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Rajiv Gandhi University

# BAHIS201 HISTORY OF INDIA UPTO 1526 AD - I



## BA (HISTORY)

### 3<sup>RD</sup> SEMESTER

**Rajiv Gandhi University**  
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## **About the University**

Rajiv Gandhi University (formerly Arunachal University) is a premier institution for higher education in the state of Arunachal Pradesh and has completed twenty-five years of its existence. Late Smt. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, laid the foundation stone of the university on 4th February, 1984 at Rono Hills, where the present campus is located.

Ever since its inception, the university has been trying to achieve excellence and fulfill the objectives as envisaged in the University Act. The university received academic recognition under Section 2(f) from the University Grants Commission on 28th March, 1985 and started functioning from 1st April, 1985. It got financial recognition under section 12-B of the UGC on 25th March, 1994. Since then Rajiv Gandhi University, (then Arunachal University) has carved a niche for itself in the educational scenario of the country following its selection as a University with potential for excellence by a high-level expert committee of the University Grants Commission from among universities in India.

The University was converted into a Central University with effect from 9th April, 2007 as per notification of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

The University is located atop Rono Hills on a picturesque tableland of 302 acres overlooking the river Dikrong. It is 6.5 km from the National Highway 52-A and 25 km from Itanagar, the State capital. The campus is linked with the National Highway by the Dikrong Bridge.

The teaching and research programmes of the University are designed with a view to play a positive role in the socio-economic and cultural development of the State. The University offers Undergraduate, Post-graduate, M.Phil and Ph.D. programmes. The Department of Education also offers the B.Ed. programme.

There are fifteen colleges affiliated to the University. The University has been extending educational facilities to students from the neighbouring states, particularly Assam. The strength of students in different departments of the University and in affiliated colleges has been steadily increasing.

The faculty members have been actively engaged in research activities with financial support from UGC and other funding agencies. Since inception, a number of proposals on research projects have been sanctioned by various funding agencies to the University. Various departments have organized numerous seminars, workshops and conferences. Many faculty members have participated in national and international conferences and seminars held within the country and abroad. Eminent scholars and distinguished personalities have visited the University and delivered lectures on various disciplines.

The academic year 2000-2001 was a year of consolidation for the University. The switch over from the annual to the semester system took off smoothly and the performance of the students registered a marked improvement. Various syllabi designed by Boards of Post-graduate Studies (BPGS) have been implemented. VSAT facility installed by the ERNET India, New Delhi under the UGC-Infonet program, provides Internet access.

In spite of infrastructural constraints, the University has been maintaining its academic excellence. The University has strictly adhered to the academic calendar, conducted the examinations and declared the results on time. The students from the University have found placements not only in State and Central Government Services, but also in various institutions, industries and organizations. Many students have emerged successful in the National Eligibility Test (NET).

Since inception, the University has made significant progress in teaching, research, innovations in curriculum development and developing infrastructure.

**SYLLABI-BOOK MAPPING TABLE**  
**History of India upto 1526 AD**

<b>Syllabi</b>	<b>Mapping in Book</b>
Unit-I Sources of Ancient India and The Indus Valley Civilization	7-19
Unit-II The Vedic Age	20-39
Unit-III Rise of Hetrodox Sect: Buddhism and Jainism	40-51
Unit-IV Mauryan Empire	52-71
Unit-V Post Mauryan Period: The Sungas, the Indo Greeks and the Kushana	72-91

## INTRODUCTION

India is recognized as having a unique and intriguing history and culture. Historical records trace the beginning of Indian civilization to the ancient Indus Valley Civilization. It is also called the Harappan Civilization as Harappa was the first site to be excavated. The sources of evidence about this civilization are the artefacts, pottery, tools, ornaments and ruins of towns. Man began to use metals which continued into the Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic Ages. This was followed by the arrival of the Vedic Age which occupies an important place in Indian history. The religion, philosophy and social customs of the Hindus who constitute the majority of our country have their principal source in the Vedic culture. However, with the passage of time, Vedic religion had become quite ritualistic and the caste system had become predominant. This resulted in regional dissent among the masses, which led to the emergence of new classes and the rise of Jainism and Buddhism. Jainism and Buddhism represent a remarkable phase in the religious and cultural development of India. This was followed by the emergence of cities and territorial states, especially the Magadha Empire and the Nandas.

Further, the small cities and territorial states were brought under the control of Chandragupta Maurya who laid the foundation of the Mauryan Empire. The decline of the Mauryan Empire led to the arrival and emergence of Indo-Greeks, Shungas, Kharavelas, Kushanas and Satvahanas. India was once again politically united in the Gupta Period. The Gupta Age is marked as an era of unprecedented progress in all aspects of polity, religion, art and literature. The disintegration of the Gupta period led to the emergence of regional kingdoms. This was followed by the arrival of Arabs and Turks in India. Later, India was plundered and invaded repeatedly by foreign rulers such as Timur and Mahmud Ghazni. These invasions laid the foundation for the establishment of Muslim rule in India by Qutub-din-Aibak. He was the first ruler of the Delhi Sultanate and also the founder of the Slave dynasty. This dynasty was followed by the Sayyid and Lodhi dynasties. However, none of them could hold on to power for long and eventually Babur-the first Mughul emperor of India-defeated and conquered them.

This book, History of India upto 1526 AD, has been designed keeping in mind the self-instruction mode (SIM) format and follows a simple pattern, wherein each unit of the book begins with the Introduction followed by the Unit Objectives for the topic. The content is then presented in a simple and easy-to-understand manner, and is interspersed with 'Check Your Progress' questions to reinforce the student's understanding of the topic. A list of Questions and Exercises is also provided at the end of each unit. The Summary and Key Terms further act as useful tools for students and are meant for effective recapitulation of the text.

## **Unit – I**

### **Sources of Early India and Indus Valley Civilisation**

#### Structure

- 1.0 Introduction
- 1.1 Unit Objectives
- 1.2 Sources: Archaeological and Literary
- 1.3 Indus Valley Civilization
  - 1.3.1 Extent of the Civilisation
  - 1.3.2 Origin and Period
  - 1.3.3 Town Planning
  - 1.3.4 Indus Seals
  - 1.3.5 Indus Script
  - 1.3.6 Social Life
  - 1.3.7 Economic Life
  - 1.3.8 Religious Life
  - 1.3.9 Indus Art
  - 1.3.10 Political Life
  - 1.3.11 Decline
- 1.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.5 Key Words
- 1.6 Check Your Learning
- 1.7 Suggested Reading
- 1.8 Hints/Answer to Questions in Check Your Progress

#### **1.0 Objectives**

The objective of the Unit is to acquaint the students about the sources of early Indian history and the earliest civilisation of India, called Indus Valley Civilisation. The basic features of the civilisation and causes of its decline are also discussed.

#### **1.1 Introduction**

Information about the past is based on several sources, each contributing a part in our attempt to visualize the complete picture. There are two primary source materials for studying ancient Indian history, namely literary and archaeological. For a comprehensive understanding of historical events, it is essential to analyse both literary and archaeological sources, wherever possible. These sources will help you analyse various facets of the Indus Valley Civilization. It is also called the Harappan civilization as Harappa was the first site to be excavated. The sources of evidence about this civilization are the artefacts, pottery, tools, ornaments and ruins of towns. Some tablets and seals of this civilization have certain symbols engraved on them. However, these symbols have not been deciphered till now. Therefore, the main evidences of this civilization are the archaeological excavations.

#### **1.2 Sources: Archaeological and Literary**

There are many sources' through which we come to know about our past. They can be divided into:

- Archaeological evidence
- Literary evidence

### **Archaeological Evidence**

Archaeologists and historians study the remains of past civilizations. Archaeology is the study of the remains of our past like monuments, tools, pottery, coins, weapons, paintings and other artefacts. Thus, archaeology provides us direct evidence from the past, which serves as clues to reconstruct the past.

Most of our information about pre-historic man, the Indus Valley people and other ancient civilizations is based upon archaeological findings.

Archaeological findings usually have the following forms:

- Inscriptions
- Coins
- Monuments
- Artefacts

### **Inscriptions**

In ancient times, rulers engraved important messages for people on rocks, pillars, stone walls, clay tablets and copper plates. These writings are known as inscriptions. The study of inscriptions is called epigraphy. A study of these inscriptions throws light upon the language of the people, names of the rulers, the years they ruled, their military achievements, the religious and social conditions of the people and many other details. For example, the edicts of Ashoka are a collection of 33 inscriptions on the Pillars of the Emperor Ashoka of the Mauryan dynasty (269 BC to 231BC). An edict was a formal announcement of the ruler to inform the public. The Ashokan edicts on pillars give us information about the extent of his empire.

### **Coins**

The study of coins is called numismatics. Coins are made of metals like gold, silver and copper and are therefore not easily destroyed. They have the names and images of rulers stamped upon them. They give information such as the date of accession and death of the ruler. For example, Roman coins discovered in India give us an idea about the existence of contacts with the Roman Empire. The principal source of information of the Bactarian; Indo-Greeks and Indo-Parthian dynasty is numismatics. The coins of these dynasties throw light on the improvement in the coin artistry of India. Portraits and figures, Hellenistic art and dates on the coins of the western satraps of Saurashtra are remarkable sources for reconstructing the history of this period. The history of the Satavahanas is ascertained from the Jogalthambi hoard of coins. The circulation of coins in gold and silver during the Gupta Empire provides a fair idea of the economic condition during the rule of the Guptas.



## **Monuments**

Ancient buildings like temples, palaces and forts are known as monuments. They give us information about the life and times of the people. For example, the carvings on the panels of Qutub Minar tell us about the reign of the early Delhi Sultans, and the carved panels on the walls and railings of the Sanchi Stupa tell stories from the life of the Buddha

## **Artefacts**

An artefact is something made or given shape by man, such as a tool or a work of art, specially an object of archaeological interest. The ancient artefacts help historians form a picture of cultural and religious life of ancient societies. For example, the artefacts of Harappan civilization with motifs relating to asceticism and fertility rites suggest that these concepts entered Hinduism from the earlier civilization. The stone tools, pottery, buttons, jewellery and clothing found at various sites provide information about the life of early man.

## **Literary Evidence**

It took humans a long time to develop the art of writing. Before paper was invented people wrote on palm leaves and the bark of birch trees. These written records which include both religious and secular literature are called manuscripts.

The Vedas, the oldest recorded text of the Aryans, and the Buddhist texts are written sources, which tell us about the past. But since these scripts are associated with rituals or religious practices of the past, these are called religious sources. Other examples are the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Gita and the Puranas. However, there could be books written in the past, e.g., accounts of foreign travelers who came to India and wrote about Indian society. The literature not connected with the religion of the times is called "secular. For example, the Arthashastra, which was written by Kantilya.

### **1.3 THE INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION**

India is an ancient land. One of the earliest civilizations flourished in this sub-continent. In 1922, a great discovery took place when R.D. Banarjee and D. Sahni discovered two important sites of Indus Valleys Civilization, known as Harappa and Mohenjodaro. This civilization is as old as the civilization of the valleys of Nile and Tigris. Archaeologist termed it as a Bronze Age. 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 banks of the Indus valley; hence called Indus Valley Civilization. The Indus civilization ranks among the four widely known civilizations of the old world and covers an appreciably larger area than that of either Egypt or Sumer.

Various scholars have contributed significantly towards the study of the Indus Valley civilization. Scholar like A. Cunningham, G.R. Hunter, Father Heras, John Marshall, N.G. Majumdar, M.S. Vats, D.R Sahni, R. D. Banerjee, E. Mackay, Mortimer Wheeler and others

carried out research regarding various aspects of Indus Valley Civilization in pre-independence period. After independence, Indian scholars such as A. Ghosh, B.B. Lal, B.K. Thapar, Y.D. Sharma, S.R. Rao, J.P. Joshi, R.S. Bisht and many others, have explored and excavated various Indus sites in India. M.R. Mughal, George L. Possehl, B. Allchin and F. Allchin also have done extensive research on Indus cities of India as well as Pakistan.

### **1.3.1 Extent of the Civilisation**

The Indus Civilization was the most extensive of the ancient riverine civilizations, with sites as far north as shortughai in the Pamirs and some activity across the sea southwards in Oman in the Arab Peninsula. However, it extends in India from Manda (Jammu) in the north to Diamabad (Maharashtra) in the south, in the east from Alamgirpur (Uttar Pradesh) to Kutch in Gujarat in the west. The total area of the Indus world is approximately 65,000 to 80,000 square Kms. However, in India, the Indus area extends over 12, 500 square Kms. The Indus area in India falls broadly into the separate geographical regions, divided essentially by the Thar Desert. These are:

1. The eastern region covering Rajasthan, Haryana, Punjab, some parts of Jammu and Uttar Pradesh ; the river system being the Ghaggar, Sarasvati, Chautang Sutlej, Beas, Ravi, Chenab and Yamuna.
2. The southern region, covering Kutch, Kathiawad, coastal flats of Gujarat and some areas of the hinterland of Maharashtra ; the river systems being the Luni Banas, Sabarmati, Narmada, Mahi, Kim, Tapti and Godavari. Within these regions, hundreds of sites of Pre-Harappan, Harappan and Late Harappan affiliations have been located. In the eastern region, most important Indus sites are Ropar and Bara, Kalibangan, Mitathal, Sanghal, Banawali, Bhagwanpura, Manda etc and in the southern region, Rangpur, Rojdi, Lothal, Prabhas patan, Desalpur, Surkotada, Diamabad are the most important excavated sites. Harappa was excavated by R.D.Banerjee, M.S.Vats and M.Wheeler. Mohenjodaro was excavated by John Marshall while B.B.Lal excavated Kalibangan, Lothal was dug by S.R. Rao. M.R.Mughal has explored and excavated various Indus Valley sites in Pakistan. Recently major Indus Valley sites like Dholavira (Gujarat) and Rakhigarhi (Haryana) are being excavated by Archaeological Survey of India.

### **1.3.2 Origin and Period**

The origin of Indus Valley civilization is shrouded in mystery. From the excavation of Mehargarh, Kot-diji, Kuli, Mohenjodaro (Pakistan), Banawali (India), antiquities of pre-defence phase of Harappans, like defence wall of mud brick, terracotta cake, potteries with typical Harappan designs and shape, etc are noticed, which reveals that there was a pre Harappan phase. Scholars believe that the pre Harappan phase subsequently developed to a matured Harappan phase, due to environment and genius of the people. Scholars have tried to determine the period of the civilization. According to John Marshall, this civilization is as old as 3000 BC. While Wheeler ascribes a date of 2500 -1500 BC, D.P. Agarwal dates it from 2300 – 1700 BC. The time period of the civilization may be divided into the pre Harappan (starting in the late fourth millennium and continuing to 2600 BC). The Mature Harappan (from c 2600 to 1900 BC) and the late Harappan (to c 1750 BC). The cluster of sites in the Bolan area, particularly at Mehargarh, Pirak, Nowshehra and at Harappa reveal cultural continuity from the pre-urban to the mature

urban and finally the declining phase of the civilization. Scholars are, however, of the belief that the prosperous civilization came to an end in or around 1500 BC.

## **Main Features of Indus Valley Civilization**

The civilization is characterized by a few cultural aspects like double mound system, seals and sealings with pictographic script, black painting on red ware with typical shapes like dish on stand, perforated jar, beaker, goblet, grooved dishes, shaped jar, long parallel sided chert blade, carnelian tubular beads and beads of fience and steatite, weights of agate and chart, use of copper and bronze, terracotta, toy cart, Mother goddess and cakes, systematic town planning with grid pattern building, citadel etc.

### **1.3.3 Town Planning**

Excavations at Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Kalibangan, Lothal, Banawali, Dhaulavira and many other sites led to the discovery of scientific and well planned town planning. Their culture centered round in towns so we call it a urban culture. Cities have identical layout; some regional variations are also marked. The cities demonstrate a sophisticated sense of civic planning and organization. Each city consisted of two parts: acropolis or citadel and lower city. The cities are fortified. In most cases, the city was divided into the smaller citadel area, frequently to the west, where the essential institutions of civic life were located, possibly together with some places used for public rituals, and the larger residential area to the east. Manmade bricked floor platform formed the foundation for the buildings of the citadel, probably to save it from floods. The citadel was the central place with special buildings meant for the ruling class people. Near the citadel are noticed the lower city, which were only a part of the entire settlement complex. Here lies the house for ordinary persons. The houses were located in a grid pattern which divided the city into several square blocks the roads oriented approximately to the cardinal directions, which assisted the civic facilities particularly the well planned drainage system where house drains were linked to those of the street. The houses have big spacious room kitchen, bathroom and a courtyard. Most of the houses were double storied. There were staircase, leading to the upper storey. There were no entrance to the road side. Each house was exposed to road on three sides. There was no dearth of light and air, ventilation and sanitation were given highest priority by the builders. Wells were dug to provide drinking water. Kiln burnt brick of size (4: 2:1 in length, breadth and height) were used to construct the houses. Local made mortar was used as the binding materials. Roads run almost parallel to each other. The main streets run from north to south. There were drains along the roads, connecting with drains from the houses. Water could be discharged smoothly. Drains were covered. Manhole system was there and hence there was no water logging. The drainage system was perfect. The city plan of Dholavira, however, differed from other Indus cities; stone was used more extensively at Dholavira. Here elaborate arrangements were made, for the storage of water. Large water reservoirs were built within the fortified part of the city. The citadel area of the city had defence walls and bastions with elaborate entrance to guard the structure.

Some notable structures are also excavated. The monumental buildings of the citadel areas have been various interpreted: granaries, warehouse, collegiate, buildings, rituals centre including a tank, etc. At Mohenjodaro a great bath, a granary, assembly hall, the college has been identified. At Harappa also, a big granary complex has been found. At Lothal, a dockyard with

platforms (warehouse) near by is noticed. Some of the big houses, at Harappa and Mohenjodaro, were probably used for government offices and priests. Some ceremonial structures, a platform with several fire alters have also been noticed at Kalibangan and Lothal. Even at Mohenjodaro, remains of a fire temple are discovered.

### **Great Bath**

The most important building at Mojenjodaro is the great bath discovered within a large house of the size of 180 feet long and 10 feet wide. The bath itself is 39 feet wide and 8 feet deep. There are steps on both the sides to enter the bath. The bricks are very well laid with a water proof immediately and having a layer of pitch in the face wall. In order to clean the tank, provisions of draining out water existed. Fresh water was supplied from a huge well nearby. There are rows of 8 small rooms perhaps used for the purpose of changing clothes. There was gallery system for the people to sit and watch. It is suggested that the great Bath was used by the people for ritual bathing during religious ceremony. The solidarity of the construction is amply borne out of the fact that it has successfully withstood the ravages of five thousand years.

It appears from the above that the Indus valley people gave much importance to health, sanitation and hygiene. They were a very clean people. The science of town planning, drainage and sewerage system had made great progress. Even the kilns and cemetery was located outside the city. This shows how careful the people were about their environment.

#### **1.3.4 Indus Seals**

Seals of Indus Valley are one of the important features of the great civilization. These are generally small, flat, square or rectangular. The standard Harappa seal was a square or oblong made of soft stone, steatite and sometimes of copper. The seals have different signs, close to 400. Minimum sign noticed are 5 to maximum 26 signs. It contains pictorial as well as geometrical motif. The pictorial motifs are the representation of humped bull, unicorn, rhino, elephant, tiger, crocodile, fish, tortoise etc. The depiction of the horse is absent in the seals. The mythical unicorn is often depicted with an object most probably oraltar or even a brazier. The geometrical design noticed are of swastika, spoked wheel and a circle with a dot. Thousands of seals have been discovered from exploration and excavation. A perforated boss at the back of the seal helps in its, handling. Seal impressions on clay indicate that among other uses, seals were used to stamp packages. They could therefore have been tokens identifying civic authorities, supervisory managers of long distance trade, merchants or those bringing raw materials to the cities or clan affiliations. The primary aim of the seal was probably to mark ownership or may be that these were used as amulets.

#### **1.3.5 Indus Script**

The earliest scripts of India were used by the Indus Valley people. The Indus scripts are noticed on soft stone, copper tablets, potsherds, bangles and such like. Scholars have not been able to read it so far due to the absence of bilingual key. Besides the Indus scripts, another script known as Etruscan script of Italy of Bronze Age is still to be identified by the scholars. The script has as many as 400 sign. It appears to be pictographic or logographic and not alphabetic, Each letter stands in the form of picture, representing sound or idea or object. The script was

pictographic and later on it was standardized. Scholars like I. Mahadevan, Aska Parpola and others are of the opinion that the script is proto Dravidian where as another group of scholar like A. Cunningham, S.R. Rao connects it with Indo-Aryan. Even a few connects it with Mesopotania civilization. However, these identifications are not without doubt and systematic. Various scholars like A. Cunningham, L. A. Waddell, Father Heras, P. Merigi, I. Mahadevan, A. Fairservic, G. R. Hunter, S. R. Rao, A. Parpolo and others have tried to decipher the script so far without any success. B.B. Lal has shown that the script is boustrophedon in character. That means it writes from right to left in the first line and the successive one starts from left to right and so on. However, recent researches reveal that the scripts are written from right to left, left to right top to bottom or bottom to top and there was no clear cut standardized pattern in this regard. A short inscription in large sized letters was unearthed at Dholavira which has been described as the earliest signboard in the history of India.

### **1.3.6 Social Life**

The social life of the Indus valley people was highly developed. The people were as advanced as the ancient Egyptians and Sumerians in the field of education. About the authors of the civilization, very little is known. Archaeologists by examining the skeletal remains noticed at Indus valley sites, believe that Mongoloid, proto-Austroloid, Alpines and Mediterranean people were the authors of the great civilization. People belonging to these four races lived in Indus cities. The people in the city, probably, consisted of four different main classes the learned class, warriors, trader, artisans, and manual labourers. The learned class included priests, physicians, astrologers and sorcerers. The warriors class's duty was to protect the people and their role was similar to kshatriyas. A commercial class and various artisans such as the mason, engineer shell worker, goldsmith, weaver, carpenter etc formed the third class. Domestic servants and manual labourers like leather worker, fishermen, basket maker, peasants, daily wage earners etc formed the last class. The social structure infact seems to correspond to the four varnas of the Vedic Age. The people lived a life of luxury known from their dress and ornaments. Dresses were made of cotton and wool. Men used a shawl which was drawn over the left shoulder and under the right arm so as to leave the right arm free and in the sitting posture came down to the feet. The lower garment was like a dhoti. Both men and women used comb and liked attractive hair. Men kept short beards and whiskers, and sometimes the upper lip was shaped. The occurrence of needles and button shows that at least some of these clothes were stitched. Ornaments were worn by both men and women of all classes. Ornaments were artistic and attractive. It included ear-rings necklace, bracelets, girdles and anklets. Necklaces, fillets armlets, finger rings bangles are worn both by men and women and girdles nose studs, ear-rings and anklets by women alone. People used ornaments of gold silver, ivory copper bones, burnt clay and semi precious stones like lapis-lazuli, jasper, carnelian agate etc. Ornaments were in great variety of shapes and designs and some of them were of singular beauty. People knew the art of toilet and cosmetics. Toilet jars were made of ivory, metal, pottery and stone. There is evidence to show that the people ate besides cereals, like wheat and barley, vegetables and fruits, fish, fowl, mutton, beef and pork. Wheat was their principal article of food. Barley and palm date were also familiar to them. The people also knew the use of metal and manufactured day today objects, offensive and defensive implements of copper and Bronze. The earthenware vessels of the period were made with potter's wheel and either plain or painted with a slip or red ochre and highly polished. In some cases these are glazed. Quite a large number of bowls, dishes, cups, saucers, vases, basins, pans, jar stands, goblets of copper, bronze and clay and stone jars of different shapes and sizes

are recovered from excavated sites. Among the articles of domestic use, spindles, spindle whorls of clay, shell, needles and combs made of bone or ivory, axes, chisels, saws, knives, sickles, fishhooks, razors of copper and bronze are significant one. Terracotta toys of animals, birds, men and women were made. There were wheeled carts and chairs. The relevant animals such as humped blue, buffalo, sheep, pig, dog, elephant, camel etc were domesticated. Their artistic value can be seen from beautiful seals and beads. Animal fighting, animal racing, diving, fishing, clay-modelling etc were their modes of past time and hobby. Hunting was indulged in and people were interested in fishing people were acquainted with weapons of war such as axe, spear, dagger, maces and slings with fewer specimens of bows and arrows. Swords, Shields, helmets and other offensive weapons are conspicuous by their absence. The inferior quality of the weapons of war suggests that the users were unwar like in their habits. There was a strong family organization among them.

### **1.3.7 Economic Life**

In contrast with other contemporary cities, the Harappan cities do not display any spectacular wealth in either the houses or the graves, as revealed through the excavations. However, there is no second opinion that the economic life of the Indus people was of high standard in view of prosperous agriculture trade and industries. The Indus cities were sustained by prosperous agriculture. There used to be heavy rainfall in the area. Most of the rivers were perennial and the banks of the rivers were fertile which were favourable for cultivation of different cereals. The people must have cleared the tropical savanna forest around each city to extend cultivation sufficiently to support the urban population. A ploughed field of the period just prior to Harappan urbanization was excavated the site of Kalibangan (Rajasthan) with the field coming up to the edge of the city. Wooden plough were used, as a terracotta plough from Banawali attests to the fact. Main cereals of cultivation were wheat, barley, rai, peas, millet etc. In Ganga –Yamuna doab, rice was cultivated. Rice grains were noticed during excavation at Alamgirpur (eastern Uttar Pradesh). Water conduits sometimes underground and small scale inundation canals leading off rivers, directed water to where it was needed. The discovery of granaries in many Indus sites reflect surplus of production at that time.

Various kinds of industry developed during the period. There are indication that bead industry was in a flourishing condition. Beads of semi-precious stones were manufactured even for export purpose. It seems that Shortughai an Indus city on the North West frontier was an important bead making centre of semi-precious stones. At Lothal, a bead factory with a large open court yard and a working platform surrounded by small rooms and a cooper smith's workshop was excavated. Industry for manufacturing copper and bronze implements were also there. Other developed industries were cotton industry and pottery industry. For the bronze industry, the copper ore came from Rajasthan.

The Indus people had trade both in land and sea. They had inland trade relation with Rajasthan, Afghanistan and Persia. They imported copper from Rajasthan, silver, turquoise and lapis lazuli from Persia and Afghanistan. The inland trade was carried through bullock cart and caravan. As entrepreneurs in trade searching for raw materials, the people brought lapis lazuli from pamir and chagai hills of eastern. Iran which was much valued in trade with Mesopotamia. The Indus people were familiar with navigation in the river and along the sea coast. They had trade link with Tigris and Euphrates people. Cooper deposits in Oman perhaps attracted the

Harappans to have maritime contact with Oman. Indus coastal shipping from western India along the gulf to the Tigris-Euphrates delta continuously involved in exchange of trade between India and Gulf. There was also a close contact between Indus people and Mesopotamia. From the Mesopotamia record, we know of their trade with Meluka (Indus Valley region) or Melnuha and the product of this land being listed as ivory, carnelian, wood, lapis and gold. Other areas to the east mentioned in Mesopotamia sources were Dilmun and Makan. Dilmun and Makan were two trading stations between Mesopotamia and Indus. Trade with Mesopotamia is attested from the recovery of a few Harappan seals, beads and weights at Mesopotamian site and some in the Persian Gulf. Similarly, the Persian Gulf seals are noticed in some Indus cities like Lothal. Lothal was an Indus port town and the excavation conducted here have yielded terracotta boats, a dock yard, stone-anchors and warehouse. It indicates that Lothal was a prosperous port city of Indus Period. Trade contact with Afghanistan and Iran were maintained through the passes in the Bolan Valley. The people had also contact with the people of the Sothi-Siswal cultures in Rajasthan and Haryana as well as the Kayatha Culture in central India. The location of the cities were chosen with an eye to the availability of resources and the transportation of goods by river or by sea. The Indus people had strict control on weight and measure. Decimal system was known to them. The people used to export copper, cotton, beads of fine quality terracotta toys and pottery ivory and ivory articles such as comb pearls etc and in return they received silver and other commodities whose exact nature is still unknown. The exports mentioned come in the class of luxuries. The cities were centres for the production of crafted items that were traded both overland and across the seas. No doubt the profits from traded both within northern and western area of the sub continent and between the Indus people with Persian Gulf and Mesopotamia, kept the cities economically viable.

