

**401: HISTORY OF INDIA (EARLY TIMES-1200 AD)****SYLLABUS****UNIT – I      SOURCES**

- a. Archaeological Sources
- b. Literary Sources

**UNIT –II      PRE-HISTORIC AND PROTOHISTORIC PERIODS**

- a. Prehistoric sites and settlements
- b. Indus Valley Civilization

**UNIT – III      VEDIC AND SANGAM AGE**

- a. Early Vedic Age
- b. Later Vedic age
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## UNIT – I

### SOURCES

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#### **1.0 Introduction**

The history of India goes by its own significance. The Indian civilization is as old as the civilization of the Nile Valley of Egypt and Mesopotamia. Many ancient civilizations of the world are now either extinct or have failed to preserve their old traditions. However, the Indian Civilization has achieved greatness in preserving its age old traditions to the present day. Though India is one of the earlier civilizations of the world, we are confronted with a serious problem of paucity of necessary records for the reconstruction of its ancient history. The main purpose of history is to throw light on the past. The study of early Indian history is

important for several points of views. It tells us how, when and where the people of India developed their earliest cultures. Ancient Indian history is interesting because India proved to be a crucible of numerous races. The pre-Aryans, the Indo-Aryans, The Greeks, The Scythias, the Hunas, the Turks etc., made India their home. Each ethnic group contributed its mete to the evolution of Indian culture. Since ancient times India has been the land of several religions. Ancient India witnessed the birth of Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism, but all these cultures and religions intermingled and interacted.

The most baffling problem confronts a historian of ancient India is the absence of any regular historical chronicle. There is plenty of hand written and printed material on modern history. There is also enough material in respect of medieval history. But the real difficulty arises for writing ancient Indian history. In ancient Greek and Rome, there were historians to write the history of their times. But the ancient Indians, who wrote on many subjects, rarely write history. There was no lack of historical sense or historical materials in ancient times in India but dearth was in respect of historical writers. Despite the existence of Vedic, Puranic, Jaina and Buddhist literature, the authors of which were men of profound learning, ancient India did not produce a Heordotus, Thucydides, living of Tacitus. The past, like the present, is complex and can be looked at from many perspectives. Historical analysis involves carefully examining the available sources of information. All historical interpretations are ultimately based on evidence derived from the sources of history. It is thus a challenging task to rediscover India's ancient past.

Despite limitations, difficulties and imperfections, there are several sources for the study of ancient Indian history. This unit gives a broad over view of the major sources which are very useful to reconstruct our ancient past. The study includes archaeological and literary sources as well as foreign accounts.

## **1.1 Objectives**

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the historical sources are very important to write a perfect history.
- Explain the archaeological sources and the foreign accounts that provide valuable information of Indian history.
- Discuss the different literary sources, like religious and secular literatures are useful for understanding ancient history.

- Asses the importance of the accounts of foreign traveler.

## **1.2 Archaeological Sources**

Archaeology is closely connected with history. The science which enables us to dig the old mounds in a systematic manner and to form an idea of the material life of the people is called archaeology. Material remains recovered as a result of excavation and explorations are subjected to various kinds of scientific examination. Without archaeological researches and proper examination of ancient inscription the history of ancient India would have remained largely unknown. Though most of the monuments of ancient India have since perished due to climatic conditions, but what ever has still come to us as a result of various excavations. It is true that the archaeological research is comparatively new in India yet due to some European Scholars much of the details about the history of ancient India have come to our knowledge. First time the study of the Indian antiquities was initiated by scholars like Sir William Jones, who in 1774 founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal. The names of Dr. Buchanon, Hamilton, James Princep, Sir Alexander Cunningham, Sir John Marshal – all Europeans and names of Indian scholars like R.D. Banerjee, Dayaram Sahani, and K.N. Dixshit deserve special mention.

### **1.2.1 Excavations**

Excavation is the most important tool of the archaeologist. The archaeologists carry out excavation to reveal ancient past. Archaeology deals with the exploration and excavation of sites. Sites are places where material remains of past human activity can be identified. Sites are often discovered by sheer ancient. They can also be discovered by using clues in literature, by regional surveys or with the aerial photograph. Sites can be explored by carefully examining what lies on the surface or they can be excavated, i.e., dug. Excavation can be horizontal or vertical, and are accompanied by careful recording, mapping, photographing, labeling, and preserving artefacts. The modern scientific technique used by the archaeologist in excavation also help us to know the period, the climatic condition, the vegetation, flora and fauna and the progress of knowledge in metallurgy. Archaeologists increasingly reply on various scientific techniques in order to obtain precise information about the lives of past communities. These are especially useful in dating archaeological material. The dating methods are based directly or indirectly on the principle of carbon-14 or radio carbon dating, for which facilities exist in India.



In India the material remains discovered from various excavation sites speak a good deal of the past. For example, the excavation at Mahenjodaro, Harappa, etc. testify the existence of an advanced urban civilization in the Indus valley region long before the advent of the Aryans. To study the pre-historic period, archaeological exploration and excavation is indispensable. In this regard, the pre-historic excavation and exploration of Bhimbhetaka, Adamgarh and Mirzapur are remarkable. About many Chalcolithic sites, contemporary to Indus people, the excavation of Lothal, Kalibangan, Rangpur, Diambad, Ahar etc. are noteworthy. Excavations of these sites have revealed their high standard of living and material culture. Like that the Ochre Colour Pottery culture (O.C.P.), Painted Gray Ware culture (P.G.W.) and Northern Black Polished ware culture (NBPW) has been recognized by only archaeological excavation. The historical evidence of Satavahanas, Ikshavakus dynasties of South India are recognized on the basis of material culture excavated. The excavation at Arikamedu, Sisupalgarh reveals Roman contact of India in early historical period.

Similarly, the excavations at Taxila, Rajgir, Pataliputra, Nalanda, Sanchi, Saranath etc. provide us useful information about Ashoka and Buddhism. The ruins of temples of Deogaon in Jhansi and Bhitrigaon near Kanpur provide us an insight into the artistic activities of the Gupta period. The discovery of Angkor Vat in Cambodia and Borobodur in Java confirms the existence of close cultural links between India and these countries. The excavations in Chinese Turkistan and Baluchistan confirm intimate contact between India and these countries. The under water exploration at Dwaraka by Prof. S.R. Rao has proved the mythological information that the ancient city of Dwaraka was submerged under the sea. Excavation have brought to light the villages that people established around 6000 B.C. in Baluchistan and the material culture which was developed in the Gangetic plains in the record millennium B.C. The excavation show the layout of the settlements in which people lived, the types of pottery they used and the type of tools and implements they used.

### **1.2.2 Inscriptions**

Inscriptions are the most important archaeological source for the reconstruction of the political, social and economic history of ancient India. The study of inscriptions is known as epigraphy. An inscription is any writing that is engraved on seals, stone, pillars, rocks, copper plate, temple walls, bricks, clay, wood, shells, pottery etc. Epigraphy includes deciphering the text of inscriptions and analysis the information they contain. The study of the old writing

used in inscriptions and other old records is called palaeography. Inscriptions are the most reliable evidence on the basis of which ancient Indian history can be written.

We have a large variety of inscription available with important historical data. The oldest inscriptions in the Indian subcontinent are found on the seals of Harappa. They have not been deciphered. The Harappan inscriptions seem to have been written in a pictographic script in which ideas and objects were expressed in the form of pictures. The series of Indian inscriptions open with Ashokan edicts on stone, which form a class by themselves. The Ashokan inscriptions which are in a number of different languages and scripts, but mostly in the Prakrit language and Brahmi Script, i.e., written from left to right. But some were also inscribed in the Kharosthi script, i.e. from right to left. The deciphering of Ashokan inscriptions by James Prinsep in 1837 was one of the great wonders of archaeology. The Brahmi of Ashoka's inscriptions seems a fairly developed script and it must have had a prior history of at least a few centuries. Recently, the direct evidence that Brahmi existed in pre-Maurya times has come to the notice from the excavation sites of Anuradhapur in Sri Lanka. Other great monarchs like Kharavela, Kaniska, Samudragupta, Harshavardhan and many others have left behind epigraphic records. Most of the official records are to be found in Prasastis i.e., eulogies of kings written by their court poets or land grants. The most important Prasasti or inscription is Allahabad Pillar inscription of Samudragupta. Similarly the royal edicts of Ashoka, the Hatigumpha inscription of king Kharavela, the Gwalior inscription of Bhoja and Aihole inscription of Phulakesin II of Chalukya are providing important historical data.

The largest numbers of official documents are engraved on copper plates. Mostly copper plates were used for writings inscriptions. These copper plates are called Tamrapatra or Tamraoatra or Danapatra according to their content and purpose. Some of the copper plates are royal prasastis which describe in great detail the life and achievements of the ruling king. Chinese traveler Fa-hien tells us that in many Buddhist monasteries he found the copper plates which referred to the grant of land. They were used even in the time of Buddha. The kings of the early medieval period belonging to the Mukhari, Pushyabhuti, Ganga, Soma Vamsi, Varman, Pala, Rashtrakuta, Pallava, Pratihara, Chola dynasties and others have issued large number of land grants and copper plate charters during their reign. These are noticed in Sanskrit and Prakrit languages. All these inscriptions come under the category of commercial, religious, didactic, administrative, eulogistic, votive, donative, commemorative and literary inscriptions.

The inscriptions are also engraved on images of gods and religious buildings. They are of incalculable help in fixing the dates of these images and buildings and the history of the period. On the walls of Jagannath temple of Puri, Simachalam temple, Tirupati and several other temples, hundreds of native inscriptions have been inscribed. They help us to know the spread of various religious cults and the type of donation to the temple deities. In a few cases the inscriptions highlight the political history of India as they emanate from persons who held dignified posts in administrative affairs of the kingdom. Sometimes, inscriptions found in foreign countries illuminate some obscure phase of ancient Indian history. They help us in tracing the political and cultural relations between India and its neighbouring countries in early times.

Inscriptions are a valuable source of information. Most of the inscriptions bearing on the history of Maurya, Post – Maurya and Gupta times have been published in a series of collections called *corpus inscriptionum Indicarum*. Still there are a large number of inscriptions in different parts of India which await publication. Compared with manuscripts of texts, inscriptions have the advantage of durability. They are usually contemporaneous to the event they speak of and their information can be connected to a time and place. Thus, inscriptions have proved to be inestimable value in reconstructing the political, social, religious and economic condition of early India.

### **1.2.3 Numismatics**

The study of coins is known as Numismatics forms an important branch of history. From coins of ancient times it has been possible to gather important data for the reconstruction of the ancient Indian history. Thousands of ancient Indian coins have been discovered from different places by which we can form an idea about the contemporary economic condition, currency system and development of metallurgical art. The numismatic evidence is of great importance in determining the chronology, territorial extent, religion, prosperity, trade and commerce and relation with the neighbouring countries of a ruler and dynasty.

The people of Stone Age had neither currency nor coinage and conducted exchange through barter. The Harappans had a very extensive trade network based on barter. The circulation of coins as medium of exchange was started probably in Vedic period. These ancient coins were known as *Nishka*, *Suvarna*, *Karshopana*, *Shatamana* and *Pada*. These may have been metal pieces of definite weight, not necessarily full fledged coins. The earliest

definite literary and archaeological evidence of coinge in the Indian sub-continent dates from the 6<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE in a context of the emergence of Janapadas, urbancentres and trade. How the coins were manufactured in the early period is nowhere recorded in the extant literature. However, Kautilya, the minister of Chandragupta Maurya, has incidentally referred to the counterfeiters of coins in his Arthashastra, the book on statecraft, which was compiled in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE. The earliest coins which have been discovered by archaeologist in the subcontinent are punch – marked coins made mostly of silver and copper. They are usually rectangular, sometimes square or round on the basis of their manufacturing technique. These coins were made punched with various natural symbols include geometric designs, plants, birds, animals, the sun, wheel, mountain, tree, branches and human figures at the time of providing and are of different shape and weight. The early silver punch – marked coins have been found in quite large numbers, scattered all over the country in a particular area or locality and were issued by the Janapadas and Mahajanapadas.

A new phase in the history of Indian coinage is marked by the die-struck Indo-Greek coins of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE. These are very well executed, usually round and mostly in silver. They bear the name and portrait of the issuing ruler of the obverse coins of the Sakas, Parthians and Kshatrapas follow the basic features of Indo Greek coinage. The Kushana (1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D.) were the first dynasty of the subcontinent to mint large quantities of gold coins. The earliest Indian Kushana coins are those which were issued by Kujal Kadphises in copper. Kaniska, who like his predecessor, issued coins only in gold and copper. Kushana coins have the figure, name and title of the king on the obverse. On the reverse are deities belonging to the Brahmanical, Buddhist, Greek, Roman etc. After the fall of the Mauryan Empire, the people and principalities which were under the imperial domination came into power again and they re-established their administration – local, tribal and monarchical. These new states issued coins mostly in copper and rarely in silver. These coins are the important source of information of the history of the dynasties of northern and central India.

Before the expansion of the Magadhan Empire in the South, the Janapadas (States) like Andhra, Mulaka and Asmaka has issued coins in the Punch – marked technique. It might be interesting to know that the earliest find on the punch – marked coins in the country was discovered in the south. In 1800 A.D. Col. Caldwell had found such coins in the district of Coimbatore. Some of the punch – marked coins found in various parts of South India have been identified as dynastic issues on the basis of their symbols. Alongwith epigraphic

records, coins form an additional source of information for the history of the Guptas, who issued a large variety of beautiful gold coins. The obverse depicts the reigning king in various poses, usually martial ones, but there are interesting instances of coins of Samudragupta and Kumaragupta I showing them playing the vina or flute. The reverse of the Gupta coins have religious symbols indicating the king's religious affiliations. The most common Gupta coin is that which shows the king holding a bow in his left hand. No doubt, that the Gupta kings struck numerous coins which are of an improve standard. The Huna invaders, wherever they went, imitated the coinaged of their conquered territories. They introduced little that was new in their coins.

The above discussion indicates that the trade and commerce flourished especially in post-Maurya and Gupta times. But the fact that only a few coins belonging to the Post-Gupta period have been found indicates the decline of trade and commerce at that time. It is a matter of regret that a large number of coins have been melted by private individuals and still a large number of them have found their way in foreign countries and government museums. The coins are preserved in museums at Calcutta, Patna, Lucknow, Delhi, Jaipur, Bombay and Madras. Many Indian coins are found in the museums of Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Coins of the major dynasties have been catalogued and published. We have catalogues of coins in the Indian Museum at Calcutta, of Indian coins in the British Museum in London. The coins which are still available may appear to carry little historical information, but they provide clues to several important historical process.

The coins give us the names of the kings who ruled at various times in different parts of the country. They help us to fix up the chronology of the accession, important event and death of the ruler. Coins are most authentic sources of ancient India's economic life, currency system, trade and commerce and progress made in minting technology. The wide distribution of Kushana coins indicates the flourishing trade of the period. The symbol of ship on certain Satavahan coins reflects the importance of maritime trade in the Deccan during this period. Roman coins found in various parts of India provide information on a brisk trade between India and the Roman Empire. The discovery of coins of Indian origin in other countries and of other countries in India shows the sea-going activities of the people of India. Dates appear rarely on early Indian coins. Kshatrapa coins which give dates in the Saka era and some Gupta Silver coins which give regnal years of kings. The coins are indicative of the prosperity of the people and the language and script of a particular age. The figures of the deities on the coins tell us about the religion of the ruler. The image of Laxmi or Vishnu on

the Gupta coins informs that they followed Hinduism. Numismatic evidence is an especially important source for the political history of India between 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries A.D. Most of the Indo-Greek rulers are known almost entirely from their coins. Coins also provide information on the parthians, Sakas, Kshatrapas, Kushanas and Satavahans. The coins are also indicative of high excellence and aesthetic taste of ancient Indian people.

#### **1.2.4 Monuments**

Ancient monuments also provide some help in the reconstruction of history. India is full of countless historical monuments in the form of temples, stupas, monasteries, forts, caves, palaces etc. A critical study of the material used for the construction of monuments help us to understand the economic position of the people as well as their social and religious life. Most of the monuments are in ruins but still they give us evidence about the outstanding achievements of our past. The discovery of the earliest urban civilization of India at Mohenjodaro and Harappa has added new dimension to our civilization and carried back the antiquity of Indian culture by several thousands of years. The excavation of ancient sites at Taxila, Saranath and Rajgir have illuminated various aspects of life which otherwise would have been unknown to us. The caves of Khandagiri and Udayagiri in Orissa, the caves of Mirzapur and Bhimbhetka, the caves of Ajanta, Ellora, and Elephanta in Maharastra are priceless treasures of Indian art, painting and architecture. The remains of Hampi, Bijapur and Golkonda in South bear testimony to our rich culture and achievements. The temples of Mahabalipuram, Kanchipuram, Bhubaneswar, Konark, Khajuraho and Tanjore bear silent witness to India's superb architecture unparalleled any where in the world. The glory of Gupta period came to light by the excavations of the temples of Deogarh in Jhansi and Bhitargaon near Kanpur. How these specimens are built and sustained economically is a part of socio-economic history. The secular and religious representations on these monuments project the contemporary society in all its varieties and splendor. These monuments speak of the artistic excellence and taste of the people of ancient India.

The monumental remains of in out side India like Angkor – Vat in Cambodia and Borobodur in Java and Angkor Thom (Kambuja) bear testimony to the cultural activities of the Indians in ancient times. The excavations in China, Baluchistan, Afghanistan and Turkestan provide us valuable information about Buddhism and India's contaxts with these

lands. Thus the study of monuments is an important branch of the social, religious and economic history of contemporary period.

### 1.3 Literary Sources

History is not a record of only the rulers. It is mostly an account of the people's life and living. Mental and social conditions of the people are known from literary sources. The literary sources are very important to reconstruct the ancient history of India. No doubt, ancient India has produced enormous literature, both secular as well as religious. While dealing with the various literatures we are confronted with several problems in the reconstruction of ancient Indian history. The ancient Indian rulers did not engage official recorders to keep the records of day to day happenings. Many records have been destroyed by the foreign invaders. The chronology of events given in various works of ancient times is quite confusing and cannot be fully relied upon. The problem becomes all the more acute because the same rulers have been described by different names in various works. Despite the problems, we possess several literary sources for the study of ancient Indian history. The literary sources also can be divided into two groups, the indigenous and foreign accounts. The indigenous sources include, religious literature, the secular and historical literature. The foreign accounts include the accounts left by the visitors from the foreign countries.

#### 1.3.1 Religious Literature

Ancient India possesses vast religious literature which has immensely helped us in the reconstruction of history. The religious literature pertains to Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jain religions.

#### **Brahmanical Literature**

The Vedas: Among the Brahmanical literature the *Vedas* are the most important source of information. The *Vedas* are the oldest surviving texts in the Indian subcontinent. The languages of *Vedas* are Sanskrit. Sanskrit belongs to the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European family of languages, as do ancient *Pali* and *Prakrit*. In the Hindu tradition, the *Vedas* have the status of *Shruti* (literally, that which has been heard). The word *Vedas* comes from the root *vid* (literally, to know) and means knowledge. Vedas deal with every branch of knowledge and provide basic knowledge of humanities, social sciences and natural and Physical sciences. The *Vedic* Aryans who came to India in or around 1500 B.C. had no system of writings. They passed the *Vedic* knowledge from one generation to other through

oral tradition. However in ancient time all the *Brahmanical* literature were noticed on palm leaf manuscript for century and edited and published by indologist in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The Vedas are four in number – the *Rig Veda*, the *Yajur Veda*, the *Sama Veda* and the *Atharva Veda*. The *Rig Veda* is the most ancient and worlds oldest sacred literature. The *Rig Veda* may be assigned to 1500 – 1000 B.C., but the collections of the *Yajur Veda*, the *Sama Veda*, the *Atharva Veda*, the *Brahmanas* and the *Upanishads* belong roughly to 1000 – 600 B.C. The *Rig Veda* is collection of 1028 hymns. The *Sama Veda* consists of 1,810 verses. The *Yajur Veda* deals with the details of the performance of rituals. The *Atharva Veda* is the latest Veda and contains hymns, but also spells and charms which reflect aspect of popular beliefs and practices. The *Brahmans* give details and explanations of sacrificial rituals and their outcome. The *Aranyakas* (forest book) interpret sacrificial rituals in a symbolic and philosophical way. There are 108 *Upanisads* which contain a great variety of Philosophical ideas about sacrificed, the body and the universe. The central theme of all the *Upanisads* is the spiritual unity and solidarity of all existence. The contents of the *Vedas* may be categorised under three parts – the *Janana* (knowledge and wisdom), the *Karma* (action or code of conduct) and the *Upasana* (dedication and devotion to God). The most interesting point to be observed is that the *Vedas* were not intended to serve as a record of events, and any incidental information contained therein is of undoubted value. The *Vedas* occupy an important place in the evolution of Indian historiography.

The two great Sanskrit epics of Hindus, the *Ramayan* of Valmiki and *Mahabharata* of Ved Vyas provide us useful information about the social, religious, economic and political conditions of the later Aryans. The period usually has been ascribed between 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. and 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. The epics are magnificent text with powerful stories that have captured the imagination of millions of people over the centuries. Though the works are treated as legendary, but they provide us useful information about the kings, their struggle and powerful empire. *Ramayan* is in *Adi Kavya* (the earliest narrative poem) consisting of 24,000 verses divided into seven *kandas* (books). It deals with the conflict between the Aryans and non-Aryans. The *Mahabharata* is the bulkiest epic consisting of 100,000 verses which has been divided into 18 *parvas* (books). The *Mahabharat* narrates about the conflict among the Aryans themselves – the Kauravas and the Pandavas at Kurukshetra. According to Dr. R.C. Majumdar, “The *Ramayan* and *Mahabharata* have moulded the character and civilization of the Indians in a way which perhaps no other literary work can claim in any part of the world.



The word *Puranas* literally means “Old” and it is a vast genre of Indian literature about a wide range of topics, particularly myths, legends and other traditional lore. They were not the work of one person or one age. The *Puranas* composed between 4<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. and in some cases, even later, in Sanskrit language. The *Puranas* are eighteen in numbers, includes the *Vishnu*, *Narada*, *Bhagavata*, *Garuda*, *Varaha*, *Skanda*, *Padma*, *Matsya*, *Kurama*, *Linga*, *Shiva*, *Agni*, *Brahmanda*, *Brahmavaivarta*, *Markandeya*, *Bhavishya*, *Vaman* and *Brahma*. Several of these texts are named after major Hindu deities. The *Puranas* genre of literature is found in both Hinduism and Jainism. The Puranic literature includes diverse topics such as cosmology, genealogies of gods and goddesses, kings, folktales, temples, medicine, astronomy, grammar and Philosophy. The *Bhagavata Purana* has been among the most celebrated and popular text in the puranic genre. The *Puranas* had a very important function in the Brahmanical tradition as vehicles of Brahmanical social and religious value. Despite limitations the *Puranas* provide use useful historical information about early history of India.

The *Sutras* are yet another form of Vedic literature. There are three important *Sutras* viz. the *Dharma Sutra*, *Shranta Sutra* and *Grihya Sutra*. *Dharma* refers to the proper, ideal conduct of a person living in society, a course of action which leads to the fulfillment of the goals of human life. *Dharma* is closely related with the cycle of human life. *Dharma* is closely related with the cycle of birth, death and rebirth. The *Dharma Sutra* contains the collection of religious beliefs and the different traditions of Aryans. *Shranta Sutra* deals with the methods for the performance of various *Yajanas* and Sacrifices. *Grihya Sutra* provides detailed information about the domestic life of the Aryans and the various ceremonies performed by them. The *Sutra* literature also throws useful light on the government, society and the religion of the people at that time.

### **Buddhist Literature**

The earliest Buddhist texts were written in the Pali language. Pali was a literary language which developed out of a mixture of dialects, particularly those spoken in Magadha area of eastern India. The religious literature of the Buddhists is popularly known as *Tripitaka*. The *Tripitaka* consists of three books – the *Sutta*, *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma*. The *Sutta Pitaka* contains what Buddha himself said and Buddha’s discourses on various doctrinal issues. The *Vinaya Pitaka* deals with monastic discipline, rules and regulations for monks and nuns of the Sangha. The *Abhidhamma Pitaka* is a later work, and contains a

through study and systemization of the teachings of the *Sutta Pitaka*. According to Buddhist tradition, the *Sutta* and *Vinaya Pitakas* were recited at the first Buddhist Council at Rajagriha. According to Buddhists Buddha had to pass through a large number of births before he was born as a Sakya prince. Each birth story of Buddha is called a *Jataka* which is a folk tale. The birth history Buddhist religious texts provide us useful information about the polity, different rulers and their kingdoms, social, economic and religious life of the people in 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. The Srilankan chronicles, the *Dipavamsa* and the *Mahavamsa* contain a historical accounts of Buddha's life, the Buddhist councils, the Maurya emperor Ashoka, the kings of Sri Lanka and the entry of Buddhism on that land. In later years the Mahayana School of Buddhism produced works like *Vaipulyasutra* and *Lalitavistar* which deal with the life of Buddha and other aspects of Buddhism.

### **Jaina Literature**

The sacred religious texts of Jaina are known as the *Siddhanta* or *Agamas*. The texts contain the teaching of Malavira. These texts were written in *Ardha-Magadhi Prakrit* and were finally compiled in the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. in Valabhi in Gujrat. The Jaina monastic order came to be divided into the *Shvetambara* and *Digambara* Schools in about 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D. The Shvetambar School includes twelve *Angas*, twelve *Upangas*, and ten *Prakiranas*, six *Cheya Suttas*, four *Mulasutra* and four other texts. The Digambar sects accept and give prime importance to the *Angas*. These works contain rules of conduct for monks, religious doctrines, stories of various religious teachers, trade and traders etc. Importantly, these texts also help us to reconstruct the political history of eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in the age of Mahavarata. The Jaina *Puranas* deal with the life of Jaina saints known as *Tirthankaras*. The *Adi Purana* narrates the life of the first *Tirthankara* Rishabha. The *Harivansa Purana* gives a Jaina version of the Kauravas, Pandavas, Krishna and others. The *Bhadrabahu Charita* provides information about the reign of Chandragupta Maurya. The most important Jaina work from the point of view of history is the *Parishista Parva* prepared by Hemachandra, a Jain scholar. This book throws light on the achievement of the kings and others.

### **1.3.2 The Secular Literature**

Apart from religious literatures we have also a large body of secular literature in the form of biographies, dramas, historical texts and scientific and technical works which provide

us useful information about ancient Indian history. Such texts are used by historians as sources of information about the times in which they were composed.

Among the important biographical works of ancient period, *Buddha Charita* (life of Buddha) by Asvaghosha, *Harsha Charita* (life of Harshavardhan) by Banabhatta, the court poet of Harsha, *Vikramadaeva Charita* (life of king Vikramaditya) by Bilhana, the *Gauda Vaho* (king Yaso Varman's life) by Vakpati, *Kumar Pala Charita* by Hemachandra and *Prithivi Raj Raso* by Chand Bardai which provide historical information.

A number of dramas were written during the ancient period also help us in reconstructing ancient Indian history. Bhasa wrote several dramas including *Ratnavali*, *Pancharatna*, *Dutabakya*, *Balacharita* and *Pritgya Yogandharayana*. All these dramas are set on historical themes of the Buddhist period. One of the most celebrated names among Sanskrit writers is that of Kalidasa, author of the dramas *Abhijnana – Shakuntala*, *Malavikagni Mitra*, *Vikramorvasiya* and poetic works such as the *Raghuvamsa*, *Kumarsambhava* and *Meghadutta*. *Malavikagni Mitra* and *Rghuvamsa* inform us about the rule of Agnimitra, the Sunga overlord and the conquests of Samudragupta. *Abhijanana – Shakuntala* a renowned master piece for its poetic beauty all over the world contains in it historical events of the Gupta period. Vishakhadatta in his drama *Mudrarakshasa* deals with the story of war between the Nanda King and Chandragupta and highlights the role of Chanakya in establishing Maurya dynasty. Three dramas are ascribed to Harsha, King of Kanauj. He wrote, *Ratnavali*, *Priyadarsika* and *Nagananda*. The *Ratnavali* is Harsha's Master piece.

The popular folk lore and folk tales like *Brihatha Katha*, *Kothasaritsagar* and *Panchatantra* have played no less important a part in supplying us sources of information. Philosophical texts and commentaries reflect the ideas and intellectual debates of their time. The Philosophical texts are *Samkhya*, *Yoga*, *Nyaya*, *Vaisheshika*, *Purvamimamsa* and *Uttara Mimamsa*.

Some historical texts which were written during the ancient period are very helpful to know about certain aspects of history. The *Dipavamsa* (history of Ceylon and *Mahavamsa* (the great history) are two ancient historical texts which provide us information about Buddhism in India and Ceylon. Kalahan's *Rajatarangini* is a historical text of great value which deals with the history of Kashmir. It is a very dependable account of the kings of Kashmir. It is the only ancient Indian literature which can be regarded as an historical text

in true sense. The chronicles of Gujrat likd *Rasmala*, *Kirtikaumudi* by *Someshvara*, *Pravandha Chintamani* of Merutunga and *Prabhandha – Kosa* of Rajasekhara which contain stories and fables mixed with historical anecdotes. Among other local chronicles may be mentions. *Buranji* of Ahom rulers of Assam and *Vamsavali* of Nepal contain the history of the region. Some important works on polity like Kautilya's *Arthasastra* and Kamandaka's *Nitishastra* provide us useful information about the government, law and system of administration. *Arthasastra* is a major work on statecraft. *Nitishastra* was probably written during Gupta period.

Early Indians also made contributions on technical literature on varied subjects such as grammar, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, science, mettalurgy etc. The grammatical works of Panini's *Ashatadhyae* and Patanjali's *Mahabhasaya* provide us about the government and contemporary condition. Scientific works like Aryabhata's *Aryabhatiya* and Varaha Mihira's *Brihat Samhita* are important astronomical texts. Other important works of the period include the *Charaksamhita* and *Sushruta Samhita* (on medicine) the *Natyashastra* (on theatre) and the *Shilpashastra* (on architecture).

Like Sanskrit the Tamil literature also furnishes valuable information for the history of South India. The earliest literature of South India is Sangam Literature. Complied in the first to fourth centuries of Christian era, it is a veritable storehouse of knowledge about the political, social, economic and religious life of the Tamil people. The Sangram literatures were composed under the patronage of the Pandyan rulers of Madurai. The most famous Tamil works are Tiruvalluvar's *Tirukkura*, a work on ethics and polity. Two best known Tamil epics are the *Silappadikaram* and *Manimekalai*.

