



INSTITUTE
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EDUCATION **IDE**
Rajiv Gandhi University



MAHIS-401

History of India (Early times-1200 AD) -I

MA HISTORY
1st Semester

Rajiv Gandhi University
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HISTORY OF INDIA (EARLY TIMES-1200 AD)-I

MA [History]

First Semester

MAHIS – 401

RAJIV GANDHI UNIVERSITY

Arunachal Pradesh, INDIA - 791 112

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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 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.

About IDE

The formal system of higher education in our country is facing the problems of access, limitation of seats, lack of facilities and infrastructure. Academicians from various disciplines opine that it is learning which is more important and not the channel of education. The education through distance mode is an alternative mode of imparting instruction to overcome the problems of access, infrastructure and socio-economic barriers. This will meet the demand for qualitative higher education of millions of people who cannot get admission in the regular system and wish to pursue their education. It also helps interested employed and unemployed men and women to continue with their higher education, Distance education is a distinct approach to impart education to learners who remained away in the space and/or time from the teachers and teaching institutions on account of economic, social and other considerations. Our main aim is to provide higher education opportunities to those who are unable to join regular academic and vocational education programmes in the affiliated colleges of the University and make higher education reach to the doorsteps in rural and geographically remote areas of Arunachal Pradesh in particular and North-eastern part of India in general. In 2008, the Centre for Distance Education has been renamed as "Institute of Distance Education (IDE)."

Continuing the endeavor to expand the learning opportunities for distant learners, IDE has introduced Post Graduate Courses in 5 subjects (Education, English, Hindi, History and Political Science) from the Academic Session 2013-14. The Institute of Distance Education is housed in the Physical Sciences Faculty Building (first floor) next to the University Library. The University campus is 6 kms from NERIST point on National Highway 52A. The University buses ply to NERIST point regularly.

Outstanding Features of Institute of Distance Education:

(1) At Par with Regular Mode

Eligibility requirements, curricular content, mode of examination and the award of degrees are on par with the colleges affiliated to the Rajiv Gandhi University and the Department(s) of the University.

(ii) Self-Instructional Study Material (SISM)

The students are provided SISM prepared by the Institute and approved by Distance Education Council (DEC), New Delhi. This will be provided at the time of admission at the IDE or its Study Centres. SISM is provided only in English except Hindi subject.

(iii) Contact and Counseling Programme (CCP)

The course curriculum of every programme involves counselling in the form of personal contact programme of duration of approximately 7-15 days. The CCP shall not be compulsory for BA. However for professional courses and MA the attendance in CCP will be mandatory.

(iv) Field Training and Project

For professional course(s) there shall be provision of field training and project writing in the concerned subject.

(v) Medium of Instruction and Examination

The medium of instruction and examination will be English for all the subjects except for those subjects where the learners will need to write in the respective languages.

(vi) Subject/Counseling Coordinators

For developing study material, the IDE appoints subject coordinators from within and outside the University. In order to run the PCCP effectively Counseling Coordinators are engaged from the Departments of the University. The Counseling-Coordinators do necessary coordination for involving resource persons in contact and counseling programme and assignment evaluation. The learners can also contact them for clarifying their difficulties in then respective subjects.

SYLLABUS
History of India (Early Times-1200 AD)-I

UNIT I: SOURCES OF EARLY INDIAN HISTORY

- a) Archaeological Sources-Exploration, Excavation, Epigraphy, Numismatics, Monuments
- b) Literary Sources- Indigenous: Primary and Secondary-Problems of dating, myths, legends, poetry, scientific literature, literature in regional languages, religious literature.
- c) Foreign accounts: Greek, Chinese and Arab Writers

UNIT II: PREHISTORIC AND PROTOHISTORIC PERIOD

- a) Pre-historic sites and settlements- Lower Paleolithic, Mesolithic, Upper Paleolithic, and Neolithic
- b) Chalcolithic Sites and settlements
- c) Indus Valley Civilization- Features

UNIT III: THE VEDIC AGE AND SANGAM AGE

- a) Early Vedic Age- Society, Religion, Economy and Polity
- b) Later Vedic Age- Society, Religion, Economy and Polity
- c) Sangam Age- Society, Religion, Economy and Polity

UNIT IV: SOCIAL CHANGE AND RELIGIOUS DISSENT

- a) Iron Technology, settled
- b) Rise of new classes
- c) Mahavira, Jainism
- d) Buddha- Buddhism

UNIT V: EMERGENCE OF EMPIRES

- a) 16 Mahajanapadas and Republics, Rise of Magadha
- b) The Nandas and Rise of Chandra Gupta Maurya

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 artifacts, 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 Chandra Gupta 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.

This book - History of India (Early Times-1200 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, Key Terms and Activity further act as useful tools for students and are meant for effective recapitulation of the text.

This book is divided into five units:

Unit 1: Covers the various sources that help us trace the history of early India, such as, coins, monuments, literature and so on.

Unit 2: Examines the Prehistoric and Protohistoric period and the Indus Valley Civilization.

Unit 3: Traces the study of Early Vedic Age, Later Vedic Age and Sangam Age.

Unit 4: Analyses social change and religious dissent which lead to the rise of Buddhism and Jainism.

Unit 5: Identifies the emergence of empires such as Magadha and Nandas.

UNIT 1 SOURCES OF EARLY INDIAN HISTORY

Structure

- 1.0 Introduction
- 1.1 Unit Objectives
- 1.2 Archaeological Sources
 - 1.2.1 Exploration
 - 1.2.2 Excavations
 - 1.2.3 Epigraphy
 - 1.2.4 Numismatics
 - 1.2.5 Monuments
- 1.3 Literary Sources
 - 1.3.1 Literary Sources: Indigenous, Primary and Secondary Sources
 - 1.3.2 Problems of Dating Inscriptions
 - 1.3.3 Oral Traditions: Myths and Legends
 - 1.3.4 Scientific/Secular Literature: Poetry, Drama and Technical Literature
 - 1.3.5 Literature in Regional Languages
 - 1.3.6 Religious Literature
- 1.4 Foreign Accounts: Greek, Chinese and Arab Writers
- 1.5 Summary
- 1.6 Key Terms
- 1.7 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 1.8 Questions and Exercises
- 1.9 Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Indian civilization is among the most ancient civilizations of the world and this fact accounts for it occupying a renowned place of pride in the history of cultures.

Many of the ancient civilizations are now either extinct or have failed to preserve their past traditions. However, the Indian civilization is not only versatile and flexible but has also succeeded in preserving its traditions to the present day. Further, the contribution of Indian culture and civilization to the entire world has been significant. Its spirit of humanity, religious tolerance and spiritualism can be compared favourably with similar sentiments in any other cultural tradition, dead or alive. Its achievements in the fields of religion, philosophy, literature, art, mathematics and astronomy are admirable. Factually, Indians have been lauded for securing some great inventions. However, there can be no denying that the Indian subcontinent has been gradually influenced by geographical factors and this feature played a crucial role in enriching its cultural heritage.

Historical writings on India started in the eighteenth century as a result of the establishment of the rule of the English East India Company. The Englishmen who conquered India were interested in knowing the laws, habits and history of the people of India. In 1784, the Asiatic Society was founded largely through the efforts of Sir William Jones (1746-1794).

The Christian missionaries were also interested in India, although for a different purpose. They had no sympathy for Hinduism which, in their view, was 'at best a work of human folly and at worst the outcome of a diabolic inspiration.' According to Charles

Grant, the people of India lived in a degenerate condition because Hinduism was the source of dishonesty, perjury, selfishness, social divisions and sexual vices.

In this unit, you will learn about the various sources of ancient Indian history. These include archaeological and literary sources as well as accounts of foreign travellers.

1.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Explain the archaeological sources and the foreign accounts that provide information of Indian history
- Assess the importance of the sources of early Indian history
- List the crucial literary sources for understanding ancient history
- Describe the position of literary sources, both religious and secular, in detail

1.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOURCES

Archaeology has contributed a lot to the history of ancient India and its importance cannot be under emphasized. Indian archaeology is a science of recent growth but it has made wonderful progress during that brief period. The pioneer work was done by the Europeans but the same is being carried out now by the Indians. The study of the Indian antiquities was initiated by scholars like Sir William Jones who founded the Asiatic society of Bengal in 1774. A large number of researches were hampered by the ignorance of the script but that difficulty was solved by Jones Prinsep in 1838 by his discovery of the Brahmi script. After that discovery, the task of deciphering the inscriptions became an easy one and a lot of work was done by historians like Fergusson, Cunningham, Dr. Rajendra Lai Mitra, and Dr. Bhau Daji. The greatest contribution was made by General Cunningham who was appointed in 1862 as the Archaeological Surveyor to the Government. He devoted about half a century to the study of ancient Indian history. Through his personal investigations, he gathered a lot of information regarding the geography of ancient India. He also collected a large number of Indian coins. Digging was also started at places like Bodh-Gaya, Bharhut, Sanchi, Sarnath and Taxila.

Lord Curzon set up a separate Department of Archaeology and appointed Dr. Marshall as the Director-General of Archaeology. With him were associated scholars like Dr. Vogel, Dr. Stein, Dr. Bloch and Dr. Spooner. Under the direction and supervision of Dr. Marshall, the ancient sites of Taxila covering an area of about 25 sq. miles were excavated and a lot of useful information was collected. The ancient city of Pataliputra, too, was excavated by Dr. Spooner but much information could not be extracted on account of water-logging. Dr. Spooner also promoted the mine laying of the Buddhist sites of Nalanda University and a lot of material was secured within the next two decades. In 1922, R.D. Banerjee started the same work at Mohenjodaro in Sind and the same procedure was followed at Harappa. The information collected from Harappa and Mohenjodaro was fused together and Sir John Marshall wrote his monumental work on the Indus Valley Civilization. A lot of work was done by the Hungarian scholar Aurel Stein in Baluchistan, Kashmir and Turkestan. N. G. Majumdar and Dr. Mackay also made their contribution to the already existing works on the Indus Valley Civilization. A lot of archaeological work is being carried out at present in various parts of India.

1.2.1 Exploration

Since time immemorial, people have an inquisitiveness about their surrounding and the universe. They used exploration as a means of pushing the boundaries of known lands and creating new interpretation of the workings of the cosmos. As people wandered farther from home, they found new civilizations, large rivers, wide oceans and exotic foods. As a result of growing curiosity, the desire to augment military might and demand for goods, exploration was linked to trade.

Skylax from Greece was the first ever western geographer. According to Herodotus, Skylax (naval officer in Persia), was sent by King Dario to explore the estuaries of Indus river in 510 BC. To start with, he followed the flow of river through mountains in Afghanistan until its exit into the Arabian sea. Later, he followed the coast and explored the Gulf of Oman and the south-eastern side of the Arabic Peninsula. He presented to the King the record of his travels, a chronicle with the title *Periplus*. Dario used this important information to conquer India and set up naval bases and new harbours.

Conquests of Alexander the Great in 320 BC extended the known world to the distant East. Alexander wanted to enslave Asia and annex it to Greece, which was extended in all Mediterranean. Twenty years after Alexander's aggression in Indian territories, Megasthenes from Ionia was sent to the Indian empire. During his stay in India, he visited almost all of Northern India and also reached the Himalayas. In his efforts to record the extent of India, Megasthenes reported that the country's width from East to West was about 16,000 stades and her length from North to South 22,300 stades (1 stade = 180 metres). He also reported big rivers of country, as Ganges, Indus, and also other 58 navigable rivers in the extent of the country.

Early Chinese sailors explored many of Asia's rivers and surrounding seas. They ventured as far as India and the eastern coast of Africa. Exploration and trade aided in the creation of a powerful and far-reaching Chinese empire.

According to Alberuni, one of the greatest Persian scholars of the medieval Islamic era, 'The Hindus do not pay much attention to the historical order of things; they are very careless in relating the chronological succession of things, and when they are pressed for information and are at a loss not knowing what to say, they invariably take to tale-telling.'

Some writers have gone to the extent of maintaining that the people of ancient India had no historical sense in them. It is true that the old extreme view, which is essentially prejudiced, is being given up and it is admitted even by scholars like Dr. Keith that 'there is a certain amount of writing and a number of facts attesting a degree of sense for history.'

When the Indians took up this challenge, the pendulum at times swung to the opposite extremes. While the British historians tried to minimize the importance of ancient India, the Indian historians tried to glorify it. However, that period seems to have passed now and having become free from political subjugation and due to the availability of new resources, we are now in a better position to explore and interpret the history of ancient India.

Efforts were made by the Europeans to explore the history of ancient India in the latter half of the eighteenth century. The efforts of a few Jesuit Fathers like Father Hanxladen in mastering Sanskrit and of Father Coeudouse to recognize the kinship of Sanskrit with the language of Europe gave no understanding of India's past.

NOTES

The efforts which brought about definite results in this field were made by Sir William Jones, who came to India as a judge of the Supreme Court during the days of Warren Hastings as governor-general. Jones was a linguist who had already learnt the important languages of Europe as well as Hebrew, Arabic, Persian, Turkish and a little of Chinese before he came to India. Here, he learnt Sanskrit also. In 1784, with the help of Charles Wilkins, he established the Asiatic Society of Bengal. In the journal of this society, *Asiatic Researches*, the first real steps in revealing India's past were taken. Jones himself translated *Sakuntala*, *Gita-Govinda* and the law-book of Manu in English while *Bhagavad Gita* and *Hitopadesa* were translated by Wilkins. Thus, Jones and Wilkins were truly the fathers of the process that can be conveniently termed as Indology. They were followed by Henry Colebrooke and Horace Hayman Wilson. In 1786 a Frenchman, Anquetil-Duperron, translated the *Upanishads* from a seventeenth century Persian version. The efforts of these pioneers created interest in Sanskrit literature in Europe and chairs were instituted at London, Cambridge, Edinburgh and several other universities of Europe and America for the study of the revered language. It also resulted in the establishment of the French Asiatic Society in 1821 in Paris followed by the Royal Asiatic Society in London two years later. A German-Sanskrit dictionary prepared by two German scholars was published in parts by the Russian Imperial Academy of Sciences from 1852 to 1875. Another notable contribution was made by Max Muller, a German scholar, who spent most of his working life as a professor of philology at Oxford and translating the *Rig-veda* and a series of books known as the Sacred Books of the East in English. In 1837, James Prinsep interpreted for the first time the earliest Brahmi script and was able to read the edicts of Emperor Ashoka.

These literary efforts created a curiosity amongst the scholars and travellers to probe further into the history and culture of India. It resulted in the establishment of an Archaeological department in 1862 and Alexander Cunningham was appointed as its head. During the period of his Viceroyalty, Lord Curzon took a personal interest in supervising the working of the department. John Marshall was appointed the director-general of this department which was reformed and enlarged subsequently. With the help of one Indian officer Mr R.D. Banerji, Sir John Marshall discovered the remnants of the Indus civilization in 1922. Afterwards, useful work was done by many Indian scholars in exploring the history and culture of India. Amongst the pioneers were Dr Bhan Daji, Dr Bhagavad Lai Indrajai, Dr Rajendra Lai Mitra, Dr R.G. Bhandarkar and Dr A. Ghosh. Now, this work has been taken up mostly by the Indians and foreign scholars who are working simply as their associates. All these efforts have contributed to the exploration of the ancient history and culture of India and their various sources.

1.2.2 Excavations

In archaeology, excavation is the exposure, processing and recording of archaeological remains. The development of excavation techniques has moved over the years from a treasure hunting process to one which seeks to fully understand the sequence of human activity on a given site and that site's relationship with other sites and with the landscape in which it is set. Since independence, various agencies like the Archaeological Survey of India, State Departments of Archaeology, Universities and other research organizations have conducted archaeological excavations in different parts of the country.

The important excavated cities and towns of ancient India include Peshawar (ancient Purushapura), Taxila, etc., in North-western Frontier Province and the Punjab;

Check Your Progress

1. Fill in the blanks.
 - (a) Upanishadas were translated from the Persian version by _____.
 - (b) Sir William Jones founded _____ of Bengal in the year 1784.
2. State whether True or False.
 - (a) With the help of one Indian officer Mr R.D. Banerji, Sir John Marshall discovered the remnants of the Indus civilization in 1922.
 - (b) The French Asiatic Society was established in 1821 in Paris.

Mathura; Varanasi, Sravasti, Kausambi, Ahichchhatra, Hastinapur, etc., in UP; Rajgir (ancient Rajagriha), Nalanda, Bodh Gaya, certain parts of Pataliputra, etc., in Bihar; Vrissa, Padmavati, Ujjain, Sanchi, etc. in Madhya Pradesh; Bairat, Rairh, Sambhar, Karkotnagar, etc., in Rajasthan; Langhnaj, Anhilper, Patan, Amreli, etc., in Gujarat; Kolhapur, Kondapur, etc., in Deccan; Chandravali, Brahmagiri etc., in Mysore; Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda, etc., in Andhra; Virampattanam etc., in Madras; Paharpur, Mahasthana, Pundravardhana, Kotivarsha, etc., in Bengal; and Parihaspur, Avantipur, Martand in Kashmir.

Special mention may be made here of the pre-Aryan civilization of Indus Valley, excavated partly in Mohenjodaro and Chanhu-daro in Sind, and partly in Harappa in the Punjab during the later phase of British rule in India. With extensive excavations in post-Independent period, sites have been discovered in a large area consisting North-Western India, Rajasthan and the Deccan. Mehrgarh excavations deserve a special mention since Mehrgarh, located on the bank of the Bolan river in the Kochi plain (Baluchistan), is the only known Neolithic settlement in the Indian subcontinent, attributed to approximately 7000 BC.

Since independence, with the initiative of Central and State archaeological departments and different universities, almost every year archaeological excavations are revealing new data on different aspects of pre-history and ancient history of India.

1.2.3 Epigraphy

In ancient times, the 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 231 BC). 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.

Under the heading of archaeology, we discuss the information derived from inscriptions, numismatics and monuments. Regarding inscriptions, they are of a very great value being engraved upon stones and metals and they cannot be tampered without detection. Consequently, we can be sure while using the material from the inscriptions that they contain what was then originally written. While in the case of books, there is the possibility of interpolations by the known and unknown authors, however, that is not the case with these inscriptions. Their genuineness cannot be doubted. The inscriptions also give us a correct idea of the method of writing followed at the time when they were actually inscribed. The character of the script inscribed also enables us to fix their approximate age. Location can also throw some valuable light. The difficulty in deciphering the instructions has been overcome in most of the cases although the script of the Indus Valley still remains a mystery.

If we analyse the contents of the inscriptions, they can be grouped under the following heads—commercial, magical, religious, didactic, administrative, eulogistic, votive or dedicative, donative, commemorative and literary. In the case of commercial inscriptions, their specimens are found on the seals of the Indus Valley. Some of these seals must have been used for the stamping of bales of merchandise and commodities like potteries. It is possible that the shorter inscriptions (on the seals) are simply the

owner's name and longer ones include titles that the owner of the seal happens to possess. These seals may have been used by the seafaring traders engaged in foreign trade. It seems that *Nigamas* and *Srenis* (which were commercial organizations) had the power of minting their coins and they must have possessed seals to be used for such commercial purposes. Their record on the perishable materials must have disappeared. However, there are references to the use of seals for commercial purposes in other inscriptions, e.g., the Mandasore stone inscription of time of Kumaragupta and Bandhuvarman (Malwa Era 529).

Some specimens of magical inscriptions are found in the Harappan seals which were used as amulets and contained a magical formulae on them. The seals have not been deciphered as yet and it is difficult to know their contents. However, they are very likely to contain the names of the deities which are represented by the animals. The animals represented on the amulets are the antelope, buffalo, Brahma bull (a composite animal), elephant, goat, hare, human figure, monkey, rhinoceros, short-horned bull and tiger. Some of the deities represented by them are Moon, Yama, Siva, Indra, Brahma and Durga. It is to be observed that magical formulae continued to be written on metals as well as on birch-bark (*Bhojapatra*) and other materials.

Religious and didactic inscriptions deal with religious and moral matters. Possibly some of the seals and tablets of the Indus Valley were the objects of worship and their use as amulets was forbidden. The inscriptions of Ashoka are the best specimen of the religious and didactic types. The edicts of Ashoka are appropriately called *Dhamma-Lipi*.

Ashoka's edicts are also a specimen of the administrative inscriptions. An extract from one of his inscriptions reads thus: 'Everywhere in my dominions, the *Yuktas*, the *Rajukas* and the *Pradesikas* shall proceed on circuit every five years as well for this purpose (for the instruction of *Dhamma*) as for other business.' The Sohgaura copper plate inscription of the third century BC is an example of pure administrative inscription. The Junagadh rock inscription of Rudradaman I also contains some administrative material. A large number of copper plate inscriptions have been found both in the north and south and they contain many useful administrative details. Reference may be made in this connection to the Banskhera copper plate inscription of Harsha.

The eulogistic inscriptions (*Prasastis*) are very important from the political point of view. Generally, they contain an elaboration concerning the King, his military, political and administrative system and achievements, the existence of the contemporary states coming into conflict with him and the inter-state relations, the personal accomplishments of the Kings, his patronage and charity and mythological or Puranic allusions by way of comparison and similes. One great difficulty in these inscriptions is that there is a tendency on the part of the authors to exaggerate the achievements of their patrons.

Eulogistic inscriptions can be further subdivided into two parts viz. pure eulogy and eulogy mixed with other types. The edicts of Ashoka form a category by themselves. The Hathigumpha inscription of Kalinga belongs to the category of pure eulogy. It describes in detail the achievements of Kharavela in a chronological order. To the same category belongs the Allahabad Pillar inscription of Samudragupta. The number of inscriptions which contain eulogy mixed with other matter is very large. Practically, in every document of a permanent nature, reference is made to the glories of the ruling sovereign and his ancestors. Important specimens of the mixed type are to be found in the Nasik Cave inscription of Usavadata, the Junagadh rock inscription of Rudradaman I, the Nasik cave inscription of Gautami Balasri, the Mehrauli iron pillar inscription of Chandragupta

Junagadh rock inscription of Skandagupta, the Bhitari stone pillar inscription of Skandagupta, the Mandasor Stone pillar inscription of Yasodharman, the Stone inscription of Isanvarman, the Aihole Stone Inscription of the time of Pulakesin II, the Talagunda stone pillar inscription of the time of Santivarman, the Nagarjunakonda inscriptions of Vira purusdatta, Mandasor stone inscription of the time of Kumaragupta II and Bandhuvarman, etc.