### **1.3.8 Religious Life**

From the relics of Indus Valley we get some idea about the religious life of that time. The worship of mother goddess was quite popular and hundred of terracotta figures identified as mother goddess have been recovered from various Indus sites. Similar figures have been found from the historic sites of the Kulli culture in south Baluchistan and the Zhob valley in the north. Sir John Marshall is of the opinion that the foremost among the Indus pantheon was the mother goddess. The people were also nature worshippers. They adored the streams, trees, rivers or perhaps the spirits supposed to be residing on them. They also worshipped different birds, animals and reptiles. Bull, tiger, elephant, snake and dove were considered sacred. A beautiful figure appears on a seal having three faces, horns on his head, sitting on a yogic pose and on his four sides figure of animals such as elephant, tiger, rhinoceros, buffalo and below it, a pair of deer are depicted: Historian believe it to be a representation of lord Pasupati. The seals and painted pottery of the age show the figures of the pipal and acacia trees which were regarded as celestial plants and were supposed to be inhabited by divine spirits. Linga worship was also in vogue. A representation of a Naga deity, guarding the tree, indicates to the Naga worship, the people had faith in amulets and charms. There was also the practice of yoga. Bathing before the religion ritual was in vogue. However, very little is known about the community worship. There is the absence of recognizable religious buildings and of elaborate rituals. Recently, a fire temple has been recognized at Mohenjodaro. Some fire – alters of Kalibangan and Lothal are reported. Evidence of public rituals and animal sacrifice are also noticed in some Indus sites. The people had three types of funeral custom – complete burial, fractional burial and burials of ashes and bones. The burials are simple and grave goods are mainly the pottery of daily use with a scatter

of other small items. Post Harappan burials of late second millennium be are called the cemetery culture which is confined to Harappa and Punjab only and characterized by a pottery called Bara.

### **1.3.9 Indus Art**

The Indus people produced a good variety of art objects. A large number of terracotta toys, carts, animals, birds and small figurines have been noticed. These are excellent specimen of Indus art. Among stone objects busts of male, male torso, and male head are recovered. One of the above objects have been identified as priest. This figure appear to be quite healthy, muscular and robust. This figure is evidently of a person of consequence, given the band around his head and the trefoil design on his shawl, together with his curiously semi closed eyes. Among metal objects, the figure of a bronze girl is note worthy. E. Mackey has identified the object as a dancing girl. She wears ornaments and has nicely combed hair style. Though quite small in size, it reveals the pleasing stance of a young and spirited woman. The figure is a proof of developed Indus art and the progress made by the people in metallurgy. However, sculptures in the form of assembly of images in a temple are absent. There is also a noticeable absence of figures reflecting self representations. The paintings on pottery are mostly black on red surface with a polish and represents both floral and geometrical designs of high artistic skills. On seals and sealings, the graphic representation of various animals like bull, tiger, deer, buffalo, elephant, rhinoceros etc is positive indication of the high standard of art produced by the Indus people.

### **1.3.10 Political Life**

Earlier it was suggested that the Indus Valley consisted of a single centralised system, with twin capitals Mohenjodaro and Harappa. Some scholars argue that Indus cities were city states and were similar to those of autonomous cities of historical times. However, it seems that there was flexible relationship between the cities having different size and authority system. Prof. Romila Thapar believes that in the early phase, the people were governed by chiefs of clan which would have given way to a more complex one by the mature period when representatives of city authorities probably coalesced to ruling jointly in assembly. The structures at Mohenjodaro point to a complex authority systems. Infact, the usual supporting evidence for an organised administration in the form of designations, codes and accounting from the area not known to us in our present state of knowledge.

### **1.3.11 Decline**

What brought the Indus cities to an end has for long been a matter of debate. Scholars have advanced different views with regard to the decline of the civilization. M. Wheeler and S. Piggot gave a theory known as Aryan invasion theory as the decline of Indus civilization. The occurrence of skeletal remains in the habitation area of some Indus sites made to belief the scholars that the Aryans invaded India in or around 1500 BC and defeated the Indus people. As a result, the Indus people migrated to safer areas beyond the Indus valley region. Two American hydrologist R. Raikes and Dales have given the theory of excessive flooding. They ascribe the end of the Indus cities to heavy flooding. Some evidence of devastation by floods is found at Mohenjodaro and Lothal and this phenomenon has also been proved by heavy silt deposits in some Indus cities. These scholars are of the opinion that waters of Indus river were impounded by a natural dam in the vicinity of Sehwan and that Mohenjodaro and other cities were so



disrupted that it led to actually caused the abandonment of the city and eclipse of Indus civilization. Earnest Mackay also believed that Mohenjodaro might have been abandoned because of an avulsion of the Indus River. Lambrick and Mughal however believe that a dramatic shift in the course of the Indus led to the abandonment of Mohenjodaro. John Marshall on the other hand, has given the idea that in the late Harappan period due to reduction in rainfall, the Indus people migrated to other parts of India, Prof. Gurmeet Singh and his colleagues have suggested that due to the changing climatic condition in or around Indus area in 1700 BC, there was decrease in rainfall, which made agriculture difficult. Scholars such as M. Wheeler and Fairservis however of the belief that due to the exhaustion of the economic resources in or around 1500 BC., the Indus people migrated from their original home land. But Allchin and Allchin, argues that the economic factor played its part in the decline of the Indus cities, as Mesopotamia trade was declined to a great extent up to 2000 BC, and also the Indus people had no alternative major partner to turn to, which affected the health of Indus economy.

#### 1.4 Let Us Sum Up

However, Harappa and Mohenjodaro seems to have disappeared by 1750 BC. In other areas, the Indus towns survived for a century or two more. But by 1500 BC, a new and vigorous people occupied the area once inhabited by the Indus Valley people. The new people are accepted as the Aryans, the authors of the Rigveda. The Indus civilization no doubt fell; all the same it left many indelible prints on the later day cultures of the Indian subcontinent.

#### 1.5 Key Words

<i>Excavation</i>	:	To dig scientifically
<i>Seal</i>	:	Stamp of authority, ownership
<i>Mother goddess</i>	:	Worship of Devi (Female goddess)

#### 1.6 Check Your Learning

1. Describe the major features of Indus Valley civilization.
2. Discuss the characteristics of Harappan culture. What factors were responsible for its decline?
3. Write Short Notes on
  - a) Indus script, b) Indus seal,
  - c) Indus art,
  - d) Indus Religious life,
  - e) Causes for decline of Indus valley civilization,
  - f) Town planning of the Indus valley civilization.

#### 1.7 Suggested Readings

Agrawal, D.P.	:	<i>The Archaeology of India</i> , Copenhagen, 1982
Allchin, B. & Allchin, F.R.:		<i>The rise of civilization in India and Pakistan</i> , Cambridge, 1982.
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Civilization*, oxford, 1981
- Thapar, B.K. : *Recent Archaeological Discoveries in India*, Tokyo,  
1985.
- Thapar, Romila : *Early India from the origins to AD 1300*, New  
Delhi, 2002
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Historical outline*, New Delhi (Reprinted), 2004.

## 1.8 Hints/Answers to Questions in Check Your Progress

### Check Your Progress-I

1. The main features of Indus Valley civilisation are double-mound system, Indus script, Indus seals, use of bronze, scientific town planning, black painting on red ware etc.
2. In India, the Indus civilisation extends from Manda in the North to Diamabad in the south and Alamgirpur in the east to Kutch area in west.
3. Pre defence phase of Harappa has been identified at Indus sites like Koe-diji, Mehargarh, Koli (Pakistan) and Banawali (India).

### Check Your Progress-II

1. Seals were used to stamp packages, to mark ownership or may be used as amulets.
2. At Dhaula vira, in the Kutch region of Gujarat, the earliest evidence of signboard has been identified.
3. The Etruscan script of Italy of the bronze age, besides the Indus script, is till not yet deciphered.

### Check Your Progress-III

1. The authors of Indus Valley civilisation are the Proto-Austroloid, the Mongoloid, the Alpines and the Mediterranean people.
2. The Indus people had trade and commercial relation with Persia, Afghanistan, Mesopotamia, Oman, and with Tigris and Euphrates people.
3. Lothal was a prosperous pore city of Indus period. Here, a dockyard, warehouse, stone-anchors, terracotta boats, Persian gulf seal etc have been excavated.
4. The famous dancing girl of bronze was found at Mohenjodaro.

5. The causes of decline of Indus valley are many. It includes the Aryan Invasions, excessive flooding, shift in the course of river Indus, reduction in rainfall, change in climate, exhaustion of economic resources, decline of Mesopotamia trade etc.

## Unit-II

### THE VEDIC AGE

#### Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Sources
  - 2.2.1 Archaeological Sources
  - 2.2.2 Literary Sources
- 2.2 Origin of the Aryan
- 2.3 Early Vedic Age
  - 2.3.1 Polity
  - 2.3.2 Society
  - 2.3.3 Economy
  - 2.3.4 Religion
- 2.4 Changes in the Later Vedic Age
  - 2.4.1 Political History
  - 2.4.2 Society
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  - 2.4.4 Religion
- 2.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.6 Key Words
- 2.7 Check Your Learning
- 2.8 Suggested Readings
- 2.9 Hints/Answers to Questions in Check Your Progress

#### 2.0 Objectives

After reading this Unit you should be able to:

- know about the *Vedic Corpus* through which we attempt to reconstruct the *Early Vedic Age* and *Later Vedic Age*;
- examine the various theories on the original home of the Aryans and Large-scale migration of Indo-European family of languages; and
- know about the nature of polity, society, economy and religion of the *Early Vedic* and *Later Vedic* society.

#### 2.1 Introduction

The starting point of Ancient Indian history has been outlined for decades till recent years in supposition of invasion of the Northern India by the Aryans who conquered the region and subsequently established Aryan culture. The supposition was that of a radically superior people of Europe who had colonised India. The study of both the *Sanskrit* texts and ethnology went into the making of this theory by the European scholars. One of the serious handicaps to know the exact nature of the pre- and post-Harappan society [culture] was the failure to decipher the

Harappan Script. The beginning of our early history has been based on two types of evidence, *archaeological* and *literary*. The literary sources are well established and consist of the *corpus of Vedic* literature. The archaeological evidence comprises a number of pre-Harappan cultures, the *Sothiculture* of the 'Sarasvati Valley' and the Chalcolithic village localities of Baluchistan and Sindh Province. These were the forerunners of matured Harappan culture [C.2300-1750 B.C.] which expanded from Southern Punjab area and Sindh to the Valley of Narmada delta mainly following the coastal region. It also spread eastward and extended up to the Upper Ganga - Yamuna Doab. The post-Harappan material cultures later expanded up to the Indus Valley and Ganga Valleys. In the Northern Punjab region the Gandhara Grave Culture [C.1500-500 B.C.], using a great extent of red ware and a plain grey ware, shows evidence of copper in the early stages and iron technology later, and intermittently contacts with Iran and Central Asia. The white-painted black-and-red pottery and its probable intermingling of certain Harappan character, possibly acted as a link between the Harappan and post-Harappan cultures. This has been amply but occasionally associated with the Copper Hoard culture found both in the Doab and in Southern parts of Bihar and West Bengal. Ultimately, the later Painted Grey Ware [C.1100-400 B.C.] at the early stages of agrarian culture acquaints with iron technology and the Northern Black Polished Ware Culture [C.500-100B.C.] is largely connected with urbanisation in the Ganga - Yamuna Doab.

While cross-examining archaeological and literary evidences, it is significant to determine the nature of the society concerned. When we study about the *Rigveda* the main geographical focus is that of the *Saptasindhava*, roughly from the Kabul river to the Sarasvati river. *Rig Vedic* Society, essentially a pre-urban society with a copper and possibly iron technology, probably, evolved from Semi-nomadic pastoralism dependent on cattle rearing to an active agrarian form with gradually more settled communities. The *Later Vedic literature* portrayed a desirable change in material culture mainly in the middle Ganga Valley while more marginal acquaintance with the Indus region, western and eastern India and the Vindhya. Perhaps, the society was essentially an agrarian culture culminating in a series of urban centres. At this point, there was a considerable degree of familiarity with iron technology and the clan identity, probably extended to territorial identity.

Many theories have been put forward in nineteenth century Europe about the Aryan home which have perhaps far-reaching consequences on world history. Another significant outcome was that it became the foundation to the interpretation of early Indian history. Toying with the same notion, some scholars have attempted at a literal application of the theory to Indian society. Some western scholars now labelled it as a nineteenth century 'myth'. Indo-European and Indo-Aryan are language labels, but in the nineteenth century these were also incorrectly used as racial labels and this confusion continues. The correct usage should be 'Indo-European-speaking people' and 'Indo-Aryan-speaking people', but commonly used as Indo-European or Indo-Aryan. Indo-European is a reconstructed language, whose speakers had probably Central Asia as their original habitat. The *Rig Vedic* people had a diet substantially of barley and wheat, and the *Later Vedic literature* possibly introduces rice. From the archaeological evidence we know that the Harappan people were mainly barely and wheat eating people, whereas the people in the Ganga Valley, the Banas Valley and some parts of western India were predominantly rice eating. This points to a major difference of staple diet between the *Rig Vedic* and *Later Vedic* people, and the original Aryan home theories could be well understood by referring these sources.

## 2.2 Sources

Historiographical change incorporates new evidences and new ways of studying the existing evidences. These new evidences are inclusions of perspective from other human sciences; studies of societies, economics and religion have led to some significant reconstructions by interpreting the early history of humankind. Among the new sources of evidence, quite apart from conventional coin, inscription or sculpture, there have been data provided by archaeological evidences and corroborated by oral tradition and literary sources. In recent years, the study of *early Vedic* society has increasingly drawn on evidences from archaeology and literary sources. Let us first examine the archaeological sources for this period.

### 2.2.1 Archaeological Sources

The varied theories employed to reconstruct the *Early Vedic* society received a wide acclaim with the archaeological excavation and discovery of the Indus Civilization. These include the extensive excavations of the sites of Harappan and Mohenjo-daro in the 1920s and subsequent excavations in India and Pakistan revealing extensive urban cultures in the northern and western parts of Indian Subcontinent. These archaeological evidences, more specific on data relating to the environment, technology and economy, cover a much larger area and go further back in time. This has become the watershed, hence, the primary data for the reconstruction of proto history of India. Prior to the availability of archaeological evidence, the *Vedic texts* were used in reconstructing the past society of the *Early Vedic period*.

Various sophisticated methods and technologies from scientific disciplines are being used in the analysis of archaeological data. Information provided by these archaeological excavations expanded largely to include data on ecology, climate, settlement pattern, material culture, palaeopathology, flora and fauna. To study the continuity of cultural survivals, attempts are now being made in the inter-discipline of ethno-archaeology to correlate ethnographic studies with the excavation of human settlements. The material objects and other archaeological artefacts found from excavated sites furnish dominance of cultures of the period and the region. Particularly, the Painted Grey Ware [PGW] cultures, the Black-and Red-Ware cultures and the Northern Black Polished Ware (NBP) cultures provide some details about the *Early Vedic* society.

### 2.2.2 Literary Sources

The main sources of information on the early history of *Vedic* people in India are the *Vedas* which are perhaps the only literary sources in the Indo-European linguistic group. The word 'Veda' means which implies 'to know', meaning knowledge. There are four *Vedas*; *Rig Veda*, *Sameveda*, *Yajur Veda*, and *Atharvaveda*. The *Vedas* are primarily ritual texts and their depiction of society is ancillary to their main purpose. The *Rig Veda* is a collection of 1028 hymns, mostly prayers to gods used for sacrifices. The *Yajur Veda* is chiefly of sacrificial formulae in prose and verses recited by the poets or the priests who possibly performed the manual part of the sacrifice. The *Sameveda* is a compilation of different verses from the *Rig Veda* for liturgical purpose, while the *Atharvaveda* contains mainly of magical charms and spells. Amongst the scholars, there is no conclusive date to be attributed for the *Vedas*. However, the *Vedas* texts have been divided into two broad chronologies: the early [1500-1000B.C.] period when most of the *Rig Veda* was composed and the Indus cities had declined. Later *Vedic* texts

were composed between 1000-600 B.C. to which belong the remaining *Vedas* and their branches. The various sages and poets who are known as their authors claim to have received them directly from god. The *Vedic* people do have written records but these *Vedas* were orally transmitted from generation to generation. Most probably writing started very lately. *Early Vedic* society was interpreted on the basis of the *Vedic* texts. It was in late eighteenth century that the East India Company serving in India started to explore the history and culture of the colony which they were governing. The focus therefore, was on language, law and religion. This initially led to curiosity of studying comparative philology, especially after the availability of *Vedic* texts in the nineteenth century. *Vedic* studies were hospitably received in Europe both for enthusiasm or criticism of Indian culture. The later part of the nineteenth century witnessed discussion on the interrelatedness of language, culture and race, and the notion of biological race came to the forefront. The experience of imperialism where the European *races* were viewed as advanced, and those colonised, as 'lesser breeds', reinforced these racial identities.

Leading among these identities was Aryan, used both for the language and the race. Aryan was derived from the Old Iranian word *airiia* used in the Zoroastrian text, the *Avesta*, and was a cognate of the *Sanskrit* *arya*. The geographical location of the *Rig Vedic Saptasindhu* is usually taken to be the Punjab and the adjoining border lands, although some scholars would place the geographical location of the *Rig Veda* closer to Central Asia and Afghanistan. The *Vedas* therefore, came to be seen as the foundational texts of Indian civilization. As a result, the acceptance of the Aryan theory underlined the Hindu idiom in nationalist historical writing.

### **2.3 Origin of the Aryan**

The invasion of an Aryan race theory in nineteenth century Europe and efforts of our historians to search the home of the Aryan is an inclusive debate among the historian crafts and practitioners. This is because of the ambiguity of the term Aryan which has been interpreted variously by different scholars. It has absolutely no racial significance at all. If we are to accept that, it has only a linguistic significance, then the problem of locating the origin of the Aryan in the *Saptasindhu* region will not pose serious difficulties. Debate on 'Aryan origin' in the print media and the controversy over its treatment in school textbooks, has become the subject of a larger section in terms of its ideological underlying rather than different readings amongst historians and archaeologists.

The earliest attempt to trace the origin of Aryan was dominated by the need to construct a linguistic consideration largely by many philologists. They are mostly comparative philologists such as F. Bopp and E. Burnouf primarily interested in the technicalities of language. They traced back the original home of Indo-Germanic or Indo-European speakers to Iran and India or still further to a Central Asia. In the later part of the nineteenth century, this has shifted to interrelatedness of language, culture, race and the notion of biological race. Taking a sequel to these notions, similarities of *Vedic* texts and the *Zoroastrian* text, the *Avesta*, Aryan was derived from the Old Iranian word *airiia* in which the *Sanskrit* equivalent is *arya*. At this point, the study of chronology became important which at this time began to question the wider identity of the Aryan. It was discovered that the speakers of Indo-European languages were represented by diverse skull types. This was partially responsible for a new twist to the theory in the suggestion that the European Aryans were distinct from the Asian Aryans. Subsequently it was pointed out that the European Aryans to be indigenous to Europe while the later had their homeland in Asia.

The exercise of these ideas to Indian origin was strengthened by Max Muller's work on *Sanskrit* and *Vedic* studies during the years from 1849 to 1874. He maintained that the *Rig Veda* was the most ancient literature of the world providing evidence of the roots of Indo-Aryan. So he postulated the theory that the Central Asia was the original Aryan homeland. Further, from here over the course of some centuries, Aryan branched off in two directions. One group moved towards Europe and the other migrated to Iran eventually splitting again with one segment invading North-Western India. According to Max Muller, the Aryans were fair-complexioned Indo-European speakers who conquered the dark-skinned *dasas* of India.

The Aryan race theory itself has a history, and a beginning in time that we can identify. It arose from three fundamental discoveries about the ancient history of India. These discoveries have come about through philology (linguistic) and archaeology, which have been the two main avenues by which we have acquired new knowledge about ancient India, adding greatly to what we may know of the ancient past from the king-lists and genealogies to be found in the *Puranas*, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. The three discoveries and the date at which they were first published are:

- the discovery of the Indo-European language family (1786);
- the discovery of the Dravidian language family (1816); and
- the discovery of the Indus Civilization (1924).

These discoveries are fundamental in the sense that the historical facts they revealed have survived the critical scrutiny of the community of scholars worldwide and are therefore well-established truths of history today.

In 1786 Sir William Jones first published what scholars today call the Indo-European language family. He said that six ancient languages: *Sanskrit*, *Latin*, *Greek*, *Gothic*, *Celtic* and *Old Persian* are so similar that they must have been descended from a common original language, which, perhaps no longer exists. Jones interpreted the similarities to be seen in the grammar and vocabulary of the six ancient languages in terms of a common genealogy. This new way of looking at *Sanskrit* was quite revolutionary, for it proposed a new and unexplored linkage between the history of India and the histories of nations lying to the west of India. This new linguistic studies had found profound effects on the way, we understand India's ancient history. The most important effect was that India's most ancient history was now connected with that of Iran and Europe.

The second discovery of the Dravidian language family is generally credited to Bishop Robert Caldwell, whose classic work, *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South Indian Languages*, was published in 1856. The new linguistic discovery tended to show that Indian civilization is a fusion of cultures belonging to different linguistic groups. These discoveries have also stood the test of time and remained accepted by linguists today. This had proven to be permanent additions to knowledge, so far as we could see. The methods employed in the discoveries of Indo-Europeans and Dravidians were so successful that they were extended to other parts of the world, and helped to explain the histories of peoples without written record.

The discovery of the Indo-European and Dravidian language families was not a simple matter of observing similarities among the languages, because the language of India have



borrowed large number of words and grammatical features from one another over thousand of years of interaction. As a result, they resemble one another to a large degree. Philologists or linguists have developed analytical methods that the historical relations of Indo-Aryan and Iranian languages are inferred from the patterning of shared and non-shared features. The *retroflexion-consonants* which are found in Dravidian and Indo-European languages, but not in other Indo-European languages, is an example of a telling pattern showing Dravidian influence on Indo-Aryan language group.

During excavations in 1922-23, R.D. Banerji found inscribed seals in an unknown script at Mohenjo-daro in Sindh (present day Pakistan) beneath the level of Buddhist monuments, similar to the one known from Harappa. On the basis of Banerji's excavation at Mohenjo-daro, and Daya Ram Sahni's excavations at Harappa, Sir John Marshall, the Director-General of the ASI, published the detail finds in the *Illustrated London News* in 1924, announcing the discovery of a new civilization. The discovery of a Bronze Age civilization in India greatly complicated the picture of Aryan's original homeland. According to the philologists, the language of the *Veda* is closely related to the language of the ancient Iranians, whose oldest text is the *Avesta*, dating back to about 700 BC. Based on linguistic findings, it is well-established fact that Dravidian languages were current in North India prior to *Sanskrit*, and that tends to support the hypothesis that a Dravidian language was the language of the Indus Civilization. So the underlying difficulty is that origin of the Aryan theory entails two very different kinds of evidence. The *Indus Civilization* is represented by the material remains and the *Vedic Civilization* is represented largely by the texts of the *Veda*. The great difference between linguistic and material evidence makes it difficult to resolve the Aryan debate. However, the standard view amongst the community of scholars is that the Aryan came to India in about 1500 BC from somewhere to the north-west, after the high period of the *Indus Civilization*. The Aryan origin theory would be very greatly advanced by the Indus script is deciphered successfully. If the script were deciphered, the language of the Indus Civilization would have been identified, which is the crux of the Aryan origin debate.

## 2.4 Early Vedic Age

The main traits of the *Early Vedic* culture can be reconstructed on the basis of the information contents in the *Rig Veda*. The *Rig Veda* is held to be the first of the four *Vedas*, which belongs to C.1500-1000 B.C. The *Early Vedic* phase may be placed in the late or post-urban phase of the Harappa period, but it cannot be linked to the mature Harappa material culture phase. The *Vedic* people were semi-nomadic with mixed pastoral and agricultural economy, in which cattle-rearing played a predominant role. Cattle obviously, formed their most valued possessions and the chief form of their wealth. The cow was the main medium of exchange and barter. Cattle were very often the cause of inter-tribal wars or conflicts. The overall socio-economic and polity of the *Early Vedic* people can be understood under following heads:

- |               |               |
|---------------|---------------|
| (i) Polity    | (ii) Society  |
| (iii) Economy | (iv) Religion |

### 2.4.1 Polity

The *Early Vedic* phase being an essentially pastoral community, did not develop any strong political structure which could measure up to a state in strict sense of the modern term. At

the head of the tribe was the *rajanya* or chiefs. The association of named kings with particular tribes can frequently be detected in the *Rig Veda*. Kingship was a tribal institution. They were primarily a tribal leader; the kings or chiefs led the clan people fight for cows, and not for any territory. He generally ruled over his tribe (*jana*) and not over any specified area of land. The word *jana* found mentioned twenty-seven times in the *Rig Veda*, but *janapada* is not referred at all, while the term *rajanya* occurs only once. Nonetheless, the idea of territorial monarchy emerged towards the close of the *Rig Vedic* phase when the tribal chief came to be looked upon as an upholder of the *rashtra* (kingdom). At this period, the king's domain was linked to a definite territory: "I am the royal Ruler, mine is the kingdom (*rashtra*)" says *Varuana* in the *Rig Veda*, IV.42.1. The kings lived in many-pillared palaces, and were usually to be found bedecked in gold. Large gifts (*dakshina*) in booty, cattle, horses, chariot, ornaments and gold were solicited from them by the priests; so they must have been possessed of large stores of such movable wealth. But his position was not beyond question. The office of king was hereditary, as may be illustrated by the two cases where royal genealogies can be reconstructed among the *Purus*, the line ending with *Trikshi*, and among the *Bharatas*, with *Sudas*.

*Gana*, the technical word for the Republic, is found at forty-six places in the *Rig Veda*, at nine places in the *Atharvaveda*, and at several places in the *Brahmanas*. In most cases, it has been interpreted in the sense of 'tribal assembly' or 'troops'. This *gana* (tribal assembly) in this sense was a clan unit. Later this meaning tended to be obsolete. There is no doubt that this tribal *gana* acted also as an 'arbitrary assembly' to settle the routine nature of disputes. Probably, in this *ganas*, fighting and voting went together. The *ganas* seem to have been well equipped with swift steeds and well provided with weapons. It would seem that their equipments consisted of bows, arrows and quivers. The tribal leaders of the *gana*, at one place known as *ganasya raja*, is generally called *ganapati*. The speculation of *rajan* for *ganapati* may suggest that gradually the latter transformed himself into the position of a chief. Whether the *ganapati* was selected by clan members of the *gana* is nowhere indicated in the *Vedic* texts. The spoils captured by the members of the *gana* were not directly appropriated by them in their individual capacity. It was obligatory on them to surrender all such booty to their chiefs. In the *Rig Veda*, it is mentioned that *Vidatha* elected its priests, but there is no references in the case of the *gana*.

Most probably, with the passage of time, these rudimentary forms of tribal assemblies, *gana* and *vidatha* were transformed into identical tribal *Sabha* and *Samiti*. Raja or king have been possibly surrounded in public session by his courtiers and chiefs to tender advice and hear orders and proclamations. No certain distinction lies between *Sabha* and *Samiti*, and neither term should be regarded as referring exclusively to the assemblage around the king. The *raja* and the chief who exercised authority over the people at large are given the designation of *Kshatriyas* from *kshatra*, 'dominion or rule'. The chariot was the major engine of war. Person who possessed chariots (*ratha*) and horses to draw them must have been of some status and recognition. Horse-drawn chariots and bronze weaponry are yet further evidence of an intrinsic inequality within *Early Vedic* society. The kings and chiefs on their own or in the name of their tribes, are shown as making generous gifts of cattle, horses and gold to their priests, which must have been derived from some sources. The source could only be their subjects, *vish*. The *vish* bring *bali* (tribute) to the king or chief. Sometimes, conquered or subdued tribesmen bring their *bali* to dominion chiefs. *Bali* was thus, an imposed tribute and not voluntary offerings, as is so frequently asserted in textbooks. We do not know, how it was levied, and in what forms it was paid. It is most probably, not just cattle, horses and gold only, but forest and agricultural produce

also formed part of *bali*. Tribute was supplemented by booty from successful cattle raids or battles; the king could also receive gifts in kind. Very likely king owed his office to the choice of the people, though kingship was perhaps, confined to certain families. Available sources do not indicate the continuance of royal succession in one family for more than three generations. This definitely suggests that the law of hereditary succession from father to son was not yet established. The king of *Early Vedic* phase was virtually limited to the tribal assemblies, particularly the *Sabha* and the *Samiti*, which discharged judicial and political functions.