#### **1.4 Foreign Accounts**

The Indian subcontinent was never an isolated geographical area. From time to time several envoys, scholars, traders and travelers kept visiting India in ancient times and recorded their observations about India. To India came the Greek, Roman and Chinese visitors. The accounts of the foreigners greatly helped us in the writing of ancient Indian history.

The first contact between India and Greek were established after the invasion of Alexander. The invasion of Alexander opened the gates of India to western visitors. The earliest among these Greek writers was Herodotus, the father of History who wrote a lot

about India and the Indians in his book *Histories*, Skylax was another early Greek writer who came to India as a navigator and left useful information in his account 'sea journey to Indus'. One of the most famous works is the *Indika* of Megasthenes, ambassador of Seleucus Nikator to the court of Chandragupta Maurya. The *Indika* which is not available in the original form provides us useful information about the Maurya system of administration. Some of the classical writers have described the geography and natural history of ancient India. Strabo, the Greek writer, in his book *Geography* (a scientific work) has explained about the river, cities and forests of India. Ptolemy wrote a geographical account of India in 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. An anonymous Greek writer was responsible for writing a book named *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* in which a very interesting and important account of the Indian sea ports, harbours and Trade of ancient India has been mentioned.

The Roman writers which have provided useful information include Pliny and Justinus. Pliny in *Naturalis Historia* has mentioned about the political situation in India and its trade relations with Roman Empire. Justinus provides us useful information about the relations between Seleucids and Bactrian and India. The relation between India and China began with the introduction of Buddhism in China. Many Chinese travellers made long and arduous over land journey to India. Crossing mountains plateau and deserts Plateau in order to collect authentic information about Buddhism. In the words of R.K. Mukherjee, "The visit of the Chinese travelers was a tribute paid to the sovereignty of Indian mind, intellect, culture and religion. Fortunately these travelers have left a beautiful record of their observances and experiences in India." The best known among those who wrote accounts of their Indian travels are Fa-Hien, Hinen-Tsang and I-Tsing. Fortunately their accounts have been preserved for posterity in their original forms. All they spent a number of years in India, learnt its language and visited different places of the country. Fa-Hien travels extended from 399 to 414 A.D. and were confined to northern India. His account throws a flood of light on the political, social, economic and religious condition of India under Chandragupta II. Hiuen Tsang, the master of law, who visited India in 629 A.D. during the reign of Harshavardhan. He spent over 10 years travelling the length and breadth of the country and left useful information in his account *Si-yu-ki*. He provides us the information about Harsha's administration, the geography of India, the socio-economic condition, Buddhism and the system of education in the ancient Universities of Nalanda and Taxila. Another Chinese pilgrim I-Tsing visited India in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. His observation was primarily religious in character.

After the Arab invasion of Sind, India figured prominently in the Muslim Chronicles. Several Arabic geographical and travel accounts were written in the early medieval period. These accounts throw light on trade and aspects of Indian political history. Alberuni who accompanied Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni studied Sanskrit himself. His books *Tehqiq-i-Hind* give useful information about the religion, traditions and social customs of the period.

It is obvious that the ancient Indians did not write history in the manner as it is done now, nor did they write history in the way the Greeks did. A meticulous and skillful analysis of the various sources is the foundation of history. In order to write the ancient history of India one has to rely upon the sources like archaeological, literary and foreign accounts.

### 1.5 SUMMARY

In this unit you have learnt that:

- The sources like archaeological, literary and foreign accounts are very helpful to construct the ancient India history.
- The coins, inscriptions and monuments provide us the knowledge about the rulers and their kingdoms.
- The literary sources are Vedas, Puranas, Samhita historical works, biographies, Buddhist texts and Jain texts.
- The Samhitas are collections of hymns and Prayers. There are four Samhitas. Rigveda is the oldest.
- The original Buddhist texts are Tripitakas, which are written in Pali.
- The Jain religious texts are called Agams. Other texts are Jaina Puranas.
- The accounts of the foreign travelers have left a lot of information about India and its rulers.

### 1.6. KEY TERMS

- Carbon 14: Scientific dating method used in Archaeology.
- Samhitas: Collection of ancient Hindu scriptures namely the Vedas.
- Aranyakas: The forest texts.
- Upanisadas: Treatises containing sacred instructions.
- Archaeology: The study of the human past.
- Epigraphy: The study of Inscriptions.
- Paleography: The study of old writings held in inscriptions.

- Numismatics: The study of coins.
- Artefact: A portable object made by human hands.
- Ardha Magadhi: An eastern dialect of Prakrit.

### Check your progress

#### A. Fill in the blanks:

1. Asiatic society was founded by \_\_\_\_\_ in the year \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Vedas are \_\_\_\_\_ in numbers.
3. The author of Rajtarangini is \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The Harsha Charita was written by \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Grammatical works 'Ashadhyae' was written by \_\_\_\_\_.
6. The study of Inscription is \_\_\_\_\_.
7. The study of coins is \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Megasthenes was from \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Indica was written by \_\_\_\_\_.
10. Hiuen-Tsang's travel account was \_\_\_\_\_.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ was the ruler when Hiuen-Tsang visited India.

#### B. True or False.

1. The study of coins is called numismatics.
2. The study of inscriptions is called paleography.
3. *Vedas* are three in numbers.
4. *Indica* is written by Megasthenes.
5. *Arthashastra* is written by Kalidasa.
6. Hieun Tsang was a Chinese pilgrim.
7. Patanjali is the author of *Mahabhasya*.
8. Foreign accounts are very helpful to reconstruct the history of ancient India.
9. Two best known Tamil epics are the *Silapadikaram* and *Manimekalai*.
10. Sir William Jones was the founder of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

### 1.5 Answer to check your progress

#### A

1. a) Sir William Jones b) 1774
2. Four

3. Kalahan
4. Banabhatta
5. Panini
6. Epigraphy
7. Numismatics
8. Greek
9. Megathenes
10. Si-Yu-Ki
11. Harshavardhan

**B**

Ans. 1.True 2.False, 3. False, 4. True, 5. False, 6. True, 7. True, 8. True, 9. True, 10. True.

**1.6 Questions and Answers**

Short Answer Questions –

1. What is archaeology?
2. Explain the terms of the following.
  - a) Epigraphy
  - b) Numismatics
  - c) Vedas
3. What is Secular literature?

**Long – Answer Questions**

1. Asses the important of archaeological sources for the reconstruction of Ancient Indian History.
2. Discuss the important of indigenous literary sources in the reconstruction of ancient Indian history.
3. Why are the foreign accounts of India useful for the writer to write history of India ?

**1.9 Suggested Readings**

Basham, A.L., The wonder that was India, London, 1963.

Ghosal, U.N., Studies in Indian History and Culture, Cambridge, 1958.

Gupta, P.L., Coins, New Delhi, 1969.

Nilakanta Sastri, K.A., A History of South India, Delhi, 1955.

Thapar, R., A History of India, Vol. I, Delhi, 2002.



## UNIT –II

### PRE-HISTORIC AND PROTOHISTORIC PERIODS

#### STRUCTURE

- 6.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 Prehistoric sites and settlements
  - 2.2.1 Paleolithic Sites
  - 2.2.2 Mesolithic Sites
  - 2.2.3 Neo-lithic Sites
  - 2.2.4 Chalcolithic Sites
- 2.3 Indus Valley Civilization
  - 2.3.1 Geographical extent of Indus Valley Civilization
  - 2.3.2 Characteristics or Main Features
  - 2.3.3 Social Life
  - 2.3.4. Economic Life
  - 2.3.5 Religions Life
  - 2.3.6 Decline of the Civilization
- 2.4 Summary
- 2.5 Key Terms
- 2.6 Answer to Check Your Progress
- 2.7 Questions and exercise
- 2.8 Suggested Readings

## 2.0 INTRODUCTION

The earliest period of history of India has been described as pre-historic age. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, hundreds of Pre-historic sites have been discovered in the Indian subcontinent. The sources of information to know the pre-historic period included structural remains, plant remains and bones of humans and animals. The most important sources are the different kinds of stone made tools used by pre-historic humans which have been collected from the excavation sites. Stone tools were a very important part of the lives of the Stone Age people and are therefore an important key to understanding their world. The environments in which the pre-historic people lived were very different from ours. Some of the major changes that gave the subcontinent its present form took place millions of years ago due to dramatic climatic changes.

Man has been living in India roughly from 500,000 B.C. There is no unanimity among the scholars regarding the exact area where man first of all existed in India. Some scholars are of opinion that man first of all lived in the Sewalik hills, while the others are of the opinion that Deccan was the original place of man in India, because the oldest stone implements have been discovered there. However, the man in the process of his development passed through different phases of Stone Age. In this unit you will study three different phases of Stone Age, that is Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic ages according to the kind and nature of the stone tools.

Towards the end of the Neolithic period began the use of metals. In Indian subcontinent first time the metal was used by the Harappan people. The evidences of the use of metals have been found in the different excavation sites of Indus Valley Civilization. In this unit, you will also study the Harappan Culture and expansion of Indus Valley Civilization.

## 2.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Identify the various pre-historic sites, settlement and different stone implements used by the Stone Age people.
- Discuss the geographical extent and various features of Indus Valley Civilization.
- Discuss the town planning system, trade and commerce, religions beliefs and practices of Indus Valley Civilization.

- Analyse how the various factors responsible for the decline of this great urban civilization.

## 2.2 PRE-HISTORIC SITES AND SETTLEMENTS:

The pre-historic or the stone age of India is divided into the Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic on the basis of geological age the types of stone tools and subsistence base in 1863 by John Lubbock.

### 2.2.1 Palaeolithic Age:

The earliest pre-historic period is called Palaeolithic age or the Old Stone Age. The term Palaeolithic is a Greek Word. In Greek language 'Palaeo' means old and 'Lithic' means stone. So the term Palaeolithic age means Old Stone Age. During this age the men were food gatherers and hunters and they used tools of unpolished undressed, rough stones to hunt animals for food. The Old Stone Age or the Palaeolithic age of India development in the Pleistocene period or Ice age, which is a geological period. We do not know when the Pleistocene period exactly began, but human remains associated with stone tools have been dated in East Africa as early as 3.5 million years ago. In India the first human occupation on the basis of stone tools, is not earlier than the middle Pleistocene which perhaps began about 500,000 years ago. The Palaeolithic age in India is divided into three phases on the basis of the nature of the tools used by the people and the nature of the change in climate.

The Palaeolithic age is divided into three phase largely on the basis of changes in fauna associated with different tool types.

- (i) Early or lower Palaeolithic
- (ii) Middle Palaeolithic
- (iii) Upper Palaeolithic

#### (i) **Early or Lower Palaeolithic**

Early Stone Age or the lower Palaeolithic Age which occurred during the years 600,000 through 60,000 B.C. The majority of Early Stone Age tools found in all parts of the subcontinent is made of quartzite. The evidence of stone tools in the lower Palaeolithic age of India enable us a partial way to visualize the life of their makers. The lower Palaeolithic man of India was a hunter and a food gatherer. Bori in Maharastra is considered to be the earliest lower Palaeolithic site. During this period people used fairly large core tools made of hard

rocks. They include handaxes, cleavers and Choppers. The axes found in India are more or less similar to those of Western Asia, Europe and Africa. The lower Palaeolithic man was ignorant of agriculture and had no domesticated animals. The people lived either in rock – shelters or in huts with thatched roofs.

The important sites of the Lower Palaeolithic Age have been found in the valley of Sohan in Punjab (now in Pakistan). Several sites have been found in Kashmir and the Thar Desert. In Gujrat, lower Palaeolithis tools have been found in the valley of the Sabarmati and in the Bhadar Valley in Saurashtra. The lower Palaeolithic tools have been found in the Bellan Valley in UP, Ajmer in Rajasthan, Bhimbetka hill side, Chhotanagpur Platenu in Jharkhand, adjoining areas of West Bengal, Mahanadi Valley of Odisha, Coastal Visakhapatnam area of Andhra Pradesh and Attioram Pakkam in Tamil Nadu.

(ii) **MIDDLE PALAEOOLITHIC:**

The Middle Palaeolithic Age began around 150,000 B.C. and ended in 40,000 B.C. During this period the tools and weapons used became a bit more advanced. Tools were made from flakes which were thin pieces of stone which have been found in different parts of India with regional variations. The principal tool comprise blades, points, borers, knives and scrappers, all made of flakes. Remants of these tools have been found at different sites around India. In fact, a number of very important sites have been found that contained evidence of how much Indian technology had advanced passed the preceded period of the Palaeolithic Age. The important sites of the Middle Palaeolithic Age in India have been found in the Sohan Valley, the Valley of Narmada, South of Tungabhadra Rivers, and the Bellan Valley and in the Visakhapatnam Coast. The middle Palaeolithic industry of Central and perinsular India is sometimes referred to as the Nevasan industry after the site of Navasa, where the pioneering archaeologist H.D. Sankalia first discovered middle Palaeolithic artefacts. The tools, which include a wide variety of scrapers, are made of smooth, fine-grained stone. There is evidence of middle Palaeolithic living and factory site at Chirki near Nevasa in Ahmednagar district of Maharastra.

(iii) **UPPER PALAEOOLITHIC:**

The Upper Palaeolithic age is the third and last phase of the Palaeolithic age. This age began around 40,000 B.C. and ended in 10000 B.C. The climate of this period saw dramatic changes. The climate was less humied. It was the last phase of ice age and climate became

comparatively warm. In the world context, it marks the appearance of new flint industries and men of the modern type (Homo Sapiens). The use of blades became more common. The upper palaeolithic tools have been found in different parts of India. The upper palaeolithic sites are found in the Chhotnagpur region, the Damin area of Rajmahal hills, Rohri hills in upper Sindh in Kashmir Valley, in Vindhya region and Baghor in Madhya Pradesh. The upper Palaeolithic cave sites of Kurnool and Muchchatla in Andhra Pradesh are the only places in the subcontinent where tools made of animals' bones have been found. It clearly indicates that the upper Palaeolithic people shared their landscape with the animals. Caves and rock shelters for use by human beings in the upper palaeolithic phase have been discovered at Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh. This period saw the upper Palaeolithic give way to the start of the following Mesolithic cultural period.

### **General Characteristics of the Palaeolithic Age**

The life of Palaeolithic people living in different parts of the subcontinent were based on their adaptations to the specific environment. They were mainly hunting – gathering communities. They lived in caves and hollows of Trees. Their shelters were made of rock, branches, grass, leaves or reeds. There was no permanent settlement. Habitation site of Bhimbetka give evidence of continuous occupation over centuries. They tend to mobile or nomadic to some extent, moving from one place to another in search of food. They ate foods like fruits, roots, leaves of the trees, flesh of animals etc. For hunting and other purposes they used different kinds of tools made of hard rocks. The main tools used by them are hand axes, sticks to dig the earth, scrapers, blades and burins etc. There were no institutions of formal government, no formal of permanent leaders not even the powerful chiefs. Animals, plants and landscape may be worshiped or may form the focus of rituals. We get some references about the use of fire in the Kurnool caves. Fire was lighted outside the caves at night only to avoid the danger from wild animals.

#### **2.2.2 THE MESOLITHIC AGE**

Prof. Gordon Childe says that man developed “an aggressive attitude to his environment” and gradually entered into the Neolithic age or New Stone Age. But mid way between the old stone and the New Stone Age, Scholars speak of a Mesolithic period, which was characterized by the making and use of small stone implements. The stone implements are of minute size and hence are called microliths. The Mesolithic period roughly ranges between 10,000 and 6000 B.C. In the case of India it started about 8000 B.C. and continued

upto about 4000 B.C. Climatic changes brought about changes in fauna and flora and made it possible for human beings to move from one place to another. The Mesolithic people lived on hunting, fishing and food gathering and at a later stage they also domesticated animals.

### **Characteristics of the Mesolithic Age**

The characteristic tools of the Mesolithic Age are Microliths or tiny tools. Microliths range in length from under 1 cm to 5 cm. The tools are mostly made on short parallel sided blades made of crypto – crystalline silica stone such as quartzite, chert, jasper and agate. Their tools include miniature versions of some of the upper Palaeolithic tool types such as burins, points and scrapers. Mesolithic sites found in Rajasthan, Southern UP Central and Eastern India and also South of the river Krishna. Bagor in Bhilwara district of Rajasthan is one of the best documented Mesolithic sites. The site remained occupied for 5000 years from the fifth millennium BC onwards. Bones of wild and domesticated animals have been found at some Mesolithic sites at Bagor and Tilwara in Rajasthan, Langhraj, Kanewal and Loteshwar in Gujrat, Adamgarh and Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh and Sarai Nahar Rai, Mahadaha and Damdama in Uttar Pradesh. Collection of the bones of different animals from the above sites provides the earliest evidence for the domestication of animals in the Indian part of the subcontinent. The most noticeable feature of this period was the concentration of population along river valleys, heralding a settled form of life in which food – gathering turned into food producing. The evidence from Mesolithic sites from different parts of the subcontinent suggests movement and interaction among communities. Factory sites located at source of raw materials must have been meeting grounds for different groups.

The evidence from the burial sites of Swami Nahar Rai, Mahadaha and Damdama confirms the presence of grave grounds is often taken as an indication of some sort of belief after life. There are few examples of portable Mesolithic art. A few engraved bone objects have been discovered at sites such as Bhimbetka. The first rock painting in India was discovered by A.C.L. Carlleyle in 1867-68 at Sohaghat in the Kaimur hills of Uttar Pradesh. Till now 150 Mesolithic rock art sites have been found in various parts of India. The various types of rock paintings are an important source of information regarding the lives of Mesolithic People.

The Mesolithic people obtained their food through, hunting and gathering. However, the animal bones found at some Mesolithic sites indicate that the beginning of the

domestication of animal can be traced to this phase. Undoubtedly this phase paved the way for the rise of Neolithic culture.

### 2.2.3 THE NEOLITHIC SITES AND SETTLEMENT

The domestication of plants and animals marked a special kind of human interference in nature. This resulted in the growth of a new type of culture popularly known as Neolithic culture. The term Neolithic is derived from Greek word ‘Neo’ meaning new and ‘Lithos’ meaning stone. Hence it is New Stone Age or Neolithic Age. The term was coined by Sir John Lubbock in 1865. In the world context the period of Neolithic age began between 9000 and 3000 B.C. Early Neolithic farming was limited to a narrow range of plants, both wild and domesticated, which included wheat, millet and spelt and the keeping of dogs, sheep, goats, cattle and pigs. The chief characteristic that distinguishes men from animals is their ability to think and move from progress to more progress. As time passed, men naturally acquired more knowledge than what they possessed during the Mesolithic phase and gradually entered into the Neolithic Phase.

#### **Characteristics of Neolithic Age**

The Neolithic settlements in the Indian subcontinent are not older than 6000 B.C. The chief characteristics of Neolithic age are settled life, animal husbandry pottery and some form of cultivation which depended solely upon the use of stone. The beginnings of animal and plant domestication did not mean the end of the hunting – gathering way of life. Communities that practised, animal rearing and agriculture usually continued to hunt and forage for food. Food production is the most important aspect of Neolithic phase. The people of this age used large variety of tools and implements of polished stone. The most common being the axes, which have been found in the greater part of the country. The other important tools made by the people of Neolithic age included celts, chisels, mace-heads, arrow – heads, saws etc. Animal bones were also used to make needles, blades and other tools.

The people of Neolithic age also knew about the art of pottery. This is testified by the discovery of several remains of pottery from the different sites. The common items of pottery were chatties, bowls, lothas, big pots to store food grains and water. People used variety of colours in pottery. The most common colours used in pottery were red, brown, yellow etc. The pottery was made with wheels. One of the greatest inventions of Neolithic man was the invention of wheel. The invention of wheel made the life of the Neolithic people more

comfortable. The Neolithic people lived in caves, decorated their walls by painting scenes of leaves, flowers, hunting, dancing etc. They knew spinning and weaving, as also making of boats. The chief food of Neolithic age was fruits, vegetables, roots, and nuts, flesh of the animals, fish, pulses and milk products. People used very scanty dresses. Generally they covered their bodies with barks of trees and skin of animals. At a later stage they discovered clothes of cotton and wool. Hunting and fishing was the main occupation of the people. The art of agriculture was not known to them during early stage but later on they developed the art of cultivation of grains. They were also domesticated various animals. There was no specific religion. People of Neolithic age generally worshipped spirits of their ancestors and forces of nature.

The relics of Neolithic age are found in great abundance in different parts of India. From Burzaham in Kashmir valley pit dwelling are found. There are also traces of mud-brick houses a number of burials with skeletons have been found. The earliest date for Burzahom is about 2400 B.C. from the available evidence it becomes apparent that the Neolithic people in Southern India reached a fairly high degree of civilization in the Godavari river valley. They usually settled on the tops of granite hills or on plateau near the river banks. They used stone axes and blades. They possessed cattle, sheep and goats. Fire baked figurines of animals suggest that they domesticated different animals. The Neolithic tools have been found in the hills of Assam as well as in the Garo hills of Meghalaya on the north-east frontier of India. Neolithic settlement of Mehrgarh gives clear evidence of the transition from hunting to animal domestication. In Southern Uttar Pradesh, where over 40 neolithic sites have been identified in the course of exploration in the Belan, Son, Rihand, Ganga and Lapari rivers. The important Neolithic sites excavated include Maski, Brahmagiri, Hallur, Kodekal and Takkalakota in Karnataka, Paiyampalit in Tamil Nadu, Piklihal and Utnur in Andhra Pradesh, Koldinwa and Mahagara in Uttar Pradesh and Kanjun (Sohn valley) in Madhya Pradesh. The Neolithic culture in this area emerged out of well-established Mesolithic phase. The process of food production and its associated cultural developments eventually led to the emergence of proto-urban settlements and then full-fledged cities.

#### **2.2.4 THE CHALCOLITHIC SITES AND SETTLEMENT**

After the end of Neolithic Age the human civilization entered to a new phase known as Chalcolithic period. It was a phase applied to the Pre-Harappan when stone and copper were used. Copper was the first metal to be discovered in India. On the basis of the use of



metal a new culture developed, which is called Chalcolithic culture. However, the transition from use of stone to metal is slow and gradual process. The use of metal during this period in different parts of India was not uniform. While in Northern India copper was the metal that came to be used after stone, in Southern India iron replaced stone without the intermediate stage of use of copper. Bronze which is an alloy made of copper and tin was in use in India simultaneously. The Chalcolithic age of India was a period of copper – bronze. The Chalcolithic age probably started between 3000 B.C. and 1000 B.C.

The earliest settlements belonging to this phase are found in south eastern Rajasthan, the Western part of Madhya Pradesh, Western Maharashtra and also in eastern India. Extensive excavations have exposed Ahar and Gilund in South – eastern Rajasthan, Malwa, Kayatha and Eran in Western Madhya Pradesh, Jorwe, Nevasa, Daimabad, Chandoli, Songaon and Inamgaon in Maharashtra, Chirand, Pandu Rajar and Mahishadal in West Bengal, Senwar, Sonpur and Taradin in Bihar and Khairadih and Narhan in Uttar Pradesh.

### **Characteristics of Chalcolithic Age**

People of Chalcolithic Age used tools made of stone in which the stone blades and stone axes were found in large numbers in South India. In other settlements the people used copper tools like axes, Chisels, swords and harpoons. These tools were better, sharper and of more permanent in nature. The people of Ahar and Gilund in Rajasthan used household utensils made of copper. People of this age domesticated animals and practiced agriculture. They reared cows, sheep, goats, pigs and buffaloes. They produce wheat and rice and in addition to these staple crops they also cultivated bajra, barley, pulses etc. All these food grains have been found on the bank of Narmada in Maharashtra. The people of eastern regions lived on fish and rice as fish hooks have been found in Bihar and West Bengal. The people of this period were generally not acquainted with burnt bricks. Their houses were made of mud bricks. However, the people in Ahar lived in stone houses. At Inamgaon in Maharashtra large mud houses with ovens and circular pit houses have been discovered. Largest settlement Chalcolithic sites have been discovered so far in Jorwe and Daimabad in Madhya Pradesh. A large number of bronze tools have been discovered from Daimabad.

The people of Chalcolithic age used different types of pottery. Black and red types of pottery were commonly used. It was thrown on wheel and occasionally painted with white linear designs. The Chalcolithic people were very expert in coppersmiths and also skillful workers in stone. They were expert in arts and crafts. Tools, Weapons and bangles of copper

have been unearthed. They manufactured beads of semiprecious stones such as carnelian, steatite and quartz crystal. The people knew the art of spinning and weaving as cotton flax and silk threads have been found in Maharashtra. Burials are found in Maharashtra in which people buried their dead in urns along with the copper objects under the floor of their house in north to south position. The Chalcolithic people worshipped the mother goddess as is proved by the discovery of terracotta figures of women.

It is a general belief of the scholar that the Chalcolithic culture was a rural culture. People belonging to this period usually founded rural settlements on the banks of rivers. They used stone tools supplemented by some copper tools. They were the first to use painted pottery. They founded large villages in peninsular India and cultivated food grains in abundance. They domesticated different animals. They did not know the art of writing.

### 2.3 **INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATIONS**

The Indus civilization was as old as the civilization of the valleys of Nile and Tigris. For thousands of years that civilization was lying buried under earth. Modern men had no idea of it. Everybody believed that civilization in India began with Aryans. However till the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the modern world was completely in dark regarding the civilization. In 1856 when the British were constructing railway line from Lahore to Multan they found burnt bricks near Harappa. The railway authorities informed the Archaeological Survey of India. It was only in 1872 the notice was taken. It was in 1920, Daya Ram Sahani eminent archaeologist started excavations at Harappa and in 1921 another archaeologist R.D. Banerji started excavating Mohenjodaro. The formal announcement of the discovery of the Indus or Harappan civilization was made in 1924 by John Marshall, Director General of Archaeological Survey of India. The principal archaeological remains were of two cities – Mohenjodaro and Harappa. Mohenjodaro is situated in the Larkana district of Sindh on the bank of river Indus and Harappa is in the Montgomery district of Punjab on the bank of the river Ravi. The word Mohenjodaro means ‘Mound of the dead’ or ‘City of the dead’. Earlier it was known as Harappan culture as this culture was at first noticed at Harappa. Subsequently, this culture was discovered in many sites on the bank of the Indus Valley, hence called Indus Valley civilization. At present both the cities are in Pakistan.

In the subsequent years further excavations were carried out at various other sites which confirmed that Indus Civilization or Harappan Culture was not confined to the provinces of west Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan, Gujrat, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh but

covered much wider area. The area of Indus Valley Civilization extended Jammu in the North to the Narmada in the South and from Baluchistan in the west to Meerut in the north – east. The area covered by the Indus Culture much greater than that occupied jointly by the contemporary civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia. The Harappan culture was consisting of at least three phases – the early Harappan, Mature Harappan and Late Harappan. The early Harappan phase was the formative phase of the culture. The mature Harappan phase was the urban phase. The late Harappan phase was the post-urban phase, when the cities declined.

Scholars have tried to determine the period of Indus Valley civilization. Sir John Marshall, the Director General of Archaeology found some similarity between the Indus and Mesopotamian civilization. On that basis he put the time between 3250 B.C. and 2750 B.C. Some other scholars compared various things found from Mahenjodaro with those found from Babylon. On that basis they believed that the civilization perhaps prospered after 3550 B.C. Sir Mortimer Wheeler, Director General of archaeology fixed the time of Indus Civilization between 2500 B.C. and 1500 B.C. The advent of radio carbon dating in the 1950s offered the prospect of more scientific way of dating the civilization. D P. Agarwal suggested the date 2300 – 2000 BCE. Recent calibrated C-14 dates give a time frame of about 2600 – 1900 BCE. But the most commonly accepted view is that the Indus Valley civilization flourished between 2300 B.C. and 1750 B.C.

The inhabitants of the civilization are not clear. Archaeologists by examining the skeletal remains at Indus Valley sites believe that Mongoloid, Proto-Austroloid, Alpine and Mediterranean people were the inhabitant of the great civilization.

### **2.3.1 GEOGRAPHICAL EXTENT OF INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION**

The first sites of this civilization were discovered in the valley of Indus and its tributaries. Hence it was given the name Indus Valley Civilization. At the time of partition of India in August 1947, only 40 settlements belonging to this civilization had been discovered. But the researches carried out by the archaeologists have altered the picture completely. Today, the count of Harappan sites has risen to about 1022 of which 406 are in Pakistan and 616 in India. Of these, only 97 sites have so far been excavated. The area covered by the Harappan Culture zone is huge, ranging between 680,000 to 800,000 square kilometers. This ancient civilization, like any other, cannot properly be studied on the basis of its present day political boundaries. The geographical distribution should be its basis. The 1022 settlements, discovered so far are distributed over a wide geographical area. The pattern of the distribution

of these settlements in terms of rivers shows that only 40 settlements are located on the Indus and its tributaries about large settlements are located on the vast plains between the Indus and Ganges. Some settlements are found beyond Saraswati System, a number of them in Gujrat and a few in Maharastra.

Besides Mohenjodaro and Harappa, the remains of the *expansion* of this civilization have been found at Chanudaro, Judeeirjo – daro and Amri in Sindh, Sutkagendor, Sotakakoh, Balakot, Nal and Kalat in Baluchistan, SutKotada, Dholavira and Lothal in Gujrat and Kalibangan in Ganganagar district of Rajasthan. Many more sites have been discovered at Kotla Nihangkaan near Ropar in Punjab, Alamgar and Sharanpur in Uttar Pradesh, Banwall and Rakhigarhi in Hissar district of Haryana and the valley of Narmada and Tapti and Manda in Akhnoor district of Jammu and Kashmir. Two other smaller sites excavated in recent years are Rojdi in Saurashtra and Desalpur in Kutch district. Excavations in all these sites have shown the existence of a well – developed Indus Culture. The area covered by the Indus Culture much greater than that occupied jointly by the contemporary civilization of Egypt and Mesopotamia.

### 2.3.2 CHARACTERISTICS OR MAIN FEATURES

#### **Town Planning**

Excavation at Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Kalibangan, Lothal, Surkotada and many other Indus sites show a well planned town planning of a truly amazing nature. The two cities, Mohenjodaro and Harappa were built on a uniform plan. The people of this civilization were expert in the art of town planning. The distance between Harappa and Mohenjo-daro is 483 kilometers and they were linked together by the river Indus. Each city consisted of two parts:

(1) Acropolis or citadel and (2) Lower City. To the West of each was a citadel built on a high platform. The citadel is of 30-40 feet high and 400 x 200 feet in length and breadth, having bricked floors. The citadel was the central place with special buildings meant for the ruling class people. To the east were the town proper and the main hub of residential area of the ordinary people. The citadel and the town were further surrounded by a massive brick wall.

