1 The Vedic Literature:

The earliest literature is the Vedic literature with all its branches. There are Four Vedas — The Rigveda, The Yajurveda, The Samaveda and The Atharvaveda. They are considered as revealed books, written by the sages (Rishis) under the inspiration from God. The contents of the Vedas were transmitted orally from generation to generation.

Vedic literature is further divided into two categories, viz. Early and Later Vedic literature.

The Rigveda :

The Early Vedic literature consists primarily of the Samhita of the Rigveda, comprising 1028 hymns in praise of various gods, intended to be used as a means of invoking the deities and soliciting their support. The hymns or Suktas are grouped into ten mandalas or books. It sheds light on the political, social, economic and religious life of the Vedic Aryans. It also gives us historical information relating to the progress of the Aryans in India.

Later Vedic literature includes the Samhitas of the 'Yajurveda', 'Samaveda' and the 'Atharvaveda'.

The Yajurveda:

It contains the formulas for the religious sacrifices which are borrowed from the Rigveda. It is divided into two parts viz. 'Shukla Yajurveda' i.e. white and 'Krishna Yajurveda' i.e. black. The Shukla Yajurveda is concerned with Samhita and the Krishna Yajurveda deals with Sacrifices. In general, it was meant to be a guidebook for priests performing sacrifices.

The Samaveda:

Samaveda is a collection of melodies. It contains information in musical forms. It is the earliest work in Indian music.

The Atharvaveda:

The Atharvaveda deals with spells, magic, and charms and is a prayerbook of the common people meant for application at the humbler domestic sacrifices. It is a sort of encyclopedia. It contains information on various topics. These are the primary sources for the history of the early period which is known as the Vedic period.

Other Vedic literature comprises the commentaries on the Vedic hymns. There are three types of commentaries.

- 1] **Brahmanas:** The Brahmanas are prose commentaries on the Vedic verses. They describe details of sacrifices, religious rituals and practices.
- 2] **Aranyakas:** The Aranyakas appearing at the end of the Brahmanas are forest texts to be read by hermits in the woods. It is a Religious and Philosophical work composed in the forest.
- 3] **Upanishadas:** The Upanishadas contain the Vedic Philosophy. It is a Philosophy of very high level. They are sacred philosophical texts containing principles, which are to be taught by the Acharya to his trusted pupils sitting near him. It deals with universal problems like God, Soul, Death, Brahman and Atman.

Each Veda has the Samhita, the Brahmana, the Aranyakas and the Upanishads as its four parts. The study of these commentaries helps us understand the development of the Aryan Culture.

Vedangas and Upavedas:

Vedangas and Upavedas form two supplementary sections of Vedic literature. The Vedangas help us to understand the text of the Vedas. The six Vedangas are:

1. Shiksha (phonetics) deals with pronunciation
2. Kalpa (ritual)
3. Vyakarana deals with grammar.
4. Nirukta deals with etymology.
5. Chhanda deals with meters.
6. Jyotisha deals with astrology.

Out of six Vedangas, the Shiksha and Kalpa are considered to be very important.

Upavedas:

The Upavedas are supplementary Vedic literature. These Upavedas deal with secular subjects like Ayurveda (medicine), Dhanurveda (Archery and Art of warfare), Shilpa (Sculpture and Architecture) and Gandharva Veda (Music and Dance).

Smritis or Dharmashastras:

In addition to the above literature, an exhaustive literature was produced on rules, regulations and other aspects of society as well as the religious rituals and the vratas. These literary works are popularly known as Smritis or Dharmashastras. They were composed of sages after whom they came to be designated. Some of the prominent smritis are the Manusmriti, Yagnavalkya Smriti, Gautama Smriti, Narada Smriti, Brihaspati Smriti and Apastambha Smriti. These smritis provide us valuable information about the Varnashrama system, duties of different Varnas, rights and privileges

of the uppercastes etc. It was during the later Vedic period that marks the beginning of a sort of rigidity and orthodoxy in the socio-religious matter. The Smriti literature throws light on contemporary law.

Epic Literature:

The great epics 'The Ramayana' and 'The Mahabharata' are rich sources of valuable material for history. The social and political conditions of the Aryans are clearly described in these popular works.

The Ramayana was composed by sage Valmiki.

The Mahabharata was the work of many composers though it has been regarded by tradition as the product of Vyasa's genius only. It is a massive epic of lakhs of verses.

The epics form a good source of information about the manners and customs, religious practices and beliefs, ideals and ideologies of the people in their times.

Puranic Literature:

The Puranas are the stories of ancient times. The traditions preserved in the Puranic literature form the main source of information for the history of the early period. The Puranas contain the genealogies of the contemporary rulers. They are eighteen in number. These Puranas throw light on all aspects and phases of Hinduism. The Puranas provide us with information about the history of ancient cities which existed in their times.

2.3.2 The Buddhist Religious Texts:

Buddhism came into existence in India, during the 6th Century B.C. Consequently, a variety of literature was produced by Buddhist writers. Most of the early Buddhist literature was written in the Prakrit language viz. Pali. During the reign of Ashoka, Buddhism received an extraordinary sort of royal patronage. This also gave a boost to the revision of old Buddhist literature, known as the Tripitakas.

The Pali canon is divided into three pitakas or parts viz.

- 1. Vinaya Pitaka:** Deals with the rules and regulations of the monastic life and the conduct of the monks.
- 2. Sutta Pitaka:** Deals with the principles and the philosophy of Buddhism. It includes the five nikayas, viz. Digha, Majjhima, Samyutta, Anguttara, and Khuddakanikaya.
- 3. Abhidhamma Pitaka:** Consists of seven texts, which are scholarly works on Buddhist doctrine.

The **Kathavatthu** which is a part of the Abhidhamma Pitaka was composed by Mogaliputta Tissa, a great Buddhist Acharya, during the time of Ashoka.

Therigatha is a collection of poems composed by Buddhist nuns for Prayers and **Buddhavamsa** is a collection of Buddhist legends which depict the previous incarnations of Buddha.

Besides this non-canonical Buddhist literature was also produced of which **Netti prakarna**, **Petakopadesha**, **Sutta sangha** and the **Milindopanha** are some of the significant works. **Dhammapada** is a collection on sayings of the Buddha.

The Jataka Tales (Stories) of Mahayana Buddhism deal with the previous births of the Buddha. These Jatakas convey Morals. They throw light on contemporary society; religion, economic activities and political life of the contemporary people about 549 Jataka stories have been collected and published. The Jataka have been assigned to the 2nd or 3rd B.C. They give us supplementary information which helps us to corroborate the information available from the Brahmanical works.

Milinda Panha (Questions of King Milinda):

The Milinda Panha is also a very useful as a source of history because it is in the form of questions asked to his teacher, by the Greek king Menander. This Greek king was converted in to Buddhism. He had many questions which he asked to Buddhist philosopher Nagasena. This is a book in form of questions and answers (by Nagasena). It contains valuable information about the political, socio-economic and religious conditions of the centuries before and after the Christian era.

Some of the Buddhist literary works of this period were written in the Sinhalese language of Sri Lanka. Among these are Divyavandana, Dipavamsa, Mahavamsa etc. are the most prominent. They are the religious texts. Nagarjuna, Ashvaghosha, Vasubandhu were the great Buddhist scholars and their contributions enriched Buddhism enormously. We may note that all the texts invariably deal with canons, ruler, regulations, Psalms and other matters on the religion.

After the emergence of Mahayana cult, Buddhist writers wrote in Sanskrit as well.

Ashvaghosha, who was the contemporary of the Kushans, is regarded as a leading Sanskrit scholar and Sanskrit writer. He wrote '**Buddha Charita**', **Sari Putta – Prakarana** and **Saundarananda** in Sanskrit.

The Mahayana canonical works are called **Vaipulya sutras**. The **Lalitvistara**, the **Pradnya Paramita** and **Saddharma Pundarika** are the famous Vaipulya sutras. They are important works in Sanskrit dealing with Buddhism. The Lalitvistara contains the story of the life of Buddha. The Vaipulya Sutras deal with Buddhist doctrines in nine books.

Buddhist literature is also full of mythological and imaginary descriptions but compared to Brahmanical literature it is more authentic because it was written during the contemporary period and it underwent comparatively less alterations.

2.3.3 Jain Literature:

Jain literature also contains a lot of historical information. Prof. Jacobi and Dr. Banarsi Das have done a lot of work on Jain literature. Compared to the Buddhist literature, the number of Jain literary works is lesser. It was written in Ardhamagadhi language, one of the Prakrit languages. The Jain religious texts are known as the Twelve Angas. They supplement the information of the 'Tripitaka', i.e. the Buddhist religious texts.

Mahavira's teachings were passed on from one generation to another by oral tradition. Two Jain Scholars Sthandila at Mathura and Nagarjuna at Vallabhi made efforts to put the old Jain canon in a form acceptable to all Jains. The second Jain council at Vallabhi in the 5th Century A.D. brought about a final compilation of religious texts.

The Jain canonical texts are classified into 6 groups:

- 1) Twelve angas
- 2) Twelve upangas
- 3) Ten prakarna
- 4) Six cheda sutras
- 5) Four mula sutras and
- 6) Four miscellaneous texts.

- 1) **Twelve Angas:** explain the Jain Doctrines with the help of legends and stories and prescribe rules of conduct for monks.
- 2) **The Twelve Upangas:** are dogmatic and mythological Upangas are associated with the Angas texts.
- 3) **The Ten Prakirnas:** which are in verse deal with miscellaneous topics regarding the doctrines of Jainism.
- 4) **The Cheda sutras :** give the rules of discipline in monasteries and also Prescribe Penalties for breaking them.
- 5) **The Mula sutras :** deal with the basic doctrines of Jainism. Mula is the supreme penalty of the cancellation of monkhood.
- 6) **The Miscellaneous texts:** deal with religion, economics and other subjects. The Jain monks studied different subjects and these are given in miscellaneous literature.

Besides these canonical literary works, the Jain Monks Produced rich Supplementary literature. For instance, they wrote Niryuktis or Commentaries. These Jain religious texts contain information about the contemporary Political, Economic, Social and Religious conditions.

Check Your Progress:

1. Explain in brief Importance of sacred literature as an important source for the study of Ancient Indian history.

2.4 SECULAR LITERATURE (INDIAN)

Literary Sources and Foreign
Travelers Accounts

The literary works other than the religious in nature, form a separate category of secular literature. It developed side by side with the religious texts and Provide Valuable information about ancient India and the Indians. We get different categories of secular literature such as Biographies, Dramas, Local Chronicles, Poetry and Miscellaneous Literature such as books on art, architecture, Science, Medicine, Music, Mathematics and many other subjects. Most of these works refer to historical events, socio-economic and cultural conditions of the time.

Kautilya's Arthashastra:

Kautilya was the mentor as well as the Prime Minister of Chandragupta Maurya. Arthashastra is a work on Polity, but at the same time it has given us valuable information about contemporary socio-economic and cultural life. It is divided into 15 Prakarana, each dealing with a separate topic. The king, his ministry, state administration, domestic and Foreign Policy of the State taxation system, laws and punishment and relations between states etc. have been discussed in the Arthashastra. Particularly, it is very important for the study of Political and economic conditions of the Mauryan period.

Shukra Nitisara and Kamandakiya Nitisara :

Shukra Nitisara and Kamandakiya Nitisara also belong to this type of literature. They give an idea of the high standard of Political thought and Organisation. These are the works dealing with State-Craft, economic System and Social Organisation.

Gatha Saptashati :

Is a collection of 700 gathas or Poems composed by various poets, its compilation is attributed to the Satavahana ruler Hala (1st century A.D.) and written in Maharashtri Prakrit and is like folk literature. It throws light on the socio-cultural life of common people and therefore; it has proved to be an important Source material for the study of social history.

Brihatkatha of Gunadhya:

A large body of folk literature also exists in Sanskrit, consisting of fables. Stories with morals which have passed down from one generation to another. Therefore, the Brihatkatha of Gunadhya is important. This work, however, was originally written in Paishachi, one of the Prakrit languages. Its translations in Sanskrit are (1) **Brihatkathashloka Sangraha** by **Buddhaswami** (2) **Brihat Kathamanjiri** by **Kshemendra** and (3) **Kathasaritsagara** by **Somadeva**. Of these, the Kathasaritsagar of Somadeva has produced a great impact. The stories in this work deal with all possible experiences, situations in human life. It has influenced folk literature in many other languages. There are many other works of these types in Sanskrit language. The **Panchatantram**, written by Vishnu Sharma is another world famous Sanskrit work which is a collection of

ables. In Panchatantram we get stories of animals, reflecting on human nature.

Sanskrit Dramas also were written by several dramatists.

Bhasa wrote many dramas in Sanskrit. His Svapnavasavadatta is the best known play.

Kalidasa wrote dramas such as Malavikagnimitra, Vikramorvashiyam, Abhidhyanashakuntalam.

Vishakhadatta wrote Mudrarakshasa and Devichandraguptam.

Shudraka wrote Mrichhakatika based on Bhasa's romantic play.

Bharata Wrote the Natyashastra which is considered to be the most authoritative treatise on Sanskrit dramaturgy.

Emperor Harshavardhana was a great scholar himself; he had also written three dramas namely Ratnavali, Priyadarshika and Nagananda.

Bhavabhuti wrote Mahaviracharitam, Malatimadhavam and Uttaramcharitam.

Bhattacharyya wrote Venisanhara.

Ashvaghosh wrote Saundarananda.

All of the above mentioned literary works deal with different subjects like grammar, science, medicine, etc., also process to be the source material which is useful for the study of socio-economic and cultural life.

The Sangam literature:

Under the patronage of the Pandyan rulers of Madura, high standard Tamil literature known as Sangam literature was produced. Tamil tradition mentions about three literary academies i.e. Sangam which met at Madurai, the capital of the Pandyas. The literature was presented in the sangama by the authors and poets and only after it was passed by a committee of the scholars, and was accepted as Sangama literature.

There is no literary work left for us from the First Sangama, all its works have perished. Of the second there survives only the early Tamil grammar Tolkappiyam. The Poets of the third sangama wrote the Ettutogai (eight Anthologies). These contain 200 poems ascribed to 200 authors. In addition, there are Pattupattu (Ten songs) containing 10 longer Poems of similar style belonging to later period. The Tirukkural or Kurul contains the didactic Poems composed by Tiruvallavar, a Jain Poet. Sangam literature is full of information and a good source of history of the South Indian society, economy, religion and culture.

Besides the Sangam literature, early Tamil works of the type of epics such as **Silappadikaram**, **Manimekhalai**; the **Ramayana** and **Mahabharata** are also important sources of history.

Kavya or Poetic literature : Several important Poets Flourished such as :

Literary Sources and Foreign
Travelers Accounts

Ashvaghosha — wrote Buddhacharita

Magha — wrote Sisupalavadha

Bharavi — wrote Kirtarjuniya

Kalidasa — wrote Raghuvamsa and Kumarsambhava

Banabhatta — Harshacharita

Dandin — wrote Kavyadarsha and Doshakumaracharitra

Bhatti — Ravanavadha

Rajashekara was a poet and also a dramatist.

Bilhana — wrote Vikramankadevacharita.

Besides the above mentioned works. Several other works dealing mainly with different subjects contain valuable historical and cultural information.

The works on Grammar:

The works on Sanskrit Grammar were written by (Panini (Ashtadhyayi) and Patanjali (Mahabhashya) Vararuchi also was a grammarian.

In the field of Medicine: The medicinal Science, traditionally known as Ayurveda, was well developed in ancient India. Charaka wrote **Charaka samhita**, **Vagbhatta** wrote Ashtanga sangraha.

Palakapya wrote Hastayurveda.

Sushruta was the famous surgeon of ancient India who wrote Sushrutasamhita which gives us detailed information of different aspects of surgery.

Aryabhatta wrote on algebra, arithmetic and astronomy.

Varahamihira wrote his valuable works on astronomy such as Panchasidhanta, Romaka and Paulisa.

Vatsyayana wrote the Kamasutra on sexology and erotics.

Kamandaka wrote Nitishastra.

Kalhana wrote Rajatarangini during the 12th century A.D. It is the most famous among the local chronicles. It deals with the history of Kashmir upto the middle of 12th century A.D.

Check Your Progress:

1. Discuss the importance of the literary sources for the study of ancient Indian history.

2.5 THE GREEK AND ROMAN ACCOUNTS

For a detailed and proper study of ancient Indian history, the Greek sources are very important. It is the fact, that India was known to the Greeks

even before the invasion of Alexander the Great. Some of the Greeks, who have left their accounts on India, are mentioned below:

Skylax: was the first to write a book on India. He was sent by Darius in about 515 B.C. on a voyage of exploration to find out the course of river Sindhu (Indus). He wanted to astonish his countrymen by the accounts of his adventures.

Aristotle, the Greek philosopher- scientists has quoted from the work of Skylax.

Herodotus:

He was a Greek historian who never visited India, but believed in recording everything read or heard. He has also left his impressions about India, which were formed mainly on hearsay. He gives us information regarding the relations between India and Persia during the 5th Century B.C. however, these accounts do not refer to the whole Indian subcontinent. They are limited to only a part of the North Western hilly tract. Herodotus has recorded about the trees which give wool, from which the clothes were made (i.e. cotton). He also gives details of fairy tales. In general, he refers to the conquest of a small part of India by Darius and has also made some useful observations about the peoples of the north western borders of India.

Ktesias:

He was a physician of the 5th Century B.C. who wrote his accounts on India. Like Herodotus, he had written about the relations between India and Persia. His information was based on hearsay, heard from the travellers who came to India. However, his writing is not a firsthand information and is full of fables, hence not much of value for the study of ancient India.

The historians, who came in the wake of Alexander's invasion, give more exact information than the earlier writers. Alexander was a lover of knowledge and he had collected a few scholars around him who accompanied him to India.

Ptolemy, Nearchus, Onesicritus and Aristobulus were some of the scholarly campaigners. They have their accounts about India. A description of the territory from the Persian Gulf to the river Sindhu is given in the book of Nearchus. This work is regarded as trustworthy. It was from their accounts that the Europeans came to know about India. Their writing is more exact than the earlier writers.

The intimate relations between the rulers of India, Greece and Persia were maintained by exchange of ambassadors. The ambassadors like **Deimachus** of Syria, **Dionysius** of Egypt and **Megasthenes**, who came to the courts of Indian rulers, have left their valuable records. Unfortunately, the works of accounts of all these have been lost except a few extracts from the **Indica of Megasthenes**.

Megasthenes:

He wrote one of the most valuable foreign traveller's records on India. Megasthenes was an ambassador of the Greek king Selucus Nicator to the court of Chandragupta Maurya. He lived in the city of Pataliputra and wrote his accounts on India which he named as 'Indica'. The original copy of this book has been lost in course of time. However, the other Greek writers have quoted the extracts from Indica in their works, and thus have been preserved only in fragments. On the basis of these extracts, the history of the Mauryan period has been reconstructed. Megasthenes has described the city of Pataliputra. It contains some useful information about the social classes and economic activities during the Mauryan period. It also provides information on our country, its soil, climate, flora and fauna, the Mauryan administrative system etc. the Indica of Megasthenes though sometimes, it is not free from exaggerations, has been regarded as a good source of information and has a high historical value.

Among the other Greek accounts, a special reference may be made to the classical writers who wrote about India. It has been observed that many of them never visited India but wrote about India on the basis of information which they gathered through Alexander's soldiers. Among these writers, Pliny, Arrian, Plutarch, Justin and Curtius are worth mentioning. Pliny wrote 'Natural History' which gives an account of the Indian flora, fauna and minerals in the 1st A.D. All these writers have mentioned in their accounts about India with special reference to political, social as well as economic conditions.

Unknown author of the 'Periplus of the Erythrean Sea' also gives us much information about India during the 1st A.D. As a matter of fact, when India developed brisk trade with the Roman Empire during the early centuries of the Christian era, some geographers and navigators visited India and wrote about it. The earliest of them is the above-mentioned anonymous author of the 'Periplus of the Erythrean Sea'. He was a Greek sailor, settled in Egypt. He made a voyage to the Indian coast in about 80 A. D. and has left a record of his whole voyage starting from the Red Sea to the Indian coast. In fact, it was a manual for others who wanted to go on a voyage to India. This book gives us detailed information about the chief ports of the Konkan i.e. western coast of India such as Bharuch, Sopara, Kalyan and Chaul, prominent trade centers such as Paithan, Tagar etc. from the hinterland in Deccan have also been mentioned.

Ptolemy was a Greek geographer and wrote a geographical account of India in the 2nd A.D. His writing is based on scientific method. He also wrote a book entitled 'Geography'. He has left a detailed account about the Indian ports and parts of the contemporary period.

Kosmos Indikopleustes- was another Greek trader who had lived at Kalyan in Thane district of Maharashtra during the 6th Century A.D. In his account, he gives us information about the coastal areas, ports, other commercial centers, the trading business etc. which is a valuable account.

Virgil, Diodorus and Strabo also give us information about India's geography and trade practices. Strabo gives more details on the physical geography of India.

Writings of Pliny, Periplus and Ptolemy are more useful sources for the study of ancient Indian history. They provide us detailed information about India's geography, maritime trade and merchandise, the people, their behaviour, flora and fauna, Indian industries, and the commodities of import and export etc.

In general, all these Greek accounts are valuable because unlike Indians, the Greeks had historical perspective and they had recorded whatever they observed. However, their writings have to be studied carefully. They were not familiar with the languages and customs of the people and about when they wrote and therefore, due to ignorance, their information, observations, sometimes may be wrong. In the light of new evidence, their information can be reviewed again.

Like the Greek sources, we get some Roman documents that give us some information of ancient Indian history. **Trogus Pompeius** wrote a history titled "Historiae Philippicae". This original work is lost but the extracts from it were taken by another Roman author **Justinus** in his book viz. 'Epitoma Historiarum Philippinarum.' It throws light on the relationship of Selucus with India and also refers to the invasion of India by Bactrian Greeks. **Pomponius Melas** (1st Century A.D.) was another author. Pliny's work *Naturalis Historia* gives an account of Political Geography of India. **Quintus Curtius, Rufus** (2nd Century A.D) were some other Romans who wrote about India and their writings have become a source of ancient Indian history.