### 2.4.2 Society

The sketch of polity life we have discussed above shows that *Early Vedic* society was essentially a tribal society. The two terms, *Jana* (Tribe) and *vish* (Tribal Unit), frequently occur in the *Rig Veda*. The *Jana* was split into *vish*; the former stood for the whole tribe and the latter for the clan. It is held that the *vish* was divided into *gramas*, but evidence for this is insufficient. The basic unit of the society was tribal organisation with patriarchal family order. In the hymns, desire is expressed for *praja*, including both boys and girls. But the people seem to have been most keen on having brave sons who might fight their wars. Despite the patriarchal character of the family, the position of women was much better in this period than in subsequent times. Girls generally married after puberty. In some cases, a woman could freely attend the game and carry on polity affairs. She could also take part in sacrifices with her husband during the ceremonial rituals. Contrary to a widespread characterisation, as we often understand, the society was not essentially pastoral. The pastoral sector was important because of the requirements of agriculture, the large herds of cattle being a kind of capital from which those who cultivated the soil drew their animal power. The classes, which held the surplus in their possession were those of the rulers' and the priests' (*Purohitas*). The chief of the tribe was the *raja* or the *gopati*. He was the leader in battle and the protector of the tribe. In *Rig Veda* some tribes, who fought in the battle of Ten Kings were the *Bharatas*, the *Yadus*, the *Druhyus*, the *Anus*, the *Turvasus* and the *Purus*.

On the composition of the tribe, they were divided into three important classes, the warriors (aristocracy), the priests and the common people. The warrior's classes received the largest booty from tribesmen war spoils. Within the tribe, the family was obviously the most important social unit. It was centred on the head of the house (*Grihapati* or *dampati*) and his wife. The family was modelled on the line of patrilineal order. The greatest boon of marriage was to have 'ten sons'. Daughters do not appear as claimants to inheritance, and as such who were without brothers were thought to be unprotected.

The *Rig Veda* clearly mentioned that other than the *Rig Vedic* authors, there were groups of the aboriginal tribes designated as *Dasyu* and *Dasa*. Both the *Dasyu* and *Dasas* are said to be a dark, full-lipped, snub-nosed, worshippers of the *phallus* and unintelligible or hostile in speech. It is to be established whether there existed any significant distinction between *Dasyu* and *Dasas*. There are mentions of about another people, known as the *Panis*, as the enemies to the Aryan, who are paired with the *Dasyu* in one verse and with the *Dasas* in another in the *Rig Veda*. *Dasyu* and *Dasas* are Indo-Iranian words, *dasyu* having an Old Iranian cognate in *dainhu* (enemy, whence enemy country in *Persian deh*, village), and *dasa*, Old Iranian *daha* or slave (when *Persian dah*, woman slave). One can imagine that these general alternative designations were not those given to themselves by the non-Aryan peoples, but imposed on two different sets

of non-Aryan peoples by their *Rig Veda* opponents. It would appear that *Dasyus* were hated more than the *Dasas*, there being many direct calls for the slaughter of *Dasyus*.

*Early Vedic* people carried out various occupation groups on the basis of individual expertise. Most common occupational group included those of smiths, leather workers, weavers, carpenters, priests and chariot makers. Driving furiously into the battle on chariots drawn by horses played a vital role in tribal warfare. Hence, the chariot makers and chariot riders occupied a significant social status amongst the tribesmen. Societies did not have any advanced technology and knowledge of metals seems to have been extremely limited.

### 2.4.3 Economy

Agro-Pastoralism remained the main economy of the *Early Vedic* people for some time. The cattle were a measure of value. Pastoralism was a subsistence strategy adopted by people who live in less sedentary agricultural life and harsh environmental conditions. Many early linguistic expressions were associated with wealth of cattle. Hence, *gavishthi*, literally means 'to search for cows', came to mean 'to fight'. Thus, obvious implication is that cattle raids and lost cattle frequently led to armed conflicts.

At the early stages, the authors of the *Rig Veda* were pastoralists, but practised some agriculture. Possibly some of the pastoral chiefs became the protectors of local agriculturists and the herders of cows. In the *Rig Veda*, there are some linguistic expressions which related with *gau* (cow). Cattle were the main measure of wealth, and thus added to the economic status of a man. He who owned a number of cattle was referred to '*gomat*'. This would have given the pastoral chiefs considerable authority over *vish* or cultivators. Pastoralists and cultivators had a symbiotic relationship. The cultivators allowed the herds to feed on the stubble after the harvest and this manured the field. They were also associated by exchanges of produce, the more so, where pastoralists are carriers of grains for exchanges. Later on, there evolved some overlap between cultivators and pastoralists that enabled the more powerful pastoral chiefs to claim territories and agricultural land. Cattle raids would have been an important source of sustaining economy and increasing livestock. In the process, new areas were appropriated hosting settlements. Settled life demands for necessary settled agricultural activities and initial procurements of grain and cereals. Some clans are mentioned in the *Rig Veda*, who had fought over the issues of settling cattle; there arose disputes over grazing grounds or controlling river water. We are told that *Suda* was the Chief of the *Bharata* who had clan settled in western Punjab, He was attacked by the confederacy of ten clans on the banks of the *Ravi*, but *Suda* emerged victorious. This suggests that a rapid increase in livestock and its sustainability could be achieved through a raid. Definitely raids involved physical confrontation and fight among the clans so as to ensure their reallocation of economy position.

The influence of cattle rising on the social economy of the *Early Vedic* people can be seen from the fact that those who lived with their cows in the same cow shed came to belong to the common ancestor. Cow was not yet held sacred, both oxen and cows were slaughtered for food. The eating of beef was perhaps reserved for specific occasions, such as rituals or when welcoming a guest or a person of high status. The economics value of the cow further enhanced its veneration. In addition to cows, goats, sheep and horses were domesticated. Though cattle-breeding seems to have been chief occupation of the *Rig Veda* people, they also practised

considerable agriculture. Land must have been cultivated by means of the plough drawn by oxen. One of the words frequently used for the plough is *langala*. This indicates that plough agriculture was more common among the *Vedic* people. Yokes with six and eight oxen were used to plough the land. The plough became an icon of power and fertility as referred in the *Rig Vedic* hymns.

With the need for oxen for ploughing, irrigation and cart-transport, cattle assumed an ever-increasing importance. A constant need for cattle in agriculture made possession of large herds of cattle with their pastures on the margins of cultivation, yielding regular assured income. Oxen from the herds were bartered for food grains from the peasant. Innovation in agriculture in the Gangetic Plain was the gradual shift from wheat cultivation to rice, and in animal herding to the domestication of buffalo. *Wet-rice cultivation* was a striking change, as it produced a larger yield which sustained a bigger population. So, the greater dependence on agriculture rather than pastoralism led to a wider range of occupations. The members of the various professions pursued them with a view to obtaining an assured income in a rudimentary kind of market, where a person possessing a particular skill went about seeking customers. Much must have been done on the basis of barter. The increasing availability of wood from the nearby forests made carpentry a lucrative profession, which must have created an additional status in the society. Other important members of the village community were the weaver (*Vaya*), blacksmith, potter, tanner, and reed workers. The weaver was mentioned of making clothes of wool and the blacksmith was mentioned of using copper, bronze and later iron. Much of various professional products were exchanged on the basis of barter. Even God *Indra's* favour, in one instance, was sold away or leased for ten cows. But precious metals were also sought, high value being put on gold (*hiranya*).

In fact, craft production does not seem to have been sufficiently concentrated to develop corresponding trade. However, when craft production developed internally, it gradually allowed growth of towns and ultimately urban centres. Progressively, when agrarian economy became an assured and sustainable surplus, this led to exchange. This later resulted in inter-village and urban centres in trade. In the beginning, exchange was in the form of barter; the cow being the unit of value in large scale transactions, which limited the geographical reach of those traders wishing to exchange produce. Both barter and precious metal transactions imply the presence of persons who bought goods to sell from elsewhere for profit.

#### **2.4.4 Religion**

The essential nature of the *Vedic* deities was benevolent. The *Rig Veda* is significantly a religious text, and it is, therefore, a rich source for the beliefs and rituals of the society in which it was composed. The *Vedic Corpus* reflects the prototype religion of those who called themselves *aryas*. Although this religion contributed to facets of latter-day religious aspects, it was never identical. But ineluctably some belief and practice would have been passed on because of the proximity of those with other religious practices. The chief objects of worship were the *devas*, a word believed to be cognated with the Latin *Deus*. The root from which this word is derived, *div*, is related to brightness and radiance. Hence, the worship of fire was central to ritual in early *Vedic* religious practice. Fire altars changed from small domestic structures, associated with a habitation, to include impressively large structures particularly built as altars for the more elaborate rituals. Possibly, rituals were held on certain specific days and times thought to be auspicious. *Rig Veda* deities, like those of the Indo-Iranian origins, were mainly connected with

the sky and were predominantly male. A few deities occur in the *Rig Veda*, such as *Mitra* and *Varuna*. These gave way to *Indra* and *Agni*. *Indra* was the greatest and ideal hero, foremost in battle, always ready to smite demons and to destroy the settlements of the *dasas*, and willing to aid those who propitiated him. Though his name was different he had many of the characteristics and was associated with storms and thunders and also as rainmakers, fond of feasting and drinking. *Agni*, the god of fire, inspired some beautifully evocative hymns. The fire was the focus of numerous domestic rituals like the solemnising of marriages. Believed to be the purest of the fire elements; it was the appropriate intermediary between gods and men. He was the god of the priest, who dealt with him at the fire sacrifice, and thought to be dwelt in the waters of heaven in the form of lightning, and on earth in many forms.

There were several other gods associated with the Sun. These included gods of *Surya* (Sun), *Savitri* (a solar deity to whom the famous *gayatri mantra* is dedicated). *Yama* was the god of death. There were also demi-gods of various kinds, among them-*Gandharvas*, *Maruts*, *Vishvadevas* were notable. Number of hymns were also dedicated to the power residing in the sacrificial implements, especially the sacrificial altar, and to the stones used for pressing the *Soma* plant along with the plough, the weapons of war, the drum and the mortar and pestle. *Soma* was a divinity of special feature which was inevitably used in all ritual activities of the *Vedic* people. *Soma* was originally a wild plant and its juice was drunk on ritual occasions. The juice acted as a hallucinogen. So important was the *Soma* drinking that an entire book of the *Rig Veda* was dedicated to *Soma*, indispensably carrying a complicated symbolism.

The centre of *Rig Veda* ritual was the *yajna*-sacrifice. The domestic rituals with small oblations continued to be performed and remained significant. Gradually, the more spectacular rituals attracted patronage from chiefs and wealthier tribesmen. The rituals of sacrifice were believed to sustain the well-being of the clan and the system of society. The cardinal purpose of the *yajna*-sacrifice was the gratification of the gods in order to obtain boons. With the passage of period, the elaboration of the ritual and the role of the priest assumed greater importance, thus, the designation of *Brahman* applied to one who possessed the mysterious and magical power. It was thought that the deities, the priests and the offering passed through a moment of complete identity. The presenting of gifts was believed to ensure a return of gifts in even greater amount. With these ideas, sacrificial rites tended to increase the power of the priest, without whom the sacrifice ceremony could not take place. Such sacrifice was possible of the chiefs or *raja* that possessed the required wealth. In turn, collecting this wealth meant burdening the *vish* to part with their subsistence produce. When the wealth of a *raja* was collected, it was displayed through the public sacrifice. This wealth was consumed and whatever, remained was gifted away to priests and *vish*. By such competitions in the display of wealth and lavish giving of gifts, the *rajas*, established the status and power of the *yajamana*, stimulating his belief that even more wealth would come his way.

Sporadic public sacrifice with regular accumulation of wealth, and its spending on a variety of additions to authority marked the point at which kingship was beginning to draw on political authority, rather than ritual authority alone. At a point when greater production of wealth increased in the wake of gradual urbanisation in the middle Gangetic Plain, it did allow the *rajas* to accumulate more wealth. Hence, he used to contribute towards a change in the requirements of society and polity in the pastoral society. These increased production, gave impetus to frequent performance of ritual sacrifices which led to the growth and development in

the knowledge of mathematics, basic geometry and idea of measurements. Elementary mathematics was necessary to make the calculations which were required to establish the position of various objects in the sacrificial altars. Also, the constant observations of lunar movements and constellations led to a knowledge of calculating time and the calendar. The recurrent sacrifice of animal also led to some knowledge about animal anatomy. The *Vedic* worldviews grew out of a vast cosmic sacrifice and were maintained by the proper performing of sacrifice. Life after death was considered in terms of either punishment or rewards. Those to be punished went to the *House of Clay* where they remained indefinitely, while those rewarded went to the *World of the Fathers*. In all respect *Vedic* religion reflected the patriarchal pastoral society and was predominantly maintained by the cult of sacrificial rites. The role of priest was identical and inevitable.

## 2.5 Changes in the Later Vedic Phase

In the established view, the *Rig Veda* is the earliest text of the orally transmitted (by words of mouth) literature that constitutes the *Veda* (knowledge). The *Rig Veda* is added by three other *Vedas*, viz., the *Samaveda*, the *Yajurveda* and the *Atharvaveda*. The *Atharvaveda* is certainly the most important of the later three *Vedas*, though there has always been a suggestion of a lower level of sanctity accorded to it. However, it may be noted that all of three *Vedas* constitute fairly invaluable source material for different aspects of political, social economy and religious life of the late *Vedic* phase.

With the gradual growth of large kingdoms, there have been further extensions of the political and cultural control of the *Vedic* people towards the east and the south. Probably, not all Aryans moved to the east, nor was the advance steady. It was not a easy matter of large Aryans entering further east to push their predecessors further forward. Perhaps the southward expansion was restricted by desert. The literary sources frequently refer to the regions of Western Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan. The period assigned to the *Later Vedic* society is circa 1000-700 B.C. Probably, before the close of the later *Vedic* phase, the Aryans had extensively subdued the fertile plains watered by the Jamuna, the Upper Ganges and the Beapti or the Gandak. The progressive people settled in regions stretching from the river Sarasvati to the Gangetic Doab and firmly occupied by the *Kurus*, the *Panchalas* and some adjoining tribes. It was from this 'firm Middle country' that Brahmanical civilization emerged and disseminated to the outer regions, to the land of the *Kasis* and the *Kosalas* and to the swamps east of the Gandak was colonised by the *Videhas*, and to the valley of the *Wardha* settled by the *Vidarbhas*.

The evidence of the later *Vedic* phase indicates a gradual transition from a tribal pastoral society to a sedentary agrarian society. It was earlier suggested that the socketed hand axes made of iron were extensively used to clear the forest and the Gangetic Daob for sendentry cultivation of agriculture. Further, it was also believed that iron tipped ploughshares and hoes increased the efficiency of the agricultural implements which gave technological impetus to agricultural activities. This has tended to give uncritical emphasis to one category of historical source material and its interpretation. Certainly, the historical reconstruction of these centuries is full of uncertainties and lacunae. Recent excavations of sites and particularly horizontal excavations in the Ganges plain have helped the evolution of these societies. Studies that illuminate social, political, economic and religious institutions, as well as detail investigation into the evolution of

these institutions would provide some modest historical truth. With the improved use of iron tipped weapons and horse drawn chariots believed to have helped and furthered military activities with secured viable agrarian economy. The amalgamation of tribes and the societies of the Indo-Gangetic plains witnessed the substantial changes during this *Later Vedic* phase. Thus, there generated refined and polished ideas and institutions coupled with the successful leadership of the kings in war, which inevitably led to a growth in territorial monarchs and royal power.

### 2.5.1 Polity

Our main sources for the study of the *Later Vedic* polity are the coronation rituals and ceremonies in the form of *rajasuya* and *vajapeya* sacrifices. It is significant that in early *Vedic* phase nowhere any desire is expressed for territorial sovereignty. But there are considerable changes which took place during the *Late Vedic* period. The material and social progress of the phase were amply reflected in the *Later Vedic* period. Chiefdoms and simple authority no longer remained tribal. The period witnessed a transition to a new political scene in North India with the emergence of kingdoms, oligarchies and chiefdoms, and the surfacing of towns. Now attention was shifted from the North-West and Punjab to the Ganges Plain. Changes in polity had begun slowly but steadily. As a result, permanent settlement in a particular area gave a geographical identity to a clan, or a confederacy of clan. Subsequently, this identity was given definite shape by its claiming possession of the territory. Maintaining of this possession required political organisation with an able leadership either as chief, *raja* or king. *Jana* was used in the sense of people or tribe and *pada* as territory in the *Rig Vedic* phase, but now the new concept of *janapada* appeared. *Janapada* meant the territory where the clan or tribe settled. The word *rashtra* was also used for the first time during this period.

Both the *Aitereya* and *Shatapatha Brahmanas* inform us that the *Kurus*, who formed from the union between two major *Vedic* tribes viz, the *Bharatas* and the *Purus* believed to have occupied the region of upper portion of the Ganga-Yamuna Doab. The territory of the *Panchalas*, established in the middle portion of the north-western plains in Uttar Pradesh, was called the *Panchala desa*. In the different verses of the *Yajurveda*, it is said that when the *Kurus* and *Panchalas* came together their control over the upper and middle reaches of the Ganga-Yamuna Doab was complete and the territory emerged as a powerful kingdom.

Several kingdoms came to be established. Now the *rajan* or the chief was no longer engaged only in cattle raids but emerged as the protector of the possessed territory where his tribesman settled. The *rajanya* who were already a superior lineage in the early period now became the '*Kshatriya*' who held power of dominions. Thus, emergence of the '*kshatriya*' as the wielder of power and focus of authority had frequently coincided with the role as the protector of their tribes and the land. We are told that the *Kurus* had fought a battle at *Kurukshetra* near Delhi with their collaterals, the *Panchalas*. Such changes would also have effected in the access to resources to maintain authority. Obviously, the territorial monarchy derived taxes from the '*Vish*' in lieu of the protection given to them. Settled agricultural life led to the production of considerable surplus, and this could be collected by the king in the form of regular tributes and taxes.

On account of an assured income from the regular tributes and taxes, the king could appoint many subordinate officers. We hear of *ratnins* (*jewel-bears*) whose houses the king used



to visited at the time of coronation in order to offer oblations to deity. Probably they were the high functionaries and royal officials. These officers were under the direct control of the king and maintained out of the taxes collected from the *vish*. These growing demands of official role might have relegated the general public role in the polity process. Naturally, the increase in royal power considerably led to gradual weakening of the *Sabha* and *Samiti*. But the *Sabha* became more important than the *Samiti* during the *Later Vedic* phase. Those who might have attended these two tribal assemblies were either wealthy members of the society or the king's appointed officers. This in effect gave an aristocratic character to these assemblies and took away much of their effectiveness.

Due to lack of well established principles of heredity and primogeniture, sanctity rituals became very significant for the ruler in order to maintain their authority. Thus, ceremonial sacrifices like *rajasuya*, *asvamedha* and *vajapeya* were performed on lavish scale. These ceremonial sacrifices generally believed to last for several days and legitimising the king as an unequal. These also raised him from a simple *raja* to a *samrat*, a monarch who owed allegiance to none but controlled several kings. In the *Rigvedic* period, these complex sacrifices were small affairs. The chief or king was required to integrate their territories with resources, economic viable production and distribution, which enhanced their status considerably from a mere raider, or a leader of conflicts. So, the *Kshatriya* lineage gained a distinctly superior position during this time, the reason being that the concept of territorial identity was established. Hence, territory assumed the physical manifestation of the king's authority to rule. Physical confrontation was no longer mere skirmishes over cattle, now the acquisition of more land under control was an important element in these fights. The increasing power of the king was reflected with the growing importance of the Brahmanas too, who legitimised the office of the king through the consecratory rituals. The lavish redistribution of wealth through *dana* and *dakshina* on such occasion was essentially from the *Kshatriya yajamana* to the *Purohita*. The information that we get from the *Vedic corpus* for reconstructing the political history of the period C. 1000-700 B.C. is so fragmentary that we can build only a hazy picture of it. But it is better to be hazy than to try to fill the picture with details drawn from later traditions contained in the epics (the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*) and the various *puranas*.

### 2.5.2 Society

We have already studied how society, by the last phase of the period of the *Rig Veda*, came to be divided into four recognised classes, later on known as *varnas*. Only one of the hymns of the *Rigveda*, the four-fold divisions appear viz, *Brahmanas*, *Rajanyas*, *Vaishyas* and *Shudras*. *Atharvaveda* hymn on the *purusha-sukta* also reproduced the substantive passage on the origin of the four *varnas* with some alterations. So it is fair to regard the hymn as much more than a chance composition. The symbolism which is schemed in these hymns is that *Brahmana*, *Kshatriya (Rajanyas)*, *Vaishyas* and *Sudras* are the limbs of the society. Nonetheless, these limbs did not have equal position and status in the society. The *Brahman* and the *Kshatriya* were compared to the head and arm whereas the *Sudra* was compared to the feet, and *Vaishya* to the thigh.

An original distinction is sometimes suggested between *Rajanya* as persons belonging to the family to the ruler (*rajan*), and *Kshritiyas* as warriors, from *kshatra* (strength, power), but this does not seem to be borne out by the *Vedic* texts. So both *Rajanya* and *Kshatriya* would

seem from very early times to be alternative names. *Vaishya*, is nearly as rare of occurrence in the *Atharvaveda* as in the *Rigveda*, and this possibly suggests that the term was simply coined out of the word *vish* meaning the common people. According to the *Aitareya Brahmana*, they were subject to payment of *bali* or tribute to another. An assignment of specific professions to the *Vaishya*, distinct from those to the *Sudra Varna*, had not, however, yet taken shape, to understand from the way the occupation followed men and women. It is thus, clear that while the *Brahmans*, *Rajanyas* and *Vaishya* constituted the Aryan-regiment of society, the *Sudras* were held to form the non-Aryan component. Thus distinction was no longer one of language or territory, as with the *Dasyu* and *Dasa* but of place in the social order.

Two of the major institutions of the later *varna* system, namely, exogamy or marriage outside the kin group called *gotra*, emerged during this period. Although, *gotra* marriage only within the *jati* or *varna*, does not seem as yet to have been widely established. The earliest meaning of the word means only the cow-pen or cattleshed, and later signified to be descent from a common ancestor and marriages could not take place between couples belonging to the same *gotra*. We have some references that in the later doctrine of hypergamy, a man can marry a woman of the same or lower *varna* (caste) but not of a higher one. During the *Later Vedic* phase, the strong patriarchal family system was well established and the *grihapati* acquired a special status. Household economy was gaining prime importance, the position of women too acquired economic significance. At this time, participation of the women in production activity was enormous. She could do the works of washing clothes, dyeing, splitting of cane, making of ointments and sheath-making. Such contribution in production was no passport to equal status; on the contrary, women's work was obviously considered with scorn. Now the *grihapatis* were wealthy and their ritual role was that of a *yajamana*. Child marriages are not referred in any of the main *Vedic corpus*. On the other hand, polygamy seems to have been firmly recognised as the prerogative of the wealthy and the powerful individual.

### 2.5.3 Economy

The *Later Vedic* society, in some ways the material basis, was strikingly different from that of *Rig Vedic* people. The *Vedic* people now shifted their scene of activity to *Ganga-Jamuna Doab* region, where they displaced and imposed themselves on a copper using people whose tools and weapons spread over this area. Their expansion was facilitated by the active use of iron tools and weapons, which have been discovered in good numbers at *Atiranjikhhera* in Itawa district of Uttar Pradesh. Iron technology enabled the *Vedic* people to use durable agricultural tools and implements. Towards the end of the *Later Vedic* phase, the territorial idea generated a sense of possession over the land. Agriculture, however, became the chief means of livelihood in this period, and the idea of private possession than of clan land gradually began to clearly emerge. The *Vedic* texts referred that *Tandula Vrihi* and *Sali*, all suggesting rice cultivation. The buffalo seems to have been tamed along with usual cattle rearing for agricultural purpose. In addition to barley, the chief crop cultivated during this period was wheat, which continued to be the staple food of the people during post-Vedic period. Beans and sesamum were also known which assumed ritual significance in course of time. The *Atharvaveda* mentions about the twelve sacrifices prescribed for acquiring material gain and recommend the gifts of cows, calves, oxen, gold and well cultivated lands to the *Brahmanas*. The *Later Vedic corpus* mentions, *Indra* as 'Lord of the plough' and the divine *Maruts* are his ploughmen. No doubt, the growing importance of agriculture undermined the earlier pastoral economy.

The gradual transition from pastoralism and hunting subsistence to active agricultural economy seems to have given rise to sustainable mixed farming. Agricultural activities in this period were not labour intensive but family members perhaps constituted a unit of production. This mixed farming led to the growth of sedentary agricultural life and settlements. The Painted Grey Ware (PGW) deposits are generally 2 to 3 metre deep and suggest that people were living in the same spot for a long period. Most probably, at this time, durable materials were being used for house construction due to the adoption of a sedentary life and gradual decline of the wattle and daub styles. In early phase, Gods were worshipped for ensuring victory over other tribes, granting cattle and good chase. This method of worship and ritual underwent gradual changes. Ritual became much more complex which required special skill and knowledge. Thus, only the wealthy could perform them and thereby spirit of collectivity was greatly reduced. In the process, the rituals became a mechanism for ensuring the material and spiritual superiority of the chiefs and the *Brahmans*. Hence, the common people were relegated to producing status and regular payer of tributes.

The multiplicity of occupations, therefore, the necessity of exchanges of services and products must have made necessary a larger use of precious metals as medium of exchange. The *niskha*, originally a gold or silver ornament, had begun to acquire the form in which gifts of value might be given. Passing on to tool making, we see that all the metals known in the Indus civilization were thus in use, with the notable addition of iron. The *Purusha-Medha* hymn speaks about multiplication of specialised occupation emerged during this period. Apart from those already noticed, we have such occupations as those of the bow-maker, rope-maker, bowstring-maker and arrow-maker; hide-dresser, woman splitting cane, horse-keeper, fisherman, smith, goldsmith, merchant, physician and astrologer became a crystallised occupation of individuals. There was thus, considerable progress in the dimensions of economic functions, though this did not bring about any basic sharp change in the subsistence economy.

#### **2.5.4 Religion**

Generally, the religion of the *Late Vedic* age was a continuation of the set of beliefs and rituals found in the *Rigveda*. With rising royal pretensions and priestly ambitions, there took place a great development in the religious life of the *Vedic* people. Several new lengthy and complicated sacrifices developed and procedures for their meticulous performance dominated much of the *Later Vedic corpus*. Whether such change is already visible in any substantial degree in the *Atharvaveda*, is a matter of dispute. The large number of incantations and magic formulae contained in the *Atharvaveda* has suggested to many that it embodies a popular, even partly non-Aryan, influx into the older *Rigvedic* religion. Sacrifices became very important during this period and they assumed both a public and private character. The public sacrifices viz; the *Rajasuyas*, *Vajapeya*, *Asvamedha* were performed on a large scale, where the whole community participated. Definitely, this elaborate sacrificial rites undermined the significance of the *Rigvedic* deities, some of whom relegated into oblivion. The priest became the chief beneficiaries of the sacrifices and consequently gained in power and status. Cattle were slaughtered at sacrificial altar often in large number. Thus, *Vedic* sacrifices no longer meant simple offering of food or oblations into the fire. The procedures and nature of offering differed according to the needs of the king or the *yajamana*. A new science of priest-craft emerged due to the complexities involved in the performance of these *yajnas*. Hence, a class of priests became specialists in the performance of *yajnas*.

It has been often suggested that the changing depictions of Gods derived considerably from cults brought in by subjugated non-Aryan populations. This is certainly possible, but we are handicapped by our lack of knowledge of the previous beliefs of the non-Aryan communities. It may, however, be mentioned that the two prominent rarely *Vedic* gods, *Indra* and *Agni* lost their importance. *Prajapati*, the Creator, became significant. *Rudra*, a minor deity in the *Rigvedic* phase, became important now and incorporated into local deities. Myths and powers were attributed to *Rudra (shiva)*. *Vishnu*, at the same time had risen distinctly with the status of Creator and Protector of the universe. *Pushan*, the earlier God of the cattle protector, now transformed into the God of the *Sudras*. These changing statuses of the *Rigvedic* deities are manifestation of the change in the nature of the communities from pastoral packs to sedentary agriculturist groups. Simultaneously, we have an early example of the Creation Hymn and bold speculation of a philosophical kind. There was a progressive tendency to see all happenings in the universe as a result of one ritual sacrifice or another. Much of the mythology developed in the *Brahmanas* was woven around one sacrifice or another. Early set of *Upanishads*, which clearly reflects a wider spirit of inquiry, prevailed towards the end of the *Vedic* phase. Now, the *Upanishadic* thought centres round the doctrine of *atman* (soul) and not *yajna* (sacrifice). In the *Upanishads*, we find the first clear exposition of philosophy in the passage of human soul from life to life. *Atman* were thought of as being born to happiness or sorrow according to their conduct in the previous life. Thus, *Atman* meant 'self', the *Upanishads* convert it into 'soul' by isolating it from the body, and thereby open a new realm for speculation of transmigration of souls. The transmigration theory is obviously a response to the immobilities of a *varna* (caste) society where birth matters most. One's position in the hereditary caste order can now by the doctrine of *Karma* (conduct) be justified on the basis of one's own merits or faults in the previous life. Hence, the materialistic aspect of the religion was dispensed and religion was raised to the sphere of philosophy.