The ruins of the city reveal elaborate system of sanitation and drainage. The roads were straight and cut across one another almost at right angles. The roads of main streets were 30 to 34 feet wide which lay out with great skill, dividing the city into blocks, within which were networks of narrow lanes. There were covered drain on the both the sides of the

main road. The drains of the private houses were connected with the main drain. The drainage systems were very impressive. There was also arrangement for street lighting which is evident from the discovery of light posts in the streets.

The buildings of Mahenjodaro can be divided into three groups, such as dwelling house, public buildings and the Great Bath. The dwelling houses were of different size and structure. The houses have big spacious room, kitchen, bathroom and a courtyard. Most of the houses were doubled storeyed. There were staircases leading to the upper story. Each house was provided doors, windows, proper system of ventilation and sanitation. Almost in every house there was a bath room and near the bathroom there was a well. Both burnt and sun-dried bricks were used to construct the houses. Local made mortar was used as the binding material. The roofs of the houses were flat and made of wood.

The ruins of some big and spacious buildings of elaborate structure and design have also been discovered from Mohenjodaro. A big hall has been unearthed at Mohenjodaro which has been named collegiate building. It was twenty massive pillars made of Kiln-burnt bricks. This could probably be an assembly hall. The most remarkable and largest building excavated at Harappa is the great granary. It was built on a raised platform to protect it from floods. It measures 169 feet length and 130 feet breadth. The granary was divided into storage blocks for storing the food grains. One important structure of the Indus Civilization is the dockyard discovered at Lothal in Gujrat. This is enclosed by walls of burnt bricks. The eastern and western walls measured 212 M and 215M respectively in length, while those on the north and south measured 37 M and 35 M. The scholars have identified it as a dockyard. Here the ships and boats come for loading and unloading of goods.

### **The Great Bath**

The most interesting and remarkable structure of the Indus Valley is the Great Bath of Mahenjodaro. It is an example of beautiful brick work. The bath measures 180 feet in length and 108 feet in width. In the centre of the bath there is a swimming pool, which is 39 feet in length, 23 feet in breadth and 8 feet in depth. There are galleries around the bath. There are steps on both the sides to enter into the bath. The bath is made of burnt bricks and connected with a fine drainage system for filling and draining out the water. Fresh water was supplied from a huge well nearby. On one side of the bath there were 8 small rooms. Those rooms were perhaps used by the people to change their clothes after bath. It is suggest that the great bath was used by the people for ritual bathing during religious ceremony.

The straight and wide streets, clean and simple dwelling houses, drainage system, huge granaries, public buildings and great Bath were the main features of the cities of Mohenjodaro and Harappa. They create surprise those three thousand years before the Christian era the inhabitants of Indus Valley lived such an excellent urban life.

### 2.3.3 Social Life

**Society:** The Society of Indus Valley Civilization was cosmopolitan in character and composed of various races which settled down in this region on account of its fertility. There is the larger question of the analysis and assessment of the structure of Harappa Society. The absence of deciphered written evidence is a major handicap. So we have to rely upon the archaeological data. The people who lived within the Harappan zone comprised villagers and city folk. Harappan society consists of different, occupational group such as farmers, hunter – gatherers, merchants, crafts people, sailors, rulers, carpenters, brick masons, well diggers, boat makers, shopkeepers, ritual specialist and so on. The affluent social groups would have comprised rulers, land owners and merchants. There is no proof of any division of society into caste. The social life of the people was highly developed. The people were as advanced as ancient Egyptians and Summerians.

#### **Domestication of Animals:**

Remains of the animals have been found at Harappan sites. These include deer, sheep, goat and pig. Bones of tortoise and fish also have been found. Animals like Rhinoceros, elephants, camel, monkeys, and leopard are depicted on numerous seals and in terracotta figurines. Rabbits, peacocks, pigeons and ducks are represented in figurines and paintings on pottery. Remains of domesticated animals such as humped and humpless cattle, buffalo, sheep and goat have been found in Harappan sites. Cattle and buffaloes were the most important domesticated animals. Dog figurines suggest the domestication of this animal. Some animals like goats and sheep were used for meat, milk and wool. They did not know the use of horse.

#### **Food Habits:**

The social life of the Indus People was quite well organized. In their food habits, the people were quite advanced. The Indus Valley people were both vegetarian and non-vegetarian. Wheat and barley were their Staple food, milk, milk products, mutton, pork, fish

vegetables and fruits were also commonly used. The river Indus facilitated the growth of agriculture and enabled the people to produce wheat and barley in large scale.

### **Dress and Ornaments:**

As regards the dress of the people, not much evidence is available. We are to depend entirely on the indications supplied by figurines and the similar other sources. Most probably the cotton fabrics as well as woolen clothes were commonly used by the people. Men generally used a sort of shawl to cover the upper part of the body and wore a band of cloth round their loins. It appears that women put on a skirt. The terracotta figurines wearing clothes (shawl's, skirts, etc.) reflect the kinds of clothes people wore. The occurrence of needles and buttons shows that at least some of the clothes were stitched. From the ruins of Mahenjodaro a large number of spindles made of baked earth have been discovered. From this evidence it is confirmed that the people of Indus Valley known the art of weaving clothes. People were fond of beautiful ornaments. Ornaments were used by both women as well as men. The ornaments were made of gold, silver, copper, ivory, precious and semi-precious stones. Ornaments like necklace, armlets, pendants, finger rings, ear rings, bangles, girdles, nose studs were used by the people. However, the ornaments like girdles, earrings, nose studs, bangles, armlets were used only by women. Beautifully worked gold and silver jewellery including necklaces, bracelets, pendants and earrings have been found at Harappan sites. A hoard of jewellery made of gold, silver and semi precious stones was found at the small village sites of Allahdino, located 40 Km east of Karachi in Pakistan. The people were quite fashionable. Men kept various types of beards and whiskers. The women were quite fashionable. They generally wore fan – shaped head dress. Various objects head dressing such as ivory combs, bronze mirror, hair pins etc. have been found at Harappan sites.

### **Amusements**

The people of Indus Valley also took keen interest in sports and amusements. Dicing and some sort of chess playing were the common pastimes of the people. A large number of dices have been unearthed. People also took interest in hunting and fishing both for sports and amusement. Certain seals represent of men shooting a wild goat and large antelope with bows and arrows. Clay modeling appears to have been the favourite pastime of the children. A large number of clay toys of carts, animals, birds, whistles and human beings have been

discovered from Harappan sites. In addition, the people also took delight in music and dancing. Stringed musical instruments and drums were also known to the Indus people.

### **Art and Crafts**

There is a great variety of standardized, mass produced craft items at Harappan sites. The artefacts are far greater in quantity and range, and show greater technical skill than those found in earlier cultural phase. The people used many tools and implements of stone but they were very well acquainted with the manufacture and use of copper and bronze. The Harappan civilization is marked by a large number of copper and bronze objects. Copper and bronze artefacts included vessels, spears, knives, axes, bows and arrows, daggers, fish hooks, needles, mirrors, rings, bangles etc. A number of copper furnaces were found at Harappa and copper workshops were found at Lothal. The Harappan people developed the art of making stone sculptures in the round. In the art of metal sculpture also, great heights were achieved. The famous bronze female figure in a dancing position has been discovered from Mohenjodaro. The dancing girl wears ornaments and has nicely combed hair style. Making of the seals, jewellery and bead are important craft of Harappa. People did not know the use of Iron, because no iron tools or weapons have been discovered from the Indus Valley. Huge brick structures suggest that brick making was an important craft.

### **Pottery:**

The Harappan Pottery reflects efficient mass production. Pottery kilns were found at Mohenjodaro, Harappa, Nausharo and Chanudaro. It can be regarded as an index to the economic and artistic standards of the people. The Harappan people used a great variety of pottery, including black-on-red, grey, buff and black and red wares. They were experts in use of potters wheel. Most pots were wheel turned. The typical Harappan Pottery is a fine, sturdy, wheel-made ware with bright red slip, decorated with painted, black designs. The great bulk of the pottery such as houses, dishes, Jars and Squares are wheel – turned but some hand – made pottery has also been recovered from different sites. Cooking pots of various sizes have been found. The large jars may have been used to store grain or water. Only one painted jar has been found with animals arranged in row. There are small vessels in several colours such as red, black and green have been found. Harappan sites have yielded a plenty of terracottas. We get many figurines made of fire-baked earthen clay, commonly called terracotta. These were either used as toys or objects of worship. There are figurines of animals. Such as bulls, monkeys, buffaloes and dogs. There are toy carts with solid wheels. Human figurines include



male figurines and more numerous female figurines of various types. Terracotta masks and bangles have been found at Mohenjodaro and Harappa.

### **Seals:**

The greatest artistic reactions of the Harappan culture are the seals. The Indus people had developed their own process of writing, which is evident from the discovery of seals at Mohenjodaro and Harappa. More than 2000 seals have been unearthed but it is unfortunate that so far the scholars have been unable to decipher the scripts written on the seals. Most of the seals are square or rectangular. The average size of the square seals is about 2.54 cm. A few cylindrical and round seals have also been found. Most of the seals are made of steatite. Two fine silver seals were discovered at Mohenjodaro and some copper seals were found at Lothal. Majority of seals carry short inscriptions with pictures of one horned animals called unicorns, buffaloes, tigers, rhinoceroses, goats, elephants, antelopes and crocodile. Some seals however, bear script only and some bear human and semi human forms. The inhabitants of Mohenjodaro attached great importance to these seals.

### **Script and Language:**

The biggest mysteries about the Indus Valley Civilization are the language and writing system. It is believed that people living in various parts of the Harappan culture zone spoke different languages and dialects. The writing on the seals was probably in the language of the ruling elite. Some scholars have suggested that this language belonged to the Dravidian family of language, while others have suggested of the Indo-Aryan family. So far the scholars have no unanimity on language and unable to decipher the Harappa script. A total of about 3700 inscribed objects have been discovered from Harappan sites. Most of the writing appears on seals and sealings, some on copper tablets, copper and bronze implements, pottery and other objects. Most of the inscriptions are very short, with an average of five signs and the longest one has 26 signs. There are 400 – 450 basic signs and the script is logosyllabic i.e., each symbol stood for a word or syllable. The people were familiar with the art of writing. They wrote from right to left.

### **2.3.3 ECONOMIC LIFE**

#### **Agriculture:**

The basic economy of the Indus Valley people was necessarily agriculture. Cultivation was on an extensive scale, facilitated largely by the presence of rivers. The Indus region was quite fertile. There were facilities for irrigation. Farmers must have built bunds (embankments) of mud or stone to divert river water. Irrigation canals have been found at Shortughai. The main products were wheat, barley and cotton etc. Wheat has been found at Mohenjodaro and Harappa; barley at Mohenjodaro, Harappa and Kalibangan. Harappa has also given evidence of watermelon, seeds, peas and dates, rice occurs at Harappa, Kalibangan, Lothal and Rangpur. Millets have been identified at Harappa, Surkotada and Shortughai. A plough field has been discovered at Kalibangan. There is evidence of use plough in cultivation. Terracotta models of plough at Bhawalpur and Banwali give further evidence of the use of this implement.

### **Industry:**

From the archaeological remains it is clear that different industries developed in the Indus Valley. Though a large number of people engaged in agriculture, trade and industry also flourished during this period. Mahenjodaro was a great industrial centre. Probably, weaving was an important industry. The discovery of a large number of spindles and spinning wheels in the houses of the people confirmed it. The people of Harrapan culture were using the cotton and wollen clothes in a large scale. The people also knew the art of dying. There are indications that bead industry was in flourishing condition. Beads of semi-precious stones were manufactured, even for export purpose. The remains of bead industry are noticed from the excavation site of Lothal. It seems that Shortugai an Indus city in the North – West frontiers was an important bead trade centre. Pottery was another important industry. Probably industries for manufacturing copper and bronze implements were also there. Several weapons like axes, saw, knives, spears etc. made of bronze have been discovered. The art of brick-laying was also known to the people. This is evident from the presence of huge brick structure. It was also a flourishing industry.

### **Trade and Commerce**

The people of Indus Valley were expert in trade and commerce. Mahenjodaro itself was a great trading centre from where both inland as well as sea trade was carried on. They had inland trade relation with Rajasthan, Afghanistan and Persia. They imported copper from Rajasthan, Silver, turquoise and lapislazuli from Persia and Afghanistan. They have even contact with South India. The inland trade was carried through bullock cart and caravan.

Two – wheeled carts were an important mode of transport for people and goods – Bronze and terracotta models of carts have been found at various sites. Traders must also have transported their merchandise across long distances in caravans of pack animals such as oxen, sheep, goats and donkeys. Towards the end of the mature Harappan phase there is evidence of the use of the camel. The Indus People were familiar with navigation in the river and along the sea coast. They had trade links with Tigris and Euphrates people. There was also a close contact between Indian people and Mesopotamia. The discovery of Harappan civilization generated a great deal of interest in Harappan – Mesopotamian trade links. There is literary as well as archaeological evidence for Harappan trade with Mesopotamia. From the Mesopotamia records we know of their trade with Meluka (Indus Valley region). Dilmun and Magan were two trading stations between Mesopotamia and the Indus. There is evidence of Harappan trade contacts with Persian Gulf. A round seal with a short – horned bull motif and Harappan writing was found at Failaka in the Persian Gulf. Harappan related artefacts including a piece of ivory, a circular mirror and seals with Harappan motifs have been found at Rasaloala on the island of Bahrain. A seal with bull motif and Harappan script was found at the site of Hajjar. Lothal was an Indus Port town. Boats are depicted on seals and moulded tablets, and clay models have been found at Harappa and Lothal. River boats had cabin, ladders leading to the roof, a dock-yard and ware house have been discovered from excavation sites. There were several trade routes which connected the various parts of the Harappan culture zone – Baluchistan, Sindh, Rajasthan, Punjab, Gujrat and Upper Doab. The people used to export cotton, beads of fine quality, terracotta toys and pottery. The flourishing trade and commerce contributed to the prosperity of the Indus Valley People.

### **Weights and Measures**

The advanced stage of economy is further confirmed by the discovery of different articles used for weights and measures from the Mohenjodaro and Harappan sites. The urban people of the Indus Valley also needed and used weights and measures for trade and other transactions. The weights and measures were very accurate. Standardization extended to units of weights and measure. Cubical weights made of chert; chalcedony, black stone, etc. have been found at all excavated sites. The system is binary in the smaller weight (1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, and 64) and decimal in the higher weights (160, 320 and 640). The largest weight found in Mohenjodaro weighs 10.865g. The Harappans also knew the art of measurement. Bronze sticks have been discovered from the Harappan sites containing measure marks. These sticks were used for the measurement purpose. A shell scale was found at Mohenjodaro and an

ivory scale at Lothal was probably used to measure angles. The state control may have responsible for the high level of standardization.

#### 2.3.4 RELIGIOUS LIFE

The people of Indus Valley Civilization had an advanced type of religious faith. No temples or any positive religious material has been discovered in Harappa and Mohenjodaro. However, some of the seals, sealings, statues, figurines and stone images found in the ruins of Mohenjodaro and Harappa help in forming an idea about religious beliefs and practicals of the people. In Harappa numerous terracotta figurines of women have been found. Probably the image represents the Goddess of Earth or Mother Goddess. She is almost nude except a short skirt, wearing many ornaments and her head dress looks like a fan. The Harappan looked upon the earth as fertility goddess and the source of all creation and so they worshipped her.

John Marshal suggested that the Harappan also worshipped a male god represented on a steatite seal discovered at Mohenjodaro, usually referred to as the Pashupati seal. This god has three heads and has horns. He is represented in the sitting posture of a yogi placing one foot on the other. He is flanked by four animals – an elephant, rhinoceros, a tiger and a buffalo below his throne. At his feet appear two deer. The figure is identified as god *Shiva*, who in later literature is described as *Mahayogi* and *Pasupati* (Lord of the animals). The people also practiced the worship of *Linga* and *Yoni* symbols. Numerous symbols of the *Linga* and *Yoni* made of stone have been found in Harappa.

The Harappan seals, sealings, amulets and copper tablets depict a number of trees, plants and animals. Some of which may have had certain importance. The people of Indus Valley also worshipped trees. One of the sacred trees was the peepal tree. In one of the seals a God is seen standing and surrounded by the branches of the peepal tree. This tree continues to be worshipped to this day by the Hindus.

The Indus Valley people also worshipped animals and many of them are represented in seals. The animals like the humped bull, the tiger, the goat, the rhinoceros, the crocodile and the snake are worshipped. They also worshipped mythical and demigods. The most important of them is the humped bull. The animals surrounding *Pasupati Siva* indicate that these were worshipped. Amulets have been found in large numbers. Probably the Harappans

believed that ghosts and evil forces were capable of harming them and therefore used amulets against them.

No temple has discovered from the ruins of Harappa and Mohenjodaro. It is not clear, therefore, how the people worshipped their gods and goddess. The images or figures were all found from the dwelling houses of common man. It may be that the people of the Indus Valley offered worships in their own houses.

The Swastik and the wheel symbol of some seals indicate the worship of Sun god. The Great Bath was probably the scene of an elite ritual activity involving ceremonial bathing. The most striking evidence suggesting ritualistic practices from the fire altars found on the citadel mound at Kalibangan. A triangular terracotta cake found at Kalibangan has a carving of a horned diety on one side and an animal being dragged by a rope by a human on the other. It may be the practice of animal sacrifice.

Harappan cemeteries have been located at sites such as Harappa, Kalibangan, Lothal, Rakhigarhi and Surkotada. Burial was the usual rite. The people had three types of funeral custom; complete burial, fractional burial and burial of ashes and bones. Fifty seven graves were indentified between 1937 and 1947, which showed that the bodies were extended from north to south, the head towards the north, in a simple pit or brick chamber. Grave goods including food, pottery, tools and ornaments were placed alongwith the body. Multiple burials of men and women were discovered at Lothal.

It seems as if the religion of the ancient Indus Valley and the future Hinduism of India has similarity in many respects. Worship of gods and goddesses, animals and trees, as was prevalent in Indus Valley, is also seen in Hindu mode of Worship.

Most of the historians are of the view that Harapp and Mohenjodaro was governed by a Priest-King. The stone bust of a male figure found at Mohenjodaro has been given the label 'Priest King'. Harappan society was highly disciplined and had a strong corporate element; the Harappans may have been ruled by councils rather than priest kings. The uniformity in town planning, drainage system, buildings, pottery, vessels and the seals suggests a strong centralized authority and municipal administration as well. It appears that the life of the people and various activities were regulated to a great extent by some sorts of centralized authority.

### 2.3.5 DECLINE OF THE INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION

The decline of the Indus Valley Civilization is a tangled problem and no single factor can claim in fallible truth. The decline was a gradual process. Decline had set in at Mohenjodaro by 2200 B.C. and the settlement had come to an end by 2000 B.C. In some places the civilization continued till 1800 B.C. Mohenjodaro and Dholavira give a picture of gradual decline, while at Kalibangan and Banwalli, the city life ended all of a sudden. In the absence of any authentic records it is difficult to explain the exact cause of the decline of Indus Valley Civilization. When definite causes cannot be known, scholars have to imagine several possible reasons leading to its decline.

One of the most popular reasons of the decline of Harappan civilization is the Aryan invasions. The idea that the civilization was destroyed by Aryan invaders was put forward by Mortimer Wheeler in 1947. Wheeler argued that references in Rigveda to various kinds of forts and attacks on walled cities reflect an Aryan invasion of the Harappan cities. Wheeler also pointed out certain skeletal remains with cut marks found out at Mohenjodaro as proof of the Aryan massacre. This view seems to be untenable.

Another theory attributes the end of the Indus Civilization due to frequent occurrence of heavy floods. M.R. Sahni (1956). Robert L. Raikes (1964) and George F. Dales (1966), argued that the floods at Mohenjodaro were the result of tectonic movements. There is some evidence of devastation by flood at Mohenjodaro and Lothal but there is no such evidence in respect of other cities. According to other scholars, that the river Indus and Ravi changed their courses for which the cities were badly affected. It also appears possible that the frequent floods of those rivers made it difficult for the people to live.

Some scholars hold that natural calamities like earthquake, famine and cyclone may be the possible reason for the destruction of the Indus Valley Civilization. It is also possible the natural calamities might have brought havoc in the Indus Valley and people may migrate to other areas. Being deserted the cities perhaps got buried under sand dune in course of many many years.

The issue of environmental change can be connected to the decline of the Indus Valley Civilisation. Gurdeep Singh (1971) and a few other scholars have suggested that due to the change of climatic condition in and around 1700 B.C. the decrease in rainfall, made agriculture difficult. Over cultivation, over grazing and excessive cutting of trees for fuel and

farming would have resulted in decreasing soil fertility and rainfall. So the people migrated from their original home land.

Archaeological evidence does not give direct access to the possible social and political dimensions of the decline of the Harappan Civilization. However, Harappa and Mohenjodaro seems to have disappeared by 1750 B.C. In other areas, the towns survived for a century or to more, but by 1500 B.C. a new and vigorous people occupied the area. The new people are accepted as the Aryans. In the course of time, the Aryans borrowed some features of the Indus Culture.

## 2.4 SUMMARY

In this unit you have learnt that:

- Prehistory represents the longest part of the human past.
- The pre-historic period, India had passed through Paleolithic, Measolithic and Neolithic ages.
- Important developments in stone tool technology.
- Harappan civilization was the first urban culture in South Asia.
- Archaeological evidence reveals a great deal about this civilization. The town planning system and Great Bath the most imposing construction of Mohenjodaro.
- Besides Harappa and Mohenjodaro the remains of this civilization has been discovered in different parts of ancient India.
- Harappan arts, craft, trade and commerce, agriculture are the important parts of their economic life.
- The people worshipped mother Goddess, animal, trees etc.
- The different reasons for the decline of this great civilization.

## 2.5 KEY TERMS

- Artefact: Portable object made or altered by human hands.
- Homo sapiens: Automatically modern humans or wise men.
- Citadel: Core fortified area of a town or city.
- Steatite: Soapstone.
- Pleistocene: Geological era
- Seal: An engraved piece of metal used as a stamp for identification.

- Pebble tools: An oldest type of tool

### Check your progress

1. State whether True or False.
  - a) The pre-historic period of India had passed through Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic ages.
  - b) Palaeolithic man ate roots, fruits, nuts and the flesh of wild beasts.
  - c) People made small huts for their shelter during Palaeolithic age.
  - d) Indus valley civilization was an urban civilization.
  - e) Iron tools are discovered from Harappan sites.
  - f) Barley and wheat was produced from the Harappan sites.
  - g) The people of Indus Valley worshipped mother Goddess.
  - h) A good number of temples have been discovered from Indus Valley Civilization.
2. Fill up the blanks –
  - a) The term Palaeolithic is a \_\_\_\_\_ word.
  - b) Mesolithic age is characterized by \_\_\_\_\_ or tiny tools.
  - c) One of the greatest inventions of Neolithic man was \_\_\_\_\_.
  - d) The first excavation in the Indus Valley was started at \_\_\_\_\_ and was carried out in the year \_\_\_\_\_.
  - e) The Great bath has been found at \_\_\_\_\_.
  - f) \_\_\_\_\_ was a sacred animal of Indus Valley People.
  - g) The Indus Valley People used garments of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
  - h) The Harappan people built up their houses of \_\_\_\_\_.
  - i) \_\_\_\_\_ are the only source to know about Indus Valley people.
  - j) \_\_\_\_\_ Tree was worshiped by the Indus People.

### 2.6 Answer to check your progress

1. a) True      b) true      c) False      d) True      e) False      f) True  
g) True      h) False
2. a) Greek      b) Microlithis      c) Wheel      d) i) Mohenjodaro      ii) 1922  
e) Mohenjodaro      f) Humped Bull      g) i) cotton      ii) wool      h) Burnt bricks  
i) seals j) People

### 2.7 Questions and Exercise

Long – Answer Questions



1. Trace the various phases in the Palaeolithic Age of India.
2. Describe the extent of Harappan Civilization.
3. Give an account of the Arts, Crafts and technology of the Harappans.
4. Write the characteristic feature of the Indus Valley Civilization.

Short Answer Questions:

1. What is pre-history?
2. What is meant by neolithis?
3. Who was John Marshal?
4. Name any four cities of Harappan Civilization discovered by Archaeologist.
5. Where is Lothal?
6. Write a short note on seals.

2.8 **Suggested Readings**

1. Basham, A.L.: The wonder that was India, London, 1963.
2. Chakaravarti, S.N.: The pre-historic periods in India.
3. Kosambi, D.D.: The culture and civilization of Ancient India, Lndon, 1965.
4. Lal, B.B.: Indian archaeology since Independence, Delhi, 1964.
5. Sankalia, H.D.: Pre-History and Proto-History of India and Pakistan, Bombay, 1962.
6. Thapar, Romila: A History of India Vol.I, Delhi, 2000.

**UNIT – III****VEDIC AND SANGAM AGE****STRUCTURE**

- 7.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 Early Vedic Age
  - 3.2.1 Society
  - 3.2.2 Religion
  - 3.2.3 Economy
  - 3.2.4 Polity
- 3.3 Later Vedic age
  - 3.3.1 Society
  - 3.3.2 Religion
  - 3.3.3 Economy
  - 3.3.4 Polity
- 3.4 Sangam Age
  - 3.4.1 Society and Religion
  - 3.4.2 Literature
  - 3.4.3 Economy
  - 3.4.4 Polity
- 3.5 Summary
- 3.6 Key words
- 3.7 Answer to check your learning

### 3.8 Questions and Exercise

### 3.9 Suggested Reading

## 3.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you about the Aryans, Vedic culture, Society and way of life and the unit will also analyse the Sangam Age and its importance.

A new phase of Indian history starts with the advent of Aryans. The new phase is known as Vedic period or Vedic age (1500-600 BC) in the history of northern Indian Sub-continent. It gets its name from the Vedas, which are liturgical texts containing details of religion, philosophy and social customs of Hindus. The Vedic texts along with the corresponding archaeological evidences, allow for the evolution of the Vedic culture to be traced and inferred. Early Vedic Aryans were a late Bronze Age society centered in the Punjab, organized into tribes rather than kingdoms and primarily sustained by a pastoral 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. The Vedic period saw the emergence of a hierarchy of social classes that would remain influential. During these periods, many parts of the sub-continent made the transition from the Chalcolithic to the Iron Age. Historians have used the Vedic texts to identify broad patterns of historical change in the north-west and upper Ganga Valley.

### 3.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Get the clear idea about the salient features of early Vedic, later Vedic and Sangam age.
- Trace the expansion of the Aryans in the later Vedic period.
- Describe the material life of the later Vedic people.
- Describe what kind of religion and rituals during early Vedic / later Vedic Age.
- Compare the Indus Valley Culture and Vedic culture.
- Analyse the various features of Sangam Age.

### 3.2 EARLY VEDIC AGE

The Advent of the Aryans constitutes a land mark in the history of ancient India. Their civilization known as Vedic Age civilization which flourished many years after the decay of the Indus Valley civilization. The Aryans entered India through the north-Western passes and at first settled in the Saptasindhu region of Punjab or the land of seven rivers, namely, Indus, Jhelum, Chenab, Rabi, Sutlej and Saraswati. The early civilization of the Indo Aryans grew up in this region. Gradually the Aryans succeeded in establishing their supremacy over the whole Valley of river Indus and Ganges and developed their own political and social system.

The Vedic Age has been divided into two parts for the sake of convenience – the Early Vedic Age (1500-1000 B.C.) and Later Vedic Age (1000 – 600 B.C.). The history of the Vedic period is based mainly on Vedic texts which were compiled during the Vedic Age. The Vedic literature included four *Vedas* namely. *Rig Veda*, *Sama Veda*, *Yajur Veda* and *Atharva Veda*. The collection of Vedic hymns or mantras were known as the *Samhitas*. The Vedic literature is divided into three periods, it refers to the *Samhitas* or texts or the four *Vedas*. The second period refers to the time of the *Brahmanas*. The *Brahmans* contain observations on various sacrificial rites and rituals. The third period refers to the *Upanisads*, *Aranyakas* and the Sutra literature. The word *Upanishad* which means ‘sitting down near’ was the secret communication or doctrine imported by the teacher to the pupil. The *Aranyakas* or ‘forest texts’, deals with mysticism and philosophy and not with rituals. The *Rig Veda* is considered as the early *Veda* and remaining three as the later *Vedas*. There is no unanimity of opinion among the scholars with regard to the age of its composition. Some lay down the year 1000 B.C. as the earliest limit while others fix the same between 3000 and 3500 B.C. The view of Max Mueller was that the *Rigveda Samhita* must have been completed before 1000 B.C. However, the majority scholars accept that most of the *Rig Vedic* hymns were composed between 1500-1000 B.C. The *Rig Veda* is the only source which gives most valuable information about the life of the early Vedic people and society. Though *Rig Veda* was not a historical work it provides useful information about the history of Aryans.

#### 3.2.1 SOCIETY

The early Vedic society was a society of high moral standard. It represented human equality and simplicity. The early Vedic society was primarily pastoral in which tribal

elements predominated. It showed an advanced civilization, settled life and an organized human relation. They lived in small villages and led the life of purity and chastity.

### **Family:**

The Aryans developed a healthy social life. The society was organized on the basis of family. The family was patriarchal in character with the eldest male member (father) enjoying full control over the family members. The members of the family lived in the same house built of wood or reed. Every house had a fire place, besides a sitting room and separate room for female members. The family was largely a joint unit. The father exercised autocratic power over the members. The younger members obeyed the senior members. The relation between father, mother, brothers and sisters rested on a sense of duty, devotion, affection and cordiality. The birth of a son was considered a happy event. The ownership of the property rested with the head of the family. It seems that several generations of the family lived under the same roof. The grihapati was also assisted by his wife in the management of household activities and in performing religious ceremonies. Hospitality was a notable feature of the etiquette of the Rigvedic age.