2.6 ACCOUNTS OF THE CHINESE TRAVELLERS

The teachings of Buddha were spread to foreign lands by the efforts of Ashoka. The Chinese accepted Buddhism in large numbers and several Chinese Buddhist devotees visited India on a pilgrimage. Some of them were great scholars who stayed in India and wandered over a wide territory. These scholars carried with them several manuscripts of religious, philosophical and scientific works. Obviously, the accounts given by these scholarly pilgrims are very useful for reconstruction of ancient Indian history.

About 60 Chinese pilgrims have left valuable records of their travels in India. The most notable from them were as follows:-

Fa- Hien: (309-414 A.D):

Fa- Hien visited India during the Gupta period. He has left a valuable account. He was a Buddhist pilgrim. He stayed mostly in Magadha region. He spent almost fifteen years in India learning Buddhism and visiting almost all the holy places associated with the life and career of Buddha. His account is titled 'Fa-Kou-Ki' in which he throws light on contemporary political economic and cultural conditions of the period. His account is a very reliable source for the study of the Gupta age.

Hiuen Tsang (629- 645 A.D.):

Hiuen Tsang visited India during the first half of the 7th Century A.D. He was a great Chinese scholar. He came during the reign of Harshavardhana. Like Fa – Hien, Hiuen Tsang also spent more than 16 years in India. He travelled extensively in north and south India and has left a graphic account about the contemporary political, socioeconomic and cultural conditions. He has recorded his observations about Indian kings, capitals, provinces, Buddhist Monasteries and centers of education such as Nalanda. He has also described the various people living in different parts of India. He visited the region of Maharashtra, which he called 'Mo-ho-le-cha' and also has described the nature of characteristics of Maharashtrian people during the 7th Century A.D. He had also stayed at Nalanda and gave detailed information about Nalanda University. He gives interesting information about his royal patron Harshavardhana. His account mainly helps for the reconstruction of Harshavardhana's history. In general, he gives valuable information about geography, literature, administration and religious life of the people.

His account titled as 'Si-Yu-Ki' i.e. 'Records of the Western world' has proved to be a storehouse of accurate information about India during the 7th Century A.D. His account is really very useful and a good source of history of 7th C. India and the Indian people.

I-tsing (673- 95 A.D.):

I-tsing was another great Chinese pilgrim that visited India. He has left a very interesting account about Indian Buddhism. He visited India at the end of the 7th Century A.D. He stayed at the University of Nalanda and gave a graphic picture of the campus of the Nalanda University, the grand buildings, the gardens and lakes, the huge library of Nalanda University, the curious students and the talented and versatile teachers as well as the administration of the university.

I-tsing does not mention names of any ruler in India, but indirect references to the political, social and economic conditions of the Indians of that time are found in this work.

All these three Chinese scholars spent a number of years in India and learnt Indian languages. They were all the Buddhist monks whose journey to India was merely a pilgrimage to holy lands. Thus their outlook was purely religious. Fa-Hiuen and I-tsing does not refer much to secular matters. Incidentally, we get some information in their accounts. However, Hiuen Tsang's account is the most important and has proved to be the most valuable of the Chinese accounts on India.

Hwui-li was a friend of Hiuen Tsang, who wrote a biography of Hiuen Tsang. In this book some information about India is found and hence is the source of ancient Indian history.

2.7 TIBETAN ACCOUNTS

The Tibetan accounts on India also are a good source material for the study of ancient India. The works of the Tibetan Lamas Taranath, Dulva and Tengyur etc. can be used for the study of ancient Indian history.

2.8 ARAB AND PERSIAN ACCOUNTS

The Arab travellers, geographers and historians came to India from the 8th Century A.D. onwards. From those times, many Arab writers wrote about India. Most prominent among them were Al- Masudi (9th Century A.D.) Al Istakhari and Ibn Haukal (both 10th Century A.D.) and Al- Beruni (12th Century A.D.)

Al-Masudi has left a graphic account about north India during the 9th Century A.D. He and Al-Istakhari as well as Ibn- Haukal all were traders and wrote their accounts which deal with the country and its inhabitants. They give us valuable information about coastal India, ports, trading centers and their merchandise.

Al-Beruni the most learned Arab scholar, who visited India, was Al-Beruni (1030 A.D.). He mastered Sanskrit language and literature. He was a mathematician and astronomer and wrote his account on India titled 'Tahkikat- I- Hind'. It is of utmost historical value because this great scholar travelled throughout India during the 11th Century A.D. and has recorded his observations about ancient Indian religion, philosophy, astronomy, astrology and various other subjects. He has also described the life of common people.

Apart from Al-Beruni, **Al-Biladuri**, **Hasan Nizami**, etc. also give us some information about India during their times.

Firdausi (940 – 1020 AD) was the great Persian writer who has preserved some Indian legends in his famous book, 'Shahnama' (Book of Kings) some other Persian works which have reference to Indian include –

- Jamit-ul-Tawarikh (collection of histories) by Rashid Uddin,
- Rauzat-us-safa by Mirkhond,
- Tarikh-i-Yamini by Al-Utbi.
- Taj-ul-Masir by Hasan Nizami etc.

An account of India known as "Kisse Sanjan" of post-10th Century A.D. was written by the Parsis, who came to Sanjan as refugees. This book also provides us valuable information about the early Parsis on the western coast of India and their settlements.

Although the foreign traveller's accounts are useful for the study of ancient Indian history, they have some drawbacks also. They must be used very cautiously while using them as sources.

Check Your Progress:

1. Evaluate the accounts of the foreign writers in the study of socioeconomic history of ancient India.

2.9 SUMMARY

The literary sources for early history of India may be classified on:

- 1) Indian Literature i.e. sacred and secular.
- 2) Accounts of the Foreigners.

In this lesson, we have studied the literary sources, which give us valuable information about the ancient Indians. The Sacred (religious) literature is subdivided in three parts i.e. Vedic or Brahmanical texts, Buddhist texts and Jain texts. All these religious texts contain valuable material for the study of religion and culture.

We have also studied numerous works of a secular nature like Kautilya Arthashastra, Gatha Saptashati, other literary works like those of Bhasa, Kalidasa and others. All these works contain some historical information and a good deal of material for Cultural Study.

During ancient times India had very close commercial and cultural ties with foreign countries, particularly of the western world. Consequently, several foreign writers came to India and wrote their accounts on their personal observations. Among such writers the Greeks, Chinese, Persians writers have left their accounts which has proved to be a major source to reconstruct the history of ancient India. Thus, in this lesson we have taken a brief review of accounts of these foreign travelers.

2.10 QUESTIONS

1. Bring out the importance of sacred literature as an important source of Ancient India History.
2. Critically examine secular literature as the sources of history.
3. Describe the foreign travellers account as an important source of Ancient Indian history and culture.
4. Write short notes on
 - a) The Vedic literature
 - b) The Jataka Stories
 - c) The Jain literature
 - d) The Buddhist literature
 - e) Accounts of the Greeks
 - f) Accounts of the Chinese pilgrims

2.11 ADDITIONAL READING

- Basham, A. L., *The Wonder that was India*, Rupa & Co, Delhi, 1998.
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TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Unit Structure:

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Social-Religion
- 3.3 Architecture
- 3.4 Economics
- 3.5 Summary
- 3.6 Questions
- 3.7 Additional Reading

3.0 OBJECTIVES

- To give brief introduction of Social, Religious and Economic conditions of early India.
- To introduce the most prevalent terms and terminologies of social and economic history of early India.
- To provide basic learnings on the prominent architectural styles of early India.
- To introduce significant concepts of early Indian economy.
- To develop overall conceptual understandings on the early Indian history.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Unit one of the present papers provided a detailed discussion on the source of early Indian history; including archaeological and literary. Many of these sources, often expresses the contemporary socio-religious and political conditions with selective words or terms. These terms reflect contemporary political, social, religious as well as economic conditions of early India. Thus, the present unit highly confines to provide elaborated understanding on the various terms and concepts of early India.

3.2 SOCIAL-RELIGION

The social and religious progress of early India share a very strong connection, rather they were interdependent. The whole philosophy or Darshan of early India was governed with the concept of Moksha. All

three prominent religions i.e. Vedic, Buddhism and Jainism; accepted the ultimate aim of life was to attain Moksha. However, every religion believed in societal responsibilities which every individual has to fulfil. Thus, the texts often discuss the balance between materialistic and non-materialistic realities or goals.

The Vedic religion which remained prominent religion of all times believed one can only attained Moksha after fulfilling his/her duties. These duties often referred as Dharma. Therefore, the concept of Varnashrama Dharma was profoundly referred as a path to achieve Moksha. It highly recommended that every member of Vedic society must follow the Varnashrama Dharma. The Vedic society was prominently divided into four divisions i.e. Brahmana (one who was indulged in education/knowledge), Kshatriya (one who protect the society), Vaishya (one who was indulged in trade and commerce) and Shudra (one who serve the society with skills). Initially, the segregation was meant for the smooth functioning of society, hence was not rigid and except individual choice there was no governing factors to decide Varna. Thus, Varna system was a very gradual establishment and primarily focused to support every individual to nurture his/her skill. The aim of Varna system was to provide opportunity for everyone to become self-reliant and assist to lead on the path of Moksha.

The second part of Varnashrama system was Ashrama. Varna segregate the society, similarly, Ashrama segregate an individual life. The Ashrama system divided an individual life into four stages i.e. Brahmacharya Ashrama (Stage to pursue education and nurture skills), Grihastha Ashrama (stage to serve society in its economic, political and administrative affairs as well as by producing progeny), Vanaprastha Ashrama (Stage to relieve from the duties and distribute these duties among others), and Sanyasa Ashrama (stage to move on the path of Moksha). All the four stages were important and one has to follow them in given order. However, every individual was free to choose these stages or skip if he/she wanted. Thus, the whole concept Vedic religion revolved around the Moksha followed by Varnashrama Dharma. Gradually, both Moksha and Varnashrama Dharma became rigid and away from the individual's choice. Yet society actively adapted with these changes through introduction of Bhakti Marga.

Therefore, early Indian society was transitive. The society was actively adapting and adjusting with newer goals whether economic, political or spiritual. To achieve its goals several changes in its social structure as well as religious settings were introduced. These changes were confined with selective terms and concept. Thus, the present part focused to provide brief introduction of these terms and concepts.

1. Bharatvarsha:

The concept Bharatvarsha is often refer in many historical texts including Mahabharata, Vishnupurana, Dharmashastras, etc. The texts connote Bharatvarsha in sense of specific time-frame as well as geographic space.

Thus, with time and events the geographical concepts are constantly changed. As Romila Thapar has rightly mentioned, ‘.... regions are not uniform not do they emerge simultaneously. They surface in an uneven pattern, the differences being determined both by a pre-existing landscape and environment and by the shape given to it through human action’ (Thapar, 2022: 37). Thus, the Bharatvarsha essentially defines the geographical space of early Indian history. Scholars believed the term Bharatvarsha is named after the King Bharat.

The ancient text describes the world’s geography with four continents and Mount Meru at the centre of these four continents; and these continents are separated by the oceans. The southern continent called as Jambudvipa; and Bharatvarsha was considered as the part it. Whereas few Puranas like Vishnu Purana refers Jambudvipa as Bharatvarsha. We also encountered reference of Jambudvipa in the Minor Rock Edict I of Mauryan Emperor King Ashoka. The landscape of Bharatvarsha was tentatively classified into three broad categories, viz. Northern Mountain Ranges, Indo-Gangetic Plains and Peninsula.

a. Northern Mountain Ranges:

The Northern Mountain ranges include the ranges of Hindu Kush, Sulaiman, Kirhar and Himalaya. The various passes within these ranges of Hindu Kush, Sulaiman, Kirhar connects the Indian subcontinent with the Central Asia; these passes are Bolan, Gomal and Khyber. These were the corridors of communication and exchange between East and West. The passes of Himalayan ranges were provisioned to connect with extreme eastern countries like China. The passes of Himalayan ranges are Karakoram Pass via Gilgit, Chitral and Hunza pass. The route stretching from Hindu Kush Mountain ranges to Himalayan ranges was part of the Central Asian Silk Route. Thus, the Northern Mountain Ranges supported international trade, exchange of ideas, and road of communication. It eventually helped for the development of civilization as well as imperialistic goals.

b. Indo-Gangetic Plains:

All the major rivers of India including Ganga, Yamuna, Sutlej, Jhelum, Brahmaputra etc. and also most of their tributaries have their source in the glaciers of Himalayas. Thus, these rivers receive flow throughout the year. The continuous flowing water created huge fluvial land at the foothills of the Himalayas. The fluvial belt popularly known as the Indo-Gangetic Plains. The Aravalli hills and Vindhyan Plateau separates the Indo-Gangetic belt from the Peninsular India. The belt is the most fertile crescent of Indian Subcontinent. The Second Urbanization started and flourished in the same belt. The fluvial channel of the belt helped for hinterland trade and connected the ancient trade routes i.e. Uttarapatha with Dakshinapatha. Thus, the belt was significant for understanding the Bharatvarsha and also its society, polity and economy.

c. Peninsula:

The third major region of Bharatvarsha is Peninsula. The Vindhyan ranges, Satpura Ranges, Aravalli hill and Narmada River separates the Peninsula region from the Indo-Gangetic belt. The region includes massive landscapes of Deccan Plateau, Western and Eastern Ghats; and huge coastline stretched from Arabian Sea to Indian Ocean to Bay of Bengal. The region is very well watered by the rivers of Godavari, Krishna, Tungabhadra, Kaveri and many more; thus, fluvial deposits assisted to flourish trade as well as dynastic rules in the South. The massive coastline also supported maritime trade as well as the inland trade. The coastline also connected the Bharatvarsha with other South-Eastern countries; and through Mediterranean Sea it connected to Gulf countries as well as with other western Empires like Roman.

The concept Bharatvarsha exhibits the geographical spaces as well as time-line of historical identity and ethnicity of early India.

2. Sabha and Samiti:

The Bharatvarsha provides historical geography of early India; whereas the Sabha and Samiti expresses the early Indian polity and society. Sabha and Samiti were a very striking feature of political institutions mentioned in the main Vedic literature. Sabha was often mentioned in Rigveda. The text also mentioned Sabheya (noteworthy member of Sabha) Sabhasaada (member of Sabha), Sabhavatti (woman member is of Sabha), Sabhapala (Guardian of Sabha), etc in connection with Sabha. This term signifies the importance of Sabha in Rigvedic times. Generally, it is believed the Sabha may have clan character or members of Sabha were belonged to same group or family. Thus, in early times, any adult person without discrimination of profession or gender may became member of the Sabha. Thus, it was quite difficult to identify the political character of the Sabha but it must be gathering of the people either for entertainment or gambling or ritualistic activities and must be assembly to discuss the pastoral affairs of the community. Gradually Sabha became an important entity of the community. Thus, it began to perform the administrative and political functions as well. The Maitrani Samhita and Atharvaveda provides references of judicial character of Sabha. Thus, Sabha was prominent system of administration, jurisdiction, as well as religious activities.

Samiti was mentioned in the later portion of Rigveda. Thus, it is believed Samiti must have introduced after Sabha. Samiti was introduced to embrace various non-political affairs of the community; hence at initial period many religious activities were performed at Samiti. The Atharvaveda mentioned the platform of Samiti was used for various philosophical discussions too. Gradually, Samiti performed the military decisions as well as operations too.

Therefore, both Sabha and Samiti are integral part early Indian polity and society. Both are interconnected yet are sovereign bodies. Any adult person may become member of either or both institution without any discriminations. However, in later period women's participation was denied.

3. Vedanta:

Vedanta is prominent Vedic literature of theoretical stage, which encompasses knowledge in condensed form of many philosophical schools of Vedic India. The Vedanta, literally, means end or conclusion or beyond of Veda. It is also known as Uttar Mimansa. Most of the Upanishadic thoughts are comprised in Vedanta, therefore it is believed the period of Vedanta must be begun from the Upanishadic times. The Vedanta is profoundly a discussion on Atman (self) and Brahman (ultimate truth or reality); and relationship between Atman and Brahman. Due to these discourses, the six prominent schools of Vedanta emerged;

a. Advaita:

Adi Shankaracharya was the founder of Advaita School. He believed, Brahman is the only reality and an individual soul i.e. Atman merged or disappeared into Brahman. Thus, both Atman and Brahman are one.

b. Vishishtadvaita:

Ramanujacharya was the main exponent of Vishishtadvaita. Unlike Advaita, the Vishishtadvaita believes in diverse realities. Thus, it identifies three realities i.e. Brahman (God), Jiva or Cit (individual soul) and Acit (matter or nature). Except Brahman the rest two are dependent on each other; only Brahman is self-reliant.

c. Shuddhadvaita:

The main profounder of Shuddhadvaitawas Vallabhacharya. He believed Krishna is the ultimate reality or Brhamanand an individual soul Atman vanishes in Brhaman. He identifies this relation purely non-dual.

d. Dvaita:

The school was founded by Madhavacharya. He was strong believer of dualism. In Dvaitaschool both Brahman and Atman are separate entity. Brahman is permanent and controller of universe; whereas, Atman is depended on Brahman.

e. Dvaitadvaita:

It is founded by Nimbarkacharya. Like, Ramanujacharya, he also believed in three separate entities i.e. Brahman, Jiva or citand Acit. However, he further states, Brahman is controller of the rest two and remains the ultimate reality.

f. Bheda-Abheda:

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu popularized the Bheda-Abheda school. He also believed that Atman and Brahman are separate entities; however, one can found Brahman either through knowledge or devotion.

The Vedanta philosophy established concept of divinity, and devotion. Therefore, early Indian polity and society was influence by these school of thought.

4. Purusharthas:

The Vedic religion believes the final aim of every individual life was to attain Moksha; however, it also believed that Moksha can only be attained through right action i.e. Karma. Thus, Vedic religion provides four goals of human actions viz Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. These goals were collectively known as Purusharthas. The word Purushartha connotes the fundamental aspiration of human life; as well as it also apprehends the human action. The Dharma and Moksha aligned to spiritual value whereas Artha and Kama are associated with materialistic goal of life. Thus, the Purusharthas helps to maintain balance between materialistic and spiritual life. The Vedic religion also ordered an individual life into four different stages i.e. Brahmacharyashrama (student life), Grihashtashrama (married life), Vanaprasthashram (partially retired life) and Sanyasashram (detached life). In each stage or Ashram of life, an individual is bound to perform selected goal or Purushartha.

a. Dharma:

In simple word, Dharma is virtue. It is primarily a guideline to an individual for his/ her behaviour, morality, etc. It is highest Purushartha compare to Artha and Kama. Thus, every individual must work for the fulfilment of Dharma.

b. Artha:

It is second most important Purushartha. It, principally, explain how an individual must earn his/ her livelihood or earning source. It provides a guideline to choose profession, skills, etc.

c. Kama:

Kama represent the passion for life. The Vedic religion believed every individual must live their life passionately and compassionately. Thus, it just not expresses the lustful nature of human life, but it explains the significance of every emotion and relation of an individual.

d. Moksha:

It is highest goal of human life and above three goals i.e. Dharma, Artha and Kama assist to attain Moksha. Few scholars identified Moksha freedom or liberation from cycle of birth, death and rebirth; whereas Moksha in Upanishadic thoughts is represented as self-realization.

Though these goals were distinct from each other yet they were interdependent. It is believed that without Artha, Dharma cannot be fulfilled; and without Kama, Moksha cannot be attained. Therefore, Dharma and Moksha were considered as the Sadhya (to achieve) of an individual; and Artha and Kama were Sadhana.

5. Samskaras:

Purusharthas governs or provide guidelines to all actions of individual; and becomes essential feature of each stage or Ashrams of human life. The Samskara was break through ritual of exit and entry of these stages or Ashramas. Thus, like Purusharthas, Samskaras plays a vital role in both

spiritual and materialistic life of an individual. It begins from the conception of an individual (Garbhadhan) to the end of life (Antyeshti). The Rigveda mentioned three Samskaras i.e. Upanayana, Vivahand Antyeshti; and the rest of other Samskaras are later additions, especially added at the times of Sutraand Dharmashastra period. Every Vedic text including Brahmanas, Vedas, Aranyakas, Upanishadas, Dharmashastras, and many more provides list of Samskaras; all together there were forty different Samskaras mentioned in these texts. However, among all forty Samskara, sixteen Samskaras were significant as it provided clear demarcation between stages of human life.

In simple word Samskaras means ceremony, and to be precise it is religious ritual or rites or observance. These Samskaras are broadly classified into five categories such pre-natal, childhood, educational, marriage and last rites. They are:

Pre-Natal Samskaras

The pre-natal Samskaras precisely discussed the duties and responsibilities of mother and father at every stage before the child was born.

a. Garbhadharana (Conceptions Ceremony):

It was rite through which a man placed his seed in a woman. The ceremony was very lately introduced; must have codified during the Sutra period.

b. Pumsavana (Quickening of Male Child Ceremony):

The ceremony was performed once the conception was confirmed. At the initial period the Pumsavan Samskaras was performed to nurture foetus. Gradually, the purpose of Samskaras was changed and it was performed to seek male child.

c. Simantonnayana (Hair Parting Ceremony):

It was the third and last Samskara of pre-natal ceremonies. In Simantonnayana Samskara the hairs of pregnant woman were parted to protect woman from evil spirits. Asvalayana Smriti mentioned that the evil spirits attacked the woman in her first pregnancy; it may create trouble to women during her delivery. Thus, the Samskara was performed to protect mother and foetus in pregnancy as well as in delivery.

Childhood Samskaras

The childhood Samskaras were associated with introduction of child in public to taking care of health and hygiene of child to bodily ornamentation.

d. Jatakarma (Birth Ceremonies):

It was first post-natal ceremony of a child. The Samskara was associated with birth of a child. The ceremony begins from the time a woman enters in Sutika Gruh (room prepared for woman to deliver a child) to till naval cord of baby was separated from mother.

e. Namakarmana (Name Giving Ceremony):

It was naming ceremony of child. According to Gruhyasutra, the naming ceremony generally performed at the tenth or twelfth day after a baby was born. The child for the first time introduced in public with his or her formal name.

f. Nishkramana (First Outing):

The Nishikramana Samskara performed after the taboos of maternity house or family was over; thus it was tentatively performed at the fourth or fifth month after the baby was born. However, Asvalayan Sutra mentioned that the Samskara may performed at time of Annaprashana Samskara. Whereas Smriti text mentioned that it can be performed at the time Namakarana Samskara. It was first official outing of a child.

g. Annaprashana (First Feeding):

The child was for the first feed with solid but soft food in the Annaprashana Samskara. It was performed at the fifth or six months after the child was born. Till this Samskara a child was completely fed with milk.

h. Chudakarana (Tonsure):

The Chudakaran Samskara was basically cutting of the hair of a child for first time after the child was born. This Samskara was performed for cleanliness, health and hygiene. Gradually it became an elaborated ceremony. The Grihyasutra mentioned that the Samskara must be performed anytime from first year to till third year of age.

i. Karnavedha (Ear piercing ceremony):

The ceremony exhibits body ornamentation customs in early India. It was a very minor ceremony and can be performed the time of Namakarana Samskara or Chudakaran Samskara. However, every texts such as Katyanasutra, Brihaspati sutra, etc provides different ages of child to perform this ceremony. Altogether, it was believed the Samskara can be performed anytime from twelfth day to till fifth years after the child was born.