With such power to sustain faith in the existing order, it is not surprising that the doctrine became the principal ideological pillar of the caste system later on. Therefore, we find that a great change in religious belief and practices had undergone between the *Rigvedic* and the later *Vedic* phase. This identical change was to some degree related to the relocation from active pastoralism to sedentary agricultural life of the *Vedic* people.

## 2.6 Let Us Sum Up

After going through this unit you have learnt about literary and archaeological sources which help us to understand and reconstruct the *Rigvedic* and *Later Vedic* societies.

The coordination of archaeological and linguistic evidences is inherently difficult; and can only achieve certainty where the languages in question have traces in writing on material objects that survive the ages or the writings speak unambiguously of distinctive physical objects. This lack of precision is an inescapable difficulty to accept the notion of the Aryan invasion theory.

In the *Rigvedic* polity, the tribal chiefs or the *rajan* exercised political authority over the *vish* at large were given the designation of *Kshatriyas*. In the *Later Vedic* phase it was drawn

from *kshatra*, which meant dominion or rule. Among several tribal assemblies, *Sabha* and the *Samiti* played significant roles in maintaining political organisation of communities. During this period the *Sabha* could retain its importance and the *Samiti* had become less relevant. The *Sabha* ritually played the role of advisory and rendered help to the king in his dispensation of authority and power. There was no well defined political hierarchy and the office of chief or *Rajan* was hereditary with the powers of protecting cattle and *vish*.

Both the *Rigvedic* and *Later Vedic* societies were tribal based on patriarchal egalitarian society. Within the tribe, the family was undoubtedly the most important social unit. It was centered on the head of the house (*grihapati or dampati*) and wife and children. Social division was based on occupation but there was visible emergence of distinct caste division in the *Later Vedic* phase.

The agro-pastoralism was the chief subsistence economic activities in the *Rig Vedic* society which shifted to active mixed farming and herding in the *Later Vedic* period. Cow was valued as an important form of wealth. Besides cattle rearing, the communities had also domesticated goats, dogs and other animals. But these cattle were largely slaughtered for complex ritual sacrifices and to provide lavish gifts to priests. Agriculture activity became a sedentary subsistence economy now.

The centre of *Rigvedic* religion was the *yajna*-sacrifice. They personified the natural forces, such as water, wind, rain and worshipped them as God. Temples and images were not present. People worshipped different deities for cattle and sun but this concept had changed to sophisticated sacrifices and led to growing importance of priest. Towards the close of this phase, a strong reaction against the priestly domination resulted in the emergence of a philosophical doctrine which is articulated in the *Upanishads*. Apart from the above, the material features of the religion were abandoned and religion was developed to the sphere of philosophy.

## 2.7 Key Words

<i>Bali</i>	:	Tributes and presentations paid to the victorious chiefs by the defeated groups or regular tributes/or taxes paid by the <i>vish</i> to ruler.
<i>Clan</i>	:	Large family group found in tribal community.
<i>Kinship</i>	:	Relationship by blood.
<i>Patriarchy</i>	:	Male dominated family or tribe.
<i>Sapta Sindhavali</i>	:	The seven Rivers
<i>Yava, dhana</i>	:	Food grains
<i>Vaya</i>	:	Weaver
<i>Hiranya</i>	:	Gold
<i>Jana</i>	:	Tribe
<i>Pada</i>	:	Territory
<i>Rashtra</i>	:	Kingdom
<i>Purohitas</i>	:	Tribal chiefs, or priests
<i>Gathas</i>	:	Ritual songs
<i>Ratnins</i>	:	Royal jewels
<i>Shyama</i>	:	Iron (black)

Endogamy	:	Marrying within e.g. within a tribe, caste or a gotra etc.
<i>Labour Intensive</i>	:	an activity where labour or manpower is used relatively more than Technology available.
<i>Presentation</i>	:	Service or tribute required by custom or promise.
<i>Sedentary</i>	:	Stationary or remaining permanently at one place.
<i>Subsistence Economy</i>	:	Activity relating to economic survival, mixed farming in this case.
<i>Jati or Varna</i>	:	Caste
<i>Rajan</i>	:	Ruler or ruling family
<i>Atman</i>	:	Soul or /self
<i>Sira</i>	:	A plough

## 2.8 Check Your Learning

1. Give an account of Socio-religious life in early Vedic age.
2. Who were Aryans? Give an account of their settlement pattern and belief system.
3. Compare and contrast the features of early Vedic age with later Vedic age.
4. Give an account of socio-religious life in later Vedic age
5. Write short notes on
  - (i) Polity of *later Vedic* period.
  - (ii) Family system.
  - (iii) Economic life of *Early and Later Vedic* age.
  - (iv) Sources of *later Vedic age*.
  - (v) Society of *Early Vedic* period.

## 2.9 Suggested Readings

- Sankalia, H.D. : *Prehistory and proto- history of India and Pakisthan*, Poona, 1962.
- Bashaal, A. L. : *The Wonder that was India*, New Delhi, 1986
- Kosambi, D.D.: *The culture and civilization of ancient India in historical outline*, New Delhi, 1987
- Thapar, Romila : *Cultural pasts: Essays in early Indian History*, New Delhi, 2000
- Thapar, Romila : *Early India, from the origins to AD 1300*, New Delhi, 2002
- Sharma, R.S. : *Aspects of political ideas and institutions in ancient India*, Delhi, 1991.

## 2.10 Hints/Answers to Questions in Check Your Progress

### Check Your Progress-I

- Ques :- 1, 3, : See section : 2.2 and 2.3
- Ques :- 2 : Your answer should comment on whether the theory of Aryan invasion is correct or not?
4. (i), (ii), (iii), (iv)

### Check Your Progress-II

Ques :- 1, 2, 3, 4 : Section: 2.4.1, and 2.4.3. Your answer should comment on important features of the *Early Vedic* Society.

### **Check Your Progress-III**

Ques :- 1, 2, 3, and 4 : See section: 2.4.3 and 2.4.4. Your answer for Q.1 should comment on agro-pastoral and for Q. 2 the importance of cattle in the *Early Vedic* phase.

### **Check Your Progress-IV**

Ques :- 1. (i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (v)

Ques : 2 : See section : 2.5.1 and 2.5.2. Your answer should comment on the identical transition from *Rig Vedic* to the *Later Vedic* society.

### **Check Your Progress-V**

Ques :- 1. (i), (ii), (iii), (iv), 2

### **Check Your Progress-VI**

Ques :- 1. (i), (ii), (iii), (iv) :

Ques :- 2, 3: See section : 2.5.3 and 2.5.4. Your answer should comment on the distinct change found in the economy and religious life in the Later Vedic period.

## Unit – III

### RISE OF HETRODOX SECT: BUDDHISM AND JAINISM

#### Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Life and Teachings of Mahavira
- 3.3 Vardhaman Mahavir (540-468 B.C)
- 3.4 Main Aspects of Jainism
- 3.5 The Jain Councils
- 3.6 Contribution of Jainism to Indian Culture
- 3.7 Impact of Indian Civilization
- 3.8 Life and Teachings of Gautam; the Buddha
  - 3.8.1 Teachings of Buddha: Buddhism
    - 3.8.1.1 Four Noble Truths of Arya Satya
    - 3.8.1.2 Noble Eight fold Path
- 3.9 Causes of the Spread of Buddhism
- 3.10 The Buddhist Councils
- 3.11 Impact of Buddhism on Indian Civilisation
- 3.12 The Decline of Buddhism
- 3.13 Different between Buddhism and Jainism
- 3.14 Ajivikas
- 3.15 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.16 Key Words
- 3.17 Check Your Learning
- 3.18 Suggested Readings
- 3.19 Hints/Answers to Questions in Check Your Progress

#### 3.0 Objectives

The objective of the unit is to provide an idea of the rise of heterodox sects like Buddhism and Jainism in 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. in India. It also throw light on the teachings of Jainism and Buddhism, with reference to their contributions towards Indian culture.

#### 3.1 Introduction

The 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. witnessed a new phase in ancient Indian history and culture. During the time, two great religious movements were witnessed in India. The movement called Jainism was led by Mahavira of the Jnatrika clan and Buddhism was led by Gautama of Sakya clan. Both these movements were sponsored under leadership of kshatriya princes. These movements came into the forefront due to various circumstances that were prevailing in the then Indian society. The time was ripe for a change, due to many unpopular aspects of Brahmanical religion like animal sacrifices, caste system and dominance of the priestly class. The teachings of the Upanishad, the Ajivikas and Charvaka, made a great impact on the thoughtful section of the society and on the newly emerging urban class. Side by side the freedom of enquiry and thought



among the people of various republics led to criticism of Brahmanical creed. The protest against the Vedic religion gave rise to the new religious creeds like Buddhism and Jainism. 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 gods but also rejected many practices of Brahmanical religion. Both Mahavira and Gautama were contemporaries and Gangetic region was the area of their missionary activities.

### **3.2 Life and Teachings of Mahavira**

**Origin of Jainism:** The origin of Jainism is shrouded in mystery. From the Rigveda, the Vishnupurana and the Bhagavatapurana, it is known that Jainism is as old as Vedic religion. The Jainas believe that there were 24 tirthankaras (prophets) of Jaina religion. Rishabha was the founder of Jainism. The first 22 tirthankaras are so legendary in character that we do not get any clear idea about them. The 23<sup>rd</sup> Tirthankara was Parsvanath, who lived two hundred fifty years before Mahavira. His main teachings were non-injury, non-lying, non-stealing and non-possession. Mahavira was the last and twenty fourth tirthankara of Jainism.

### **3.3 Vardhaman Mahavir (540 B.C. – 468 B.C)**

Vardhaman Mahavir was born in 540 B.C. at Kundagrama near vaisali in a rich kshtriya family. His father Siddhartha was the chief of the Jnatrika clan and mother Trisala was a Lichhavi Princess. Vardhamana received the highest perfection in all branches of learning and grew up to be a householder. His wife Yasoda gave birth to a daughter in course of time named Priyadarsana. In his thirtieth year, on the demise of his parents, Mahavira renounced the world, left his home as a sannyasi in search of spiritual solace.

Vardhamana moved from place to place for long twelve years in search of truth. He practised meditation and hard penance, giving himself physical pain and torture. He faced the hardship of summer and winter and even lived without food and water. He also discarded his clothes and garments and practised penance and austerities for 12 years. At the age of 42, he attained the supreme knowledge and became known as Mahavir, the great hero or Jina (the conqueror who had subdued his passions). There after he proclaimed a new faith called Janinism. For long 30 years, he preached the-new doctrine moving from one place another. He visited and preached in the towns of Champa, Vaisali, Rajagriha, Mithila and Sravasti. Even the kings like Bimbisara and Ajatasutru of Magadha were attracted towards this creed. Mahavira Jina died in 468 B.C. at the age of 72 at Pawa near Rajgriha. His followers were known as Jainas.

### **3.4 Main Aspects of Jainism**

Paravanath was the fore-runner of Mahavira in the preaching of Jainism. Some of his teachings 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 principle of Jainism. The religious texts like the Angas, Upanga, Mulashutra throw light on various aspects of Jainism.

Mahavira followed a policy known as Tri-Ratna. These were known as the Right faith, Right knowledge and Right action. These were considered as the three cardinal principles in life.

He called upon his followers to adopt the Triratna or three gems for a noble life. This would help them to achieve perfection of soul and salvation. He did not consider worship of God as essential for spiritual salvation.

Mahavira believed in karma and rebirth. Good works in life would yield good results, as bad works lead to bad results. Each karma or action would have its own result. No one could escape the consequences of his karma. He believed that karma was the cause of rebirth. Man is born again and again to suffer the sins of his earlier birth. That's why, he called upon his followers to adopt Tri-Ratna to escape the pains of rebirth.

He did not believe in God. He did not have faith on the creation of God. God, according to him, is only the highest, the noblest and the fullest manifestation of all the powers latent in man. Mahavira also rejected the authority of the Vedas. He was against the Vedic rituals and the Brahmana supremacy. He advocated a very ethical and holy code of life, followed by severe ascetism 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 was a great champion of non-violence. Each life was considered sacred. Destroying life was the greatest sin; kindness was considered as supreme virtue. Mahavira regarded all objects, animate or inanimate as having various degrees of life. Jainism showed great care and respect for even the smallest insect.

### **3.5 The Jaina Councils**

Mahavira successfully founded the Jain church. The first Jaina council was summoned at pataliputra about 300 B.C. There the sacred text of Jain, known as the Twelve Angas were compiled. In this council, there was a division among Jaina people, known as the Digambaras (naked) and Svetambara (clad in white). In 512 A.D., the second Jain council was held at Valabhi in Gujarat. Royal patronage was also bestowed upon Jainism. The great Maurya emperor Chandragupta, (4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.), the great Orissan king Kharavela (1<sup>st</sup> century B.C.), and many medieval kings of Gujarat and Deccan supported the cause of Jainism.

### **3.6 Contribution of Jainism to Indian Culture**

1. Mahavira created a strong social awareness. Questioned the evils of Brahmanical religion and provided answers to them. He released religion from the control of the Brahmanas. He condemned Vedic rites, rituals and denied the supremacy of the veda. He also disapproved of superstition and caste system. He offered a new approach to the questions of God, rebirth, soul and salvation. He called for a holy and ethical code of life.

2. The Jain literature developed a lot. They gave patronage to the spoken languages of the people. Their religious literature was written in Prakrit language. Mahavir himself preached in the mixed dialect called Ardha Magadhi. Some Jain literature, are written in the language called Apabhramsa. The Jains also have written some of their scriptures in Sanskrit. The Jain works dealing with philosophy, grammar, lexicography and mathematics are very important in Indian literature. It also influenced local literature in south. Jain writers and poets like Jinasena, Gunabhadra, Hemachandra and others wrote their famous treatise.

3. The beauty of Jainism finds the high water mark in their art and architecture. The Jainas 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, Udaigiri caves at Bhilsa, Jain caves at Ellora. Early medieval Jain temples are noticed at Deogarh in Uttar Pradesh, Aihole, Badami, Ellora, near Mysore and Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh. The famous and gigantic statues of Bahubali called Gomatesvara at Sravanabelgola is the best example of Jaina art. Many Jain temples at Gujarat (Mt. Abu, Palitana and Girnar), at Parsvanatha hills, Pavapuri and Rajgir in Bihar, and Rajasthan reflects the rich art of Jain tradition. The Jain tower at Chittorgarh in Rajasthan is one of the best specimens of Jain architecture.

### **3.7 Impact on Indian Civilisation**

Jainism received enthusiastic welcome as a new religious faith. It offered a new approach to the questions of God, rebirth, soul and salvation. Mahavira by birth and training was the right person to lead his countryman towards a new path. He questioned the evils of Brahmanical religion and at the same time provided answers also. Against polytheism and animal sacrifice which was the order of the day, he offered the pure and simple life of good conduct and non-violence. Mahavira's idea of Triratna aimed to create a life of virtue and dignity as against sin. Mahavira made people realise the futility of worship and sacrifice. He denied the supremacy of the Vedas and priestly class, who were playing a dominant role in the then society. He disapproved of superstition and meaningless ritualism. He treated all men on an equal footing. Caste system was condemned by him as an artificial social division created by the Brahmanas and ancient Smrti writers.

Mahavira created a strong social awareness. He released religion from the control of the Brahmanas. He called upon the people to lead a life of non-violence and virtue. There by he made great impact on the contemporary society. Non-violence as a cardinal principle of life played a great role in the sphere of Indian religious belief. Its impact was felt even in recent times when Mahatma Gandhi made it the most effective weapon to fight against British Imperialism.

### **3.8 Life and Teachings of Gautam; the Buddha**

Buddha, the light of Asia, was one of the greatest men of all times. He is one of the immortal sons of India. He was a great prophet who propagated Buddhism in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. No other person has influenced the history of mankind so profoundly as Gautama, the Buddha.

There was a small state named Kapilavastu in ancient India. It was situated in the Tarain area of modern Nepal. The Sakyas were ruling in Kapilavastu. The Sakya king Suddhodhana and Queen Mayadevi were the parents of Gautama. Gautama was born at Lumbini in 566 B.C., outside the city of Kapilavastu. There is an Asokan pillar at Lumbini commemorating it as the birth place of Buddha.

The childhood of Prince Gautama was spent amidst plenty and pleasures. King Suddhodhana paid utmost attention to the happiness of his son. But Gautama was of a different

nature. From childhood, young Gautama remained detached and thoughtful. Suddhodhana tried his best to engage the mind of the son in worldly affairs. That's why Gautama was married to beautiful Yasodhara when he was only 16 years age. In course of time they were blessed with a son.

But the luxurious life of the palace did not keep Gautama happy for ever. While his mind was in distress, he came across four scenes one by one. He saw an old man with wrinkled face and bent, at one day. At another, he saw a man, diseased and miserable. It was yet another day. He came across the scene of a dead body being carried towards the funeral fire. Finally, he came across a sannyasi (ascetic), walking without any fear or care, in absolute freedom from bonds of desires. Gautama started thinking. He came to the conclusion that the life of a sanyasi was the answer to old age, sufferings, disease and death. Thus, he wanted to escape the chains of the world. At the age of 29, he decided to free himself from worldly life and in a dark deep night, when every body was asleep, he went out of Kapilavastu. He had renounced the world.

From Kapilavastu, Gautama proceeded towards Rajagriha. There he tried to acquire knowledge from two learned pandits. Gautama proceeded to Uruvila near Gaya. There he began hard and painful penance. For long six years, he endured self imposing sufferings. His body was reduced to skeleton for continuous fasting and self torture. A small girl named Sujata offered him milk which saved his life. There after, Gautama sat down under a peepal tree in meditation. And there, he got the answers at last. He got enlightenment. From that moment Gautama was known as the Buddha, the enlightened one. The tree under which he got enlightenment, became famous as the (Bodhitree) and the place came to be known as Buddha Gaya. At that time, Buddha was 35 years of age.

Buddha was concerned about the sufferings of man. The truth which he got was the internal truth of human existence. He realised that "life is full of suffering; desire in the cause of that suffering; suffering ends at the destruction of desire; desire is destroyed by noble and right living".

From Buddhagaya, he proceeded to Sarnath near Benaras. There he turned a prophet and in the deer park of Sarnath, propagated Buddhism. The event became famous as the Dharma Chakra Pravartana or the turning of the wheel of law. For long 45 years, Buddha preached his doctrines. He visited places like Benaras, Uruvila, Rajagriha, Sravasti, Kapilavastu, Vaisali, Champa and Magadha. Hundreds of people became his disciples. Some of the great disciples of Buddha were Ananda, Sariputta, Moggalana, Rahula, Upali, Sudatta and Anirudha.

Like Mahavira Jina, Gautama Buddha was a mobile prophet. He moved from place to place spreading his message. Within a short time, his sangha developed into one of the most powerful religious organisations ever. The simple language, logic and personal idealism of Buddha attracted people from far and wide. In no time Buddhism became the most popular religion of India. He died at Kusinagar in 486 B.C. at the age of 80. His passing away is called Mahaparinirvana.

### **3.8.1 Teachings of Buddha: Buddhism**

The religion of Gautama Buddha is famous as Buddhism. The followers of the religion are known as Buddhists. The teachings of Buddha are known to us from Tripitaka, the Buddhist religious texts. Tripitaka consists of Sutta, Vinaya and Abhidamma pitaka. Together these pitakas represent the philosophy of Buddhism.

### **3.8.1.1 Four Noble Truths or Arya Satya**

Buddha got his enlightenment with acknowledge of four things. They were life is suffering, suffering is due to desire; suffering ends with end of desires, and desires end with noble thoughts and actions. These are known as four noble truths. Buddhism developed its philosophy on these truths. To Buddha, the material existence of everything is momentary. It is necessary to escape all sufferings. Buddha searched for means to escape worldly sufferings. He discovered the causes of sufferings and wanted the destruction of worldly desires. For that purpose, he discovered the “Noble Eightfold Path”.

### **3.8.1.2 Noble Eight Fold Path**

For the attainment of Nirvana, Buddha prescribed Noble eight fold path. They were Right views, Right aspirations, Right speech, Right conduct, Right livelihood, Right effort, Right mindfulness and Right contemplation. By following these noble paths, man could attain the bliss of Nirvana. In fact Buddha did not want every householder to give up his family and go in search for truth through hard penance. Buddha, therefore, prescribed a “middle path”. One could practise these noble paths even as a householder.

### **The Karma**

The desires lead men to karma. Man can not escape the results of his karma (deeds). 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. That’s why he discovered the path of Nirvana.

### **Nirvana**

The Nirvana was considered the supreme goal of life. It was possible to attain Nirvana by putting an end to the desire for life, for world, for birth and for existent. When all desires are extinguished once for all, life enters into a state of eternal peace. In Buddhist philosophy, the idea of Nirvana had a deep root. In order to achieve that Nirvana, a Buddhist was required to regulate his entire conduct.

### **Moral Codes**

The conduct for Nirvana was a moral conduct. Man should give up violence, killing of animals, falsehood, luxury, stealing, desire for wealth and many such immoral acts. There after, he should try for Samadhi (meditation) and try to attain prajna (insight). Finally he should aspire for Nirvana. In substance, salvation was possible through moral and ethical practices.

Buddha also did not believe in any God or worship of God. He also opposed the caste system. He denounced the dominance of the Brahmanas and the meaningless animal sacrifice and costly ritual practices. He taught the people through narration. Therefore, Buddhism received wide response in India and became a great religion.

### **3.9 Causes of the spread of Buddhism**

\* **Personality of Gautama Buddha:** The major cause of the popularity of Buddhism was Gautama Buddha and his method of teaching. 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 a great impact on the mind of the common people.

\* **Defects in Hinduism:** Hinduism had lost its hold on the people due to the exploitation by the priests. Many dogmas, superstitions, ceremonies, sacrifices and rituals had made the Hindu religion expensive and unpopular. As against this, Buddha preached a simple religion, having emphasis on ethical and moral codes without any God, Brahmana or sacrifice.

\* **Royal Patronage:** Buddhism received patronage from different rulers of ancient and medieval India. The kings of North India having accepted Buddhism as their personal religion extended liberal patronage. Kings like Bimbisara, Ajatasatru, Ashoka, Kanishka, Harshavaradhana, Pala rulers of Bengal and others converted Buddhism into a world religion. Their zeal and enterprise contributed significantly for the spread of Buddhism in different parts of the world.

\* **Use of popular language:** Buddha preached his religion in the language of the common people. Instead of using the court language of Sanskrit, he preached in Pali, the spoken language. People could understand him well and thus liked his religion.

\* **Absent of caste system:** The Hindu society was ridden with caste system. The upper caste dominated upon the lower caste. They even exploited the lower caste. Buddha denounced this system and believed in the principle of equality of man. Thus the lower class people were attracted towards Buddhism.

\* **The Councils and missionaries:** The Buddhists helped large councils with the royal patronage. These councils organised the Buddhist in a coherent group. The sangha or the monasteries of the Buddhism received popular support in the council. The sanghas were well-organised having a disciplined code of conduct. Every monk of the monasteries was assigned area of work as missionary. This helped a lot for the propagation of Buddhism.

\* **Role of the universities:** Several universities and centres of learning like Nalanda, Vikramaila, Puspagiri, Udantepuri, etc in the early medieval period attracted number of Buddhist scholars from India and abroad. These centres played a supporting role for the propagation of Buddhism.

### **3.10 The Buddhist Councils**

After the death of Gautama Buddha, four Buddhist councils were held at different periods to codify Buddhist doctrines. The first Buddhist council was held in 487 B.C., summoned at Rajagriha in the time of Ajatasatru, the ruler of Magadha. The second council was held at Vaisali in and about 387 B.C. and the third Buddhist council was held at Pataliputra by Ashoka. The fourth council was held in 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. either at Kundalavana Vihara at Kashmir or at Jallandhar in Punjab during the reign period of Kanishka. After the 4<sup>th</sup> council, Buddhism was divided into two sects (a) Hinayanist who used to follow the teaching of Buddha and worships Buddha through symbols (b) Mahayanist, who used to worship Buddha as a God, through visual representation on art and architecture. Later on other branches of Buddhism like Vajrayanist and Sahajanaist came into being.

### 3.11 Impact of Buddhism on Indian Civilisation

\* **Simple and popular Religion:** Buddhism gave a popular religion without any complicated and elaborate rituals performed by priestly class. Its simplicity, easy ethical code, use of popular language and the monasteries appealed to the masses.

\* **Noble ethical code:** Buddha prescribed a simple and practical code of ethics for his followers. It gave stress on public morality. It also emphasised on charity, purity, self-sacrifice, truthfulness and control over passions. It explained to the people that man is the architect of own destiny not any god.

\* **The monastic system:** Another contribution of Buddhism was their monastic system. The Buddhist sangha for the first time made a systematic organised attempt to teach simple code of ethics for better spiritual life of the masses. There, the common people received lesson on moral and spiritual truths.

\* **The influence on Hinduism:** In the Hinduism of later period, there was some influence of the Buddhist thought and ethics. The doctrine of Ahimsa, so strongly stressed, preached and practised by the Buddhists, was later on incorporated in their teachings by the Brahmanas of later days. The institution of mathas (organised brotherhood of Sadhus) is a feature introduced in the Hindu society, as a result of its contact with Buddhism. Even practice of worshipping personal gods, making idols and erecting temple, in their honour was adopted by the Hindus in imitation of the Mahayana Buddhists.

\* **Development of Vernacular Literatures:** As Buddhism was intended for the masses, it made popular through the spoken languages of the people. Lord Buddha, his monks and nuns preached in the language of the masses. In the Buddhist viharas, Prakrit, the vernacular literature was developed.

\* **The Buddhist Art:** The finest contribution of Buddhism to Indian culture was made in the realm of architecture and sculpture. The Buddhist caves at western India like Karle, Bhaja, Pitalkhora, Ajanta, Ellora and others reveal the development of Buddhist cave architecture. The stupas, the chaityas, the monasteries and different religious pillars are considered as the best specimens of the Buddhist art. The Buddhist art at Mathura, Saranath, Amaravati, Ajanta, Ellora and Bagh are unique example of Indian art.

\* **Equality and Toleration:** Buddha condemned the caste system and social distinctions and advocated equality in society. Buddhism also preached to the princes, the principles of peace, love, affection and toleration. Thus the outlook and policy of princes underwent a considerable change.

\* **Intellectual Freedom:** In the Vedic time, the lower caste people had no intellectual freedom. Buddha raised his voice against it. He asked his followers to be rational in outlook. He encouraged independent thinking.

\* **Political unity and Nationalism:** By popularising the Indian vernacular, he attracted many people towards Buddhism. The common people came to look upon it as the religion of the country. Buddha, thus helped in the evolution of Indian Nation and paved the way for a political union of India.

\* **Diffusion of Indian Culture Abroad:** Buddhism broke the isolation of India and established an intimate relationship with many foreign countries. Indian culture and civilisation had been carried by the Buddhist missionaries to China, Japan, Korea, Java, Sumatra, Burma and other countries since the days of Asoka.

\* **Buddhist Influence on Indian History:** Buddhism also influenced the course of Indian History. Asoka the great followed Buddhism and left war for ever. The government under Asoka

became more humane and philanthropic. Unlike some other religions, it never resorted to the sword. This made the Indian nation shrink from shedding blood and adopt pacific temperament. Thus in due course, India fall an easy prey to the Muslim invaders.

To sum up, we can say, that Buddhism left behind an indelible impression on Indian culture. It inspired Indian art, thought, literature, painting and philosophy. Its far reaching influence was felt in recent years when India propounded panchsheel as the basis of her foreign policy.