### **Position of Women**

Women enjoyed an honoured position during the early Vedic age. In every sphere of life they enjoyed equality with men. They exercised much influence in domestic affairs. In religious ceremonies and festivals, women enjoyed equal place with men. The *Rig Veda* contains hymns composed by women; there are references to women sages. Women participated in rituals. They took part in chariot races and attended the *Sabha* and various social gatherings. There were some notable and learned women like Lopamudra, Ghosha, Vshwavara and Apala. The *Rig Veda* attaches importance to the institution of marriage and refers to various types of marriage – monogamy, polygamy and polyandry. Monogamy was the common in the society. Polygamy was, however, practiced and was probably confined to kings and great chiefs only. The rituals indicate post – puberty marriages and there are references to women choosing their husbands. A woman could remarry if her husband died or disappeared. There is also reference to unmarried women, such as the *Rig Vedic* seer Ghosha. The practice of levirate was allowed. Both dowry and bride price were recognized.

### **Cast System**

There is a difference of opinion among the scholars with regard to the existence or non-existence of cast system during early Vedic age. The Aryans were fair in complexion in contrast to the local people who were dark. This difference led to the Varna system of social division in early *Vedic* period. The cast system was later development when the Vedic Aryans had settled in the middle country. The genesis of the cast system may be found in a late hymn of the *Rigveda*. Prohibition of interdining and intermarriage was not practiced in the *Rig Vedic* age.

### **Food and Drink**

Wheat and barley formed the staple food of the people. The people took both vegetarian and non-vegetarian food. Milk and its various products, vegetables and fruits were used. The people also ate non-vegetarian food like fish, birds, goats etc. But slaughter of cow was disfavoured. People used to take certain intoxicating drinks like *Soma* and *Sura*. The *Soma* was treated as sacrificial and ceremonial drinks, while *Sura* was obtained by distillation of grain and was regarded as impure by the people.

### **Dress and Ornaments**

The *Rig Vedic* Aryans used clothes made of cotton, wool and animal skins. The garments consisted of three parts called *Vesa* (Lower garment), *Adhivesa* (Upper garment) and the upper garment has called *Nivi*. Ornaments were used by both men and women. Women used ornaments of gold and precious stones. Both men and women wear turbans. The *Rig Veda* makes references to the common ornaments of that age like ear rings, necklace, armllets and amulets.

### **Amusements**

The favourite pass – time of the people in *Rig Vedic* period were chariot racing horse racing, dicing, gambling dancing and music. We come across several references in the *Rig Veda* about dancing by maidence. Women used to sing and dance to the accompaniment of musical instruments. People played with flute, violin and drum.

The Aryans did not develop any script till 700 B.C. They preferred oral learning. The entire education was orally given. The students were attached to *Gurukul* system. The *Rig Vedic* pottery attained an amazing degree of technical perfection. The *Rig Vedic* society was ideal and unique in ancient world.

### 3.2.2 Religion

The Aryans were deeply religious. We have much knowledge of the religion of the early *Vedic* age from the 1028 hymns of the *Rig Veda*. The early *Vedic* religion has been designated by the name of monotheism, a belief in single God, each return standing out as the highest. The Aryans considered the different forces of nature as the manifestation of supreme creator, who created the universe. They therefore, became the worshiper of nature. The mighty elements of nature were regarded by the Aryans as their gods. In the *Rig Veda* there are all together 33 *divinities*; of them, 11 are of heaven (*sky*), 11 of mid air (*Antariksha*) and 11 of the earth (*Prithivi*). The word *deva* is frequently used for the gods. The gods are some times also called *asuras*. In later times it came to be used exclusively in a negative sense for demons. The Rig Vedic people worshipped *Prithvi* (the mother earth), *Indra* (the God of rain and thunder), *Vayu* (the god of wind), *Agni* (the god of fire), *Usha* (the goddess of dawn), *Surya* (the Sun god), *Varuna* (the god of water) and *Marut* (the God of Storm). Thus all the Gods of the *Rig Vedic* age represented various forces of nature. Indra, who personified rain, was the most powerful of Aryan Gods in the *Rig Veda*. He was worshipped a great warrior God, the destroyer of forts or '*Purandhar*'. He led the Aryan soldiers against asuras or Demons. The *Rig Veda* contains 250 hymns in the honour of Indra. The next important Aryan God was *Agni*, for whom the sage offered as many as 200 hymns.

An important feature of the *Vedic* religion was the predominance of the male Gods. Goddesses like *Aditi*, *Prithvi*, *Usha* and *Saraswati* occupy a very subordinate position. Other deities of the *Rig Veda* include the *Ashvins* (the twin gods associated with war and fertility), *Vishnu* (benevolent god) and *Rudra* (the God of destruction). Another important characteristic of *Vedic* religion was the tendency towards monotheism or monoism. The hymns express the belief that God is one although they bear many names.

Sacrifices occupied a prominent place in the *Vedic* ritual. The main purpose was to appease the gods in order to obtain boons from them for the welfare of family, cattle and for good health. Recitations of hymns of prayers and offering or sacrifices were common religious practices. In community worship prayer was offered in group or by members of a tribal in chorus. The religious ceremonies were simple and free from complex ritualism. Sacrifices could only be undertaken by kings or chiefs.

As far as image worship was concerned, it can be observed that even when some references to symbols or sensible representations are found in the *Vedic* text, it does not

deities. The *Vedic* Aryans had no special doctrines about life after death. They felt that death was not the end of all things. After his death a man was supposed to reach the *Yama's* kingdom. Regarding life after death, the *Rig Veda* hymns have no consistent theory. As far as funerary practices are concerned, the *Rig Veda* refers to both cremation and burial. In early *Vedic* age the priestly class was yet not effective in religion as most of the rites were performed by the head of the family i.e. *Grihapati*. In a nutshell, the *Rig Vedic* religion was simple and centered round the personifications of the principal phenomena of nature.

### 3.2.3 ECONOMY

The economic condition of the people in early Vedic Society was prosperous. The Aryans were permanently a rural people. Their economic activities mostly centered in and on their villages. The early Vedic people were primarily agriculturists. Agriculture was the mainstay of their economy. Clearing of forests for reclamation of land, conversion of arable land to agriculture and domestication of animals were their main preoccupation. Rice, yava and barley were their main crops. The Aryans were essentially pastoral people and attached great importance to the cows. Cow and ox were considered sacred animals. The early Aryans treated the cow as the most valued wealth. The cow was also the chief medium of exchange during the early Vedic period. Sheep, goats, horses etc. were also domesticated.

The early Vedic people also practiced several crafts. The *Rig Veda* makes reference to different professional groups like carpenters, chariot makers, the weavers, potters etc. Weaving of cotton and wool was the principal industry. Textiles, metal works, utensils, wooden articles and agricultural implements were produced by local craftsman as per demand. Carpentry was a lucrative profession. Both men and women were engaged in this industry.

The early *Vedic* people had developed trade and commerce. They carried trade with members of same tribal and also with other tribes. Trade was carried along the river route. The principal medium of trade was barter and the cows were used as a means of exchange. Commerce was largely controlled by the people called *Pani*. According to some scholars that a piece of gold called *nishka* were used as means of exchange. The chief means of transport by land were chariots and wagons drawn by horses and oxen. They also used boats made of timber for navigation in rivers. Main items of the trade were clothes, bed sheets, leather, grains etc.



### 3.2.4 POLITY

The Aryans' came to India in an organized way. As they spread themselves in India and settled permanently, they developed political organization for better life. The family constituted the lowest political unit of Vedic Age people. Several families formed a village or the grama. The head of the *Grama* was called *Gramani*. Several Grammas formed a *Vis* or district. The head of the *Vis* was *Vispati*. Several district or *Vis* formed *Jana* or *Rastra*. The head of the *Rastra* was called *Rajan* or king. Monarchy was the prevailing form of government. The kingship was generally hereditary though in some cases people used to elect their kings. The king occupied the position of honour. He was appointed by the Chief Priests. The king was not an autocrat. He was rather a benevolent despot. He usually enjoyed the confidence and loyalty of the people. He governed according to the laws and customs of the land and with the help of the advice of seers, sages and elders. The primary duties of the king were collection of taxes, administration of justice and to protect his state. The king was called the protector of his tribe. He was required to protect his land and cattle and to offer prayers to gods on his behalf.

The important officers of the state were *Senani* or the commander of the army, the *Purohit* or the royal priest and *Gramini* or the village headman. The *Purohit* occupied an important position and he used to give advice to the king relating to the affairs of the state. There were even some kind of popular tribal assemblies in those days such as the *Sabha*, *Samiti*, *Vidatha* and *Gana* are mentioned in *Rig Veda*. These are popular institutions to transact political business. Military and religious matters were also discussed here. But the most important and popular assemblies from the political point of view seem to have been the *Sabha* and *Samiti*. *Sabha* was an assembly of a few selected elder to help the king and *Samiti* was an assembly of larger group of people presides over by the king. The king or *Rajan* ruled the tribe with the help of *Sabha* and *Samiti*. The king used to maintain a powerful army which included infantry and chariots. Bows and arrows, spears, swords and axes were used as weapons by the soldiers. The regular word for law or custom in the *Rigveda* is *Dharman*. Theft, burglary, robbery and cheatings are among the crimes recorded. Cattle lifting at night were very frequent. Punishment, however, was very lenient during the *Rig Vedic* period.

On the whole, the Vedic Political organizations were sound and stable. The state rested on the foundations of ethics, morality, virtue and popular will.

## 3.3 LATER VEDIC AGE

The period between 1000 BC and 600 BC is commonly known as later *Vedic Age*. The history of the later *Vedic age* is based on the following sources of three *Vedic* texts i.e. the *Sama Veda*, the *Yajur Veda* and the *Atharva Veda*, the *Brahmanas*, the *Aryankas*, the *Upanisadas*, the *Sutras*, the *Puranas*, the *Ramayan* and the *Mahabharata*. Sometimes, the later *Vedic Age* and the Epic Age (period of Ramayan and Mahabharat) are treated as same period by the scholars. All these later Vedic texts were compiled in the upper Gangetic basin in 1000 – 600 B.C. Excavation of the area have brought to light nearly 700 sites inhabited for the first time. These are called Painted Grey Ware (PGW) sites because they were inhabited by people who used earthen Bowles and dishes made of painted gray pottery. The later Vedic period witnessed the mobility of the Aryans in various directions. They did not confine themselves to the land of the Punjab and eastern Afghanistan they penetrated towards the East upto Bengal and the far South and the seat of their civilization shifted to the territory between the rivers Saraswati and the Ganges. The texts show that the Aryans expanded from Punjab over the whole of Western Uttar Pradesh covered by the Ganga-Yamuna doab.

The valley of river Ganges and Yamuna became the main centre of activities of the Aryans. The Aryan tribes of *Rig Vedic* period like the *Bharatas* and *Purus* lost their power and influence and the tribes like the Kurus, Panchalas and the Kasis became very prominent. Soon the *Kurus* occupied Delhi and the upper portion of the Doab the area called Kurukshetra and they established their capital at Hastinapur (modern Meerut). The Panchalas who occupied the middle portion of Doab and established their capital at Kausambi. The History of the Kuru and Panchala tribes are important for the battle of Bharata which is the main theme of the great epic Mahabharat. This war was fought between the Kauravas and Pandavas, although both of them belonged to the Kuru clan. By the close of the later Vedic Age the Aryans extended their political supremacy both towards east and south. The use of iron weapons, horses and chariots helped the Aryans to expand their territories in the different direction.

The changes in the Aryan people affected the character of the early *Vedic Civilization*. The society, the state and the religion of the later *Vedic Age* thus appear very much different from what they were in the *Rig Vedic Age*.

### 3.3.1 SOCIETY

The later Vedic Literature reflects a complete change in the social life of the people.

### **Family:**

The joint – Patriarchal family was the norm of the social life of the Aryans. Family was an important institution during this period. The heads of the family is called *Kulapati*. In the later *Vedic* period in the family the power of the father increased. He now possessed the authority to disinherit his son from property rights. Marriages, sacrifices and other important rituals were performed by the head of the family. In the ruling family, the system of eldest son inheriting throne became an approved and accepted tradition. This is known as the law of primogeniture. The institution of *gotra* appeared in later Vedic times. By this system, people accepted their descent from a common ancestor. People began to practice *gotra* exogamy. No marriage could take place between persons belonging to same *gotra* or having the same ancestor. The people also started to worship their male ancestors.

### **Position of Women:**

During the later Vedic Age the women lost their earlier importance and status. They did not enjoy position of respect which was accorded to them during the early Vedic period. They lost their right of *Upanayana* to perform religious rites and the right to attend meetings of the tribal assembly (Sabha). Polygamy or marrying of several wives by a man became a social vice. The higher casts practiced this system because of their wealth and status. The birth of a daughter considered as a source of misery and suffering. The son alone could be the savior of the family. The system of child marriage appeared. Dowry system was practiced. The women could not inherit property. The rules of marriage underwent a change towards greater rigidity. There were instances of Sati. An ideal wife was one who would remain taciturn and dine after her husband. Of course, women still received education and could show their talent. Celebrated women like Gargi and Maitreyi showed their merit in the spheres of highest learning. Gargi was one of the learned persons summoned by king Janaka to attend the Philosophical conference convened by him. The *Upanisads* refer to an intellectual conversation between Maitreyi and her husband, Yajnavalkya.

### **Caste System**

The greatest change which the later Vedic Period saw in the Aryan society was the rise of rigid cast system. It destroyed the values of human equality of the earlier days and created distinction of their occupation. The later Vedic Society came to be divided into four *Varnas* or castes called *Brahmanas*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaisyas* and *Sudras*. During the *Rig Vedic*

period there was no caste system and the people were engaged in different professions. Some performed the different mode of worship, some fought as soldiers, and some engaged themselves in cultivation and in trade and commerce. In course of time these professions of people during the later Vedic Age known as *Brahmanas*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaisyas* and *Sudras*. *Brahmanas* emerged the most important class who conducted rituals and sacrifices for their clients and for themselves. They occupied the most important position in the society. *Kshatriyas* were given the second position. They were the military and ruling class. The third category was the *Vaisya*. The *Vaisya* remained tagged to trade, agriculture and production of essential articles. The fourth category called the *Sudras* who performed all menial jobs and were looked down upon as out caste. In course of time several sub-castes followed from the caste system. Society became more complex day by day. The *Brahmanas* and *Kshatriyas* regarded themselves as higher class and made monopoly of social privileges. According to *Satapatha Brahman*, while the *Brahmanas* and *Kshatriyas* could marry women from the *Vaishyas* and the *Sudras*, the *Vaishyas* and *Sudras* could not marry *Brahmana* and *Kshatriya* girls. It was difficult to change one's caste.

### **Ashram System**

Another important feature of the social organization during the later *Vedic* period was the prevalence of *Ashram* or four stages of life. According to this concept the life of a person was divided into four stages namely *Brahmacharya*, *Grihastha*, *Vanaprastha* and *Sanyas*. *Brahmacharya Ashrama* which lasted upto the age of 25 years. During this period a person spent most of his time in receiving education in gurukul. The student had to lead a very simple life. The *Grihastha Ashrama* which lasted from 26 to 50 years of age. It was a period of married life and to look after the family. The *Vanaprastha Ashram* lasted from 51 to 75 years of age. During this period the person was expected to detach from his family to lead a pious life. The *Sanyas Ashram* was the final stage and complete detachment from family life. It may be observed that though the life was based on *Ashram* system during the later Vedic age, but it was not strictly adhered to. The *Ashram* System promoted a sense of self-discipline among the people.

### **Dress and Ornaments**

There was no remarkable change in the sphere of dress during later Vedic Age. People used clothes made of cotton, silk and wool. Generally, the dress consisted of three garments viz. under garments (*nivi*), lower garments and Upper Garments (*Adhivasa*). People

also used turban. The ornaments like armlets, finger rings, necklaces etc made of gold and silver were used by the people. Different varieties of cosmetics were also used.

### **Food and Drinks**

The food habits of the Aryans during later *Vedic Age* underwent some change. Rice was the most staple food of the people. The common items consumed by the people were milk and milk products, barley, rice, beans etc. During this period people gradually developed their disliking towards non-vegetarian food. Killing of cow was looked with disfavour. People also took certain intoxicant drinks like *Sura* which has prepared from certain herbs and plants.

### **Amusements**

Like the early Vedic people, the later Vedic people had different hobbies and pastimes, sports, music, dancing and various indoor games were the main source of recreation. Horse racing and chariot racing were quite popular. Chess and dicing were popular indoor games. Music was played with several instruments like flute, lutes etc., by the men.

### **Education**

In the later *Vedic Age* also script was not developed. The rhymes were learnt by the priest by heart and the whole *Vedic* text has, thus passed down generation to generation orally. Education became more common among the higher classes. It is evident from the *Vedic* text the people had developed high intellectual standards and possessed a well organized system of education. The education of a child started from the early age through the Upanayana ceremony. Education mostly consisted of home-teaching. The *Brahman* teachers taught the student at their homes till the completion of his education. As a student he had to serve his teacher. He was supposed to collect fire wood, look after the cows and to help the guru in the household activities. He had to live a disciplined life. The main curricula of the education consisted of the study of *Vedas*, *Puranas*, scriptures, philosophy, medicine, ethics, Science, astronomy, astrology etc. Language and grammar were also taught to the students. It is probable that Sanskrit was used by the scholars. Another notable feature of the education during the later Vedic period was the existence of wandering teachers (*Charakas*) who continued to move in different parts of the country to spread knowledge. Obviously, most of the teaching was done orally and the students were required to learn the things by heart. In short a lot of emphasis was given to education during the later Vedic Age.

### 3.3.2 RELIGION

During the later Vedic age the simple religion of the early Vedic Aryans became complicated one. The hold of the priestly class became more absolute. The priest developed a complicated mode of worship. Sacrifice became a common feature of religion. Superstitions made its appearance in religious sphere. Brahmins or priestly class established their supremacy in religious and social spheres.

The old gods, *Varuna*, *Indra*, *Agni*, *Surya* etc. of early Vedic age were worshipped with less zeal. These gods lost their importance. The new gods like *Prajapati*, *Siva*, *Rudra*, and *Vishnu* became prominent. *Prajapati*, the creator now occupied the supreme position among the Vedic gods. *Rudra* the god of animals and *Vishnu*, the preserver and protector of the people enjoyed the next position. *Siva* and *Rudra* are synonymous. The *Siva* later on became regarded as the great god (*Mahadev*) and the lord of animal beings (*Pasupati*). *Pushan* was associated with the *Sudras* as the god of cattle. *Gandhavas*, *Apsaras*, *Nagas* etc were raised to a semi divine rank. Monotheism was being advocated. Worship of Gods was mainly for the purpose of attaining material prosperity.

Another change that took place during this period is in the mode of worship. Elaborate and complicated rituals and sanskaras were introduced during this period which necessitated the existence of priestly class. Sacrifice became the all important thing in worship. Animal sacrifice caused the destruction of cattle wealth. Sacrifices were associated by formulae and rituals. One who performed sacrifice was called *Yamana*. Sacrifices assumed both public and domestic character. Public sacrifices involved the king and the whole of the community. The private sacrifices were performed by individuals in their houses due to well-established households. The priest who performed sacrifices was given *dakshina* or gifts.

It was believed that by right performance of rituals and correct pronounciation of mantras it was possible not only to please the gods but also to control them to get desired results. The *Brahmanas* invented new ritual practices making worship complicated. The *Atharva Veda* contains a number of popular superstition, beliefs, spells, charms, and witch crafts etc. found favour with the people. The ceremonies became more elaborate, complicated and expensive. The exploitation by priestly class created social tension. We hear that as many as 240,000 cows were given as *dakshina* or gift to the officiating priest in the rajasuya sacrifice. In addition to cows, gold, clothes and horses were also given as gift to the priests.

Sometimes there was demand of land as *dakshina* or gift by the priests. The *Satapatha Brahmana* states that in the *Asvamedha Yajna* all should be given to the priest.

Towards the end of the Vedic period we notice a strong reaction against priestly domination, against cults and rituals, especially in Panchal and Videha region around 600 B.C. During this period *Upanisadas* were compiled. These Philosophical texts criticized the rituals and laid stress on the value of right belief and knowledge.

The religious life of the later *Vedic Aryans* was based on high sense of morality and duty. They believed that worshipping the Gods, studying the *Vedas*, performing the funeral ceremonies etc. indicated high moral sense and duties. Side by side, the concept of transmigration of soul was also developed. That the soul has to born again and again and reaps the fruits of the actions of their previous lives. The people also believed in *Karma* (deeds). The idea of reward and punishment after death in exact correspondence to the good and bad deeds of a person in his life. The later Vedic Aryans also emphasized on austerity (*Tapas*) and celibacy (*Brahmacharya*). The Philosophy of *Tapas* emphasized by the *Aranyakas* and the Philosophy of attaining *Nirvana* or Salvation of soul through Gyana or knowledge emphasized by the *Upanishads* is the product of the later Vedic Age.

The concept and principle of *Brahman*, *Nirvana*, transmigration of soul and *Karma* grew up and perfected during this age. Thus Hindu religion and philosophies largely the heritage of the later Vedic Age.

### 3.4.3 ECONOMY

#### **Agriculture**

The later Vedic Aryans lived in the villages like their ancestors in the Rig Vedic age. With the expansion of Aryan kingdoms new dominions and new people came under the Aryan culture. Agriculture continued to be one of the principal occupations of the people. Although very few agricultural tools made of iron have been found, there is no doubt that agriculture was the chief means of livelihood of the later Vedic people. Ploughing was done with the help of oxen and wooden plough share. Therefore agriculture was primitive, but there is no doubt its wide prevalence. The *Satapatha Brahmana* speaks at length about the ploughing rituals. In those days' even kings and princes did not hesitate to take to manual labour. In later times ploughing came to be prohibited for the members of the upper varnas or castes. The later Vedic people continued to produce varieties of crops like rice, barley, wheat,

oil seeds etc. For the first time the Vedic people came to be acquainted with rice in doab region and its remains recovered from Hastinapur belong to the eighth century B.C. The use of rice was recommended in the rituals of the priests. The knowledge of metallurgy developed giving new ideas about tools and metal equipments. During later *Vedic Age* the transfer of land was disapproved. There are references to artificial water ways which make it certain that the system of irrigation was known to them. Manures were used by them. Cow, oxen, sheep, goat, dog, horse, donkey were their domesticated animals. Elephant was also tamed during the later *Vedic Age*.

### **Arts and Crafts**

The later *Vedic* period saw the rise of diverse arts and crafts. There are many references about basket makers, rope makers, chariot makers, bow makers, carpenters, tanners, dyers, weavers, potters, smiths etc. Women were engaged in making embroidery garments, dyers and basket making. Weaving was confined to women but was practiced on a wide scale. Leather work, pottery and carpenters work made great progress. The later Vedic people were acquainted with four types of pottery: black and red ware, black – slipped ware, painted grey ware and red ware. The last type of pottery was most popular and has been found in different parts of Western Uttar Pradesh. However, the most distinctive pottery of the period is known as painted Grey ware. It consisted of bowls and dishes which were used either for rituals or for eating. Jewel workers are also mentioned in later Vedic texts. We hear of smiths and smelters, who had certainly to do something with iron working. Numerous copper tools of the pre-later Vedic period found in Western Uttar Pradesh and Bihar might suggest the existence of copper smith. Copper was the first metal to be used by the Vedic people. Copper objects have been found in Painted Grey Ware sites. They were used mainly for war and hunting and also for ornaments.

### **Town, Trade and Commerce**

The later Vedic people were agricultural and led a settled life. But since they cultivated with the wooden plough share and primitive method, the peasants could not produce enough for feeding. Hence the peasants could not contribute much to the rise of towns. Although the term *nagara* is used in later Vedic texts we can trace only the faint beginnings of towns towards the end of the later Vedic period. Hastinapur and Kausambi (Allahabad) can be regarded as primitive towns belonging to the end of the Vedic period. They may be called proto-urban sites.



The *Vedic* texts also refer to the seas and sea voyages. This suggests some kind of trade and commerce which may have stimulated by the rise of new arts and crafts. On the otherhand the emergence of large kingdoms led to the construction of roads and bridges. This promoted trade and commerce. Cart roads, chariot routes and navigation routes were looked after by the state. Communication facilities provided favourable atmosphere for economic growth. Maritime trade was utilized for supporting the urban centres. During the early Vedic Age, barter system was practiced but during the later *Vedic Age* the commerce was facilitate by the use of convenient units of value like the *atamana*, *the nishka* and *the Krishna*. These were gold pieces of a certain definite weight were used by the traders as a means of currency. References to *ganas* (corporation) of the business people are noticed. There were inland trades with the *Kiratas* inhabiting the mountains. As regards means of transport, there were wagons drawn by oxen, chariots, ships and boats.

On the whole the later Vedic phase registered a great advanced in the material life of the people. The pastoral and semi-nomadic forms of living were relegated to the back ground. Agriculture became the primary source of livelihood and life became settled and sedentary. Supplemented by diverse arts and crafts the Vedic people now settled down permanently in the upper Gangetic plains.

### 3.3.4 POLITY

#### **Kingdoms**

The Arayans called their state *Rashtra*. The small tribal kingdoms of the early Vedic age gave place to large territorial Kingdoms during he later Vedic age. The old tribes of *Bharatas* and *Purus* and old customs went into the background and new states emerged. A number of tribes set up their kingdoms in the later Vedic age. The new kingdoms were the *Kurus*, *Panchalas*, *Kosala*, *Kashi*, *Videha*, *Magadha* and *Kalinga*. The *Kuru-Panchalas* were the most prominent in the new age. They were considered to the best representatives of the Vedic culture, speakers of the best Sanskrit, performers of sacrifices with perfection, the best kings and patrons of learning. *Kasi*, *Kosala* and *Videha* are referred to as the seats of Vedic culture. On certain occasions, these three states joined together in a confederacy. The kingdom of *Magadha* located in South Bihar finds mention in *Atharva Veda* alongwith the kingdom of *Anga* (East Bihar). The people of *Magadha* were described as *Vratyas* in the *Atharva Veda* and regarded as out castes and nomads. This kingdom was probably colonized

by the members of Kuru – Panchala tribe and played an important role in ancient Indian history after Alexander's invasion.

### **Kingship**

In the later *Vedic* age monarchy continued to be the main form of the government and the kings became more powerful. The tribal kingdoms of early Vedic period were replaced by large kingdoms. Hereditary monarchy was the usual polity. Raja was elevated to the status of *Chakravarty*. With the increase in the territorial size of a kingdom, the concept of *Rashtra* and *Samrajya* emerged. Initially each state was named after the tribe which first settled there but subsequently they began to be known by the territorial names. For example, Panchala was first a name of a people, but subsequently it began to be used as name of a region. The king performed *Rajsuya* and *Asvamedha* ceremony to proclaim his status. *Vajapeya* sacrifice was another imperial ceremony which was performed by the powerful kings in which the royal chariot was made to win the race against his kinsmen. The ideas of imperialism began to grow during this period. This is abundantly proved by terms such as *Adhiraj*, *Rajadhiraj*, *Samrat*, *Ekrat* and *Virat*.

Another notable feature about the kingship in the later Vedic period was the theory of the divine origin of kingship. This is evident from the fact that the various works of this time refer to the divine elements in the kings. By which the kings claimed absolute royal power over their subjects. *Atharva Veda* describes king *Parikshit* as god amongst men. Likewise *Aitareya Brahmana*, *Smritis* and *Puranas* also attached divinity to the person of the king. All these rituals impressed the people with the increasing power and prestige of the king. The ideal set before the kings was to win all victories, attain superiority, preeminence and supremacy over all kings and achieve over lordship. It was the duty of the kings to protect the people, maintain the laws and destroyed the enemies of his subjects.

Though the kingship was absolute during this period but there were certain democratic elements in the same. Monarchy was normally hereditary but there is occasional reference that the people had a hand in the election of the king. Even after his election, the king was always anxious to secure the loyalty and support of the people. Certain conditions were imposed on the king at his coronation. The formal enthronement had to pass through several stages. The new king had to seek the approval of the earth or the mother country by

uttering certain mantras. The king and the earth were required to enter into friendly relations like those of a son and mother. The king was required to make offerings to *Savita*, *Agni*, *Soma*, *Brihaspati*, *Indra*, *Rudra Mitra* and *Varuna*. Water was collected from seventeen different sources such as river, sea, well, pool etc. That water was to be sprinkled on the king jointly by *Brahmana*, *Kshatriya* and *Vaisya*. Next the bath an oath was administered to the king before he was seated on throne. Then he took the following oath: “If I play the false, I may lose the merit of all my religious performances and gifts of my good deeds, my placed, my life, and even my progeny.” The people of four casts were asked to protect their kings as a precious treasure.

The king was not an unquestioned despot. The *Sabha* and the *Samiti* the two popular assemblies acted as a check on his authority. The ministers, though appointed by the king to advise him, also acted as a check on his authority. Above all, the king was bound by the well established customs. If a king behaved in an autocratic maner, the people could remove or replace him. There are references in *Atharva Veda* about the expulsion, re-election and restoration of the king to the throne.

### **Popular assemblies**

The popular assemblies the *Sabha* and the *Samiti* of the *Rig Veda* period continued. But they lost much of their earlier importance. They were dominated by royal princes and rich aristocrat. The *Vidatha* completely disappeared. The women were no longer permitted to participate on the *Sabha*. Most of the members were nobles and priest. This was due to the enormous increase in the power of the king.

### **Officials**

With the growth of royal power and expansion of territories the king was compelled to obtain the services of several officials known as *Ratnins* to look after the various administrative departments. Some of the important officials those who helped in the administration, as mentioned in the *Taittiriya* texts were : *Purohita* (the chief priest and counselor of the King), *Rajanya* (the nobles and the representative of the Warrior class), *Senani*, (the Commander of the army), *Mahishi* (the Chief queen of the King), *Vavata*, (kings favourite wife), *Parivkriti*, (descendent wife), *Grammani*, (the Village headman), *Suta*, (the Charioteer), *Samgrahitri*, (the treasurer), *Bhagadugha*, (Collector of taxes), *Akshavapa*, (the Superintendent of dicing), *Kshattri*, (the Chamberlain), *Govikartana*, (the Chief huntsman)

and *Palagala*, (the courier or messenger). The *Maitrayani Samhita* adds the *Takshan*, (the carpenter) and *Ratnakara*, (the Chariotmaker).

The official nobility wielded great power and the *Suta* and the *Gramani* were designated king makers (Prajakrit). Besides the queen, the son and the brother of the king, the *Purohit*, the *Suta*, the *Gramini*, the *Kshatri* and the *Samgrahitri* were regarded as chief supporter or defenders (*Viras*) of the king. There were no regular institutions for justice. The king administered criminal justice. Sometimes the king could delegate the responsibility of imparting justice to a royal officer *Rajanya*. At the local level the cases either decided by the chiefs of dominant tribes or by the assemblies or by the *Gramyavadin* the village judge. For evidence, eye-witnesses were looked upon as more important than informers. Several punishments, including death penalty or amputation of hands were meted out to the criminals. Killing an embryo, murder of *Brahmana* was regarded as serious crimes. Treachery towards the king was always punished with death.