Educational Samskaras

The educational Samskaras were significant in the development of child. These Samskaras begins teaching basic social and ethical mannerism to introducing child in formal education system as student. These Samskaras also nurtures the ability and interest student; as well as make student responsible and independent individual.

j. Vidyarambha (Learning of Alphabets):

The Vidyarambha Samskara was performed to mark beginning of formal learning of child. The Samskara also known as Aksharambha, and Aksharalekhana Samskara. The Samskara was not mentioned in Rigveda but in Sutra period the Samskara was referred as it must be performed before Upanayana. The Samskara was a minor ceremony performed at home. The Samskara can be performed at the time Chudakarana Samskara

to till age of five; the Samskara must be performed before the Upanayana Samskara. The preliminary education was provided to child along with basic learning in health-hygiene and social mannerism.

k. Upanyana (Initiations Rites):

It was the most significant Samskara of early India. By performing this Samskara a person entered into the Brahmacharaya Ashrama or stage; and student was called Brahmachari. After the performance of Upanayana Samskara a person was considered as Dvija or twice-born; because it considered spiritual or intellectual birth of child. In Rigvedic period the Samskara was compulsory for all children. Gradually, by the time Dharmashatra period, the Samskara restricted to specific group; especially women and Shudra were not permitted to perform the Samskara. The minimum age perform Samskara eight years for every child; later for Kshatriya it became eleven years and for Vaishya minimum age became twelve; Shudra were debarred to perform. The maximum age to perform the Samskara was sixteen for Brahman, Kshatriya at twenty-two years of age and Vaishya at the age of twentyfour years. Wearing of Yajnopavita i.e. sacred thread was important ceremony in Upanayana Samskara. The Rigveda refereed deer skin Yajnopavita for all, however later for every Varna, material of sacred thread was changed. Baudhayana Sutra mentioned the Yajnopavita for Brahmana was made of cotton thread whereas for Kshatriya it was silk and for Vaishya it was made of goat skin.

Guru/ Acharya, under whom a child was going to study, helped child to perform all the rituals. Ceremonial begging was one the major ritual of this Samskara. The ritual is performed to teach student modesty. After observing all the ritual Guru/ Acharya declared child as his/ her official student and takes to his/ her Gurukul (house of teacher is learning centre). Henceforth, Brahmacharya stage of child began till he/she completed Samavartana Samskara.

l. Vedarambha (Beginning of the Vedic Study):

The Vedarambha Samskara was lately introduced during times of Sruti and Smriti period. The Samskara was first mentioned in Vyasa Smriti. The Samskara was performed after the Upanayana Samskara. The Samskara was performed to mark beginning of learning of Veda.

m. Kesanta (Shaving of head):

The Samskara was performed when student reached to the age of puberty, thus tentatively at sixteen years of age. The Samskara observed to teach student removal of all bodily hair especially moustaches, beard, armpit, etc.; and meant to teach importance of cleanliness and hygiene. Henceforth students were taught to observe strict continence and chastity. The cows were offered to Guru and barber in this Samskara, therefore it was also called as Godan Samskara.

n. Samavartana (End of the Studentship):

Samavartana means returning home. Thus, the Samskara mark the end to Brahmacharya Ashrama (student life) and beginning of Grihasthashrama. The Samsara was performed when a student completed his/ her learnings or twelve years of rigorous learnings. The Samskara was performed with consent of Guru/ teacher. The student was dressed in new clothes or attire and represented as a learned scholar by a Guru.

o. Vivah (Marriage):

Vivah Samskara was most important among all the Samskara. Grihyasutra provides an elaborated treatise on the Vivah Samskara. The Upanishadic texts established the significance of every Ashrama or stages of human life, and it further advocated every individual; should proceed one after the other Ashrama. Thus, to enter in the Grihasthashrama every person must perform the Vivah Samskara. The Samskara, instead of an individual choice, it was a family affair and at large a societal condition. Because, the Samskara was associated with progeny. Vivah Samskara was considered as the sacrifice; it was performed to fulfil the three debts or Tri-Rin i.e. Deva Rin, Rishi Rin and Pitra Rin. Thus, any person who did not perform this Samskara was considered as not suitable for religious act.

The formal concept of marriage was introduced in the Upanishadic period; till this time both women and men were free to choose their partners as well as free to leave their partners. It is stated, this system was abolished by Svetaketu, son of Rishi Uddlaka Aruni. Hence forth the Samskara was discussed thoroughly with all its social and cultural implications. There were eight different forms of marriages mentioned in many Sruti texts such as Baudhayana Sutra, Grihyasutra, and many more. These forms are:

- i. Brahma:** it was most pure form of marriage. A father invites a learned and good conduct man; and give his daughter without anything in return.
- ii. Daiva:** Father gift his daughter to the priest who officiated the sacrifice commenced by him.
- iii. Arsha:** It was one of the best form of marriages. A groom gifts pair of cows and a bull to the father of bride.
- iv. Prajaptya:** In this form of marriage, a father gift/give away his daughter for religious or civic duties.
- v. Asura:** In this form of marriage a groom paid in cash or kind to father or relatives of bride.
- vi. Gandharva:** Man and woman entered in contact with mutual consent and later the marriages was approved.
- vii. Rakshasa:** A women was captured and man marries to her without her consent.
- viii. Paishachh:** Man marries to woman when she was either in sleep or intoxicated. Its most uncivilized marriages among all eight forms.

The First four forms of marriage were considered as ideal forms whereas the last four forms are imperfect marriages. The most practiced rule of marriages in Exogamy or Asagotra and Endogamy or Sagotra.

Apart from forms of marriages, the early Indian texts also recorded the limitations and types of marriages. Exogamy means the marriages were performed outside the Gotra or blood relations or affinal relations. In Endogamy or Sagotra, marriages are performed within Varna. However, the endogamous marriages were also observed and accepted in early India society. These marriages were known as Anuloma and Pratiloma. When the man from higher Varna marries to woman from lower Varna was called Anuloma marriages; and if woman was from higher Varna and man was from lower Varna, it was called Pratiloma marriage. Polygamy was very commonly practiced in ancient Indian society; there were instance of polyandry as well.

Marriages significantly contributed in every sphere of society. The forms of marriages exhibited the different ways of selecting partner as well as involvement of family members. The rules and limitations of marriages express the societal structure. Thus, Vivah Samskara played vital role in the development of early Indian society and culture.

p. Antyeshti (Funeral Rites):

It was last rite or Samskara of worldly life of an individual. The Samskara was post-mortem ceremony; therefore, it was performed by the family members or close relatives of a person. The Samskara is discussed in the Sruti literature. It is believed that the merely death does not cause the complete annihilation of a person; the soul may exist after a person's death. Therefore, rituals are necessary to perform for the deliverance of soul. An elaborated ritual i.e. from washing dead body to till cremation are mentioned in Atharvaveda. Whereas Aranyakas, Baudhayana Sutra and many Dharmashastra mentioned rituals even after the cremation; it includes last feasting and observance of Sutaka.

Early Indian society considered stages from nurturing of an individual to participation of individual in larger societal goal was an important function or responsibility of both societies at large and family in particular. Therefore, the Sixteen Samskaras were stepping stone on every stage of this ladder.

6. Janapadas:

The Rigvedic text hardly mentioned of Janapadas; the polity of Rigvedic period was more of kinship or clan-based. Therefore, Janapadas exhibited the gradual change of political institution, ideas and ideology. Rigveda referred Jana as highest social unit. K.P. Jayaswal referred Janapada as central law-making authority. Gradually, the word Jana began to connect with territorial idea and political order. Thus, Janapada was an idea to represent the regional affiliation and political identity of a group. Therefore, the concept of Janapada Dharma emerged. Smriti writers, especially Manu, equated Janapada Dharma with Desadharma. Thus,

loyalty and patriotic values towards the one's own land were discussed in Janapada Dharma.

The nature of Janapadas was extended and it transformed to unify larger territorial unit under single republic form. These republic forms were named after the region such Magadh, Kosala, etc. Hence, the Janapadas further developed into major territorial units. There were sixteen Mahajanapadas such Kasi, Kosala, Magadha, Malla, Chedi, Panchala, Avanti, Kamboja, Gandhara, Surasena, Matsya, Vatsa, Asvaka, Vriji, Anga, and Kuru. These Mahajanapadas flourished from ranges of Hindukush Mountain at North-West India to Eastern ranges Himalaya at East in India; to till the River Godavari in the South.

Janapada, in early Indian history might either was assembly of learned and brave warriors; or it must be territorial unit; or was political order. However, it was transiting phase between kinship to kingship political order.

7. Doctrine of Karma:

The word Karma means doing or making. Thus the doctrine of Karma simply expresses every action of individual will have similar course of reaction or consequences. However, Radhakrishnan mentioned even the thoughts behind the actions were also affected the consequences. Hence Karma is moral law with explaining the merits and demerits. It was one of the basic concept of every philosophical school of India. The doctrine of karma exhibits the universal law of causation i.e. cause lies in effect and vive-versa. Thus, every action was compensated either in present birth or in next birth; because Jiva (Soul) unable to attain Moksha. Therefore, the doctrine Karma was closely associated with birth and rebirth theory. To attain freedom for the birth-rebirth cycle one must be strict observer of his/her own actions. In later period, the Dharma i.e. duties towards society and with oneself was prominently discussed, the law of Karma associated with fulfilment responsibilities assigned by the Dharma. Thus, the concept of Karma-Yoga was highly discussed in Bhagavad Gita. The Karma-Yoga means one must follow or remain loyal to the duties assigned to him/her without thinking of consequences or results.

8. Dandaniti:

Dandaniti is science of governance. The word Dandaniti is comprised of two words, Danda means force or punishment; and Niti means policy. The Dandaniti implies king's policy of administration or governance. The word often found in Arthashastra; however, Mahabharata referred it as Rajadharma; and many other texts including Nitisara, Daskumaracharita, etc. identified it as Arthashastra. According to Arthashastra, Dandaniti covered the civic dimensions and public control. The rest of other scriptures hardly gives reference of Dandaniti.

9. Arthashastra:

Arthashastra is the most important and famous source of early Indian history. The text is also known as the science of politics. The composer

the work was Kautilya, many scholars identified him with Chanakya, very popular minister of Mauryan King Chandragupta. The text discussed the practical problems of government, describes the machinery and function of government both in war and peace. Though the book was source of political and administrative treatises, however it discusses taxation policy, criminal and judicial aspect, social and religious aspects too. To note few discussions, the Arthashastra permits and discusses the levirate, widow re-marriages, post-puberty marriages as well as divorces. Therefore the book till date is considered as the administrator manual. Scholars like A.S. Altekar, Basham and Mookherjee believed that the text is broadly divided into fifteen Adhikarana (book) and each Adhikaran further divided into smaller chapter i.e. Adhyaya or Prakarana. Influence of Arthashastra was observed in the later works like Ashtadhyayi, Sukraniti, Yajnavalkya Smriti, Manusmriti, Kamandaka Nitisara and many more.

10. Saptangas:

In simple word, Saptanga means seven limbs of state. These limbs are nothing but different administrative unit of the state which assist the state for peaceful governance. The Saptanga theory was hardly mentioned in the Rigveda; however, it extensively discussed in Arthashastra. Later the theory was also elaborated in Sukraniti, Manusmriti, Kamandaka, and many other contemporary texts. The Saptangas are:

a. Swami (The King):

According to Saptanga theory, the monarchical or kingship is the ideal form of governance. Therefore, king became very significant element of Saptanga theory. King is symbol of legal, judicial, and political authority as well as power. The qualities of the king are constituted in four categories; these are Adhigamika (welcoming attitude), Prajna (intuitive), Utsaha (enthusiastic) and Atma-Sampad (self-spirited). King's duties and responsibilities are very well explained in Saptanga theory.

b. Amatya (Ministers):

Amatyas are the ministers at the court of king. Amatyas advised the king in all administrative and judicial matter. Amatya should be citizen of the state or Rashtra/ Janapada; and must be strong devotee to the king and state were the qualities prescribed by Arthashastra and Kamandaka.

c. Rashtra (territory):

Rashtra expresses its geographical or territorial spread. However, Kamandaka and Arthashastra stated without the subject people Rashtra is incomplete. Thus, active participation of people (subjects) is essential for Rashtra.

d. Durga (Fort):

Durga simply means fortification. Arthashastra mentioned the frontiers of Rashtra should be well protected with strong fortification. King must build forts and fortifications both for the defence of state as well as subject.

e. Kosha (Treasury):

Kosha means treasury of the state. The king and his predecessors as well as welfare works for the people were depended on treasury. Therefore, Arthashastra, Kamandaka and Manu believed the Kosha was important element of state. Taxes were the important source of treasury; hence king should impose taxes righteously. Broadly, there were types of recommended taxes; land tax, sales tax, export-import duties, and other miscellaneous taxes.

f. Bala (Army):

Bala was most important requisite for any successful state. It is necessary to control enemies of state. Thus, Arthashastra recommended well equipped and trained defence mechanism along with well-trained spies.

g. Mitra (Allies):

Arthashastra stated the political isolation means the death of state. Thus, Mitra or allies are significant element of state. There were two types of allies recommended by Arthashastra i.e. Sahaja and Kritrima. Sahaja allies were the friendship carried on from the forefathers; whereas Kritrima allies are temporary friendship and was mainly developed for immediate help or protection.

Saptanga theory is discussed all the essential elements for the success and life of state. The theory inclusive in regards with welfare of state and people; at same time it is exclusive in terms with policies of protection and foreign policies. Thus, the Saptanga theory applicable in all time.

11. Dharmavijaya:

Dharmavijaya, literally, means lawful conquest. The concept Dharmavijaya, was periodically changed. In Rigvedic period, the concept Dharma was connected with protection of people and cattle from foreign aggression; and to maintain law and order. Thus, Rigveda refers to Dharmapati, who looks after the law and order. Gradually, the concept was revised, the attribute maintained the Varnasharama Dharma became major function of state. However, Arthashastra mentioned the state has right to recognize the essential change in society and polity e.g. Niyoga. Mahabharata explains to protect Dharma was primary function of state; and every king must observe Dharmavijaya. Therefore, Dharmavijaya has political, social as well as religious significance. Politically, Dharmavijaya was associated with policy to invade and accession of neighbouring country or Rashtra. Arthashastra referred Dharmavijaya, as conquest by arms to recognise the suzerainty by the defeated king. Whereas, Ashokan Rock Edict XIII, referred Dharmavijaya as moral and religious conquest; and devoid any use of arms. Altogether, the king must not capture the defeated land in Dharmavijaya; but must try to establish the law of Dharma.

12. Bodhisattva:

The word Bodhisattva is comprised of two words, Bodhi and Sattva. Bodhi means enlightenment and Sattva means conscious being. Thus, Bodhisattva means an individual who consciously making efforts for

enlightenment. Early Buddhist texts, such as Theravada defined the concept Bodhisattva as a person who is on the path of discovering ultimate truth or Nirvana. The text more often used this term for Gautam Buddha in his early life or till he reached to stage of Buddha. Thus, the Jataka stories narrate the stories of Buddha's previous life and explains the Buddha's journey to attain Nirvana. Thus, the Theravada Buddhism accept only one form of Bodhisattva i.e. Maitreya. Maitreya was considered as the future Buddha. However, Mahayana Buddhist texts used the term Bodhisattva to an individual who is on path of Buddhahood. The texts of Mahayana Buddhism gave more impetus to Bodhisattva such as Madhyamakavatara; it discussed the characteristics of Bodhisattva. Therefore, Bodhisattva iconographic became more precise. Thus, Mahayana sect believed in many Buddha both in past and future such as Avalokiteshvara, Manjushri, Kshitigarbha, Samanthabhadra and Maitreya.

13. Tirthankara:

In simple words, Tirthankara means who founded Tirtha or a pilgrimage centre. Tirthankara is popular concept of Jaina philosophy. In Jainism, Tirtha refers to the bridge or canal between the birth and death cycle. Thus Tirthankar was the one who helps to attain Moksha or liberation. According to Jain philosophy, any individual, with hard penance, serenity and meditation can reach to stage of Kevalajnana i.e. ultimate truth; thus he/ she may become Tirthankara. Thus it is not a divine or supernatural concept. According to Jaina texts, there were twenty-four Tirthankara; among all twenty-four, three are important one.

a. Rishabhdev:

He was considered as the first Tirthankara of Jainism; and known as Adinatha. According to Bhagvada Purana, he was born in Ishvaku clan to King Nabhi and Queen Marudevi.

b. Parshvanath:

He was twenty-third Tirthankara. He was born to King Ashvasena and Queen Vama of Varanasi. He introduced four vows of Jainism i.e. Ahimsa (non-violence), Aparigraha (non-possession), Asteya (non-stealing) and Satya (truth). Thus, he built the base of Jain philosophy and monastic life.

c. Vardhamana Mahavira:

He was twenty-fourth and last Tirthankara. He was born in Ishvaku clan to king Siddhartha and Queen Trishala. He renounced the world at the age of thirty years, and after twelve years of meditation he attained Kevalajnana. He introduced the fifth vow i.e. Brahmacharya (celibacy); and initiated the concept, Sangha. He further elaborated the concept of Ahimsa, thus the Ahimsa introduced by Parshvanath was way different from the Mahavira's concept. He contributed immensely in Jain philosophy.

Jaina philosophy is developed by Tirthankara. These Tirthankara created enormous impact on religious and social history of early India; as well as it impacted art and architecture too.

14. Alvars:

Alvars represents the earliest traces of Bhakti movement, particularly in southern India. The term Alvars used for devotees of Lord Vishnu. The movement which was started by Alvars was revived in twelfth century CE in form Bhakti Movement. Nathamuni was popular leader/ devotee. It is believed he gathered all the hymns and songs sung by the Alvars in a book; the book is called as Divya Prabandham. He used these hymns and songs in all Vaishnava temples of south India. Alvars believed devotion or Bhakti was the only way to attain Moksha. Hence, the group rejected the ritualistic practices of Brahmanical religion. Alvars had twelve saints who propagated its ideology.

15. Nayanars:

After Alvars, a group of devotees emerged in South India, who were strong devotee of Lord Shiva, the group is known as Nayanars/ Nayanamars. Nayanars were very popular at the time of king Rajaraja Chola I. Namiyandar Nambi compiled all the devotional songs and hymns of Nayanars, the book was known as Thirumurai. The hymns and songs were sung in Shaiva temples of South India. It is stated that Nayanars had sixty-three saints who propagated its ideology.

Check Your Progress:

1. Explain in brief the various concepts associated with ancient Indian society and religion.

3.3 ARCHITECTURE

Religious and spiritual development created impact on the art and architecture. There three broad architectural style such as Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jain. The following concepts were dominant in early Indian history. However, among all three early form of worshipping was bound with Stupa and Chaitya. Later, both Stupa and Chaitya were becoming prominent structures in Buddhism. However, in certain instance the Chaitya was continued in Brahmanical tradition as well as Jainism also adopted it. Early form temples and Chaitya were rock-cut architecture often excavated, gradually it transformed to stone or brick construction. The present part will briefly discuss the salient features of selective architecture and its styles.

Temples were prominent concept of Brahmanical religion. Temples were started since Mauryan period, early phase it was rock cut temples like Lomash Rishi cave, however till the times of Gupta Empire very few temples of Brahmanical traditions were encountered. But from Gupta period onwards, the brick temples were constructed. As the temples received social religious connotation and became an integral part of imperialistic policy. Thus, temples received enormous royal patronages as well as donations from wealthy family. Hence, temples began to exhibit regional affiliations too. In Northern India Nagara style of temple architecture became popular where as in south India Dravida form architecture became popular; and Vesara style was a composite of Dravida

and Nagara style highly observed in central India. Yet, in all three styles of architecture developed. However, the basic elements of temple architecture were continued in all three styles. The layout of temples commonly exhibited the Garbhagriha (sanctum), Mandapa, Pradakshinapath; whereas, elevation continued with Jagati, Shikar, and gates. The three styles added more structural features as well as carved elaborated decorations on existing elements. This stylistic variation demarcated the temple architecture.

1. Stupa:

Stupa is a pre-Buddhist concept; it is mentioned in Rigveda, Atharveda, TaittiriyaSamihta and many other texts. Stupa in pre-Buddhist text referred as the conical heap or mound. Pali literature mentioned Stupa as conical shape of structure with relics of Buddha. Later, the architecture was becoming popular and prominent style of Buddhism. Stupa was later identified with Buddha's Mahaparinirvana; and was immensely worshipped. It is stated that King Ashoka constructed 84000 Stupa as commemorative structure over Buddha's relics. Stupas are broadly classified into three categories viz; Sharirika Stupa, it enshrined Buddha's relics; Paribhogika Stupa i.e. enshrined the personal belonging of Buddha; and third is Uddeshika Stupa, mainly constructed to commemorate the places or events of Buddhas life as well as in memory of Buddhist monk.

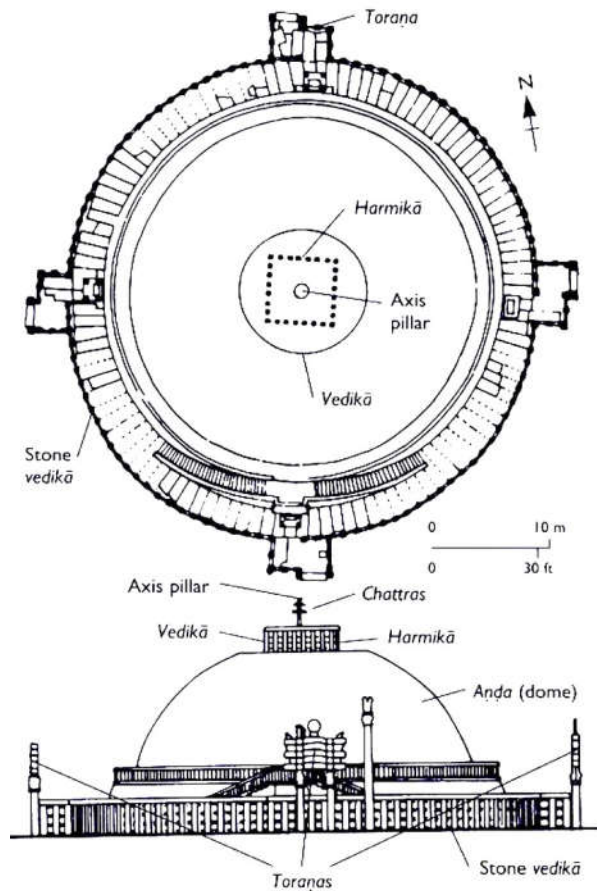


Fig. 1: Stupa at Sanchi. Modified after: Benjamin Rowland, 1958.