### **3.12 The Decline of Buddhism**

The causes of the decline of Buddhism are many and varied. It is to be noted that although Buddhism gained popularity with the masses, it was never able to destroy Hinduism. In fact, Hinduism rose to a new height, under the Guptas and the Rajputs and Buddhism began to decline. In due course, Buddhism perished. The important causes of the decline of Buddhism are (1) inherent weakness or Defects of Buddhism (2) Deterioration of Buddhism (3) Degeneration of the Buddhist Sangha (4) Loss of Royal patronage (5) Brahmanic Revival (6) Assimilative power of Hinduism (7) Muslim Invasions and persecutions (8) Development of Tantric form of Buddhism. It has been suggested rightly that somewhere in 14<sup>th</sup> century, Buddhism disappeared from Northern India. Though it lingered on for few years in the hills of Northern India, it was not able to stand and consequently the disappearance of Buddhism from the land of its birth was complete.

### **3.13 Differences between Buddhism and Jainism**

Buddhism and Jainism originated from the prevailing darkness of the time, protesting against the Vedic religion. Both the religion wanted social transformation, denied the God, the Vedas and caste system and tried to break the social barrier erected by the Brahmanas. The doctrine of non-violence, upliftment of women, social harmony and Nirvana was followed by the Buddhists as well as the Jains. It is no wonder that both the religion has some points of resemblances. They derived their ideas from the Upanishads. Buddha and Mahavira belonged to princely classes and started their revolt from Eastern India. They contributed to the rise of revolutionary anti-Brahmanical creeds and opposed to sacrifices, dogmas, superstitions and rituals of Vedic Hinduism. They were also vehemently against the animal sacrifices. Both the religion in their philosophic concepts were indebted to the sankhya philosophy. Both made the doctrine of Karma in former lives as the central point of teaching. They stressed for Nirvana, which could be achieved by purity of thought, word and deed. Both propounded a moral code of conduct for a better life and emphasised the necessity of living a hard life in order to attain Nirvana. They denounced the Vedas and preached their doctrines in the language of the people.

Inspite of a few similarities between the two creeds, the differences between them can be easily marked. (1) The Jaina creed was an ancient creed and prevailed in India before Manavira (6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.). Thus Mahavira did not found a new religion. Rather he tried to introduced some reforms in Jainism and made it popular among the masses. But in case of Buddhism, it was founded by Gautama in 6<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. (2) The Jaina concept of the soul differed from that of the Buddhists. The Jainas believe that the soul resides in plants, stone and



water, which the Buddhists reject (3) It is in the fitness of things that the Jainas practise tremendous physical suffering and rigorous asceticism to realise the truth. Mahavira even advised his followers to follow the extreme path to realise the truth. But Buddha was opposed to it and prescribed a “middle path” for his followers. (4) Mahavira advised his followers to discard the garments, which was however denounced by Gautama Buddha (5) The Jainas practise extreme form of non-violence. They even did not like the idea of killing insects or germs even. The Buddhists, though, also believed in non-violence, did not observe it in such a form (6) The Jainas tried to

destroy the evil aspects of karma by physical hard-ship and torture, following rigorous penance. However the Buddhists believe that by following the four noble truths, eight fold path and good deeds, the evil effects of karma can be extinguished. (7) In their attitude towards Hinduism, Jainism was more liberal and they never entirely cut off their relations from Hinduism. Even some time the Jainas employed Brahmanical priests for worship. But Buddhism totally severed their contacts with Hinduism. As a result, we can notice several criticisms of the Jain doctrines in the Buddhist literature (8) In their later developments, Buddhism crossed the political boundary of India and became a world religion. The Buddhist displayed a great missionary zeal to popularise it in various countries of South-East Asia. The Jainas however never attempted to get large number of converts in India or abroad (9) Last but not the least, though Buddhism has practically vanished from India, Jainism is still a strong living faith having its deep imprint in the hearts of millions of Indian people.

### **3.14 Ajivikas**

Besides Buddhism and Jainism, there was another sect known as Ajivikas in early Christian era. They were said to be Sudra Sanyasis. The sect was established by Nanda Vachcha. However the Ajivikas became prominent under the dynamic leadership of Makkhali Gosala, who was a contemporary of Mahavira Vardhaman. The Ajivikas were atheist and denied the theory of karma. They argued that “man is subject to the laws of nature; action therefore can not lead a man out of the inevitable and so a quietist view of life is desirable”. They also believed in the process of nature and spiritual evolution through ceaseless rounds of births and deaths. They laid emphasis on love of solitude, extreme asceticism, and love of austerities of all kinds. The followers of Ajivika sects were known as Ekadandins from the single staff they carried. Their main centre of activity was at Sravasti. The Ajivikas are referred to by Patanjali (150 B.C.), Pilinda-Panho (1<sup>st</sup> century A.D.), Varahamihira (6<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) and Harshacharita (7<sup>th</sup> century). They enjoyed patronage of Mauryan kings Asoka, Bindusara and Dasarath. It is to be noted here that during the Mauryan period, some caves were dedicated to the Ajivikas in the Barabar hills in Bihar.

### **3.15 Let Us Sum Up**

Thus, the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. witnessed the rise of various heterodox sects like Jainism, Buddhism, Ajivikas etc. Jainism and Buddhism have contributed immensely to the art, culture and thought of India. Their teachings have far reaching effect in the socio-cultural life of the people of India.

### **3.16 Key Words**

*Tirthankas* : Prophet (Religious preacher)

- Digambara* : Follower of a sect among the Jaina, who wear least clothes.
- Svetambar* : Follower of a sect among the Jiana, who wear white clothes.
- Hinayanist* : Follower of Hinayana, small or lesser Journey, a pejorative term used by Mahayana to denote all forms of early Buddhism that did not accept Mahayana teachings.
- Mahayanist* : Follower of Mahayana; Great vehicle; name of one of the major divisions of Buddhism, where in persons strive to become a Buddha rather than an arhat.

### 3.17 Check Your Learning

1. Describe the philosophy of Jainism? What are the contributions of Jainism to Indian culture?
2. Describe the teachings of Gautam Buddha? What are the causes of the spread of Buddhism?
3. What are the contributions of Buddhism to Indian culture?
4. Write short notes on:
  - a) Eight fold path,
  - b) Decline of Buddhism,
  - c) Ajivikas

### 3.18 Suggested Readings

- Arnold, Sir E. : *The light of Asia*
- Bapat, P. V. : *2500 years of Buddhism*
- Dutt, Nalinaksha : *Early History of the spread of Buddhism*
- Saunders, K. : *The story of Buddhism*
- Stevenson, S. : *The Heart of Jainism*
- Shah, C. J. : *Jainism in Northern India*

### 3.19 Hints/Answers to Questions in Check Your Progress

#### Check Your Progress-I

1. Ishabnath is the founder of Jainism.
2. Vardhawan Mahavir belonged to Inatrika clan.
3. Tri-Ratna were Right – faith, Right knowledge and Right action.
4. Ancient kings like Candragupta Maurya, Kharavela and rulers of Vallabhi, Gujurat, patronised Jainism.

#### Check Your Progress-II

1. The Rummiendei Ashokan pillar refers to the birth place of Gautam Buddha.
2. Gautama Buddha belonged to the Sakya clan
3. The four noble truths are: life is suffering, suffering is due to desire; suffering ends with end of desires, and desires end with noble thoughts and actions.

4. The noble eight fold paths are Right views, Right aspirations, Right speech, Right conduct, Right livelihood, Right effort, right mindfulness and Right contemplation.
5. Important causes of decline of Buddhism are loss of Royal patronage, defects of Buddhism, Degeneration of the Buddhist samgha, Muslim invasions and persecution, Brahmanical revival etc.

## Unit–IV

### MAURYAN EMPIRE

#### Structure

- 4.0 Objective
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Chandragupta Maurya
  - 4.2.1 Origin and Ancestry
  - 4.2.2 Early Career
  - 4.2.3 Wars and Conquests
  - 4.2.4 Estimate
  - 4.2.5 Administration
- 4.3 Bindusara
- 4.4 Accounts of Megasthenese
- 4.5 Kautilya's Arthashastra
- 4.6 Asoka
  - 4.6.1 Early Career
  - 4.6.2 Wars and Conquests
  - 4.6.3 Asoka's Administration
  - 4.6.4 Asoka's Dhamma
  - 4.6.5 Edicts of Ashoka
- 4.7 Mauryan Art and Architecture
- 4.8 Asoka's place in History
- 4.9 Decline of the Maurya Empire
- 4.10 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.11 Key Words
- 4.12 Check Your Learning
- 4.13 Suggested Readings
- 4.14 Hints/Answers to Questions in Check Your Progress

#### 4.0 Objectives

The objective of this Unit is to acquaint the students to understand the history and culture of the Mauryan Period. At the same time it throw light on the exploits of Chandragupt Maurya, policies of Ashoka and causes of the decline of the Mauryan empire.

#### 4.1 Introduction

The advent of the Mauryas ushered in a new era in the political and cultural history of India. It was in this period, that the whole of India was politically united under an umbrella. According to V.A. Smith, "The advent of the Mauryan dynasty marks the passage from darkness to light for the historian. Chronology suddenly becomes definite, almost precise, a huge empire springs into existence unifying the innumerable fragments of distracted India. The foundation of the Mauryan empire is of immense significance, because it was achieved against formidable difficulties created by the establishment of a foreign rule in the country as a consequence of

Alexander's victorious campaigns in the Punjab during the period of two years, 325-327 BC. with the coming of the Mauryas the historical scene is illuminated by a relative abundance of evidence from a variety of sources. The Mauryans adopted an imperial system, an uniform system of administration, encouraged the movement of people and goods and patronized a punch-marked coins in exchange transaction and the projection of a new ideology. Infact, the concept of emergence of empire in India stated with the Mauryas. Credit goes to Chandragupta Maurya for the establishment of Mauryan rule, which reached pinnacle of glory due to the untiring efforts of the great Asoka.

## **4.2 Chandra Gupta Maurya (322 – 298 Bc)**

Chandra Gupta Maurya was the founder of Mauryan dynasty of Magadha. After the invasion of Alexander on India, the Nanda rulers were ruling in Magadha. They were oppressive rulers, not liked by the people. At this juncture, Chandra Gupta appeared in the political arena of India, successfully liberated the North-West India from the yoke of the foreign rule and freed the people of the east from the unpopular hands of the Nandas. He, for the first time in ancient Indian history translated the dream of political unification of India to a reality.

The sources, which give an idea about the career and achievements of Chandragupta are varied. The Arthasastra of Kautilya, writings of Megasthenese known as 'Indika', writings of many Greek historians like Arrian, strabo, Plutarch, Justin, the Puranas the Buddhist texts (Mahavamsa and Dipavamsa) and the Jaina evidences are trustworthy accounts of the rule of Chandragupta Maurya. The Junagarh Rock inscription of Rudradamana of 150 AD also gives an idea of Chandragupta's reign.

### **4.2.1 Origin and Ancestry**

Chandragupta belonged to a Maurya family. But there is no unanimity among historians about the origin or ancestry of Chandragupta. The Visnu Purana says that Chandragupta had a Sudra origin that is of lower origin. The classical writers tell us that "he was born in humble life but was promoted to aspire to royalty by an omen" . The Jaina tradition also tell us that Chandragupta was not born in purple but grew to be manhood among peacock tamers, But the Buddhist texts point in uncertain times to the Kshtriya origin of Chandragupta. There is good reason to believe that Chandragupta bore Kshatriya blood of the Moriya clan.

### **4.2.2 Early Career**

Since his childhood Chandragupta was an adventurer. Born posthumously, he was adopted by cowherd for safety. The cowherd sold him to a hunter who engaged him to tend cattle. As a boy, he held mock courts to dispose 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 to give education and training. Chandragupta's youth was spent in Taxila. Justin writes that "India after the death of Alexander had shaken, as it were the yoke of servitude from its neck and put his governors to death. The author of this liberation was Sandrocottas (Chandragupta)". He also points out the meeting of Chandragupta with Alexander, the great and Chandragupta's idea to find a new

sovereignty. It also describes how Chandragupta approached Alexander seeking his help for a political career but could not succeed. He then arranged a band of mercenaries, trained them and plotted the assassination of Greek Governors in the North-Western India and led a war of liberation against the Greek rule and achieved success.

### **4.2.3 Wars and Conquests**

#### **War of Liberation against the Greeks**

The task of liberating the land of five rivers (Punjab) from the yoke of Macedonian rule was not an easy job for Chandragupta. The satraps of Alexander were ruling in different parts of North-West. The local people as a whole were against the foreign rule. The murder of the Greek satraps like Nicanor and Philip confirmed the under current of Indian protest against the foreign rule. Chandragupta took full advantage of the situation. He raised an army for the war of liberation. In this, he was assisted by the hill tribes of North-West, who did not relish the Greek rule by 321BC. Chandragupta conquered the Sindh province from the Greeks. Chandragupta also said to have liberated Punjab from the Greek hands. Justin writes that Chandragupta carried the war of liberation by exterminating the prefects of Alexander. Chandragupta at first conquered Punjab up to the Jhelum river and later on extended up to the Indus. Having liberated that part of India Chandragupta used it as a spring board for war against the Nandas.

#### **Overthrow of the Nandas**

Chandragupta was a great strategist before launching an attack on the powerful Nanda Empire. He had to weigh carefully its relative strength and weakness. At that time Dhana Nanda, the last Nanda king was unpopular among his subjects on account of his low origin and policy of extortion. Prevailing discontent against Nanda rule thus created a favourable atmosphere. Chandragupta assisted by Kautilya alias Chanakya first conquered the outlying areas of the Nanda Empire before having a direct confrontation. The text Milindapanho refers to a ghastly and devastating war in between the Nanda and the Mauryas. It is told that two kotis of soldiers, 10,000 elephants, 1 lakh of horses and 5,000 charioteers' were killed in the battlefield. The Nandas were defeated. The city of Pataliputra was seized till Dhana Nanda surrendered. Chandragupta conquered Magadha and laid the foundation of the Mauryan rule. Visakhadatta's drama, Mudraraksasa deals with the overthrow of the Nandas by Chandragupta Maurya.

#### **War with Seleucus Nikator**

The victory over Dhana Nandas made Chandragupta the overlord of a vast empire and a large army. His territory was extended from the Punjab to Bengal. Emboldened by this success he decided to extend his territory further. In 305 BC., Seleucus Nikator, a former general of Alexander the Great crossed the river Indus with an intention to recover the lost portion of India which Alexander conquered in 326 BC. Plutarch tells us that not long afterwards, Chandragupta presented Seleucus with 500 elephants and overran and subdued the whole of India with an army of 5,00,000". This shows that the expedition of Seleucus was a failure and forced Seleucus to sign a treaty with Chandragupta. According to the treaty, Seleucus handed over Aria, Arachosia, Gedrosia, and Paraponesadai ( Heart, Kandahar, Beluchistan and Kabul ) to Maurya emperor in exchange of a valuable gift of 500 war elephants. According to Arrian, there was matrimonial alliance between the two kings. It is presumed that Seleucus's daughter was married to

Chandragupta. As a mark of friendship and good relation, Seleucus sent Megasthenes, as ambassador to Pataliputra.

### **Conquest of Western India**

Chandragupta extended his dominion further by conquest of Western India. In western India, he conquered and annexed the province of Saurashtra or Kathiawar. This is known from Junagarh rock inscription of Rudradaman. The inscription records that Puspagupta was Governor of Chandragupta in Saurashtra, who constructed the lake Sudarshana. It is known from the Jain records that Chandragupta also annexed the neighbouring province of Avanti and captured its capital Ujjaini. The discovery of Asokan rock edict in Sopara in Konkan region of Maharashtra proves that Chandragupta also conquered Maharashtra region.

### **Conquest of South India**

With regard to the conquest of South India by Chandragupta, the historians are divided in their opinion. H.C. Roychoudhary believes that the Nandas conquered South India which Chandragupta, inherited. V.A. Smith credits Bindusara with the conquest. But Jain tradition associates Chandragupta with south India. From the Asokan inscriptions found at Maski and Yerragudi it is generally believed that Chandragupta had conquered South India since Asoka refers to the Cholas, Pandyas, Satyaputras and Keralaputras as southern neighbours. He is also said to have conquered Andhra and Karnataka provinces. It is also known that in the later part of his career he became the chief disciple of the Jain saint Bhadrabahu and died at Sravana Belgola by starving himself to death in typical Jain tradition.

Chandragupta Maurya's empire was, therefore, quite extensive. Both Plutarch and Justin refer to him as the lord of India. His empire had extended from Afghanistan in the North-West, Gujarat in the West, Karnataka in the south and Bengal in the East.

#### **4.2.4 Estimate**

The career of Chandragupta is of a fascinating saga of the rise of a self-reliant youth to the position of the liberator of India from foreign yoke. By rising from an obscure position, he founded a great empire in India. His achievement have been praised even by the classical writers. The spirit of the intrepidity and adventure marked his whole life and brought him success. He won a vast empire by the edge of the sword. His military power over shadowed the great Nandas and created fear in the hearts of the Greek Satraps of Punjab and Sindh. His empire extended from the Hindukush in the North to Mysore in the south. During his period, the dream of political unification of India became a reality. H.C. Raychoudhury has remarked "Chandragupta Maurya is the first historical founder of a great empire in India". He gave stability to the government by framing an efficient civil administration. His sense of beauty and love of nature is revealed from the well decorated palace, with parks and tanks and the maintenance of tamed wild animals and birds. He also patronized literary and cultural developments. The authors of Arthashastra (Kautilya or Chanakya) and Kalpasutra (Bhadrabahu) adorned his court. These achievements fairly entitle Chandragupta as one of the greatest kings of ancient India.

#### **4.2.5 Administration**

Chandragupta Maurya organised a sound system of administration. From Kautilya's Arthashastra and Megasthenes' "Indika", we gather detailed account of the Government. Kautilya assisted the emperor in devising reforms to improve the efficiency of the Government.

Chandragupta was a benevolent despot. His government was monarchical in nature. The king was the pivot of Maurya administration. 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 and social usage. The Prince had to obtain proper education to become a king.

The Maurya administration was influenced by the Persian system. The king was powerful and hardworking. From the account of Megasthenes and the Arthashastra we learn that the king sat in the court for the whole day to administer justice. As the chief executive king ambassador adequate precautions were taken to ensure safety of the king.

The empire was divided into a number of provinces ruled by viceroys appointed from among the princes. The Mauryan province was divided into Uttarapatha (Capital at Takshasila), Avanti (Capital at Ujjain), Prachi (Capital at Pataliputra), Kalinga (Capital at Tosali and Somapa) and Dakshinapatha. Different officials were appointed to run the administration in each province. Rajuka was one of the highest class of provincial officials.

Arthashastra mentions about the council of Ministers who assisted the king in day to day administration. The Sachivas were very powerful. They and the Amatyas were powerful officers. Sachivas were sometimes promoted to the rank of Mantrins. There was a council of ministers, who advised the king in day to day affairs.

The Mauryas had a vast army. Chandragupta's army consisted of 6,00,000 infantry, 33,000 cavalry, 36,000 men with elephants and 24,000 men with 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 Boards looked after:

1. The Infantry
2. The cavalry
3. The chariot of war
4. The war-elephants
5. Transport, commissariat, provisioning
6. The army.

The war office was handled by the senapati (commander-in-chief). The army was equipped with a mobile engine which could kill hundreds of people. It is interesting to note that like modern day surgeons and nurses used to attend soldiers in the battlefield.

King was the head in the affairs of Justice. Rajuka looked after the judiciary in the province. The village tribunals were set up in large numbers to settle petty disputes. Besides, there were two classes of courts viz (i) The Dharmasthiya court and (ii) The Kantakasodhana court. These two courts were looking after all civil and fauzdari disputes.



Land Revenue formed the basis of state income. Income was derived from toll, fines, and fees for licenses for various trades. To streamline accounts there was a separate government department. Kautilya records about 30 departments each headed by a superintendent. Land was classified into 3 types agriculture, pasture and forest. Bali and Bhaga constituted king's Revenue. 1/6<sup>th</sup> of the produce was king's share of Bhaga. Bali was an additional imposition levied in some specific areas.

The system of town administration was carefully planned. Megasthenes informs that there was a town council, which functioned through six boards of committee dealing with trade and commerce, industries, collection of sales tax, entertainment of foreigners, registration of births and death, supervision and sale of manufactured articles.

There was a well organised bureaucracy, who looked after the administration. The Maurya administration was a well organised machinery geared up to promote the welfare of the people.

#### **4.3 Bindusara (298-273 BC)**

Chandragupta was succeeded by his son Bindusara. The mother of Bindusara was Durdhara. The puranas mention him under the name of Bindusara. The classical writers mentioned him under the epithets Amitraghates, a corrupt appellation of Bindusara's Sanskrit title Amitraghata or slayer of foes.

Nothing is known about his career as a conqueror. Taranath, a Buddhist historian mentions that the empire of Bindusara was extended from the eastern sea to western sea. According to the Jain traditions disturbances broke out in the Deccan but they were suppressed and Deccan was conquered. During his reign, the city of Taxila broke into revolt, but the people submitted without striking a blow.

Like his father, Chandragupta continued friendly relations with the neighbouring Greek kings and maintained the dignity and prestige of his government in his relations with Asiatic powers. He had friendly relations with the Greek King of Syria, Ptolemy II, the King of Egypt. The two ambassadors known as Decimachos and Dionysus visited the court of Bindusara. It is also known that Bindusara asked the king of Syria to buy and send sweet wine, dried figs and a sophist. The classical writers testify to Bindusara's fascination for the Greeks.

He was a strong and awakened ruler. The credit goes to Bindusara that he kept intact the vast empire which he inherited from his father. The Buddhist works refer to his patronage to Ajivaka saints. He had a taste for culture and had a special interest in philosophy.

#### **4.4 Accounts of Megasthenes**

Megasthenes lived in the court of Chandragupta Maurya as the ambassador of Greek King Seleucus. What he saw at Pataliputra during his stay has been recorded in his book 'INDIKA' though the entire book is not available, whatever is preserved, gives us a lot of information regarding the condition of India in his time.

Magasthenese writes that the Indian society was divided into seven castes. These were philosophers or Brahmanas, farmers, herdmen and hunters, merchants and artisans, soldiers, minor officials and lastly the councillors and the assessors. The philosophers were held in utmost respect and were employed by the king for religious and educational purposes. The farmers were the second caste. Their duty was to till the soil and they were exempted from military duty. The third caste consisting of herds men and hunters who kept live stock and cleared the jungle. Merchants and Artisans constituted the fourth caste and their duty was to control trade and industry. Soldiers formed the fifth class of Indian society and their occupation was to fight. Minor official's who controlled and supervised the local administration formed the sixth class. Lastly, the councilors and assessors, as heads of the department served an useful purpose in administration. He also tells us that there was no slavery in India and all the Indians were free. It is possible that Megasthenes having the Greek conception of slavery in mind, did not recognize the Indian system of slavery.

About the king, Megasthenes, writes, that the affairs of the state and imparting justice kept the king pre-occupied .But there was a constant fear of life for which he could not sleep in the same room over night, he was guarded by female sentries.

The royal palace situated at Pataliputra was well fortified. There were gardens and artificial lakes. Peacocks roamed around in the parks. The palace had a many pillared halls. The city of Pataliputra was 9 miles long and 11/2 mile broad. The palace was surrounded by a wooden wall with 64 gates and 500 towers. Beyond the wall, there was a deep ditch to prevent trespassers entering the city on any easy assault. The administration of Pataliputra was in the hands of a commission consisting of 30 members, divided into six boards of five members each. These boards looked after the industrial arts and development of arts and crafts, foreigners, registration of birth and deaths, trade and commerce, supervision of manufactures, collection of taxes on sales etc.

Speaking about the military administration, Megasthenese writes that six boards each consisting of five members managed it. The board looked after six different branches of the Army like infantry, elephants, cavalry, navy, chariots and the transport.

About the people, Megasthenese writes that they were disciplined and believed in truth and virtues. The Indians were ignorant of the art of writing. They lived peacefully and happily. They were not allowed to marry out of their own caste. The laws of India were very simple and the people seldom went to courts. They had high regard for beauty and did their utmost to improve their looks. They believed in the theory of transmigration of soul. He also tells us that the Indians were an indigenous race and did not come from outside.

#### **4.5 Kautilya's Arthashastra**

The author of Arthashastra was Kautilya alias Vishnugupta . He has been identified with Chanakya, the crafty minister of Chandragupta Maurya . His book 'Arthashastra' is a standard work on ancient Indian polity. It gives the opinions of many earlier authors on polity. His book provides a detailed guide line for a successful kingship.

Kautilya tells us that the king should attain the virtue of humility. He should be highly qualified with indepth knowledge in various fields. He should have full control over his six senses like lust, anger, greed, vanity, pride and pleasure. He should work untiringly to promote the welfare of his people. His motto should be “in the happiness of his people lies his happiness”. As a Chakravarti, the king should be an imperialised, ever interested in expanding his kingdom. His army should be efficient and treasury always full. For attaining victory, he should take resort to diplomacy and intrigue. He should be assisted by ministers as the advisors. The help and advice of his wise ministers would keep the king in right track. The king however need not share sovereignty with ministers, nor was he bound to accept their advice.

Kautilya laid emphasis on an efficient system of espionage. King must maintain spies together advance information. Kautilya advised the division of empire into several small units for better government. The province should be further subdivided into districts. To run the administration of towns and cities, councilers should be appointed. Kautilya refers to 18 departments of administration. He has given rates of salaries to be paid to the various officials. He puts great emphasis on finance. He also advocated the use of torture for exorting confessions. Kautilya, considered poverty as the evil of evils. The king should, therefore, promote the economic well being of his subjects.

#### **4.6 Asoka (273 Bc To 236 Bc)**

The year 273 BC marks the beginning of a new epoch in Indian history. It witnessed the ascendance of the Magadhan throne, by Asoka Priyadarsi. Asoka was one of the greatest monarchs of history. His work for the spiritual and material welfare of the people, Buddhist religion, his conquests, administration and reforms created a special niche for Asoka in the history of the world. He left an imperishable mark on India’s history.

There are many sources for the study of Asoka’s life. The enormous volume of Buddhist literatures give an idea about his career and achievement. The Puranic sources refer to the activities of Asoka, The inscriptions of Asoka viz thirteen major edicts, pillar edicts cave edicts, minor edicts also reveal the achievement of Asok. The Buddhist art and architecture in the form of stupas, chaityagrihas and pillars speak of religious activities of Asoka.

##### **4.6.1 Early Career**

Asoka’s early career is associated with many legends. His accession to the throne was probably not a smooth affair. Under mysterious circumstances, his coronation was delayed by four years. The Ceylonese chronicles refers to the story of struggle among the brothers of Asoka for succession. Whatever may be the cause, Asoka ascended the throne in 269 BC and assumed the title of Devanampriya and Priyadarshi.

##### **4.6.2 Wars and Conquests**

The records of Asoka give an idea about his imperialistic policy during his early career as a king of Magadha. Asoka followed a policy of aggressive imperialism by invading Kalinga in the ninth year of his reign that is in 261-260 BC. He completed the Kalinga campaign in the

tenth year of his reign. We get an idea about the Kalinga war in the 13<sup>th</sup> Rock edict of Asoka, found at Mansahera and Shavazgarhi, now in Pakistan.

### **Causes of the Kalingan War**

**The Political And Psychological Causes:** The Kalinga country corresponds to modern Orissa. It formed a part of the Nanda ruler of Magadha in 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. Kalinga threw the yoke of Magadha and became an independent country. Just before the time of Chandragupta Maurya. The Kalinga rulers posed a serious threat to the aggressive policy of Magadha because of its increasing military power. Pliny has told us that “Kalinga kings had 60,000 Infantry, 1000 cavalry and 700 elephants who were ready in precinct of war”. Thus a sort of fear was in the minds of the Magadha rulers towards Kalinga. Asoka probably thought that attack was the best part of valour and thus went for a war against Kalinga.

**Commercial Causes:** The material prosperity of Kalinga was another important cause. Kalinga at that time had commercial relation with Malay, Java and Ceylon. It had monopoly over both the land and sea routes. It was also a powerful maritime area, which was likely to provide vast wealth to Magadha. Magadha being a land locked empire wanted to enhance its trade and commerce through the land and sea routes to south India. As Kalinga obstructed that route, hence Asoka led the campaign against Kalinga.