Due to the expansion of the kingdom, the king divided the empire into number of provinces. To look after the provincial administration two officers were appointed. The officers were *Sthapati* and *Satapati*. The *Sthapati* was concerned with the administration of aboriginal tribes. On the otherhand, *Satapati* was entrusted to look after the administration of a group of hundred villages. At the lowest rung of the ladder stood the village officials, *adhikrita*.

There was no evidence of standing army in the later Vedic period. However, it seems that the army was confined to the Kinsmen, The army was primarily constituted of the infantry and the charioteers and the main weapons were bows, arrows, spears, lances and strings.

In the later *Vedic* period we find the collection of the taxes from the people. The references to *Sangrahitri* and *Bhagadugha* coupled with the mention of regular contribution from the people in the shape of *Bali* clearly demonstrated the existence of revenue administration. The *Brahmanas* were exempted from the taxes. The main burden of taxation was borne by the people attached to various professions. *Bhag*, *Sulk* and *Bali* were the taxes collected by the king.

### 3.4 SANGAM AGE

Sangam age is the period of history of ancient Tamil Nadu and Kerala known as Tamilakam spanning from 5<sup>th</sup> Century BC to 3<sup>rd</sup> Century A.D. The word 'Sangam' is the Tamil form of the Sanskrit word *Sangha* which means a group of persons or an association. It is named after the famous Sangam academies of poets and scholars centered in the city of Madurai. In old Tamil language, the term Tamilkam referred to the whole of the ancient Tamil speaking area, corresponding roughly to the area known as Southern India. According to Tamil legends, there were three Sangam periods, namely Head Sangam, Middle Sangam and Last Sangam. The first Sangam had its seat in old Madura under the patronage of the Pandya kings which included celebrities like Agastya. The second Sangam had its seat at Kapatapuram or Alaivai. The most important work of this period was *Tolkappiyam*, the great Tamil grammar. The third and last Sangam had its seat at Madura whose works have come down to us in the shape of anthologies. The age of the Sangam is the age to which the Sangam literature belonged. It is difficult to give an exact estimate of the period, but it is possible to suggest a period within which such literature was produced and the political and social life depicted in that literature prevailed.

Scholars are not unanimous in determining the Sangam Age. Modern writers have dismissed the first two Sangams as pure myths. According to Professor K.A.N. Sastri, the Sangam Age flourished sometime after the third century B.C. L.D. Swamikannu Pillai assigns the Sangam Age to the seventh and eighth century A.D. Dr. N.P. Chakravarthy pushes it back to the sixth century A.D. which S.K. Iyengar, S. Pillai and K.K. Pillai place the age in the first and second century. The generally accepted period of the Sangam Age, especially the last one, is somewhere in between 500 B.C. and 300 A.D.

The Sangam Age has produced a large mass of literature with a variety of subjects. Social customs, religious practices, rituals, important duties; art of war, folk tales, foreign trade etc. were also dealt by the Sangam poets. These literatures throw valuable light on the political, social religious and economic life of the people of the Tamil country.

#### 3.4.1 SOCIETY AND RELIGION

The earliest social elements of the Tamil Society consisted of Negroid and Australoid groups with a mixture of another racial stock known as *Nagas*. This miscellaneous group received the *Dravidian* stock which migrated from the eastern Mediterranean regions and was so called because it spoke a *Dravidian* tongue. After a few centuries came waves of migration from North India and this added the third element to evolving Tamil society. After the

process of Aryanisation had reached an advanced stage the society was distinguishable by its three major stratification. (1) those who followed the brahmanical way of life and this include the *Brahmins* who came from the north and the natives those who adopted the brahminical way of life; (ii) non brahmanical elements among the *Dravidian* Stock, and (iii) the three *Dravidian* groups. Though the *Varna* System was brought in by the immigrating *Brahmins* it did not include the *Kshatriyas* as in the north. The introduction of *Varna* system in the South led to two principles in that society: (1) the acceptance of the social superiority of the *Brahmin* as a social group and (2) the organization of profession on a hereditary basis.

The traditional caste system prevalent in the Vedic society did not exist as we donot get any references. The Sangam literature speaks of many tribes and also refers to the traditional castes. This means that the caste divisions and the tribal arrangement stood side by side. However, the caste system existed in an inchoate way when we find *Arivars* or sages were accorded higher place than the *Brahmanas*. Another class, known as *Ulavar*, was essentially consists of peasants. There were aristocratic classes like *Vellalar* and *Karalar*, who were held in high esteem. The other classes included *Avar* (Eyinar), *Vedduvars* (hunters and shepherds), *Padaiadchier* (the armed men), *Valainar* (fishermen) and *Pulayars* (Scavengers). Thus the Tamilian people had their own class divisions instead of tradional hide-bound four-fold division of society. The Sangam society was not priest dominated although the priests were slowly trying to assume powers of advice and supervision. The most distinctive feature of Tamil caste system was the Brahmin, for the king, the merchants and peasants did not correspond to the *Kshatriyas*, *Vaisyas* and *Sudras* of the Aryan caste system. The introduction of caste system did not bring about a revolution in Tamilahan. It spread only the superiority of Brahmins and organization of professions on a hereditary basis.

We have no positive evidence to show the existence of the construction of slavery during the Sangam Age. We have no references to the sale and purchase of human – beings. However, the prevalence of salvery is attested to by even the most ancient text. The Tamil Slave was known as the *Adimai* literally, one who lived at the feet of another. Many serfs living without any right on land and just being maintained by land owners.

In the Sangram Age the status of women was not equal to that of men. Through out her life she was subject to the authority of one male or another, first her father and then her husband. The woman had no property right. Till her marriage she belonged to the caste and gotra of her father and after marriage she assumed those of her husband. Monogamy was the

usual practice. Polygamy was however practiced. The condition of a widow was so horrible that most wise widows preferred to commit *Sati*. *Sati* however was not a widespread practice among the lower communities. It was, however, prevalent in the royal families and among the aristocrats. There were different kinds of marriages. There were idealistic ways of marriage which involved no rituals, marriage on negotiations, marriage on consent of man and woman and marriage involved lot of rituals. There were female ascetics of Buddhist or Jain Sangam like Kaundi Adigal and Manimekalai. Women acted as body guards and courtesans.

The Sangam people were accustomed to good food. Non-vegetarianism was the main food habit though the Brahmins and the ascetic orders preferred vegetarian. Rice was the staple food. The non-vegetarians took mutton, fish, turtle etc. Intoxicants were freely used.

There were various types of dress worn by the people. The kind of dress varied from class to class and individual to individual. Most people wore cotton and the aristocrats used silk. The average dress of the Sangam Tamils comprised a loin cloth and a towel dropped on their shoulders. Ornaments were used by both male and female. Ornaments of many kinds of gold and of silver were known and used. The anklet, the rings, the necklaces, the waist bands and the ear-rings were the common ornaments. The *Tali* was a sacred ornament. The bangles on the wrists and the *Tali* around the neck were not to be removed by any married woman unless she was a widow. Flowers were the greatest favourites of Tamil women. The people loved perfumery.

The popular entertainments of the Sangam Age were bull-baiting, cock-fight and goat-fighting. Gambling and wrestling were practiced widely. The Sangam people had their own beliefs and superstitions. The dead were disposed of by cremation, by burial or by being thrown to the vultures and the jackals. They believed in dreams and the influence of the planet so on human life. They believed in the significance of dreams and omens. They believed in and feared ghosts and spirits.

## **Religion**

The Sangam period in Tamilkam was characterized by the coexistence of many religions like Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism alongwith the ethnic religions of the Tamil people. Ancient Tamil grammatical works *Tolkappiyam*, the ten anthologies *Pathuppattu*, the eight anthologies *Ettuttokai* sheds light on early religion of ancient Tamil people. The

religion of the Sangam Tamils was not of uniform or single pattern. The people knew and preached both the ritualistic and supplicatory aspects of religion. Their rituals were related to animism and other forms of deity worship. They worshipped tree, stone, water, animal, stars and planets. The gods were worshipped by the people living in their regions. The cowherd worshipped *Tirumal*. The hunters worshipped *Murgan*. The farmers worshipped *Indra*. There was a festival instituted in *Puhar* in honour of *Indra*. The fishermen worshipped *Varuna* the God of water. The worship of sun and moon was known.

The most popular deity was *Murugan*, who has from a very early date been identified with *Karthikeya*, the son of *Siva*. *Siva* was the Supreme God. Temples of *Murgan* are mentioned in the Sangam literature. It is believed that *Murgan* was supposed to reside generally on the hill-tops. *Murugan* undoubtedly was the favourite god of the Tamils. The worship of *Murugan* was done in primitive way as well as in the more sophisticated and Brahminical way. *Indra*, *Yama*, *Varuna* and *Soma* are mentioned as the guardians of the four directions viz., the east, west, north, and south respectively. There were parallel names in Tamil and Sanskrit for the same gods like *Muruga* – *Subrahmanya*, *Siva* – *Rudra*, *Mayan* – *Vishnu*, and *Kali* – *Parvathi* etc. A large number of temples are mentioned in the Sangam literature. The temple of *Indra* is mentioned in *Silappadikaram* and in *Manimekalai*. The name of *Ganesh* is also not specifically mentioned in Sangam literature.

Jainism and Buddhism were also flourished in South.

### 3.4.2 LITERATURE

The Sangam literature is the ancient Tamil literature of the period in the history of South India. Spanning from 300 B.C. to 300 A.D. barring Sanskrit and some kinds of Prakrit, Tamil produced the earliest literature in India. Most of the available Sangam literature is from the Third Sangam or Last Sangam, this period is known as the Sangam period, which refers to the prevalent Sangam legends claiming literary academies lasting thousands of years, giving the name to the corpus of literature. There is, however, difference of opinion as to what texts comprise the Sangam literature. The most orthodox view holds that the *Tolkappiyam*, *Ettuttogai* (eight anthologies), *Pattupattu* (an anthology of ten long verses) and most of the eighteen minor works known as the *Padinenkilakkanakku* as well as the *Tagadur Yattirai* and the *Muttolayiran* along with the two epics *Silappdikaram* and *Manimekalai* constitute the Sangam literature. The only religious poems among the shorter poems occur in *Paripaatal*. The rest of the corpus of Sangam literature deals with human relationship and



emotions. The poems belonging to Sangam literature were composed by Tamil poets, both men and women, from various professions and classes of society. Sangam literature deals with emotional and material topics such as love, war, governance, trade and bereavement. Some of the greatest Tamil scholars like Thiruvalluvar, who wrote on ethics and on the various issues of life like virtue, wealth and love and the Tamil poet Mamulnar, who explored historical incidents that happened in India lived during the Sangam period.

### **Learning**

The Sangam Age was the product of liberal and technical education. The society was advanced and civilized. The people knew enough science, mathematics, engineering, astronomy, logic and ethics to sustain the civilization. Their literature is an index of their refinement in thought and expression. There was no institutional system of education but merely an oral tradition of teacher to teach by word of mouth and from generation to generation. The Kanakkayar was the ancient Tamil teacher. Technical and craft education was imparted at home by father to son. Memory was a necessary and chief instrument of transmission of knowledge. The Brahmins learnt and taught the *Vedas* and allied studies. The princes of the royal family learnt the art of war in military schools. The merchants and royal servants were probably more interested in arithmetic for professional reasons. The *Brahmans* were interested in Astronomy. The teachers who taught the large number of students in a particular place called *Kulapatis*. The girls of Sangam Age were given a good training in literature, music and drama. The Sangam literature bears ample evidence to the fact that many women had distinguished themselves in the art of music. More than fifty women have been ranked among the Sangam poets.

### **Art and Architecture**

The tradition of art and architecture of Sangam Age could be gauged only by inference through mention in literature. Among the arts, painting was greatly developed. The walls of the houses of the richer people and courtesans were painted with appropriate colour. Architecture, secular and religious, was known to and practiced by as evidenced by the Sangam literature. Music of a fairly high order as well as the art of dancing reached fairly high levels of perfection. Their sculptures were in the medium of plaster. The material used by the sculptors was of a perishable nature and hence there is no concrete evidence about the Sangam Sculptures.

### 3.4.3 ECONOMY

The economy of Sangam Age was self sufficient. Some classes were very rich and some were very poor which have been described in Sangam literature. The division of social group into the rich and poor and accepted not only as a natural condition but also a desirable condition. Agriculture was the main occupation of the common people. The distinguished few are the priests and the servants of the king. Rice, ragi, sugarcane, cotton, pepper, ginger, turmeric, fruits and nuts were the main products of the period.

The Sangam age witnessed an advanced stage of industries and crafts. The textile industry, house building, planning and buildings of towns and forging of weapons provided necessities comforts and luxuries of life. A large number of people were engaged in industries and commerce both in land and foreign. The major towns like Puhar, Uraiyur, Tondi, Musiri, Madurai, Kanchi etc. absorbed most of the manufactured goods. Industry was encouraged on account of a rising demand in foreign markets. Shipping and other allied industries like harbor building and warehouse construction etc. were developed to sustain foreign trade. The market place was known as *Avanam*. It was a centre of transactions. Spinning and weaving were the most important and widely practiced crafts. Weaving was a specialized industry in certain very important centres like Uraiyur, Madurai etc. The smithy was an important industrial factory where weapons of war were forged and repaired. Carpentry was a very common industry.

The literature of Sangam Age is full of details regarding the trading and commercial activities of the people. There was both internal and foreign trade at that time. Most of the trade was carried on by barter. Paddy constituted the most commonly accepted medium of exchange especially in the rural areas. There was an extensive trade with foreign countries. The large quantities of Roman gold and silver coins found in the interior of the Tamilnadu testing to the existence of a large volume of trade. Towards the end of the second century A.D., the direct trade between the Roman Empire and Indian declined. The internal trade carried by caravans of merchants. The members of the warrior class were recruited to escort the caravans from the attack of the highway robbers.

Tamil Nadu had certain commodities which were in great demand in foreign markets. Those were, ginger, rice, sandal-wood, camellum, cinamon, turmeric, ivory and pearls. Salt was an important article of internal trade.

The more or less continuous state of warfare in the country must have affected adversely the economy of the land. While agriculture, trade and commerce flourished, the fine arts, poetry, music and dancing were liberally patronised. The general economic condition of the people was not very unsatisfactory.

#### 3.4.4 POLITY

The southern end of the Indian Peninsula situated south of the Krishna River was divided into three kingdoms during Sangram Age – the Cholas, Pandya and Chera or Kerala. We can construct the political history of the three kingdoms of the Sangam period with the help of mainly the Sangam literature and secondarily external sources like epigraphs found outside Tamil country and foreign notices of family Tamilhan. The Pandyas are first mentioned by Greek ambassador Megasthens, who says that their kingdom was celebrated for pearls. The Cholas, Pandyas and the Cheras, all the three are mentioned in the inscriptions of Ashoka in the third century B.C. It is difficult to identify which out of the three kingdoms was the earliest.

#### The Cheras

The Chera or Kerala country was situated to the west and north of the land of the Pandayas. It included the narrow strip of the land between the sea and the mountains and covered a portion of the modern Kerala state. In the early centuries of the Christian era the Chera country was an important as the country of the Cholas and Pandyas. The major source of information in regard to the Cheras is the famous anthology, the *Purananuru*. The known history of Cheras begins with an encounter between Chera king Perum Sorru Udiyan Cheral Adan and the Satavahanas. Udiyan was a great warrior. He is said to have defeated Satakarni II, the Satavahan King. Nedum Cheral Adan was the successor of Udiyan. He won a naval victory against a local chiftain on Malabar Coast. He possessed a large army. He defeated the Yavanas and imprisoned many of them.

According to Chera poets their greatest king was Senguittuvan the son of Imaya varamban. He defeated the Aryans in North India. The most important event in the political history of the Cheras was their fight against Cholas about 150 A.D. Although the Cheras killed the father of the Chola King Karikala, the Chera king also lost his life. After the second century A.D. the Chera power declined, and we have nothing of its history till the eight Century A.D.

## **The Cholas**

The Chola Kingdom was called Cholamandalam or Coromandal. It was situated to the north – east of the territory of the Pandayas between the Pennar and the Velur rivers. The Cholas gave themselves a solar origin. Their origins as given in later literary works are mythical. They connected themselves with Sibi and Manu of the Sanskrit *Puranas*. Historically speaking the first Chola ruler to be mentioned by our sources is Uruvappahrer Ilam Senni, who ruled from Uraiyur, a place famous for cotton trade. It seems that in the middle of the second Century B.C. a Chola king named Elara conquered Sri Lanka and ruled sover it for nearly 50 years.

The real history of the Cholas begins in the Second century A.D. The greatest king of the Sangam Age was Karikala Chola, who flourished around 100 A.D. He created an alternative capital for the Chola Kingdom in Puhar also called KaviriPpumpattinam at the mouth of the river Kaveri. It was a great centre of trade and commerce and excavation show that it had a large dock. Karikala was a just ruler and a valliant warrior. He fought two battles and he emerged compeletely victorious. In the first battle he defeated the Chera king Perumcheraladan and in the second battle at Vagai Pparandalai he defeated nine princes. He had a powerful navy which he used to conquer Ceylon. He brought from there a number of prisoners of war who were engaged as labour for construction of 160 Km of embankment along the Kaveri River.

One of the main sources of the wealth of the Cholas was trade in cotton cloth. They maintained and efficient navy which sailed as far as the mouths of Ganga and the Iravadi, and in later centuries went even to the Malaya archipelago. Under Karikala's successors the Chola power rapidly declined. Their capital Kaveripattanam was overwhelmed and destroyed. Their two neighbouring powers, the Cheras and the Pandyas extended at the cost of the Cholas. There is not much to write about the later history of the Cholas. The Chola Kingdom was plunged into chaos and confusion. What remained of the Chola Power was almost wiped out by the attacks of the Pallavas from the north.

## **The Pandays**

The Pandya territory occupied the Southern most and the South – eastern portion of the Indian Peninsula and it roughly included the modern districts of Tinnevelly, Ramnad and Madurai in Tamil Nadu. It had its capital at Madurai, which was the Tamil word Mathura.

The literature compiled in the Tamil academics in the early centuries of the Christian era and called the Sangam literature refers to the Pandya rulers, but it does not give any connected account. The Pandayas were perhaps the oldest among the Sangam Tamil ruling dynasties. In legend and early literature we hear of a Pandyan king called Vadimbalambaninra Pandyan. He was also called Nediyan. He was one of the most reputed and remembered among the kings of the Pandayan dynasty.

Among the Pandyan rulers of the Sangam Age the most reputed in epic and history was Aryappadai Kadanda Nedum Seliyan. He was the Pandayan rulers, according to the Silappadikaram. He is said to have defeated the Aryan kings of north. That is why he was given the title of Aryappadaikadanda. His achievements had recorded in the Maduraikanchi. He instituted a festival in honour of Kannagi, the lady of Chastity. He was the contemporary of Chera King Senguttuvan. Of all the Pandyan rulers of the Sangam age historically the most important, however, was Talaiyalangaattu Nedum Seliyan. He came to the throne when he was very young. He set out to defeat a confederacy of enemies including the Chera, the Chola and five Chieftaines. In this battle he was completely victorious and the Chera was taken captive. This battle was fought at Talaiyalanganam in the north – eastern part of the Pandyan land and it was one of the most important events in Sangam history. The Sinnamanur and the Velvikkudi plates of later times refer to it.

The last great Pandayan king of the Sangam age was Kannapperkadanda Ugrapperuvaludi. He was a poet and Patron. He defeated Vengali Marban, the ruler of Kanapper Egil (a forest fortress). He was a contemporary of great Chola Perunarkilli who performed the imperial sacrifice. Among the feudatories of the Pandayas the greatest was Pari who ruled over the Parambu and is reckoned by tradition as the greatest among patrons of those times. There were number of local chieftains who played a minor role in the history of the Sangam Tarnils.

It is evident from the literature that the Pandaya Kingdom was wealthy and prosperous. The Pandya kings profited from trade with the Roman empire and sent embassies to the Roman emperor Augustus.

The main interest of the political history of these three kingdoms lies in the continuous wars they fought with one another and also with Srilanka. By about fifty century A.D., the glory of Sangram disappeared.

## The System of Government

The Tamils during the Sangam age were ruled by various kings. There were also a large number of independent chieftains who shared the government of the country. The most common form of government in the Sangam age was hereditary monarchy. Hereditary succession did not necessarily mean succession by primogeniture. But usually the eldest son was recognized. The royal court was called *Arsavai* or *Vettavai*. This court was the centre of the political activities of the king. The king had certain basic functions and those were learning, performing sacrifice and protecting the subjects. The sacrifices prescribed for the kings were *Rajsuya* (the imperial Sacrifice) and *Asvamedha* (the horse sacrifice). The royal emblem of Chola Kings was the tiger, that of the Cheras the bow and that of the Pandayas the carp. The royal umbrella accompanied the king to the battle field along with royal flag. The Sangam monarch was an autocrat whose powers could not be checked and challenged. The king was expected to maintain the dignity of his office by looking after the welfare of the people and maintaining law and order. He had his prerogatives and his duties.

The Sangam kings enjoyed absolute and unquestioned discretion. They had their advisors whom they consulted if they wished and accepted their advice if they felt like doing so. The learned men in general and the purohit and the astrologer influenced the king such more than others. Divine qualities were attributed to the king. He was treated with respect and given the worship due to God. The divine right of the king to rule was fully accepted. Two political institutions were flourished during Sangam age. This has mentioned in the Sangam texts. They were called *Aimperukulu* and *Emperayam*. The *Aimperukulu* consisted of the *Purohit*, the army Chief, the ambassador, the spies and ministers. The *Emperayam* consisted of the officials, accountants, chiefs of the (infantry, elephant and cavalry) and leading men of the capital city.

The king employed many ministers and their duties were to advise the king on matters on which they were consulted. The king also employed ambassadors. They were the representative of one king in the court of another. Spies were employed by the king in large numbers. They were called *Orrar*. Espionage was a permanent institution in the Sangam Polity. They had to spy on local persons as well as on foreigners. The *Brahmins* played an important role in the courts of the king. The kings respected the *Brahmins*. The Purohits of the kings were in variably *Brahmins*. One of the essential functions of the king was judicial. There were law courts both in urban and rural areas. The court in the town was called *Avai*

and the court in the village was called *Manram*. In the capital town the king personally presided over the court of justice. The king's agent presided over the court in village. In the Sangam age, the punishments were very severe. The punishments included decapitation, mutilation of the offending limbs of the body, torture of various kinds and imprisonment.

The Sangam Tamils knew the necessity for taxation and the main source of revenue for their government was land revenue. Almost all the taxes were paid mostly in kind and occasionally in cash. The king used the revenue for public purpose of popular welfare as well as for private expenses of his household. The taxes were called *Karai* or *Irai*. The rate of land revenue was 1/6 of the produce of the land. Villages granted as gift to Brahmins were called *Brahmatayam*. The tributes paid by conquered Chieftains were called *Tirai*. Customs duties and tolls were called *Sungam*. The Kural mentions three kinds of royal revenues: (1) *Uru Porul* (land revenue), (2) *Ulgu Porul* (cesses and duties) and (3) *Onnarтеру Porul* (war booty and tribute). Revenue was collected by hierarchy of officials.

The kings' government was centralized at the capital and decentralized in the villages, which were fairly autonomous units of administration. This decentralization was necessitated mainly due to the absence of a system of bureaucracy and law of community to the village. The affairs of the village were conducted by its own leading elders. The elders were not elected, but age and status in society played a role in selection of these persons. These elders were looking after the affairs of the village. The Kingdom itself was divided into *Nadus*, *Kurams* etc. Among the local groups the merchants who grouped themselves into guilds or corporations, though of a primitive nature, were perhaps influential.

### 3.5 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- The Vedic literature includes the four *Vedas* also called *Samhitas*, *the Brahmanas*, the *Aranyakas* and the *Upanishads*, throws a flood of light on the social, economic and political life of the people of the *Vedic* Period.
- The Arayans lived in villages and there was system of Patriarchal family. Head of a village was called *gramina*.
- The king was most powerful. *Purohit*, *Senani* and *Gramina* were the Chief officials of the state. *Sabha* and *Samiti* were two different assemblies during the *Vedic* Age.

- The origin and growth of caste system.
- The Sangam literature provides sufficient information about the three important kingdoms like the Cholas, the Pandayas and the Cheras of the Sangam age.
- The ancient Tamil monarchies were hereditary. The king had absolute power. The government was centralized. The Tamil Kingdoms had trade relations with the foreign countries.

### 3.6 KEY TERMS

- Janapada: A region consisting of urban and rural settlements alongwith its inhabitants.
- Rashtra: The state or tribal kingdom.
- Samhita: A collection of hymns associated with the Vedas.
- Rajan: Head of the *Rashtra* or King.
- Polyandry: A system in which a woman can have several husbands.
- Kula: A patriarchal family where the head of the family was called *Kulapati* or *Grihapati*.
- Sangam Age: In Tamil land the period between 500 B.C. to 300 A.D.

### Check your progress

A) Fill in the blanks –

1. \_\_\_\_\_ is the only source to know the Vedic Age.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ And \_\_\_\_\_ were the two important assemblies of the Vedic Period.
3. The head of the family is known as \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The institution of *gotra* appeared \_\_\_\_\_ Vedic times.
5. East system originated during \_\_\_\_\_ Vedic period.
6. In all there were \_\_\_\_\_ Sangams.
7. Three kingdoms of Sangam period were \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
8. The royal emblem of the Chola King was \_\_\_\_\_.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ was the Capital of Pandyas.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ was the Capital of Cholas.

3. State Whether True or False.



1. The early Vedic Aryans were non-vegetarian.
2. The early Vedic Aryans believed in one God.
3. The religion of early Vedic Aryans primarily depended in Yajnas and sacrifices.
4. The Philosophy of Upanishads emphasis on Gyan.
5. The Sangams were societies of learned men.
6. In all there were four Sangams.
7. The Pandaya kings had trade relation with Roman empire.
8. The literature of Sangam age was written mostly in the form of poetry.

### 3.7 Answers to Check your Progress

- A. 1. Rigveda 2.a) Sabha, b) Samiti, 3. Kulpatior Grihapati, 4. Later 5. Later, 6. Three, 7.a) Pandyn, b) Chola c) Cheras, 8) Tiger, 9) Madhurai 10) Puhar or Kaberi Pattanam
- B. 1. True, 2. False, 3. True, 4. True, 5. True, 6. False, 7. True, 8. True

### 3.8 Questions and Exercise

Short – answer Question

1. Write about the political organization of the Rig Veda.
2. Write short note on Vedic literature.
3. What is meant by Painted Grey Ware culture?
4. What is Sangam age?
5. Write a short note on the achievements of Pandayas.

Long – Answer Questions

1. Give an account of the material life of the Rig Vedic people. Is it correct to call them an agricultural community?
2. Why the Rig Vedic society is called tribal and patriarchal?
3. How was society organized in later Vedic times?

4. What is meant by Sangam literature? Give an account of life covered by it.
5. Discuss the polity and government of the Sangam Period.

### 3.9 Suggested Readings

1. Basham, A.L.: The wonder that was India, London, 1963.
2. Chakaravarti, S.N.: The pre-historic periods in India.
3. Kosambi, D.D.: The culture and civilization of Ancient India, Lndon, 1965.
4. Lal, B.B.: Indian archaeology since Independence, Delhi, 1964.
5. Sankalia, H.D.: Pre-History and Proto-History of India and Pakistan, Bombay, 1962.
6. Thapar, Romila: A History of India Vol.I, Delhi, 2000.

## UNIT – IV

### RISE OF HETERODOX SECTS

#### Structure

- 8.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Objectives
- 4.2 Jainism
  - 4.2.1 Origin of Jainism
  - 4.2.2 Doctrines and Philosophy
  - 4.2.3 Spread and decline
- 4.3 Buddhism
  - 4.3.1 Origin and life of Buddha
  - 4.3.2 Philosophy of Buddhism
  - 4.3.3 Spread and decline of Buddhism
- 4.4 Summary
- 4.5 Key Words
- 4.6 Answer to check your learning
- 4.7 Questions and Exercises
- 4.8 Suggested Readings
- 4.0 **INTRODUCTION**

The Sixth Century B.C. witnessed a new phase in ancient Indian history and culture. In Indian history it is known as an age of protest against the old practices. It was like a spiritual and religious awakening in the Indian society for reform and newness. The earlier religious simplicity and social equality of the *Rig Vedic* time were no longer their. From the later Vedic time, religions lost much of its inner substance in ever increasing outer practices.

Dogmas and rituals became more and more rigid. Many gods and goddesses were made to appear in religious belief. The dominations of the priests became through. They made a monopoly of both religious thinking and sacred performances. The Brahmanical supremacy closed the doors of religious quest to other social classes. As religion lost its former vitality, the society also lost its earlier strength. The people were quite fed up with the dominance of the priestly class. The people were greatly dissatisfied with the large number of sacrifices. In post – Vedic times society was clearly divided into four *Varanas* or castes. Cast system destroyed the concept of human equality and divided men into many sections. The rigidity of caste system also contributed to the discontent among the people. Most of the religious works of Hindus were composed in Sanskrit, which was not understood by the common people. This provided an opportunity to the priestly class to interpret the religion as it suited their interests. The reaction of the *Kshatriyas* against the domination of priestly class called *Brahmanas*, who claimed various privileges, was one of the causes of the origin of new religion. It was in this mental climate that Jainism and Buddhism rose as two mighty religious movements to usher in an era of enlightened progress. Varadhama Mahavira, who founded Jainism and Gautam Buddha, who founded Buddhism, belonged to the *Kshetriya* clan, and both disputed the authority of the *Brahmanas*. In fact, these movements Jainism and Buddhism are protestant Hinduism as Lutherism and Calvinism are protestant Christianity. These two creeds not only denied the authority of the *Vedas*, existence of Vedic God but also rejected many practices of Brahmanical religion.

#### 4.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the causes of the origin of the new religious sects.
- Discuss the origin and development of Jainism in India.
- Discuss the teaching, spread and decline of Jainism.
- Describe the teachings of Buddhism.
- Explain the spread and decline of Buddhism.

#### 4.2 JAINISM

Of the numerous systems that arose in 6<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. Jainism influenced the fabric of Indian culture. It created a strong social awareness in the society and enriched Indian literature, architecture and sculpture. Let us explore its origin and Philosophy.