We have a large number of votive or dedicative inscriptions. It is possible that some of the tablets found in the Indus Valley contain votive inscriptions. The Piprahwa vase inscription records the dedication of the relic casket of Lord Buddha. The Besnagar Garuda pillar inscription of Heliodorus also belongs to this category. Many of the dedicative inscriptions deal with the installation of images and the construction of temples. Reference may be made in this connection to the Mandasor Inscription of the time of Kumaragupta Nand Bandhuvarman and the Bhitari Pillar Inscription of Skandagupta and the Aihole inscription of the time of Pulakesin II.

The number of donative inscriptions is quite large as many occasions offered themselves for this purpose to the rulers and the subjects. Some of the inscriptions refer to the donations of caves or other buildings for the residence of monks and ascetics. Some refer to the donation of money in the form of a permanent endowment. Out of these funds, the Brahmins and the needy were fed and lamps were lighted in the temples. In some inscriptions, there is a reference to the donation of lands and villages to the monasteries, educational institutions and the Brahmins.

Commemorative inscriptions record births, deaths or other important events. The Rummidei inscription of Ashoka reads 'King Priyadarsin, beloved of the gods, when he had been consecrated many years, came in person and did worship. Because here the Shakya sage, Buddha, was born, he caused a huge stone wall to be made and a stone pillar to be erected.' A large number of commemorative inscriptions refer to the Silaharas of Kohlapur, the Chalukyas of Kalyani, the Rashtrakutas, the Yadavas, etc.

Some inscriptions contain poetic compositions and dramatic works and their purpose is primarily literary. From the Mahanirvana Stupa at Kusinagara in Uttar Pradesh was discovered a copper plate containing 13 lines the *Udana-Sutra* of Buddha.

Inscriptions have been found on stone and copper plates and other materials. The details of Asoka's reign tell us that he got his edicts engraved on stone so that they may last for a long time. Writings on stone were done on rocks, pillars, slabs, pedestal or the back of images, rims and lids of vases, caskets, prisms of crystal, walls of temples, pavements of pillars of colonnades, and caves, etc.

Copper was the material which was commonly used for the writing of inscriptions. A copper-plated inscription was called Tamrapatra, Tamrasasana, Sasanapattra or Danapattra according to its contents. It is remarkable to note that the land-grants were invariably inscribed on the copper plates and were handed over to the concerned so that they may serve as title-deeds. Fa-hien tells us that in many Buddhist monasteries he found those copper plates which referred to the grant of land. Some of them were as old as the time of Buddha. The discovery of Sohgaure copper plates of the Mauryan period confirms this statement of Fa-hien. Hieun Tsang tells us that emperor Kanishka used to summon a Buddhist council which prepared these commentaries. These were later engraved on copper plates and kept in stone caskets which were placed in the Stupas built over them. It is also stated that the commentaries of Sayana on the Vedas were engraved on copper. Some specimens of the books inscribed on copper plates are to be found in the British Museum. The use of copper for writing purposes was not very common up to the sixth century AD but it remained quite popular for the next six centuries.

Copper plates were of different sizes and thickness. Some of them were so thin that they could be bent easily and there were others which were very thick and heavy. The size of a copper plate depended upon two factors, the contents of the document and the size of the commonly used writing material in the district where the copper plate was issued. Sometimes, a document was inscribed not on one copper plate but on many and in that case the copper plates were fastened together by means of copper rings. In this way, the copper plates looked like a book which would be opened easily. Sufficient margin was left on the copper plates.

1.2.4 Numismatics

A study of ancient Indian coins enlightens us a great deal regarding the history of ancient India. The Numismatic Society of India is doing a lot of useful work in this connection. We have, at present, a large number of coins excavated from various parts of India dealing with the different aspects of ancient Indian history. Coins are of various metals viz. gold, silver and copper.

Coins help to build up the history of the country in many ways. They give us the names of the kings who ruled at various times in different parts of the country. In many cases, the coins are the only sources of information we have regarding the existence of certain kings. Without these coins, the very existence of those kings would have remained unknown. Many a time, the information from the coins can be used to corroborate the evidence extracted from other sources such as the Puranas and other religious literature. The coins also help us to fix up the chronology as they mention the year in which they were issued. The existence of a large number of coins issued during the different years of the reign of a king helps us to fix the exact dates for the accession and the death of the king. Coins have helped us to fix the dates of Samudragupta. The location of coins helps us to determine the extent of the territory of a king. The discovery of a large number of Roman coins in India confirms the fact that there was brisk trade between India and the Roman Empire. That also refers to the economic prosperity of India and the coastal activities of its people. The figures of the various kings appear on the coins from where we can get an idea of the head-dresses and attire of those kings. Sometimes, the hobbies or the amusements of the rulers can also be known from studying their coins. Coins give an indication of the prosperity (or otherwise) of a country. If people have gold or silver coins, they are likely to be prosperous. The case is the opposite if they have copper coins alone or more of them than those of gold or silver. Sometimes, the depreciation of coinage gives an indication that the country was passing through difficult times. During the Huna invasion of India, the Gupta currency depreciated. The symbols on the Gupta coinage refer to their zeal for Hinduism. The coins give us genuine information regarding the history of ancient India as there is no possibility of their being tampered with. Coins were issued by the rulers and other authorities like *Srenis*, etc., and there is no possibility of their being issued merely to deceive people.

The earliest coins of India have only figures, devices or symbols and no legends. Sometimes, the coins were cast in a die but very often symbols were punched metal pieces. These symbols varied from time-to-time and were punched with a view to guarantee their genuineness and value. On account of the absence of legends on them, much information is not available.

After the Greek invasion of India, the practice of writing the names of the kings on the coins was started. A large number of coins were issued by the Indo-Bactrian rulers who had under their control Punjab and the North-western Frontier. These coins possessed a high degree of artistic excellence and ultimately had a tremendous influence

on Indian coinage. The design borrowed in the Indian coinage was the name and the portrait of the ruler. The Greek coins refer to about thirty Greek kings and queens who ruled in India. The classical writers refer to only four or five of them and had these coins remained undiscovered, the names of other rulers would have remained absolutely unknown. The coins of the Scythians and Pratiharas are of an inferior quality but they also give us a lot of historical information. Their coins have enabled us to have an outline of the history of their rulers and without them even the outlines would have been missing. A branch of the Scythians settled in Gujarat and Kathiawar issued coins in which the names of the ruling kings and their fathers were mentioned in the Saka era. These have helped us to reconstruct the history of the Western *Satrap*s for more than three centuries. The Kushans also issued a large number of coins. The existence of the Malawas, Yaudheyas and the Mitra rulers of Panchala is known only from the coins. The coins of the Satavahanas supplement, correct and corroborate the accounts of the Puranas. The Gupta coins also give us a lot of useful information. The Indian coins after the Gupta period do not give us much historical information.

According to historians, V.A. Smith and Rapson, the punch-marked coins represent a private coinage. The view of Smith is that they were issued by guilds and goldsmiths with the permission of the ruling power. The numerous obverse punches were made by different moneyers through whose hands those coins passed. The reverse marks were the signs of approval by the controlling authority. According to Rapson, the obverse marks were the private marks of the money-changers and the reverse marks denoted the locality in which the coins were issued. However, recent researches have proved that the punch-marked coins were issued by a regular public authority. A few of them found at Pataliputra have been ascribed by Dr. K.P. Jayaswal to the age of Chandragupta Maurya. A large number of coins are to be found in government museums and municipal museums and with private collectors. A critical study of all of them is bound to give a lot of additional evidence.

1.2.5 Monuments

The ancient monuments like buildings, statues of stones or metals, terracotta, ornamental and decorative fragments, pottery, etc., give us a lot of useful and reliable information. The excavations at the sites of the old towns like Harappa, Mohenjodaro and Taxila have revealed secrets hitherto unknown and, thus, changed our concept of ancient India. It is after the discovery of the Indus Valley Civilization that we began to talk of a civilization in India prior to that of the Aryans. The excavation at Taxila throws welcome light on the Kushanas. A study of the sculptures found from there gives us an idea of the Gandhara School of art. The digging of the old sites of Pataliputra gives us some information regarding the old capital of the Mauryas. The Angkor-Vat in Cambodia and Borobodur in Java bear testimonial to the colonial and cultural activities of the Indians in ancient times. The temples of Deogadh in Jhansi and Bhitargaon near Kanpur throw light on the artistic activities of the Guptas. The excavations add to our knowledge regarding Buddhism and Ashoka. The excavations in China, Turkestan and Baluchistan by Stein prove the intimate contacts of India with those territories. The progress of the archaeological work in India in the near future is bound to enrich our knowledge of ancient Indian history.

ACTIVITY

Visit the libraries in your locality and find out the information about the Numismatic Society of India. Prepare a report on their work and achievements.

NOTES

Check Your Progress

3. Fill in the blanks.
 - (a) Asoka's edicts are also a specimen of the _____ inscriptions.
 - (b) The excavation at Taxila throws welcome light on the _____.
4. State whether True or False.
 - (a) Coins help to build up the history of the country in many ways.
 - (b) The scripts on the Harappan seals can be easily deciphered.

1.3 LITERARY SOURCES

The literary source for the reconstruction of ancient Indian history may be classified as (i) indigenous literature and (ii) accounts of the foreign travelers.

1.3.1 Literary Sources: Indigenous, Primary and Secondary Sources

The indigenous literature may be divided into a number of varieties, e.g. religious text, secular or scientific text, biography, poetic writings and regional literature. However, when literary writings are patronized by the king's court, they are likely to be exaggerated ones. Thus, they should be used as sources of history with caution. Foreign accounts are also to be used cautiously as the foreigners, in most of the cases, did not know Indian language and the pattern of life.

Indigenous literature

The Indigenous literature includes the Vedas, the Brahmanas, the Aryankas, the Upanishads, the Epics (Ramayana and Mahabharatha), the Brahmashastras, the Puranas. The Buddhist and Jain literature gives knowledge of the traditions prevalent in those periods. The books of this period are in Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit. They give us a knowledge about music, dance, painting architecture and administration of various kings. Kautilya's *Arthashastra* is a remarkable work on the system of administration. The Sangam literature in south is an elaborate record of life in South India. Though these literatures lack historical sense, they are the main sources to venture into the facts of Indian history.

Primary literary sources

Primary sources are original materials. Information for which the writer has no personal knowledge is not primary, although it may be used by historians in the absence of a primary source. In the study of history as an academic discipline, a primary source (also called original source or evidence) is an artifact, a document, a recording, or other source of information that was created at the time under study. It serves as an original source of information about the topic. Similar definitions are used in library science, and other areas of scholarship, although different fields have somewhat different definitions.

Secondary literary sources

Secondary sources are works of synthesis and interpretation based upon primary sources and the work of other authors. They may take a variety of forms. The authors of secondary sources develop their interpretations and narratives of events based on primary sources, that is, documents and other evidence created by participants or eyewitnesses. Frequently, they also take advantage of the work of other historians by using other secondary sources. Reference books, popular periodical literature, and general historical works and monographs are the examples of secondary sources.

1.3.2 Problems of Dating Inscriptions

Most of disputes in history start with dates. It is very difficult to know the exact year of existence of particular person from inscriptions. For example, inscriptions are dated in some many ways: ranging from simple year date (regnal or era) to detailed year-month *tithi* (lunar day), week day and/or other calendrical or astronomical dates. Let us see the Era or dating used.

Regnal (relating to a king or his reign) Year

This is practice of dating records from regnal years of king. This method is used in most of the inscriptions. In their inscriptions, Ashoka, the Satavahana, the Ikshvakus, used regnal years in their records. This continued in medieval period with the Palas, the Pallavas, the Cholas and the Pandyas. A typical inscription with regnal year, might say: 'The great king of so-and-so with so-and-so titles with so-and-so achievements donated in the first year of his reign.' The inscription may add the *tithi* or day of the week, or month in addition to the regnal year. Unless additional reference date or another king or ruler or event is provided the dating of the inscription is not absolute. These inscriptions have to be dated by techniques similar to paleographic records or undated inscriptions. The problem with regnal years is that everything is relative and fluid, with change of date of one inscription every other inscription has to be re-dated. If Greek had not come to India, we would not be able to date Ashoka and with Ashoka the entire Indian History.

Year of an Era

Starting from the first century BC, some inscriptions dated the years in continuous era. In this practice, a king issued the inscriptions in the regnal years of the previous kings instead of his accession. This system was seen in the dynasties. Sometimes this system was followed even when the dynasties fell and new ones took over. Let us discuss some of the eras.

Jain Nirvana Era

This date starts with Nirvana or salvation of Last Jain Tirthakarna Vardhamana Mahavir. While Vicarasreni (1310 AD) in *Merutunga* (Prakrit) gives date as 470 years to Vikrama Era, Nemichandra (1084 AD) in *Mahaviracariam* (prakrit) gives the date as 605 years and 5 months before the start of Saka Era. So, the dispute will be there as the Mahavira date is not certain.

Buddhist nirvana Era

Cantonese records say each year after passing of Buddha was represented by a dot and so the date of Buddha is 486 BC, the start of Buddhist nirvana Era. But there is no agreement in Buddhist world. So the dates are disputed.

Vikram Era

This Era starts in 50 BC. Vikramaditya regained his ancestral kingdom in Ujjain by expelling the Sakas from there after 9 years of their rule (66-57 BCE). In order to commemorate his victory over them, he introduced a new era called Vikram Samvat (or Malawa Samvat) in 57 BCE. This story is also disputed.

Saka Era

The origin of Saka is very debatable. However, it is generally agreed that Kanishka was the first to use Saka Era. So, the origin is given to him. But Kushana chronology itself is debated. The Era starts in 78 AD.

Gupta or Vallabi Era

Due to absence of this era in the early inscriptions of the Guptas, the date of origin of this era is questionable. Most historians attribute this era to accession of Chandragupta I.

The dates are calculated by adding years 319 to 322 years to what is found in the inscriptions.

Kalachuri-Cedi Era

The date of origin of this era is also doubtful. The date of 248 AD based on the accession of Abhira king Isvara Dutta is now not valid.

1.3.3 Oral Traditions: Myths and Legends

Oral tradition applies to a process of communication of facts from one individual to the other through oral messages which are based on previous information. It is as old as human beings, since before writing was invented, spoken words were the only means to pass information from generation to generation. Many people around the world continue to use oral traditions to pass along knowledge and wisdom. Interviews and recordings of community elders and witnesses to historical events provide existing stories, anecdotes and other information about the past.

Eye witness accounts are purportedly the fundamental component of oral tradition. They are without fail a direct and personal experience and involve both perceptions and emotions. Oral tradition is an aspect that shapes most parts of historical sources. In writing history, there are a variety of sources available to the historian to gain the accurate knowledge of events and actions that happened in the past and which are presently unavailable for scrutiny or direct study since the persons or events are no more. Historians rely on information on any evidence from the past, therefore anything; material or immaterial that bears witness to the past is a historical document or source.

Myths and historical documentation

Numerous historians and scholars in their related fields use the term 'myths' in somewhat different ways. In a very broad sense, myth is referred to any traditional history. The main characters in myths are usually gods, deities or supernatural heroes whose stories were usually sacred stories. Myths are often endorsed by rulers and priests and closely linked to religion in the society in which it is told. A myth is usually regarded as a true account of the remote and immediate past. Myths as traditions of the people are not invented, they are experienced. It is an aspect of orally transmitted tradition among various peoples of the world and form part and parcel of the history of the people..

The *Mahabharat*, which is considered as huge historical source, contains numerous aspects of myths, legend and folklores. Apparently, numerous fields of study, ranging from history, archaeology, astronomy and linguistics have used the epic and its accounts to provide insight into their respective pursuits and understanding of ancient and modern culture, mythology, anthropology and morality – to name just a few.

1.3.4 Scientific/Secular Literature: Poetry, Drama and Technical Literature

Scientific/Secular literature, comprising poetry, drama and technical literature like grammar, astronomy, medicine, statecraft, provide embedded information often useful to historians. Discovery of ancient texts of Indian poetry and drama has revealed the history of ancient Indian culture. Technical literature reflects the advanced knowledge attained by society in the respective fields.

As the term suggests, the writings included in this section are not restricted to a particular religious sect or social class. Rather, it focuses upon sorting out those major

texts which were composed by neutral and intellectual personalities so as to compile an exact and a precisely transparent record of Indian culture and heritage. Therefore, it includes writings by foreigners, biographical works of great historical persons, historical texts and literary compositions.

The Greek, Roman, Chinese and Muslim writers and travellers have left fairly interesting sources of information in their accounts. Amongst the Greek and Roman writers, Strabo, Skylax, Justin, Herodotus, Curtius, Diodorus, Arrian, Plutarch, Ptolemy and the anonymous author of the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* have left interesting accounts of India. But the most popular amongst them is *Indica* written by Megasthenes who lived for some time in the court of Chandragupta Maurya as an ambassador of Seleucus. Amongst the Muslims, Sulaiman and Al Masudi left brief records of India while Alberuni who came to India with Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni wrote the best ever foreign account of India that this age has produced. The Chinese travellers Fa-hien, Hiuen Tsang and I-tsing recorded their experiences in bulky volumes which provide us with useful and relevant information. Besides these important writers and travellers there are many other Greek, Muslim and Chinese authors whose works play a crucial role in educating us regarding the contemporary Indian cultural beliefs.

Accounts apart, the contemporary biographical works also prove to be a source of authentic and filtered information. The most important of these works are Harshacharita of Banabhatta, Gaudavaho and Vikramankadeva-charita of Vakapati and Bilhana describing the exploits of Yasovarman and Vikramaditya of the later Chalukya dynasty, Kumarapala-charita of Jayasimha, Kumarapala-Charita of Hemachandra, Hammir-Kavya of Nayachandra, and Bhoj Prabandha by Ballal, and Prithviraja-Vijaya by an anonymous writer. Amongst the historical writings, the most famous is the Rajataragini, the history of Kashmir written by Kalhana. After him, writers like Jonaraja, Srivara, Prajya Bhatta and Shuka carried on this work and scribbled down the history of Kashmir till a few years after its conquest by the Mughal emperor Akbar. The Gujarat chronicles like Ras-Mala, Kirti Kaumudi Hammira Mada-Mardana, Vasanta-vilasa, the Persian translation of Chachanama which gives a detailed account of the Arab conquest of Sind, the Vansavalis of Nepal and Tamil literature, particularly of the Sangam age, also throw valuable light on the contemporary history and culture of their respective places.

Pure literary works such as dramas and poems and prose works on polity, economy and grammar carried out by scholars in the other branches of knowledge are also of some valuable help. Among them, the most notable are Arthashastra of Kautilya, Mohabhashya of Patanjali, Astadhyayi of Panini, Mudra-Rakshasa of Vishakhadatta, and the Katha Sarita Sagar of Somdeva dealing with the period of the Mauryas. The Nitisara written by Kamandaka provides an insight into the polity of the Gupta rulers, the Mahabhashya of Patanjali and the Malvikaganimitram written by Kalidas help us in finding out the material concerning the history of the Sungas and the Mricchakatika of Sudraka and the Das Kumara-Charita written by Dandin throw useful light on the contemporary socio-political and economic life.

Judging by the same standards, the Sangam literature written in Tamil language becomes a sort of mirror reflecting the social and political realities of the Chera, the Chola and the Pandya dynasties of the far South up to third century AD.

However, the list is not complete. Different scholars wrote religious and secular texts in Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, Tamil and other languages at different points of time. Among them, many are well known and many more might have been missed. Besides,

a student of history should be cautious while going through this literature, whether religious or secular, in an effort to dig out ancient Indian history, as religious history is no historical chronicle and the object of biographical works, in most cases, remains the glorification of the kings while the writings of the foreigners are mostly based upon second-hand information. Yet, though suffering from these handicaps, the literary sources certainly provide valuable help to the students of Indian history.

1.3.5 Literature in Regional Languages

India is very rich in languages. There are a number of languages and dialects being spoken in India. The country has a vast diversity in regional languages. A regional language is a language spoken in an area of a nation state, whether it be a small area, a federal state or province, or some wider area. Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu are the important regional languages of India.

Urdu emerged as an independent language towards the end of the 4th century AD. It, as a language, was born out of the interaction between Hindi and Persian. Urdu became more popular in the early eighteenth century. People even wrote accounts of later Mughals in Urdu. Gradually it achieved a status where literature, both poetry and prose, started being composed in it. The last Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar wrote poetry in it. Urdu was given its pride of place by a large number of poets who have left inimitable poetry for posterity. The earliest Urdu poet is supposed to be Khusrau (1253-1325). He started writing as a poet in the reign of Sultan Balban and was a follower of Nizamuddin Auliya. He is said to have composed ninety-nine works on separate themes and numerous verses of poetry. Among the important works composed by him are *Laila Majnu* and *Ayina-I-Sikandari* dedicated to Alau-din-Khalji.

There was a tremendous growth of regional languages like Hindi, Bengali, Assamese, Oriya, Marathi and Gujarati in the medieval period. Hindi evolved during the Apabhramsa stage between the 7th and 8th centuries AD. In the South, Malayalam emerged as an independent language in the 14th century. The rise of the Bhakti movement and the use of these regional languages by the various saints helped in the growth and development of English literature. We have already noted the various dialects that developed in northern and western India. *Prithviraj Raso* is supposed to be the first book in the Hindi language. It is an account of exploits of Prithviraj Chauhan.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy wrote in Bengali (besides English) that gave impetus to Bengali literature. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-91) and Akshay Kumar Dutta (1820-86) were two other writers of this early period. In addition to these, Bankim Chandra Chatterji (1834-94), Sharat Chandra Chatterji (1876-1938), and R.C. Dutta, a noted historian and a prose writer, all contributed to the making of Bengali literature.

The earliest Assamese literature consisted of buranjis (court chronicles). Shankardev has left several devotional poems, which people sang with rapturous pleasure, but it was only after 1827 that more interest was shown in producing Assamese literature. Two names, Lakshmi Nath Bezbarua and Padmanaba Gohain Barua cannot be forgotten.

From Orissa, a couple of names are worth mentioning and these are Fakirmohan Senapati and Radha Nath Ray, whose writings deserve considerable attention in the history of Oriya literature. The works of Upendra Bhanja (1670 - 1720) were important as they ushered a new period of Oriya literature. The works of Saraladasa are regarded as the first works of Oriya literature.

Punjabi is a language with several shades. Guru Nanak was the first poet in Punjabi. His poems are still being sung by local singers. There are several other poetic stories which have been composed by the locals. This folklore has been preserved. The most important of these is *Heer* of Waris Shah. It is the most popular of the early works. It is a landmark in Punjabi poetry.