**Miscellaneous Causes:** The Buddhist historian Lama Taranath has also quoted some Buddhist traditions of later period which refers to the cause of the Kalinga war. It is told by Taranath that the beauty of finance of prince of Kalinga a daughter of fishermen attracted Asoka and hence to achieve her, he started the Kalinga war. Another Buddhist tradition refers to the Naga people of Kalinga who snatched away many jewels and wealth from the treasury of Magadha. Asoka wanted to take revenge against the people of Kalinga. Infact, these traditions are not authentic sources of history. There is no doubt that Kalinga was both strategically and economically important to Magadha.

In 261 BC at the eighth regnal year, Asoka invaded the powerful kingdom and conquered it amidst great slaughter and devastation. The Rock edict XIII at Mansahera and Shahbahgarhi describes the horror of Kalinga war in which 100,000 men were slain, 150,000 were deported and many more died. Besides, such huge loss of life there was famine pestilence and separation of families causing unusual social rapture.

**Results:** The conquest of Kalinga was a great landmark in the history of Magadha and India. Asoka was emotionally upset at the horrible consequences of the war. He therefore, eschewed war for ever as a state policy. He practiced Dharmavijaya rather the digvijaya. He sought for mental peace. The teachings of Lord Buddha attracted him. Asoka embraced Buddhism and became a devout Buddha. The conversion of Asoka to Buddhism had great impact on Indian history and culture. Asoka became a patron of Buddhism. He reformed the pattern of Mauryan administration, following the fundamental principles of Buddhism. He patronized Buddhist art, architecture, philosophers, learning making Buddhism a world religion. Through his efforts Buddhism was popularized in India and abroad. Thus, the Kalinga war of Asoka heralded a new era in the life of Asoka and the Buddhist religion.

### **4.6.3 Asoka's Administration**

Asoka inherited a vast Maurya empire as the legacy of his grandfather Chandragupta. The conquest of Kalinga in 261 BC closed the chapter of aggressive imperialism in the life of Asoka. The horrors of Kalinga war resulted in profound changes in the outlook of his government. He adopted the idea of benevolent despotism and his administration was geared up to promote the welfare of the people.

Asoka appointed the yuvaraj , the crown prince as the head of his provinces. The princes were given responsibilities as the viceroys of outlying provinces. Kalinga constituted the fifth province of the empire with headquarters at Tosali and Samapa, other provinces were uttarapatha, Avanti, Prachi and Dakshinapatha. The provincial Governors were known as pradisikas.

Asoka created many new officers for the welfare of his people. These officers were designated as Rajuka, Yuta and Mahamatra. The Rajukas had special powers and would give awards and punishments. He had ordered the Rajukas to look after the people, as a nurse takes care of a children. The Yutas and Upayatas were in charge of public treasuries. They managed royal properties, received payment and maintained accounts of expenditure. The Mahamatra had a pivotal role to play. They headed various department of the states. The Dharma Mahamatras were appointed to visit nooks and corners of the empire to protect people against tyranny and mal administration. They also promoted the welfare of the common people, destitutes and old persons. Their main work was to ensure moral and spiritual upliftment of people. In the Kalinga edict II Asoka declared "All men are my children and just as I desire for my children that they may enjoy every kind of prosperity and happiness , both in this world and in the next , so also the same for all men".

As a wise administrator he followed a policy of conciliation rather than war . To the Atabikas of Kalinga, he issued a stern warning. He cautioned them not to take advantage of his policy of peace. He even warned them that he would tolerate up to a particular limit. This shows that he was a good administrator.

The welfare of women was also taken care of Asoka created a separate department for women known as Stri-Adhyaksha Mahamatra. He also appointed district and many city officials. The dutas or ambassadors and spies were also engaged. One of the novel schemes introduced by Asoka in administration was the system of tours of officers. The officers would go tours to different parts of province to inspect the administration, propagate Dharma and to enhance the moral and material progress of the subjects. Asoka took special care in the administration of the people.

### **4.6.4 Asoka's Dharmma**

Dhamma is the Prakrit version of the Sanskrit word, 'Dharma' meaning religion. There is a controversy regarding the nature of Asoka's Dhamma. H.C.Roychoudhury and D.R. Bhandarkar believed that the Dharma of Asoka was nothing but Buddhism. K.M.Panikar, on the other hand, opines that Asoka religion and Hinduism are one and the same. For R. Davis, it was not a particular religion but principle of duties. However, that Asoka preached may be regarded

as the essence of all religions, the real ethics, virtues and morality. His real aim was to elevate mankind to a higher level of thought and action. R.C. Majumdar has rightly observed, "The aspect of dharma which he (Asoka) emphasised was a code of morality rather than a system of religion." The policy of Dhamma has been described in the Asokan edicts in great details.

Kalinga war was a turning point in the career of Asoka. Asoka was originally a follower of Brahmanical religion. But after the Kalinga war, he embraced Buddhism. Asoka's Buddhism was based upon ethical code. The Buddhist Dhamma means-Right thought, Right speech, Right action, Right means of livelihood, Right exertion, Right remembrances and Right meditation. This was known as the Arya Astanga marga (Eight fold path). Even the monks at the time of their initiation were taking a vow not to kill or injure living beings, not to steal, not to lie and to abstain from liquor, dancing, singing and receiving money. Asoka adopted this Dhamma for himself and prescribed it for others.

Asoka's Dhamma included the laws of eternal and universal Dharma. He preached; "obedience must be rendered to mother and father, like wise to elders; kindness must be shown towards animals; truth must be spoken; moral virtues must be practiced. In the same way the pupil must show reverence to the master, and one must behave in a suitable manner towards relatives". In this pillar edict, Asoka declared; "Happiness in this world and in the other world is difficult to secure without great love of morality, careful examination, great obedience and great fear of sin".

Asoka's Dhamma emphasised on purity and simplicity of life, on truth and restraints. He was opposed to ceremonies and sacrifices. He laid emphasis on self introspection as a remedy against sinful life.

The spirit of non-violence had a great impact on Asoka's policy of Dhamma. In the Pillar edict V, he has given a list of animals whose killing was prohibited. Cattle and beasts of burden could not be killed. He gave up eating flesh and restricted its consumption in the royal palace. He took interest in providing medical care to animals in his empire and the neighbouring countries. Extravagance in religious practices was deplored by him. He also tried to educate his people regarding the evils of superstition.

Religious toleration was an important aspect of Asoka's Dhamma. He himself gave patronage to different religions. He asked the people not to harbour ill feelings for other religions. He believed that the essence of all religions were the same. He emphasised on religious toleration for harmony in social life. This reflects the broad outlook and tolerance of Asoka.

The administration of Asoka reflects his principles of Dhamma. His policy of Dhamma was, therefore, an embodiment of Asoka's ideal of kingship. In his special Kalinga edict I Asoka declared "All men are my children, and just as I desire for my children that they should obtain welfare and happiness both in this world and the next, so do I desire the same for all men" Asoka, therefore, established a paternal kingship as a part of the policy of Dhamma. His administration was benevolent in nature.

Asoka also wanted to create a welfare state. His aim was to promote social and spiritual well being of his subjects. That's why he opened medical centres for men and animals,

constructed roads, and wells and planted trees for the comfort of the travellers. He appointed special class of officers to look into the material and spiritual benefit of the people. He appointed Dharmma Mahamatra and Yutas, who were directly responsible for the working of Dharma. They enjoyed the power to reward and punish. These officials worked all over the empire for the religious, moral, social and economic welfare of the subjects. Even Asoka introduced Dhamma yatras as a major aspect of the policy of Dhamma. Dhamma yatras were tours of the kings and officers in the empire in the promotion of Dhamma. The foreign policy of Asoka was a projection of his policy of Dhamma. He gave up Digvijaya and resorted to Dhamma Vijaya. His policy consisted sending missionaries and Dhamma Mahamatra to foreign lands for the spread of Dhamma and doing philanthropic works. They carried the message of non-violence and measures for the relief of all suffering beings.

Last but not the least Asoka patronized Buddhism. He gave liberal donation for the construction of stupas, viharas and pillars. Tradition accounts that he constructed as many as 84,000 stupas. During his reign, the third Buddhist council was also held at Pataliputra. Asoka himself in his religious pilgrimages, visited many important places, associated with Gautama Buddha, planted royal edicts and appointed higher officials to create a new society and state based on the ideals of Buddhism. His untiring efforts made Buddhism an international religion.

Thus, the Dhamma of Asoka was nothing but a unifying force to unite together various elements of the empire. His motto was 'keep the universe intact and happy'. And here lies the greatness of Asoka and the key to his success as an ideal Indian king.

#### **4.6.5 Edicts of Asoka**

The edicts of Asoka are one of the most valuable archaeological sources of ancient India. They are also known as Dhamma – Lipi, as the edicts provide the contents of Asoka's Dhamma. The edicts of Asoka can be classified as:

- (a) Fourteen Rock Edicts (b) Two Barabar cave inscription (c) Minor Rock Edicts and (d) Seven pillar Edicts and (e) Minor pillar edicts.

Here it may be mentioned that most of the edicts of Asoka contained the name of Piyadasi. It was only in 1915 that the name of Asoka was discovered in Maski record and thus the problem of identity of Piyadasi of inscription with Asoka of Buddhist sources and Asoka Vardhana of the puranas was solved. The edicts of Asoka are written in Brahmi, Kharosthi, Greek and Aramic script. However, Asoka generally used Pali language and Brahmi script for preaching Dhamma. In the North Western frontier, Kandahar and in various parts of Afghanistan edicts of Asoka written in Greek and Aramic scripts are noticed. J. Prinsep was the first scholar to decipher the Brahmi script in 1838 A.D. It is to be noted here that the Asokan inscription are called edict because it signifies the command of a legal overlord, breach of which entails penalties. It is believed that Asoka might have influenced by the edicts of Darius, the Persian king a throughout his empire in planting his edicts.

The Barabar cave inscription of Bihar are dedicated to the Ajivikas, revealing the catholicity and religious toleration of Asoka. Other cave edicts are also noticed at Kandahar, Raghman near Jalalabad.

The edicts of Asoka engraved on minor rocks or stones are called minor rock edicts. The minor rock edicts (M.R.E) of Asoka have been discovered from various parts of India. These are noticed at Bairat ( Jaipur), Sahasram ( Bihar ), Rupnath (M.P) , Maski, Lalkigandu, Gavimath ( Hyderabad ), Brahmagiri, Siddapura, Jatinga and Ramesvara ( Mysore ), Yerragudi ( Kurnool ), Sannati, Bahapur ( Near Delhi ). The minor Rock edicts mainly describe the relationship of Asoka with the Buddhist samgha and the places of pilgrimage made by him. These edicts also give an idea regarding the personal conviction of Asoka in Buddhism. It is to be mentioned here that Asoka declared his faith in Buddhist sangha openly in the unique Bhabru edict. Even in kandahar, Bilingual rock inscriptions are discovered of Asoka's period in which Greek as well as Aramic scripts are noticed. Other inscription of Asoka are also noticed at pangurari Gujjara (M.P) , Pataliputra and Rajula Mandagiri.

The fourteen Rock edicts are noticed at Girnar ( Gujarat ) kalsi (In Dehradun U.P ), Sopara ( In Thana District of Bombay), Yerragudi ( in the Kurnool district of Andra Pradesh ) , Mansehra ( near Abbotabad ), Shabazgarhi (near Peshwar ), Dhauli and Jaugada ( Orissa ). These rock edicts provide an idea about the principles of Government of Asoka, besides throwing light on Asoka's Dhamma. All these edicts are confined to the remote frontier province which were under the vicerorys of Asoka. Most of the 14 Rock Edicts are written in Brahmi script. However, the edicts of Mansehra and Shahbazgarhi, found in North-West frontier of India are inscribed in Kharosthi script which is written from right to left.

In rock edict (R.E) I Asoka prohibited killing of animals for sacrifices. R.E II refers to Asoka's philanthropic and humanitarian activities. R.E - III throws light on the doctrine of toleration to Brahmanas, Sramanas, Nirganthas and Ajivikas. R.E - IV gives an idea of Dhamma Ghosa or sound of Dharma in place of the Bheri ghosa or sound of the bheri. Asoka also said to have claimed that his Dhamma has enhanced the moral and spiritual life of the people. R.E. – V refers to the appointment of Dhamma Mahamatras and their duties. In R.E - VI Asoka declared to meet the people's grievances every where, whether in the harem or the orchard. He declared that "there was no higher than doing one's duty to the people". R.E-VII enjoins toleration for all sects and urged the people to follow self restrain. RE-VIII gives an idea of theDhamma yatra of Asoka in a place of vihara yatras or pleasure or hunting tours. It also says that Asoka repaired the 'Sambodha', meaning 'Bodhgaya' where Buddha got enlightenment. R.E.-IX of Asoka upholds the value of Dhamma Mangala in comparison to ordinary mangals, The edict also laid down la code of moral and social duties. R.E-X highlights the glory which can be attained by performing the principles of Dhamma. R.E-XI refers to the gift of Dhamma and practice of non-violence by abstaining from killing animals and non-injury to livings. R.E-XII pleads toleration among different sect, while in R.E-XIII Asoka repeats many of the principles announced in other edicts. R.E-XIV gives an out line of the edicts which Asoka caused to be inscribed throughout the country.

Besides the above 14 Rock edicts, two special R.E are noticed at Dhauli and Jaugada in Orissa. The separate R.E –I was inscribed at Dhauli near Bhubaneswar, on the surabha Parvata. This place was known as Tosali during the period of Asoka . The separate R.E-II was inscribed at Jaugada in modern Ganjam district of Orissa, on the Khapimgala Parvata (hill) and the place was known as Samapa during Soka period. In both the edicts, edicts XI, XII and XIII are not inscribed and in place of them two special edicts have been engraved. The two S.R.E of kalinga (Orissa ) laid down the principles on which the newly conquered province of Kalinga was to be



governed. It refers to the policy of paternalism and order the officials for welfare and happiness of the people of the frontier. The minor pillar inscriptions are discovered at Sarnath, Sanchi and Kausambi. These inscriptions refer to penalties for schism in the church. These are also known as schism edicts. The officials of Kausambi and Pataliputra were informed so that no one is to cause dissension in the order.

The seven pillar edicts are noticed in their complete form at Topra and Meerut (now these are at Delhi) hence called Delhi-Topra and Delhi-Meerut, pillar edict. These two pillar edicts were brought from their original place to Delhi by the order of Firuz Shah Tugluq. Other pillar edicts are noticed at Allahabad, Lauriya-Araraj, Lauriya-Nandangarh and Rampaurva. It is interesting to note that in the Allahabad pillar edicts of Asoka, the record of the achievements of Samudragupta was later on incised. Besides, there are two Tarai pillar inscriptions one found at Rummindei in Nepal and the other at Nigliva in the Nepalese Terain. These are dated to the 20 years after the coronation of Asoka. The Rummindei (Lumbini ) pillar edict states that Asoka visited Lumbinivana and worshipped the spot where Buddha was born and installed a memorial pillar. Like that the Nigliva pillar edict refers to the interest of Asoka in Buddhism and states that Asoka increased the stupa of Buddha konakamana to double its size at Nigalisagar (Nigliva) and came in person and worshipped it. Besides, the inscriptions at mahstangarh in Bengal and sohagaura near Gorakhpur (U.P) also belongs to the Mauryan period. These two Mauryan inscriptions are concerned specially with measures to ameliorate famine condition in the Ganges valley.

Thus the edicts to Asoka are the singular and most important source of the reign of Asoka. The administration, religion, personal qualities and achievements of Asoka are reflected here. These edicts also describes the political, social economic and religious condition of the then India. India's relation with far off countries are also highlighted. The problem of chronology of Asoka's reign is also solved. In short, we can judge the greatness of Asoka from his edicts.

#### **4.7 Mauryan Art and Architecture**

The Mauryan art and architecture inaugurated a new era in the history of art in ancient India. The Mauryan art was urban in character and is designated as court art by art historian like Prof. Havell. The art was individualistic in nature. The Mauryan rulers for the first time introduced the use of stone for art and architecture in place of wood. However, the spirit of Mauryan art was always Indian. Mauryan art can be studied in:

(i). A series of edicts on rock (ii) A number of stupas (iii) Monolithic pillars (iv) Group of rock out chambers (v) Remaining of vast palace (vi) Mauryan pottery, terracottas and other sculptures.

Asoka inscribed a series of stone edicts. Among them the S.R.E at Dhauri, 14 R.E at Kalsi and the Girnar rock inscription have representation of elephant probably signifying the birth of Buddha. Asoka is also credited to have built 84,000 Buddhist stupas . However, we are certain that during the period of Asoka the sanchi stupa was constructed and stone was used in it. Infact a stupa is a solid domical structure of brick or stone, resting on a round base and is surmounted with a shaft and an umbrella, the symbol of spiritual sovereignty, sometimes surrounded by a plain or ornamented stone railing having one or more gateways. The monolithic pillar (single stone pillar) are the best specimens of Asokan art. The monolithic pillar known as lats, were set up by Asoka in those places which were sacred to Buddhism. These pillars generally made of spotted red and white sand stone and chunar sand stone are highly polished.

Each pillar weighed about 50 tonne and was about 15 metres high. These free standing pillars have three parts the prop under the foundation, the shaft and the capital. Over the capital, can be noticed the abacus over which some Buddhist symbols and animals like elephant, horse, bull, lion are noticed. Besides, a group of 7 rock cut chambers are excavated during Mauryan period – 4 on Barabara hills and 3 on Nagarjuni hills near Gaya in Bihar. These rock cut caves also required patient skill and infinite labour and were meant to be residence for monks. A few remains of a wooden Mauryan palace are unearthed by Dr. Spooner in 1910 from the Kumrahar Excavation, near Patna. However, most of the noble buildings of the Mauryan epoch have utterly perished.

The examples of Mauryan sculptures are noticed in the majestic animal figures on Asokan pillar, like those of lion, elephant, bull, horse etc. The yaksha statues discovered at Didarganj, parkham (near Mathura), Yaksi statue from patna, two stone images of Tirthankaras from Lohanipur, reveal the indigenous technique of Mauryan art. Here it may be mentioned that the beautiful and nicely executed Northern Black polished ware (N.B.P.W) terracottas and silver punchmarked coins of Mauryan period reflects the sophisticated as well as folk art of the period.

#### **4.8 Asoka's Place in History**

Historians have showered praises upon Asoka for the rare contributions he made to the history of mankind. H.G. Wells writes. "Amidst tens and thousands of names of monarchs that crowd the column of history the name of Asoka shines and shines almost alone a star" from Volga to Japan his name is still honoured. China, Tibet and even India preserve the tradition of his greatness.

Asoka's claim to greatness lies in championing the causes of peace and non-violence and his sincere concern for the welfare of living beings. He was the only monarch in ancient history who gave up war after victory and since then devoted himself to the principles and ideals of Buddhism. Asoka was a great conqueror and administrator. He followed the policy of *divijaya* in his early career. But after the Kalinga war, realizing the futility of war he took shelter in the bliss of Buddhism. He introduced a series of administrative reforms for the welfare of his subjects. He treated the subjects as his own children. He issued warning against negligence in the welfare of the people. He appointed Dhamma Mahamatras to ensure public welfare and spiritual upliftment. In fact, his administration was paternal and humanitarian. His motto was doing "Maximum good to maximum people".

Asoka was particular in the moral progress of his subjects. He established many philanthropic institutions, provided roads, rest houses and medical facilities. He was both an idealist and practical Monarch. He himself followed the ideals of Buddhism. He himself gave up hunting and eating flesh. His twin policies consisted of Dhammaghosa and Dhamma vijaya.

Though a devout Buddhist, Asoka was a champion of secularism. He patronized and respected all religious faiths. He generously helped different religious sects without any discrimination. He even instructed his officials to be respectful to all creeds and sects. However, as a missionary, he dedicated to the cause of Buddhism. It was his credit to make the Buddhist religion as an international religion. He was determined to utilize Buddhist doctrine as a panacea to social evil. His edicts emphasised on morality and ethics.

In practice and theory in thought and action, Asoka set an unprecedented example in Indian history, He was an universal monarch far ahead of all his contemporaries of the world. He was nobly, dignified and majestic. India is justifiably proud of him.

#### **4.9 Decline of the Maurya Empire**

Though Asoka had many sons namely Mahendra, Kunala, Jaluka and Tivara yet it is not exactly known as to who succeeded him as the emperor. It appears that after the death of Asoka, a civil war broke out leading to the disintegration and division of the Mauryan empire. The Puranic, Buddhist and Jaina sources give an idea of the fragmented Mauryan empire after Asoka. This state of affairs promoted indiscipline in the army. Finally, pushyamitra sunga, the commander in chief of Magadha, in a military coup murdered Brihadratha the last Maurya king in broad day light with an evil intention to usurp power. This incident took place in 187 BC bringing the rule of the Maurya dynasty to an unfortunate end.

The historians have long debated upon the causes of the decline of the Maurya Empire. The causes of downfall of the Mauryan Empire can be discussed under the following heads.

#### **Theory of Brahmanical Revolt**

Some scholars have accused Asoka bringing about the fall of the Maurya empire. According to H.P Sastri, the policies of Asoka were anti-brahmanical and created a discontentment which sapped the foundation of Mauryan empire. Sastri believed that Asoka's pro-buddhist policy and his successor's pro-jaina policy caused strong resentment strong resentment and provoked violent reaction among the brahmanas. The scholar has add used the following points in support of this theory:

1. Asoka's edict against animal sacrifices had offended the Brahmanas as a class.
2. In another edict (Brahmagiri), Asoka claimed who were regarded as Gods on earth (Brahmanas) have been reduced by him into false gods. This means that the exposed the pretensions of the Brahmanas .
3. The introduction of Danda samata (equality of punishment ) and vyavahara samata ( equality in law suits) by Asoka irrespective of caste, creed and colour was too offensive to the Brahmanas, who earlier were enjoying special previliges before .
4. The appointment of Dharma Mahapatras (superintendent of morals) directly infringed the privileges and rights of the Brahmanas.

On the above basis, pandit H.P Sastri has concluded that after the death of Asoka, the Brahmanas revolted against his weak successors. But scholars like H.C. Rayshoudhury has deeply analysed Sastri's view and concluded that the theory does not bear scrutiny. He has discarded the theory of Brahmanical revolt on the following grounds:

1. The prohibition of animal sacrifice was not necessarily an attack on the Brahmanas and their rites.
2. In brahmagiri edict, there was nothing offensive against the Brahmanas .
3. The principles of Danda Samatata and Vyavahara samata should be interpreted as uniformity in penalties and uniformity in judicial procedure, it was never against the privileges of the Brahmanas.
4. The appointment of Dharma Mahamatras did not result in the destruction upon the rights of the Brahmanas.

Thus, the theory which attributes, the decline of Mauryan Empire to a Brahmanical revolution led by Pushymitra is untenable.

### **Asoka's Non-Violent Policy**

Scholars like Bhandarkar, H.C Ray choudhury and others hold Asoka's non-violent policy as a policy of state and the ideal fall of the Mauryan empire. "The empire had been founded by a policy of blood and iron and could be maintained by the same policy". The moral effect of Asoka's non-violent policy was disastrous. The Hindu mind became more spiritual and created apathy to militarism, political greatness and material well being Asoka pursued the policy of Bharna Vijaya, which was politically disastrous. The army remained inactive for long twenty nine years of Asoka's reign and thus lost its skill, energy and discipline. But this theory is not supported by historian like N.K. Sastri. He pointed out that the non-violent policy of Asoka was not absolute, rather it was kept within limits. There is no evidence that Asoka diminished the strength of the army or weakened the defences of his empire. From a perusal of Asoka's inscription, it is also known that the policy of Asoka was strength with moderation.

### **Weak Successors**

The Maurya Empire was based on hereditary monarchy. It had been founded and reared up under the glorious rule of Chandragupta Maurya and Asoka . Asoka was succeeded by weak rulers whose shoulders were not broad enough to bear the burden of Mauryan state craft. "The bow of Ulysses could not be drawn by weaker hands". Besides these the weak successors had been brought up in the tradition of non-violence and Dhamma Vijaya. They had thus neither the strength nor the will to arrest the process of disintegration.

### **Partition of the Empire**

Another factor contributing to the downfall of the Maurya empire was the lack of unity among the Maurya princess and the partition of the empire. After the death of Asoka, the Maurya princes were ruling in different provinces and threw away their allegiance to the central authority and raised the standard of rebellion. It is known from Kalhana's Rajatarangini that Jalauka , one of the sons of Asoka declared himself as an independent king of Kashmir. There seems to be a partition of the empire among Dasaratha and Samprati, the two grandsons of Asoka's Virasena, apparently a Maurya prince snatched away Gandhara from the Mauraya king at pataliputra. Thus, the Maurya Empire had began to disintegrate after the death of Asoka, which helped in accelerating the process of decline.

## **Oppressive Rule and Inefficiency of Governors**

The highhandedness and inefficiency of the provincial governors was an important cause of weakening the Maury empire. The government had become thoroughly unpopular due to the oppressive rule of the governors, particularly in outlying provinces. In the reign of Bindusara, the citizens of Taxila bitterly complained against the misrule of wicked ministers. In the time of Asoka, he felt concerned about oppression in the provinces and directed his officers not to torture the people without due cause. For this purpose, he introduced rotation of officers in Tosali, Ujjain and Taxila. But all this failed to stop the oppression.

## **Rival Factions**

The rivalry in Maurya court was another cause of the weakness of the Mauryan empire. The Mauryan court and nobility had been divided into rival groups. One of them was headed by the general Pushyamitra Sunga and the other by a minister who managed to make his sons respectively the governors of Vidisa and Vidarabha. This quarrel among the faction sapped the vigour of the administration.

## **Centralised Administration**

The Mauryan administration was extremely centralized . It was directly under the control of the ruler. This necessitated a king of considerable personal ability. In such a situation, the weakening of the central control leads automatically to the weakening of the administration. Asoka's successor did not possess the ability of their ancestors and hence with the death of Asoka, there was a weak government in the centre. Again, the change of a king led to the change of officials and this was specially detrimental to the Maury empire during the period when there was rapid succession of kings after Asoka.

## **Economic Condition**

Prof. Romila Thapar is of the opinion that the Mauryan economy was one of the most important cause for its downfall. Mauryan had a vast countries, run by a number of officials. The increasing salaries of number of officials and the settlements in newly cleared lands must have strained Mauryan treasury. In later Mauryan coins that's way we find debasement of coins, having decreasing silver content. Besides, there was also a great variation in economic pattern and revenue throughout the empire. This disturbed the economic equilibrium with revenue from agrarian areas ( ganga valley ) not being sufficient to maintain the entire empire.

## **Absence of National Consciousness**

In the Maurya period, the concept of nationalhood had not yet developed. The necessity of the conception of nation or state lies in the fact that it becomes an idea above the king, the government and the social order. The absence of national consciousness can be observed from the fact that even the resistance against the Greeks was not organised. There was no fundamental unity among the people of Maurya power. At the same time, there was no representative institution to stabilize public opinion.

## Yavana Invasion

While the Maurya Empire was passing through such a critical juncture, the Greek invasion under Demetrius accelerated the fall. It is mentioned in the Gargi samhita that the Yavanas (Greeks) entered Madhyadesa and captured Pataliputra. But the yavana invasion was not of a permanent one. Still its impact destroyed the hold of the Maurya Government over the provinces particularly in the north-west and weakened the Maurya Empire.

## Coup by Pushyamitra Sunga

At this moment Pushyamitra Sunga, the commander-in-chief of the Maurya army was carefully preparing the ground of a coup d'état. By sending the army he took advantage of the prevailing chaos and assassinated his master Brihadratha at the military parade and usurped the throne, in 187 BC. With the death of Brihadratha the Maurya dynasty came to an end and a new dynasty, the Sunga dynasty was founded in the soil of Magadha.

### 4.10 Let Us Sum Up

The Maurya rule was a remarkable era in the field of polity, culture and economy of India. It witnessed tremendous outbursts in the field of art and architecture. The beautiful monuments of the period, potteries, terracottas and remains of excavated sites reveal a well developed economy. The interactions of India with the culture of Greek, Roman and Central Asia developed in this period. India was to a great extent politically unified and a vibrant Indian culture came to the forefront.

### 4.11 Key Words

<i>Dhamma</i>	:	Prakrit Version of the Sanskrit word 'Dharma' Meaning religion
<i>Edicts</i>	:	Inscriptions in the form of King's instruction, which is bounded on the subjects
<i>Brahmanical Revolt</i>	:	Revolt started by the Brahmanas

### 4.12 Check Your Learning

1. Describe the exploits of Chandragupta Maurya.
2. Give an account of Asoka's dhamma on the basis of his edicts.
3. Discuss the broad features of Mauryan administration.
4. Assess Asoka's place in the history of Ancient India
5. Write short notes on:
  - a) Arthashastra of Kautilya
  - b) Megasthenese account
  - c) Mauryan art
  - d) Asoka's Dhamma
  - e) Edicts of Asoka
  - f) Causes of Kalinga war.