#### 4.2.1 Origin of Jainism

The origin of Jainism is shrouded in obscurity. From the *Rig Veda*, the *Vishnu Puran* and the *Bhagavatapurana*, it is known that Jainism is as old as *Vedic* religion. The word Jaina means follower of a *Jina*, which means victor, a person who has attained infinite knowledge and teaches others how to attain *Moksha*, i.e., liberation from the cycle of rebirth. The Jaina tradition speaks of 24 *Tirthankars* or prophets of Jaina religion. The first Jaina *Trithankar* was Rishava and last *Trithankar* before Mahavira was Parsavanath. No historical information is available regarding the first twenty two Tirthankaras who are considered as legendary figures. The Jains believe that all the teachings contained in Jainism are the contributions of twenty – four *Tirthankaras* before Mahavira, who appeared at different intervals and preached the religion. About Parsavanath and Mahavira, the Buddhist canon supplies us with incontrovertible proof of their historicity. According to Prof. Incobi, “Parasavanath was the real founder of Jainism in the *Puranic* texts and he is regarded as the incarnation of God.”

Jain literature throws some light on teaching of Parsavanath. He became an ascetic at the age of 30 and after performing a penance of 84 days he was enlightened. He lived two hundred fifty years before the birth of Mahavira. He taught four principles i.e., *Satya*, (truth), *Ahimsa* (non-violence), *Aparigraha* (non-possession of property) and *Astya* (not to receive anything which is not given freely). To these Mahavira only adds the fifth principles, namely, to maintain celibacy or *Brahmacharya*. But the essential difference between the two was that while Parsava allowed the monks to use white garments, Mahavira forbade even this. A study of Parsavanath’s teachings reveals that Mahavira was not the first founder of Jainism. Jainism had already been organized before Mahavira. Rules had also been set up even for monks, nuns and Jaina *Sangha*. Mahavira, however, gave that faith its real and historical form and made it a great religion.

#### Early Life of Mahavira

Vardhamana, the future Mahavira was born in 540 B.C. at Kundagrama a village near the ancient city Vaishali, capital of Videha. His father Siddhartha was the head of the *Kshatriya* clan called *Jantrikas*. His mother Trishla was a Lichavi princess of Videha. Mahavira had an aristocratic *Kshatriya* back ground. Vardhaman received the highest perfection in all branches of learning and grew up to be a householder. The *Acharanga Sutra* describes Vardhamana’s parents as followers of the *Jina* Parshavanath. *Shvetambara* tradition states that Vardhamana entered the house-holder stage by marrying Yashoda and

had a daughter named Priyadarshana. From his very childhood Mahavira had a bent towards meditation. Vardhamana is supposed to have renounced the world when he was 30 years old. The *Shvetambar* hagiography asserts that he did so after the death of his parents and with the permission from his elder brother, Vardhaman became ascetic.

*Digambara* and *Shvetambara* traditions both describe Vardhamana moved from place to place for long twelve years in search of truth. At first he wore a single garment which he abandoned after thirteen months and began to wander as a naked monk. During this period he practiced severe austerities, meditation and fasting. People struck him and mocked at him unconcerned, he continued his meditations. He took no kind of medicaments; he never washed, did not bathe and never cleaned his teeth. He faced the hardship of summer and winter and even lived without food and water. The people disturb him in his meditation by all sorts of torments. But like a hero in the forefront of the battle, Vardhaman withstood it all. For some six years his hardships were shared by another ascetic, Gosala Makkahaliputta, who left him, proclaimed himself a jina and set up a new religious order called the *Ajivikas*. In the thirteenth year of his asceticism and at the age of 42 he is supposed to have attained *Kevalajnana* (infinite knowledge) outside the town of Jrimbhikagrama, on the banks of the Rijupalika River, under a Sal tree in the field of a house holder named Samaga. With that supreme knowledge he became a *Jina*. The *Jina* is considered a human being endowed with super human insight and knowledge. According to Jaina tradition, he is born with certain unusual characteristics that mark him out for his future destiny. With that Vardhamana became *Jina* or Mahavira (a great conqueror). There after he proclaimed a new faith called Jainism. His followers were called the Jainas.

For the next thirty years Mahavira spent his life in preaching his religious principles and ideas. Shvetambar tradition on the otherhand describes Mahavira as travelling widely and teaching his doctrine himself. He visited and preached in the towns of Champa, Vaisali, Rajagriha, Mithila and Sravasti. The first *Ganaddaras* (Chief disciple) of the *Sangha* were the *Brahmana* Indrabhuti Gautam and his two brothers. The number of disciples soon increased to 11, all of them were *Brahmanas*. Among the rulers kings Bimbisara and Ajatsatru of Magadha were too attracted towards this creed. Both the traditions agree that Mahavira died in 468 B.C. at Pava (Modern Pavapuri) near the city of Rajgriha at the age of 72 and became a Siddha – fully liberated for ever free of embodiment.

#### 4.2.2 Doctrines and Philosophy

Parsvanath was the fore-runner of Mahavira in the preaching of Jainism. Some of his teaching influenced the ideas of Mahavira. Jainism preached by *Tirthankaras* stood for non-violence, truth, non-stealing and non-possession. Mahavira added *Brahmacharya* as the fifth principles.

Mahavira did not accept the authority of the *Vedas*. He rejected the Vedic rituals. He also objected the supremacy of priestly class or the *Brahmins*. He did not believe in God and rejected the ideas that the world has been created by God. According to him "God is only the highest noblest and fullest manifestations of the powers remain hidden in the soul of man. The discovery of that power was the real purpose of life. The worship of many Gods, the use of Mantras, prayers, the sacrifices of animals or performance of many rituals were unnecessary for knowing the soul. He advocated a very ethical and holy code of life, followed by severe asceticism and extreme penance for the attainment of *Moksha* or the highest spiritual state. Salvation was prescribed as the supreme and ultimate goals of the Jainas.

Mahavira gave the maximum stress on *Karma* and rebirth. He divided all existing things into two categories, the living and the non-living. All the living beings were described as the *Jivas*. Since the *Jiva* existed in physical and material form, it got bound to action or *Karma*. Each *Jiva* in the body was the Atma. It was *Karma* which decided the future of the Atma. Good works in life would yield good results, as bad works lead to bad results. Each *Karma* or action would have its results. No one could escape the consequences of his *Karma*. He believed that *Karma* was the cause of rebirth. No prayer or worship could save man from his *Karma*. Responsibility was solely with man for his own future, good or bad. That is why he called upon his followers to adopt *Triratna* or Three Jewels to escape the pain of rebirth.

According to Jainism, man is the architect of his own destiny and he could attain Salvation and even the status of god by pursuing a life of purity, virtue and renunciation. A monastic life is essential to attain *Nirvan*. The Nirvan of an individual depends on 1. Right belief, 2. Right knowledge and 3. Right action. These are called the three jewels or *Triratna* of Jainism. Mahavira called upon his followers to adopt these cardinal principles to achieve perfection of soul and salvation.

Mahavira laid great emphasis on the right conduct of man. He wanted man to conquer two weaknesses, namely, attachment and aversion. Attachment led to selfishness and greed

while aversion led to hatred and anger. According to Mahavira the highest standard of conduct meant the freedom from both.

Mahavira has a great champion of *Ahimsa* or non-violence. He gave it the highest place in human behavior. *Ahimsa* or non-violence is a fundamental principle of Jainism. According to Jainas all objects living and non-living possess life or soul. For this reason the policy of non-violence should be followed even towards animals, plants and trees. Destroying life was the greatest sin, kindness was considered as supreme virtue. The highest aim of life should be to respect the life of others, however small or insignificant be the creature. The *Ahimsa* or non-injury is the fundamental law of civilized life and national living.

Mahavira asked his disciples to try to realize the supreme truth. Apart from leading a life of austerity, morality, purity and virtue, they were asked not to possess, not to acquire, not to desire and not to do injury. One should avoid evil *Karmas* in order to Nirvan or salvation. So one should observe five vows or principles. These are *Ahimsa* or non-violence, *Satya* or speaking the truth, *Astheya* or non-stealing, *Aparigraha* or non-possession and *Brahmacharya* or to maintain celibacy. According to Jainism there are 13 main sins. It has mentioned in *Avashaka Sutra*. These sins are – 1. *Himsa*, 2. Telling a lie, 3. Stealing, 4. Masturbation, 5. Using intoxicants, 6. Anger, 7. Covetousness, 8. Pride, 9. Rage, 10 Jealous, 11. Quarrel, 12. Levying Charges, 13. Speaking ill to others.

The teaching of Mahavira created a great impact on the mind of contemporary men. It became popular in Kosala, Magadha, Anga and Mithila. In course of time it spread in Rajasthan, Western India and some parts of Southern India. A great split took place in Jainism 200 years after the death of Mahavira. It was divided into two sects *Svetambaras* and *Digambaras*. The primary difference is on the use of clothings and concerns not the followers, but the preachers. The preachers of *Svetambar* sect wear white clothes while preachers of *Digambar* sect practice complete nudity.

### **Jain Religious Literature**

The task of arranging religious literature of Jainism was under taken by first Jain council convened at Pataliputra in 300 B.C. under the guidance of Sthulabhadra which compiled the teachings of Mahavira into 12 *Angas*. The canon was accepted only by the *Svetambar* Jainas. The *Digambaras* claimed that the old canon was hopelessly lost. The existing texts were finally compiled at second Jaina council held at Valabhi in the fifth



century A.D. The sacred literature of *Jina* canon was written in a form of *Prakrit* called *Ardha Magadhi* and broadly consists of six categories of works such as: 1) the twelve *Angas*, 2) The twelve *Upangas*, 3) The ten *Prakirans*, 4) The Six *Chhedasutras*, 5) The four *Mulasutras*, 6) Miscellaneous texts.

1. The twelve *Angas* contain rules and regulation of Jainism. They explain the Jain doctrines with the help of legends and theories. The text also deals with the code of conduct for Jain monks.
2. The twelve *Upangas*, which do not possess much literary values. They are mostly dogmatic and mythological in character.
3. The ten *Prakirnas*, which have been composed in verse and deal with the doctrinal matters of Jainism.
4. The six *Chhedasutras* high lights the disciplinary rules for monks and runs. *Kalpasutra* of Bhadrabahu also forms part of *Chhedasutra*.
5. The four *Mulasutras*, which contain religious poetry, parables, ballads and dialogues. They deal with basic doctrines of Jainism.
6. There are several miscellaneous texts which deal with secular subjects like *Arthasastra*, *Karmashastra* etc.

The Jains have vast non-canonical literature in the form of commentaries, *Kavyas*, lyrics, *Charitras* and *Prabhandhas*. Hemachandra wrote his monumental work *Trishashtisalaka – Purusha Charita* (lives of 63 men). There are semi historical works like *Prabhandha Chintamani* of Merutunga, *Prabhandha – Kosa* of Rajasekhara, Jinasena's *Harvamsa Puran* and Haribhadra's *Samaraichchakaha* may also be mentioned.

#### 4.2.3 Spread and Decline of Jainism

In order to spread the teaching of Jainism, Mahavir organized an order of his followers. This admitted both men and women. At the same time, Jainism did establish a monastic order for women. The traditional Jain account of the growth of *Sangha* during the life time of Mahavira infact gives greater prominence to women. According to *KalpaSutra*, when Mahavira died there were 14000 monks and 36000 nuns. Nuns must have played an important role in spreading Jainism among women. Since Jainism did not very clearly mark itself out from the Brahmanical religion, it failed to attract the masses. Despite this Jainism gradually spread into South and West India. According to Jain tradition, the spread of Jainism in Karnataka is attributed to Chandragupt Maurya ( 322-298 B.C.). In the later part of

his political career, Chandragupta Maurya abdicated the throne and became a Jaina ascetic. There upon he proceeded to far South and lived at a place named Sravana Belgola in Karnataka. Another reason was that 200 years after the death of Mahavira a great famine took place in Magadha. The famine lasted for 12 years and so in order to protect themselves many a Jaina migrated to the south under the leadership of Bhadrabahu. The immigrant Jains spread Jainism in South India.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. Jainism spread to Kalinga (Orissa) and in the first century B.C. it enjoyed patronage of the king Kharavela. In the second and first century B.C. it also seems to have reached the southern part of Tamil Nadu.

Support extended by several royal families also greatly contributed to the popularity of Jainism. The rulers who extended support to Jainism included Bimbisara and Ajatsatru of Magadha.

Mahavira and his followers preached Jainism in the language of the common people viz – *Ardhamagadhi* and *Prakrit* and this greatly contributed to the spread of the religion.

In later centuries Jainism penetrated Malwa, Gujrat and Rajasthan and even now these areas have a good number of Jainas, mainly engaged in trade and commerce.

Although Jainism did not win as much State Patronage as Buddhism did and did not spread very fast in early times it still retain its hold in the areas where it spread.

## **DECLINE OF JAINISM**

Some of the major causes responsible for the decline of Jainism in India are as follows;

1. **Lack of Royal Patronage:** The initial tempo of royal Patronage of Jainism by Bimbisara, Ajatsatru, Udayin and Kharavela of Kalinga was not kept up by kings and princes of latertimes. Rather the zeal and determination of Ashoka, Kaniska and Harsha Vardhan to spread Buddhism came to eclipse Jainism. So lack of sincere and determined royal patronage came to relegate Jainism.
2. **Lack of Efforts:** There was also a decline in the missionary zeal and sincerity of the Jaina mendicants. They were no more particular in undertaking the strain of spreading Jainism in villages and towns. The traders and business men still remained loyal to Jainism. But they had no time to do anything for the spread of Jainism.

3. **Severity of Jainism:** The severity of Jainism boomeranged against it, to bring about its decline. Unlike the 'middle path' of Buddhism, Jainism stood for severe penance, meditation, fasting and restraints etc. All these were too severe to endure. People soon became disillusioned with it. In course of time, Jainism, once adored, became alienated from the people.
4. **Unintelligible Philosophy:** The most of the Jaina Philosophy was unintelligible for the masses. The concepts of *Jeeva*, *Ajeeva*, and *Syadbada* etc could not be understood properly by the people. Many could not accept the view that stone, water, tree and earth etc. had a soul of their own. This paved the way for its decline.
5. **Spilt in Jainism:** After the death of Mahavira, Jainism was divided into two sects over the issue of Jaina ideology. They were divided into *Digambara* and *Svetambara* groups. The former, led by Bhadrabahu and the 'Sventamber' group, led by Stalbahu. The split weakened Jainism and as such, its spread came to be curtailed.
6. **Rapid Spread of Buddhism:** Rise and rapid growth of Buddhism came as formidable obstacle in the path of the spread of Jainism. Buddhism was simple and intelligible. There was no severity in it. Even a householder could follow it.
7. **Role of Hindu Preachers:** Hinduism also posed threats to Jainism. Nimbarka, Ramanuja, Sankaracharya etc. came to make the foundation of Hinduism more solid and strong. Rise of Vaishnavism, Saivism and Saktism paved Jainism into comparative insignificance.

Thus, the decline of Jainism became inevitable and unavoidable. Jainism which gained momentum came to a decline stage after the spread of Buddhism and revival of Hinduism.

### **Contribution of Jainism**

Jainism made manifold contributions to the enrichment of Indian Culture and Philosophy. Firstly, Jainism made the first serious attempt to mitigate the evils of caste system, and the ritualistic Vedic religion.

Secondly, Jainism tried to remove most of the evils from which Hinduism suffered. It provides an impetus to Hindu scholars to carry out various reforms in Hinduism. Thus Jainism contributed to the purification of Hinduism.

Thirdly, Jainism popularized the principles of Ahimsa which has come to be regarded as the basic principles of Indian culture. They condemned various types of sacrifices of animals. Non-violence played a great role in the sphere of Indian religious belief. Its impact was felt when Mahatma Gandhi adopted it most effective weapon to fight against the British imperialism.

Fourthly, Jainism made valuable contribution to the enrichment of vernacular literature. Mahavira preached in the *Ardhamagadhi* language, which could be easily followed by the people of the region. The adoption of *Parakrit* by the Jainas helped the growth of this language and its literature. Many regional languages developed out of *Prakrit* languages. Particularly *Suraseni*, out of which grow the Marathi language. Another notable contribution of Jainism was the *Apabhramsa* language and its first grammar. Apabhramsa language which is regarded as a link between the classical language Sanskrit, *Prakrit*, and modern Vernacular languages. Jaina scholars also made valuable contribution to the enrichment of Tamil and Kannada literature.

Fifthly, the beauty of Jainism finds its high water mark in the field of art and architecture. The Jains erected stupas, stone railings, decorated gateways and carved pillars. Their famous centre of art and architecture are located at the caves of Khandagiri and Udayagiri in Orissa, Mathura, Udayagiri Caves at Bhilsa, and Jaina Caves at Ellora. One of the best cave temples was built by them in the second century B.C in Orissa is known as Hatigumpha cave temple. The other notable architectural and sculptural feats of the Jainas include the temples of Gwalior, 57 feet high statue of Gometeswar in Sarban Belgola, temples at Khujarah and Mount Abu. The Jain tower at Chittore in Rajasthan is one of the best specimens of Jaina architecture. Lastly, the followers of Jainism undertook several welfare programmes of public utility for the benefit of the people. They rendered maximum service to the cause of humanity. They opened inns, hospitals schools and many other institution of public utility.

No doubt we can say that Jainism was not so popular in comparison to Buddhism but they have left a far reaching impact on the culture, Philosophy and history of India. Though Jainism did not spread far and could not become a popular religion, yet it survived through ages and continues till today as an important religion of India.

### 4.3 BUDDHISM

Buddha the light of Asia was one of the greatest men of all times. He is the Tathagata, one who has liberated himself from the cycle of rebirth. Some elements of his hagiography (sacred biography) are contained in the *Sutta* and *Vinaya Pitakas*, but more detailed and connected accounts are given in later texts such as the *Lalitavistara*, *Mahavastu* and *Buddha Charita*.

Gautam alias Siddhartha, son of Suddhodana, chief of the Sakya clan of Kapilavastu was born in 566 B.C. His mother Mayadevi gave birth to him in a grove at Lumbini near the city of Kapilavastu. At a much later date, emperor Ashoka erected a pillar at Lumbini to make it even memorable. His mother Mayadevi died within a few days. So Gautam was brought up by his step mother Mahaprajapati Gautami. According to her name, the child was named as Gautam.

Much of the life of Buddha is shrouded in mystery. But much of it also appears clearer from the Buddhist sources. The childhood of prince Gautam was spent amidst plenty and pleasures. King Suddhodhana paid utmost attention to the happiness of his son. But Gautam was of a different nature. But from his early childhood Gautam showed a meditative bent of mind and detachment towards the worldly life. His father marked his feeling of indifference of his son towards, the worldly life and arranged his marriage with a beautiful princess named Yasodhara, when he was only 16 years of age.

The luxurious life of the palace did not keep Gautam happy for ever. While his mind was in deep distress, he came across four scenes one by one which left a deep impression on his thought. On different occasions when he was travelling in the city of Kapilavastu, he came across an old man bent with age and having wrinkled skin, a diseased person and a dead body being carried towards the burial ground. It made a deep impression in his mind and feeling of hatred towards the material world. He thought deeply about the problem of life like old age, disease and death. He was finally impressed by the peaceful life of a *Sanyasi* or ascetic. The *Sanyasi* who had renounced every thing and walking alone without any sign of worries or anxieties on his happy face. These four experiences of Gautam proved like a turning point in his life, causing him to think seriously on the meaning of human existence. He wanted to escape from the chains of the world.

In the meantime a son was born to Gautam and Yasodhara who was named Rahula. To Gautam it was another bond of worldly attraction. The royal happiness, charming wife and new born baby could not change his mind. So at the age of 29, in the silent hours of a dark night, he came out of the palace, leaving behind his sleeping wife and son as well as his old father disappeared into darkness from a home to homeless life and began his quest of salvation for mankind. This event in Gautam's life is famous as the Great Renunciation.

From Kapilavastu, Gautam proceeded towards Rajaghirā. There he attached himself to two teachers named Alara and Rudraka, the great exponent of Sankhya School of Philosophy. But there he was not satisfied by their instruction. Then he left his teachers and accompanied by five wandering ascetics, he practiced severe austerities until his body was emaciated. For long six years he endured self imposing sufferings. He then realized that he must nourish his body and try to attain peace of mind. His companions abandoned him, thinking he had compromised his ascetism. One night when he was on the point of death due to exertion and starvation, he decided to take food. A young woman named Sujata offered him a bowl of milk-rice. Nourished with food, Gautam went to the sylvan retreats of Uruvela, near modern Boddhgaya on the banks of the river Niranjana and sat under a Peepal tree in deep meditation, resolving not to get up until he had attained enlightenment. On the 29<sup>th</sup> day of his continuous meditation Gautam ultimately attained enlightenment and became known as the Buddha, the enlightened one. At that time he was in his thirty-fifth year. He also came to be known as *Tathagat*, or one who attained the truth and the *Sakya Muni* or the Sage of the *Sakyas*. The Peepal tree under which Buddha got Enlightenment became famous as the Bodhi tree, and the place came to be known as Bodhagaya.

From Bodh Gayua Buddha proceeded to Saranath a place near Benaras and delivered his first Sermon at Deer Park to five Brahmins. This event is called *Dharma Chakra Pravatan* (turning the wheel of *Dhamma*). These five Brahmins became his first disciples. For the next fortyfive years Buddha travelled widely with his disciples to preach his new doctrines. He visited Magadha, Kosala, Vaisali, Kausambi and Anga. King like Bimbisara and Ajatsatru became his disciple. Among his famous disciples the names of Siriputta, Moggalana, Sanjaya, Rahul (Buddha's Son) Aniruddha, Ananda, Upali and Sudatta occupy permanent place in Buddhist history. He established an order of monks and nuns known as the *Sanga*. Within a short time, his *Sangha* developed into one of the most powerful religions organizations ever. Buddha died at Kushinagar in Uttar Pradesh in 486 B.C. at the age of 80 and this event is called *Mahaparinirvana*.

### 4.3.2 Philosophy of Buddhism

The real message of Buddha is to be found in the first sermon which he delivered at the Deer Park at Saranath. It contains the kernel of his doctrines. The core of his doctrine is expressed in the *Arya Satya* or Four Noble Truths. They are:-

1. Life is full of suffering or sorrow (*Dukhha*).
2. Sorrow comes from worldly things and material enjoyment (*Samudaya*).
3. One can escape from sorrow through Salvation or Nirvana (*Nirodha*).
4. Nirvana can be achieved through eight-fold path (*Athanga Margga*).

#### **Noble Eight Fold Path:**

This path consists of a number of interconnected activities related to knowledge, conduct, and meditative practices. It consists of Right view, Right aims, Right Speech, Right action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right mind fulness and Right concentration.

1. By right views, Buddha meant that man should realize how sorrowful was this world for man's greeds, desires and selfishness. Man should therefore rise above for a new vision for his own happiness and for the happiness of all.
2. By Right Aims or aspiration, man should not run behind the power and wealth and should not run for passion, pleasures and enjoyment.
3. By Right speech, man should give up falsehood, lies, criticism of others and quarrels which spoil the peace of the society.
4. By Right action, man should avoid violence and killing; give up harmful acts like theft and stealing.
5. By Right livelihood, Buddha advised man to live by harmless means.
6. By Right effort meant a correct discipline in mind and action not for any evil thought or practice. Man should develop nobler feelings.
7. By Right mindfulness, Buddha wanted man to be conscious of the unrealities of his existence, unrealities of the body and attachments. Instead he was to search for the real happiness.
8. By Right meditation, Buddha wanted man to concentrate his mind on the real truth of existence.

The Noble Eightfold Path, if followed would open the eyes; bestow understanding, lead to peace of mind, to higher wisdom, to full enlightenment, to *Nirvana*. *Nirvan* was

extinguishment of cravings and of desires and the consequent end of suffering. Meditation is very important in Buddhism and is the key to achieving mental calm and insight. The path taught by Buddha is often referred to as the Middle Path one between extreme indulgence and extreme asceticism. In fact Buddha did not want every householder to give up his family and go in search of truth through hard penance. Therefore, Buddha prescribed a 'Middle Path'. One could practice these noble paths even as a house holder.

### **Nirvan:**

The *Nirvan* was considered the supreme goal of life. *Nirvan* meant complete destruction of the desires or the feeling of attachment towards the material world. When all desires are extinguished once for all, life enters into the most peaceful state of mind. In order to achieve Nirvan a Buddhist was required to regulate his entire conduct.

### **Karma:**

Buddha held faith in the theory of *Karma* (deeds). The man's present and the next lives depend upon his *Karma*. Man cannot escape the results of his *Karma*. There is no escape even in death. After death, the life will again take a new shape to suffer the *Karma* of the last time. Transmigration of the soul will continue. Thus, *Karma* leads to the cycle of many births. To Buddha, it was essential to put an end to such eternal suffering. The chain of birth, death and rebirth was thus endless. So the ultimate goal of one's life is to attain salvation or *Nirvan*.

### **Moral Code**

Buddha did not believe in the existence of God or worship of God. Buddhism has no faith in the performance of *Yajna* and sacrifices. It condemns the Brahmanical rituals and sacrifices as useless. Buddha was the Prophet of non-violence. He laid great emphasis on the principle of *Ahimsa* and instead on observance of non-violence in all walks of life. Ultimately the philosophy of non-violence became a cardinal principle of Buddhism. Buddha emphasized the basic equality between man and man. He preached fraternity and equality of all. He condemned the caste system as a social disease. Buddha greatly appealed to the people of lower castes and they flocked to his fold in large numbers.

Buddha prescribed certain moral principles for his followers. In his teaching he laid greater emphasis on the cultivation of moral qualities rather than observance of superficial



rituals. The most prominent features of teachings were charity, truthfulness, love and benevolence, obedience to parents, forgiveness, respect to elders,' abstention from intoxicants and mercy towards all living beings.

### **Buddhist Literature**

Buddha taught the people through narration of parables. His teaching was always diadactic Buddhism were incorporated in the original Buddhist texts written in *Pali* language were called the *Tripitakas*. These are the *Vinaya Pitaka*, the *Sutapitaka* and the *Abhidhama Pitak*. The first contains the teachings and sayings of Buddha, the second contains the rules for monks and nuns and the third contains the Philosophical ideas of Buddha. Besides the sacred texts, the *Jatakas* or the stories relating to the different births of Buddha also added much to the literature of Buddhism. There is vast non-canonical Buddhist literature in *Pali*, such as *Milinda Panna*. This work explains Buddhist doctrine in the form of dialogue between Greek King Menander and the Buddhist scholar Nagasena. The Mahayan sect of Buddhism also developed its own canonical literature, which was written in Sanskrit. Its texts are *Vaipulya Sutras*, *Lalitavistara* and *Mahavastu*.

#### **4.3.3 Spread and decline of Buddhism**

Started in one corner of India, Buddhism spread in a very short period not only in India but also in several countries of the world. This rapid spread was on account of several reasons.

### **Personality of Buddha**

The personality of Buddha and the method adopted by him to preach his religion helped the spread of Buddhism. He tried to fight evil by goodness and hatred by love. He was a great orator. It was difficult to defeat him in any religious discussion. He had the advantage of social status, high intellectual, ability and charisma. His life created great Impact on the mind of the common people.

### **Use of Popular Language**

Buddhism became popular because Buddha preched his teachings in a very simple language which could easily followed by the common people. The use of *Pali* and *Prakrit* language instead of Sanskrit also contributed to the spread of Buddhism.

### **Defect in Hinduism**

Hinduism has lost its hold on the people due to the exploitation by the Priests. Many evil practices, ceremonies, rituals and sacrifices and made the Hindu religion expensive and unpopular. For which Hinduism was in a bad shape and at the same time Jainism did not possess any effective missionary for its propagation. The absence of any effective opposition from other religious gave opportunities to spread its doctrine. Buddha condemned the Hindu mode of worships. So he insisted on observance of principles of morality such as love, non-injury, respect to elders etc. All this greatly influenced the people to support Buddhism.

### **Absent of Caste System**

Buddha did not believe in cast system. He strongly condemned it. He laid great emphasis on social equality. As a result people of the lowest strata of society were attracted in large number to this new religion.

### **Support of the Rulers**

Buddhism received Patronage from different rulers of ancient India. The royal patronage extended to Buddhism by rulers like Bimbisara and Ajatsatru also greatly contributed to its popularity during the early phase. But the conversion of Ashoka to Buddhism after Kalinga war gave it a new dimension. Under the patronage of Ashoka, grounds were prepared for the spread of Buddhism in India and other countries. Kaniska and Harshavardhan also made their mission to spread this religion to different nooks and corners of the country.

### **Buddhist Sangha**

The foundation of Buddhist Sangha also greatly contributed to the popularity of Buddhism. The Sangha was a unique feature of Buddhism. The Sangha means the brotherhood of the Buddhist monks. It forms Buddhist Trinity – Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. The Buddhist pay reverence in their daily prayers to the Holy Trinity: “I take refuge in the Buddha, I take refuge in the Dharma, and I take refuge in the Sangha.” The Sangha comprised Buddhist monasteries where Buddhist monks and runs lived and devoted their life for the cause of Buddhism. The membership of the Sangha was open to all persons, male or female, irrespective of any caste, above fifteen years of age. Persons who were in debt or had been branded as robbers or criminals were not allowed admission into the Sangha. The

Sangha thus formed a community of persons who were morally and physically fit to perform the noble services in the cause of Buddhism. The monks and runs greatly contributed to the popularity of the Buddhist religion by carrying the message of Buddha to the door steps of every house.

### **Contribution of Buddhist Scholars**

Several universities and centres of learning like Nalanda, Vikramsila, Puspagiri, and Udantapuri etc. attracted number of Buddhist scholars from India and abroad. These institutions played a supporting role for the propagation of Buddhism. A host of Buddhist scholars like Nagarajuna, Asanga, Vasumitra and Vasubandhu contributed a lot towards the rapid progress of Buddhism.

### **The Buddhist Councils**

The practice of convening of Buddhist councils with a view to keep Buddhism up-to-date also greatly contributed for its rapid growth and spread. After the death of Buddha, four Buddhist councils were held at different period to codify Buddhist doctrines and to settle down the disputes among the scholars. The First Buddhist council was held in 483 B.C. under the patronage of Ajatasatu just after the death of Buddha. The second council was held at Vaisali in 383 B.C. under the Patronage of Kalasoka of Sisunaga dynasty. The third Buddhist council was held at Pataliputra under the patronage of Ashoka in 2575 B.C. The fourth council was held in Kashmir in the first century A.D. under the Patronage of Kaniska.