The basic structural element of Stupa includes Harmika, Anda, Medhi, Lower and Upper Pradakshinapath. Stupa has largest uninterrupted historical development both in architecture and iconography. Earliest Stupa was built with mud; some of them were gradually ruined and few were renovated by later kings such as Stupa of Sanchi. Later, Stupa was constructed with bricks. Even the structural elaborations were added such as well decorated Chhata, railings and, heavily decorated Torana, etc. Few notable Stupas are Sanchi, Bharhut, Amravati, Sarnatha, etc.

2. Chaitya:

Chaitya means prayer hall. It is the earliest structure in rock cut architecture of India. The architectural commonly found in Brahmanical, Jain and Buddhist school. However, later the concept was very inclined to Buddhist architectural style. The architectural features of hall are; it is long and has good height, but width is comparatively less. The hall contains Stupa at the farthest end of hall. The plan of hall is apsidal with dome. The hall is comprised of multiple pillars arranged parallel to the wall. Thus, formations of pillars create inner and outer circle; and passage between them is used as Pradakshinapath. Like Stupa, even Chaitya went through the architectural development;

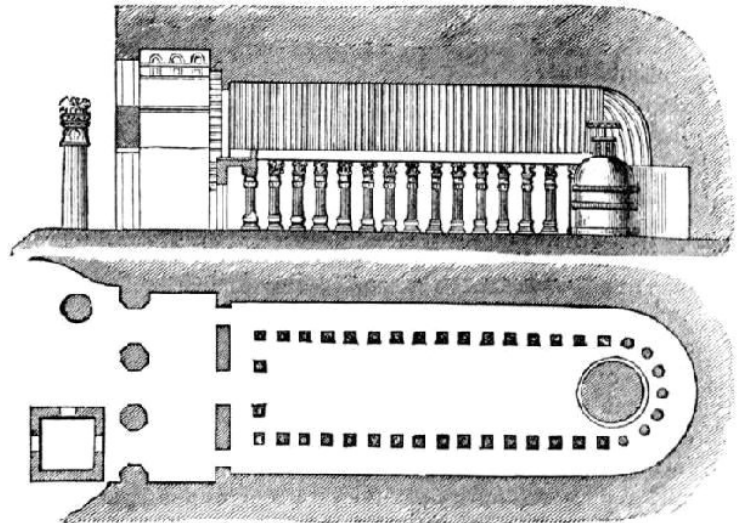


Fig. 2: Chaitya hall at Karla. *Modified after: Benjamin Rowland, 1958.*

prominently observed on facades, arches, decorations of pillars, Stupa, Chhatra. Chaitya hall of Bhaja, Bedsa, Kanheri, Karla, Ajanta and Ellora are few examples.

3. Nagara:

The Nagara style was prominently found in Northern, Western and parts of Eastern India. It differentiated on the ground of Shikhara style, Gopurama (entrance), and Kalasha. The Nagara style

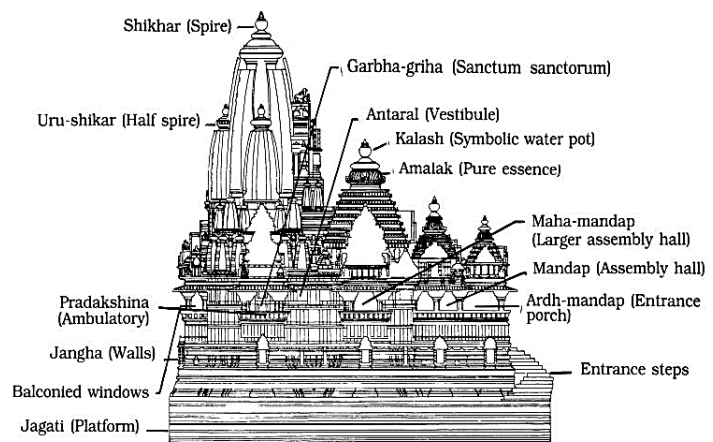


Fig. 3: Elevation of Nagara Style Temple. *Modified after Adam Hardy, 2007.*

began from the Gupta period onwards. The salient features of the style are:

- a. Shikhara is built like tower, it's pyramidal in shape and narrow down at the top. Multiple Shikhara are connected at the Amalaka.

- b. There are five prominent style of Shikhara such as Latina, Phamsana, Shekhari, Valabhi and Bhumij.
- c. It has well-articulated Amalaka (it is found at the top of Shikhara); and above Amalaka, Kalash is constructed.
- d. The shrine of Garbhagriha is placed right below the Kalash.
- e. Temple entrance is hardly elaborated.
- f. Temple is situated on Jagati, on high platform.
- g. The well decorated Dwar-shakhas (door jambs) is another characteristic. It is decorated with river goddesses, and other minor deities.

Further, the style derived its regional forms; these are Chandela, Odisha and Solanki. Thus, the Nagara style of temple architecture is more regional based as well as exhibits the periodic changes in every single element of the temple. Famous temples of the Nagara styles are Dash-Avatar temple of Deogarh (Madhya Pradesh), Konark temple of Odisha, Sun temple of Modhera (Gujarat), and many others.

4. Dravida:

The style is significantly developed in South India. The Dravida style is well known for its Shikhara, Gopuram, shrines for minor deities, and gateways. The style became popular at the time of Chola reign. The salient features of Dravida style are:

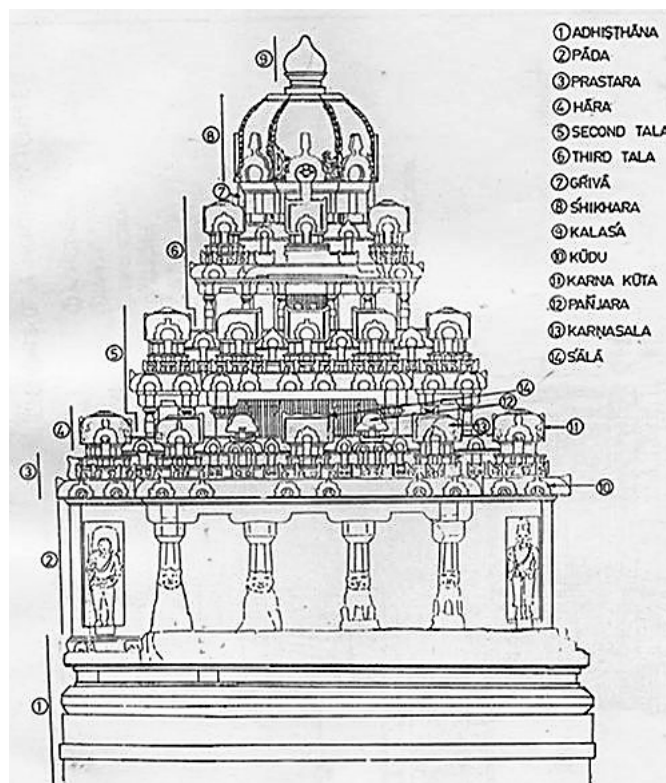


Fig. 4: Elevation of Dravid Style Temple. *Courtesy: Susan Huntigton, 2016*

- The Shikhara is pyramidal; comprised of shorter tower one over the above. Thus, unlike Nagara style, the Dravida style Shikhara is single.
- Every single structure is well covered with wall; and is provided with doors.
- The temple complex is well covered with wall and has Gopuram (gates) at all four directions.
- Gopuram is also provided with Shikhara; it is called as Gopura.
- Every Gopuram has small pillar hall structure at entrance to temple.
- Every entrance of the temple has sculptures of Dwarapalas.
- Main temple is hardly found on high pedestals

Gopuram is very prominent and exclusive feature of Dravid style of architecture. The examples of Dravid style are chezarla (Andhra Pradesh), Aihole temple (Karnataka), Mahabalipuram (Tamil Nadu) and many others.

5. Vesara:

Vesara style is culmination of Dravida and Nagara style of architecture. The plan of Mandapa is Dravida style whereas Shikhara is Nagara style.

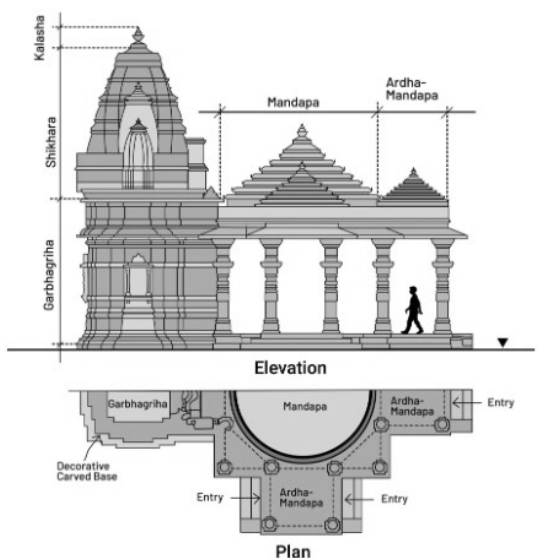


Fig. 5: Plan and Elevation of Vesara Style Temple.
Modified after Adam Hardy, 2007 and Huntigtin, 2016

The style came into prominence at the time of Chalukya rule. The style was flourished on Deccan Plateau. Notable features of Vesara style are:

- Garbhagriha has good height with pyramidal shape towards its ceiling.
- The ground plan is star shape.
- Jagati or platform is hardly found.
- Pillars, wall of the temples are heavily decorated with intricate carvings. The stories from epics were also depicted.
- Shikhara is also decorated. The Shikhara is comprised of multiple towers like Nagara style. The height of every tower is minimized and connected with other tower on top of it; the feature shares close proximity with Dravida style.

The Vesara style is as ideal example of hybrid architectures. Virupaksha Temple, Ellora (Maharashtra), Channakeshwar Temple (Karnataka), Vijayanagara architecture are few examples of Vesara style.

1. Explain in brief the various concepts associated with ancient Indian architecture.

3.4 ECONOMICS

Varnashrama Dharma believed every individual must contribute in the societal development with his/ her skills and fulfilling duties. Thus, to economic goal of the society as well as an individual was considered as pious duty. Hence, political institution and administrative settings were framed to utilized skills as well as resources. Thus, present part will provide brief information of revenue system, taxation policy, as well as other prominent concepts prevalent in early India.

1. Shreni:

Shreni and guilds are interchangeable. The intensive agriculture increased the surplus production; it supported to develop trade as well as skilled craftsmanship. The group of these traders, merchants and artisans was called as Shreni. It is believed that leader or highest authority of Shreni was known as the Shreshthi; however according to Romila Thapar, any individual who earns his/ her primary sources income without agricultural support is called as Shreshthi. Therefore, members of any Varna may become Shreshthi. Thus, Shreni, was an altered social group within Varna system. Thus, group loyal to its own laws known as Shreni-Dharma. The Shreni derived its own order for ranking the artisans; such as, Karamakaras (skilled artisans), Antevasika (apprentices) and Dasabhrataka (hired labourers). Shreni was parallel institution along with Varnashram system. It profoundly exhibits the economic development; as well as it was parallel social order governed by the economic superiority.

2. Bhumi-Chidra-Vidhana-Nyaya:

Bhumi-Chidra-Vidhana-Nyaya explains the rules and benefits of the land which is cultivated for the first time. The land was broadly classified into four categories; Polaj land which frequently used for cultivation up to five years, after five years a when land was kept uncultivated to improve its fertility was called Paroti land; when tenure of Paroti land was increased to four year, it was called Chachhar; and lastly Banjar or land which was not suitable for agriculture. All the four types land were taxed according to their production capacity. However, need of the cultivable land was increasing, hence state provide tax free facilities to a person who brought the land in cultivation for the first time. Thus, the term literally means the rent free enjoyment of land by a person who brings it under cultivation for first time.

The concept became prominent from the Gupta period onwards. Nidhanpur copper plate inscription of Bhaskarvarman mentioned about the Bhumi-Chidra-Vidhana-Nyaya. Nitisaraprovides information on Bhumi-Chidra-Vidhana, however it does not mention about tax free land.

3. Kara-bhoga-bhaga

Kar, Bhoga and Bhaga were the important revenue of state treasury. Kar simply means tax, whereas Bhaga means an additional tax if land was facilitated with state facilities such as irrigation; and finally Bhoga means King's share on the product for his own consumption. Both Arthashastra and Nitisara referred Kar-Bhoga-Bhaga as important source of revenue.

Kar was any type of tax such as custom duties, sales tax, land tax, etc payable to the state. Arthashastra mentioned Kar as important source of income to treasury; even Manusmriti gave impetus to it.

Bhaga was state share over the profit. State imposed one sixth tax on total production. State could impose Bhaga if the production was made out of using any facility provided by state such as irrigation.

Bhoga means states or king's share of agricultural or merchandise product for regular consumption. Bhoga was considered as the periodic taxes.

4. Vishti

Vishti was a form of forced labour. In some sources, it is stated that the tax which was paid in manual labour was called Vishti. Prior, to the Gupta period the practice of Vishti was uncommon, but later this system of tax became one of the major sources to find soldiers in army. After Gupta period Vishti became significant source of revenue as well.

5. Stridhana:

Stridhana is literary - women's own property. Women since Rigvedic times considered as the possession of male either as a daughter or wife. Yet, her economic independence was maintained in several text in form Stridhana. The concept was started with the custom of Kanya-shulkai.e. bride-price. Generally, the bride-price was given to bride at the time of wedding to secure her economic independence. Subsequently, the bride-price developed as Stridhana. According to Smriti text, Stridhana of deceased women goes to her children and if there were no kids to claim then her father and brother claims it. Thus, Stridhana was solely owned by woman; and her husband as well as his family had not right over Stridhana. Gradually, the concept was enlarged in Sutra and Shashtra period. It is stated the gifts received by woman from husband, friends, as well as maternal and paternal family members was considered as a Stridhana. Thus, immoveable property (such as land) was included in Stridhana. However, Yajnavalkya Smriti and Manusmriti rejected inclusion of land or immoveable property in Stridhana.

The concept is little unclear, every text provides different explanation of Stridhana; however, text unanimously agreed women's economic freedom. Stridhana showed periodical changes to immoveable property (land) from moveable property (jewelry) as well as from right over fathers or paternal or ancestral property to belongings of mother. Thus, the concept Stridhana was important source of information on social and economic history of ancient India.

6. Agraharas:

Agrahara was rent free land donated to Brahmana. King and royal family members used to give donations to Brahman as an acknowledgement to his achievements. Subsequently these donations became hereditary and finally converted into land grants. The practice land grants became popular during Gupta period. It is stated that Agrahara was significantly increased, hence Agraharika, the officer was appointed to keep record during Gupta period. In later period, temples and educational institutions were included in list of Agrahara.

Check Your Progress:

1. Explain in brief the various concepts associated with economics.

3.5 SUMMARY

The early history of India till 1000 CE exhibited significant development in philosophy and literature. Eventually, it had a major impact on the societal structure of the contemporary period as well as religious settings. The prominent religion was introduced i.e. Buddhism by Gautam Buddha and Jainism by Vardhamana Mahavira; as well as the Upanishadic discourses and discussion in Smriti and Sruti period; revived many social, political and spiritual thoughts. Hence, the period witnessed the revival of older concepts and emergence of new concept which brought major change in social and religious sphere such as Vedanta, Janapada, Purusharthas I and many more. All these developments impacted the cultural life of early India; especially art and architecture. Several existing architectural styles were transformed and many new styles were introduced.

The process created massive impact on political institutions, administrative system, economic affairs, and cultural settings. Kautilya's Arthashastra and Kamandaka's Nitisara became guidelines for any successful state. Both texts provide detailed information on statesmanship, administrative system, source of state treasury especially taxes.

3.6 QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the Samskara as a reflection of early Indian Society.
2. Explain architectural difference between Nagara, Dravid and Vesara.
3. Write note on types of Vivah or marriage.
4. Give note on the taxation system of early India.
5. Narrate periodic development in the concept of Stridhana.
6. Write note on Brahman concept in Vedanta philosophy.

3.7 ADDITIONAL READING

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AGRICULTURE AND ECONOMIC SYSTEM

Unit Structure :

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Pastoralist
- 4.3 Settled Agriculture
- 4.4 Feudalism
- 4.5 Guild System
- 4.6 Iron Technology
- 4.7 Trade and Craftsmanship
- 4.8 Economy
- 4.9 Temples and Pilgrimage
- 4.10 Summary
- 4.11 Questions
- 4.12 Additional Reading

4.0 OBJECTIVES

1. To acquaint students with the economic history of India since the time of the Rig veda to the Early Medieval period.
2. To understand the concepts of Feudalism and Guild system and their importance in ancient economic system.
3. To introduce students with the causes for these changes which have been sought often in the introduction of new technology, and adaptation of the political and trading institutions with the newly emerging challenges.
4. To understand the role of temples and pilgrimage in ancient Indian economy.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The history of India has passed through several stages of development since the Rigvedic times to the beginning of the Medieval period. The textual and archaeological evidence plays a significant role in shaping our understanding of it. The meticulous observation of textual and epigraphic

data made by scholars has helped in reconstructing overwhelming importance of pastoralism during the Rig Vedic period, its transformation to agriculture based subsistence economy of Later Vedic age, emergence of specialized craft, trade and services leading to the emergence of urbanization by the time of Mauryas, increased number of occupations and overseas trade at the time of Kushana and Satavahana and subsequent period changes followed to it. At various places these observations have been assisted by archaeological evidence.

4.2 PASTORALIST

The geographical focus of the Rig Veda is the Captainship region, which roughly includes the region between the Kabul River to the west and the Saraswati River to the east. It was the period when the economy was mostly pastoral based. The family books of the Rigveda contain different declensions of cow (gau) for 176 times against twenty-one references to agriculture. For example, the terms referring to cow includes gomat (a wealthy person), gavi□□i, go□u, gavyat, gavyu, and gave□a□a (the terms for battle), gopa and gopati (epithets used for king), etc. The occurrence of such a large vocabulary originating from gau imply a strong bonding of the Rigvedic people with the cattle. The term vrāja (cow-pen) in its different forms comes 45 times in the Rigveda. There is also a term vrājapati probably meaning head of the tribal unit.

The agricultural activity of the time has been indicated by the terms like lā□gala and sīraused for plough, the varatrā for a leather strap of the plough, khanitra (hoe), dātra and s□□i (sickle) and paraśu, kuliśa, v□k□a, svadhiti and tejas (axe). The term k□□ (to cultivate) rarely found. Cultivated fields are called k□etra the fertile one urvarā. The Rigveda contains a single term Yava (literally it means barley) for any kind of cereal. Thus, although agriculture was being practiced during the Rigvedic period it was not the main course of the economy.

Archaeologically, Harappan civilization begin to decline in its economy, agriculture, industry and commercial activities from approximately c. 2000 BCE in the wake of which the process of desertion of the sites like Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Dholavira, Kalibangan, etc. appears to have begun by this time. This resulted in the emergence of rural habitations across northwestern parts of the Indian subcontinent. This cultural period in archaeological context is recognized as the period of Late Harappan and regional chalcolithic cultures. It is by c. 14th /13th century BCE the Late Harappan and chalcolithic settlements came to an end except in the Indo-Gangetic divide region. In this area there is continuity of habitation at the settlements like Bhagwanpura, Dadheri, Katpalon and Nagara. This is the period when still iron had to come in use. The composition of the Rigveda occurs to have taken place more or less at the same time and in the same region. The settlements of the Rigveda were small rural settlements.

The Rigveda mentions the presence of warriors, priests, cattle-rearers, farmers, hunters, barbers, and vintners. It also confirms the presence of the crafts like chariot-making, cart-making, carpentry, metal working, tanning,

the making of bows and bowstrings, sewing, weaving, and making mats out of grass or reeds. Long distance trade was probably confined to limited items, such as copper, gold and semiprecious stones.

4.3 SETTLED AGRICULTURE

The Later Vedic texts were composed in the Indo-Gangetic divide (that is the land between Indus and Gangetic drainage system) and the upper Ganga-Yamuna doab region. The rural life of the previous period continued in the late Vedic Age. For the first time the term nagara occurs in the Āraṇyaka and nagarin in two Brahmanas. The distinct term for iron śyāma occurs for the first time in the Vājasaneyya Saṁhitā, the youngest of the Yajurveda collection.

Unlike the Rigvedic people who knew only Java (barley) as agricultural product, the Later Vedic people were aware about rice (vr̥hi), wheat (Godhūma) and bean-pulse (māṇa), sesamum (tila), and millet (syāmāka). Atharvaveda and Brāhmaṇas discusses various rituals corresponding to agriculture, indicating increased importance of agriculture produce during this period. It shows shift in economy from pastoral centric of the Ṛgveda to agriculture based during the Later Vedic period.

The increased importance of the agricultural economy led to the emergence of permanent settlements, which may have ultimately culminated into the beginning of the concept of property in the form of houses and land. Nevertheless, consideration of land as personal property is not established beyond doubt. In addition to the property in the form of women slaves, animals, weapons and ornaments, mentioned in the Ṛgveda, the Later Vedic texts recommend the gift of cows, calves, oxen, gold, cooked rice, thatched houses, and well-prepared and cultivated fields to the Brāhmaṇas. It also suggests the offering to be made to Indra and Agni in case of dispute of field. Such references do imply the existence of private ownership of land by this time. The same text, however, while stressing the protection of the cattle and wife belonging to the Brāhmaṇa by king does not include land in the list. In such a situation it may be assessed that the land was not considered as personal property. The Atharvaveda might be suggesting priestly claims to a few crops raised on the fields by the peasants.