Early Gujarati literature is available in the form of Bhakti songs of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Dr. K.M. Munshi was a great Gujarati novelist, an essayist and a historian, and has left a plethora of historical novels. In these books, he exhibits his ability to mix fact with fiction. *Prithvi Vallabha* is one of his finest novels.

The earliest Marathi poetry and prose is by Saint Jnaneshwar (Gyaneshwar) who lived in the thirteenth century. He wrote a long commentary on the *Bhagavad Gita*. He was the one who started the *kirtan* tradition in Maharashtra.

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1.3.6 Religious Literature

Religious literature includes the religious texts of the Hindus, Buddhists and Jains.

Hindu religious texts

The first literary source of the Hindus is the Samhita which includes four Vedas namely the Rigveda, the Samveda, the Yajurveda and the Atharvaveda. Besides these, there are the Brahmanas (the Satapatha, Panchavis, Atreya, etc.), the Upanishads (the Kathaka, the Isa, the Svetasvatra etc.), the Aranyakas, the Sutras (the Manu, the Vishnu, the Narad, the Brashpati, etc.), the Puranas (the Vishnu, the Vayu, etc. 18 in all) and the Epics (the *Ramanayana* and the *Mahabharata*) which assist one in deciphering and understanding the history and culture of India from the Vedic up to the Gupta age. The Rig-Veda provides us some significant information about the civilization of the early Vedic Age while the rest of the three Vedas illuminate upon the specificity of the cultural aspects of the later age. The Brahmanas provide us some critical knowledge concerning the Aryans- their attitude towards east India, religious beliefs, and rituals to be conducted especially during the later Vedic age. The Upanishads, too, were concerned with the philosophical speculations and beliefs of the Aryans such as the transmigration of the soul, Brahma and salvation. The Shastras inform us about the rituals while performing different *Yajnas* and the religious, social, moral and political responsibilities of an individual. The Smritis reveal to us the social and religious conditions of the Indians between 200 BC to AD 600. The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are useful for knowing the living conditions of the Aryans during the later Vedic age while the Puranas help us in finding out the history of the rulers and their kingdoms which existed in India after the war of the *Mahabharata* till the sixth century AD.

Buddhist religious texts

The original Buddhist texts are known as the *Tripitaka*. They are three in number and can be categorized as (i) The *Vinya pitaka* which describes the rules and regulations for the guidance of the Buddhist monks and the general management of the Church; (ii) the *Sutti-pitaka* is a collection of the religious discourses of Buddha; and (iii) the *Ahbidhamma-pitaka* which contains an exposition of the philosophical principles underlying religion. Afterwards, the Mahayana and the Tantrika sects of Buddhism created vast religious literature of their own and the penultimate *Jataka* stories (nearly 549 in number) of Mahayanism describing various life-stories of Mahatma Buddha were also written. All of them constitute the sources of approaching the contemporary culture and

NOTES

history of India. These Buddhist religious texts provide useful information to us concerning the polity, political life, different rulers, their dynasties, their rule and their kingdoms up to the sixth century BC and also the social, economic, religious and cultural life of the people in that age. The religious texts, the *Mahavansa* and the *Dipavansa*, prepared by the scholars of Sri Lanka, also provide us useful information concerning the history of ancient India.

Jain religious texts

The original Jain religious texts were called *Agams*. Afterwards, these were compiled into 14 *Purvas* and further, the first ten *Purvas* were re-arranged in 12 *Angas* in the fifth century AD. Now, only 11 *Angas* are available. Besides, a vast literature was created by Jain scholars afterwards which also provide us useful knowledge concerning the history, culture and civilization of ancient India. The *Bhadrabahu Charita* refers to several events belonging to the reign of Chandragupta Maurya. The *Katha Kosh* and other similar Jain religious texts have churned out some useful historical material. Among the later Jain religious texts, one of the most prominent ones is the *Parisista Pan/a* which was prepared during the twelfth century.

1.4 FOREIGN ACCOUNTS: GREEK, CHINESE AND ARAB WRITERS

Foreign accounts are of immense importance in the reconstruction of ancient Indian history. According to K.A.N. Sastri, 'The accounts of any country and its people by foreign observers are of great interest to the historians of the country. For they enable him to know what impression is made upon the minds of such observers and to estimate with greater confidence the part played by it in the general history of the world.'

(i) **Greek writers:** Herodotus in his *Histories* gives us information about Indo-Persian relations and the political condition of north-west India in his time. Arrian, a Roman historian, wrote a detailed account of the invasion of India by Alexander. The Greek ambassador to the court of Chandragupta Maurya, Megasthenes in his book *Indica*, gives a descriptive account of India at that time. The Greek account of the Periplus of the Erythean Sea gives us an idea of the maritime activities between India and the West by mentioning ports, harbours and merchandise. Ptolemy wrote about the geography of India during second century AD. Pliny gives an account of the Indian animals, plants and minerals in the first century AD. The accounts of Plutarch and Strabo also provide us with useful information regarding the socio-economic life of their times. But the Greek accounts are based on generalizations. Their ignorance of the Indian languages might have affected their impressions and knowledge of our country. Since the Greek ambassadors mostly stayed in state capitals; their information was based on mere hearsay which could have been represented in a distorted or exaggerated way.

(ii) **Chinese writers:** Chinese accounts of Hiuen Tsang and Fa Hein provide us with useful information regarding the life during the reign of Harsha and Chandragupta II respectively. Tibetan historian, Taranath in his *History of Buddhism* gives us information about Buddhism and its spread.

Check Your Progress

5. Fill in the blanks.

(a) The _____ is a collection of the religious discourses of Buddha.

(b) The original Jain religious texts were called _____.

6. State whether True or False.

(a) The Nitisara is written by Kautilya.

(b) Patanjali is the author of Mahabhashya.

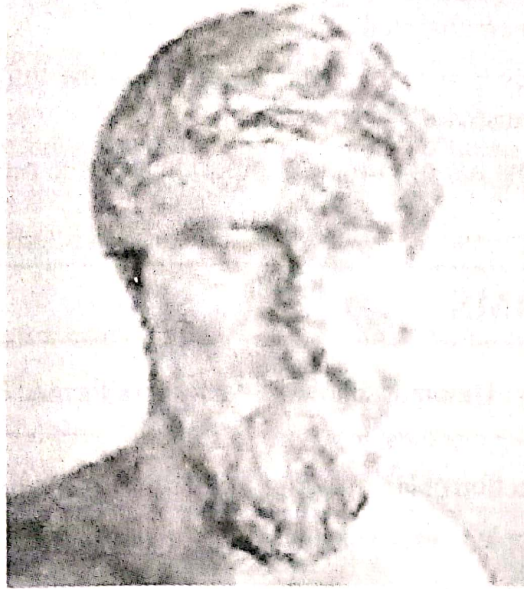


Fig. 1.1 Megasthenes

(iii) **Arab writers:** The Arab accounts of travellers and geographers mostly deal with India and its inhabitants and not history as such. Alberuni's *Tehqiq-I-Hind* throws light on the various aspects of socio-economic and political condition of India at the time of Mahmud of Ghazni.

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

DID YOU KNOW

The Indus Valley Civilization was one of the first civilizations in the world to be discovered.

1.5 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- Efforts were made by the Europeans to explore the history of ancient India in the latter half of the eighteenth century.
- Amongst the literary sources we include all written records whether in the form of texts, essays or descriptions.
- The first literary source of the Hindus is the Samhita which includes four Vedas namely the Rigveda, the Samveda, the Yajurveda and the Atharvaveda.
- The original Buddhist texts are known as the *Tripitaka*.
- The original Jain religious texts were called *Agams*.
- The Greek, Roman, Chinese and Muslim writers and travellers have left fairly interesting sources of information in their accounts.

NOTES

Check Your Progress

7. Fill in the blanks.
- (a) Chinese accounts of _____ and Fa Hein provide us with useful information regarding the life during the reign of Harsha and Chandragupta II respectively.
- (b) Arrian, a Roman historian, wrote a detailed account of the invasion of India by _____.
8. State whether True or False.
- (a) Foreign accounts are of immense importance in the reconstruction of ancient Indian history.
- (b) The accounts of Plutarch and Strabo also provide us with useful information regarding the socio-economic life of their times.

- Archaeology has contributed a lot to the history of ancient India and its importance cannot be under emphasized.
- Under the heading of archaeology, we discuss the information derived from inscriptions, numismatics and monuments.
- Foreign accounts are of immense importance in the reconstruction of ancient Indian history.

1.6 KEY TERMS

- **Asiatic Society:** Union of scholars and authors formed by Sir William Jones in 1774.
- **Samhita:** Collection of Hindu scriptures namely the Vedas.
- **Moneyers:** People who physically create money by striking and casting bronze, silver and copper coins.
- **Agams:** Name given to the sacred texts of Jainism.
- **Numismatics:** Study of coins and other ancient material discovered through the excavation of archaeological sites.
- **Archaeology:** Study of human society, primarily through the recovery and analysis of the material culture and environmental data which they have left behind.
- **Inscription:** A marking, such as the wording on a coin, medal, monument, or seal, that is inscribed.

1.7 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. (a) Anquetil-Duperron (b) Asiatic Society
2. (a) True (b) True
3. (a) administrative (b) Kushanas
4. (a) True (b) False
5. (a) Sutti-pitaka (b) Agams
6. (a) False (b) True
7. (a) Hiuen Tsang (b) Alexander
8. (a) True (b) True

1.8 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on the sources of early Indian history.
2. What is secular literature? Prepare a list of the books that are covered under this literature.
3. What kind of information on Indian history has been revealed from numismatics and monuments?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the various religious texts which give ample information about Indian history.
2. Elaborate upon the initiatives taken by the British officials in exploring Indian literature and history. Name a few prominent officials and their literary contributions.
3. What kind of information about Indian history has been deciphered from the inscriptions?
4. Describe the foreign accounts that have revealed substantial information about ancient Indian history.

1.9 FURTHER READING

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UNIT 2 PREHISTORIC AND PROTOHISTORIC PERIOD

Structure

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Unit Objectives
- 2.2 Prehistoric Sites and Settlements
 - 2.2.1 Lower, Middle and Upper Paleolithic Sites and Settlements
 - 2.2.2 Mesolithic Sites and Settlements
 - 2.2.3 Neolithic Sites and Settlements
 - 2.2.4 Chaleolithic Sites and settlements
- 2.3 Indus Valley Civilization: Features
 - 2.3.1 Geographical Expansion of the Indus Valley Civilization
 - 2.3.2 Dress and Ornaments
 - 2.3.3 Farming and Cattle Rearing
 - 2.3.4 Pottery and Trade
 - 2.3.5 Settlement Patterns and Town Planning in the Indus Valley Civilization
 - 2.3.6 Religious Beliefs and Practices of the Indus Valley Civilization
 - 2.3.7 Art Practised in Indus Valley Civilization
 - 2.3.8 Urban Decline of the Indus Valley Civilization
- 2.4 Summary
- 2.5 Key Terms
- 2.6 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 2.7 Questions and Exercises
- 2.8 Further Reading

2.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will examine the three divisions of the Stone Age, that is, Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic Ages. During these Ages, man used to make tools and weapons with stone. In the next stage of development, man began to use metals. The earliest evidence of the use of metals is found at the sites of 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 artifacts, pottery, tools, ornaments and ruins of towns. This unit will also introduce you to the various facets of this civilization.

2.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Discuss the prehistoric sites and settlements
- Discuss the geographical extent of the Indus Valley Civilization
- Identify the various features of the Indus Valley Civilization
- Describe the settlement patterns and town planning of the Indus Valley Civilization
- Recognize the religious beliefs and practices of the Indus Valley Civilization
- List the various forms of art practised in the Indus Valley Civilization
- Explain the urban decline of the Indus Valley Civilization

2.2 PREHISTORIC SITES AND SETTLEMENTS

Let us now take a look at the various prehistoric sites.

2.2.1 Lower, Middle and Upper Paleolithic Sites and Settlements

Early man lived in agreement with the environment and his surroundings for long. He used the material that could be obtained and handled conveniently to prepare tools and weapons. He began using stone and later used metals to prepare his tools and weapons. Civilization did not develop everywhere simultaneously. The periods of its development differ from civilization to civilization. In India, it commenced long ago.

The Paleolithic Age is divided into three phases in accordance with the type of stone tools used by the people and according to the nature of climatic change. The different phases of the Paleolithic Age are classified as follows:

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

- (i) **Early or lower Paleolithic** : The lower Paleolithic or the early Stone Age covers the greater part of the Ice Age. The early Stone Age may have begun in Africa around two million years ago, but in India it is not older than 600,000 years. The region of Bori in Maharashtra is considered to be from this age and is said to be one of the earliest. During this age, people used hand axes, cleavers and choppers. The axes found in India are more or less similar to those of Western Asia, Europe and Africa. Stone tools were used largely for chopping, digging and skinning. When the climate became less humid, the people of the lower Stone Age principally became food gatherers. They took to small game hunting and consumed fish and birds. The early or lower Stone Age in India may be associated with the *Homo sapiens* (i.e., scientific name of man). Early Stone Age sites have been found in the valley of river Son or Sohan in Punjab, now in Pakistan. Several sites found in Kashmir, the Thar Desert and the Belan valley also show features of the lower Paleolithic Age.
- (ii) **Middle Paleolithic**: The middle Paleolithic industries show the basic technological features common to the Mousterian (tool culture) of Western and Central Asia. The tools are generally small, light and based upon flakes struck from cores which, in some cases, are carefully shaped. These flakes were transformed into finished tools. There was also a marked change in the choice of raw material. Silica and minerals, chiefly chert, agate, jasper and chalcedony, became the most common media of working in most parts of the country. These enabled the middle Paleolithic man to prepare beautiful tools with better edges. In some regions, particularly, Chennai, the Deccan and Kutch, the material employed by the lower Paleolithic groups continued to be used during the middle Paleolithic Age. In such cases, the material seemed to be finely grained and carefully selected.
- (iii) **Upper Paleolithic**: The Upper Paleolithic or the Late Stone Age is the third and last subdivision of the Palaeolithic age (40,000 to 10,000 BC). It is said to coincide with the appearance of behavioural modernity (a time when *Homo sapiens* began to rely on symbols to express cultural creativity). This period was marked by the appearance of many new flint industries and several figurines and other artifacts

reflecting art and rituals. It was also marked by the appearance of a wide range of bone tools, including needles, fishing tools, harpoons and blades.

Prot

Characteristics of the Paleolithic Age

Life of the Paleolithic man or *Homo habilis* was hard. *Homo habilis* was a food gatherer and depended entirely on nature for food. He ate fruits, roots, nuts, flesh of animals and even insects. He did not have a fixed place to stay. He wandered like a nomad from place to place. He lived in caves and hollows of trees to protect himself from wild animals and harsh climate. He used animal skins or the bark of trees and leaves to cover his body.

NC

Tools

The tools used by man during the Paleolithic Age were pebble tools, which were quite crude. He made tools using flint, a kind of stone that chips easily. The tools of this age can be divided into two categories: core tools and flake implements.

Core tools were made by chipping and shaping large stones. They were usually pear shaped with sharp edges, like hand axes, which were held in the hand and used to cut trees, dig the earth and shape sticks. Some of these have been found in South India. Flake implements were tools made from smaller pieces of stone and were used as choppers and cleavers to chop meat and skin animals.

Discovery of Fire

Early man feared fire that broke out in the forests due to lightning. Later, he discovered how to produce fire himself. The discovery of fire was probably accidental. Perhaps, one day, he picked up pieces of flint to chip and shape them into tools. He was fascinated by the sparks made by striking two pieces of flint against each other. He repeated his action and perhaps some dry leaves caught fire. In this way, one of the greatest discoveries of mankind was made.

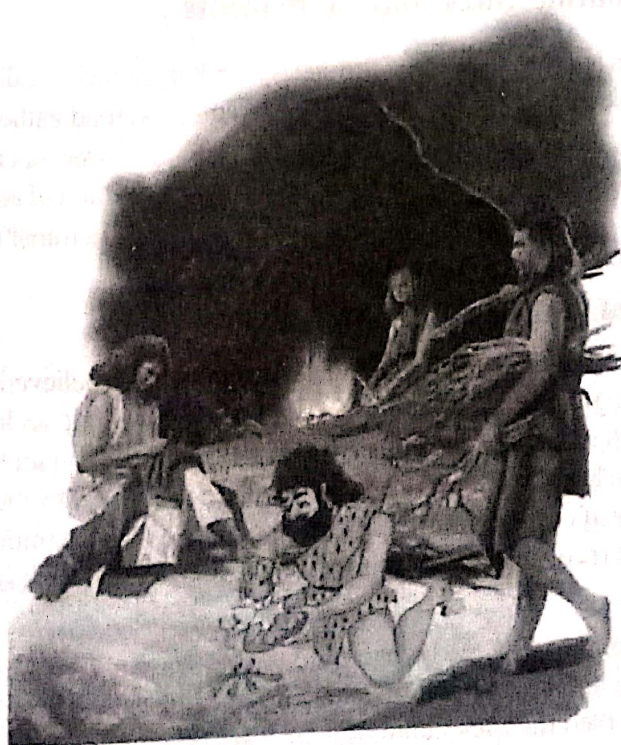


Fig. 2.1 *Homo Sapiens* Rubbed Two Stones Together to Make Fire

Self-Instructi
Material



Once humans had discovered how to make fire, they began to use it for various purposes, listed as follows:

- To frighten off wild animals, they kept fire burning at the mouths of the caves at night and slept inside in comfort.
- They used it to keep themselves warm in winter.
- They used fire to cook the flesh of animals. They found that cooked food was easy to chew and digest.
- By the light of fire, they could work inside the caves at night.

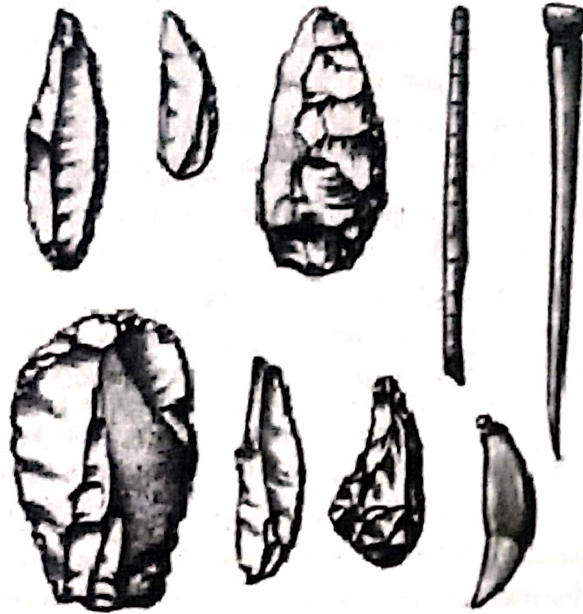


Fig. 2.2 Tools of the Palaeolithic Age

2.2.2 The Mesolithic Sites and Settlements

In 9000 BC began an intermediate stage in Stone Age culture, which is called the Mesolithic Age. The Mesolithic people survived by hunting, fishing and food gathering; however, at a later stage, they also domesticated animals. The first three occupations were a continuation of the Paleolithic practice, whereas the domestication of animals developed later in the Neolithic culture. Thus, the Mesolithic Age marked a transitional phase in the mode of subsistence leading to animal husbandry.

Characteristics of the Mesolithic Age

Mesolithic Age is characterized by microliths or tiny tools. It is believed that the bow and arrow came into regular use with the introduction of microlithic technology based on microblades which were produced by pressure techniques. The fact that the people of the Mesolithic Age had developed an aesthetic sense is attested by the discoveries of a very large number of cave paintings across the country. These paintings are a mine of information for the reconstruction of the Mesolithic man's way of life and contemporary environment.

In the Mesolithic Age, early man tried to find ways and means to make his life more comfortable and secure and fulfill his basic requirements of food. During this period, which is called the Mesolithic Age, he learnt to make more sophisticated tools using bones and horns along with stone. Since these materials were more flexible and

lighter than stone, they could also make a larger variety of things like bows and arrows and fishing hooks. Heavy tools gave way to smaller and more refined ones like arrowheads and spearheads. For most of this period, men continued to be food gatherers. It was probably towards the end of the Mesolithic Age that they learnt about cultivation. Men observed that when seeds fell on the ground and received water, they grew into plants that bore grains. Thus, another means of getting food, besides hunting and gathering, was now available to them, i.e., growing crops or agriculture.

2.2.3 The Neolithic Sites and Settlements

The period between 9000 and 3000 BC saw remarkable technological progress in Western Asia. Man developed the art of cultivation, weaving, pot making, house building, writing, stock raising and the like. The Neolithic Age in the Indian subcontinent began around the seventh Millennium BC. Some important crops including wheat and barley came to be cultivated in the subcontinent; villages were established in this part of the world. All these were indicative of a revolutionary change in the mode of subsistence. People no longer depended on hunting, fishing and food gathering because cultivation and cattle husbandry provided them with food. With new means of food and shelter, they were on the threshold of cultivation.

Refined Tools

The Neolithic man began to make a variety of stone tools with the help of a grindstone. They were sharper, well polished and had handles fixed to them. In this period, man began to use tools made of basalt, which was harder and stronger, and could be shaped and polished. Bones were also used to make needles, blades and other tools. Due to this improved variety of tools, this period is called the Neolithic Age or New Stone Age.

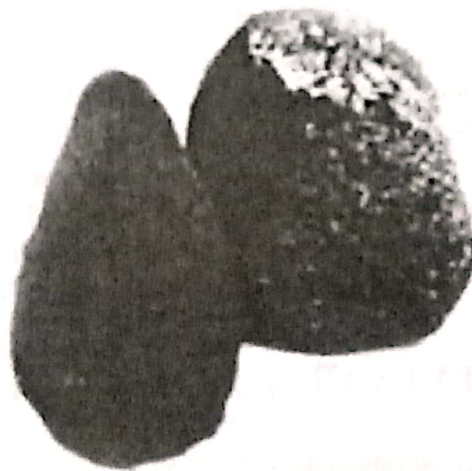


Fig. 2.3 Tools Used in the Neolithic Age

Art

Early man also learnt to paint the walls of his cave dwellings with scenes showing dancing figures and animals. In this way, art developed. For example, the paintings in Bhimbetka Caves in Madhya Pradesh.