All the above factors highly contributed towards the rapid spread of Buddhism.

### **IMPACT OF BUDDHISM ON INDIAN CULTURE**

Firstly, Buddhism gave a popular religion without any complicated and costly rituals. Its simplicity, easy code of conducts, use of popular language and monasteries influenced the masses.

Secondaly, Buddha prescribed a simple and practical code of ethics for his followers. It gave stress on public morality, charity, purity, truthfulness and self-sacrifices.

Thirdly, it promoted among the people a national feeling which greatly helped in achievement of social harmony and the evolution of a strong empire in the country.

Fourthly, Buddha condemned the caste system and social distinctions and advocated equality in society.

Fifthly, another contribution of Buddhism was their monastic system. The Buddhist Sangha for the first time made a systematic organized attempt to teach simple code of ethics for better spiritual lift of the masses.

Sixthly, There was some influence of the Buddhist thought and ethics on Hinduism. The doctrine of *Ahimsa*, so strongly stressed and practiced by the Buddhists later on it influenced the Hinduism. The institution of *Mathas* (organized brotherhood of Hindu Saints) introduced in the Hindu society as a result of its contact with Buddhist *Sangha*.

Seventhly, Buddhism was also largely responsible for the improvement of the position of women and the *Sudras*. The women and *Sudras* were treated with utmost disrespect. Buddhism treated them at par with other members of the society and greatly contributed to the removal of sense of inferiority prevailing among them.

Eighthly, Buddhism also contributed towards the development of vernacular literature. It also played an important role in the development of education.

Ninthly, Buddhism broke the isolation of India and established an intimate relationship with several foreign countries. Indian culture and civilization had been carried by the Buddhist missionaries to Cylone, China, Java, Japan, Sumitra, Korea, Burma and other countries since the days of Ashoka.

Lastly, the finest and most important contribution of Buddhism to Indian culture was made in the realm of architecture and sculpture. The first human statues worshipped in India were created by Buddhists who presented Buddha in human form. The artistic activities of the people of this period are found in the pannels at Gaya in Bihar and at Sanchi and Bharhut in Madhya Pradesh. The Buddhist caves at Western India like Karle, Bhaja, Pitalkhora, Ajanta, Elora and Nasik are the best specimens of Buddhist architecture. The stupas, the chaityas, the monasteries and different religious pillars also proved the best Buddhist art.

## **DECLINE OF BUDDHISM**

Buddhism continued to be popular religion for several centuries not only in India, but also in many parts of Asia. But gradually it began to decline. By the twelfth century A.D., Buddhism became practically extinct in India. Several factors contributed to its decline.

**Firstly**, The Gupta age may be regarded as an era of *Brahmanic* revival. Buddhism became a victim to the evils of *Brahmanism* against which it had fought in the beginning. To meet the Buddhist challenge, the *Brahmans* reformed their religion.

**Secondly**, Buddhist monks were gradually cut off from the main stream of peoples like. They gave up *Pali*, the language of the people and took to Sanskrit, the language of intellectuals.

**Thirdly**, from the first century A.D. Buddhist practiced idol worship on a large and received numerous offering from devotees. The monks and nuns began to lead lives of ease and pleasure. The Buddhist *Sangha* failed to inspire any confidence and the masses lost faith in it.

**Fourthly**, lack of royal patronage in the later years greatly contributed to the decline of Buddhism. After Kaniska and Harashavardhan it did not receive any royal patronage. In the absence of royal patronage the religion suffered a decline and contributed to survive only in certain areas.

**Fifthly**, the absence of powerful personalities, who could propagate the teachings of Buddhism also proved responsible for its decline. After Buddha the powerful preacher was Vasumitra. But there after it did not produce any powerful personality who could popularize Buddhism.

**Sixthly**, entry of women in Buddhist *Sangha* indirectly helped for its decline. The Buddha Viharas at a latter stage became places of moral degradation. Sanctity of the Viharas was polluted. The wealth and women completely tarnished the image of monks.

**Seventhly**, the emergence of several Rajput states after the decline of Gupta Empire, also contributed to its decline. The rulers of these states did not hold any faith in the philosophy of *Ahimsa* preached by Buddhism. They were brave soldiers and warriors and naturally could not develop any liking for this religion.

**Eighthly**, the foreign invaders like the Hunas and Turks also greatly contributed to the decline of Buddhism in India. They destroyed Buddhist monasteries and monuments in North-West India. They also killed large number of Buddhist monks in Nalanda and of her places. Many monks managed to escape to Nepal and Tibet.

**Finally**, the division of Buddhism into two main sects also greatly contributed to its decline, Buddhism was divided into two major sects, viz. Hinayan (also known as *Theravada*) and *Mahayan* at its fourth general council held during the reign of emperor Kanishka. The

followers of Buddhism who believed the original teachings of Buddha were called *Hinayan* or the Lessor Vehicle. The followers of *Mahayan* sect were different from the former. They think that the Buddha is a God and he came to this earth to help the people. So Buddha can be worshipped as a God. On the other hand *Hinayan* Buddhist thinks that the Buddha has a Human instead of a God. The members of both these sects began to expose weakness of each other in public. This gave a serious set back to the image of Buddha and people lost all respect and faith on Buddhism. In any case by the twelfth century A.D. Buddhism had practically disappeared from the land of its birth.

No doubt Buddhism brought a historic revolution in the sphere of Indian society and religion. It enriched the Indian Philosophy, literature, culture and art and architecture. However, it is observed that effects are being made to revive Buddhism in India. A lot of work is being done by the Mahabodhi Society of India which was founded by the Late Devamitta Dharmapala of Ceylon. The Mahabodhi Society of India has set up a number of branches in the different parts of the country to look after the Buddhist Shrines.

#### 4.4 SUMMARY

In this unit you have learnt that:

- Origin of Jainism is shrouded in mystery. According to Jaina tradition all the teachings contained in Jainism are the contribution of 24 *Tirthankaras*.
- Mahavira was a great preacher. He believed in three principles namely Right Faith, Right knowledge and Right conduct. The Jains stress on right conducts. Jainism does not believe in the existence of God.
- Buddhism is one of the greatest religions of the world. Buddhism follows a code of morality. Buddha's teaching can be divided as philosophical and moral. The four noble truths and eight fold paths are the most important doctrine of Buddhism.
- Buddha believed in theory of *Karma* and rebirth. *Nirvana* was a basic principle of Buddhism and could be attained in this world. Buddha condemned violence, cast system, costly rituals and sacrifices.
- Different factors were responsible for the rapid growth and decline of Buddhism.

- Contribution of Buddhism to India was in the field of art, architecture, sculpture and literature. Buddhism established an intimate contact between India and foreign countries.

#### 4.5 KEY TERMS

- Moksha : Salvation
- Tirthankara : Path finder
- Ardha-Magadhi: an eastern dialect of praurit.
- Bodhisattiva : a future Buddha
- Chaitya : a Buddhist Shrine
- Dharma : a Sanskrit word, ideal conduct of a person.
- Jatakas : containing the stories of the previous birth of Buddha.
- Pali : an ancient language
- Prakrit : an ancient language.
- Sangha : the Buddhist monastic order.

#### Check your progress

##### A. Fill in the blanks

1. \_\_\_\_\_ was the 23<sup>rd</sup> *Trithankaras* of Jains.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ was the real name of Mahavira.
3. The original religious texts of Jainism were called \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Buddha gave his first religious message at \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Buddha died at \_\_\_\_\_.
6. The *Pitakas* were written in \_\_\_\_\_ language.
7. To become a member of Buddhist *Sangha* a person must have \_\_\_\_\_ years of age.
8. The third Buddhist council was held at \_\_\_\_\_.

##### B. State whether True or False.

1. Mahavira was a contemporary of Buddha.
2. Mahavir believed in God.
3. Mahavira taught the Principles of *Ahimsa* or Non-violence.
4. By caste Gautam Buddha was a *Brahman*.
5. The main sects of Buddhism are *Hinayan* and *Mahayan*.

6. Buddhism became popular because Buddha preached his teaching in simple language.
7. Buddhist texts *Tripitaks* were written in Pali language.
8. Both Jainism and Buddhism believed in cast system.

#### 4.6 Answer to Check your learning

- A. 1. Prasavanath, 2. Vardhaman, 3. Purvas, 4. Saranath, 5. Kusinagar (UP), 6. Pali, 7. Pataliputra.
- B. 1. True, 2. False, 3. True, 4. False, 5. True, 6. True, 7. True, 8. False.

#### 4.7 Questions and Exercises

Short answer questions

1. Write the central teaching of Jainism.
2. Write a short note on eight fold path.
3. Write a note on the role of Buddhist Sangha.
4. Write in brief the art and architecture of Jainism.
5. Write a short note on Buddhist councils.

Long answer Questions

1. Trace the origin and development of Jainism in India.
2. Discuss the contribution of Jainism of Indian Society.
3. Discuss the various causes which led to the decline of Jainism.
4. Describe the life and teachings of Buddha.
5. Why did Buddhism spread in India and abroad?
6. Account for the decline of Buddhism.

#### 4.8 Suggested Readings

1. Basham, A.L.: The wonder that was India, London, 1963.
2. Chakaravarti, S.N.: The pre-historic periods in India.
3. Kosambi, D.D.: The culture and civilization of Ancient India, Lndon, 1965.
4. Lal, B.B.: Indian archaeology since Independence, Delhi, 1964.
5. Sankalia, H.D.: Pre-History and Proto-History of India and Pakistan, Bombay, 1962.



6. Thapar, Romila: A History of India Vol.I, Delhi, 2000.

**UNIT – V****EMERGENCE OF EMPIRE****Structure**

- 5.0 Introduction
- 5.1 Objectives
- 5.2 The Mahajanapadas
  - 5.2.1 Administration of Republic
- 5.3 Magadha
  - 5.3.1 Rise of Magadha
  - 5.3.2 The Brihadrathas
  - 5.3.3 Bimbisara
  - 5.3.4 Ajatsatru
  - 5.3.5 Udayan
  - 5.3.6 Sisunaga
- 5.4 The Nandas
  - 5.4.1 Mahapadmananda
  - 5.4.2 Dhana Nanda
  - 5.4.3 Rise of Chandragupta Maurya
- 5.5 Summary
- 5.6 Key words
- 5.7 Answer to check your learning
- 5.8 Questions and exercise
- 5.9 Suggested readings

## 5.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit you will study about the emergence of *Mahajanpadas* and the rise of Magadha. The 6<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. is often regarded as a major turning point in early Indian history. It saw the emergence of India's first large cities after the demise of the Indus Valley Civilization, as well as the rise of religious movements (Jainism and Buddhism) which challenged the religious orthodoxy of the Vedic period. Archaeologically, this period corresponds in part to the Northern Black Polished ware (NBPW) culture. During this period there was no political unity in India. India lacked a strong central rule. From the sixth century B.C. the wide spread use of iron in North India facilitated the formation of large territorial states. Because of iron weapons the warriors' class played an important role. The new system of agriculture and use of iron tools and implements enabled the peasants to produce more food grains than they required for consumption. The surplus products could also be made available to the towns which had sprung up in the sixth century B.C. these material advantages naturally enabled the people to stick to their land and also to expand at the cost of the neighbouring areas. This led to the rise of large states with cities. The rise of large states with cities as their base of operations strengthened the territorial idea.

### 5.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the political condition of India in the Sixth Century B.C.
- Discuss the sixteen *Mahjanpadas* and cities which emerged in ancient India.
- Explain the expansion of Magadhan Empire.
- Discuss the rise and fall of the Nanda dynasty.
- Analyse the success of Magadha in founding an empire.

### 5.2 THE MAHAJANAPADAS

The term '*Janapada*' literally means that foothold of a tribe. It may be observed that in the beginning, the Aryans were divided into several tribes. Later on several tribes formed a '*Jana*' which was ruled by the '*Rajan*' or the king having small area under his control. Gradually several *Janas* combined together and formed several *Janapadas*, demarcated from each other by boundaries. With the emergence of these territorial states people replaced their tribal loyalty by allegiance to the *Janapada* to which they belonged. *Mahajanapadas*

symbolize amalgamation of large number of rural and urban settlement alongwith inhabitants. Buddhist and other texts only incidentally refer to sixteen *Mahajanapadas* which were in existence before the time of Buddha. They do not give any connected history except on the case of Magadha. The Buddhist text *Anguttara Nikaya* (a part of Suttapitak) provided the names of 16 *Mahjanapadas*. Similarly the Jaina text *Bhagavati Sutra* and another Buddhist text *Mahavastu* also provided such list of sixteen *Mahajanapadas*. Each of these Janapadas was named after the *Kshatriya* tribe or the *Kshtriya Jana* who had settled there in. These *Mahajanapadas* were mostly situated north of the Vindhya and extended from the north – west frontier to Bihar. The Buddhist *Auguttara Nikaya*, at several places, gives a list of sixteen *Mahajanapadas*:

1. Anga
2. Assanka (Asmaka)
3. Avanti
4. Chedi
5. Gandhara
6. Kashi
7. Kamboja
8. Kosala
9. Kuru
10. Magadha
11. Malla
12. Matsya
13. Panchala
14. Surasena
15. Vriji
16. Vatasa

Apart from these, there must have been smaller states, Chiefdoms, and tribal principalities. Another Buddhist texts, the *Digha Nikaya* mentions only twelve *Mahajanapadas* from the above list and omits four of them (Assaka, Avanti, Gandhara and Kamboja). The *Bhagavati Sutra* of Jainism gives a different list of sixteen Mahajanapadas. While some of the names in the two lists are common the *Bhagavati Sutra* list seems to be later and less reliable.

Two kinds of states are included in the list of Mahajanapadas – monarchical and republican states. Both the forms of government rest on stable systems and well established principles. The ancient Indian polity was, thus remarkably well advanced. Some states were ruled by *Kshatriya* rulers, even though some non-*Kshatriya* kings also existed. The most powerful states in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. were Magadha, Kosala, Vatsa and Avanti. The relations among the states fluctuated over time and included warfare, true and military alliances. Marriage alliances too were an important aspect of inters – state relations. Outlines of the political history can be reconstructed by using various literary sources.

**Kashi:** The kingdom of Kashi was the most powerful *Mahajanapada* in the beginning. Its capital was Varanasi (modern Benaras) on the banks of the Ganga. There was rivalry between the kingdoms of Kashi and Kosala. Kashi was also involved in occasional conflicts with Anga and Magadha. Though it was very powerful state but eventually it was absorbed into the Kosala Kingdom.

**Kosala:** Kosala roughly corresponds to modern Avadh in Uttar Pradesh. The Sarayu River divided it into a northern and a southern part. Shravasti, which is identified with Saheth-Maheth, was the capital of north Kosala and Kushavati the capital of South Kosala. Saketa and Aydhya were two other important cities and political centres. The popular king of Kosala was Prasanjit contemporary of Bimbisara and Ajatsatru of Magadha. It was a monarchical kingdom. Kosala succeeded in conquering Kashi. It extended its power over the *Sakyas* of Kapilavastu. Later on Kosala itself fell a victim to the growing power of Magadha.

**Anga:** The Kingdom of Anga corresponded roughly to the modern districts of Monghr and Bhagalpur of East Bihar. The river Champa was the boundary between Anga and Magadha. Its Capital was Champa. Champa was also an important commercial centre. In the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. the kingdom of Anga was swallowed by its powerful neighbour Magadha.

**Magadha:** Magadha one of the leading Monarchical *Mahajanapadas* roughly covered the modern Patna and Gaya districts of Bihar. It was bounded by the Ganga, Soan and Champa Rivers. The struggle for political pre-eminence in the region among the four *Mahajanapadas* of Kashi, Kosala, Magadha and Vajji lasted for one hundred years. Magadha emerged victorious and established itself as the centre of political power in northern India. Its initial capital was called Girivaraja or Rajagriha. Later the capital was shifted to Pataliputra. Religious movements like Buddhism and Jainism originated from this region.

**Vajji:** Vajji was one of the leading republican states located in the present Vaisali district of Bihar. Most historians consider the Vajji a confederacy of eight or nine clans. However, the most important members of the confederacy were the Vajjis, Lichchhavis, Videhas and Jantrikas. The Buddhist sources give an idea of how the ancient republic works in the state of Vajji. The capital of republic was Vaisali. The Vajji confederacy is said to have been led by Chetaka, who was the brother of Trishala (mother of Mahavira). The Chief executive or head of the state was an elected leader styled as Raja.

**Malla:** The Malla, the republican kingdom was located to the west of Vajjis and consisted of a confederacy of nine clans. The twin capital of Malla was Pavapuri and Kusinagara. Lord Buddha died in the vicinity of Kusinagara. Malla was annexed by Magadha.

**Chedi:** The Chedi territory was situated in the eastern part of the modern Bundel Khand in Central India. Its capital was Shuktimati.

**Vatsa:** Vatsa territory was situated around the region of Allahabad with the capital Kausambi. It was famous for cotton textiles. According to a Buddhist tradition the Vatsa were a Kuru clan who had shifted from Hastinapur and settled down at Kausambi near Allahabad. In the sixth century B.C. it had a strong fortified capital. The most powerful king of Vatsa was Udayana.

**Kuru:** Kuru was situated around the Delhi – Meerut region. According to Buddhist tradition, the Kuru kingdom was ruled by kings belonging to the *Yuddhitthila* gotra, i.e., the family of Yudhisthira. Its capital was Hastinapur / Indraprastha.

**Panchala:** The Kingdom of Panchala was one of the older Mahajanapadas included the Rohilakhand area of Uttarpradesh. The kingdom was divided into two parts of the Ganga i.e., the Northern Panchala and the Southern Panchala. The capital of Northern Panchala was Ahichhatra (modern Ramnagar in Bareilly district) and that of Southern Panchala was Kampilya (Kampil in Farukhabad district). The famous city of Kanyakubja or Kanauj was located in this kingdom.

**Matsya:** The Matsya Mahajanapada was located in the Jaipur area of Rajasthan. Their capital was at Viratnagara (modern Bairat), named after Virata, founder of the kingdom.

**Surasena:** The Surasena was a republican Mahajanapada. Its Capital was Mathura on the bank of river Yamuna. Buddhist tradition describes Avantiputra, king of the Surasenas, as a disciple of Buddha.

**Assaka:** The texts like *Ashtadhyayi* of Panini and Brihatsamhita suggest that the Assaka Mahajanapada was situated on the bank of river Godavari near Paithan in Maharashtra. Paithan has been identified with ancient Pratisthana (Potna), the capital of Assaka. Ikshavaku was the ruler of this kingdom. Finally it was annexed by the kingdom of Avanti.

**Avanti:** The Malwa region of Central India and the adjoining parts lay the state of the Avantis. It was divided into northern and Southern part by the Vindhyas. The northern part had its capital at Ujjain, and the southern part of Mahishmati. Chanda Pradyoto was the most powerful king of Avanti. During his period Avanti was involved in conflicts with Vatsa, Magadha and Kosala.

**Gandhara:** The kingdom of Gandhara comprised modern Peshawar and Rawalpindi districts of Pakistan and the Kashmir valley. Its capital Taxila was a famous centre adjudication and learning in ancient India. King Pukkusati ruled over Gandhara in mid-6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. He had a cordial relation with Magadha.

**Kamboja:** Kamboja included the area around Rajori, including the Hazara district of the North – West Frontier province of Pakistan. The Kambojas were a monarchy in the sixth century B.C. Its capital was Rajpur.

### **Republican States**

Despite the prevalence of Monarchical form of Government side by side there existed several republican states. This is amply confirmed by several sources which include Buddhist texts, Panini's *Astadhyai*, and Kautilyas *arthasastra*. Besides to these sources, coins, inscription and accounts of the Greek travelers' confirm the existence of republican states. For the republics two terms were mentioned in ancient India were ganas or Sanghas. Both the terms implied the same meaning. These were Oligarchies, where power was exercised by a group of people. In republics some sort of election was prevalent. The central feature of the republican government has the seemingly corporate culture. Most of the ganas, especially the politically important ones, were located in or near the Himalayan foothills in eastern India, while the major kingdoms occupied the fertile alluvial tracts of the Ganga Valley. The prominent republics which find mention in the different literature were:

1. **Sakyas of Kapilavastu:** The Sakya state was bounded on the north by the Himalayas, on the east by the river Rohini and on the west and south by the Rapti River. The Sakyas formed an independent oligarchic republican state known as Skya Ganarajya. Its capital was Kapilavastu, which may have been located in present day Tilaurakot in Nepal Tarai. It owed its importance because Gautambuddha was a Sakya by birth. The people claimed to belong to the solar race and Ikshvaku family.
2. **Koliyas of Ramagrama:** This republic lay to the east of the Sakyas, The Rohini river forming the boundary between the two Ramagrama was a major city of Koliya Kingdom. The Koliyas were known for their police force and notorious for their practice of violence and extortion. Gautam Buddha's mother Maya Devi was from the Koliya Kingdom.
3. **Bhaggas:** Bhagga the name of a tribal and a kingdom. The Bhaggas seem to have been located in the Vindhyan region, between the Yamuna and Soan rivers. Its capital was Sumsummaragir. The Buddha went there several times in the course of his wanderings.
4. **Moriyas of Pippalivana:** The great emperor of India Chandragupta Mourya belonged to Moriyas, a Kshatriya Clan of a little ancient republic of Piplalivana. Pillalivana is located between Rummindei in the Nepal Tarai and Kasia in the Kusinagar district of Uttar Pradesh.
5. **Bulis of Allakappa:** The people of Allakappa were called the Bulayas or Bulis. They were located some where in Bihar presumably between modern Shahabad and Muzaffarpur. But they are mentioned only in the Digha Nikaya. Allakapa was in Buddhist tradition, one of the eight republics to whom were given the relics of Buddha upon his death or parinirvan.
6. **Kalams of Kesaputta:** Regarding the Kalams of Kesaputta we know that Alar Kalam, the famous Philosopher, belonged to this clan. He was the teacher of Gautam Buddha. This dynasty is related to the Panchal Kesins as described in the Satapatha Brahmana. The Kalam Sutta starts off by describing how the Buddha passes through the city of Kesaputta and is greeted by its inhabitants, a clan called the Kalams.
7. **Lichhavis of Vaishali:** The Lichchhavi republic with its headquarters at Vaishali was located in Muzzafarpur district of Bihar. The mother of Mahavira was a Lichchhavi princess. Buddha visited this city. The second Buddhist council was held here.
8. **Mallas of Kushinagar:** Malla was an ancient Indian republic that constituted one of the sixteen Mahajanapadas. Mentioned in Anguttara Nikaya. It was named after the



rulling clan of the same name. It was situated north of Magaddha. The republic is notable for being the death place of Mahavira (Pavapuri) and Gautam Buddha (Kusinara).

9. **Videha of Mithila:** The kingdom of Videhas was an ancient Indian Kingdom, which rose into prominence under king Janaka. The kingdom was located in Mithila region in the northeastern Bihar and eastern Terai of Nepal.
10. **The Nayas (Jantrikas) of Vaisali:** The Jantrikas were Kshatriyas of Kashyapa Gotra, of whom was born Mahavira, called as the highest Jina, the Jantriputra. Jantrika was associated with the town called Vaisali.

The existence of republic states in ancient India at that time has been accepted by all scholars. But the scholars are divided on the form of their organizations. There is no unanimity among scholars regarding the method of election. The Buddhist sources provide sufficient information regarding the then republican state. A few scholars have expressed the opinion that every adult of the population participated in the administration. Some others maintain that only *Kshatriyas* had this right; and yet others have expressed the view that only the head of a joint family was allowed to participate in the administration. Dr. Jayaswal maintain that these republics were divided into the three categories: a) Democracies or pure Gana, where in the total adult population participated in the administration; b) Aristocracies or pure *Kula*, wherein only some selected families participated in the administration; and (c) mixed aristocracies and democracies or mixture of *Kula or Gana*, wherein the administration was the mixture of the two. According to Dr. Bhandarkar, the republics were basically divided into two types, viz., pure republics and *Kshatriya* aristocracies. However, the scholars agree that the fundamental basis of all these states was republican.

Thus, we find that these republican states differed in matters but all of them followed the broad pattern of elections, permitted all respectable citizens or their groups to participate in administration and framing of laws and thus pursued democratic procedures as primary conditions for the governance of the State.

### 5.2.1 Administration of the Republic

The *ganas* were closely associated with the Kshatriyas and were named after the ruling Kshatriya clan; members were linked to each other through real or claimed Kinships. However, apart from these hereditary elite, various other groups – Brahmanas, farmers,

artisans, labourers, slaves etc. lived in these republics had a subordinate status, politically, socially and economically.

The state was divided into several administrative units which were self – governing and autonomous. The executive government was in the hands of a chief or a number of chiefs who were called *Rajan* or *Sangha Mukhya*. The President or Raja of the Assembly was elected for a term of one year. Each of the republics had a parishad or assembly which met in a hall called the *Sanghagara*. There was an executive council consisting of nine members elected by the Assembly to help the Raja to discuss all matters of public importance and had the power to enact new laws and abrogated old ones.

In case where opinion was divided the view of the majority prevailed. If the point of issue was complicated one, it was referred to a committee. There were definite rules for giving notice of a motion, for discussing the motion in the form of a resolution, for forming a quorum, for counting the votes and for recording the votes of absentee members. Members of assembly mostly belonged to the Kshatriya class. Besides the central assembly at the capital there were local Parishad in the all the more important places in republic. Besides the *Raja* (President of the Assembly), there were other important members in the council. They were *Uparaja* (subordinate kings), *Senapati* (military commanders) and *Bhandagarikas* (Treasurer). Judicial procedure was very elaborate and the suspected accused had to face in turn a hierarchy of officials. The *raja* was the chief of the judiciary.

Besides the *Raja* (President of the Assembly), there were other important members in the council. They were *Uparaja* (Subordinate Kings), *Senapati* (military commanders) and *Bhandagarikas* (Treasurer). Judicial procedure was very elaborate and the suspected accused had to face on turn a hierarchy of officials. The Raja was the Chief of the judiciary.

The powerful monarchies of the time developed a standing army which was maintained by the state. Such an organism may not have existed in the ganas. But the Lichchhavis had a strong army. Land revenue was the Chief source of income of the state.

The consciousness of a clan origin seems to have played a great part in the formation of republics. Where it did not exist, such a state did not usually come into existence. It further appears that the political horizon and influence of these states could not usually extent to territories where their own clan was not in ascendancy. These republican states could not expand into a strong and big state. Their horizon was limited to their home lands. The

republic could not last long due to certain causes. Dr. Jayaswal has attributed their eclipse and destruction to the imperialism of the Gupta. Samudragupta, like Alexander, killed the spirit of the country. The republics were torn by local loyalties, mutual bickerings and constant warfare among themselves. The ambitious rulers of Magadha attacked and annexed the territories of any republics. The smaller republics could not survive their aggression. But some of the republican tribes in western India continued to exist in freedom for a much longer time.

The ancient Indian republics proved that the people of the land had the ability and desire to rule themselves with common consent and will.

### 5.3 MAGADHA

The struggle for political pre-eminence among the four Mahajanapadas of Kasi, Kosala, Magadha and Vajji lasted for about one hundred years. Ultimately, the kingdom of Magadha emerged to be the most powerful and succeeded in founding an empire in entire northern India. Not much is known about the early history of Magadha. The dynastic history of Magadha is shrouded in darkness. The earliest reference to the Magadha people occurs in the *Atharvaveda*, Jain and Buddhist texts. Magadha played an important role in the development of Jainism and Buddhism, and two of India's greatest empires, the Murya Empire and Gupta Empire, originated here. The learned and wised personalities like Patanjali, Panini and Kautilya were the product of this land. The success of this kingdom began with the conquest of Anga Mahjanapada by king Bimbisara. But Magadha emerged to be the most powerful and successful under Ashoka the great.

#### 5.3.1 Rise and growth of Magadha Empire

The kingdom in Magadha correspondence to the modern district of Patna and Gaya, Jehannabad, Nalanda and Auryangabad in Southern Bihar. It was bounded on the north by the river, Ganges, on the east by the river Champa, on the south by the Vindhya Range of mountains and on the west by the Soan River. In the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Magadha rose into prominence on account of various factors.

Firstly, Magadha enjoyed an advantageous geographical position in the age of iron, because the richest iron deposits were situated in and around its earliest capital Rajgir. The rich and vast iron-ore enabled its rulers to equip themselves with effective weapons, which were not easily available to their rivals. On account of this, the rulers of Magadha defeated their rival

rulers and could be able to establish their supremacy over north India by their strong standing armies.

Secondly, Magadha was economically rich. The vast iron ore deposits in the region enabled its rulers to make various implements for agriculture. The Magadhan region was fertile. It was located in the Gangetic Valley which was immensely fertile and produced varieties of crops. Agriculture played an important role in its economic development and keeps the kingdom in good shape. The growth of agriculture and industry brought prosperity to the Magadhan Empire. The geographical location of the empire also greatly contributed to the development of trade and commerce which increased the economic conditions and prosperity of the people.

Thirdly, the strategic situations of both the capitals of the Magadhan Empire were very favourable from defence point of view. The two capitals of Magadha, the earliest at Rajgir and the second at Pataliputra, were situated at very strategic points. Rajgir was surrounded by a group of five hills. Pataliputra, the new capital also occupied a pivotal position. The new capital was situated on the confluence of the rivers Ganga, Gandak and Sone. This enabled the Magadhan army to move to various directions by following the course of the rivers. So both the capitals were quite safe and invulnerable.

Fourthly, Magadha enjoyed a special advantage in military organisation. On account of the richness of the kingdom the rulers could afford to have a strong, well-equipped and well organised army. The army was consists of chariots, elephants and horses. Although the Indian states were well acquainted with the use of horses and chariots, it was Magadha which first used a large scale of elephants in its wars against the enemies. On account of its location in the eastern part of the country the kingdom was assured of supply of elephants in abundance. The Greek sources provide us information that the Nanda rulers of Magadha had maintained 6,000 war elephants. Horses and elephants played an important role to bring military success of the Magadha rulers.

Fifthly, the liberal religious approach of the rulers of Magadha also one of the factors for the rise and growth of the empire. The Magadha rulers made the best use of the intermixing of the cultures of both the Aryans and non-Aryans. They used the talents of the both for the promotion and development of their kingdom. As the rulers of Magadha did not belong to any classes, they preferred to follow either Jainism or Buddhism. Both these religions insisted on adoption of liberal attitude towards people of various casts. Thus the rulers were able to create favourable social climate. On account of this liberal attitude of the Magadhan rulers there was peace and harmony in the empire.