Archaeologically during the same period, i.e. by the first quarter of the 1st millennium BCE, the early widespread use of iron began in the Indian sub-continent. The large number of habitation sites of this period are reported in the Indus and Gangetic divide and upper Ganga-Yamuna doab region consisting of states of Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Delhi and Western Uttar Pradesh. These settlements are archaeologically assigned to Painted Gray Ware culture, a distinct pottery type produced during this period. Since the soil of Ganga-Yamuna doab region is hard and calcareous in nature it was argued that it could not be tilled without the use of iron ploughshare. Therefore, iron was considered to be the causative factor for the emergence and spread of agriculture-based settlements in this and further in the middle Gangetic region.

4.4 FEUDALISM

Feudalism as described by R.S. Sharma is the administrative structure '[...] in which peasants were attached to the soil held by landed intermediaries (landlords) placed between the king and the actual tillers, who had to pay rent in kind and labour to them.' In the third and fourth centuries, as the urban centres began to decline the emergence of feudal lords became evident. Subject peasantry and a dominant class of landlords became a marked feature of the time. By Gupta times, villages together with their fields and inhabitants, with fiscal, administrative and judicial rights (with the right to enjoy fines received) and with exemption from the interference of royal officials were given to religious beneficiaries. In subsequent stages similar grants were made to the warrior class. Although the practice of donating such lands is recorded since Satavahana times, its increasing practice in epigraphic records coincides with the disintegration of urban life and the emergence of local and self-sufficient economies since the rule of Gupta and Vakataka.

R.S. Sharma provides five characteristic features of social structures for the feudal formation at the beginning of medieval India. First, landlords, who claim and collect rent from the peasants on the grounds that they are the owner of the land. Second, a class of peasantry who was expected to pay part of their produce to the landlords. Third, these payments, however, were not used by landlords for promoting production or the economic growth of the country. These were used for their own consumption. The payments made by peasants were not out of expectations of returns but because of custom, coercion, legal sanction and ideological influence. Fourth, agriculture became the predominant base of the socio-economic set up leading to the development of a self-contained village economy in which the scope for the functioning of the market system became extremely limited. And fifth, after disintegration of urban centres and direct relation of state with the artisans, they were attached either to villages, or big estates or temple establishments. Thus, it established direct relation between producer and consumer wearing off the need of middlemen or traders.

B.K.S. Yadava, however, seeks causes for the emergence of feudal economy in the socio-economic conditions at the early Common Era. He points out that the state's control over production and distribution through taxes, interfered in the traditional Brahmanical social order. This led to the sharp social conflict and crises between the brahmanas and kshatriyas on the one hand and the vaisyas on the other, the other between the brahmanas and the sudras. In order to pacify such social tensions, the new mechanism of surplus extraction and distribution was introduced by abandoning the practice of tax collection and began to assign land revenues directly to priests, military chiefs, administrators, etc. for their support.

Check Your Progress:

1. Explain in brief the concept of feudalism.

The corporate organizations are recognized as guilds. The emergence of long-distance trade and specialized craftsmanship must have led to the formation of corporate organizations of merchants, artisans and craftsmen. Referring to the texts ranging in time from c. 500 BCE to c. 600 CE, K.K. Thaplyal provides various terms which were in use denoting corporate organizations; these terms include śreṇī, nigama, gaṇa, pūga, vrāta and saṅgha.

Discussing the causes for the emergence of guilds, Thaplyal argues that ‘the social nature of man calls for cooperative efforts in various fields of activity. This is particularly so in regard to the economic field. The advantages of pooling of resources and skills must have been obvious to the people of yore engaged in production. People residing in a particular area and following the same occupation naturally cooperated with one another to achieve common objectives. Besides, by organizing themselves into guilds, the artisans and traders could negotiate with the state authorities with greater force to make their voice heard and grievances redressed. Organizing into guilds was also deemed very helpful for providing safety to craftsmen and traders and their merchandise as also for attending one who in a long journey might fall sick. It was realized that [...] dangers from robbers and irregular troops could be warded off only through cooperative efforts. It is, therefore, [...] the guilds should make a compact for prevention of calamities and for performance of duties.’

The Gautama Dharmasūtra (circa fifth century BCE) provides the first reference to guilds. Agriculture, trade, tending cattle and lending money at interest are mentioned amongst the occupations of the Vaiśyas. It also mentions that Cultivators, traders, herdsman, money-lenders, and artisans have authority to set rules for their respective classes which were recognized by king and the spokesperson of the organization were consulted by king while taking legal decisions. It indicates that by the fifth century BCE the above-mentioned professions had begun to form their own organizations.

During the Mauryan period, as stated by Megasthenes, there existed a separate committee dealing exclusively with management and control of industries. The Arthashastra fixes rates of profits on indigenous and foreign goods, meticulously lists dutiable articles and prescribes punishment for violation of rules including artisans’ default in the delivery of goods in time. There were government officials to keep records of trades and crafts and related transactions and conventions of the guilds. In addition to taxes in cash, the artisans, many of whom must have been members of the guilds, also paid taxes in the form of labour.

The state provided the guilds with separate areas in the town for running their trades and crafts. The guilds could make deposits with the competent agencies, which they got back in time of financial distress, and they also advanced loans to merchants.

The Jataka refers to eighteen guilds. In the post-Mauryan period Mahāvastu mentions two dozen guilds of artisans. Milindapanho refers to sixty crafts. The donations made by followers of different occupations to the religious organizations of Sanchi, Bharhut, Bodhgaya, Mathura and sites in Western Deccan provides extensive lists of organizations of different occupations. Guilds of flour-makers, weavers, oil-millers, potters, manufacturers of hydraulic machines, corn dealers, bamboo workers, bankers, etc., are also mentioned in epigraphs of the period. Guilds must have played a significant role in the oversea trade flourishing during Kushan and Satavahana time.

4.6 IRON TECHNOLOGY

Iron Technology is considered to be a complex metal technology compared to copper metallurgy. Early use of copper began in the Middle East by the eighth millennium BCE. The copper which was used in this early stage was not a smelted copper, it was acquired from native copper (purer form of copper compared to copper ore). From the same region comes the early evidence of smelted copper which dates back to the mid sixth millennium BCE. However, the early evidence of Iron smelting belongs to 2nd millennium BCE. This difference in time for the invention of respective technologies is ascribable to the complexities involved in the method of smelting, hardening and shaping of the metals.

The melting point of iron is 1536°C. In ancient times iron was never completely melted. It was acquired in a furnace in the form of a spongy mass, called bloom. Such a furnace is, therefore, called a bloomery furnace. In furnace iron oxide ore is smelted to iron bloom under reduced atmospheric conditions which is achieved by continuously maintaining extremely high temperatures of 1100° C to 1200° C for approximately seven to eight hours. Bellows were used to force draught in the furnace, providing required oxygen to maintain high temperature in it. Iron has, however, a strong affinity with oxygen. Consequently, there was a possibility of smelted iron coming in contact with oxygen which may cause partial or complete re-oxidation of it, resulting in failure of the entire smelting process. In order to overcome this problem, there was a need to maintain a strong reducing atmosphere within the furnace, which could be achieved by consistently replenishing it with excess charcoal. This helped in the formation of carbon monoxide by burning oxygen being supplied to maintain high temperature. Thus, maintaining a strong reducing atmosphere in the furnace was key to the successful smelting of iron. It must have taken a long time for smiths to understand this particular problem for the efficient smelting of iron.

The next stage was to harden the iron. Iron procured from a bloomery furnace is called wrought iron. Such iron is brittle in nature and lacks enough strength and hardness. Therefore, carbon is infused in the iron which converts it into steel. This process is recognized variously as cementation, carburization or case-hardening. For this iron had to be forged in close proximity with the carbon at above 900° C. Iron can only be worked when it is red hot. To produce steel, bloom was beaten down to

a thin strip by consistently heating it on a bed of red-hot charcoal. Subsequently, the strip was being folded and welded together by further heating and forging. Repeating the same process several times was causing entrapment of carbon on the folded surface of iron. The production of steel was thus a hot, arduous and expensive process. In this process maximum up to 0.7% of carbon could be infused, but most of the time it was as low as 0.2% to 0.3%.

Infusing carbon in iron radically alters the crystalline structure of the iron resulting in a formation of brittle metal. Reheating it at appropriate temperature and annealing it, i.e. allowing it to cool slowly, by covering it with ash or sand, helps to reorganize its crystalline structure and provides it suitable softness, as well as convert it into a strong and hard metal.

Thus, early iron smiths had to overcome three level of difficulties, first, maintaining strong reduced atmosphere in the furnace to acquire bloom, second, process of infusing carbon in the iron to convert it into steel and third, process of shaping it into different artefacts and annealing it for producing strong and hard metal with adequate malleability. Iron is considered as a cheap metal, because the iron ore is easily available on the surface of the earth, and could be exploited without much effort. In India it is available almost in every part of the country. Copper smelting technology came into existence at a very early stage, but due to limited ore source (both of copper and tin, alloy of which produces bronze, a metal as effective as iron) it could not completely replace lithic technology, as a result the use of stone tools continued during chalcolithic period. But after the introduction of iron metallurgy and it became widespread the lithic technology was abandoned by human beings.

It was believed that iron metallurgy first originated in Anatolia by the mid of second millennium BCE and from there in the course of migration of Aryans reached India at the time of Rig Veda. In Rig Veda a term *āyas* occurs, which was believed to be representing iron. However, scholars like Lallanji Gopal argued that it stands as a generic term for metal and not specifically for iron. It is only after the iron metallurgy came into existence the distinct term of *śyāmaayas* must have come into use.

Recently, the dates for the early invention of iron metallurgy in India confirms its use going back to almost early centuries of the second millennium BCE. The consistent dates for the early use of iron, ranging from the beginning of second millennium BCE to the end of it, are available from the sites of Malhar, Raja Nal-ka-Tila, Dadupur and Lahuradeva, located in the middle Gangetic basin. These are the earliest dates for smelted iron anywhere in the world, indicating indigenous development of iron technology in India. It did not, however, bring any kind of immediate change in the economy of the middle Gangetic basin people. There is a continuation of the previous neolithic/chalcolithic material culture even after the introduction of iron until almost c. 7th century BCE. Widespread use of iron, however, cannot be dated to the period earlier than c. 1000 BCE in the Gangetic basin.

Check Your Progress:

1. Describe in brief the importance of Iron technology in Ancient India.

4.7 TRADE AND CRAFTSMANSHIP

Archaeologically, the period between 7th century BCE to 1st century BCE is recognized after the distinct type of pottery, called Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW). The urbanization which took place during the Early Historic period is recognized as the period of Second urbanization. Harappan civilization is the period of first urbanization.

The presence of various kinds of characteristic traits are used to identify emergence of urbanization in archaeology. It includes the size of settlement, use of the monetary system, use of script, presence of specialized and artistic craftsmanship, long distance trade, and construction of monumental structures. On the basis of these traits, presence of ruling class, merchandise class and collection of taxes are indirectly inferred. The presence of some of these characteristic traits in archaeological context has become evident from c. 6th century BCE. The early use of the monetary system in the form of Punch Marked Coins and the construction of monumental structures like bund and ramparts for the protection of settlements from either high floods or from enemy began to occur in the Gangetic basin from this time. The use of punch marked coins imply presence of long-distance trade and merchants. It also confirms the presence of the ruling class at that time as in the absence of law-and-order trade cannot thrive. But, the presence of all abovementioned characteristics have become evident in archaeological context from 3rd century BCE onwards implying emergence of second urbanization in India at this time. The timing of it in other parts of the country, however, may vary between 3rd century BCE to 1st century CE. In Maharashtra during 2nd century BCE, we find the emergence of all abovementioned traits, indicating emergence of urban centres at the places like Adam, Bhon, Bhokardan, Pauni, etc.

As it is mentioned in the late Vedic context the term nagara which stand for urban place first used in the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka, almost at the same time of C. 600 BCE. Vajasaneyi Samhita and Taittiriya Brahmana mentions about various occupations existing at this time, including doorkeeper, charioteer, attendant, drummer, mat maker, smith, ploughman, astrologer, herdsman, maker of bowstrings, carpenter, wood-gatherer, basket maker, jeweler, vintner, elephant keeper, and goldsmith. We may also add leather workers and potters in this list.

As it has been discussed in the Later Vedic section, there was no existing concept of property in the form of private land holding during the Later Vedic period. It, however, appears to have emerged during 6th/5th century BCE. There is reference to Brahmana Kasibharadvaja of Ekanala village employing 500 ploughs on his land for tilling. In the story of Anathpindika, who was a wealthy merchant of Shravasti, he bought Jetavana from Jet Kumara, to gift it to Buddha. In fact, the presence of

land by Bimbisara and Pasenadi to Brahmanas and Sanghas, as mentioned in the Digha and Majjhima Nikaya, indicate the control of kings over some tracts of land.

The Buddhist Pali texts which were composed after c. 5th century BCE give a much more extensive list of occupations than the previous period texts. It includes farmers, cattle rearers, and traders as basic occupations. Besides these various services include washermen, barbers, tailors, painters, cooks, physician, surgeon, accounting and money changing. Specialized military units include soldiers, archers, and members of the cavalry, elephant corps, and chariot wing. The administrative units include ministers, governors, estate managers, the royal chamberlain, policemen, jailors, slaves, and wage-workers. There is also reference to artisans, such as vehicle maker, ivory worker, metal smith, goldsmith, silk weaver, carpenter, needle maker, reed worker, garland maker, and potter. It also speaks about the presence of entertainers, like actors, dancers, magicians, acrobats, drummers, courtesans and ordinary prostitutes. Thus, the wide variety of occupations coming in the category of non-food producing class appears to have emerged during this period. The wealth began to accumulate in various ways in the hands of the king and his subordinates and merchants along with a long chain of traders and craftsmen that must have augmented the need for various kinds of services which ultimately resulted in the increased size of settlements and emergence of urban centers.

The Mauryan Empire observed a quite uniform and efficient system of administration. The long-distance highways, such as the one extending from Pataliputra to Pushkalavati and beyond via Taxila, were the most important, and were constructed and maintained by the state. This certainly must have facilitated greater mobility of the people, and easy transportation of goods and surplus production from one region to another. The Mauryan state regulated trade and commerce and brought under its monopoly the mineral resources, and controlled to quite some extent the economic activities of production and distribution. It exploited minerals, and other raw materials, ran factories, and undertook agricultural production, cultivating the sizable crown lands.

The number of occupations and crafts increased many folds in the post-Mauryan period. Milindapanho refers to seventy occupations out of which sixty are concerned with various kinds of crafts. Epigraphs from Sanchi, Bharhut, Bodhgaya, Mathura and sites in Western Deccan refer to a number of donations variously by potters, masons, weavers, gem-cutters, jewellers, painters, gold-smiths, iron-smiths, brass-smiths, bronze-smiths, carpenters, sculptors, terracotta-makers, glass-makers, ivory-workers, perfumers, leather-workers, bankers-cum-merchants, and caravan merchants. These donations bear witness to the prosperity and status of the donors.

North-western and western India variously witnessed consistent invasions and rules of the non-Indian people, such as the Greeks, Śakas, Parthians and the Kushāṇas. The discovery of South-West monsoon by Hippalus, in

c. 46 CE gave impetus to commercial contact with Rome at this time. India was the main exporter of the luxury items to the Roman Empire and earned huge profits. Pliny, a Roman Senator, complained that India, China and Arabia absorbed between them one hundred million sesterces per annum of which nearly half went to India. Important Indian exports included cloth (cotton, silk and muslin), gems, precious woods, iron and steel articles, and many varieties of aromatics and spices. Among imports were lead, tin, wine, Roman pottery, glass, and singing boys and choice girls for the royal harems. Some Roman traders had permanent settlements in India. Indian mercantile activity also extended to Central Asia and China.

In the Gupta and Vakataka period the decline or desertion of urban centres in various parts of the sub-continent is recorded in archaeological context. It coincides with the end of the Indo-Roman trade. It has been attested by the accounts of Hiuen Tsang for the sixth century which has been considered by R.S. Sharma as the second phase of urban decay. The tradition of making land grants, in the form of towns and villages and also of shops and artisanal income to priests and officials, emerged at this time and became more prominent after the sixth century. This adversely affected urban occupations and resulted in agrarian expansion. This ultimately led to the political instability that emerged after the Guptas, causing the emergence of a large number of states, nearly fifty, in the fifth and seventh century.

4.8 ECONOMY

As discussed in the 'Pastoralist' and 'Settled Agriculturist' section the emergence of the concept of private ownership of land during the Rigvedic and the Later Vedic Age is not clear. There is no reference about sale, transfer, mortgage, or gift of land during these periods. In the pre-Mauryan period, however, the holding of land was a well-established concept. Panini refers to the systematic survey of agricultural land undertaken by special officers called kshetrakaras. The rate of 'tith' or share to the king is not known for this time.

The Mauryan Empire had its extent almost in entire northern parts of the Indian subcontinent and parts of the Deccan. The control of such a vast empire was conducted through standing army and various administrative offices. The maintenance of such an elaborate administrative set up required regular collection of taxes and many more other sources of income for the state. Establishing state control over agriculture, industry and trade imply exploring such various means of income for the state.

The special efforts were made to bring virgin land under cultivation by offering remission of taxes. The peasants were supported with cattle, seeds and money. Many stringent rules were formed to ensure regular payment of taxes. The arrangement of land grants to retired village officials and priests did exist, but they were not allowed to sell, mortgage or inherit it. The peasants were not allowed to sell land to non-tax paying peasants. In instances of land remaining uncultivated, it could be transferred to another

peasant. Arthashastra provides insight into the contemporary tax system. The tax on farmers was amounting to $1/6^{\text{th}}$ of the produce, but the Greek accounts suggest it was $1/4^{\text{th}}$ of the produce. Besides the regular tax, farmers were also to pay the pindakara, a lump of assessment made on the groups of villages. The tax levied on the fruit and flower produce was probably called Kara. The peasants were also expected to provide provision for the army passing through their territory. They were also expected to pay cess to a fifth, a fourth and a third of the irrigated land for irrigation facilities made available by state.

The control over industry and trade was exercised through superintendents. The market, weights and measures, shipments of various commodities through rivers and roads, internal and external commerce were controlled by these superintendents and collected taxes on it. The customs on commodities of internal and external trade varied from $1/5^{\text{th}}$ to $1/25^{\text{th}}$ according to the nature of it. The separate superintendent for state-controlled industries, such as weaving, liquor, mining, salt extraction etc. did also exist and contributed extensively to the state treasury. The concept of voluntary offering of share of produce called Pranaya was also followed by Mauryas.

In the post-Mauryan period, the control of the state over land and peasants reduced significantly. The farmers were encouraged to bring more virgin land under cultivation by providing ownership of it. Irrigation facilities were made available by some rulers on a regional level. It shows the economy of contemporary states largely depended on agriculture, causing encouragement to such kinds of activities. This is also a period when the number of specialized crafts and long-distance trade increased by many folds (see 'Trade and Craftsmanship' and 'Guild' section of this unit). Well established trade contacts with Rome and China proved lucrative for the Indian economy, tax collected on this trade must have been one of the major sources of income for the contemporary states in India.

The land grant to the Buddhist monks by Satavahana rulers as well as by merchants and lay worshippers provides earliest epigraphic evidence for land grants. Such lands enjoyed freedom from taxation. The concept of land grants became more widespread in the Post-Kushana/Satavahana period. In some regions, like in Bengal, it enjoyed immunity from tax and in other regions, like in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, from administration. Unlike previous periods, lands under cultivation were also donated. The local chiefs became intermediaries between peasants and kings. This period is also marked by increased autonomy of guilds (see 'Guild' section of this unit) causing minimized role of state in trade and commercial activities. This must have affected the income of the states.

4.9 TEMPLES AND PILGRIMAGE

In South India, specifically towards the late Pallava and early Chola periods, the royal patronage shifted from gifts to Brahmanas towards gifts to temples. As a result, temples began to play a significant role in the socio-economic life of the contemporary people. During this period temple

emerged as the centres for spiritual, art, architecture and culture. The endowments made by the king and royal family members transferred these temples into rich economic institutions. This influence continued to persist until the time of Later Pandya and Vijayanagar kingdoms.

The construction of temples, such as the Brihadishvara temple of Tanjavur, must have involved the continued engagement of workers for a few years. After its completion, in order to fulfil various forms of needs of the temple almost 600 employees were assigned in service of it. It involved almost 400 dancing girls, and 200 other employees including dancing-masters, musicians, drummers, singers, accountants, superintendent of temple and the female musicians, parasol bearers, lamp lighters, watermen, potters, washer-men, barbers, astrologers, tailors, a brazier, master-carpenter, carpenters, a goldsmith and others. The temples were self-sufficient. The payments of the employees were being incurred from the land endowments made to the temple. Thus, temples of the time emerged as the independent institutions supporting the large section of the artist, craftsmen and also peasants of the society.

In order to ensure maintenance of the temple and regular payments of the employees, efforts were made by the temple for regular cultivation of land under their possession. The temples undertook provision of irrigation facilities on their land. It also encouraged reclamation of a land under their control. In some instances, temples also raised funds for the repairing of breached tanks of the villages which were not under their control.

The emergence of these temples as pilgrimage centres must have contributed in the development and sustenance of the trade and commerce around it. These places began to flourish as centres of craft and trade. The objects of regular needs as well as of exquisite nature became available at such places. Thus, it helped in mobilizing these places into the urban centres during the Early Medieval period in South India.

Check Your Progress:

1. Describe in brief the importance of temples and pilgrimage in Ancient India economy.

4. 10 SUMMARY

The Harappan Civilization which represented the first urbanization in the Indian Sub-continent began to decline after c. 2000 BCE. The rural settlements which emerged in the wake of its decline also came to an end by c. 14th / 13th century BCE, causing abandonment of the region almost until reemergence of settlements by c. 7th / 6th century BCE. It is in this temporal context the composition of the Rigveda and the Later Vedic texts took place. The geographic set up of the Rigveda is the Sapta-Sindhu region, which shifted to the Indo-Gangetic divide and Ganga-Yamuna doab region during the Later Vedic Age. The pastoral economy of the Rigvedic people also appears to have shifted to agriculture-based economy during the Later Vedic Age. The early evidence for the widespread use of iron coincides with it, suggesting its probable important role in this

change. Although agriculture became the mainstay of the economy during the Later Vedic Age there is no substantial textual evidence to support the existence of private land holdings at this time.