Pottery

When man became a food producer, he felt the need for containers to store the surplus grain. Containers were also required to store milk and water and cook food. At first, man wove baskets from wild grass and plastered it with wet clay. But these were not

NOTES

Check Your Progress

1. State whether True or False.
 - (a) The Paleolithic Age is divided into five phases.
 - (b) Middle Paleolithic industries show the basic technological features common to the Mousterian industry (tool culture) of Western and Central Asia.
 - (c) In 9000 BC began an intermediate stage in Stone Age culture, which is called the Mesolithic Age.
 - (d) The Neolithic Age in the Indian subcontinent began around the Second Millennium BC.
2. Fill in the blanks.
 - (a) The lower Paleolithic or the early Stone Age covers the greater part of the _____.
 - (b) _____ were made by chipping and shaping large stones.
 - (c) Mesolithic Age is characterized by _____ or tiny tools.
 - (d) One of the greatest inventions of Neolithic man was the invention of the _____.

Self-Instructional
Material

good enough, as liquids could not be stored in them. Later, man learnt to bake the pots over fire to make them waterproof.

Invention of the Wheel

One of the greatest inventions of Neolithic man was the invention of wheel. Early man observed the way logs rolled easily. This must have given him the idea of fitting wheels to his sledges and carts. The invention of the wheel made travelling quicker and more comfortable. Apart from this, the wheel was used for making pottery, spinning and weaving. Man began to use cotton and wool to make clothes, along with animal skin, barks and leaves.

Religious Beliefs

The Neolithic man, like the Paleolithic man, was afraid of natural phenomena like lightning, thunder, storms and forest fires which could do him immense harm. So, he began to worship the forces of nature like the sun, rain, thunder and fire to appease them.

When he took to cultivation, he came to regard soil too as the life-giver, and thus began to worship earth. Some animals, like the cow, came to be regarded as holy. Death was considered a journey from which one never returned. Hence, the dead were buried and their belongings were placed in the grave or in large vessels called urns. They also marked the burial places with huge blocks of stones or megaliths.

2.2.4 Chaleolithic Sites and Settlements

This age has been regarded to fall during the years between 3,000 BC and nearly 1,000 BC. Scholars believe that in south India this age did not exist at all. Rather, with the entry of the Aryans in south India, it entered the Iron Age after the Neolithic Age. Certain scholars believe that India did not at all enter the Bronze Age. From the Neolithic Age, it entered the Copper Age and then the Iron Age. During the Copper Age, apart from the copper implements and weapons, men also used stone implements for a long time. Therefore, this age has been regarded as the Chaleolithic Age as well. The Indus Valley Civilization in India has been accepted as belonging to this age. By this time, men had progressed in every field. They cultivated land, lived in villages and cities, domesticated animals, used both cotton and woollen clothes, developed means of transport and communication, language and script, faith in religion and worship of gods and goddesses, rather, every means of livelihood which makes a group of people cultured and civilized.

2.3 INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION FEATURES

Up to 1920, nothing was known about the Indus Valley Civilization. Construction workers at a railway track near Harappa were using the bricks from a nearby ruin, when it was realized that the bricks probably belonged to a very old civilization. The railway authorities informed the Archaeological Survey of India. In 1921, two archaeologists, Dayaram Sahani and Rakhal Das Bannerjee carried out excavations at Mohenjodaro in Sind and at Harappa, which revealed that a very advanced civilization far older and superior to the Europeans had flourished in India. This generated great enthusiasm, not only in India but in other countries as well. Further excavations at Lothal, Ropar and Kalibangan revealed that the Indus Valley Civilization flourished beyond the River Indus. The area that it covered at that time was approximately 1.3 million square kilometres.

Figure 2.4 shows us some of the important sites of the Indus Valley Civilization. It is estimated that the Indus Valley Civilization existed between 2500 and 1500 BC almost at the same time as the Egyptian, Sumerian and Chinese civilizations.

It is true that all the civilizations of the world have originated and developed in the valleys of rivers. A common feature of all civilizations is the river, which provided fertile soil for the civilizations to develop in its valley. When rivers flooded the banks, the water left deposits of fine silt, which made it possible for farmers to produce abundant crops. Floodwater was used to irrigate fields in the dry season. Rivers provided humans with additional source of food in the form of fish. Rivers also served as waterways for the transport of people and goods from one place to another. The Sumerian, Babylonian and Asirian civilizations developed on the banks of Dajla-Farat, the Egyptian civilization on the banks of the river Nile and the Harappan civilization on the banks of the Indus.

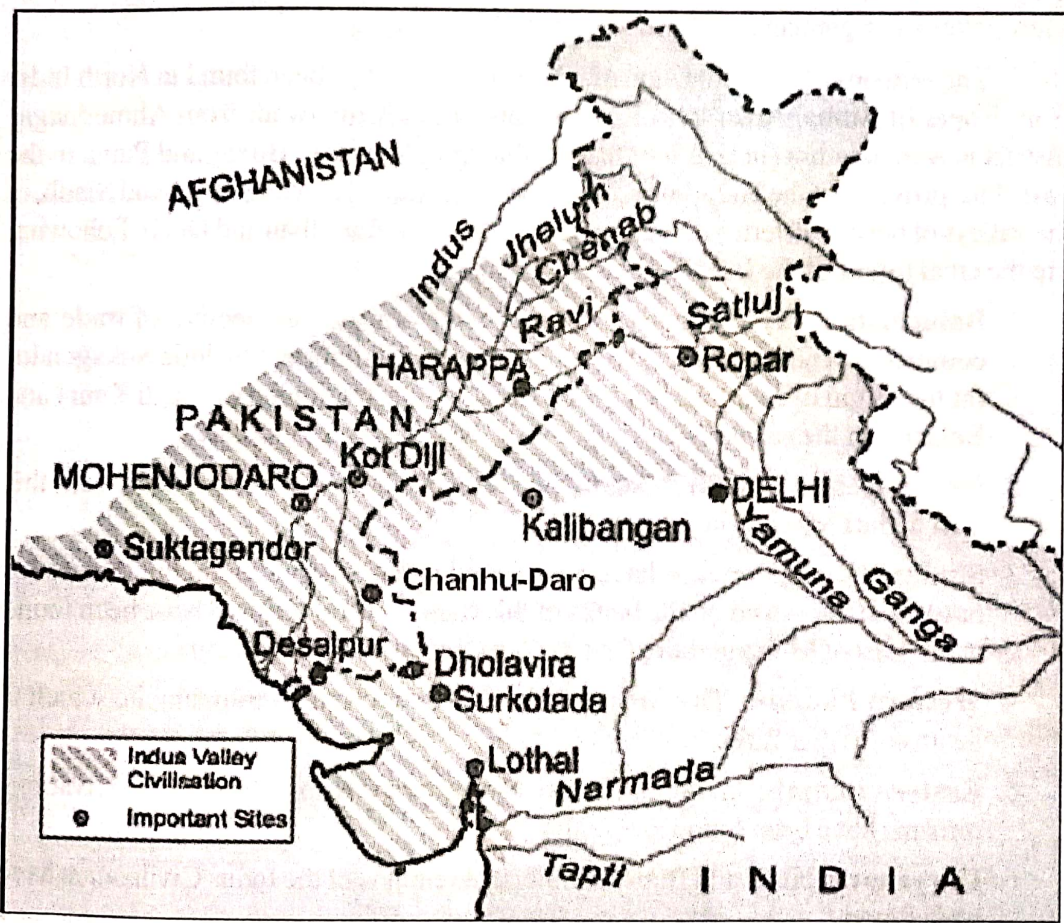


Fig. 2.4 Important Sites of the Indus Valley Civilization

The Indus Valley Civilization was an ancient civilization that had disappeared hundreds of years ago leaving its ruins. Maximum remains of the Indus Valley Civilization have been found in the valley of river Indus, from where the civilization derives its name. The city of Mohenjodaro was 640 km away from Harappa. The term 'Mohenjodaro' means 'the mound of the dead, which was a local name of a high mountain located on the fields of Larkana. In the context of the Indus Valley Civilization, author and historian Ramashankar Tripathi states, 'Till so far our way has been full of obstacles but now we can see the horizons of the Indian Civilization.' It has been established by the remains of the Indus Valley Civilization that hundreds of years before the Aryans there was a pre-established civilization in India.

NOTES

The cities belonging to Indus Valley Civilization were divided into lower town area and citadel. Historians believe that there was some kind of difference between people who lived in the lower town area and those who lived near the citadel. Occupational groups lived in the lower town area and the nobility comprising the king and his nobles lived in the citadel. Nevertheless, there must have been some controlling authority, otherwise the uniformity of the town plan, standardization of weights and measures, collection of taxes and grains would have been impossible. You would probably get a better idea about the social and political life of the Indus Valley Civilization once the script is deciphered.

2.3.1 Geographical Expansion of the Indus Valley Civilization

According to the Australian archaeologist and biologist Vere Gordon Childe, 'The geographical area of the Indus civilization was much more than the ancient Mesopotamian, Egyptian and Persian civilizations.'

The remains of the expansion of this civilization have been found in North India from Ropar of Ambala district to Rangpur district in Kathiawad; from Ahmednagar district in Maharashtra (in South India) to Ghazipur, Varanasi, Buxar and Patna in the east. This proves that the Harappan Civilization was spread across Punjab and Sindh, in the valleys of north-western frontiers mainly Kathiawad, Rajasthan and Doab. Following are the chief towns of the Indus Valley Civilization:

1. **Baluchistan:** This region was important from the perspective of trade and commerce. The main places that were extremely important include Sukagendor (at the origin of river Dashak), Sotakakoh (at the beginning of Shadi Kaur) and Balakot (in the east of Son Miyani at the origin of river Vindar).
2. **North-Western Border:** Significant artefacts have been discovered from this area in the Gomal valley.
3. **Sindhu:** Several remains have been found in the Sindhu region but many sites have been destroyed on the banks of this river. Several remains have been found at the sites of Mohenjodaro, Chanhudaro, Judeirjo-daro and Amri.
4. **Western Punjab:** This area has the most important Harappan site which is located on river Ravi.
5. **Eastern Punjab:** An important site of this area is Ropar. In recent excavations remains have been found in Sanghol.
6. **Haryana:** In Hisar and Banvali important remains of the Indus Civilization have been found.
7. **Doab of Ganga and Yamuna:** The remains of Indus Valley Civilization are spread from Meerut to Aalamgir. Recently remains have also been found at Hulas in Saharanpur.
8. **Gujarat:** There are several Indus Valley Civilization sites at the peninsula of Kutch and Kathiawad and the mainlands of Gujarat. Important sites at these peninsula are Sutkotada and Lothal, respectively.
9. **Other sites:** Important remains have also been found at the sites of Bahawalpur, Jammu and Northern Afghanistan.

2.3.2 Dress and Ornaments

The spindles found in the excavations reveal that the Indus Valley people knew the art of spinning and weaving. They were perhaps the first people to cultivate cotton to make

Check Your Progress

3. Fill in the blanks.

(a) In 1921, two archaeologists—Dayaram Sahani and _____ carried out excavations at Mohenjodaro in Sind and at Harappa.

(b) The term 'Mohenjodaro' means _____.

4. State whether True or False.

(a) It is estimated that the Indus Valley Civilization existed almost at the same time as the Egyptian, Sumerian and Chinese civilizations.

(b) The city of Mohenjodaro was 40 km away from Harappa.

clothes. Besides cotton, they wore woollen clothes. Men wore a piece of cloth round their waists and a shawl over their shoulders, while women wore a skirt and do not seem to have worn blouses. Archaeologists have unearthed an idol of a man covered with a shawl (see Figure 2.5). The shawl was tied under the right arm and went across the left shoulder, which left the right hand free. A cloth similar to the dhoti worn in rural India was worn at the bottom.

N

The discovery of needles at the excavation site points towards the fact that the people of this civilization were familiar with sewing. Both men and women wore ornaments. These were made of metal, bone, shell and beads. The Indus people loved ornaments. The chief ornaments worn by women included necklaces, armlets, bangles, earrings, nose-rings, rings and waistlets.



Fig. 2.5 Man Covered with a Shawl

The ornaments of rich people were made of gold, silver and precious stones whereas the ornaments of poor people were made of bones, copper and baked clay. Sir John Hubert Marshall who was the Director General of Archaeology in India in 1902 stated, 'seeing the shine and design of gold ornaments it seems that they are brought from an ornament shop of Bond Street (London) and not from a pre-historical house of five thousand years ago.' Figure 2.6 illustrates a bronze dancing girl.



Fig. 2.6 Bronze Idol of Dancing Girl

2.3.3 Farming and Cattle Rearing

Agriculture was the chief occupation of the people. The climate and seasons were conducive for farming and annual flooding of the rivers made the land fertile. This facilitated the growth of crops. The chief crops were wheat, barley, cotton, maize and millet. They also grew fruits and vegetables. Different methods of irrigation were in use. Channels and embankments were also built to control the flow of water into the fields. Ploughs and sickles were commonly used agricultural tools.

Animal husbandry was also practised, and oxen, buffaloes, goats, sheep, pigs, donkeys and camels were reared. The horse, however, was unknown.

The chief occupation of the Indus people was agriculture. Crops such as wheat, barley, corn and cotton, were cultivated here. According to Dr Basham, the people did not know how to cultivate rice but the remains of rice at Lothal and Rangpur have proved this conception wrong. Similarly, Dr. Lal has said that the cultivation of cotton was the specialty of Indus people. Grinding machines of wheat, barley and crushing machines and storehouses reflect their proficiency in agriculture. Adequate irrigation facilities were developed for agriculture.

Domestication of animals

Agriculture being the chief occupation the Indus people used to domesticate buffaloes, cows, sheep, pigs, dogs, oxen, etc. The people also earned their living by domestication of animals, which were also helpful in agriculture.

2.3.4 Pottery and Trade

Next to agriculture, pottery seems to have been the most popular industry of the people. They were skilled in the use of the potter's wheel. Reddish-brown clay was baked, glazed and decorated with various designs in black. Some broken bits of pottery found in the excavation sites have geometric designs and animal motifs. They speak of the excellent craftsmanship and artistic skills of the Harappan people.

Trade, both by land and by sea, thrived in the Harappan society. A number of seals of Indus origin have been found at various sites in Mesopotamia (Sumer). This indicates that trade flourished between the two civilizations. In order to measure articles, they used a stick with markings on it. They also used various kinds of weights and measures. Figure 2.7 shows samples of the ornaments, pottery and seals prevalent during the Indus Valley Civilization.

More than 2000 seals have been found at various sites. The seals were made of terracotta and steatite, a soft stone. Most of the seals are rectangular but some are circular in shape. Some of them have a knob at the back, which contains a hole. It is believed that different guilds or individual merchants and traders used these seals for stamping their consignments. They have a carved picture with some inscription on the other side. These seals throw light on the religion, customs and economic activities of the society. The animal shown in the seal may be a sacred bull. Small-scale industries were also chief sources of living.



Fig. 2.7 Indus Ornaments, Pottery and Seal

Carpenters, potters, weavers, goldsmiths, connoisseurs, sculptors, etc., constitute the different professions of the time. Potters made a good living by making earthen toys. The Indus Valley Civilization's economy appears to have depended significantly on trade, which was facilitated by major advances in transport by bullock-driven carts as well as boats. Most of these boats were probably small and had flat-bottoms, perhaps driven by sail, similar to those one can see on the Indus River today. Archaeologists have discovered a big canal and docking facility at the coastal city of Lothal. The artefacts of this civilization found at the sites of other ancient civilizations suggest trade links with portions of Afghanistan, the coastal regions of Persia, Northern and Central India and Mesopotamia.

- (ii) **Partial meditation:** As per this technique, the dead bodies were left in open so that they became food for birds and animals. The leftovers were then buried.
- (iii) **Cremation:** In this technique, the dead bodies were burnt and the ashes were collected in pots and buried.

2.3.5 Settlement Patterns and Town Planning in the Indus Valley Civilization

One of the most remarkable features of the Indus Valley Civilization was meticulous town planning. This is especially evident in the city of Mohenjodaro.

Architecture

Evidence of town management of this time is found from the remains of Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Kalibanga, Lothal, etc. Towns were so well managed and organized that it is still a matter of wonder. The roads were very broad. The drainage system was very fine. Figure 2.8 illustrates the citadel, the Great Bath and the city of Mohenjodaro. The remains of Mohenjodaro are proof of the unparalleled art of the ancient cities, their cleanliness and construction. It is quite clear from studies that cleanliness was given a lot of importance.

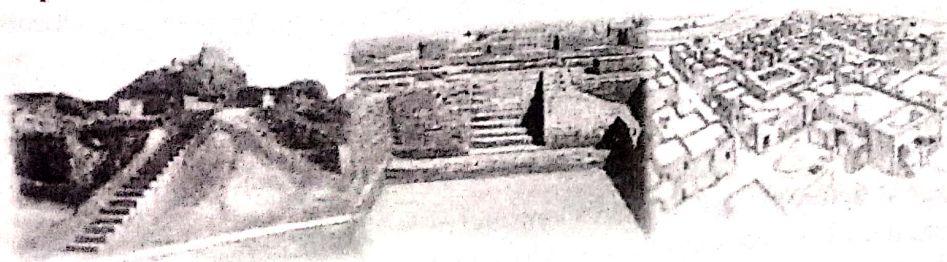


Fig. 2.8 Mohenjodaro

NOTES

Check Your Progress

5. Fill in the blanks.
 - (a) The chief occupation of the Indus people was _____.
 - (b) Both men and women wore _____.
6. State whether True or False.
 - (a) Trade, both by land and by sea, thrived in the Harappan society.
 - (b) Adequate irrigation facilities were not developed for agriculture.

The shape of the city was rectangular. The roads cut each other at right angles and divided the city into large blocks. Within each block, there was a network of narrow lanes. The drainage system was magnificent and lights were arranged on roads. It seems that the town planning was the work of efficient engineers.

Art of Making Buildings

The houses, built of burnt bricks, were constructed on both sides of the roads. There were covered drains along the roads, in which sewage from the houses flowed. Some houses had only one or two rooms while others had several, indicating different living quarters for the rich and the poor. The Indus people were excellent constructors. There are other things related to architecture and idol making, which are living examples of their efficiency. The interiors of these buildings prove that the Indus people were definitely aesthetically inclined. Of all the remains of the Indus Civilization, the best is the Great Bath. Its walls are cemented. There are stairs on the corners. In order to keep the water safe and the foundations strong, the masons worked cleverly. The system of filling and emptying the water tank was no doubt extraordinary. There was also a system for hot water, which was probably used by the priests. The biggest proof of the durability of the bath is that it was constructed in 5000 BC and is till today totally intact.

Town Planning

Excavations at Harappa and Mohenjodaro reveal that all these cities were similarly planned. They were divided into two parts—a raised area with large buildings called the citadel at the western end and a lower town. The roads ran at right angles, bringing out the grid pattern of the township. The citadel was built on a raised platform, constructed with bricks and stones, about 12 metre high and rectangular in shape, and surrounded by a huge brick wall with watchtowers. This protected the buildings and the people from the recurrent flooding of the river Indus. The citadel was probably the seat of the government and overlooked the lower town. The ruler or the administrator lived here along with the nobles. It also had public buildings such as the granaries, the assembly or town hall and important workshops. At Mohenjodaro, which means 'mound of the dead' in Sindhi, the most remarkable feature was the Great Bath. It was situated within the citadel. It resembled a large swimming pool measuring 55 by 33 metres. A flight of steps led down to the pool at two ends. Broad corridors on four sides with a number of rooms surrounded the pool. It is the finest specimen of the engineering skill of the Harappan people.

In Harappa, archaeologists found the Great Granary located in the citadel. It measured 61.5 by 15.5 metres and consisted of two similar blocks with a wide passageway between them. Each block had six halls further divided into smaller rooms and compartments with openings for ventilation. The largest granary was found in Mohenjodaro. Close to the granaries at Harappa, circular brick platforms have been found. According to archaeologists, these were used for threshing grain. Grain was brought by boats along the rivers. The grain collected as tax was safely stored to be used in times of crises like floods or famine. The granaries prove that the land was fertile.

Town hall

A huge structure almost 70 metres long and over 23 metres wide with walls about 1.5 metres thick has been excavated in Mohenjodaro. It has twenty pillars made of burnt bricks, arranged in four rows of five each. Archaeologists believe that this great hall may have been used as an assembly hall, a prayer hall or as a hall for cultural shows.

Residential area and houses

Below the citadel was the residential area of the town where the merchants, artisans and craftsmen lived. The whole area was divided into blocks by wide roads, which formed a grid. Sun-dried and baked bricks were used for construction of houses. They were single or double storeyed. All houses had a courtyard around which there were rooms. Every house had a well and a hearth for cooking. The main entrances opened onto the lanes or side alleys instead of the main street in order to keep out dust and to ensure privacy. Within the houses, the rooms were built around a central courtyard. Some houses also had wells to supply water. Several *pukka-kutchra* and big-small buildings have been found during the excavations of the remains. Houses were well ventilated. The roofs of the houses were flat and made of wood. Each house had its own bathroom with drains, which were connected to the drains in the street.

Streets

The streets and lanes ran straight from north to south and east to west, cutting each other at right angles. They were 4 to 10 metres wide. Roads were paved and suitable for movement of bullock carts. Ruins of lamp posts suggest that there were street lights. Dustbins were provided at regular intervals to keep the roads clean.

Drainage system

Another striking feature of the Indus towns was their drainage system. It was the best drainage system known to the world in ancient times. Drains were constructed on either side of the roads connected to a drain from each house. They were lined with bricks and were covered with slabs of stone, which could be removed in order to clean them. This shows that the dwellers had great concern for health and sanitation.

2.3.6 Religious Beliefs and Practices of the Indus Valley Civilization

No temples or shrines of the Harappan Civilization have been found. Our knowledge of the religious beliefs of the Harappans is based on the information derived from the seals and the terracotta and bronze figures. Seals engraved with the figures of animals like the humped bull, elephant and rhinoceros suggest that these animals were probably considered sacred. The image of a three-headed male God sitting cross-legged and surrounded by animals, like the lion, the rhinoceros, the buffalo and the elephant with two deer under his seat is found on many seals. There is evidence that the peepal tree and the serpent were also worshipped. The terracotta figure of a female deity has been identified as that of the Mother Goddess who represented fertility and prosperity. Some statues also bear soot marks at the base, indicating that incense was burnt as a part of the ritual. These evidences show that Harappan people worshipped images.