#### 4.13 Suggested Readings

- Sastri, K.A Nilakanta (ed) : *The Age of the Nandas and Mauryas* (Varanasi, 1952)
- Levin, C. Bongared : *Mauryan India* (Delhi, 1985)
- Thapar, Romila : *Asoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Delhi 1997
- Thapar, Romila : *The Mauryan re-visited*, Delhi, 1998
- Bhandarkar, R.G : *A peep into the early History of India from the foundation of the Maurya Dynasty to the downfall of the Gupta Dynasty.*
- Majumdar, R.C. et al. (ed) : *The history and culture of the Indian people (the age of the imperial Unity)* Bombay, 1920 Vol-II
- Sharma, R.S. : *Material culture and social formation in Ancient India*, Delhi, 1983
- Ray, N.R. : *Maurya and Shunga Art* (Calcutta, 1945)

#### 4.14 Hints/Answers to Questions in Check Your Progress

##### Check Your Progress-I

1. Chandragupta Maurya belonged to Kshtriya blood of the Moriya clan.
2. The Nanda ruler of Magadha Dhana Nanda was defeated by Chandragupta Maurya.
3. The Greek traveller 'Megasthene' visited the court of Chandragupta Maurya.
4. Megasthenese wrote the book 'INDIKA'

##### Check Your Progress-II

1. Kautilya alias Visnugupta has been identified with Chanakya, the crafty minister of Chandragupta Maurya.
2. Kautilya wrote the book Arthasastra, which is a standard work on ancient Indian polity.
3. The result of the Kalingan war were many. Ashoka practised Dharmavijaya rather than the digvijaya. He adopted Buddhism, which had great impact on Indian history and culture.
4. Ashoka's Dhamma meant his concept of 'Dharma' meaning religion. It includes Arya Astanga marga, laws of eternal, non – violence, and universal Dharma.
5. Edicts are known as Dhamma-Lipi, as it provide the contents of Ashoka's Dhamma. These are inscriptions written on stone, which provide ideas about the administration, religion, personal qualities, achievements of Ashoka etc.

### **Check Your Progress-III**

1. Bindusara, the Mauryan ruler was the son of Chandragupta Maurya and father of king Asoka.
2. The commander-in-chief of the Mauryan army Pushyamitra Sunga killed the last Mauryan ruler Brihadratha.
3. Pushyamitra Sunga, the commander – in – chief of last Mauryan ruler, was the founder of the Sunga dynasty.
4. Prof. H.P. Sastri, the noted historian propounded the theory of Brahmanical revolt as the cause of the decline of Maurya rule in India.



## Unit-V

### POST MAURYAN PERIOD: THE SUNGAS, THE INDO GREEKS AND THE KUSHANA

#### Structure

- 5.0 Objective
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Pushyamitra Sunga
  - 5.2.1 Relation with Vidarbha
  - 5.2.2 Yavana Invasion
  - 5.2.3 Pushyamitra and Buddhism
  - 5.2.4 Successor of Pushyamitra
- 5.3 Art and Culture
- 5.4 Importance of the Sunga Period
- 5.5 The Indo-Greeks
  - 5.5.1 Early History
  - 5.5.2 Demetrious
  - 5.5.3 Successor of Demetrious
  - 5.5.4 Menander
  - 5.5.5 Successor of Menander
  - 5.5.6 Significance
- 5.6 The Kushanas
  - 5.6.1 Sources
  - 5.6.2 Early History of the Kushanas
  - 5.6.3 Kanishka-I
  - 5.6.4 Administration
  - 5.6.5 Foreign Relations
  - 5.6.6 Religion
  - 5.6.7 Learning and Literature
  - 5.6.8 Art and Architecture
  - 5.6.9 Later Kushana Rulers
- 5.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 5.8 Key Words
- 5.9 Check Your Learning
- 5.10 Suggested Readings
- 5.11 Hints/Answers to Questions in Check Your Progress

#### 5.0 Objectives

After reading this Unit you will be able to:

- know the history and culture of Post-Mauryan period upto downfall of the Kushanas
- familiarize yourself with the contribution of Sungas to Indian history and culture
- to understand the history of Indo-Greeks

- to know about contribution of Kushanas to Indian Art and Culture

## **5.1 Introduction**

After the downfall of Mauryas, the throne was occupied by Pushyamitra Sunga, the commander in chief of the last Maurya ruler, Brihadratha. Pushyamitra inaugurated the Sunga rule in 187 B.C. The Sungas were Brahmanas by caste, as referred by Panini. Pushyamitra belonged to the family of royal chaplain or Purohita of the Mauryas. The Puranic literature affords an interesting glimpse of the history of Sunga period. The Gargi Samhita, the Mahabhasya of Patanjali, the Divyadana, the Malavikagnimitram of Kalidas and the Harshacharita of Bana, the Theravali of Marutunga etc contain historical information about them. The later Sunga history is brightened by inscriptions from Ayodhya, Vidisa, and Bharhut and the coins found at Kausambi (modern Kosom,) Ayodhya, Ahichhatra and Mathura.

## **5.2 Pushyamitra Sunga**

The Puranas corroborated by the text Harshcharita provide some details of the overthrow of the Maurya power by Pushyamitra Sunga. It is told; that Pushyamitra carefully prepared the ground for a coup d'etat and assassinated the last Mauryan king at the military parade in broad daylight. After the coup d'etat, he imprisoned the minister of the Maurya king, Brihadratha. Then he appointed his own son and relatives as provincial governors. The Malavikagnimitran tells us that Agnimitra, son of Pusyamitra was appointed the governor of Vidisa. Virasena, a relative of the Sunga king was appointed frontier governor in the district Normada in the Deccan. Another relative of Pushamitra became the governor of Kosala. Scholars believe that the success of Pushyamitra's coup de tat; was due in large measure to popular disaffection which enfeebled the last of the Mauryas when he could not protect the empire against the Greek onslaught.

### **5.2.1 Relation with Vidarbha**

The foundation of a new kingdom in the Deccan i.e. in Vidarbha synchronized with the establishment of the Sunga rule of Pataliputra. Its ruler Yajna Sena is represented as a relative of the minister of the Mauryan emperor and thus a natural enemy of the family of Pushyamitra. In the confusion following Brihadratha's murder and the imprisonment of the minister, Yajna Sena declared his independence. It is further stated that Madhavasena, a cousin of Agnimitra, on his way to Vidisa was captured by Yajnasena, was kept in custody. Agnimitra at once called upon Yajnasena for his release. The Vidarbha king promised to surrender him on the condition that his brother in law, the Mauryan, imprisoned by Pushyamitra, should be released. This infuriated Agnimitra who ordered Virasena to invade Vidarbha. The Sunga army advanced upto varada (modern Wardha). Yajnasma submitted and released Madhavasena. Vidarbha was divided into two parts between its two claimants, the river Varada (Wardha) forming the boundary between the two states and both extended the Suzerainty of Pushyamitra Sunga. This extended the influence of the Sunga to the south of the river Narmada.

### **5.2.2 Yavana Invasion**

Pushyamitra had to face a Greek invasion the Mahabhasya of Patranjali states that the Yavana besieged Saketa (Ayodhya) and the place Madhyamika (a place near Chitor). This theory is; further supported by the Yuga Purana section of Sargi Samhita, which says; that the Greeks overran Saketa or Oudh, Panchala, Mathura and reached Pataliputra, the capital of Pushyamitra Sunga. However, many scholars are of the view that the Yavana invasion took place on the eve of the occasion of Pushyamitra. It is known that when the Yavanas reached Pataliputra, there was no king. Purshyamitra had murdered Brihadratha but had not actually ascended the throne. This invasion might have taken place while Pushyamitra was yet a general of the Maurya. This invasion might have taken place under Demetrius, the Indo-Greek ruler. The hasty withdrawer of Demetrius to foil the; machinations of Eucratides, however, enabled Pushyamitra to seize the throne and lay the foundations of a new dynasty.

There was some evidence which refers to a Yavana; invasion towards the last part of the reign of Pushyamitra. This is described as the second Yavana war. Pushyamitra in his advanced age decided to perform an Asvamedha sacrifice. The consecrated horse, commanded by Vasumitra, his grandson and escorted by one hundred princes, was stopped by the Yavanas on the right bank of the Indus. Pushyamitra took up the challenge, which resulted in a war between Pushyamitra and the Yavanas. The leader of the Yavana was Mennander, the Indo-Greek king of Sakala. Pushyamitra said to have routed the Greeks in a keenly contested battle and drove the Yavanas out of Magadha and even beyond the Indus river. The horse was brought back safely to Pataliputra and the sacrifice successfully concluded.

The Ayodhya inscription of Dhanadeva mentions that Pushyamitra performed two horse sacrifices, as a proclamation of his double victory over the Greeks and his over lord shipover; Northern India. He undertook the performance to proclaim his sovereignty. The horse sacrifice was considered as the symbol of royal glory in ancient India. These horse sacrifices proved the revival of Brahmonical sacrificial cult including the slaughter of animals. It also signify thegrowing power and authority of Pushyamitra Sunga.

It is alleged by Prof. Rapson that Pushyamitra lost Ujjain to the Andhra Kind Sata Karni I. he relied upon the Andra coins bearing the name Sata, whom he identified as Satakarni I and as these coins were of the 'Malwa fabric', he believed that Avanti (Ujain region) was possessed by Satakarni. However, a scrutiny of literature makes us to understand that Andhra- Sunga conflict at this stage was impossible as Satavahana suzerainty had yet to be established even over Vidarbha. Prof. V.A. Smith has provided with another suggestion that Kharavela, the Chedi king of Kalinga, attacked the ruler of Magadha whom he identified with Pushyamitra Sunga. However, it has been proved categorically that the name of the Magadhan king who is stated in the Hatigumpha inscription to have been defeated by Kharavela was Mahasatimitra and not Pushyamitra and further it is not possible to identify with the other. Another view of Prof. Rapson was that Sakala was wrested by Menander perhaps during the reign period of Pushyamitra. He based his argument on the Yugupurana which states that Purshyamitra waged war against the Greek ruler of Sakala for the sake of a beautiful domsec and died fighting. There is no definite, evidence, however, in support of the view.

A study of the evidences, reveal that Pushyamitra's dominions that his empire extended; to Jalandhar and Sakala (Sialkot) in the Punjab. The inclusion of Ayodhya is proved by an

inscription where as according to Malavikagnimitram, Vidisa and Narmada region formed part of his dominion.

About the administration of Pushyamitra, little is known. Patanjali has referred to the Sabha of Pushyamitra, which may be the royal Durbar or council of magnates. Kalidasa in his book Malavikagnimitram mentioned about the Mantriparishad of the period. Probably, Mantriparishad or Amatya Parishad used to play important role whenever any important decision of the state had to be undertaken.

### **5.2.3 Pushyamitra and Buddhism**

The Buddhist tradition depicts; Pushyamitra as a cruel persecutor of Buddhism, burning monasteries and killing monks indiscriminately. He is said to have burnt out the great monastery known as Kukkutarama at Pataliputra. It is said that at Sakala, he declared a prize of one hundred gold coins for the head of a monk. Sakala has been described in Milindapanha as a resort of the Buddhist monks. It is stated in the Divyavadana that acting on the advice of his Brahmana chaplin, Pushyamitra made up his mind to destroy the teachings of the Buddha and he marched out with a four-hold army destroying stupas, burning monasteries, and killing the monks as far as sakala. But many scholars have rejected the testimony to these Buddhist tradition. Scholars like V.A Smith, N.N. Ghosh and others however supported the tradition. H.C. Ray Choudhury believes that the Buddhist remains at Bharhut erected during the supremacy of the Sungas do not bear out the theory which represents Pushyamitra and his descendants as the leaders of militant Brahminism. It is true that Pushyamitra was a strong adherent of Brahmonic religion but that does not prove his persecution of Buddhism. It is quite possible that Buddhist population could not reconcile to the fact that the Mauryan ;dynasty declined, which was regarded as the protagonist of Buddhism and in its place, the Sunga dynasty was established, considered as the supporter of Brahmanical religion. The sources of the period indicate that Pushyamitra followed a policy patronizing different religions. He not only spared the Buddhist stupas at Sanchi and Bharhut but also made liberal donations to them. The beautiful gateways of the great Stupa at Sanchi, were erected during the Sunga period. Hence, the tradition of religious persecution by Puishyamitra had no basis.

### **5.2.4 Successors of Pushyamitra**

After enjoying a long reign of 36 years Purshyamitra was succeeded by his son Agnimitra in 148 B.C. Agnimitra was the crown prince and was the governor of southern provinces during the lifetime of his father. He is the hero of Kalidasa's Malavikagnimitra. He ruled for eight uneventful years. Some copper coins bearing the legend Agnimitra as a Brahmi character of the second century B.C. discovered from Panchala area is attributed to him. Agnimitra was succeeded by Sujyesttha, identical with Jethamitra of the coins, who ruled for seven years. After him came Agnimitra's son, Vasumitra, identical with Sumitra. As a prince, he had won laurels in the battle against the Greeks while commanding the forces escorting the sacrificial horse let loose by his grand father, Pushyamitra. He was a pleasure loving king and thus gave opportunity to forces of disruption to set in. while enjoying a theatrical performance, he was murdered by Muladeva, the later being regarded as the founder of the independent principality of Kosala. The Puranas mention the names of Andhraka, Pulindaka and Ghosho as the successors of Sumitra, which are far from correct. Sumitra was infact succeeded by weak king like Vajramitra,

Bhagavata and Devabhuti Bana's Harshacharita tells as that the last Sunga king Devabhuti was killed by a woman, disguised as a queen and a new dynasty i.e, the Kanava dynasty was established in about 73 B.C. thus ended the rule of the Sungas.

### 5.3 Art and Culture

The Sunga age saw an outburst of activity in the domains of religion, literature and art. The memorable horse sacrifices of Pushyamitra marked the beginning of Brahmanical reaction, which was fully developed during the Gupta period. The Sungas patronized Brahmanical religion. Brahmanical rite and ceremonies become popular. The Ayodhya Inscription, Malavikagnimitram and Mahabhasya refer to the horse sacrifices. Patanjali, the author of Mahabhasya himself officiated at one of those sacrifices.

In the field of literature, Sanskrit literature flourished with the revival of Brahmanism, many Sanskrit literature were written during this period. The great grammarian Patanjali was a contemporary of Puskyamitra. He wrote the Mahabhasya', a commentary on **Panini's** grammar. Even the 'Manusamhita' was written during this period. Inscriptions at or near Vidisa show that the Bhagavata religion was becoming popular among the people. Infact the foundations for the revival of the Brahmanical religion and literature, which came in with vigour under the Gupta emperors were laid in the time of the Sungas.

The Sunga period ushered in a new age in the art of buildings. The art of the period differed widely from the Mauryan art. The wooden railings of Buddhist Stupas at Sanchi were replaced by stone railings and magnificent stone-gateways during the period. The Bharhut railings have made the Sungas immortal. The reliefs of Bharhut are a striking commentary on contemporary Indian life and attitude towards mundane life. The Sunga art was more popular in character and more collective in its aim and origin. The Sunga art is the people art, and the first attempt of the organized and integrated activity of the Indian people as a whole. The general tone of the Bharhut art is sober, modest and dignified. N.R. Ray in this aspect writes: "While Mauryan art is conscious, courtly and sophisticated, Sunga art is naïve, popular and perhaps also primitive in a way.../. Mauryan art reflects the exhaustion of a tradition born outside of its own people; Sunga art reflects the lively unfoldment of a tradition born of the blood and flesh of the people to whom it belongs."

The Bharhut stone railings of the period (near Nagod Madhya Pradesh) have been praised by various scholars of art, The Bharhut stupa consisted of a hemispherical dome of brick surmounted with a shaft and umbrella. It was surrounded by a railing made of red sand stone. The sculptures depicted "wonderful panorama of scenes of daily life and concrete illustrations of faith, hope and ideal". The carvings of individual figures are note worthy; present, the railings are kept in Indian Museum, Kolkata, after the destruction of the Bharhut Stupa. The art is somewhat archaic, but provide an idea about the life of the common people. The art historian **Foucher** has aptly remarked, " It was the ivory workers of Vidisa who carved in the immediate vicinity, of their town one of the monumental gates of Sanchi". The gateways of Sanchi and the railings of the Stupa are attributed to the Sunga and Andhra – Satavahana period. The art in the gateway is unique in the history of Plastic art in India. All the available space on the railings and gateways are filled with decorative carvings and narrative scenes, depicting stories and legends connected with the life of Buddha and his teachings. The four great event of Buddha's life i.e. his birth, enlightenment, his first **sermon** and his Mahaparinirvana is nicely executed. The workmanship

belongs to a period when the craftsmen formerly used to work in wood, had just started in sculpting on stone. The other important monuments of the period are the Vihar at Bhaja near Poona, a group of rock cut Stupas and a large Chaitya **hall** near Bhaja, the Chaitya Hall No. 9 at Ajanta, the Vriksha devata at Bharhut, railing at Bodhgaya enclosing the promenade, a chaitya hall at Nasik etc. the famous **Garuda** pillar at Besnagar was planted during the Sunga period. This Pillar was erected by Heliodorous, a Greek ambassador, at Vidisa to immortalize his new faith, Bhagavatism. There was probably a Stupa at Bodhgaya and a small stone railing was placed during the period, which was engraved with beautiful individual figures.

#### **5.4 Importance of the Sunga period**

The rule of the Sungas marks an important epoch in the history of India in general and of central India in particular. The militarism of the Sunga provided a new lease of life to the decaying political structure in Magadha. Pushyamitra successfully stemmed the tide of foreign invasion and checked for sometime the disintegration of the Magadha Empire. The age saw the Brahmanical revival. The Besnagar Pillar proves beyond doubt that even the Greeks were allowed to convert to Hinduism and worship the Bhagavata cult. The age also coincided with the flourishing of Buddhist art and architecture. Some scholar styles the Sunga period as “brilliant anticipation of the golden age of the Guptas”.

#### **5.5 The Indo-Greeks**

The disintegration of the Mauryan Empire, ended the political unity of India and for nearly two centuries, north western India remained under the sway of the Indo-Greeks. However, it is to be mentioned here that the end of Achaemind rule in Iran and death of Alexander gave rise to kingdoms ruled by Alexander’s generals such as the Seleucid kingdom in the North-western frontier. About the middle of the third century B.C. while Ashoka was at the height of his power, Bacteria and Parthia seceded from the Seleucidan empire and became independent kingdom. The province of Bacteria lay between the Hindukush in the south and the river Oxus in the North and Parthia was the territory lying to the South-east of Caspian sea. Since the invasion of Alexander, the area was colonized by the Greek rulers some refer these rulers as Greco-Bacterions, who ruled over Bacteria and Indo-Greeks who included north-west India in their domain others refer; to them as Indo Bacterian Greeks. Indian sources however refer to them as Yavanas at that time. These Greek people made inroads to Indian territories and established an empire, known as the Indo-Greek empire in ancient period. The history of Indo-Greek is an interesting chapter in the history and culture of India.

The sources for the study of Indo-Greek are their beautifully executed gold silver and copper coins. The coins alone have enabled us to reconstruct the outline of their history and recover the names of quite a number of rulers, who are not mentioned in literary records. The Indian literary sources like the Gargisamhita, the Mahabhashya of Patanjali, the text Milindapanho Malavikagnimitraam of Kallidas throw welcome light on the Indo-Greek rulers. The writings of Greek historians such as Justin, Strabo, Plutarch also helps us in reconstructing their history. The epigraphs particularly the Kharosthi inscriptions provide relevant information on the Indo-Greek rulers.

##### **5.5.1 Early History**

As we have seen, the country of Bacteria and Parthia, which was under Greek general, became independent in around 250 B.C. According to Justin, Parthia revolted against the Seleucidian rule and became independent under Arsaces. About the same time Diodotus, the governor of the thousand cities of Bacteria, rebelled and proclaimed himself king. Diodotus is said to have not on friendly terms with Arsaces of Parthia. Diodotus was succeeded by his son of the same name, who reversed the anti-parthian policy of his father and allied himself with Parthia, the enemy of Seleucids. However he met a violent death at the hands of an adventurer from Magnesia named Euthydemus. Euthydemus became the king of Bacteria. In or around, 212 B.C., the great Syrian king Antiochus III, made a bid for the recovery of his lost provinces. Euthydemus was soon involved in a protracted struggle with Antiochus III. The latter besieged Bacteria finding his existence at stake, Euthydemus I sent one Teleas to the camp of Antiochus to have an honorable peace. It was pointed out to Antiochus III that Euthydemus was not against; Antiochus III and if peace was not made between Bacteria and Syria, then Euthydemus would take the help of the Seythian barbarians, who were always on the look out to fish in troubled waters. The importance of Bacteria as a buffer state was also emphasized. Antiochus wisely made peace as his presence at that time was urgently needed in the west on account of the expanding Roman power. A peace treaty was negotiated in 206 B.C. by both the parties. As a result, Antiochus recognized the independence of Bacteria and gave the hand of his daughter to Demetrius, the son of Euthydemus. It is also told that before his departure, Antiochus advanced to the valley of the Kabul river and received the submission of its king Sophagasenus (Subhagasena). Subhagea was probably a local Indian ruler. However, being hard-pressed, he could not conquer any part of India. His invasion was nothing better than a raid on a gigantic scale, a triumph without result.

The abundance of Euthydemus coins seems to suggest that he had fairly a long reign over an expanding kingdom. His silver coins have been noticed in large numbers in Bacteria and Sogdiana (Bokhara) to the north of the Hindukush but they are lots in Kabul, Kandahar and Seistan, where majority of coins found are bronze issues. He is said to have extended his sway over southern Afghanistan, adjoining region of Iran and some parts of north-western India. He made Bacteria a powerful kingdom.

### **5.5.2 Demetrius**

It was under Demetrius, the son and successor of Euthydemus that the Greeks made considerable advance in the heart of India. He was perhaps the first foreign king after Alexander who carried Greek arms into the interior of India. His Indian expedition became the first of a series of subsequent Bactrian invasions of India. When Demetrius became the ruler of Bacteria, Bacteria was already a strong and a prosperous country. He was therefore strong enough to lead an expedition to India. The political condition in the extreme North was favourable to him. To and taking the opportunity, he crossed the Hindukush mountains with a large force, and after crossing Indus, is said to have conquered portions of the Punjab and Sindh. He established some cities for the purpose of effective administration of the newly conquered territories.

The Indian literature refers to his invasion of Madhyadesa. He sent his army south eastward along the great road across the Punjab and by the Delhi passage to the Ganges and the Mauryan capital Pataliputra, which was at that time ruled by Pushyamitra Sunga. Strabo gives

the credit of extending Greek dominion in India partly to Demetrius and partly to Menander. The Mahabhasya of Patanjali and the Yuga Purana of the Gargi Samhita speaks of a Yavana invasion of Saketa (Oudh), Panchala (Rohilakhand), Mathura and Pushpapura (Pataliputra). There was also Yavana invasion of Nagari in Rajasthan. Menander was placed in Pataliputra and Apollodotus after conquering Kathiawar and part of **Gujarat** made Ujjain the citadel of his power. The conquest of Ujjain was of much significance as it was an important centre of learning and one of the chief commercial centres of India. However, the name of the Greek invader is not known clearly in literary sources. Patanjali and Mahabharata mention one Dutta Mitra, king of the Yavanas; whether he was same as Demetrius are not, we do not know clearly. But it is generally believed that these above invasions were attributed to the Indo-Greek kings Demetrius. Some coins of Demetrius with Kharosthi legend on the reverse and Greek legend on obverse prove definitely his association with India some scholars, believe that Demetrius did not march to eastern India. He only penetrated in the Indus Valley and marched upto Kutch. It seems that Taxila was an important seat of administration and remained as the base of his power. Demetrius Indian conquest included part of the north-west frontier, the Punjab with southern Kashmir, much of the present Uttar Pradesh with a small portion of Bihar, Sindh, Kutch, Kathiawar and Northern part of Gujrat.

When Demetrius was busy in his Indian adventure, his hold over Bactria became weak. A revolt by an ambitious leader Eucratides turned the table against him. Most probably Demetrius lost his life in an unsuccessful bid to overthrow the usurper. Ultimately a new king named Eucratides wrestled the Bactrian crown for him. It seems that Demetrius ruled in a diminished glory in Afghanistan and part of Punjab during the last phase of his career. Sakala was the capital city of Demetrius.

### 5.5.3 Successors of Demetrius

Not much is known about Eucratides, who made himself the master of Bactria after Demetrius. But Eucratides success in India proved to be ephemeral as he had to contend with several princes of the Euthydemian house who maintained their hold over several parts of India. Eucratides was able to dislodge Apollodotus from Kapisa, Archosia (Kandahar) and Drangiana. Pantaleon and Agathocles, who are believed to have been the sons of Demetrius and who hold Gandhara including Taxila must have died about the same time as Demetrius. Their coins are interesting because they contained Brahmi legends, instead of usual Kharosthi script. Eucratides, after the death of Pantaleon and Agathocles, said to be occupied the Kabul valley, Archosia and parts of **Siesta**. Eucratides who was away from Bactria for long, was returning home about 155 B.C. when he was killed by his son Plato whom he had made a joint king. Plato became unpopular and was soon slain by his brother Heliocles I. About the same time Parthia became so powerful that Bactria lost two satrapies of Tapuria and Traxiana Apollodotus was another important Greek ruler of Demetrius family. It seems that his rule extended over Kapisa, Gandhara, Western Punjab and a part of Gujrat. The coins of Apollodotus and the author of the 'Periplus of the Erythrean sea' and Periplus mention him as one of the powerful king.

### 5.5.4 Menander

The great among the Indo- Greek kings was Menander. He is identified with king Milinda of the Palitext, Milinda Panho. He was born in the Village Kalasi, which was 200



Yojanas from Sakala (modern Sialkoe in Pakistan). He probably married the daughter of Demetrius. Classical writers mention him in association with Appollodotus with reference to Indian conquest. But the exact relation between the two is not known. Scholars believe that Menander was a Yavana ruler, who invaded Saketa and Madhyamika during the life time of Patanjali, a contemporary of Pushyamitra Sunga. But classical source do not provide any reference regarding eastic Yavana conquests in these regions. Strabo doubts whether Menander actually crossed Beas (Hyphasis) and advanced as far as the Imaus (modern Kalindi running through Kumaun, Rohilakhand and thde Kanauj region). The coins of Menander are noticed from Kabul to Mathura. His coins are also found in Bundelkhand area of Uttara Pradesh. He also recovered some of the lost possessions of his house in the Kach Valley from the rival house of Eucratide. His coins have been recovered from Kabul and Peshwar region. The findings of his coins in Sindhu, western Uttar Pradesh and Kathiawar region points to his authority over the area. At Pushkalavati and Taxila, hoards of his coins have been discovered. The Bajaur Casket inscription attests Menander's conquest of Hazara and Swat valley. He also controlled Udayana and Abhisara but his invasion of Kashmir is at best doubtful. The discovery of the Shinkot record points to Menander's hold over the Peshwar region. His coins are found at Barygaze, modern Broach. The empire of Menander consisted of central Afghanistan, North-west frontier province, Punjab, Sind, Rajputana, Kathiawar and a portion of Uttar Pradesh. It is probable that encouraged by his success in India, Menander planned to recover Bacteria but died in the course of his march to the west.

Sakala or modern Sialkot was the capital city of Menander. A fine description of the city is found in the text Milindapanha. The city Sagala (Sakala) was a great centre of trade. This beautiful city was well protected by strong towers, ramparts and decorated with superb gates, archways gardens, parks and marvelous buildings. The city had well laid out streets, squares, cross-roads and market places.

The greatest testimony to Menander's legendary fame is the Pali works Milindapanha (questions of Milinda) which is in the form of a dialogue between Milinda, (menander), the mighty Yavana king of Sakala and Nagasena, an erudite Buddhist scholar. The book gives an idea about his conversion to Buddhism, after his discussion with Nagasena, regarding metaphysical problems of Buddhist philosophy. A casket containing two groups of Kharosthi inscriptions has been discovered in the Bajaur area, near Swat valley. Some relics of Sakyamuni Buddha are said to have been installed in the casket for worship first by a prince, named Viyakamitra, apparently a feudatory of Menander and afterwards by his son or grandson. According to Prof. A.K. Narain, "the greatness and popularity of Menander are attested not only by overwhelming Predominance of his coins over those of other Indo Greek kings, but also by the survival of his name in tradition. Surely he was the greatest of the Indo Greek kings of India".