The age of c. 7th / 6th century BCE brought many changes in the socio-economic history of India. This period witnessed dissolution of various Janapadas into sixteen Mahajanapadas under the newly emerging monarchical polity set up. At the same time, we come across the term nagara representing the urban settlement that came into existence. The mobilization of population for the construction of bunds and ramparts has become evident. Punch Marked coins came into use. Such a variety of evidence clearly indicates the emergence of administrative and merchandise institutions. It is almost at the same time Panini provides clear indications for the development of the concept of private land holdings in the Gangetic basin.

The subsequent period is marked by the emergence of the variety of specialized craftsmanship, leading to the emergence of a long-distance trade and corporate organizations recognized as guilds. The emergence of an elaborate administrative system necessitated continuous supply of income for the states. The expanded base of agriculture and trade fulfilled this requirement of the state through tax and revenue collections. In fact, from time to time, in different periods the efforts were made by the states to bring more and more land under cultivation, indicating a need to increase income of the state for the maintenance of the administrative set up. In the post Kushana and Satavahana period, however, in order to decrease a pressure on central authority, disintegration of power took place, which led to the emergence of feudalism. Now instead of the state being directly involved in the collection of tax and maintenance of law and order, it was performed through feudal intermediaries. The tax and administrative immunities enjoyed by the land grants made to Brahmanas and administrative officials are testimony to it. One effect of it was the emergence of a self-contained village economy; weakening the specialized craftsmanship and the long-distance trade.

During the Early Medieval period in South India, temples became dominant institutions. The endowments made by royal families and merchandise class in the form of land and wealth helped these temples to be self-sufficient. It helped temples to provide support to the different sections of the society including artists, craftsmen and peasants. The emergence of these temples as pilgrimage places contributed in the establishment of markets around it thus channelizing the process of urbanization in the region.

4. 11 QUESTIONS

1. Explain the economic history of India since the time of the Rig veda to the Early Medieval period.
2. Describe the concepts of Feudalism and Guild system and their importance in ancient economic system.

3. Examine the causes responsible for the introduction of new technology during ancient period.
4. Analyze the role of temples and pilgrimage in ancient Indian economy.

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POLITICAL CONTROL

A) DOMINANT GROUP AND KINGSHIP

B) FORMATION OF JANAPADAS AND MAHAJANAPADAS

Unit Structure :

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- 5.1 Introduction
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 - 5.2.2 The Vedic Age
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- 5.3 Political Developments in Ancient India
 - 5.3.1 The Harappan Civilization (Mature Phase, 2600 BCE – 1900 BCE)
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 - 5.3.5 Regional States: India 200 BCE – 300 CE
- 5.4 Evolution of Political Systems in Ancient India
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 - 5.4.3 Gupta Empire
 - 5.4.4 Post-Gupta Period
- 5.5 Key Features of Ancient India Polity
- 5.6 Formation of Janapadas and Mahajanapadas
- 5.7 Summary
- 5.8 Questions
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5.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

1. Explain the background and evolution of political systems during ancient India
2. Know the political developments in ancient India.
3. Discuss the concept of dominant group and political control in ancient India.
4. Understand the key features of ancient India polity, and
5. Describe the formation of Janapadas and Mahajanapadas during ancient India.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Nature of state in India must be studied for understanding how the modern state evolved in India. History is not just a study of the past but also a study of how that past has guided our present. History as a discipline is not only a study of names, places, and dates but of processes, events, and their outcomes over time. The modern state in conceptualizing its policies can test its actions against the barometer of the similar actions or processes in the past. It is said that ‘History repeats itself’. Those who do not learn from the past are on the path of destruction. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the formation of state in India not only from an academic perspective but also to learn from the mistakes and successes of that past in building a strong, durable, and prosperous and an inclusive nation state.

Our knowledge of the ancient world has been drastically changed by impressive archaeological discoveries over the last two centuries. Prior to the twentieth century, historians believed that India’s history began in the second millennium BCE, when a people known as Indo-Aryans migrated into the Indian subcontinent and created a new civilization. Yet, even during the nineteenth century British explorers and officials were curious about brick mounds in the landscape of northwest India. A large one was in a village named Harappa. A British army engineer, Sir Alexander Cunningham, sensed its importance because he also found other artifacts among the bricks, such as a seal with an inscription. He was, therefore, quite distressed that railway contractors were stealing these bricks for ballast. When Cunningham became the director of Great Britain’s Archaeological Survey in 1872, he ordered the protection of these ruins. But the excavation of Harappa did not begin until 1920. Harappa, it turned out, was an ancient city dating back to the third millennium BCE, and only one part of a much larger civilization sprawling over northwest India. With the discovery of this lost civilization, the timeline for India’s history was pushed back over one thousand years.

5.2 BACKGROUND

5.2.1 Indus Valley Civilization

The Indus Valley civilization (3300 – 1700 BCE) now stands at the beginning of India's long history. Like the states of ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt, the foundations for that history were established by Paleolithic people who migrated to the region. Later the Neolithic agriculturalists settled in the villages. During the third millennium BCE, urban centers emerged across the Indus River, along with other elements that contribute to making a civilization. The Rig Vedic and the Later Vedic corpus of literature talk about a civilization, religious, economic, social, and cultural life. While the date is not certain the scholarly world is divided on the issue of who were the Vedic Aryans with diametrically opposite views. Historians such as Romila Thapar and others believe that the Aryans migrated from outside India. According to Thapar the Indus Valley Civilization declined in the second millennium B.C.E., and had almost disintegrated when (by 1500 B.C.E.) the Aryans entered the north-west of India. The Aryans or Indo-Aryan's, descendants of the Indo-Europeans – had remained for some time in Bactria and the northern Iranian plateau, but by about 15000 B.C.E., they migrated into northern India through the passes in the Hindu Kush Mountains. At first, they wandered across the plains of Punjab, searching for pastures, as they were mainly a cattle-breeding people. Finally, they settled in small village communities in forest clearings and gradually took to agriculture, which had been the main economy of the earlier Indus people. It was during this period that the hymns of Rig Veda were memorized and collected. The two epics Ramayana and the Mahabharata are concerned with events which took place between c. 1000 to 7000 B.C.E. According to Thapar, Mahabharata may have been the description of a local feud but caught the imagination of the bards and in its final form all the tribes and peoples of the sub-continent were seen participating in the battle. The events described in the Ramayana probably occurred somewhat later, since the scene is set further east than that of the Mahabharata in eastern Uttar Pradesh. As the southward movement of the Aryans is generally dated to about 800 B.C.E., the original Ramayana must have been composed at least fifty or a hundred years later. While Upinder Singh resonates with Thapar's views she says that due to complex internal chronology it is difficult to use the Sanskrit epics the Ramayana and Mahabharata as sources for any specific period. They can at best be used in a very general way for a comparative perspective on cultural practices. B.K. Ghosh calls this the Aryan problem, where he explains the different theories prevalent regarding the original home of the Aryans which leaves the original home of the Aryans to be inconclusive. Prof. Vasant Shinde, leading Harappan Archaeologist, who recently conducted genome studies in collaboration with CCMB, Hyderabad, Harvard University, and Max Planck Research School for Genome Science, in Rakhigarhi, says that if the Aryans had migrated from outside in large numbers, it would have been reflected in Archaeological evidence as well as in DNA. If they had come from outside, destroyed the local civilization and settled here then a new genome sequence would

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have gotten added into the DNA which is not there. So, as per archaeological and DNA evidence there was no largescale migration from outside. But there was exchange of cultures and trade. So, there was movement both ways and that can be gleaned, but not a different ancestry due to mass migration. Similarly, Jonathan Mark Kenoyer, an expert on Harappan civilization in Pakistan, says that it was the same people who lived in Mehrgarh, transitioned from the Neolithic period to the food producing age and later to the Early Harappan phase and there was no largescale migration from the west or south west. With divergent views and with no consensus amongst Archaeologists and historians on this issue it is better to avoid dating the Vedic and the epic periods. As Upinder Singh suggests these periods can at best be used in a very general way for a comparative perspective on cultural practices.

5.2.2 The Vedic Age

During the long course of the Vedic Age, states were formed in northern India. The surplus from farming and pastoralism allowed people to engage in many other occupations and there was a vigorous trade. Villages thus grew in number and some became towns. Consequently, there was a need for greater leadership. This was provided by chieftains of the many Aryan clans. Over time, advanced levels of political organization developed, and these chieftains became kings or the leaders of clan assemblies. By the beginning of the sixth century B.C.E., North India was divided into sixteen major kingdoms and oligarchies. The next three centuries (c. 600 – 321 BCE) were a time of transition. These states fought with each other over territory. The most successful state was the one that could most effectively administer its land, mobilize its resources, and command the largest armies. That state was the kingdom of Magadha which, by the fourth century BCE, had gained control of much of northern India along the Ganges River.

5.2.3 The Mauryan Empire

In 321 BCE, the last king of Magadha was overthrown by one of his subjects, Chandragupta Maurya, and a new period in India's history began. Through war and diplomacy, he and his two successors established control over most of India, forging the first major empire in the history of South Asia. That Empire was known as the Mauryan Empire (321 – 184 BCE). Chandragupta's grandson, Ashoka, ended the military conquests and sought to rule his land through Buddhist principles of non-violence and tolerance. But after his time, the empire rapidly declined, and India entered a new stage in its history. After the Mauryan Empire fell, no one major power held control over a substantial part of India for five hundred years. Rather, from c. 200 BCE to 300 CE, India saw the growth of numerous, regional kingdoms. Some of these were in northern India, along the Ganges River, but others grew up in the south or the area known as the Indian Peninsula (300 B.C.E. to 300 C.E.) Also, some kingdoms emerged through foreign conquest. Outsiders in Central Asia and the Middle East saw India as a place of much wealth and wanted to plunder or rule it. Thus, throughout its history, India was repeatedly invaded by conquerors coming through mountain passes in the northwest. Many like the King

Kanishka of Kushan Empire (c. 100 CE), established distinguished kingdom that extended from India into these neighboring regions from which they came.

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5.2.4 Post Mauryan Period

After 400 C.E and up to the fifteenth century, India was never unified again for any length of time by one large empire. Substantial regional powers emerged, and they contributed in other important ways to India's civilization. The period 300 – 600 CE is often referred to as the Gupta Period and Classical Age. The Guptas (c. 320 – 550) were rulers who forged an impressive empire in northern India. As their empire flourished, Indian intellectuals were also setting standards for excellence in the fields of art, architecture, literature, and science, in part because of Gupta patronage. But important kingdoms also developed in south India.

5.2.5 Early Medieval India

The last period of ancient India overlaps with early medieval India (c. 600-1300 CE). After the Gupta Empire, and during the following seven centuries, the pattern of breakup intensified. Numerous regional kingdoms large and small frequently got established and disintegrated. In such unstable and fluid political scene, kings granted land to loyal subordinate rulers and high officers of their courts. The resulting political and economic pattern is referred to as Indian feudalism. Also, kings put their greatness on display by waging war and building magnificent temples in their capital cities. And, during the medieval period, a new political and religious force entered the Indian scene, when Muslim Arab and Turkish traders and conquerors arrived on the subcontinent. This overview briefly summarizes major periods in India's political history. But we also must pay close attention to social, cultural, and economic life. Socially, the people of India were largely organized by the caste system. Culturally, the people of India shared in the development of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism the three major religious traditions that shaped their worldview. Finally, throughout the ancient and medieval periods, India flourished as a civilization because of its dynamic economy. The people of India were linked in networks of trade and exchange not only with other parts of South Asia but also with neighboring regions of the Afro-Eurasian world. India's history alternated between two different periods. Sometimes it was partially unified by empires and sometimes it consisted of an assortment of regional states. This history was also impacted by influxes of migrants and invaders. India's geography has no doubt influenced its history. It is important to remember that "India" can mean different things. Today, India usually designates the nation-state of India. But modern India was only formed in 1947 and includes much less territory than India did in ancient times. As a term, India was first invented by the ancient Greeks to refer to the Indus River and the lands and people beyond it. When used in this sense, India also includes today's nations of Pakistan and Bangladesh. The history of this region was shaped by a multitude of ethnic groups who spoke many different languages and lived and moved about on a diverse terrain suited to many kinds of livelihood.

5.3 POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN ANCIENT INDIA

5.3.1 The Harappan Civilization (Mature Phase, 2600 BCE – 1900 BCE)

Three different types of settlements based on size and sophistication can be seen in the Harappan Civilization. The top consists of five major cities of roughly 250 acres each. At the bottom there are fifteen thousand smaller agricultural and craft villages. In the middle there are several dozen towns. Excavations throughout this region show a pattern of development whereby settlements start looking more like towns than villages and ground plans become larger. Similar artifacts spread over larger areas show that the local communities building these towns were becoming linked together in trade networks. Archaeologists date this transitional period when India was on the verge of its first civilization from 5000 to 2600 BCE. The mature phase, with its advanced cities, begins from 2600 BCE. The ruins of Mohenjo-Daro, Harappa, Rakhigarhi and other Indus cities dating to this mature phase suggest a vibrant society thriving in well planned urban areas. Some of the principal purposes of these urban settlements included coordinating the distribution of local surplus resources, obtaining desired goods from more distant places, and turning raw materials into commodities for trade. Artifacts indicate that there was a well-organized urban system. Farmers and pastoralists brought their grain and stock to the city for trade or to place it in warehouses managed by the authorities. Laborers dug the wells and collected garbage from rectangular bins. Craftsmen made bronze tools, ceramics, manufactured jewelry and beads out of gold, copper, semi-precious stones, and ivory. Merchants carried raw materials and finished goods by bullock carts or boats to the towns and cities throughout the region. Some goods also went to foreign lands. Harappan cities located along the coast of the Arabian Sea engaged in coastal shipping that brought goods upto the Persian Gulf, the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. In Mesopotamian city-states, Harappan seals and beads have been found. Mesopotamian sources speak of a certain place called “Meluha,” a land with ivory, gold, and lapis lazuli. That land may have been Harappan Civilization. Cities like Mohenjo-Daro were linked in networks of exchange extending in every direction. But this civilization has not yet provided sources that we can read, and this poses major problems of interpretation. True, over four thousand inscribed objects with at least four hundred different signs have been found on clay, copper tablets, along with small, square seals. Since we cannot decipher them, we call it as a protohistoric civilization. This distinguishes it from both prehistoric cultures that have no writing and historic period where the script has been deciphered. This proto-historical state of the evidence raises many questions concerning Harappan people’s political organization. On the one hand, we see that there was a lot of effort in planning. Cities and towns were similarly designed, burnt bricks had the same dimensions, and weights were standardized. On the other hand, the ruins lack structures that can be identified as palaces, temples, or large tombs. In other words, there is little evidence for either a central political authority ruling over an empire or for independent city-states. One fascinating relic found in

Mohenjo-Daro is a little sculpture of a bearded man. The dignified appearance, the headband and cloak of this man suggests he may have been a priest or king, or even both. Yet, this is purely speculation, as the sculpture is unique. He may also have been a powerful landowner or wealthy merchant who met with others of a similar status in assemblies convened in the Great Hall of the citadel. Perhaps local assemblies of just such elites governed each city. The decline of Harappan civilization set in from 1900 B.C.E. and it ended in different time periods in different sites. The towns and cities and their lively trade networks faded away, and the region reverted to rural conditions and in a few sites the people even went back to hunter-gatherer stage. Likely causes include geologic, climatic, and environmental factors. Movement by tectonic plates may have led to earthquakes, flooding, and reverse flooding in the deltaic region of the Indus due to tectonic shifts. Less rainfall and deforestation may have degraded the environment's suitability for farming. All these factors would have impacted the food supply. Consequently, urban areas and the civilization they supported were slowly starved out of existence.

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5.3.2 The Vedic Age

Vedic Age is named after a set of religious texts composed during these centuries called the Vedas. The people who composed them are known as the Vedic Aryans and Indo-Aryans. The Aryans first settled in the Punjab, but then they pushed east along the Ganges, eventually impressing their way of life, language, and religious beliefs upon much of northern India. The course of India's history was completely changed during this period. By the end of the Vedic Age, numerous states had emerged and Hinduism and the varna social system was beginning to take shape. a. The Early Vedic Age The early history of the Vedic Age does not have much primary source material. For example, for the first half of the Vedic Age we are largely limited to the Rig Veda. This is the first of four Vedas. It consists of 1028 hymns addressed to the Vedic pantheon of gods. But scholars believe that it was not actually written down until after 500 BCE. These 103 hymns were orally composed and transmitted by Aryan poet-seers, eventually becoming the preserve of a few priestly clans who utilized them for specific religious functions. Thus, these hymns only offer certain kinds of information. Yet, despite these limits, historians have been able to sketch out the Aryan's way of life in these early centuries. The Vedic Aryans were pastoralists. They referred to themselves as Aryans, a term meaning "noble" or "respectable." They spoke Sanskrit and used it to transmit their sacred hymns. At first, they settled along the hills and plains of the Indus River and its tributaries, pursuing pastoral and farming way of life. In their hymns, the Aryans supplicate the gods to bless them with cattle, bounteous harvests, rain, friends, wealth, fame, and sons. From these, it is apparent that herding was the principal occupation and cows were especially prized. But the Aryans also farmed, as apparent in hymns that speak of plough teams and the cutting and threshing of grain. During the early phase, some Aryans retained a semi-nomadic way of life, living in temporary dwellings and then moving about with their herds. Others settled down in villages. In both cases, kinship was especially valued. At the simplest level, the society consisted of extended families of three

generations. Fathers were expected to lead the family as patriarchal heads. Sons were expected to care for the herds, bring honor through success in battle, and sacrifice for the well-being of their fathers' souls after death. They also inherited the property and family name. This suggests a male dominated society. Yet, women had some choice in marriage and could remarry. Clans were made up of several extended families, and the members of a clan shared land and herds. Groups of larger clans also constituted tribes. The Vedas speak of Rajas who were clan or tribal chieftains. These men protected their people and led from forefront in times of battle. The clans and tribes fought with each other. In times of war, these chiefs would rely on priests who ensured the support of the gods by reciting hymns and officiating sacrifices for them. At assemblies of kinsmen the Rajas redistributed war booty. Sudas, for example, was the chief of the Bharata clan. After settling in the Punjab, the Bharatas were attacked by neighboring clan confederacies, but with his skills in chariot warfare and the support of priests, Sudas successfully fought them off.

b. The Later Vedic Age : During the early centuries of the Vedic Age, the Aryan tribes were based in the Punjab region. Some settlers, however, migrated east to the upper areas of the Ganges River, setting the stage for the next period in India's history, the later Vedic Age. The later Vedic Age differs from the early Vedic Age. During this phase lands along the Ganges River were colonized by the Aryans and their political, economic, social, and religious life became more complex. Over the course of time, Aryan tribes, with horses harnessed to chariots and wagons drawn by oxen, drove their herds east, migrating along and colonizing the plains surrounding the Ganges. Historians debate whether this happened through conquest and warfare or intermittent migration led by traders and people seeking land and opportunity. Regardless, by the later Vedic Age the Aryans had reached the lower areas of the Ganges and as far south as the Vindhya Range and the Deccan Plateau. Most of northern India would therefore be shaped by the Aryan way of life. But in addition, as they moved into these areas, the Aryans encountered indigenous people and interacted with them. They ultimately forced their way of life on them but also adopted various elements of nonAryan languages and traditions. During this time, agriculture became more important and occupations more diverse. As the lands were cleared, village communities formed. Two new resources made farming more productive: iron tools and rice. Implements such as iron axes and ploughs made clearing wilderness and sowing fields easier, and rice paddy agriculture produced more calories per unit of land. Consequently, population began to grow, and people could more easily engage in other occupations. By the end of this period, the earliest towns had started to form. Before this state formation, chiefs known as Rajas and their assemblies, with the assistance of priests, looked after the needs of their clans and administered them. This clan-based method of governing sustained and may have evolved later into oligarchies. As the Aryans colonized new territories, the heads of clan families or chiefs of each clan in a confederacy then jointly governed the territory. They would convene meetings often in assembly halls. A smaller group of leaders managed the deliberations and voting, and carried out the

tasks of day-to-day governing. These kinds of states have been called oligarchies because the heads of the most powerful families governed. They have also been called republics because these elites governed by assembly. The well-known example was the Vrishni Sangha of the Yadavas. But in other territories clan chiefs became kings. These kings elevated themselves over kinsmen and the assemblies and became the head of the administrative system. Their chief priests conducted grand rituals that demonstrated the king's special relation with the gods. A sort of divinity was ascribed to the Kings. This majesty overawed the people and, in a sense, intimidated them. At the same time. It gave them the sense that they would be protected. Treasurers managed the compulsory gifts kings expected in return. Most importantly, kingship became hereditary, and dynasties started to rule. Society changed too. In earlier times, Aryan society was organized as a fluid three-class social structure consisting of priests, warriors, and commoners. But during the later Vedic Age, this social structure became more hierarchical and rigid. A system for classifying people based on broad occupational categories was developed by the religious and political leaders in society. These categories are known as varnas, and there were four of them: Brahmins, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra. The Brahmins were the priests. Their duty was to memorize and orally transmit the Vedas. They also had to perform and officiate sacrifices. The Kshatriyas were the chiefs and warriors, whose duty was to govern well and fight. The Vaishyas were commoners who traded and farmed. They were responsible for society's material prosperity. The Shudras were servants who labored for others, usually as artisans or by performing menial tasks. Warriors were respected for their leadership and they supported the Brahmins. In return, the Brahmins affirmed the authority of the Kshatriyas by carrying out royal ceremonies. Together, they dominated society. The Shudras or the servants were considered to be the most polluted and could not participate in any sacrifice. They could not freely interact with the members of other varnas. Over time, this way of organizing society came to be viewed as normal and natural. In conclusion, by the end of the Vedic Age, northern India had undergone immense changes. An Aryan civilization emerged and spread across the Indo-Gangetic Plains. This civilization was characterized by the philosophy of Brahmanism, the use of Sanskrit, and the varna social system. The simpler rural life of the clans of earlier times was giving way to the formation of states. New religious ideas were being added.

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5.3.3 Transition to Empire: Magadhan Imperialism:

States, Cities and New Religions (600 To 321 Bce) The realm and on sandstone pillars in the Gangetic heartland. His thirteenth rock edict at Shabazgarhi mentions as to why King Ashoka decided to renounce war. The sixth century begins a transitional period in India's history marked by important developments. Out of the formative stage of state development, sixteen powerful kingdoms and oligarchies emerged. At the end of this period, one kingdom dominated. At the same time, India entered a second stage of urbanization. Towns and cities became a prominent feature of northern India. Other developments also took place. The caste system took shape as an institution, giving Indian society one of its most unique traits.