Like their contemporaries—the Mesopotamian and Egyptian people—the people of the Indus Valley used a script, which consisted of picture-like signs called pictographs. Each sign stood for a specific sound or idea. Examples of this script are found on the seals, most of which bear an inscription. Figure 2.9 shows the idol of the Mother Goddess.

NOTES

Check Your Progress

7. Fill in the blanks.
 - (a) The _____ was magnificent and lights were arranged on roads.
 - (b) In Harappa, archaeologists found the _____ located in the citadel.
8. State whether True or False.
 - (a) The Indus people were excellent constructors.
 - (b) The drainage system of the Indus Valley was very poor.



Fig. 2.9 Mother Goddess

Although the Indus Valley Civilization has declined and disappeared, its influence on the Indian culture remains. The worship of the Mother Goddess in image form as the symbol of female power or *shakti* was introduced in the Later Vedic Age. The bullock carts still seen in Indian villages today are similar to the carts of the Harappan cities. The realistic carving of animals on the seals can also be seen on Ashoka's Lion Capital at Sarnath.

The religious knowledge of the people of the Indus is based on the findings of seals, inscriptions on copper plate, idols, etc. We do not have any knowledge of their philosophy due to lack of clear and readable written material. According to most historians, the Mother Goddess and Lord *Shiva* were the most important deities. The primary features of their religion are as follows:

1. **The worship of Mother Goddess:** Mother Goddess or Nature Goddess was the main religious deity of the time. In one of the idols, a plant is seen coming from a woman's abdomen and, in another, a woman is sitting with legs crossed. Sacrifices were also in vogue to please the Mother Goddess.
2. **The worship of Lord Shiva:** The tradition of praying to Lord Shiva was also much prevalent. In one of the seals, a yogi is surrounded by animals and has three faces with a crown of two horns. This image is considered to be that of Lord Shiva. Historians accept Shaivism as the oldest religion after finding its origin in the Indus Valley Civilization.
3. **The worship of the womb:** Along with the worship of Shiva, the worship of the *lingas* or the womb was also in practice. Several rings have been found during excavations, which were made of shell, stone, clay, etc. Structures in the shape of female organs of reproduction have been found from the Indus area as well as Baluchistan.

4. **The worship of trees or nature:** Coins reveal that worship of trees was also in practice. It had two forms—(i) worshipping trees in their natural form (ii) worshipping trees in the symbolic form, i.e., worshipping trees while considering them to be a place of residence of God. The Banyan tree was considered to be a sacred tree by the people of the Indus Valley Civilization.
5. **The worship of animals:** Animal worship was a popular practice of the Indus people. They considered the ox, bull, snake, sheep, buffalo and lion as holy animals.
6. **Other traditions:** There are evidences, which prove the worship of rivers and the sun. Idol worship was practised but historians have differences with regard to the existence of temples. Most probably prayers were offered at sites consisting of pillars and the sign of the swastik. From the discovery of an idol depicting a naked woman, it is assumed that the devadasi system was in practice.

The religious beliefs of the Indus Valley civilization had a lot in common with modern Hinduism. This proves that the Hindu religion is very ancient and is till today practised with little change. The Indus Valley Civilization is one of the oldest civilizations of the world. Its affinity to peace is till today the central character of our culture. The practice of idol worship is the gift of this civilization only. It is believed that people of this civilization were happier than those of other civilizations. The tradition of Indian culture which was started by the Indus Valley civilization is constantly flowing till today. Indian culture is indebted to the Indus Civilization especially in the field of religion and art.

2.3.7 Art Practised in Indus Valley Civilization

The people of the Indus Valley Civilization were art lovers and capable of making beautiful and attractive idols. Certain aspects of the art forms during the Indus Valley Civilization are as follows:

1. **Proficiency in constructing buildings:** The people of the Indus Valley Civilization were proficient in constructing buildings. Big buildings and good bathrooms prove their mastery in this art.
2. **Proficiency in idol making:** The idols of this time are of very good quality. These idols are very imaginative and artistic. The artists paid great attention to detailing to achieve the right facial expressions on their idols. The idol of the *Tribhanga* dancer is an excellent example. The metal idols were made by melting and moulding metals.
3. **Proficiency in seal making:** Seals were prepared from different kinds of stones, metals, clay and ivory. The seals were mainly square, rectangular or circular in shape. To increase the beauty of the coins, shapes of animals were made on them. People had acquired great proficiency in this field.
4. **Art of writing:** The people of the Indus Valley Civilization were familiar with the art of writing. Their script was symbolic in character. They wrote from right to left. Though the language is not decipherable, the seals tell us that the text used was brief and short.

NOTES

Check Your Progress

9. Fill in the blanks.
 - (a) There are evidences to show that Harappan people worshipped _____.
 - (b) _____ reveal that worship of trees was also in practice.
10. State whether True or False.
 - (a) Historians accept Shaivism as the oldest religion after finding its origin in the Indus Valley Civilization.
 - (b) The religious beliefs of the Indus civilization had nothing in common with modern Hinduism.

NOTES



Fig. 2.10 An Indus Valley Pictograph Appears on this Seal

5. **Dance and music:** It is known from seals and other things that the Indus Valley people were familiar with dance and music. A copper idol has been found in which a lady in a dancing pose is standing on her right leg.
6. **Other art forms:** The Indus Valley people were familiar with the art of metallurgy, drawing, pot making and manufacturing statues.

Textile workers were also considered as craftsmen. The Indus Valley Civilization was one of the first in the world to cultivate cotton and weave it into cloth. The textile workers of Harappa were believed to have woven cloth by hand interlacing two or more sets of strands. They did not use looms. Instead spindles made of terracotta were used. Remnants of dye vats have been found at some Indus sites, and it is believed that these were used to dye cotton cloth. Cotton cloth was also an important trade item.

Not only metallurgists but even stoneworkers made sharp-edged tools. A parallel-sided chert flake was supposed to have been used as a blade. Stone was used to make statues. The sculpture of a bearded man that was found at one of the sites is proof of the existence of skilled sculptors.

Check Your Progress

11. Fill in the blanks.
 - (a) The people of the Indus Valley Civilization were familiar with the art of _____.
 - (b) _____ was also an important trade item.
12. State whether True or False.
 - (a) The people of the Indus Valley Civilization were art lovers and capable of making beautiful and attractive idols.
 - (b) Indus Valley people were familiar with dance and music.

ACTIVITY

Out of the various artifacts recovered from the Indus Valley excavation sites, the most impressive is the figure of a dancing girl reflecting considerable creativity and casting skill. Obtain information on the figure and what it tells you about the people of the civilization.

DID YOU KNOW

The earliest Indian art emerged from the valley of the Indus River during the second half of the third millennium BC.

2.3.8 Urban Decline of the Indus Valley Civilization

Like other unanswered questions about the Indus Valley Civilization, the question of its devastation, of how, when, and why it disappeared, is unanswered. Many historians have given their own opinion. Seven layers have been found during excavations at different sites, which inform us that the Indus Valley Civilization would have been established and devastated a number of times. The chief reason being the floods in the Indus river. The Indus time and again changed its normal course, which was a frequent cause of devastation.

Another opinion regarding the decline of the Indus Valley civilization is geographical in nature including scarcity of rainfall, change in the course of the river, drought and earthquake, which may have devastated this developed civilization. In the opinion of a few scholars, this civilization was devastated due to the attack of the Aryans. Religious books clarify that there is mention of forts and towns of non-Aryans in the Rigveda which were probably ravaged in these attacks. The use of horses and chariots made these attacks successful. However, it has not been completely clarified as to how this civilization met its end.

The Indus Valley Civilization flourished for about 1000 years with very few changes in lifestyle, customs and habits. Though this civilization began to decline by 1500 BC, the exact causes of the decline are not known. However, historians have made various suggestions based on evidence, and they can be summed up as follows:

- The most commonly accepted theory is that natural calamities like earthquakes and floods or change in the course of the river Indus may have destroyed the cities or led to mass migration.
- Some historians are of the opinion that epidemics or fire destroyed the cities.
- Others believe that foreign invasions (probably of the Aryans) led to its decline.
- Yet another theory is that ecological changes due to deforestation led to the land becoming dry and uninhabitable.

2.4 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- The prehistoric sites and settlements take into account (a) Paleolithic (b) Mesolithic (c) Neolithic and (d) Chaleolithic Age.
- Construction workers at a railway track near Harappa were using the bricks from a nearby ruin, when it was realized that the bricks probably belonged to a very old civilization.
- The cities belonging to Indus Valley Civilization were divided into lower town area and citadel. Historians believe that there was some kind of difference between people who lived in the lower town area and those who lived near the citadel.
- One of the most remarkable features of the Indus Valley Civilization was meticulous town planning. This is especially evident in the city of Mohenjodaro.
- Our knowledge of the religious beliefs of the Harappans is based on the information derived from the seals and the terracotta and bronze figures.
- The people of the Indus Valley Civilization were art lovers and capable of making beautiful and attractive idols.

NOTES

Check Your Progress

13. Fill in the blanks.

- (a) In the opinion of a few scholars, this civilization was devastated due to the attack of the _____.
- (b) Some historians are of the opinion that _____ or fire destroyed the cities.

14. State whether True or False.

- (a) The Indus time and again changed its normal course, which was a frequent cause of devastation.
- (b) The Indus Valley Civilization flourished for about 1000 years with very few changes in lifestyle, customs and habits.

- Like other unanswered questions about the Indus Valley Civilization, the question of its devastation, of how, when, and why it disappeared, is unanswered.

2.5 KEY TERMS

- **Citadel:** A raised part of a city surrounded by walls for protection.
- **Granary:** An area for storage of grains.
- **Seal:** An engraved piece of metal used as a stamp for identification.
- **Pictograph:** A picture representing a word or phrase.

2.6 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. (a) False (b) True (c) True (d) False
2. (a) Ice Age (b) Core tools (c) Microliths (d) wheel
3. (a) Rakhaldas Bannerjee (b) The mound of the dead
4. (a) True (b) True
5. (a) Agriculture (b) Ornaments
6. (a) True (b) False
7. (a) Drainage system (b) Great Granary
8. (a) True (b) False
9. (a) Images (b) Coins
10. (a) True (b) False
11. (a) Writing (b) Cotton cloth
12. (a) True (b) True
13. (a) Aryans (b) Epidemics
14. (a) True (b) True

2.7 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write short notes on (a) Paleolithic (b) Mesolithic Age (c) Neolithic Age (d) Chalcolithic Sites.
2. What kinds of trade practices were prevalent during the Indus Valley Civilization?
3. What were the causes for the decline of the Indus Valley civilization?
4. Describe the dress and ornaments used by the people of the Indus Valley Civilization.
5. Write a note on the settlement patterns and town planning of the Indus Valley people.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the extent of the Indus Valley Civilization.
2. Discuss the religious beliefs and practices prevalent during the Indus Valley Civilization.
3. Describe the characteristic features of the Indus Valley Civilization.
4. Briefly describe the various forms of art practised in the Indus Valley Civilization.

2.8 FURTHER READING

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UNIT 3 THE VEDIC AGE AND SANGAM AGE

Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Unit Objectives
- 3.2 Early Vedic Age
 - 3.2.1 Society
 - 3.2.2 Religion
 - 3.2.3 Economy
 - 3.2.4 Polity
- 3.3 Later Vedic Age
 - 3.3.1 Society
 - 3.3.2 Religion
 - 3.3.3 Economy
 - 3.3.4 Polity
- 3.4 Sangam Age
 - 3.4.1 Society and Religion
 - 3.4.2 Economy
 - 3.4.3 Polity
- 3.5 Summary
- 3.6 Key Terms
- 3.7 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 3.8 Questions and Exercises
- 3.9 Further Reading

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you to the Vedic cultures, their literatures, way of life and some key features regarding their administration. In addition, the unit will also explain the Sangam Age.

Vedic culture occupies the most prominent place in Indian history. Its impact on modern India is widely prevalent. The religion, philosophy and social customs of the Hindus who constitute a majority of our country have their principal source in the Vedic culture. It has also contributed fairly towards the world culture in terms of religious philosophy and spiritual speculations. It has been tended by several scholars that the village culture of the Vedic age was inferior to the city culture of the Indus Valley. But this contention is not accepted by the majority. The contribution of the Vedic culture to human progress has far exceeded that of the Indus Valley culture and this factor alone is sufficient to justify its superiority. The Vedic culture definitely occupies a significant place among the cultures of the world and adds a brilliant chapter to Indian history.

3.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Identify the salient features of the Rig Vedic/Early Vedic civilization
- Assess the nature of kingship in the later Vedic civilization

- Assess the role played by sacred Vedic texts and the rituals and ceremonies prescribed by them
- Discuss the nature of the society, administration, caste division and the position of women in the later Vedic age
- Explain the social, political and religious structures in the Later Vedic Age
- Explain the various features of the Sangam Age

3.2 EARLY VEDIC AGE

The only source of Vedic culture is the Vedic literature. The Vedic literature includes the four Vedas also called Samhitas (namely the Rig Veda, the Sam Veda, the Yajur Veda and the Atharva Veda and the Brahmanas, the *Aranyakas* and the *Upanishads*. The Rig Veda is a collection of hymns, the Sam Veda is a collection of songs mostly taken from the Rig Veda, the Yajur Veda is a collection of sacrificial formulas, the Atharva Veda is a collection of spells and charms, the Brahmanas contain observations on various sacrificial rites and ceremonies, the *Aranyakas* contain philosophic speculations about the nature of truth and the *Upanishads* elaborate further upon the philosophic speculations of *Aranyakas*. The *Upanishads* marked a reaction against a sacrificial religion and revealed the ultimate truth and reality, the knowledge of which was considered indispensable for the emancipation of man.

During the early stage of their settlement in India, the Aryans had composed only *samhitas* (hymns) of the Rig Veda. Therefore, the only source of early Vedic culture is the Rig Veda. Its present text consists of 1,028 hymns which are divided into ten *mandalas* or books. There is no unanimous opinion amongst scholars regarding the period of its composition. Bal Gangadhar Tilak believed that it was composed during 6000 BC, Jacobi fixed the time as 2,500 BC and Max Muller opined that it was composed sometime between 1,200-1,000 BC.

However, a majority of scholars accept that most of its hymns were composed between 1,500 and 1,000 BC although many of its hymns might have been composed a century or two later. The Rig Veda gives us some ideas about the political, social, economic and cultural life of the people during the Vedic Age.

Geographical expansion

The term *Saptsindhavah* as used in the Rig Veda means a definite country. It means the country of seven rivers and according to Max Muller; the seven rivers are the Indus, its five tributaries and the Saraswati. River Yamuna has been referred to very few times, while reference to the Ganges has been made only once. Thus, during this period, the Aryans were mainly confined to Punjab though their outer settlements towards the east reached up to the banks of the Yamuna and the Ganges. However, references to Kabul, the Swat, the Kurram and the Gomul river indicate that some Aryan tribes still lingered on the western side of the river Indus. Thus, Afghanistan, the North-West Frontier Province, Punjab, Kashmir, parts of Sind and Rajputana and Eastern India up to the river Sarayu were inhabited by the Aryans during this period.

one or another phenomenon of nature. Broadly, the Rig Vedic gods were classified into the following three categories:

- (a) The terrestrial gods such as Prithvi, Agni, Brihaspati, Soma, etc.
- (b) The atmospheric gods such as Indra, Rudra, Marut, Vayu, Parjanya, etc. and
- (c) Celestial gods such as Surya, Usha, Savitri, Vishnu, Moon, Varuna, etc.

Indra, Varuna, Agni, Soma, and Surya were prominent gods among them. Indra was the most powerful god whose exclusive weapon was *Vajra*. He was regarded primarily as a god of rain and thunderstorm but now most scholars believe that he was the god of light. Parjanya is regarded as the god of rain and Marut as the god of thunderstorm. Varuna was the god of power and an upholder of moral order. Agni was the god of food and the mouth of all gods with which they ate the food offered to them in sacrifice. Surya was the god of light and *Soma*, the popular drink of the Aryans, was also assigned a place among the gods.

The religion of the Aryans was pre-eminently ritualistic and the worship of gods was looked upon as the foremost duty of man. Performance of *Yajnas*, prayer to gods and sacrifice of various articles, food and animals formed the basic concept of their religious rituals by which they tried to please gods and expected honour, wealth, power and comforts of life in return. Though the Aryans had many gods, yet, on a philosophical basis, they were monist. They had started to believe in a supreme God, the ultimate power, of which other gods were different manifestations. The Aryans had contemplated life after death and believed in the existence of hell and heaven but they did not attach much importance to afterlife. They loved their present life and prayed to their gods to make it prosperous and happy. That this life is false (*Maya*) and miserable was not their concept so far. The principle of *Karma*, that is, the law of good or bad effects flowing from good or bad conduct is binding on gods and mortals alike, was yet not well established but was recognized by them. Thus, the Rig Vedic religion possessed certain features as follows:

- (i) The religion was utilitarian as the Aryans always expected power and prosperity by pleasing their gods.
- (ii) The Aryan-gods were liberal and they provided them everything if pleased.
- (iii) Amongst the gods, the male-gods occupied dominant position.
- (iv) There was an absence of image-worship.
- (v) The religious attitude was optimistic towards life. The joys and pleasures of this life attracted them more than the life after death in heaven.
- (vi) The priestly class was yet not effective in religion as most of the religious rites were performed by the master of the house, (*Grahpati*) himself.
- (vii) The principles of *Karma* and that of the transmigration of soul, that is, the soul never dies and takes rebirth after the death of an individual unless it gets Nirvana, were yet not well established.

Thus, the Rig Vedic period has its own distinct features which differ from the later Vedic period. Describing the importance of Rig Veda, Dr. R.C. Majumdar mentions that the Rig Veda is, therefore justly regarded as a source-book of first rate importance for the study and appreciation of the gradual development of Hindu culture, and no wonder it is revered by three hundred million Hindus today as the holiest of the holy.

3.2.3 Economy

Agriculture and cattle rearing were the main occupations of the early Aryans. They grew barley, wheat, rice, fruits and vegetables. Agriculture was the basis of the economy in the Vedic age. The land where two crops could grow in a year was considered fertile and was coveted. The most important thing of Vedic period was that no profession was considered to be small except fishing and hair cutting, which were looked down upon. Both imports as well as exports were carried on during the Vedic period. The traders are known as 'Pani'. Clothes, bed sheets, leather, etc., were mainly traded. Trading was done on bullock carts.

3.2.4 Polity

The state was called the *Rashtra* (tribal kingdom). The head of the state was called *Rajan* or the king. In later days the expression *Samrat* was also used which meant emperor. It might have been used for a king who had several kings under his rule. *Rashtra*, probably, was divided into *Janas*. The officer of a *Jana* was called *Gop*. Every *Jana* was divided into smaller units called *Visa*. The administrative head of a *Visa* was called *Vispati*. The smallest unit was the village called *Gram* whose chief officer was *Gramani*. The village consisted of a group of families or *Kulas*. The head of a *Kula* or family was called *Kulapa*, *Kulpati* or *Grahpati*.

The political organization of the Vedic period is closely associated with the social structure and the lifestyles of the people living in that age. As far as the Rig Vedic phase is concerned, we do not have many archaeological evidences which can corroborate the literary ones, so we are not left with a choice but to rely on the Rig Veda, alone. Horse and Chariots were the primary distinctive elements between the Rig Vedic Aryans and their predecessors. Aryans, during this age, knew a metal described in the Rig Veda as 'ayas'. This was either copper or bronze. Whether it was used in chariot making is not known, but it was certainly used on an arrowhead (*Ayomukham*). Cow was a coveted possession of a Rig Vedic Aryan and not the land. Lack of a suitable metal like iron discouraged agriculture and pastoralism was the main source of livelihood. This made Aryans semi-nomadic. These two aspects, a 'semi-nomadic' life and 'Gavishtih'-consistent warfare for the possession of cows, prevented the Rig Vedic people from having large kingdoms and so the political organization during this age revolved around the tribal or clan kinship.

During the later Vedic period, the Aryans moved from the region of Saptasindhava to the areas of western UP and upper Doab. They now had the knowledge of 'iron' and were settled in a region which, if cleared from forests, could provide them with a very fertile tract for agriculture. Iron was useful not only for making sharper weapons and ploughs but also helped them in clearing the forests. Archaeologically, the finding of 700 or so Painted Grey Ware (PGW) sites, attributed to the later Vedic Aryans indicated that they had a settled life not with a primitive but a reasonably vibrant agricultural economy. The smaller units of Rig Vedic age now combined to form larger ones, like the Purus and Bharatas combining to form 'Kuru' and Kurus allying then with 'Panchalas'.

The new settled life created new social complications which resulted in the emergence of the concept of 'Varna'. These changes necessitated the need for stable administrative machinery which, in any case, still revolved around the king.

The conspicuous penchant of Rig Vedic Aryans towards cattle, especially cow, and the absence of agriculture, resulted in a social structure which was purely tribal.

NOTES

The two terms mentioned in the Rig Veda, which predominantly indicate a tribal society, are *Jana* and *Vish*. These two terms are mentioned 275 and 171 times, respectively, in the text. We also hear of *Panchajana* indicating a confederation of five tribes.

Basis of Polity

Jana in Rig Veda has been mentioned 275 times, but *Janapada* has not been mentioned even once. *Rajya* occurs only once and *Rashtra*, ten times and that too in the later books of Rig Veda. *Gram* has been mentioned 13 times but not in the sense of a village. It rather denoted a tribal unit mainly mobilized for warfare. This unit had a share of pasture land, to be used by their cattle for grazing. These pasture lands were under the control of *Vrajapati* who, in a sense, was the head of a particular tribal unit. It seems that from this *Vrajapati* evolved the *Gramani*, who was not the head of a village during the Rig Vedic times but was the formal head of a tribal unit.

The kingship

'Rajan' ruled his people and not a territory and so he has been referred to as the protector of his people (*Gopa janasya* or *Gopali janasya*). He was elected by the people of his tribe. The position of kingship was not hereditary, though there are examples which indicate that this position was hereditary in some cases. The family of Sudas is said to have enjoyed the position of a chief for three generations.

The *Rajan* did not have unlimited powers or authority and a check was imposed upon him through the tribal assemblies mainly the Sabha and 'the Samiti'. Another source of check on the authority of the king was with *Purohita*, whose prestige and powers the Rajan had to reckon with. *Purohita* accompanied Rajan to the battlefield and conducted spells and prayers to boost the morale of his warriors. The king is asked at several instances in the Rig Veda to give special attention and protection to *Purohita*. The increased activities of warfare increased the amount of booty and number of slaves captured, which enhanced the living conditions of the tribal chiefs. The priest, in turn, was remunerated heavily by the chief with cattle, horses, gold and slaves for the services rendered. The priests, on their part, developed the practice of a formal consecration and composed hymns called *Danastuti* extolling the Rajan, which enhanced latter's prestige among his clansmen and the conquered subjects.