### **5.5.5 Successors of Menander**

The death of Menander, brought Strato-I, a minor to the throne. He ruled for a long time and was associated with his mother in the administration. As an old man, he was associated with his grandson, Strato II in running the administration. A large number of silver and copper coins of Strate II have been recovered.

The name of Antialcidas, an Indo-Greek king is mentioned on an Indian monument. The Garuda Pillar inscription on the Garuda pillar at Besnagar near Vidisa (Madhya Pradesh) states that the column was erected in honour of Vasudeva by the Yavana ambassador Heliodorus, son, of Dion, an inhabitant of Takshashila, who came from the Greek King Antialcidas to king Kasiputra Bhagabhadra. The epigraph refers Heliodorus as a follower of Vishnu and testifies to friendly and diplomatic relations between the Yavana king of Takshashila and the Sunga king of Vidisa. Hermaeus was the last representative of the Yavana house of Eucratides and his kingdom was confined to the upper Kabul valley. He had to face Sakas on the east, the Pahlavas on the west and the Yue-chi on the north. He could not face the challenge of the hostile neighbours. The coins of Hermaeus show progressive stages of their deterioration.

### **5.5.6 Significance**

The Indo-Greek rule is of considerable importance for the study of Indian art and culture. J.N. Banarjee maintains that the second Greek conquest of India was more important for India than that of Alexander, the great. The cultural contact between the Greeks and the Indians for nearly two centuries, contributed a lot. The Greeks in India were influenced by the Indian religions, ideals. The great king Menander adopted Buddhism, while Heliodorus embraced Vaishnavism, by erecting the Besnagar Pillar. A Greek officer said to have enshrined the relics of Buddha in the Swat valley. A large number of Greeks were converted to different Indian religions and the Greeks adopted the Indian way of life gradually. The Greek coins influenced the Indian coinage. The art of die-cutting and issuing of fine coins in Greek-Kharosthi and Greek- Brahmi scripts are the contribution of the Greek people. A type of copper coins of Agathocles, found at Ai-khanum in the Oxus valley bear the effigy of Vasudeva (Krishna) with Chakra (wheel) on one side., and that of Balarama with the plough on the other. Perhaps this is the earliest anthropomorphic representations of Indian gods in the realm of art. Gold coins; for the first time are heard of during this period. They used to place portraits of the king on the obverse. They also introduced the effigy of the Greek gods and goddesses – Zeus, Heracles, Apollo, Dioskouroi, Nike Pallas and others. They introduced the bilingual coins in India, where Kharosthi was used. The coins are symbolic of an intermingling of Hellenistic with Indian or Iranian cultures. Depiction of Yakshi figures and Indian goddesses, sometimes replace the Hellenistic **deities**. The remains of a temple at Besnagar, has been unearthed by an excavation and perhaps this is one of the earliest Hindu temple of India. The foundation of Graeco-Buddhist art, known as the famous Gandhara art, had its origin in this period. This art portrays the happy blending of Indian spiritualism with Greek earthiness. In the field of literature also, there was exchange of ideas trade and commerce also boosted due to the intercourse of the Greeks with India.

## **5.6 The Kushanas**

### **Introduction**

In the early centuries of the Christian era, the political situation in India was in doldrums. With the absence of a strong centralized authority, India's political history presented a picture of instability and lack of cohesion taking advantage of this, the gateways of the North-Western region were used by the foreign invaders to come to the Indian sub-continent. In the post-Maurya period, the Kushanas appeared in the North Western part of India to play a major role in the

history and culture of ancient India. The Kushanas established a vast empire consisted of North and North-West part of India for two centuries. They significantly contributed to the socio-cultural development of India.

### **5.6.1 Sources**

Because of their Chinese origin, the sources of the early history of the Kushanas are to be found in China. The Chinese works like the history of the First Han dynasty by Pan-Ku, the history of later Han dynasty by Fan-Ye and the Chinese chronicle of Ma-twan-lin throw welcome light on the early Kushanas. The writings of Asvaghosa, Nagarjuna, Hiuen-tsang, Kalhana have thrown much light above the Kushanas. The inscriptions noticed at Ara, Mathura, Sanchi, Taxila, Zeda, Kosam, Varanasi, Peshwar and many places in North West Frontier are trustworthy source of the history of the Kushanas. The gold and copper coins of Kushana give an idea of the socio-economics, religious and political history of the period. The remains of art and architecture of the period also reflects the socio-religious condition of the dpeople. The excavated sites of Taxila, Mathura, Chirand, Sanghoe, Bhita, etc. provide an idea of material culture of the Kushana period.

### **5.6.2 Early History of the Kushanas**

According to the Chinese sources, the Yuch-chis lived in Chinese Turkestan before 165 B.C. around this year, the Hunas invaded the Yuch-chi and ousted them from their homeland. As a result, the Yuch-chi began a westward migration for new pasture, which brought them into conflict with other central Asian tribes. Finally, they reached the Oxus valley in central Asia which was then occupied by Sakas. Subsequently, the Yuch-chis were successful in driving away the Sakas and occupied their territory. The Hunas attacked Yuch-chi in central Asia again and drove them to Bacteria.

As per the history of the later Han dynasty, Yue-chi tribes had given up nomadic life and was divided into five tribes. One of these came to be known as Kushana. They remained divided for more; than a century. Eventually, one tribe defeated the other four tribes and united them under the leadership of Kujala Kadphises, who assumed the title of king after this victory.

Kujala- Kadphises or Kadphises I was the first Kushana king about whom we know something definite. He made extensive conquests. He became the lord of the Indian borderland by capturing Kabul, Ki-pin (Gandhara), Po-ta, and Kafristan. From literary and numismatic sources, it is known that Kujala's empire comprised of Bacteria, a part of Parthia, the Kabul valley Kafristan and North western India upto Indus. His empire extended from the frontiers of Persia to the Indus or perhaps to the Jhelum area. It seems that he could defeat the Indo-Greek ruler and the Indo-parthian ruler. His earliest coins are in copper, have on the obverse in Greek Hermaios, the last Greek ruler of Kabul and his own name is written on the reverse. Here Kujala is mentioned as Kujulakasa, the Kushana Chief, who established in Dharma, the Religion of truth. This probably reveal that Kadphises I began as a vassal of the Greek king Hermaios and perhaps with the help of the Greek king, he could sub due the other four sections of the Yuch-chi. His coins in copper, shows the influence of Rome. He used various titles such as yavuga (Chief), Maharaja, Rajatiraja (the king of kings) and Sachadharma (stead fast in the true faith). He seems to have ruled from about 15 A.D. to 65 A.D.

Kadphises II, or Wema Kadphises, son of Kujala, reigned from 65 to 75 AD. He made vigorous efforts to extend the Kushana power in the heart of India. He seems to have completed the conquest of northern India, started by his predecessor. He conquered Gandhara, Taxila and Punjab and pushed his boundary upto Mathura. In the west, his empire included Parthia, Afghanistan, Bukhara and parts of Turkistan. The conquered Indian provinces were administered by a military viceroy. Kadphises II issued both gold and copper coins. He had various titles such as Maharaja Rajatiraja, Sarvalokesvara (lord of all spheres), Mahisuara (lord of the earth) etc, as reflected in his coins. His coins bear a figure of Siva standing by the side of a bull, which indicates to his leaning towards Hinduism. He was a votary of Siva. His coins are noticed all over the Punjab as well as in Kandahar and Kabul valley. His high sound titles indicate his growing authority. It is pointed out that during his period; commerce between China, the Roman Empire and India was thriving. Roman gold coin began to pour to India, as India enjoyed a favourable balance of trade. Indian silks, spices and gems were too much in demand in the Roman Empire. These gold coins indicate that there was brisk trade going on between India and Rome. **Pliny** refers to the flourishing commerce between the Indian and Roman empire in the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. B.N. Puri states that "The Kushana empire under Wima Kadphises, seems to have extended a large territory, from Benaras in the east, to the frontiers of Parthia and also included the whole of the countries now known as Afghanistan, Turkestan, Bukhara and parts of Russian Turkestan.

### 5.6.3 Kanishka-I

Kanishka was the greatest king of his dynasty. It is known that Kanishka was a governor of Wema Kadphises in Uttar Pradesh. He is usually regarded as a successor of Wema Kadphises, though the exact relationship between the two is not known. There seems to be a gap through a short one, between Wema Kadphises and Kanishka and it was not a mere take over. It is very difficult to determine the exact date of his accession to the throne, though tentatively it can be placed in A.D. 78. A group of scholars of the view that Kanishka reigned before the Kadphises kings and was the founder of the Vikram era commencing from 58 B.C. which is not attested by literary as well as numismatic evidences. Marshall, Konow, Smith and others suggest that Kanishka began to rule in the beginning or middle of second century A.D. if we accept the hypothesis, then Kanishka would be the contemporary of the Saka king Rudradaman, who is known to us from his re-inscription. This suggestion can not be accepted because it is very difficult to reconcile the mastery of two independent Sovereigns, over lower Indus valley, which are said to be conquered both by Rudradaman and Kanishka. Fergusson, Rapson, Thomas and others however believe that Kanishka ruled in the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. and was the founder of the Saka era of 78 A.D.

Kanishka was a great conqueror. During his governorship, he extended his way to the Panjab, Sindhu and North Western India. He inherited a big kingdom from Wema Kadphises. He also extended his territory by many new conquests. The extent of his empire can be known on the basis of data available from inscriptions and literature.

From the epigraphic records, it is known that Kanishka ruled over Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, North-western province and part of Sindh. On the east, his dominion included Mathura. He is also said to have conquered Benaras, Sanchi and **Malwa**. The discovery of a large number of

Kanishka's records at Mathura, the Sanchi Museum of Kanishka's records at Mathura, the Sanchi Museum inscription, and the Sui Vihar inscription, seem to suggest that Rajputana, Malwa and Saurashtra also formed part of Kanishka's dominions.

The literary evidences point out the inclusion of the following territories within his kingdom. Alberuni refers to the rule of Kanishka over Afghanistan and adjoining part of central Asia. From the Si-yu-ki and the Rajatarangini, it is clear that Kashmir was also a part of his kingdom. Hiuen-tsang includes Gandhara, Purushapura and the country to the east of Tsung King mountain in Kanishka's kingdom. The Chinese and Tibetan writers record the tradition of his conflict with the rulers of Saketa and Pataliputra in eastern India from where, he carried off the celebrated Buddhist monk Asvaghosa. As per the Chinese records Kanishka annexed Pataliputra and Ayodhya in his eastern Indian campaign. There is a controversy about Kanishka's conquest of eastern India. The discovery of Kushana coins at Tamluk, Bogra and Murshidabad strengthens this theory. In Orissa also, we came across a type of coins known as Puri Kushana coins, which reveals Kushana influence on the local coin. But these evidences are not sufficient proof to know, whether Bengal and Orissa were really a part and parcel of the dominion of the Kushanas. Probably the extension of Kushana supremacy did not reach Bengal or Orissa. The Zeda inscription of Kanishka refers to him as 'Muradasa Marjhakasa I. most probably Kanishka used this title after the defeat of Murandas, ruling in south-eastern part of Bihar. Spooner came across many Kushana coins at Pataliputra. The Bodhgaya plaque points to the inclusion of that part under the Kushana.

Kanishka also waged war against the powerful Saka-kshatrapas of Punjab and northern India. Saka kshatrap Nahapana, who was ruling over western India and Deccan, was a vassal of the Kushanas. Nahapana's coins exhibit Kushana influence. He also used the saka era introduced by Kanishka. The suivihar inscription refers to his territories extension in western India.

Kanishka also made conquests outside India. According to Chinese historians, Kanishka fought against the Parthians on the west and crossing the pamirs subjugated the rulers of Khotan, Yark and Kashgar, who had been tributary to China. Hiuen-tsang refers to a war with china and Kanishka's initial success in eastern Turkistan. It is known that Kanishka secured the Chinese royal princes as hostage, whom he treated with kindness. In the latter part of his reign, Kanishka suffered reverse in the north and north-east because of the victories of Pan-chao, a famous general of the Chinese emperor Ho -ti (AD.89-105). It is told that Kanishka was compelled to pay tribute to Ho-ti and lost to him some territories in central Asia. Though Kanishka organized a great expedition against china in his last life; we are not certain about its outcome. The Buddhist tradition, the finespots of his inscriptions and coins bear ample testimony to the wide extent of his Indian possessions.

Kanishka ruled over a vast empire. His empire was extended within India from Kashmir in the north to Sanchi in the south and from Bihar in the east to the Indus valley in the west. Outside India Kanishka's empire consisted of transpamir region (Khotan), the oxus valley (Bactria) and the land between the Hindukush and the Indus comprising Kabul, Afganistan, and Baluchistan.

#### **5.6.4 Administration**

From epigraphic and numismatic sources we come to know about Kanishka's administration. His vast empire was divided into a number of provinces, which were put under Governors called satraps. The satraps were carefully selected. There is mention of Mahakshatrapa Kharapullana and kshatrapa vanaspara as governors of the eastern part of Kanishka's empire. In the northern part of his empire were appointed the Satraps Vespasi and Liaka. Kanishka called himself (Maharaja rajatriya devaputra'. The king was all powerful. Purushapura or Peshwa was the capital of his vast empire. The Satraps enjoyed good deal of local autonomy under his suzerainty. In general, Kanishka followed the pattern of Achaemenian satraps, although the saka kshatrapa of western India seems to have enjoyed complete independence, except using high sounding titles.

### **5.6.5 Foreign Relations**

Kanishka maintained extensive contact with foreign powers particularly China, central Asia and Graeco-Roman world through central exchange. The gold coins of Kanishka bear undoubted mark of Roman influence. The Indian merchants also visited China and parts of central Asia. Pliny complains that the Roman gold was drained out due to the purchase of Indian luxury goods. China received its first Buddhist mission in 68 A.D. but it was Kanishka, who was responsible for the spread of Mahayana Buddhism in the far-east, central Asia, Japan and Tibet. The results of such interaction are significant. Graeco-Roman art after a fusion with an indigenous school resulted in a hybrid art, known as the Gandhara school of art. The Kushana connection with central Asia led to the introduction of new type of dress, trousers and long quilted coat and boots in northern India.

### **5.6.6 Religion**

Kanishka is remembered in history not only as a great conqueror but also a patron of Buddhism. In the beginning, he was not a follower of Buddha. His earlier coins bear the representation of the Persian, Greek and Hindu gods. Among these may be mentioned, Oesho (Siva), the mind god Oads, and the fire god Athsho (Persian), the sun god Miiro (Persian Mithra), the Sumerian mother goddess Nana, Nanaia or Nana Shao, the War god Orlagno, the fire god Pharro (persian Farr), the Greek sun-god Helios etc. subsequently, he embraced Buddhism, which is reflected on the gold coin of Kanishka, known as Boddo coin, where representation of Buddha is noticed. It is believed that Kanishka came in contact with the great Buddhist monk Asvaghosha at Pataliputra and being influenced by him, embraced Buddhism. After that he devoted himself heart and soul to the propagation of that religion.

Kanishka patronized a new school of Buddhism i.e. the Mahayana school of Buddhism. According to Buddhist tradition, Kanishka called the fourth Buddhist council at Kauvana near Jalandhar or at Kundalavana Vihar in Kashmir. Sanskrit became the vehicle of propagation of Mahayana's philosophy. The council was attended by a large number of scholars from all over the country with a purpose to codify the Buddhist texts and prepare commentaries. Vasumitra presided while Asuapghsha was the vice President. Mahayana Buddhism was recognized as the state religion of the Kushana Kingdom. Its simple philosophy, preaching the divinity of Buddha, and his worship had greater appeal than the dry and ethical Hinayana creed. The proceedings of the council were written and compiled in a book titled 'Mahavibhasa' Sutralamkar of Asvaghosha and Kalpanamanditika of Kumarlata.

Hiuen-tsang and Alberuni refer to the construction of a great relic tower at Peshwar by Kanishka which was famous throughout the Buddhist world. He also constructed a number of statues and images of Lord Buddha, Viharas and Monasteries for the Buddhist monks. The cult of Bodhisattva and worship of Buddha become widely prevalent in the Kushana period. Because of such untiring efforts of Kanishka, Mahayana Buddhism made a great progress. It has been rightly remarked that what was Asoka to Hinayanism, Kanishka was the same to Mahayanism.

### **5.6.7 Learning and Literature**

Kanishka was a great lover and patron of learning. Sanskrit language was revived from long obscurity. As a patron of learning, he encouraged the scholars, the philosophers and poets. His court was adorned by a galaxy of scholars such as Asvaghosha, Nagarjuna, Mathara, Vasumitra, Charak and Agesilus. Asvaghosha, the Buddhist writer wrote several books including Buddha charita and sutralamkar. Nagarjuna, the great philosopher wrote his famous work 'Prajnaparamita Sutrastra' where he explains the theory of relativity. Charaka was the great physician, while Mathara was considered as the great statesman of the age. The prolific output in literature was all due to the patronage of Kanishka.

### **5.6.8 Art and Architecture**

The reign of Kanishka forms a significant epoch in the history of Indian art and architecture. In art, his reign is marked by the growth of two distinct art styles, known as Mathura school of art and Gandhara school of art. The Mathura style of art was an indigenous style of art, represented by the headless statue of Kanishka at Mathura and the image of Buddha in white spotted red sand stone. The earlier Buddha image of Mathura, reflects the mass and weight of Yaksha figures of earlier period. Here Buddha is shaven headed, dressed in dhoti or sanghati, offering protection to people with his weight and height. The art is secular in the sense that Buddhist, Brahmanical as well as Jaina images were prepared in this school of art. Foreign elements in Mathura art was negligible. On the other hand, the Gandhara school of art was the exotic school of art in which the objects were purely Indian but the technique applied was that of Graeco-Roman. The Gandhara art embraces all the productions in a particular area within definite time scale and of a particular material. The blue schist stone and stucco were used for making various images of Buddha and Buddhist divinities. The Gandhara reflects the impact of Roman, Greek, Iranian, Indian and local influences. The Hellenistic influences like Persepolitan capital, Merion, monsters like sphinx and gryphon, and various semi-human creature like the centaur, triton etc are noticed in the art. The theme of the school is same percentage Buddhist. Here Buddha is depicted like the Greek god Apollo, clad in the Toga with moustache, and a top not like that of the Greek sun god. Besides, representation of Bodhisattvas, Maitreya, various Buddhist divinities and a few foreign divinities (Iranian, Greek) also can be noticed. Life of Buddha and Jataka stories are faithfully represented in this school of art. The important sites of Gandhara art are noticed at Jamalgarhi, Takht-i-Bahai, shahbazgarhi charsada, shah-ji-ki-Dheri and in various places of modern Pakistan and Afganistan.

The coins of Kanishka are fine specimen of Kanishka art. He issued coins in gold and copper. He ended the bilingual tradition of Greek and Kharosthi and retained only Greek, for a while. On the obverse of his coin, he is shown standing, dressed in a long tunic, shalwar, mantle

held by double clasp at the chest and a low round cap, sacrificing at an altar and holding a spear in his left hand. On the reverse, he introduced various Greek deities like Helios, Salene, Hephaistos, Iranian deities such as Mithra, Mithras, Oados, Orontes, Atsho, Pharro, and Indian deity like Oesho (Siva) and introduced the figure of Buddha with the legend Boddo or Sakamano Boddo (Sakyamuni Buddha). The gold coins of Kanishka are of two denominations dinara and quarter dinara. Some quarter dinara coins have a profile bust of the kind in the reverse. The beautiful and nicely executed gold coins of Kanishka period reveals the aesthetic sense of the ruler.

In architecture also, Kanishka's reign was landmark. He constructed numerous Buddhist monuments, stupas, columns, monasteries and buildings. The great relic tower at Peshawar was constructed under the supervision of a Greek engineer Agesilus, elicited the admiration of Chinese and Muslim travelers. It was about 400 feet high and was built chiefly of wood. He built many other monasteries and stupas at Mathura, Kashmir, Taxila and Sarnath. He built a town near Taxila and the city of Kanishkapura in Kashmir probably owed its foundation to him. Mathura on the Jumna was also adorned with numerous fine buildings. He is also known to have beautified the capital and other cities of his kingdom.

**Estimate:** Kanishka was one of the greatest rulers of ancient India. He was a great conqueror and; empire; builder. He paid equal attention to the task of consolidation of his empire through an efficient form of administration. But the real greatness of Kanishka lies in his religious activities. He combined himself the military genius and administrative sagacity of Chandragupta Maurya and the religious zeal of Asoka. He is also called as second Asoka for his work towards Buddhism. He was a great patron of art, architecture and learning. Buddhist art and architecture reached to a great height during his time. The two schools of art Mathura and Gandhara School reveals the best tradition of India art. Credit also goes to him for initiating the Saka calendar and the Saka era in 78 A.D.

### **5.6.9 Later Kushana Rulers**

Kanishka's immediate; successor was **Vasishka**, who had a short reign. He seems to have been associated with Kanishka in the administration of a part of central India. Scholars has identified him with **Uajhesk**, father of Kanishka II of the Ara inscription and with Jushka of **Rajatarngini**. Jushka was credited with the foundation of Jushkapura, modern Jukar, to the north of Srinagar. He was ruling over Mathura and eastern Malwa. He assumed the full imperial title "Maharaja Rajatriraja Devaputra Shahi", which shows that he was an independent ruler. None of his coins has so far come to light.

Vasishka was succeeded by Huvishka, whose reign was significance in the history of the Kushanas. A number of epigraphs and coins of Huvishka point to the fact that he had an extensive territory. Kachana's Rajatarangini mentions that Huvishka ruled Simultaneously with Visishka or Vajheska and with the later's son Kanishka –II. Kanishka II seemed to have assumed that title kaisara i.e. Caesar and died before Huvishka. Huvishka established a town, known as Hushkapura in Kashmir. Hiuen-tsang refers to the Buddhist establishment here. He said to have constructed Buddhist monasteries at Mathura also.



Huvishka introduced a number of coinage. He issued both gold and copper coins. He portrayed his profile best on his gold coins, wearing garments decked with jewels and a flat topped ornamental gear. He normally holds an imperial scepter or club in his right hand and in his left hand, he holds on some coins an **ankusa** and on some others a spear. The reverse of his coin contain; the figures of different deities. Thus we have the figures of Indian divinities like Skanda Kumara, Visakho, Mahasena and Oma, Greek Heracles, several Zoroastrian deities like Oarindo, Oaxshed, Shaoreora etc. a most strange combination of Siva with the non Indian Goddess Nana is found prominently on Huvishka's coins. It appears that Huvishka was well disposed towards Brahmanism.

The last great Kushana king was Vasudeva, a purely Indian name pointing to the gradual indianisation of the foreigners. Almost all of his inscriptions are noticed in or around Mathura. It seems that he might have lost his control over the northern or north-western parts of India. Vasudeva issued both gold and copper coins. Most of his coins exhibit on the reverse the figure of the Indian god, Siva attended by his **bull Nandi**. In the reverse of his coin, three deities Nana, Oesho (Siva) and Vasudeva were invariably represented.

The history of the Kushana, after Vasudeva is shrouded in obscurity. Scholars held that Vasudeva was succeeded by Kanishka III, Vasudeva II and soon. The dismemberment of the mighty Kushana empire was hastened by the Persian invasions of Ardeshir I (226-241 AD) and Shahpur I (241-272 AD). The rising Sassanian power undoubtedly dealt a blow to the Kushana power in the northern and western parts of India. Simultaneously, the rise of the independent republics such as the Yaudheyas, Kunindas and Malavas in the beginning of 3<sup>rd</sup> century, partitioned among themselves territories formerly held by the Kushanas and the Nagas, occupied Mathura, Gwalior and parts of central India.

Thus, the age of the Kushana is an important epoch in Indian history. They built up a vast empire, which comprised of variety of nationalities. They bequeathed to Indian an era of political stability and well organized government. They showed toleration to different Pantheons. Their contribution towards the flourishing of Mathura and Gandhara art is remarkable. They introduced various new shapes, techniques in gold coins which were latter followed by the Gupta rulers as well as those of the Yaudheyas, Chedis, Gahadavalas etc. with the passage of time, the Kushanas succumbed to the cultural influence of the Hellenistic Greeks and of the Indians, which is well reflected in their art and architecture. The excavated site of the Kushana period reveals a happy economic condition.

## 5.7 Let Us Sum Up

The post – Mauryan period, as we have seen, gave rise to various powerful dynasties like the Sungas, the Indo-Greeks, the Satvahanas, the Sakas, the Kushanas etc. The period saw tremendous activity in the field of art and culture. Brahmanical religion as well as Buddhism were patronised. The age witnessed various schools of art like the Mathura, the Gandhara and the Amaravati school, which produced distinct art products. The production of coins increased a lot and new techniques of coin production were introduced. The era also saw brisk internal and external trade of India with outside world. The cultural interaction of the period, helped in the flourishing of Indian culture.

## 5.8 Key Words

<i>Satrap</i>	:	Provincial governors under the Kushanas
<i>Gandhara School of Art</i>	:	A school of art developed in Gandhara region in Kushana period. It reflects the blending of Greco-Roman art with Indian themes
<i>Mathura school of Art:</i>		A school of art developed in or around Mathura during Kushana period. It is an indigenous art, where Buddhist, Jain and Brahmanical images were produced.
<i>Monasteries</i>	:	Place where Buddhist monks live
<i>Stupa</i>	:	Relic structure in honour of the dead – the Holy or the great.
<i>Asvamedha</i>	:	Sacrifices

## 5.9 Check Your Learning

1. Discuss the contributions of the Sungas to the history and culture of ancient India.
2. Discuss the achievements of Indo-Greek rulers with special reference to Demetrius and Menander.
3. How the Indo-Greeks have enriched Indian art and culture?
4. Who were the Kushanas? Discuss the achievements of Kanishka.
5. Describe the major achievements of Kushana rulers in the field of art and culture.
6. Short notes on
  - a) Pushyamitra Sunga
  - b) Menander
  - c) Demetrius
  - d) Coins of Indo greeks
  - e) Gold coins of the Kushana
  - f) Gandhara school of art
  - g) Fourth Buddhist council
  - h) Religious policy of the Kushanas
  - i) Significance of Indo-greek rule.

## 5.10 Suggested Readings

Narain, A.K.	:	<i>The Indo-Greeks</i> , Oxford, 1957
Tarn, W.W.	:	<i>The Greeks in Bactria and India</i> , 1951.
Mukherjee, B.N.	:	<i>The rise and fall of the Kushana Empire</i> (Calcutta, 1988).
Roy Chaudhuri, H.C.	:	<i>Political History of Ancient India</i> (Delhi, 1966).
Chattopadhyaya, B.	:	<i>The age of Kushanas- A Numismatic study</i> .
Majumdar, R.C. (ed.)	:	<i>The Age of Imperial Unity</i>
Puri, B.N.	:	<i>India under the Kushanas</i> , 1965.

## 5.11 Hints/Answers to Questions in Check Your Progress

### Check Your Progress-I

1. Pushyamitra Sunga was the founder of the Sunga dynasty.
2. The Vidarbha ruler Yajnasena was defeated by Pushyamitra Sunga.
3. The book 'Patanjali' is written by Mahabhasya
4. the book 'Manusamhita' is written by Manu.
5. The Garuda pillar Inscription at Besnagar (Vidisa) in Madhya Pradesh prove that even the Greeks were followers of Bhagavata cult.

### Check Your Progress-II

1. The Indo-Greek ruler Menander is referred in the book 'Milindapanho' as a Buddhist.
2. The text 'Milindapanho' is a dialogue between the Indo-Greek ruler Milinda (Menander) and Nagasena, a Buddhist scholar.
3. A type of copper coins of Indo-greek ruler Agathocles, found at oxus valley represents the earliest form of Vasudeva (Krishna)

### Check Your Progress-III

1. Kujala Kadphises or Kadphises I was the founder of the Kushana rule in India.
2. The original home of the Kushanas was in Chinese Turkestan.
3. The Kushana king Kanishka I introduced the Saka era.
4. Kanishka I was responsible for the spread of Mahayan Buddhism in the far east and central Asia.
5. The Mathura school of art and Gandhara school of art were developed during Kushana rule in India.
6. The Mahayana form of Buddhism was introduced by Kanishka I.




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