Besides, new religious ideas were put forward that challenged the dominance of Brahmanism. Among all the States and Cities, the kingdom of Magadha became the most powerful among the sixteen states that dominated this period. At the beginning, it was just one of sixteen located on either side of the Ganges River. The rest were established in the older northwest or central India. In general, larger kingdoms dominated the Ganges basin while smaller clan-based states thrived on the periphery. They all fought with each other over land and resources, making this a time of war and shifting alliances. The victors were the states that could field the largest armies. To do so, rulers had to mobilize the resources of their realms. The Magadhan kings did this most effectively. Expansion began in 545 BCE under King Bimbisara. His kingdom was small, but its location to the south of the lower part of the Ganges River gave it access to fertile plains, iron ore, timber, and elephants. Governing from his inland fortress at Rajagriha, Bimbisara built an administration to extract these resources and used them to form a powerful military. After concluding marriage alliances with states to the north and west, he attacked and defeated the kingdom of Anga to the east. His son Ajatashatru, being a patricide, after killing his father, broke those alliances and waged war on the Kosala Kingdom and the Vrijji Confederacy. Succeeding kings of this dynasty and later two more Magadhan dynasties continued to conquer neighboring states upto 321 B.C.E., thus forging an empire. But its reach was largely limited to the middle and lower areas of the Ganges River. To the northwest, external powers gained control. As observed earlier, the mountain ranges around that boundary contain passes permitting the movement of people. This made the northwest a crossroad, and, many a times, the armies of rulers who sought to control the riches of India passed through. Foreign powers from Afghanistan, Iran, or beyond extended political control into the subcontinent, making a portion of it as part of a larger empire. One example is the Persian Empire. During the sixth century, two kings, Cyrus the Great and Darius I, made this empire the largest in its time. From their capitals on the Iranian Plateau, they extended control as far as the Indus River. They incorporated parts of northwest India as provinces of the Persian Empire. Another example is Alexander the Great. Alexander was the king of Macedonia, a Greek state. After conquering other Greek states, he attacked the Persian Empire, defeating it in 331 B.C.E. He then took his forces all the way to mountain ranges bordering India. He wanted to conquer the whole world. He was attracted to the famed fabulous wealth of India. Alexander took his army through the Khyber Pass and conquered several small states and cities located in the Punjab. But to Alexander's disappointment, his soldiers refused to go any further, forcing him to turn back. They were exhausted from years of campaigning far from home and discouraged by news of powerful Indian states to the east, especially that of the empire of Magadha. Magadha's first capital, Rajagriha is one of many cities and towns with ruins dating back to this transitional period. During the Rig Vedic period Magadha was outside the pale of Aryan influence and urban centers were sparse during this period, but they had blossomed during this phase. As more forests were cleared and marshes drained, the agricultural economy of the Ganges basin produced more surplus food. Population

grew, enabling more people to move into towns and engage in other occupations such as craftsmen, artisans, and traders. Kings encouraged this economic growth as its revenue enriched their treasuries. Caravans of 107 ox-drawn carts or boats laden with goods travelled from state to state. They had to pay tolls to the king's customs officials. Rivers became especially important to contact these trade networks. That is why the Magadhan kings moved their capital to Pataliputra, a port town located on the Ganges. Thus, it developed as a hub of both political power and economic exchange. In fact, most towns and cities began as one or the other, or as places of pilgrimage. The Caste System As the population of North India rose and the landscape was dotted with more villages, towns, and cities, society became more complex. The social life of a Brahmin priest who served the king differed from that of a blacksmith who belonged to a town guild. Similarly, the life of a rich businessman residing in a city was different from that of a poor agricultural laborer living in a village. Thus, the social identity of each member of society differed. In ancient India, one measure of identity was the varna system of four social classes. Another was caste. By this time, the society had moved from Varna to Jati. Like the varnas, castes were hereditary social classifications. But they were far more distinct social groups. The four- fold varna system was important for establishing clearly who the powerful spiritual and political elites in society were: the Brahmins and Kshatriya. But others were more conscious of their caste. There were thousands of these, and each was defined by birth, occupation, residence, marriage, customs, and language. The lowest castes were the untouchables. These were those who engaged in occupations considered highly impure. Such occupations included corpse removers, cremators, those worked in cleaning the Hyde, and sweepers. So those who practiced such occupations were despised and pushed to the margins of society. As members of higher castes believed that touching or seeing them was polluting, untouchables were forced to live outside villages and towns, in separate settlements. Emergence of Buddhism During this time of transition, some individuals became dissatisfied with life and decided to leave the everyday world behind. They were people who chose to renounce social life and material things so that they might gain deeper insight into the meaning of life. Some of them altogether rejected Brahmanism and established their own belief systems. The most renowned example is Gautama Buddha (c. 563 – 480 B.C.E).

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5.3.4 The Mauryan Empire (321 – 184 B.C.E.)

The kingdom of Magadha was the most powerful state in India when the Nanda Dynasty came to power in 364 BCE. Nine Nanda kings made it even greater, by improving methods of tax collection and administration, funding irrigation projects and canal building, and maintaining an impressive army of infantry, cavalry, elephants, and chariots. But Nanda aspirations were cut short when they were overthrown by Chandragupta Maurya (r. 321 – 297 BCE), who began a new period in India's history. He and his son Bindusara (r. 287 – 273 BCE) and grandson Ashoka (r. 268 – 232 BCE) forged the first large empire in India's history, one that inspired the imagination of later empire builders in South Asia. The Mauryan Empire included most of the subcontinent and lasted for 140

years. Conflicting accounts make it difficult to say anything definitive about the first two kings. Chandragupta may have come from a Kshatriya (warrior) clan, or a Vaishya (commoner) clan, or a clan of peacock-tamers. In his youth, he spent time in the northwest (Swat), where he encountered Alexander the Great. With the mentoring of Kautilya, a disgruntled Brahmin in charge of the Dhanasala of the Nanda empire, Chandragupta formed alliances with Nanda enemies, overthrowing them in 321 BCE. Thereafter, through diplomacy and war, he secured control over central and northern India. Kautilya, whose advice may have been critical to Chandragupta's success, is viewed as the author of the Arthashastra, a treatise on statecraft. This handbook for kings covered in detail the arts of governing, diplomacy, and warfare. To help ensure centralization of power in the ruler's hands, it provided a blueprint of rules and regulations necessary to maintain an efficient bureaucracy, a detailed penal code, and advice on how to deploy spies and informants. Chandragupta's campaigns ended when he concluded a treaty with Seleucus Nicator in 301 BCE. After Alexander retreated from India and later died, a struggle for his empire broke out among his generals Ptolemy, Antigonus, Seleucus, Antipater, Perdiccas, and Lysimachus. Seleucus gained control of the eastern half and sought to reclaim northwest India. But he was confronted by Chandragupta, who defeated, and forced him to surrender the Indus Basin and much of Afghanistan, giving the Mauryan Empire control over trade routes to West Asia. The treaty, however, established friendly relations between the two rulers, Seleucus gave Chandragupta his daughter in marriage and dispatched an envoy to his court. Chandragupta gifted Seleucus three hundred elephants. Hellenistic kings maintained commercial and diplomatic ties with India. Military expansion continued under Bindusara and Ashoka. Almost the entire subcontinent came under the empire's control. With King Ashoka, however, warfare came to an end. We know far more about him because he left behind a fascinating record on his ideas on governing. He had edicts inscribed on rocks throughout violence. While waging war against the state of Kalinga, his southern neighbour, located along the east coast, he was deeply disturbed by the amount of suffering and dislocation the war heaped upon innocent people's lives. This realization caused him to redouble his faith in the Buddha. Ashoka, it turns out, was a lay follower of Buddhism. Through his Girnar rock edict, he proclaimed to his subjects that the sound of the war drum would be replaced by the sound of the dharma. In ancient India, dharma meant universal law. For the Brahmin priests, for example, dharma meant a society and religious order founded on Vedic principles. For Buddhists, dharma consisted of the truths taught by the Buddha. For kings, dharma was enlightened governing and just rule. Thus, Ashoka was proclaiming that he would now rule by virtue, not force. Ashoka's kingly dharma was shaped by his personal practice of Buddhism. This dharma consisted of laws of ethical behavior and right conduct fashioned from Indian traditions of kingship and his understanding of Buddhist principles. To gain his subject's willing obedience, he sought to inspire a sense of gratitude by presenting himself in the role of a father looking out for his children. He told his subjects that he was appointing officers to tour his realm and attend to the welfare and happiness of all. Justice was to be

impartially administered and medical treatment provided for animals and humans. A principle of non-injury to all beings was to be observed. Following this principle meant not only renouncing state violence, but also forbidding slaughtering certain animals for sacrifices or for cooking in the royal kitchen. His Shahbazgarhi rock edict states that formerly in the kitchen daily many hundred-thousands of living creatures were slaughtered for purposes of curries. But now only three living creatures are slaughtered: two peacocks and one deer that too not regularly. In future, even these three will not be slaughtered. Ashoka also proclaimed that he would replace his pleasure tours and hunting tours with dharma tours. During these, he promised to give gifts to Brahmins and the aged and to visit people in the countryside. In return, Ashoka asked his subjects to observe certain principles. He knew his empire was pluralistic, consisting of many peoples with different cultures and beliefs. He believed that if he instilled certain values in his subjects, then his realm might be knit together in peace and harmony. Thus, in addition to non-injury, Ashoka taught forbearance. He exhorted his subjects to respect parents, show courtesy to servants, and, more generally, be liberal, compassionate, and truthful in their treatment of others. These values were also to be embraced by religious communities, since Ashoka did not want people fighting over matters of faith. The king's writ shaped the government. They were advised by a council of ministers and served by high officials who oversaw the major functions of the state. The Mauryans were particularly concerned with efficient revenue collection and uniform administration of justice. To that end, they divided the empire into a hierarchy of provinces and districts and appointed officials to manage matters at each level. But given such a large empire spread over a geographically and ethnically diverse territory, the level of Mauryan control varied. Historians recognize three broad zones. The first was the metropolitan region—with its capital Pataliputra—located on the Ganges Plain. This heartland was tightly governed. The second zone consisted of conquered regions of strategic and economic importance. These provinces were placed under the control of members of the royal family and senior officials, but state formation was slower. That is, the tentacles of bureaucracy did not reach as deeply into local communities. Lastly, the third zone consisted of hinterlands sparsely populated by tribes of foragers and nomads. Here, state control was minimal, amounting to little more than establishing workable relations with chieftains. After King Ashoka, the Mauryan Empire declined. The precise reasons for this decline are unknown. Like many ancient dynasties, the Mauryas placed faith on their vast and expanding bureaucracy. Since loyalty to the ruler was one element of the glue that held the centralized bureaucracy together, the weak successors of Ashoka, a fact attested by contemporary and later Buddhist, Jain and Puranic sources, the division of the empire into three parts and the invasion of Bactrian Greeks must have worsened the situation prevailed in the empire. Furthermore, the Mauryan court's demand for revenue sufficient to sustain the government and a large standing army may have contributed to discontent. In 184 BCE, the last king Brihadratha was assassinated by his own military commander

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Pushyamitra during the guard of honour, and India's first major imperial power came to an end.

5.3.5 Regional States: India 200 BCE – 300 CE

After the Mauryan Empire fell, no one major power held control over a substantial part of India until the rise of the Gupta Empire in the fourth century CE. Thus, for five hundred years, from c. 200 BCE to 300 CE, India saw a fairly rapid turnover of numerous, competing regional monarchies. Most of these were small, while the larger ones were only loosely integrated. Some developed along the Ganges. Others were of Central Asian origins, the product of invasions from the northwest. Also, for the first time, states formation took place in South India. Yet, despite the political instability, India was economically dynamic, as trade within and without the subcontinent flourished, and India was increasingly linked to other parts of the world in networks of exchange. And new trends appeared in India's major religious traditions. A popular, devotional form of worship took root in Buddhism. Similarly, the Bhakti cult became a defining element in Hinduism. The general who brought the Mauryan Empire to a close by a military coup established the Shunga Dynasty (c. 185 – 73 BCE). Like its predecessor, this kingdom was centered on the middle Ganges, the heartland of India's history since the late Vedic Age. But unlike it, the Shunga Kingdom rapidly dwindled in size. 111 Shunga rulers were constantly warring with neighboring kingdoms, and the last fell to an internal coup in 73 CE. Subsequently, during the ensuing half millennium, other regions of India played equally prominent roles. The northwest remained a source of dynamism, as different ethnic groups living beyond the Hindu Kush invaded India and established one kingdom after another. Most of this movement was caused by instability on the steppe lands of Central Asia, where competing confederations of nomadic pastoralists fought for control over the region. The most powerful amongst this succession of states was the Kushan Kingdom, whose origins take us far away to the north of China. There, in the second century CE, one of the nomadic groups by name Xiongnu struggling with scarcity moved west, violently displacing another group and forcing them into northern Afghanistan. The displaced group was known as the Yuezhi (yew-eh-jer), and they were made up of several tribes. In the first century CE, a warrior chieftain from one Yuezhi tribe, the Kushans, united them, invaded northwest India, and assumed exalted titles befitting a king. His successor, ruling from Afghanistan, gained control over the Punjab and reached the plains of the upper Ganges River. The greatest Kushan ruler, King Kanishka, furthered what these first two kings began, forging an empire extending from Central Asia across the mountain ranges of Afghanistan into much of northern India. Ruling the many peoples of such a sprawling territory required more than the periodic plundering campaigns of nomad

chieftains. One sculpture of King Kanishka puts these Central Asian roots on display. In it, he is wearing a belted tunic, coat, and felt boots, and carrying a sword and mace. Kushan gold coins, however, cast him and his two predecessors in another light: as universal monarchs. On one side, the crowned kings are displayed along with inscriptions bearing titles used by the most powerful Indian, Persian, Chinese, and Roman emperors of that time. The obverse side contains images of both Indian and foreign deities. The Kushan rulers, it appears, solved the problem of ruling an extensive, culturally diverse realm by patronizing the many different god's beloved to the peoples living within it. Buddhists, for instance, saw King Kanishka as great Buddhist ruler, much like they did King Ashoka. In fact, Kanishka supported Buddhist scholarship and encouraged missionaries to take this faith from India to Central Asia and China. But his coins also depict Lord Siva, Persian gods Vato, Atash, Mithra, Bahram, Fa'rr, Greek, god Helios etc., suggesting that he was open-minded, and perhaps strategic, in matters of religion. After Kanishka's reign, from the mid-second century CE onwards, the empire declined. Like the other, larger Indian states during this time, only a core area was ruled directly by the king's servants. The other areas were governed indirectly by establishing tributary relations with local rulers. As Kushan power waned, numerous smaller polities emerged, turning northern and central India into a mosaic of states. The Indian peninsula—the territory south of the Indo-Gangetic Plain and the Vindhya Mountain Range—also features more prominently after the fall of the Mauryan Empire. In the south, kingdoms emerged for the first time. The largest was the Satavahana Kingdom, which included most of the Deccan Plateau and lasted about three centuries. The first rulers were former Mauryan officials who capitalized on its dissolution, established their own state, and expanded to the north. To establish their legitimacy, Satavahana kings embraced Aryan civilization by allowing Brahmins to perform sacrifices at the court and by upholding the varna social order. They also prospered from a rich agricultural base and trade. However, like so many of the larger states during these centuries, this kingdom was only loosely integrated, consisting of small provinces governed by civil and military officers and allied, subordinate chieftains and kings. Far south, in the area roughly constituting modern Tamil Nadu and Kerala, from 3rd Century B.C.E. to the 3rd Century C.E., arose three kingdoms namely the Cheras, the Cholas and the Pandyas and an enormous number of smaller lineage-based chieftains. Raids, wars, and redistribution seemed to have been part of the efforts to the maintenance of the contemporary economy, though another important component was the trade that was both land and sea based. A vast corpus of literature which defined and gave the nomenclature Sangam age to this period. The ruling class big and small became the chief patrons of the bards who produced these literatures. Their extensive trade relations with the Romans, Arabs and in far-east

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made them wealthy and gave them technological edge in seafaring. Availability of iron and the technological knowhow to produce rust-free iron objects including weapons and the finesse they showed in turning out rouletted ware gave them a market far beyond the sub-continent. The uneven distribution of this wealth gave rise to extreme poverty in some areas within the region resulting in frequent wars, raids, and redistribution of wealth. The largely classless and casteless tribal society was rapidly absorbing class and caste influences from immediate and far north is defined by some of the rulers of the three major kingdoms sporting Sanskrit titles and practicing yajnas and the caste based social formations in big cities which led to very rigid caste and class formation in the region in the centuries to come. Interestingly, the Sramanic religions played an important role in social stratification in south.

Check Your Progress:

1. Explain in brief the political developments in Ancient India.

5.4 EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL SYSTEMS IN ANCIENT INDIA

5.4.1 Vedic Period

During the Vedic period, the political system was primarily based on tribal organization. The head of each tribe, known as the Rajan, held considerable authority and governed through a council of elders. Society was organized into four varnas or social classes: Brahmins (priests and scholars), Kshatriyas (warriors and rulers), Vaishyas (merchants and farmers), and Shudras (laborers and servants).

5.4.2 Mauryan Empire

The Mauryan Empire marked a significant milestone in ancient Indian polity. Under the leadership of Chandragupta Maurya and later Emperor Ashoka, the empire established a centralized administration and a highly efficient bureaucracy. The empire was divided into provinces, each governed by a viceroy. The Mauryan administration focused on welfare, trade, and public security.

5.4.3 Gupta Empire

The Gupta Empire witnessed a flourishing of art, culture, and science. The political system during this period was highly decentralized, with regional governors enjoying significant autonomy. However, the empire maintained a strong central administration to ensure effective governance.

5.4.4 Post-Gupta Period

Following the decline of the Gupta Empire, India saw the rise of numerous regional kingdoms. These kingdoms had their own administrative systems, often led by local kings. Polity became more fragmented, and regional politics played a crucial role in shaping India's history.

Check Your Progress:

1. Describe in brief the evolution of political systems in Ancient India.

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5.5 KEY FEATURES OF ANCIENT INDIA POLITY

Social Hierarchy and Caste System

Ancient Indian society was organized into a rigid caste system, which determined an individual's social status and occupation. The four varnas formed the foundation of this system, with each varna assigned specific duties and responsibilities.

Governance Structures

The governance structures in ancient India varied depending on the period and region. The Mauryan and Gupta Empires followed a centralized system, whereas the post-Gupta period witnessed the emergence of decentralized and regional governance.

Role of Kings and Administration

Kings held supreme power in ancient Indian polity. They were responsible for maintaining law and order, protecting the kingdom, and ensuring the welfare of their subjects. The administration comprised ministers, councilors, and officials who assisted the king in governance.

Judicial System

Ancient India had a well-developed judicial system. The king or local rulers acted as the highest judicial authority, assisted by a council of learned scholars and jurists. The legal system was based on principles derived from religious texts and treatises.

Ancient India Polity - Types of Ancient Indian Governments

Ancient India witnessed various forms of government. The three prominent types were monarchy, republics, and tribal systems.

Monarchy

Monarchy refers to a system of government where a single ruler, typically a king, holds absolute power. The king's decisions were final and binding. The Mauryan and Gupta Empires were examples of monarchies in ancient India.

Republics

Republics were characterized by a system of governance where power resided in elected representatives. The decision-making process involved debates and discussions among representatives. The republic of Vaishali was a notable example.

Tribal Systems

Tribal systems existed in ancient India, particularly during the Vedic period. Tribes had their own leaders who governed the tribe's affairs. Decision-making was often based on consensus and mutual agreement.

In ancient India, panchayats played a significant role in local governance and grassroots democracy.

Structure and Functions

Council of elders like Panchayat was local self-government institution comprising a council of five members. They resolved disputes, ensured the maintenance of law and order, managed village affairs, and promoted social cohesion.

Decision-Making Process

Decisions in panchayats were made through discussions and consensus-building. Each member had an equal voice, and decisions were guided by the welfare of the community.

Importance in Local Governance

Panchayats played a vital role in maintaining law and order, resolving disputes, and providing essential services at the village level. They served as the bridge between the local community and the ruling authorities.

Ancient India Polity - Religious Influence

Religion exerted a profound influence on ancient Indian polity. Let's explore the impact of different religious traditions.

Brahmanical Influence

Brahmanical traditions, rooted in the Vedas, played a significant role in shaping political structures. Brahmins were revered as the highest caste and enjoyed considerable influence in matters of governance and decision-making.

Buddhist Influence

Buddhism emerged as a prominent religion during ancient times and influenced polity through its emphasis on moral values, justice, and compassion. The Buddhist sangha (community) held significant sway in some regions.

Jain Influence

Jainism, known for its principles of non-violence and non-possession, also influenced ancient Indian polity. Jain monks and scholars actively participated in governance and advocated for ethical and just rule.

Ancient India Polity - Treatises and Philosophies

Several political treatises and philosophies emerged in ancient India, providing valuable insights into governance and administration.

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Arthashastra by Kautilya (Chanakya)

Arthashastra, written by Kautilya (also known as Chanakya), is a renowned ancient Indian treatise on statecraft and political strategy. It covers various aspects of governance, including diplomacy, economics, and military tactics. He propagated Saptanga theory of the strong statecraft.

Dharmashastric literature

Gamut of Sutra and Smriti literature served as a significant legal and social text in ancient India. It outlined societal norms, duties, and laws, offering insights into the legal system of the time.

Buddhist Texts

Buddhist texts, such as the Jataka tales and Vinaya Pitaka, contain teachings and stories that shed light on ethical governance, justice, and the role of rulers in promoting welfare.

Ancient India Polity - Legal System

The legal system in ancient India was diverse and multifaceted. Let's explore its key features.

Dharmashastra

Dharmashastra refers to the legal codes and principles derived from religious texts. It provided guidelines for personal conduct, social norms, and governance.

Sources of Law

The primary sources of law in ancient India were religious texts, including the Vedas, Upanishads, and Dharmashastra. Legal precedents and customs were also considered in judicial decision-making.

Punishments and Justice

Ancient Indian law prescribed various punishments for different offenses, ranging from fines and imprisonment to banishment and even capital punishment. Justice aimed to maintain societal harmony and uphold dharma (righteousness).

Decline and Transformation of Ancient India Polity

Ancient Indian polity witnessed a decline and transformation due to various factors.