System of voluntary offerings

Semi-nomadic lifestyle and a pastoral economy prevented a stable administrative structure to develop during the Rig Vedic phase. The source of the maintenance of the king and his officials was *Bali* meaning 'offering', During the Rig Vedic times this offering was voluntary and not a tax or an exaction. Both the clansmen of the king and the people of the conquered tribes gave *Bali*. It was received in kind and Rig Veda does not mention any official who collected taxes. Agricultural produce was not a regular feature during these times.

Military functionaries

There has been a reference to a functionary called *Senani* in the Rig Veda but there is no indication of a standing army. In fact, without a regular system of taxation, the concept of standing army was not possible. The term 'Sena', mentioned around 20 times in the Rig Veda, was a temporary institution which came into being through the mobilization of tribal units and clans whenever there was a possibility of war. Military functions were undertaken by the tribal assemblies. *Vrajapatis*, the head of the pasture land, had, in

Check Your Progress

1. Fill in the blanks.
 - (a) The only source of Vedic culture is the Vedic _____.
 - (b) The Rig Veda is a collection of _____.
2. State whether True or False.
 - (a) The Sam Veda is a collection of songs mostly taken from the Rig Veda.
 - (b) Sudas was a Bharata king of the Tristru family.

general, a peaceful duty to perform but during the time of war he undertook military responsibilities and led his tribe to the battle. The same was true for both *Kulapa* and *Gramani*. Hence, there were no regular officials to meet the military needs.

Law and order

As land was not considered a property or an asset, so territorial encroachment was not reported as a crime. Burglary, robbery, theft, etc., were reported as general cases of crime. The largest number of cases reported were of 'Cattle lifting', which seems to be the most prevalent crime owing, obviously, to the fact that a lot of importance was attached to cattle wealth. Under these conditions, the king employed a large number of spies called *Spasa* to keep a vigil on the conduct of the masses. Other officials responsible to keep the law and order under control were *Ugra* and *Jivagribha*. *Madhyamasi* was another official who acted as a mediator in the disputes. Punishment, however, was very lenient during the Rig Vedic times. A wergild of 100 cows was considered sufficient for killing a man. There was no death penalty for theft in this phase unlike the post Vedic times.

Officials concerned with civil administration

Among the so called civil functionaries were the chief queen (*Mahishi*), the Priest (*Purohita*), the treasurer, the charioteer, who originally distributed the royal goods, the carpenter (*Takshan*), and the messenger (*Dakia*). All these officials became 'Ratnins' in the later Vedic period. *Senani* was another official, during Rig Vedic times who had some civil functions. We do not hear of any civil laws and it seems that only primitive tribal laws prevailed in this matter. Since the tribal assemblies promptly undertook the responsibilities of tribal affairs, not much onus lay upon the shoulders of the king. This also explains, perhaps, the lesser number of officials during this phase.

As we have seen already, the tribal assemblies were an important pillar of the Rig Vedic society and polity. There were predominantly four types of assemblies. These were the *Vidatha*, the *Gana*, the *Sabha* and the *Samiti*. The *Vidatha* -seems to be the earliest of them and it is not known whether it had any political function or not but it is certain that the *Vidatha* distributed the booty and whatever else was captured or produced by the tribesmen. The *Gana*, the *Sabha* and the *Samiti* certainly had political functions. As has already been cited, it was not possible for the king to administer without the consent and the help of the *sabha* and the *samiti*. The main function of these two assemblies was to conduct discussions on the need and deliberation of warfare. These assemblies consisted of the tribesmen who themselves used to fight in the battles. Hence, the powers and responsibilities of these assemblies were quite extensive and this prevented the accumulation of the powers in the hands of the king.

Thus, we can surmise from this discussion that, the political organization of the Rig Vedic people in the absence of a standing army, a well defined taxation system, a permanent cadre of officials and, above all, without any territorial identity, looked quite primitive and rudimentary. All in all, the Rig Vedic society though democratic was predominantly military in nature.

DID YOU KNOW

The arrival of the Aryans marked the beginning of the Vedic Period or the Vedic Age.

3.3 LATER VEDIC AGE

The Rig Vedic period came to an end in 1000 BC. The period from 1080-600 BC is known as the later Vedic period. During this period the Aryans composed the other three Vedas, i.e. Sam Veda, Yajur Veda and Atharva Veda. They also composed the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas, the Upanishads, the Sutras, the Puranas, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, which are also called Great Epics provide the most reliable account about this period which is also called as the Great Epic Age. Sometime back the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* were considered to be fictional rather than of historical works but now their position is quite different and the information derived from them is of most valuable help and gives us a true picture of life and society in that age. The *Ramayana* is the first literary record of the passing of the Aryans beyond the Vindhyas and their penetration by the armed forces into southern India. *Mahabharata* is the second great Epic. It has eighteen cantos and about 100 *slokas* or verses. Similarly, like the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* is regarded as the creation of the imagination of the poets by the European historians. They say that even though some of the princes mentioned in the *Mahabharata* might be historic figures, yet the bards and poets have transformed the story in such a way that nothing true is left in it.

Though some imaginary, fanciful creations might have been inserted in the *Mahabharata*, yet Krishna, Arjuna, etc., were historic figures and Hastinapur and Indraprastha were historic towns. In this way, the story of the *Mahabharata* and the persons mentioned in it belongs to history. In the excavations, ruins of about 300 Aryans sites have been found containing earthen pottery as well as iron weapons. Aryans spread to the Indo-Gangetic plains from the Punjab.

At the very outset they occupied Delhi and Meerut in the Ganges-Yamuna Doab region. They made Hastinapur (modern Meerut District) as their capital. In about 600 BC Aryans advanced towards the eastern regions of Kosala and Northern Bihar. Their continuous success was due to their superior weapons, good horses and chariots. They used iron weapons and because of these factors, they were able to expand continuously.

As the Aryans advanced to the east and the south, their number decreased in proportion to the original inhabitants of those areas. Now they were surrounded by people who differed from them in religion, culture and customs. There was a great interaction and thus there came a great change in the Aryan institutions. Their social, political and economic organizations became more complex and certain corrupt practices crept into their religion. We can study the civilization of the later Vedic Aryans in the following manner.

3.3.1 Society

Family

The family was an important institution during this period. Each *Kula* or family consisted of several members. There also existed joint family system and the heads of the family, called *Kulpati*, either used to be the father or the eldest brother. Marriages, sacrifices and other important duties in the joint family were performed by the head of the family

in consultation with his wife. Adoption was resorted to not only in the absence of real children, but also to secure the addition of a specially qualified member to the family. There is a prayer in the Atharva Veda which is offered for the unity and love of the family. Guests were entertained with a warm hospitality.

In the family, we notice the increasing power of the father who could even disinherit his son. In princely families, the right of primogeniture was getting strong. Male ancestors came to be worshipped.

NOTE:

Position of women

The general position of the women changed for the worse. They lost the right to the Upanayana ceremony, and all their sacraments, excluding marriage, were performed without the recitation of the Vedic mantras. As in the earlier period, the marriage of women normally took place after puberty. Polygamy certainly prevailed. Theoretically, the wife was still accorded a very high position. Thus, the *Satapatha Brahmana* says that she is half her husband and completes him. But there are unerring signs that her status and dignity were lowered a great deal during this period. Thus, many of the religious ceremonies, formerly left to the wife, were now performed by priests. She was not allowed to attend the political assemblies. A submissive wife who would keep her mouth shut and dine after her husband was held up as the ideal. The birth of a daughter was most unwelcome for she was regarded as a source of misery and a son alone was the saviour of a family. The women were taught to dance and sing and play various kinds of musical instruments such as drums, flutes, lyre or harp, cymbals, and lutes. Although some women theologians took part in philosophic discussions and some queens participated in coronation rituals, ordinarily women were thought to be inferior and subordinate to men.

Classes and caste system

Settled life led to a further crystallization of the four-fold division of society. Brahmins claimed both social and political privileges. *Kshatriyas* constituted the warrior class and came to be looked upon as the protectors of the people and the king was chosen from among them. *Vaishyas* devoted themselves to trade, agriculture and various crafts as they were the 'tax-paying' class. In this way all work, whether religious or secular, became more and more specialized and hereditary. It was obviously easier for the son of a warrior to be trained in the use of weapons than for the son of a Brahmin who was undergoing training in a Vedic school. The same applied to the children of agriculturists and *Vaishyas*. The new conquests brought large number of slaves. Work having become more specialized and complicated, it was necessary to absorb these slaves into the service of the community, so they were included in the social system as *Sudras* whose primary business was to do some kind of unskilled service required of them. While the *Sudras* were absorbed in the social system and while some of them accumulated wealth and even mixed occasionally with the members of the three upper castes, they were never allowed to study the scriptures. The rules relating to inter-caste marriage began to be rigid. How far the change of caste was possible, we cannot speculate.

Four ashrams

Besides caste system, the life was divided into certain *Ashrams*. The first twenty-five years of life was called *Bramhacharya* stage during which period one was supposed to go to the acharyas and the *guru* for the sake of education. Next came the *Grahashta* stage which lasted up to fifty years. During this period a man was allowed to lead a

married life and have children. The third stage was *Vanprastha*. During this period, upto seventy-five years of age, a man devoted himself to the worship of god though he still lived in the family. The last stage, from seventy six to hundred years of life, was called *Sanyas*. During this period one was to go to the forest to lead the rest of the life in devotion to God.

Decline in morality

The rich and the royal classes had begun to marry several times. They were also addicted to drinking intoxicating liquors and gambling. Dancing girls and prostitutes became a source of great pleasure. Killing an enemy by deceit was a common practice. In this connection, the deceit practised by the Kaurvas to kill the Pandvas is a clear proof. In the *Mahabharata* there is a mention of the persons who did not pay taxes and were guilty of weighing short measures. Thus, a gradual degradation in the later Vedic period or Epic society was easily visible.

Food and drink

The variety of eatables had amply increased. Chief among them were *apuka* (cake mixed with ghee, made of rice or barley), *adana* (a mess of grain cooked with milk or curd or ghee), *Karambha* (porridge made of grain or barley), *Yavagu* (barley- gruel), etc. Rice cooked with milk and beans, and fried grains of rice were also known and used. A very large number of milk products were prepared and they were very popular. Chief among these products were *amiksha* (clotted curds), *dahi* (sour milk), *nava-nita* (fresh butter), *payasya* (mixture of sour milk and hot or old fresh milk), *prishadajya* (butter mixed of sour milk), *phanta* (creamy butter), *vajilla* (mixture of hot fresh milk with sour milk), etc. Meat eating was fairly common. The *Satapatha Brahmana* prescribes the killing of a great ox or goat in the honour of a guest. Meat was not only eaten on ceremonial occasions but was also used daily. Cow slaughter was looked at with disfavour. Sura, an intoxicating liquor, often finds mention. But it is often condemned as leading to quarrels and seducing men from the path of virtue.

Dress and ornaments

The people wore cotton clothes. Some of them wore silken clothes also. The dress had lost its former simplicity and became a little gaudy. Likewise, ornaments had become costly and were mostly made of gold and silver.

Marriage

There are references which indicate that inter-caste marriages took place in this period. However, they were not regarded as good. There are mentions of polygamy by men and dowry system had also started. The marriages between '*sapinds*' (within the same generation) were prohibited to the seven generations from the side of father and five generations from the side of mother.

Education

Such a highly developed intellectual life as well as the vast mass of Vedic literature presupposes a well planned system of education. The Upanayana was the religious ceremony by which a boy was initiated into the life of a student and handed over to a *guru* or preceptor. Henceforth he had to live in the house of the guru and lead the chaste life of a *Brahamachari* whose principal duties were to study and serve the teacher. The latter included gathering fuel, tending cows and begging alms. The

students got free boarding and lodging at his house and in return did personal service to him and paid fees (*dakshina*) at the completion of their study, though, sometimes, sons of wealthy parents probably gave regular fees. The Aryans themselves had no writing script until much later. It is possible that a script came to be used by about 700 BC since there are references to writing as a normal activity by 500 BC. Judging from the earliest specimens found in India (the stone inscriptions of the emperor Asoka, of the third century BC) the early script may have been influenced by a semantic system of writing. Education was restricted to the upper castes and the teaching of the Vedas was restricted to the Brahmins, although in theory it was open to all *dvija* castes. Arithmetic, grammar, and prosody were included as subjects of study. Some of the Rig Vedic hymns incorporated ritual dancing and the recitation of dialogues thus constituting the rudiments of a dramatic form. The stories of the bards, from which the epic compositions originated, also lent themselves to dramatic presentations.

3.3.2 Religion

Emergence of new gods

People believed in one Supreme God. The power of the Almighty, the Omniscience of God, is recognized in the Atharva Veda. The idea of supreme God like Prajapati the creator and preserver of the Universe and the conception of Brahma is found in the Atharva Veda. The Atharva Veda suggests the idea of Brahma as the first cause of all existence and of the oneness of man with the world-soul. In this period new Gods like Vishnu, Siva, Ganesh, Parvati, Rama, Krishna, etc., took the place of nature gods like Indra, Varuna, Surya, the Earth, Agni, etc., of the Rig Vedic period. In this context, scholars like R.C. Majumdar define that 'in one Upanishad, Krishna is associated with a school of thought that rejected the purely ritualistic interpretation of sacrifice and considered the practices of virtue to be as effective as providing gifts to priest. In the final hour one should, according to this school, take refuge in these three thoughts. You are the imperishable, the never falling and the very essence of life.'

Aim and mode of worship

People worshipped gods for the same material reasons in this period as they did in earlier times. However, the mode of worship changed considerably and prayers continued to be recited, but they ceased to be the dominant mode of placating the gods. Sacrifices became far more important and they assumed both publicity and domesticity which was still in many cases identical with the tribe. Private sacrifices were performed by the individuals in their houses because in this period the Vedic people led a settled life and maintained well established households. Individuals offered oblations to Agni and each one of these took the form of a ritual or sacrifice. Elaborate sacrificial rites undermined the importance of the Rig Vedic gods, some of whom faded into the background. The priests became the chief beneficiaries of the sacrifices and consequently gained power. Cattle were slaughtered at the sacrifices in large numbers. Animal bones with cut marks found in course of excavations at Atranjikhera are mostly of cattle. Public rituals, therefore, led to the decimation of the cattle wealth whose importance for the developing agricultural economy can hardly be overestimated.

Growth of ritualism

The Brahmins were anxious to make themselves more important and respected in the society. To achieve this objective they concentrated their energies upon developing a

complicated and detailed system of rituals (the manners of performing religious rites). Indeed, the priestly class now devoted their whole attention to find out the hidden and mystic meaning of the rites and ceremonies. These ceremonies consist of domestic rites as well as great sacrifices and form a body of rituals, probably the most stupendous and complex which has ever been elaborated by man. The domestic rites embrace the whole course of a man's life from his conception in the mother's womb up to his death, or rather beyond it, as several ceremonies refer to the departed souls.

The Brahmins claimed a monopoly of priestly knowledge and expertise. They invented a large number of rituals some of which were adopted from the non-Aryans. The reason for the invention and elaboration of the rituals is not clear, though mercenary motives cannot be ruled out. We hear that as many as 240,000 cows were given as *dakshina* or gift to the officiating priest in the *Rajsuya* sacrifice. In addition to cows, which were usually given as sacrificial gifts, gold, cloth and horses were also given. Sometimes the priests claimed portions of territory as *dakshina*, but the grant of land as sacrificial fee is not well established in the later Vedic period. The *Satapatha Brahmana* states that in the *Asvamedha Yajna*, all should be given to the priest. This, therefore, merely indicates the desire of the priests to grab as much land as possible.

Significance of tapa and gyana

A great significance was attached to *Tapa* which was considered as a means to purify the mind and soul. *Tapa* to a considerable extent was a substitute for sacrifices in *Yajnas*. It meant meditation of god accompanied by physical tortures to one's own self in various forms with a view to attaining *Nirvana*.

However, another section of the people emphasized the attainment of *Nirvana* through *Gyana* or true knowledge. The Upanishads declared that *Nirvana* is possible only by acquiring true knowledge and laid down the doctrine that he who knows God, attains God. The Upanishads hold that good deeds, *yajanas*, sacrifices etc., can provide an individual a good life in future but could not help one in the attainment of *Nirvana* or *Moksha* which could be possible only by *Gyana*.

Philosophy

Along with rites, rituals, and *Yajnas*, philosophy was also thoroughly studied. Philosophers defined soul, god, heaven, hell, salvation, etc. A unique thing of this period was the special attention of the kings and rulers of this period towards philosophy and they contributed much to its advancement. The contributions of Ajatshatru of Kasi, Janak of Videha, Asvapati of Kaikeya, etc., have been quite remarkable.

Belief in karma moksha

Belief in the transmigration of soul was further strengthened during this period. The *Chandogya Upanishad* says that a person who in his life time realizes Brahma or God is absorbed in Brahma, the universal soul after his death. He never takes birth again. Thus, he in this way attains *Moksha*. The action of man in this world, i.e., Karma, determined the future of man after death. But a person who performs good deeds but cannot realize God, goes to the world of the moon and after residing there for some time, again takes birth as a man.

Asceticism

The belief in *Karma*, *Punarjanma* and *Moksha* made many people take up an ascetic life. They renounced the earthly life and retired to forests. They believed that by self-mortification the soul can become free from *Karma*.

Belief in magic spells and spirits

Aryans had become superstitious now. They believed in magic spells. They also believed in ghosts and spirits. Recourse was taken to magical spells so as to proclaim victory in war and getting relief from diseases, etc.

Donation as a means of salvation

For their selfish ends the Brahmins encouraged gifts and donations. During that time besides the cow, gold, land, horses and clothes were also given as gifts. 'A liberal man', was made the hero of the compositions of poets, etc.

Movement against rituals, etc.

Towards the later part of the Vedic period big movements started in Panchal and Videha against the superstitions and rituals encouraged by the Brahmins and the priests. The people criticized these rituals and emphasized regent belief and knowledge. Many kings also participated in these movements. Priests were made ready for religious reformation.

3.3.3 Economy

The Aryans followed a mixed pastoral and agricultural economy. They ploughed their fields by means of a pair of oxen bound to the yoke. In later stages, they used heavy ploughs drawn by six, eight, twelve, and even twenty-four oxen. There are references to artificial waterways which make it certain that the system of irrigation was known to them. Their other chief source of income was cattle-rearing. Rather, it would be much proper to say that in the early stages, the primary occupation of the Rig Vedic Aryans was cattle-rearing because we find a heavy impact of the tribal organization on their early social and political set-up. It was only afterwards that agriculture got priority over cattle-rearing. Cows occupied an important place in it and were used as a means of exchange and value as well. Horses were also greatly valued. Other domesticated animals were sheep, goats, asses, oxen and dogs. Hunting also served a useful economic purpose. They hunted lions, boar, buffaloes, deer, birds and antelopes. They also used nets to capture them.

Another important occupation was weaving, both in cotton and wool, which supplied garments to the people. Other professions were those of priest, carpenter, goldsmith, leather-worker, physician, butcher, dancer, musician, etc. Probably, use of iron was known to them.

Dr. R.S. Sharma has expressed the view that sea-trade was not carried out by the Rig Vedic Aryans. They, being constantly busy in wars, were not able to produce so much as would have left sufficient surplus for export. But Dr R.C. Majumdar and B.M. Apte have opined that these people engaged themselves in sea-trade and had trade relations with Babylon and other countries in West Asia. However, all scholars agree that internal trade was carried on both by river and land.

The Aryans had no coins and barter system was pursued for the exchange of commodities. However, the cow had become a unit of value and a medium of exchange.

There is reference to one more medium of exchange called *nishka* which was probably a piece of gold of a fixed weight and was used as a sort of currency.

On the whole, having natural facilities for agriculture and cattle breeding, the Aryans enjoyed a prosperous economic life.

Agriculture

Mostly the people lived in villages, but by now the big cities had also come into existence. Although very few agricultural tools made of iron have been found, there is no doubt that agriculture was the main means of livelihood of the later Vedic people. Ploughing was done with the help of a wooden plough share which possibly worked in the light soil of the upper Gangetic basin. Enough bullocks could not be found because of cattle slaughter in sacrifices. Therefore, agriculture was primitive but there is no doubt about its wide prevalence. The *Satapatha Brahmana* speaks at length about the ploughing rituals. According to ancient legends, Janakas (the king of Videha and father of Sita) lend his hand at the plough. In those days even kings and princes did not hesitate to take to manual labour. Balarama, the brother of Krishna, is called *Haladhara* or wielder of the plough. In later times, ploughing came to be prohibited for the members of the upper *varnas*. The Vedic people continued to produce barley, but during this period rice and wheat became their chief crops. In subsequent times wheat became the staple food of the people in Punjab and western Uttar Pradesh. For the first time, the Vedic people came to be acquainted with rice in the Doab. It is called *Vrihi* in the Vedic texts, and its remains recovered from Hastinapur belong to the eight century BC. The use of rice is recommended in rituals, but that of wheat is rarely mentioned. Various kinds of lentils were also produced by the later Vedic people. Beans and sesames were also known and the latter assumed ritual importance in course of time. The growing importance of agriculture undermined the earlier pastoral economy which could not feed the increasing population well enough.

Arts and crafts

Simultaneously, with the transition from a pastoral to an agricultural economy, there seemed to have arisen several new arts and crafts. In place of the few occupations in the Rig Veda, many are enumerated in later Vedic literature. Mention may be made of smelter, smith or, carpenter, weaver, leather worker, jeweller, dyer and potter. It is difficult to say how far the smelters and smiths were connected with making objects of iron. Probably they worked mostly with copper, which continued to predominate with iron still being rare. Weaving was practiced on a wide scale but perhaps remained confined mainly to women. Leather work, pottery and carpentry were connected with building activities of which we have some evidence in this period. The later Vedic people were acquainted with four types of pottery: black and red ware, black-slipped ware, painted grey ware and red ware. The last type of pottery was most popular with them and has been found almost all over western Uttar Pradesh. However, the distinctive pottery of the period is known as the Painted Grey Ware. It consisted of bowls and dishes which were used either for rituals or for eating or for both, but by the upper orders. Glass hoards and bangles found in the PGW layers may have been used as luxurious objects by a few persons. The use of metals like tin, lead, silver and gold were known. Gold and silver were used normally for making ornaments and delicate articles like vessels. Medical profession was well established. Many diseases were cured by herbs. Magic spells also were used for the purpose.