Lastly, the rulers of Magadha and their strong administration contributed towards the rise and growth of the empire. Four dynasties consisting of eleven rulers ruled Magadha for about two hundred years from 544 B.C. to 322 B.C. before the foundation of great Maurya Empire.

### 5.3.2 The Brihadrathas

Magadha first owed its political importance to the dynasty founded by Brihadratha. He was the founder of *Barhadratha* dynasty, the earliest ruling dynasty of Magadha. According to Mahabharata and the Puranas, he was the son of Vasu, the Kuru king of Chedi. The name of Brihadratha is also found in the Rigveda Ripunjaya was the last in his lineage, who was killed by his minister in sixth century B.C. Dr. H.C. Raychaudhuri has observed, that the early dynastic history of Magadha is shrouded in darkness. The history of Magadha commences with the famous Bimbisara of the *Haryanka Kula*.

### 5.3.3 Bimbisara

Magadha's gradual rise to political supremacy began with Bimbisara (558 B.C. – 491 B.C.) also known as Seniya or Shrenika. The statement in the *Mahavamsa*, that he was the son of Bhattiya, who was a petty chieftain. The Buddhist texts indicate that Bimbisara was initially a *Senapati* (commander-in-Chief). According to Asvaghosha's *Buddhacharita*, Bimbisara belonged to the *Haryanka Kula* or dynasty. He ascended the throne of Magadha at the age of 15 about 543 B.C. He laid the foundations of Magadha by fortification of village, which later became the city of Pataliputra.

Bimbisara was an ambitious ruler. He followed the policy of annexation and matrimonial alliances to increase the prestige and strength of Magadha. The *Mahavaga*; a Buddhist text, speaks of Bimbisara had many wives. He married Mahakosala, sister of king Prasanjit of Kosala. This marriage brought him a village in Kashi as dowry. He also married Vidhehan princes Khema. Another queen of Bimbisara was Chellana; she was the daughter of Chetaka, the ruler of Vaisali. Bimbisar had another wife called Vasavi. The matrimonial alliances must have helped Bimbisara to extend his influence both east and west part of his empire.

Bimbisara conquered and annexed the kingdom of Anga after defeating Brahmadata. The conquest of Anga is proved by the evidence of the *Digha Nikaya* and *Mahavagga*. According to Hemachandra, the Jain writer Anga kingdom was governed as a separate provide by the crown since Kunika, who had his headquarters at Champa. It is stated that

Bimbisara sent his Physician Jivak to attend to Pradyota, King of Avanti, who was suffering from jaundice. It established cordial relations between the two. Bimbisara maintained diplomatic relations with Avanti, Gandhara and Poruk (Sindh) which must have helped in maintaining Magadha influence over these regions.

The Mahabagga suggests that Bimbisara had a large kingdom consisting of eighty thousand prosperous villages and covered an area of three hundred leagues. Buddhist texts refer to villages governed by assemblies under village headmen (gramakas). They also talk of high ranking officials known as *Mahamatras*, who probably had executive, judicial and military functions. He exercised rigid control over his subjects. The high officers (*Rajabhatas*) of Bimbisara were divided into four categories, viz., *Sambhattahaka* or officer incharge of general affairs, *Senanayak Mahamattas* or generals, *Voharika Mahamattas* or judges and *Mahamattas* or revenue officials. The penal code was harsh. Provision was made for imprisonment of criminals in jails. The various provinces in the kingdom were given a lot of autonomy king was ruling from his capital Girivraja (identified with Rajagriha).

There is no unanimity with regard to the religion of Bimbisara. Jaina texts claim Bimbisara was a follower of Mahavira. According to the *Uttaradhayana Sutra*, Bimbisara visited Mahavira alongwith family and relatives and became a devoted follower. On the otherhand, Buddhist texts claim that he was a follower of Buddha. According to *Sutta Nipata*, Bimbisara first met Gautam seven years before the latter's enlightenment. The second meeting took place when Buddha visited Magadha along with large number of his disciples. Bimbisara is supposed to have embraced his teaching and served food to Buddha. A park called Veluvana was donated to Buddha and his *Sangha*. Bimbisara appointed his own Physician Jivka to attend Buddha and other monks. The Brahmans also claimed Bimbisara was a follower of Brahmanism.

According to Buddhist text *Vinaya Pitaka*, Bimbisara was killed by his son Kunika, also known as Ajatashatru, at the instance of Buddha's wicked cousin Devadatta. Ajatashatru is said to have later confessed his crime to the Buddha. According to *Avashyaka Sutra* of the Jaina states that Ajatashatru imprisoned his father in order to become king. When Ajata shatru realized his fault, so he rushed forward with an iron club to break his fathers chains. Thinking that his son was advancing to kill him, Bimbisara is said to have consumed poison and ended his own life.

According to Buddhist chronicles Bimbisara ruled for 52 years and was succeeded by his son Ajatashatru.

#### 5.3.4 Ajatashatru

Ajatashatru like his father followed an imperialistic policy to expand his empire. His reign marked the apogee of *Haryanka* dynasty. The conflict with Kosala was an important part of this process. Prasenjit the king of Kosala was furious as Ajatashatru is patricide and the death of his sister Mahakoshala (one of Bimbisara's wife). In consequence, Prasenjit revoked the gift of the Kasi village which was granted to Bimbisara as a dowry. This was followed by a war between Kosala and Magadha. In the beginning, Ajatashatru was victorious and in later he was defeated and captured, but his life spared. The war between the two states ended with a peace treaty. According to the terms of the treaty, the village Kashi was returned to Ajatashatru. Prasenjit also gave his daughter Vajira in marriage to Ajatashatru.

Ajatashatru wage his second war against the Lichhavis of Vaisali. Vaisali was a powerful republic. Bimbisara had established matrimonial relations with them. According to Buddhist tradition, the conflict was instigated by the Lichchavis, who broke their promise to share equally with Ajatashatru the contents jewel mine that was discovered at the foot of a hill at a port of the Ganga. According to Jaina literature the cause of the conflict was Magadha's state elephant Seyanaga and a very valuable necklace consisting of 18 strings of pearls which was given by Bimbisara to his sons Halla and Vehalla. They refused to hand over these gifts to their step brother Ajatashatru. They carried these gifts to their maternal grandfather Chetaka of Vaisali. This is supposed to have led to the conflict. The Lichchavis who were then at the heyday of their political power formed a confederation with the republic chiefs of Kasi and Kosala.

Ajatashatru realized that he would not be able to defeat in direct war. So he sent his able minister, Vassakara to sow the seeds of discord, disunion and dissention among the Lichchavis. The minister was successful in his mission. After realizing the gravity of the situation Ajatashatru took all possible steps to ensure victory. To conduct the operation against the Lichchavis more effectively he ordered to construct a fort at a village called Patali on the bank of river Ganges which after wards grew under the name of Pataliputra and eventually became the capital of Magadha. The war between the two states was terrible and finally Ajatashatru destroyed their independence by invading their territory and by defeating

them in battle. It is stated that Ajatashatru used '*Mahasilakantaga*' and *Rathamusala*. The *Mahasilakantaga* was a kind of catapult which hurled big pieces of stone on the enemy. The *Rathamusala* was a chariot which created havoc by wheeling about and hurling destruction by its attached rods. The land of the Lichchhavis was annexed to the empire of Magadha.

Ajatashatru faced a stranger rival by the ruler of Avanti, Chanda Pradyaota. Avanti had defeated the Vatsas of Kausambi and now threatened an invasion of Magadha. To meet this danger Ajatashatru began fortification of his capital Rajgriha. But the war did not take place.

The Jain texts represented Ajastatra as a Jaina and in the Buddhist text as a Buddhist. Jaina texts describe the king's frequent visits of Mahavira both at Vaisali and Champa and expressed his faith in teachings of Jainism. Buddhist text describes Ajatashatru paid a visit to Buddha and expressed remorse for the murder of his father. He asked Buddha to accept his confession of sin. On the Buddhas demise, Ajatashatru is said to have gone to Kusinara to claim a portion of his relics. He is also credited with building many relic stupas around Rajagriha.

### 5.3.5 Udayin or Udayabhadra

There is no certainty about the successor of Ajatashatru. According to *Puranas* he was followed by Darsaka who ruled for 25 years. Buddhist texts refer to the immediate successor as Udayabhadda, Jaina texts as Udayabhadra or Udayin. The *Puranas* insert a ruler named Darsaka before him. The Pali literature states that Udayabhadra was a patricide like his father. Jaina tradition describes him as a devoted son. He is described as a devote Jaina, given to frequent fasting. The most important event of his reign was that he shifted the capital of Magadha from Rajagriha to Pataliputra. The *Gargi Samhita* and the *Vayu Purana* also state that he built the city of Kusumpura or Pataliputra in the fourth year of his reign. He also built the fort upon the confluence of the Ganga and Soan at Patna. This was done because Patna lay in the centre of the Magadhan Kingdom. It is stated in the *Parisishtaparava* that the king of Avanti Palaka the son of Pradyota was an enemy of Udyain. Palaka was defeated by Udayain several times. Palaka avenged his defact by getting Udyain murdered while he was piously listening to a religious discourse.

### 5.3.5 Sisunaga



According to *Puranas*, Udayain was succeeded by Nandivardhana and Mahanandin. On the otherhand Buddhist tradition lists Anurudha, Munda and Nagadasaka as the successors of Udayain. It is stated in the Ceylonese chronicles that the people of Magadha drove out the ruling family and elected an amathya (high ranking official) named Sisunaga as king. Sisunaga had acted as the Magadhan viceroy at Varanasi before he became king. He had a second royal residence at Vaisali which ultimately became his capital.

The most important achievement of Sisunaga was that he destroyed the power of the Pradyota dynasty of Avanti. The ruler of Avanti was perhaps Varti Varadhana or Avanti Vardhana. The victory over Avanti made Sisunaga the most powerful ruler of the whole of northern India. The kingdom of Vatsa and Kosala may also have been annexed by him.

Sisunaga was succeeded by his son Kalashoka (probably the Kakavarna of the *Puranas*). It is suggested by Bhandarkar, Jacobi and Geiger that Kalashoka and Kakavarna are one and same person. He once again shifted the capital of Magadhan Empire to Pataliputra. It was during his reign that the second Buddhist council was convened at Vaisali. It is alleged that the king met a tragic end in the vicinity of his capital when a dagger was thrust into his throat. However, this view has been rejected by others by arguing that even after the murder of Kalashoka his successors continued to rule ten years. The Sisunaga dynasty came to an ignoble end owing to the palace intrigue engineered by a faithless queen. According to the *Mahabodhivamsa*, the successors of Kalashoka were his ten sons. All they ruled simultaneously. It has further asserted that the successors of Kalashoka were not allowed to rule peacefully and were murdered one after another and paved the way for Nanda dynasty.

#### 5.4 The Nandas

The Sisunagas were succeeded by the Nandas who proved to be the most powerful rulers of Magadha. The *Puranas* call the founder of the Nanda dynasty Mahapadma. The Nanda dynasty ruled in northern India during 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Ancient sources differ considerably regarding the names of the Nanda kings and the duration of their rule. But based on the Buddhist tradition recorded in *Mahavamsa*, they appear to have ruled during 345 – 322 B.C.

##### 5.4.1 Mahapadma Nanda

Both Indian and Greek traditions characterize the dynasty's founder as of low birth. The Jaina *Parishistaparvan* states that the first Nanda king was the son of a barber by a

ganika (courtesan). According to Greek writer Curtius tells us that he was a barber who became a lover of one of the queens and killed the king at her instigation. The 12<sup>th</sup> century Jain scholar Hemchandra corroborates the Greek accounts stating that the first Nanda king was the son of a barbar and a courtesan. The puranas describe Mahapadma as the son of a king of *Sisunaga* dynasty by a *shudra* woman. Buddhist text describes the Nandas as of unknown lineage.’

Since the claim of the barbar ancestry of the dynasty’s founder is attested by two different traditions – Greek and Jain, it appears to be more reliable than the *Puranic* claim of *Sisunaga* ancestry. The Puranas refer to Mahapadma as one who attained sole sovereignty (ekrat) and as an uprooter of the *kshatriyas*. The *Kshatriya* dynasties which were overthrown by him comprised the following: Ikshavakus, Panchalas, Kasis, Haihayas, Kalingas, Asmakas, Kurus, Maithilas, Surasena and Vitihotras. A possible indication of Nanda military victories in Kalinga is suggested by the later Hatigumpha inscription of king Kharavela. According to some inscriptions of Mysore the Nandas ruled over Kuntala. The existence of a city called Nan Nand Dehra (Nanded) on the Godavari has been taken by some scholars to prove that Nanda rule over Deccan.

Mahapadma Nanda was the first great historical emperor who united the fragmented parts of India under one political umbrella. His low origin marked the end of the age-old hegemony of the *Kshatriyas*. *Puranic*, Buddhist and Jaina traditions agree that there were nine Nanda kings. However, the *Puranas* describe the first king as father and the later eight as his sons, while Buddhist texts describe all eight as brothers. The *Mahabodhivamsa* gives the following list of nine kings: Ugrasena, Panduka, Pandugati, Bhutapala, Govishanaka, Dashasiddhaka, Kaivarta and Dhana.

#### 5.4.2 DhanaNanda

DhanaNanda was the last king of Nanda dynasty. He was ruling Magadha at the time of Alexander’s invasion. The Greek accounts call him Agrammes or Xandrames. He is described as powerful king who ruled over Prasii (Prachyas or Easterners) and the Gangaridae (the people of the Ganges delta). King Dhana Nanda inherited the vast empire of his father. The army of Dhana Nanda consisted of a large number of cavalry, infantry, chariots and elephants. Quintus Curtius the Greek writer states he had an army consisting of 200,000 infantry, 20,000 cavalry, 2000 Chariots and 3000 elephants. According to Plutarch however,

it was even larger, numbering 200,000 infantry, 80,000 cavalry, 8000 war chariots and 6,000 war elephants.

But despite the vastness of his empire and largeness of his army he could not earn the love of his people because of the excessive burden of tax that he had levied on the people due to his greed for money. Besides, he was looked down upon because he was considered to be the son of a barbar. Plutarch tells us that Androkottos or Chandragupta Maurya had stated that the Nanda King was hated and despised by his subjects on account of the wickedness of his disposition and the meanness of his origin.

From the Jaina tradition, the Nanda had several ministers with Jaina leanings. Kalpaka was the minister of first Nanda King. He encouraged the Nanda King to exterminate all the Kshatriya states. Jaina texts suggest that ministerial office was hereditary Sakatala was the minister of ninth Nanda King. He had two sons namely Sthulabhadra and Sriyaka. On Sakatala's death the king offered the office of the Minister to Sthulabhadra, who declined the office and became a Jaina monk. So the post was accepted by Sriyaka. Dhana Nanda was ruling over Magadha at the time of Alexander's invasion. After Alexander's departure Chandragupta Maurya took advantage of the weakness of Dhana Nanda and uprooted the Nanda dynasty.

The rule of Nandas has great important in Indian history. They made the first attempt to give political unity to India by subjugating several states. They carved out an empire which extended from North India upto Godavari.

#### **5.4.3 Rise of Chandragupta Maurya**

The advent of the Maurya dynasty to power marked the beginning of a new chapter in the political and cultural history of ancient India. For the first time almost the whole of India became united as a great empire and came under one imperial administration. The Mauryas (324-187 B.C.) established an empire that extended over almost the entire subcontinent and even beyond it in the north-west. Under three great emperors of the Maurya dynasty, India enjoyed a strong and sound administration as well a phase of peace and prosperity. According to V.A. Smith, the historian "with the foundation of Maurya dynasty we come from darkness to light. It is from here that Indian history begins in a chronological setting. The history prior to Mauryas is dark".

The sources for the Maurya period are more varied than for earlier periods. The period was rich in sources both Indian and foreign. The Greeks who accompanied Alexander in his campaigns to India have left valuable accounts of the early Maurya rule in India. The Greek ambassadors Megasthenes's *Indika* has left a lot of information regarding the condition of India, in his time. It is unfortunate that his account is lost and can be traced in citations of other Greek writers. The classical authors – Strabo, Diodorus, Plutarch and Justin have recorded their impression on India by collecting information from contemporary reports and traditions. One of the greatest discoveries of India history (which we owe to Sir William Jones) is the correspondence of the Greek name Sandrakottos or Androcottus to the Indian name, Chandragupta. This leads to the conclusion that Chandragupta was a contemporary of Alexander of Greek. Besides these Latin and Greek sources, there are also Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jain sources throwing a flood of light on the Mauryas. The *Arthashastra* of Kautilya is an extremely sophisticated and detailed treatise on statecraft. Kautilya was a friend, guide and the Prime Minister of Chandragupta. Kautilya is known as Vishnugupta and Chanakya. In his works Kautilya has given a vivid description of the political, social, economic and religious condition as well as administrative system under Chandragupta. *Arthashastra* is a unique work in the whole range of Indian literature. The *Puranas*, the Buddhist texts (*Mahavamsa* and *Dipavamsa*) and the Jain evidences are trustworthy accounts of the rule of Chandragupta. The monuments belonging to Mauryan period speak of the culture and civilization of this period. The Junagarh Rock inscription of Rudradaman of 150 A.D. also gives an idea of Chandragupta's reign.

### **Origin and Early Career**

The Maurya Empire was built on the foundation laid by the Nandas. The early life of the first Maurya emperor is shrouded in mystery. There is no unanimity among historians about the origin or ancestry of Chandragupta. The Greek writer Justin described Chandragupta as a man of low origin. The *Parishishta Parvan*, on the other hand, describes Chandragupta as the son of the daughter of a chief of a village peacock tamers (*Mayura – Poshakas*). In Buddhist texts such as the *Digha Nikaya* and *Mahavamsa* represent Chandragupta as the scion of the Kshatriya clan of Moriyas, ruling over Pippalivana. Vishnu Purana, states that Chandragupta was the eldest son of Maurya, son of the Nanda king Sarvarthasiddhi, by Mura, daughter of a Virshala (hunter). In spite of diverse accounts, it is historically reasonable that Chandragupta came from the Moriyas of Pippalivana.

The rise of Chandragupta to power is mostly known from the Buddhist sources. According to Buddhist tradition Chandragupta's father left his mother destitute and she took shelter at Pataliputra. There at Pataliputra Chandragupta was born. Born Posthumously he was adopted by a cowherd for safety. The cowherd sold him to a hunter who engaged him to look after the cattle. As a boy, Chandragupta held mock courts to dispense justice among his playmates. While engaged in such an activity once he was spotted by Chanakya, the crafty Brahmana who had a grudge against the Nanda King of Magadha. Struck by the impressive personality of Chandragupta, Chanakya brought him from the hunter and took him away to Taxila. There at Taxila Chandragupta was given education and military training with an aim at the destruction of Nanda dynasty.

Chandragupta was indeed a bold and brave man as Chanakya was shrewd and crafty. When the Greek hero Alexander invaded India, Chandragupta personally came to meet the Greek hero. That visit itself speaks of Chandragupta's daring character. Soon thereafter began the rapid rise of Chandragupta to power. Alexander's departure from India left the North – West in political turmoil. The growing difficulty of the Greeks enabled Chandragupta to achieve his object with surprising ease. Chandragupta got the finest opportunity to strike the final blow and he became the master of the situation in 323 B.C. It is pointed out that Chandragupta played an important role in the liberation of India from the Greek rule. The *Mahavamsa* tells us that Chandragupta collected recruits from different places and organized them into a powerful army, and with their help he was able to turn out the foreigners.

### **Overthrow of the Nandas**

After establishing his hold over Punjab and Sindh Chandragupta and Chanakya decided to crush the power of Magadha. Before launching an attack on the powerful Nanda Empire he had to weigh carefully relative strength and weakness. At that time DhanaNanda, the last Nanda King was unpopular and so oppressive that the people felt restless against his misrule. Prevailing discontent against Nanda rule this created a favourable atmosphere. Chandragupta assisted by Chanakya first conquered the outlying areas of Nanda Empire before having a direct confrontation. The text *Milindapanho* refers to a ghastly and devastating war in between the Nandas and Mauryas. It is stated that 'two kotis' of soldiers, 10,000 elephants, one lakh horses and 5,000 charioteers were killed in the battle field. The *Parisishtaparvan* tells us that the entire Nanda territory was destroyed. Pataliputra was besieged till the Nanda ruler Dhana Nanda was forced to surrender. It is said that Chandragupta spared the life of the

Nandaking and allowed him to leave Pataliputra. The victory made Chandragupta the master of extensive territories which included Kalinga, Mysore, valley of Ganga and Yamuna and the land of five rivers and virtually the whole of North India.

### **Defeat off Seleucus Nikator:**

While Chandragupta was engaged in laying the foundation of his empire in India, a former general of Alexander Seleucus Nikator in 305 B.C. crossed the river Indus with an intention to recover the lost portion of India which Alexander had conquered in 326 B.C. Chandragupta took up the challenge of the Greeks bravely. Seleucus had to face stubborn opposition organized by Chandragupta. Details of this conflict are not known to us. The classical writer mention that Seleucus suffered a set back and was forced to surrender four satrapies to Chandragupta. These *Satrapies* were Arachosia (Kandhar), the Paropanisdae (Kabul), Ariana (Heart) and Godrosia (Baluchistan). In return Chandragupta gave 500 elephants to seleucus as a token of present. Probably Chandragupta also married the daughter of seleucus. Henceforth relations between the two empires became friendly. Seleucus also sent megasthenes as ambassador to the Mauryan court.

### **Conquest of Western India**

Chandragupta extended his empire further by conquest of Western India, he conquered the province of Saurashtra and Kathiawar. This is known from Junagarh rock inscription of Rudradaman. The inscription records that Puspagupta was the governor of Chandragupta in Saurashtra, who constructed water reservoir known as the Sudarshana Lake. According to Jaina texts, Chandragupta also annexed the neighbouring province of Avanti and captured its Capital Ujjain.

### **Conquest of South**

With regard to the conquest of South India by Chandragupta, the historians are divided in their opinion. H.C. Ray Choudhury believed that the Nandas conquered South India which Chandragupta inherited. V.A. Smith credits Bindusar with the conquest. Some later inscriptions and Jaina texts suggest a connection between Chandragupta, Jainism and Karnataka. Jaina traditions speak of the relationship between Chandragupta and the Jaina saint Bhadrabahu. It is also known that in the later part of his life, Chandragupta became the Chief disciple of the Jaina saint Bhadrabahu and died at Sravana Belgola in Karnataka by starving himself to death in typical Jaina tradition.

The Maurya Empire under Chandragupta extended towards the north – west upto the borders of the Persia, towards the east upto Bihar, in the west upto the seas bordering Saurashtra and the South upto Mysore. His empire was quite extensive. Both Plutarch and Justin refer to him as the lord of India.

### **Administration**

Chandragupta left an impression on Indian history as a great empire builder and a capable administrator. From Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, Megasthenese '*Indika*' we gather detailed account of the Government and administration. Kautilya assisted the emperor in devising reforms to improve the efficiency of the government.

#### **Central Administration:**

The Mauryan king was the head of the State and of the administration. Chandragupta was benevolent despot. His government was monarchical in nature. He was the supreme head of the state embodying in himself legislative, executive, judicial and military functions. He ruled the people by following established principles of *Dharma*. According to Megasthenes the king was assisted by a council of Ministers. The capital, Pataliputra, was the centre of the imperial administration. The central administration was divided into several departments. Kautilya mentions a large number of departments which looked after such important subjects like revenue, exchequer, accounts, agriculture, commerce etc. The king administered his kingdom on the advice of the ministers or *Mantris* and the help of State officers or *Amatyas*.

#### **Provincial Administration:**

The empire was divided into a number of provinces and each province was placed under a prince or *Kumaras*. The provinces were Uttarapatha (capital of Taxila), Avanti (capital of Ujjain), Prachi (Capital of Pataliputra), Kalinga (capital at Tosali and Somapa) and Dakshinapatha. The provinces were further divided into districts or *Janapadas*. Each district was headed by *Sthanikas* who were assisted by *Gopas*. The village was the lowest unit of administration and was headed by the *Gramika*.

Megasthenes has given detailed information about the administration of Pataliputra the capital city. He tells us that the city of Pataliputra about 15 Km long and 3 Km wide and was protected by huge wooden wall. The administration of Pataliputra was carried on by six committees, each committee consisting of five members. This committee were entrusted with

sanitation, care of foreigners, registration of birth and death, regulation of weights and measures and similar other functions. The head of the administration was known as *Nagaradhayaksha*. An efficient spy system existed under Chandragupta which kept the king informed of all important day to day happening in the kingdom.

### **Army Organisation:**

Megasthenes also gives details of Mauryan Military administration which was considered vital for the Security and Peace of the newly established empire. Chandragupta's army consisted of 6, 00, 000 infantry, 30,000 Cavalry, 9,000 elephant and 8,000 chariots. Megasthenes records that the army was controlled by a war office constituted by 30 members distributed over six boards of five members each. The army was divided into six wings, each under the control of one board. The six wings were the army, the cavalry, the war chariots, the elephants, the war transport and the navy. The *Arthashastra* mentions that the entire army worked under the control of the *Senapati* or the commander-in-Chief.

### **The Judicial System:**

The judicial administration under Chandragupta Maurya was quite well organized. The king was the head in the affairs of justice, but there were special tribunals of justice both in the cities and the country, presided over by *Mahamatras* and *Rajukas*. The *Arthashastra* mentioned two kinds of law courts; the *Dharmasthiya* or court where civil law was administered and the *Kantakasodhana* or the Criminal Court. The *Dharmasthiya* courts Presided over by three *amatyas* and three *dharmasthas* (jurists) dealt with all civil cases in accordance with traditional laws. The *Kantakasodhana* courts were presided over by three *Pradeshtris* or *amatyas*, assisted by an army of spies. The punishments were very severe. Decapitation, amputation of limbs, fines, executing and forfeitures were the different types of punishment prevalent at that time.

### **Revenue administration**

For maintenance of large army and welfare activities Chandragupta needed huge funds. Kautilya too attaches great importance of *Artha* or wealth. The sound treasury was essential for the welfare of the state. So to meet the need the king imposed various types of taxes. The land revenue was the most important source of revenue. The state brought new land under cultivation with the help of cultivators and Sudra labourers. There existed two kinds of land viz., crown lands and private owned lands. The produce of the crown land was



called 'Sita' and 'Bhaga' was the share of revenue from private owned lands. The *bhaga* was one sixth or one fourth of the total products. Taxes were levied on other products also. *Setu* was a type of tax levied on vegetables and fruits. Besides the land tax there existed other sources of revenue too such as '*Pindakara*', was to be paid by the villagers. Another tax was called *senabhaktam*, the village people had to give at the time when the army passed through the village. *Bali* was an additional imposition levied in some specific areas. Moreover, the State enjoyed a monopoly in mining, sale of liquor, manufacture of arms etc.

India under Chandragupta Maurya enjoyed a strong and sound administration based on valid principles, systematic organization and the rule of law. He was one of the greatest and most successful rulers of Indian history. As a soldier, a conqueror, an empire builder and an administrator he earned his distinction for greatness.

## 5.5 SUMMARY

In this unit you have learnt that:

- The sixth century B.C. India was divided into sixteen Mahajanapadas. Magadha emerged as the most powerful.
- Magadha produced many powerful personalities like Bimbisara and Ajatashatru.
- The founder of Nanda dynasty was a person of very low origin. The Nandas ruled over a powerful dynasty and enjoyed authority over parts of North and South India.
- The greatest contribution of the Nandas was that they tried to give political unity to the country.
- There is much controversy about the origin and growth of Chandragupta Maurya and he established a vast empire.
- Chandragupta Maurya was the first national king of India. He gave India political unity and efficient administrative system.

## 5.6 KEY TERMS

- Janapada: Foot hold of a tribe. A region consisting of urban and rural settlement along with its inhabitants.
- Mahajanapada: Big and powerful kingdom.
- Republic: A form of government where the people elected their leader.
- Monarchy: Rule of the King.

- Satrapies: Territories
- Oligarchy: Refers to a government where power is exercised by a group of people.
- Samantas: Feudal lords or land lords.

### Check your progress

#### A. Fill in the blanks –

1. The rise of Magadha began with the rule of \_\_\_\_\_ .
2. The age of imperialism and empire began with \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Indika was written by \_\_\_\_\_.
4. There were \_\_\_\_\_ *Mahajanapadas* during 6<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ was the Greek general to whom Chandragupta offered 500 elephants as gift.
6. The Greek ambassador \_\_\_\_\_ visited the court of Chandragupta Maurya.
7. Chandragupta was a Chief disciple of Jaina Monks \_\_\_\_\_.

#### B. State whether True or False

1. By caste, the rulers of the Nanda dynasty of Magadha were Sudras.
2. Indika has been lost in original form.
3. Sakyas of Kapilavastu was a Monarchical State.
4. Brihadratha was the founder of Magadhan Empire.
5. Bimbisara belonged to the Haryanka Dynasty.
6. Dhanananda was the first king of Nanda dynasty.
7. Chandragupta Maurya had constructed Sudarsan Lake in Saurashtra.

### 5.7 Answer to check your progress

- (A) 1. Brihadratha, 2. The Nandas, 3. Megasthenes, 4. Sixteen, 5. Seleucus Nikatar, 6. Megasthenes, 7. Bhadrabahu
- (B) 1. True, 2. True, 3. False, 4. True, 5. True, 6. False, 7. True

### 5.8 Questions and Exercise

#### Short Answer Questions

1. List the Mahajanapadas of 6<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.
2. Write the Name of the important republics of the sixth century B.C.

3. Write a note on Ajatashatru to power.
4. Write a short note on early career of Chandragupta Maurya.
5. Write a short note on Selencus Nikator.

#### Long Answer Questions

1. Explain the rise of Magadha under the leadership of Bimbisara.
2. Who were Nandas ? Briefly discuss the rise and fall of Nanda dynasty.
3. State the political condition of India in the Mauryan period.
4. Give a full account of wars and conquest of Chandragupta Maurya.
5. Describe the administrative system under Chandragupta Maurya.

#### 5.9 Suggested Readings

1. Basham, A.L.: The wonder that was India, London, 1963.
2. Chakaravarti, S.N.: The pre-historic periods in India.
3. Kosambi, D.D.: The culture and civilization of Ancient India, Lndon, 1965.
4. Lal, B.B.: Indian archaeology since Independence, Delhi, 1964.
5. Sankalia, H.D.: Pre-History and Proto-History of India and Pakistan, Bombay, 1962.
6. Thapar, Romila: A History of India Vol.I, Delhi, 2000.