Regional Kingdoms

The decline of empires led to the emergence of numerous regional kingdoms. These kingdoms, with their localized governance structures, played a crucial role in shaping the political landscape of ancient India.

Ancient India Polity encompasses a rich tapestry of political systems, governance structures, and cultural influences. Understanding its nuances and key features is essential for success in government exams and provides valuable insights into India's historical and political heritage. By exploring the various facets of ancient Indian polity, you will gain a deeper appreciation for the legacy left behind by our ancestors and the foundations upon which our present-day governance systems are built.

Administrative Divisions

Ancient India was divided into various administrative divisions, each with its own characteristics and functions.

Provinces

Provinces were the primary administrative divisions of large empires like the Mauryan Empire. They were headed by viceroys who were responsible for maintaining law and order, collecting taxes, and overseeing the welfare of the people.

Cities and Towns

Cities and towns served as important administrative units in ancient India. They had local governing bodies responsible for managing local affairs, infrastructure development, and trade.

Villages

Villages formed the basic unit of administration in ancient India. They were governed by elected or appointed village heads who ensured the smooth functioning of the village, resolved disputes, and coordinated with higher-level authorities.

Social Welfare Measures

Ancient Indian polity recognized the importance of social welfare and implemented measures to support the well-being of its citizens.

Healthcare and Hospitals

Hospitals, known as "asylums," were established to provide medical care to the sick and injured. These institutions were often supported by royal patronage and religious organizations.

Irrigation and Agriculture

The state played a crucial role in the development of irrigation systems to support agriculture. Canals, reservoirs, and tanks were constructed to ensure a steady water supply for agricultural activities.

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B) Formation of Janapadas and Mahajanapadas

Infrastructure Development

Ancient Indian rulers invested in infrastructure development, including the construction of roads, bridges, and public buildings. These initiatives aimed to improve connectivity, facilitate trade, and enhance the overall quality of life.

Kingship in ancient India

Monarchy in ancient India was ruled by a King who functioned as its protector, a role which involved both secular and religious power. The meaning and significance of kingship changed dramatically between the Vedic and Later Vedic period, and underwent further development under the times of the Jain and Buddhist rulers. Although there is evidence that kingship was not always hereditary during the Vedic and into the Later Vedic period, by the time of composition of the Brāhmaṇa literature, traces of elective kingship had already begun to disappear.

Kingship and the Vedas

Vedic ideas about the establishment of the office of king ultimately draw upon legends about the coronation of one God as king of all others. Legends abound as to which of the gods won this position; In the Ṛig Veda, Indra, Agni, Soma, Yama, and Varuṇa are all addressed as "King." Indeed, kingship in the Ṛig Veda largely manifests only in the form of gods as kings. Hymns directly addressed to earthly kings, like 10.173-10.175, are the exception rather than the rule. In these hymns, the king is said to have been "established" by Indra and "made victorious" by Soma and Savita. Although this implies a close dependence of the king upon the gods, the rarity of the figure of the human king in the Ṛig Veda agrees with the idea that kings at this time were basically on a level with tribal chiefs and were not viewed as divine. Also, several hymns in the Ṛig Veda demonstrate the importance of the samiti, the governing assembly, further indicating that the early Vedic king ruled in a tribal setting where decision making by assembly still played a major role.

As was stated above, the king was not considered divine in the early Vedic period. By the time the Brāhmaṇas were composed, however, the king was increasingly associated with the gods through his qualities and the rituals he performed. Also, by this time, kingship had transitioned to a hereditary position and the samiti began to decrease in importance.

King as Protector

The Dharmasūtras and Dharmaśāstras agree that it is the special duty of the king to protect, to punish, and to preserve dharma for those in his kingdom. However, a new myth of the creation of kingship not found in

the Dharmasūtras and differing from those found in previous Vedic literature is seen in the Dharmaśāstras. At Manu 7.2, it is stated that the Self-existent Lord created the king to restore order to the chaotic world which had existed without him. Then the Lord created Punishment (spoken of as a deity), because through punishment the world is subdued (Manu 7.22). By performing his duty as protector and punisher, the king flourishes (Manu 7.107). The weak and helpless (i.e. widows, children, the mentally ill, the destitute) were to receive royal protection. Beyond protecting his subjects against each other, the king, as a kṣatriya, also had a duty to protect his subjects against external threats and wage war with rival kingdoms. Manu 7.87, for instance, states that a king, when challenged, must never back down from a battle; indeed, doing battle is his dharma.

Check Your Progress:

1. Discuss in brief the key features of ancient Indian polity.

5.6 FORMATION OF JANAPADAS AND MAHAJANAPADAS

The Emergence of Mahajanapadas from Janapadas

The second urbanization means the emergence of several Janapadas and the emergence of sixteen Mahajanapadas from the Janapadas from 500 to 600 BC. Second urbanization means the emergence of sixteen Mahajanapadas from Janapadas during ancient India in the period of 500 to 600 BC in the Indian subcontinent. This was the time when agricultural improvement saw a hike in the middle of Gangetic plains. Cultivation methods like wet rice cultivation started to give you more products than any other crop during the time and therefore gave birth to more necessary agriculture surplus. The growth of crafts and trades in the middle of the drawing population in the Indian subcontinent was one of the major reasons for the emergence of towns and settlements in the Gangetic plains. Different types of towns also came into the picture where political and administrative centers were also put up such as Rajgriha, Shruti, Kaushambi, and Champa. There were centers and channels present for trade and commerce such as Ujjain, Taxila, etc. The formation of Mahajanapadas was the second urbanization whereas the Harappan civilization was the first.

About Mahajanapadas and Janapadas

The Janapadas were known as the major kingdoms of the Vedic Indian subcontinent. There were around 22 different Janapadas during the 6th century B.C. During this time the development of iron in the states of Bihar and Jharkhand went very high which made the Janapadas more powerful which later turned into the Mahajanapadas in the Indian subcontinent. During the time 600 BC to 325 BC, there were a total of 16 in the Indian subcontinent.

From Janapadas to Mahajanapadas During the Formation of States and Urbanization in The Indian Subcontinent

- Political control
A) Dominant Group and Kingship
B) Formation of Janapadas and Mahajanapadas

Some important features and characteristics of the transition from Janapadas to Mahajanapadas are listed below:

- A major transition from a tribal quality-based community to a major territorial state was witnessed during the late Vedic period (900-600 BCE) in the Indian subcontinent
- The Janas/people (clan or tribal) who are settled and who used to migrate towards the east started to settle down in various regions
- The loyalty of these people got shifted from the tribe or clan towards a territory which is the Janapadas
- The literal meaning of Janapadas is a place where the tribals settle their foot but they fought with each other for political dominance and major needful resources
- Some Janapadas started bringing others and extended their territory which later transformed into Mahajanapadas
- The most important elements of these Mahajanapadas were their people, territory, governance/government, jurisdiction, and supremacy
- These elements were found in Mahajanapadas and they mainly represented the emergence of large territories that ruled over other Janas
- The king of Mahajanapadas ran centralized governance and was the supreme ruler
- He was responsible for the smooth functioning and maintenance of law and jurisdiction under his leadership in the Mahajanapadas

Political Structure of Mahajanapadas

- Most of the states in the Mahajanapadas functioned as a monarchy whereas others were known as Gana-Sanghas
- There was a king who was elected to rule the states
- Every Mahajanapada had one capital
- Taxes were imposed on crops, craftsmen, traders, and hunters
- The ruler or the raja maintained the armies of the state

Check Your Progress:

1. Explain in brief the emergence of Mahajanapadas from Janapadas.

5.7 SUMMARY

The Indian Vedic period was one of the most prominent and important periods of all time. It marked the emergence of various reforms and

developments in Indian history. It marked the onset of urbanization and various civilizations that helped India grow better. The journey of the emergence of Mahajanapadas from the Janapadas was prominent in Indian history. The Janapadas existed from 1500 BCE to 6th BCE whereas the Mahajanapadas existed during the 600 BC to 2300 BC period. The Janapada period saw the transition from the Indus valley civilization known as the bronze age to the famous Iron Age whereas the Mahajanapada period saw the transition from smaller settlements to one of India's biggest urban area civilizations after the decline of the Indus valley civilization.

5.8 QUESTIONS

1. Examine the background and evolution of political systems during ancient India.
2. Explain the political developments in ancient India from Vedic age to Gupta period.
3. Describe the concept of dominant group and political control in ancient India.
4. Discuss the key features of ancient India polity
5. Trace the formation of Janapadas and Mahajanapadas during ancient India.

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Political control
A) Dominant Group and Kingship
B) Formation of Janapadas and Mahajanapadas



POLITICAL CONTROL

C) LOCAL, PROVINCIAL AND CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

Unit Structure :

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Evolution of Ancient Indian Administration
- 6.3 Mauryan Administrative System
 - 6.3.1 Central Administration
 - 6.3.2 Provincial Administration
 - 6.3.3 Local Administration
- 6.4 Administrative System during Gupta Period
 - 6.4.1 Central Administration
 - 6.4.2 Provincial Administration
 - 6.4.3 Local Administration
- 6.5 Summary
- 6.6 Questions
- 6.7 Additional Reading

6.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss the evolution of administration in ancient India,
- explain the central, provincial, local, and other fields of administration during the Mauryan period, and
- describe the central, provincial, local, and other fields of administrations during the Gupta period.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Indian administration, as we know, has its evolution that can be traced back to the 5000 years old Indus Valley Civilization wherein the King was all powerful and everything in the Kingdom was carried out in his name.

He was assisted by a council of ministers, and also other functionaries and officers in administering the Kingdom. In other words, in the ancient times, powers of administering the Kingdom were centralized in the institution of King.

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This was followed by the Vedic period. Early Vedic Aryans were organized into tribes rather than kingdoms. The chief of a tribe was called 'Rajan.' The main responsibility of the Rajan was to protect the tribe. He was aided by several functionaries, including the purohita (chaplain), the senani (army chief), dutas (envoys), and spash (spies).

However, a systematic model of administration came in with the coming of the Mauryan and Gupta dynasties. Both the dynasties had an elaborate governmental machinery that carried out state functions in a highly organized manner. The Unit therefore tends to discuss the administrative systems that prevailed during these dynasties. We will just have a brief discussion about the evolution of the ancient administrative system to begin with.

6.2 EVOLUTION OF ANCIENT INDIAN ADMINISTRATION

The Vedic period or Vedic age (c. 1500 – c. 500 BCE) gets its name from the Vedas. Early Vedic Aryans were organized into tribes rather than kingdoms.

The chief of a tribe was called 'Rajan.' The main responsibility of the Rajan was to protect the tribe. He was aided by several functionaries, including the purohita (chaplain), the senani (army chief), dutas (envoys), and spash (spies).

However, the autonomy of the Rajan was restricted by the tribal councils called 'Sabha' and 'samiti.' Arthur Llewellyn Basham, a noted historian and Indologist, theorizes that Sabha was a meeting of great men in the tribe, whereas, samiti was a meeting of all free tribesmen. The two bodies were, in part, responsible for the governance of the tribe. The Rajan could not accede to the throne without their approval.

In the later Vedic period, the tribes had consolidated into small kingdoms, which had a capital and rudimentary administrative system. The Rajan was seen as the custodian of social order and the protector of 'rashtra' (polity). Hereditary kingship started emerging. Rituals in this era exalted the status of the King over his people. He was occasionally referred to as 'samrat' (supreme ruler).

The Rajan's increasing political power enabled him to gain greater control over the productive resources. The voluntary gift offering (bali) became a compulsory tribute. There was no organized system of taxation. Sabha and samiti were still there but with the increasing power of the Rajan, their influence declined. By the end of the later Vedic age, different kinds of political systems such as monarchical states (rajya), oligarchic states (gana or sangha), and tribal principalities had started emerging.

Economy in the Vedic period was sustained by a combination of pastoralist and agricultural way of life. Economic exchanges were conducted by gift giving, particularly to chiefs and priests, and barter system was there, wherein cattle were used, as a unit of currency. The transition of Vedic society from Vedas are liturgical texts containing details of life during this period that have been interpreted to be historical and constitute the primary sources for understanding the period. The Vedic period, or Vedic age (c. 1500 – c. 500 BCE), is the period in the history of the north Indian subcontinent between the end of the Indus Valley Civilization and second urbanization, which began in the central Indo-Gangetic Plain c. 600 BCE. It gets its name from the Vedas. Around c.1200–1000 BCE, Vedic Aryans spread eastward to the fertile Ganges Plain and adopted iron tools, which allowed for clearing of forest and the adoption of a more settled, agricultural way of life. The second half of the Vedic period was characterized by the emergence of towns, kingdoms, and a complex social differentiation distinctive to India.

Nomadic life to a settled agriculture in the later Vedic age led to an increase in trade and competition for resources. Agriculture dominated the economic activity along the Ganges valley during this period. Agricultural operations grew in complexity and usage of iron implements increased. Apart from copper, bronze, and gold, later Vedic texts also mention about the usage of tin, lead, and silver.

Crops of wheat, rice, and barley were cultivated. New crafts and occupations such as carpentry, leather work, tanning, pottery, astrology, jewellery, dying, and wine making arose.

Romila Thapar characterizes Vedic-era state formation, as being in a condition of “arrested development,” because ...chiefs were relatively autonomous and owing to surplus wealth they controlled, which was used for the increasingly grandiose rituals that otherwise could have been directed towards state-building. The period of the Upanishads, the final phase of the Vedic era, (was approximately contemporaneous with a new wave of state formations) was linked to the beginning of urbanization in the Ganges Valley. The growth of population and trade networks led to the social and economic changes that started putting pressure on older ways of life suggesting the end of the Vedic period and setting the stage for urbanization.

By the time the Mauryan dynasty came into power, the treatise of Kautilya, namely *Arthashastra*’ became a work on statecraft, economic policy, and military strategy. Kautilya, was a scholar at Takshashila University and was the teacher and guardian of Emperor Chandragupta Maurya. Indian administration system was well developed and the treatise of Kautilya gives a very first detailed account of the same.

The Mauryan Period was the era of major development in Indian administration. Decentralization was prevalent, as the village units played a very important role, as the base of grassroots administration. Empire was

divided into provinces, provinces into districts, and districts into rural and urban centers for efficient administration.

A detailed account of the administrative system in Mauryan period is given below.

6.3 MAURYAN ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM

Indian history entered into a new era with the beginning of the Mauryan Empire, as for the first time India attained political unity and administrative uniformity.

The Mauryan Empire was divided into four provinces with Patliputra, as the capital. The names of the four provincial capitals were Tosali in the East, Ujjayain in the West, Suvarnagiri in the South, and Taxila in the North. Mauryans developed an organized and an elaborate system of administration.

There was central administration directly under the King. Besides there was provincial administration, local administration, revenue administration, judicial administration, and military administration. We will now discuss the administrative systems. To begin with is the central administration system under the Mauryas.

6.3.1 Central Administration

The King was the supreme and sovereign authority of the Mauryan administration. He had the supreme executive, legislative, and judicial powers vested in him. He was responsible for the safety and security of his kingdom. He laid down the general lines of policy that was to be followed by all officials. He appointed ministers and other officers of the royal administration. In addition, the King was the supreme commander of the army and head of the entire military entire.

The Mauryan Empire (before Ashoka) was essentially a Hindu State. According to the Hindu concept, the supreme sovereign of the State was 'Dharma' or law and the King was to be its guardian. The King could never dare to defy the laws. He was aided and advised by a 'Mantri Parishad' (Council of Ministers) and he was to be guided by it in conduct of day-to-day administration. This became more of an obligation during times of emergencies (war or a natural disaster or health epidemics). The Brahmins had a great influence on the King and the latter was required not to disobey them. Instead, he always looked towards their support.

Also, as the powers of the Mauryan government was of a decentralized nature, the provincial governor and provincial ministers had the right to be consulted by the King, especially, in all provincial matters. The number of ministers in the Council of Ministers varied and was not fixed. The ministers had to qualify by showing their ability, especially in terms of religion and money. In times of emergency, the King was always to be guided by the majority decision of the Council of Ministers. Besides, there was a well-organized hierarchy of bureaucrats, who looked after the

executive, judicial, and revenue offices. The entire administration system was organized into departments, each of which was headed by a Superintendent, known as 'Adhyaksha.' The Adhyaksha was assisted by clerks, accountants, and spies. In addition, there were two posts of high officials, namely the 'Samaharta' and the 'Sannidhata.' The Samaharta was the collector general of revenue for the Mauryan Empire. He had control over the expenditure part also. The post of Sannidhata was the officer-in-charge of the treasury and store. Besides, there were other officers like Army Minister, Chief Priest, and Governor of Forts.

6.3.2 Provincial Administration

The entire Empire was divided into two parts:

The kingdom that was under the direct rule of the King, and the vassal states. The Mauryan territory that was directly ruled by the King was divided into a number of provinces called 'Janapadas.' Ashoka had five provinces with capitals namely Taxila, Ujjain, Tosali, Suvarnagiri, and Pataliputra. Each province was subdivided into a number of districts and each district was again subdivided into a number of units.

However, in addition to these centrally ruled Mauryan territories, there were vassal states. They enjoyed a great deal of autonomy.

The provincial administration worked on similar lines of the central administration. The Mauryan Emperor directly ruled the central and eastern parts of the Empire. The other areas were ruled by the provincial Governors. The provincial Governors were responsible for day-to-day conduct of administration of provinces. They were expected to consult on important matters. (the central administration). There were also the district officers, reporters, clerks, who helped in the smooth running of provincial administration.

6.3.3 Local Administration

The district administration was in the charge of 'Rajukas', whose position and functions are similar to today's district collectors. He was assisted by 'Yuktas' or subordinate officials. In the urban administration was, there was a Municipal Board with 30 members. There were six committees with five Board members in each to manage the administration of cities. The six committees were:

- 1) Committee on Industrial Arts
- 2) Committee on Foreigners
- 3) Committee on Registration of Births and Deaths
- 4) Committee on Trade and Commerce
- 5) Committee on Supervision of Manufacturers
- 6) Committee on Collection of Excise and Custom Duties

Village administration was in the hands of 'Gramani' and his superior was called 'Gopa,' who was in charge of ten to fifteen villages. Census was a regular activity and the village officials were to number the people along with other details such as their castes and occupations. They were also to count the animals in each house. Census in towns was conducted by municipal officials, especially to track the movements of both foreign and indigenous population. The data collected were cross checked by the spies. Census appears to have become a permanent institution during the administration of the Mauryas.

Political Control
C) Local, Provincial and
Central Administration

Check Your Progress:

1. Explain in brief the salient features of Mauryan administration.

6.4 ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM DURING GUPTA PERIOD

The administrative system during the Gupta dynasty was found more or less similar to that of the Mauryan Empire. At the time of the Gupta rule, there was political harmony in ancient India. During this period, the Empire was classified into administrative divisions like Rajya, Rashtra, Desha, and Mandala. This denotes the importance being given to administrative decentralization. The administrative divisions helped the rulers to systematically control their territories.

The period of Gupta's has been described, as the golden age in ancient India. There was consolidation of northern India under one political umbrella, which ushered in an era of orderly growth and development. We will discuss Gupta administration under the following headings:

6.4.1 Central Administration

Monarchy was the form of government during the Gupta Age and it has been hailed, as a benevolent monarchy. The King adopted pompous titles such as Parameshvara, Maharajadhiraja, and Parambhattaraka. The King was the highest authority and wielded wide powers to enable smooth functioning of the Empire. He enjoyed political, administrative, military, and judicial powers. The theory of the divinity of Kings was popular during this period, which added to the royal power and prestige. They were looked upon, as Gods. Though the King possessed extensive powers, he did not rule in a tyrannical manner. Council of ministers and several other officials assisted the King in day-to-day performance of his duties.

The Gupta Kings appointed all governors and military and civil officials and the latter were responsible to the King. The King conferred all honors and titles. The King was the custodian of all land in the Empire. He looked into works like building of dams, imparting of justice, recovery of taxes, and provision of shelter to needy. The Kings could never afford to be selfish despots. They had to be ruled, according to the principles of 'Rajya Dharma.' There were also ministers and high officials to aid and advice him and he shared powers with them. The emperor was assisted by a council of ministers also known, as Mantri Parishad.

The Prime Minister of the state, known, as Mantri Mukhya was among the prominent ones in the council. The other portfolios such as military affairs, law and order matters, and such others were held by different officials known, as Mahasandhi Vigrahaka, Amatya, Mahabaladhikrita, and Mahadandnayaka. All important matters were decided in a joint sitting of the King and his ministers. The King used to respect the opinion given by his ministers.

Being a benevolent monarch, the King was always concerned with the well being of his subjects. He toured the country to keep himself abreast with the social and economic life of the people.

6.4.2 Provincial Administration

The Guptas organized a system of provincial and local administration. The Empire was divided into divisions called 'Bhukth' and each Bhukti was placed under the charge of an 'Uparika.' The Bhuktis were divided into districts or Vishayas and each Vishaya was under a Vishayapati. The Vishayapatis were generally members of royal family. They were assisted in the work by a council of representatives.

6.4.3 Local Administration

The city was governed by a Parishad and the head was known, as Nagara Rakshaka. Purapala Uparika was another officer and the Nagara-Rakshaka worked under him. Also, there was a special officer, known as Avasthika, who acted, as the Superintendent of Dharamsalas. Professional bodies were given considerable attention. Artisans, merchants, and bankers organized their own guilds and managed their own affairs. The guild merchants looked after trade in the cities.

The village was the smallest unit of administration. Gramika was the head of the village. Other officials known, as Dutas or messengers, headman, and Kartri were also there. Gramika was assisted by a village assembly. During the Guptas, the rural bodies like Panchayats were incharge of the welfare of villagers. These rural bodies comprised of the headman and elders of the villages. Hence, one can construe that the Guptas promoted local participation at all levels of the administration.

Check Your Progress:

1. Explain in brief the administrative system of Gupta period.

6.5 SUMMARY

The above sections have mentioned about the administrative systems prevalent in the Mauryan and Gupta kingdoms. The central, provincial, revenue, financial, judicial, and local administrative systems have been dealt with in details. This makes one to construe that both the administrative systems were monarchical yet not despotic. The King was a benevolent monarch, who was concerned with the welfare of his subjects. Both the administrations were the foundation of the ancient administrative system and proved to be pointers for our present-day administration.

6.6 QUESTIONS

1. Describe in detail the evolution of administration in ancient India.
2. Explain the central, provincial and local administration during the Mauryan period.
3. Discuss the central, provincial and local administrations during the Gupta period.

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