Being an agriculturist society, the Aryans attached great importance to animals. They were reared both for their milk and agricultural purposes. In fact, cattle rearing received an impetus during this period. We have references which indicate that meadows were carefully looked after so that animals might not face any inconvenience. Large sheds were also created to accommodate the cattle so that they may be protected against wild animals and extreme cold or hot weather. The cow was regarded as sacred during this period. This was perhaps due to their utility. In the Atharva Veda, death penalty was prescribed for cow slaughter. Elephants were also domesticated by the people. Other domesticated animals were sheep, goats, asses, oxen and dogs.

Trade

The requirements of the people having increased, various goods were in great demand. This resulted in brisk trade. Agriculture led to trade. With the clearing of the land eastwards along the Ganges valley, the river became a natural highway of trade, the numerous settlements on its banks acting as markets. The more wealthy landowners, who could afford to employ others to cultivate their land, were the potential traders, since they both had leisure and capital. Thus, the trading community arose from an originally land owning section of society. To start with, trade was restricted to local areas, and the Aryans probably did not venture very far afield; yet there are references in the Rig Veda of ships and sea voyages which could not have been entirely imaginary. The less advanced technology of the Aryans had a restrictive influence and tended to confine the possibilities of trade to local areas. Barter was the common practice in trade, the cow being the unit of value in large scale transactions which further limited the geographical reach of a particular trader. The *nishka* is also mentioned as a measure of value. Later it came to be the name of a gold coin, but at this stage it may have been merely a measure of gold.

3.3.4 Polity

The later Vedic period is generally considered to have commenced from the beginning of the first millennium BC. The core region of the Vedic civilization now became the area of western UP, which, according to the literary texts, was now under the control of the Kuru-Panchalas. In this area, the Vedic people seem to have displaced the copper using people whose tools, weapons and pottery types (late Harappan and Ochre Coloured Pottery) indicate that these people flourished in this region between 1700 and 1000 BC. The Aryans, by now, had the knowledge of iron which is evidenced by the discovery of large hoards of iron at Atranjikhhera, in the Etah district of UP. Iron also helped the Aryans to clear the dense forests of the region and start agriculture. This resulted in a new agrarian economy and a settled life. A large number of PGW sites, discovered through the excavations, are considered to have been the Aryan settlements during the later Vedic age.

The most startling feature of this age was the firm assertion of the territorial element. One of the hymns of Atharva Veda mentions that *Rashtra* or the territory be held by the king and be made firm by the Varuna, the god Brihaspati, Indra and Agni. We also hear of a permanent royal residence of the Kuru-Panchala kings called 'Ashandivat'. Though the tribal element was still important, now equally important was the element of territory.

NOTES

Check Your Progress

- Fill in the blanks.
 - In the later Vedic age the life was divided into certain _____.
 - The economic life in the _____ was somewhat different from that of the Rig Vedic period.
- State whether True or False.
 - The Mahabharata is the first literary record of the passing of the Aryans beyond the Vindhya and their penetration by the armed forces into southern India.
 - The family was an important institution during the Later Vedic Period.

Atreya Brahmana mentions ten forms of government present in the different parts of the country and explains as to how the concept of government in its territorial dimensions had come into vogue.

Popular assemblies

In later Vedic times, the popular assemblies lost their importance and royal power increased at their cost. The *Vidatha* completely disappeared. The *Sabha* and *Samiti* continued to hold ground, but their character changed. They came to be dominated by princes and rich nobles. Women were no longer permitted to sit on the *Sabha*, and it was now dominated by nobles and Brahamans. With reference to this A. L. Basham writes, the old tribal assemblies were still from time to time referred to, but their power was waning rapidly and by the end of this period the king's autocracy was in most cases only limited by the power of the Brahmans, the weight of tradition, and the force of public opinion, which was always of some influence in ancient India. However, it did not mean that the king had become authoritarian. The king always attempted to get the cooperation of these assemblies. In the later period, the council of *Brahmanas* also yielded a good influence over the king.

Larger kingdoms

At this stage, it would be interesting to examine how politically some of the old powerful tribes had lost their importance and some others had conquered new territories and risen to power. The conquered lands were named after the victorious tribes. In this way Panchala, Kosala and Magadha were named after the Panchalas, Kosalas and Magadhas who settled in them. The capitals of the new kingdoms were named sometimes after their kings, like Mithila after Mithi, Vaisali and Taksasila after Taksha. The Ganga was called Bhagirathi after Raja Bhagiratha. The expansion in the territorial limits of their different empires had also increased the powers of the kings considerably. The states had expanded both on their territories and powers.

New name instead of tribe

Initially, Aryans used to call a settlement a tribe but later on the region came to be called *Janpada*. The word *Rashtra* was also first used in this period, though just for a region and not for the entire nation. As the Aryans gradually expanded, they began to call India by the name of Aryavarta.

Many advisors of the king

With the expansion of the kingdoms, the king distributed his work among his advisors. The official in-charge of collecting tax and gifts was called *Sangrahi*.

Besides the priest, *Senapati* and *Gramini* other officials who helped the king were the *Dwarpala*, Judge and other administrative persons.

Army and warfare

During this period, the king did not maintain a standing army. In times of need soldiers were collected from different tribes. The king used to time collectively with the tribals so as to secure their sympathy and loyalty. During this time, elephants came to be used in addition to horses and chariots. New weapons like fire-weapons and poisonous weapons came to be used. During the later part of this period the importance of a standing army also came to be recognized and the king started keeping a standing army.

Kingship

With the emergence of the Varna system in the lower Vedic period, the king now belonged to the Kshatriya class. He always worked to secure the support of 'Brahmanas', who constituted the other powerful Varna and it is because of this reason that the king has been mentioned in *Atreya Brahmana* as the 'protector of Brahmanas' (*Brahmananam gopla*) and 'the eater of the people' (*Vishamallatta*).

Atreya Brahmana lists various types of states prevalent in contemporary India, in various regions, which were mainly differentiated or identified on the basis of the nature of kingship. These states are as follows:

- **Samrajya:** It was the rulership of the 'eastern part' where, the king was anointed for 'Overlordship'.
- **Bahujya:** It was the rulership of the 'southern part' where, the king was anointed for 'Paramount rule'.
- **Svarajya:** It was the rulership of the 'western part' where, the king was anointed for 'Self rule'.
- **Vairajya:** It was the rulership of the 'northern part' where, the king was anointed for 'Sovereignty'. It was generally considered that the king, who was consecrated with 'Indra's' great function' was 'Virat', i.e., worthy of *Vairajya*.
- **Rajya:** It was the rulership of the 'middle region' where the king was anointed for a 'Kingdom'.

Satapatha Brahmana clearly distinguishes 'Samraj' (one who rules the *Samrajya*) and Raja (One who rules the *Rajya*) from the other types. It says: 'By offering 'Rajasuya' he becomes Raja and, by offering 'Vajapeya' he becomes Samraj'. Raja was generally considered inferior to Samraj.

Nature of kingship

Satpatha Brahmana says that the office of kingship is unsuited to Brahmanas but *Atreya Brahmana* mentions a *Brahmana* king. We also have references to Shudra, Ayogava, and even non-Aryan kings in the Vedic texts. An Ayogava was member of a mixed caste, a descendent of a Vaisya by a Shudra wife. 'King Marutta Avikshita' has been referred in the *Satapatha Brahmana* as an 'Ayogava'. In *Chandogya Upanishad*, 'king Janashruti Pautrayana' has been referred to as a Shudra. The *Jatakas* refer to kings of various castes.

Kingship was sometimes hereditary and at other instances was settled through the election of a popular choice. The *Atreya Brahmana* prescribes some formulae to secure kingship for up to three generations. The expression, 'Dashapurushamarajya', which occurs in *Satapatha Brahmana* indicates kingship for up to 'ten' generations. The element of selection was also not unheard of. The selection was mostly done by the people, but the choice was mainly confined to the members of the royal family.

There are in fact some references of persons who did not belong to the royal house becoming kings as a result of popular choice.

Another important development which took place in the concept of kingship during the later Vedic times was the association of divinity with the king. This was totally unheard of in the Rig Vedic age. Perhaps it was the practice of the coronation ceremonies of the later Vedic age in which various gods were invoked to impart some of their

qualities to the king that gave an impetus to the development of this notion. The kings were sometimes even represented as gods.

The Royal Ladies: The king during the Brahmana period was allowed to have four queens. They were

- **Mahishi:** According to *Satapatha Brahmana*, Mahishi was the chief wife and the first one to have married the king.
- **Parivrikti:** She was the neglected or the discarded wife perhaps because she could not conceive a son.
- **Vavata:** She was the favourite wife of the king.
- **Palagali:** She was the daughter of the lowest court official. She was condemned as the Shudra wife.

The *Atreya Brahmana*, however, refers to the 100 wives of Raja Harish Chandra. Many more such examples are also referred to in different texts of the later Vedic period.

Sacrifices of the royal coronation

Now we shift our attention to one of the most prominent features of the kingship during the later Vedic times, and this was the sacrifices of the royal inauguration. The coronation ceremony involved a number of rituals which are mentioned in the *Samhitas*. Those who aided in the consecration of the king were called 'Rajakritri' or 'Rajakrit'. According to *Satapatha Brahmana*, Suta (Minstrel, Chronicler and the Charioteer) and the *Gramani* (Head of the village) were specified for this duty.

The principal sacrifices conducted for the royal inauguration were 'Vajapeya', 'Rajasuya', *Punar-abhisheka* and *Aindra-Mahabhisheka*. Let us discuss three sacrifices in some detail. The purpose of Vajapeya (the drink of strength) and the Rajasuya was to become the ruler of a Samrajya and a *Rajya* respectively. The purpose of conducting *Punar-abhisheka* (Renewed consecration) was to become eligible for all sorts of royal dignity while the Aindra-Mahabhisheka (closely associated with this was 'Ashvamedha' sacrifice) was conducted with the ambition of becoming an 'Ekarat'. The detailed ceremony of the Vajapeya sacrifice has been mentioned in the *Satapatha Brahmana*. It included a race of seventeen chariots in which the royal sacrifice was allowed to win. After this, the sacrifice, along with his wife, was made to mount on a pole having a ring and then pay homage to the earth. After the sacrifice descended from the pole, he was made to sit on the throne on which a goat-skin was spread. The royal sacrifice was then coronated by the address of the 'Adhvaryu priest'. *The Rajasuya Sacrifice* was a long sacrifice which started on the first day of the 'Phalguna' and was carried on for two years.

The whole process has been described in detail in the *Satapatha Brahmana*. The main features of this sacrifice were:

- (i) The Ratninam havimshi: This included giving presents to the Mahishi and other important officials (called Ratnins).
- (ii) The Abhishechaniya or the besprinkling ceremony.
- (iii) The Digvyasthapanam: It was the symbolic walk of the king towards various directions to indicate his universal rule.
- (iv) Treading upon a tiger skin- It was believed that by doing so the candidate gained the strength and swiftness of a tiger.

- (v) Narration of the story of 'Sunchshepa' by the Holy priest.
- (vi) Mimic cow raid against a relative or a dramatized fight with a member of the ruling family.
- (vii) Ceremony of enthronement
- (viii) A game of dice in which the king was deliberately made to triumph.

The

NO

One essential feature of the Rajasuya sacrifice was 'Abhisheka' or the besprinkling ceremony. It included, *inter-alia*, offerings to various deities with water (Abhishechaniya Apah) from seventeen sources. The two important types of *Abhishekas* were *Punar-Abhisheka* and *Aindra-Mahabhisheka*: *Punar-Abhisheka* has been explained in some details in the *Aitareya Brahmana*. Here the king was made to ascend to the 'asandi' (Throne) made of 'Udumbara' wood with 'Munja' grass as the interwoven part. Then the besprinkling was done. The king then got down from the throne and made obeisance to the holy power. 'Janmejaya' the son of Kuru king 'Parikshit' was consecrated with 'punar-abhisheka. *Aindra-Mahabhisheka* consisted of five ceremonies. First of these five ceremonies was the oath which was administered to the king elected by the priest. Then the enthronement (Arohana) took place. After enthronement came the proclamation (Utkroshana). Here, the king was proclaimed as '*Vishvasya bhutasya adhipati*' (sovereign lord of all beings), *Vishamatta* (*devourer* of the folk) this term alludes to his power of taxation, *Amitranam hanta* (Supreme commander to slay enemies), '*rohmonomgopala* (Protector of Brahmanas) and *Dharmasya gapta* (duty bound to preserve the laws and provide a better administration to the people). After the proclamation, the next ceremony was to address the formula (Abhimantra) after which came the last ceremony, the anointment (Abhishechana).

Ashvamedha sacrifice

Ashvamedha sacrifice was a ceremony closely associated with the *Aindra-Mahabhisheka*. *Atreya Brahmana* says that those kings who performed *Aindra-Mahabhisheka* were represented as conquering the world and offering a horse in sacrifice. Both *Aitareya* and *Satapatha Brahmana* give a long list of kings who performed it.

System of taxation

For the first time in the later Vedic polity we find a rudimentary organization of collecting tributes or taxes. During Rig Vedic times the king received *Bali* i.e., voluntary offerings made to the God or a prince, and so he was known as 'Balihrit' or the tribute giving prince. This concept of voluntary tribute receded during the later Vedic times when a new development took place. This was the coercive and forcible collection of taxes from the clansmen and this is indicated by the term *Vishamatta* 'eater of the peasants' used in the later texts for the king. *Bhoja*, another term used in the later Vedic texts indicates a tribute-enjoying aspect of the king. These forcible exactions may have started because of 'the increase in the surplus, an important result of regular agriculture.

There is no clear indication as to what was the rate of taxation during the later Vedic times. The *Satapatha Brahmana* says that the 'Vaishya' secretly stores the property and the 'Kshatriya' asks the former to deliver it whenever the Kshatriyas want it. This statement does indicate the use of coercive methods to procure tribute.

There is a mention of an official *Bhagdugha* who distributed or disbursed the shares of the collected tribute among the people. He was associated with Pushan, the

Self-Ins



god of herdsmen, who got converted into agriculturists afterwards. It seems that these shares were given primarily to the peasants in ceremonial feasts.

Administrative structure

New social developments and increased availability of the surplus produce necessitated a more organized administrative machinery. There is, however, no indication of well defined compartments of administration but a number of persons who were given the status of *Ratnins* and had a number of positive functions to perform. The *Ratnins* do not seem to have performed the duties pertaining to law and order and justice rather they were associated with a rudimentary civil administrative system.

Though a number of later Vedic texts have given comprehensive lists of *Ratnins*, but the most widely accepted one is the one given in the *Satapatha Brahmana*. The list mentions 12 *Ratnins* each of whose houses was visited by the king during the '*Ratnavimsi*' ceremony of the *Rajasuya* sacrifice. The *Ratnins* according to *Satapatha Brahmana* include:

1	<i>Senani</i>	-	Commander of the army
2	<i>Purohita</i>	-	Representative of the priestly class
3	<i>Rajanya</i>	-	Representative of the warrior class
4	<i>Mahishi</i>	-	The chief queen
5	<i>Suta</i>	-	Charioteer and wheel maker
6	<i>Gramani</i>	-	Head of the people living in a village
7	<i>Kshattr</i>	-	Chamberlain or distributor
8	<i>Samgahritri</i>	-	Treasurer (According to K.P. Jaysawal) and charioteer of an inferior kind (according to R.S. Sharma).
9	<i>Bhagadugha</i>		Distributor of shares. (R.S. Sharma opines that Bhagadugha, because of his association with Pushan, the god of cattle, may have been a distributor of cattle and cereals.)
10	<i>Akshavapa</i>		Literally means, the thrower of the dice. (According to R.S. Sharma, he may have been the distributor of land for sowing, which, he says, was distributed by the lots drawn through the throwing of the dice.)
11	<i>Govikartana</i>	-	Literally means 'the killer of the cows' He may have been the chief huntsman, and also, the keeper of games and forest.
12	<i>Palagala</i>		Considered as last of the king's <i>Ratnins</i> , who seems to have functioned as a messenger. He was, perhaps, a non-Aryan belonging to an aboriginal tribe.

It seems, possibly, that these *Ratnins* constituted the inner coterie of the king and had some specific or general functions to perform. Only two of these *Ratnins*, *Senani* and *Rajanya* seem to have military functions. As we have already pointed out, there is no evidence of a well defined administrative structure and it is not beyond doubt that one official had more than one function to perform. *Gramani*, it seems, continued with the function of guiding a group of people to the battlefield but he perhaps, also took up the function of the general supervision of the people living in the villages.

Some prominent artisanal functions like, chariot making, metal working and carpentry were associated with *Suta*, *Takshanand Rathakara*. The last two have been included in the list of *Ratnins* given in the *Maitrayani Samhita*. A prominent function of the distribution of food, cattle, booty and land during the last phase of later Vedic age was perhaps associated with the officials like *Bhagadugha*, *Kshattr* and *Akshavapa*. *Govikartana* was responsible for keeping the forest areas and the animals therein in good condition and also for arranging the hunting expeditions of the king.

Military administration

During most part of the later Vedic age there does not seem to be an indication of a standing army but the inclusion of *Senani* (the commander of force). In the list of *Ratnins*, of the *Satapatha Brahmana* which was written during the later stages of the later Vedic period, it is indicated that by this time the concept of keeping a standing force had come into being. However, it seems that the army was confined to the kinsmen at the beginning and later it started to include the members of Kshatriya Varna who were not a part of the royal kin. This is indicated by the inclusion of '*Rajanya*' in the list of *Ratnins* who seems to have represented the warrior class in the king's inner circle of officials.

The administration of law and order

There is no mention of any specific official for the purpose of police functions. However, it is quite evident that the coercive machinery which evolved during this period could not have been possible without a team of officials. The functions of exacting taxes, oppressing the Sudras and many others required a coercive apparatus. Perhaps, the officials like *Spasa*, *Ugra* and *Jivagribha*, who performed such functions in the Rig Vedic age continued to do so even in the later Vedic times. There seems to have evolved in this period a system of provincial administration, under an official referred to as *Sathapati* or *Satapati* and also a new official evolved in this period called *Adhikrita* who was perhaps a village official appointed by the king.

The state of popular assemblies

As the territorial element gained prominence in the political organization of the later Vedic times, the nature and composition of the *Sabha* and *Samiti* underwent a change. Now, people living in various parts of the kingdom were neither keen to participate in these assemblies nor was it possible for them to come and take part in the assemblies quite frequently. Only those living in the capital could gather and take part in them. So, these assemblies became more aristocratic and representative in the later Vedic times. Women were also, now, completely barred from taking part in the deliberations of the assemblies or even from attending them. The importance attached with these assemblies during the Rig Vedic times was also lost gradually perhaps because of the induction of more and more officials in the later Vedic age who took up the responsibilities which were previously undertaken by these assemblies.

3.4 SANGAM AGE

It is difficult to determine the chronology of the works of the Sangam age. Modern writers have dismissed the first two Sangams as pure myths. The inclusion of the

NOTES

Check Your Progress

5. Fill in the blanks.
 - (a) The most startling feature of the later Vedic age was the firm assertion of the _____.
 - (b) One essential feature of the *Rajasuya* sacrifice was _____.
6. State whether True or False.
 - (a) During most part of the later Vedic age there does not seem to be an indication of a standing army but the inclusion of *Senani* (the commander of force).
 - (b) There was no system of collection of tax in the later Vedic age.

supernatural agencies into the Sangams, incredibly long reigns ascribed to the Pandyan kings and the astoundingly long periods of duration assigned to the Sangams positively weaken the historicity of the Sangam tradition. The generally accepted period of the Sangam, especially the last one, is somewhere in between 500 BC and AD 300. However, L. D. Swamikkannu Pillai assigns the Sangam age to the seventh and eighth century AD. Dr. N. P. Chakravarthy pushes it back to the sixth century AD. While S. K. Iyengar, S. Pillai and K. K. Pillai place these works in the first and second century, Raghava Iyer, Sessa Iyer, Ganapati Rao and others place them in the third and fourth centuries AD as based on astronomical calculations.

The Academy at Madurai produced a large mass of literature dealing with a large variety of subjects ranging from grammar to pure romance. Social customs, religious practices, popular deities, art of war, folk tales, foreign trade and philosophical problems were also dealt by the Sangam poets. The Sangam seems to have done very useful work in the literary field. It collected the scattered literary pieces, edited them properly and tried to preserve them. It was a sort of parliament of letters, a censor board and an editorial committee. That we do not have examples of such academies elsewhere in India can be no reason why we should wholly reject the local tradition about them.

3.4.1 Society and Religion

The Sangam literature provides sufficient proof that cultures of the South and the North were fairly integrated in the far South. The caste system was not fully accepted and social divisions were primarily based on the basis of different professions of the individuals. Yet, the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas and the castes who had adopted fighting as their profession enjoyed a better status in society. The ruling class had virtually acquired the status of the Kshatriyas and adopted the practice of donating lands and other presents to the Brahmins to keep them appeased. Eight types of marriages were also accepted in the Tamil Pradesh and marriage was regarded as a religious institution. The position of women was better as compared to the North and they were employed even as bodyguards by the kings, nobles and other rich people. However, there are certain references to the practice of Sati, which means that because of the influence of the Vedic culture, deterioration in the status of women had started and the family was gradually becoming patriarchal. There were no untouchables in the society, but the status of the poor people had worsened.

The people in the far South accepted the Vedic religion of the Aryans. According to a widely accepted legend, Sage Augustya initially propagated the Vedic religion in the South. Many stories refer to his exploits of forcing the Vindyas to submit, killing the demons, Ilbala and Vatapi, drinking the entire water in the sea and killing all demons who had found shelter beneath the sea. It is also believed that sage Augustya was responsible for the birth of Tamil literature and grammar. The name of another sage, Kaudinya, is also popular in this regard. He was also largely responsible for the propagation of the Vedic religion and Brahmanism in the far South. Many stone and copper inscriptions have referred to the grant of land and other articles to the Brahmins of Kaudinya's gotra by several rulers. The people in the far South accepted the rituals and the Yajnas of the Vedic religion as a part of their religious ceremonies. But the Brahmins here accepted many religious traditions of the people of the South as well within its fold. The worship of God Murugana or Murukana is very popular in the South from very ancient times. He was, later on, accepted as the representative of God Kartikeya. Besides this, the worship of Siva, Krishna, Balrama, Vishnu and Indra also started in the South. The practice of

sacrifices in Yajnas was also accepted in the South though it blended the Vedic rituals with the traditions of the South.

Jainism and Buddhism were also accepted by the people in the far South. Buddhism, probably, became popular in the South during the reign of Emperor Asoka. Several stupas such as *Dharamchakra* of Buddhism have been found at different places in the South. Later on, *Nagarjunakonda* and *Kanchipuram* became the centres of learning of Buddhism. Jainism also reached far South during the period of the Mauryas. Probably, it was first propagated by Bhadrabahu, who migrated to the South with the disciples when a widespread famine occurred in Magadha two hundred years after the death of Mahavira.

Thus, the *Sangam* literature provides us useful knowledge concerning the history of the far South till the third century AD. Though, of course, we have to take help from other sources as well. The glory of the South declined by the end of the third century AD. It revived itself in the sixth century AD when several ruling dynasties succeeded in establishing powerful states of their own in the South.

Sangam Age: Literature and other fields

The view of Prof. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri is that the Sangam literature, which combines idealism with realism and classic grace with indigenous industry and strength, is rightly regarded as constituting the Augustan age of Tamil literature. This literature is different from the Tamil literature of later periods. It alone can be called 'the unadulterated literature of the Tamils'. It is an isolated piece holding noticeably the different ideas, forms and ideals from later ones. It gives a clear picture of the Tamil society at a stage when Sanskritic ideas and forms were attempting to dominate the picture but had not met with much success. It reveals to us secular-minded people engaged in the battle of life in all its aspects and refusing to yield to religious fanaticism. It deals with secular matters relating to public and social activities like government, war, charity, renunciation, warship, trade and agriculture. It also deals with physical manifestations of nature such as mountains and rivers and private thoughts and activity such as conjugal thoughts and domestic life of the inner circle of the members of the family. They are called Puram and Aham. Puram literature deals with matters capable of externalization or objectification. Aham literature deals with the matters strictly limited to one aspect of subjective experience.

The Tamils were not strangers to another form of classifying literary themes viz. Aram, Pand, Inbam and Vidu. These are the four goals of life and the literature, which deals with them, falls under the corresponding sections. This classification is not much different from the Aham, Puram classification because Aram, Porul and Vidu come under Puram and Inbam.

The poets played an important role in the social life of the people. They were a source of education and performed the functions of laudatory and instructive nature. They showed the spirit of universal kindness and benevolence. Among the poets and thinkers of the Sangam age, Talkapparrar, Valluvar, Inlango Adigal, Sittalai Sattanar, Nakkiranar, Kapilar, Paranar, Auvaiyar, Mangudi Mnudanar and a few others are outstanding.

The great grammatical work *Tolkappiam*, the ten poems (*Pattuppattu*) the eight anthologies (*Ettuttagai*) and the eighteen Killkkanakku works and two epics (*Silappadikaram* and *Manimekalai*) all belong to the Sangam age. There are other works, which have completely or mostly perished and have left behind either only their

names or just a few stray stanzas quoted by the commentators. The exact literature consists of 7334 poems and we come across 490 mentioned poets besides 102 anonymous pieces. Of these 7334 poems, 1612 are the Tolkappiam Sutras and 1330 Kural aphorisms.

Tolkappiyam is the oldest Tamil grammar written by Tolkappiyar. It is divided into three major parts. The *Pattuppattu* is a collection of ten long poems. Of these Mulaippattu, Kurinjipattu and Pattinappalai belong to Aham and the rest are Puram. The eight anthologies are *Narrinai*, *Kuruntogai*, *Aigurunuru*, *Patiruppattu*, *Paripadal*, *Kalittogai*, *Ahananuru* and *Purananuru*. Some of them belong to Aham group and the others to Ponam group. The same is the case with the eighteen Killkanakku works. The two epics, *Silappadikaram* and *Manimekalai*, are a grand epic treatment of an indigenous story, the first part of which is dealt with in *Silappadikaram* by Ilango Adigal and the second part in *Manimekalai* by Sittalai Sattanar. The *Kural* was composed by Valluvar. It is divided into three divisions—Aram, Porul and Inbam. It consists of 1330 stanzas. It pays considerable attention to matters pertaining to government and hence the Sangam polity has often been called the Kural polity. While the author of the *Kural* mentions the king and his associates, their qualifications and some of their functions, he does not mention the contemporary condition in a factual record. He speaks of an ideal king. He does not exhaustively deal with all the contemporary institutions. He only chooses the prominent and major political institutions and draws an ideal code of behaviour for them. Dr. S. Krishnaswami Iyengar and V. R. Ramchandra Dikshitar have compared the *Kural* with the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya. It is true that there are certain similarities between the two works, but that does not mean that the author of the *Kural* was indebted to Kautilya for his views. The view of Dr. N. Subrahmanian is that most probably both Valluvar and Kautilya borrowed from a common source.

Education during Sangam Age

The Tamil society of the Sangam age was an advanced and civilized society. Education was not merely known and encouraged but was a widespread social activity. The pattern of education was not merely reading and understanding of books, but also listening to the learned persons. It was believed that the advice given by wise and experienced persons was like a support on a slippery ground. Those who listened to the learned were the very abode of humility. Education of a secular nature was not the peculiar preserve of any particular community or caste, sex or station in life. The Sangam scholars belonged to all the classes. It was believed that education gave self confidence and dignity to men and hence was sought after.

The Brahmins must have pursued the traditional Vedic studies and the kings must have pursued horse-riding, target-practice, wrestling, etc. The merchants and loyal servants were probably more interested in arithmetic for professional reasons. The Brahmins were interested in astronomy. Fine arts were cultivated by special artisans. J.A. Kanakkayar was a teacher who collected a group of students and taught them literature and grammar.

Teachers who collected a large number of students and organized education on a large scale were called Kulapatis. The teacher was paid either in cash or in kind by the students. The ideal student was a dependable assistant or help to the teacher in time of emergency or danger. He gave much wealth to the teacher. Corporal punishment inflicted by the teacher on the student was not objected to. Some students stayed in public rest houses and led a mendicant's life.

The number of Sangam poets might be nearly 500. They lived within a period of three or four centuries and many of them belonged to the same generation. Their number included kings and women.

Works on grammar like the *Tolkappiyar*, on poetics and mathematics were subjects studied by every student. Astronomy was allied to mathematics. The fine arts like music, dance, drama, painting, building architecture, sculpture, etc., were specialized in by the hereditary artists. Much of the teaching was oral. The students wrote but sparingly and got practically everything by heart.

Fine arts during the Sangam Age

Among the fine arts, painting was greatly developed. The walls of the houses of the rich people and courtesans were painted with appropriate colours. In the theatre, screens were painted with suitable scenes. There was a treatise on painting, which elaborately dealt with the different systems of painting of moving objects and static objects. On the ceilings of houses and palaces, many objects and scenes were painted.

Sculpture was a familiar plastic art to the Tamils. The material used by the sculptors was of a perishable nature and hence there is no concrete evidence about the Sangam sculptures.

Dance, drama and music were allied fine arts and they received princely encouragement. They were developed to a rare degree. The art of dance had in a sense reached perfection in those days. Dance was performed by both men and women. Tamil art influenced the foreigners also.

3.4.2 Economy

Agriculture was the main occupation in this Age. Rice was mostly grown by the people. Some other crops grown included ragi, sugarcane, cotton, pepper, ginger, turmeric and different fruits. Handicrafts were famous during this Age which included making of ornaments such as beads, stones and ivory, metal works and carpentry, weaving, stonework and ivory. These products were in great demand as trade both internal and external was flourishing well in the Sangam Age. Merchants carried the goods on carts and on animals back and forth. However, internal trade was conducted through the barter system.

3.4.3 Polity

There are references to three powerful kingdoms in the Sangam works, viz. the Cholas, Cheras and Pandyas. Their innumerable vassals added to their power and glory. The achievements of the kings were praised by the poets and many kinds of myths and legends were associated with one another to praise their patrons who actually did not have the position of the provincial governors of the Mauryas or the Guptas. It is difficult to say which out of the three kingdoms mentioned above was the earliest. It may be presumed that their origin was not later than the third century BC.

1. **The Cheras:** The earliest Chera king about whom we have any information was Udayan Cheralathan. It is said that he fed sumptuously both the intending parties at Kurukshetra and won the nickname of 'Udayan of the Big Feed'. The view of P. T. Srinivasa-Iyengar is that this refers to the celebration for Sradha for the dead heroes in the Mahabharata war. Udayan ruled from the capital city of Vanchi, which has been variously identified. He was a great warrior and is said to have defeated Satakarni II, the Satvahana king.

NOTES

Check Your Progress

7. Fill in the blanks.
 - (a) The earliest Chera king about whom we have any information was _____.
 - (b) There were a number of local chieftains who played a vital role in the history of the _____ Tamils.
8. State whether True or False.
 - (a) The origin of the Cholas is certain.
 - (b) By about the fifth century AD, the Sangam glory disappeared.

NOTES

Nedum Cheralathan was the successor of Udayan. He won a naval victory against a local chieftain on the Malabar Coast. He possessed a large army. He defeated the Yavanas and imprisoned many of them. Later on, they were released for a large ransom. Nedum is said to have 'quelled the valour of Northern kings up to the Himalayan region.' The view of P. T. S. Iyengar is that Nedum might have marched a few miles north of the Chera kingdom, possibly up to the Konun. However, his court poets praised him to the skies by saying that he conquered Northern India. Nedum built many temples and performed many sacrifices. This shows that Brahmanism had a considerable influence in the Chera kingdom. Nedum assumed many high-sounding titles like *Imayavaramban* (He whose fame is as high as the sky). These high-sounding titles are really misleading because the territory of this king was a small one. Nedum was killed in a duel with the Chola king Virarkilli.

Nedum Cheralathan had many sons from many wives. His two sons from his Chola wife were Senguttuvan and Ilango Adigal. Ilango Adigal became an ascetic and immortalized his brother Senguttuvan through the epic poem *Silapadikaram*.

Cheran Senguttuvan alias Kadalpirakottiya Chenkuttuvan was probably the greatest Chera king of the Sangam age. His achievements have been described by his court poet Parinar. He might have emulated Parasurama tradition of throwing a weapon into the sea. Chenkuttuvan made a journey to the Himalayas to bring a stone for making the idol of Kannaki. However, this does not mean that he led an expedition to the North as a conqueror to prove his martial valour and prowess. Chenkuttuvan reached the Northern hills, cut a piece of rock and left a mark on a stone. He consecrated a temple for Kannaki and on that occasion Gajabahu, King of Ceylon, and a prince of Malwa were present among the high dignitaries.

The history of the Cheras after the death of Cheran Chenkuttuvan is not eventful. Various petty kings ruled the country one after the other. Slowly and steadily, the Chera kingdom disappeared from the scene of history.

2. The Cholas: The origin of the Cholas is not certain. Tradition connects them with the Manu of the Puranas. The first Chola king was one Uruvappaher Ilam Setsenni, who ruled from Uraiyur (Urandai). He possessed 'many beautiful chariots' and had fabulous wealth.

The greatest Chola king of the Sangam age was Karikala Chola. He was the posthumous son of Uruvappaher Ilanjetchenni. The early life of this ruler was not happy. An attempt was made by the relatives of his father to snatch the throne. He was imprisoned but he came out of it by sheer good luck. The author of *Vattinapalai* describes how Karikala re-established himself on the throne. Karikala was the victor of many battles. In the first Battle of Venni near Tanjor, Karikala defeated the kings of Pandyas and Cheras and their innumerable vassals. A potter woman of Venni sang songs about the victory of Karikala. The second Battle of Venni made Karikala the master of an extensive dominion including Tondaimandalam. A confederation of nine kings and their vassals was routed in the battlefield of Vahaiparanpalai. The Pallavas of Kanchi and the Kurumbas were compelled to accept suzerainty. He prevented the migration of his subjects to other countries. During his rule, forests were cleared and inducements were offered to agriculture and trade.

Karikala shifted his capital from Uraiyur to Kaveripattanam (Puhar). He did so because he wanted to control his possessions by means of naval power, and because he could better encourage foreign trade from that place. A beautiful picture of the new capital of Karikala is given by the author of *Pattinapalai*. It is said that the city was with

Check Your Progress

9. Fill in the blanks.

(a) The _____ literature provides us useful knowledge concerning the history of the far South till the third century AD.

(b) The ruling class had virtually acquired the status of the _____.

10. State whether True or False.

(a) The people in the far South accepted the Vedic religion of the Aryans.

(b) Jainism and Buddhism were not accepted by the people in the far South.

strong walls in which was placed the Goddess of victory. It was furnished with a door on which a tiger-crest was carved. Brahmanical sacrifices were encouraged during his reign. He was also a patron of literature.

It is said that as Karikala had no enemies, he left his capital with a sword and an umbrella and proceeded to the North up to the foothills of the Himalayas. The view of Seshadri Sastri is that Karikala ruled during the early second century. The suggestion of P. T. S. Iyengar is that 'the most probable period when Karikala flourished was the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century, the central year of his reign being AD 400.'

There is not much to write about the later history of the Cholas. The Chola kingdom was plunged into chaos and confusion. Karikala had two sons. Nalankilli ruled from Uraiyur and Mavalattan ruled from Kaveripattanam. In due course, the successors of Nalankilli and Mavalattan became deadly enemies. They fought to the finish in the Battle of Kariyaara. However, the Chola family survived for over a century with various ups and downs.

3. The Pandyas: The Pandyas of Madurai had an ancient past. Many Pandya rulers seem to be mythical heroes. Palyagasalai Mudukudumi Peruvaludi was the earliest known Pandya king who ruled from Madurai. He was a follower of the Vedic religion. He constructed many sacrificial altars. It appears that he was a heroic soldier whose fame spread to the North. He might have defeated some petty rival tribes but his achievements were glorified by the court poets. It is said that he yoked his enemies to a plough and ploughed the streets.

Aryappadaikadanda was the fourth king after Palyagasalai Mudukudumi Peruvaludi. His name is mentioned in the *Silapadikaram*. He is said to have defeated the Aryan kings of the North. That is why he was given the title of Aryappadaikadanda, which means 'he who conquered the Aryan soldiers.' His achievements are recorded in the *Maduraikkanji*. It is said that he died broken-hearted when he learnt that he had unknowingly ordered the execution of an innocent person. He was succeeded by his brother.

The greatest Pandya king of the Sangam age was Nedunjelivan of Talaiyalanganam. He was the hero of the Madurai Kanchi, the longest of the Ten Idylls. At the time of his accession, he was a young man and the neighbouring Chera and Chola kings declared war on him. However, he met the combined armies of the Cheras and Cholas in the historic field of Talaiyalanganam and defeated them. The Chera king was captured and thrown into a dungeon. Mangudi Marudan, a poet patronized by him, wrote the *Maduraikkanji* in which he described the city of Madurai and gave advice to the king to give up martial activity and become peace-loving. Nedunjelivan was a great patron of art and literature. The city of Madurai was beautified so that it could compete with the important capitals of the North. Foreign trade was encouraged and agriculture was improved. He became the hero of many legends.

The last great Pandyan king of the Sangam age was Kadalul Maintha Ukkirap Peruvaludi. He was a poet and a patron. He defeated Vengai Marban, the ruler of Kataiyar Kovil, a forest fortress. He was a contemporary of the great Chola Perunarkilli, who performed the imperial sacrifice.

Among the feudatories of the Pandyas, the greatest was Pari who ruled over the Parambu and is reckoned by tradition as the greatest among the patrons of those times. His patronage of Kapilar, the great poet, is proverbial. The three crowned monarchs became jealous of Pari and invaded his Parambu. When they could not take it by storm, they called him to a conference and treacherously killed him.

There were a number of local chieftains who played a vital role in the history of the Sangam Tamils. The tripartite struggle among the Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas dug their grave. By about the fifth century AD, the Sangam glory disappeared.

NOTES

ACTIVITY

Visit the nearest library and try to locate information about the Sangam literature. Make a list of eminent texts. Which one would you prefer to read and why?

3.5 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- The only source of Vedic culture is the Vedic literature. The Vedic literature includes the four Vedas also called Samhitas (namely the Rig Veda, the Sama Veda, the Yajur Veda and the Atharva Veda and the Brahmanas, the *Aranyakas* and the *Upanishads*.
- The Rig Vedic period came to an end in 1000 BC. The period from 1080-600 BC is known as the later Vedic period.
- The later Vedic period is generally considered to have commenced from the beginning of the first millennium BC. The core region of the Vedic civilization now became the area of western UP, which, according to the literary texts, was now under the control of the Kuru-Panchalas.
- It is difficult to determine the chronology of the works of the Sangam age. Modern writers have dismissed the first two Sangams as pure myths.
- The Sangam literature provides sufficient proof that cultures of the South and the North were fairly integrated in the far South. The caste system was not fully accepted and social divisions were primarily based on the basis of different professions of the individuals.
- The view of Prof. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri is that the Sangam literature, which combines idealism with realism and classic grace with indigenous industry and strength, is rightly regarded as constituting the Augustan age of Tamil literature.

Check Your Progress

11. Fill in the blanks.
 - (a) Tolkappiyam is the oldest Tamil grammar written by _____.
 - (b) _____ was a familiar plastic art to the Tamils.
12. State whether True or False.
 - (a) The Tamil society of the Sangam age was an advanced and civilized society.
 - (b) Among the fine arts, painting was greatly developed during the Sangam age.

3.6 KEY TERMS

- **Vedic literature:** The four Vedas (or Samhitas) namely the Rig Veda, the Yajur Veda and the Atharva Veda and the Brahmanas, the *Aranyakas* and the *Upanishads*.
- **Rashtra:** The state or tribal kingdom.
- **Rajan:** head of the state or the king. In later days the expression was changed to *Samrat*.
- **Kula:** Group of families living in the village. The head of the family was called *Kulapa*, *Kulpati* or *Grahpati*.

- **Bali:** Voluntary offerings made to the god or a prince, it was a rudimentary organization of collecting tributes or taxes.
- **Later Vedic period:** The period from 1080-600 BC.
- **Sangam age:** The period between 500 BC and AD 300.
- **Murugana:** The popular deity of the South.
- **Tolkappiyam:** The oldest treatise on Tamil grammar written by Tolkappiyar.

3.7 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. (a) Literature (b) hymns
2. (a) True (b) True
3. (a) *Ashrams* (b) Later Vedic age
4. (a) False (b) True
5. (a) Territorial element (b) Abhisheka
6. (a) True (b) False
7. (a) Udayan Cheralathan (b) Sangam
8. (a) False (b) True
9. (a) *Sangam* (b) Kshatriyas
10. (a) True (b) False
11. (a) Tolkappiyar (b) Sculpture
12. (a) True (b) True

3.8 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What is Sangam age?
2. Name the main four South kingdoms which form the basis of this literature. Elaborate on their territories.
3. Who were the important southern rulers, who are said to have left an indelible mark on the regional history of that time?
4. What were the religious conditions during the Sangam age? Was the atmosphere tolerant?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Explain the political, social, military position of the Early Vedic Age.
2. Write an essay on Sangam literature covering every aspect of this literary phase.
3. Discuss the development of education and fine arts during the Sangam age.
4. Explain the position of women in the Later Vedic Age.
5. Elaborate upon the Vedic literature and its religious philosophy in both the early and later Vedic ages.

3.9 FURTHER READING

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UNIT 4 SOCIAL CHANGE AND RELIGIOUS DISSENT

Structure

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Unit Objectives
- 4.2 Iron Technology in Post-Vedic Age
 - 4.2.1 Use of Iron Technology in Post-Vedic Age
 - 4.2.2 Iron Smelting in India
 - 4.2.3 Ancient Processes of Iron Making
- 4.3 Settled Agriculture in Different Time Periods
- 4.4 Rise of New Classes
 - 4.4.1 Development of the Caste System
- 4.5 Mahavira and Jainism
 - 4.5.1 Origin of Jainism
 - 4.5.2 Doctrines and Philosophy
 - 4.5.3 Rise, Spread and Decline of Jainism
- 4.6 Buddha and Buddhism
 - 4.6.1 Early Life of Gautama Buddha
 - 4.6.2 Philosophy of Buddha
 - 4.6.3 Causes of Rise and Fall of Buddhism
- 4.7 Summary
- 4.8 Key Terms
- 4.9 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 4.10 Questions and Exercises
- 4.11 Further Reading

4.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will learn about the use of iron technology and the practice of agriculture in the various time periods. The unit also delves in detail on Jainism and Buddhism.

The sixth century BC witnessed a great religious upheaval in the history of India. By that time, a number of weaknesses and shortcomings had crept in the traditional Vedic religion due to which there arose a discontent against it. The Vedic religion had become quite ritualistic and the caste system had become predominant. It was an age when the people were disgusted with old philosophical dogmas and thus started working hard to save the society and culture from these evils. At that time, the Sanskrit language was beyond the comprehension of the layman. Then, Buddhism and Jainism tried to clean the society and religion by introducing a number of reforms. Both Buddhism and Jainism preached pure spiritualism and stood against inequality and injustice meted out in the society. These new philosophies rejected the authority of the Vedas and sacrifices and denounced the ritualistic form of the Vedic religion. These new philosophies not only simplified the prevailing social and religious practices of the people, but also reduced the influence of Sanskrit over religion. These philosophers were Mahavira and Gautama Buddha. The former was the founder of Jainism and the latter was the founder of a new movement called Buddhism. Both of them started as reformation movements of Hinduism.

and drew their inspiration from the Upanishads and other Vedic literature. The growth of these religious movements encouraged independent thinking and enriched the Indian philosophy. Jainism and Buddhism represent a remarkable phase in the religious and cultural development of India.

4.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Analyse the use of iron technology in the various time periods
- Discuss the practice of agriculture in different time periods
- State the emergence of new classes
- Explain the rise, spread and fall of Jainism
- Describe the rise, spread and fall of Buddhism

4.2 USE OF IRON TECHNOLOGY IN POST-VEDIC AGE

We will analyse the use of iron technology in ancient Indian history.

4.2.1 Use of Iron Technology in Post-Vedic Age

I. **The Mauryan Period:** The Black and Red Ware Culture was another early Iron Age archaeological culture of the northern Indian subcontinent. Broadly speaking, it spans from twelfth to ninth centuries BC, and is related to the post-Rigvedic civilization. It stretched from the upper Gangetic plain in Uttar Pradesh to the eastern Vindhya Range and West Bengal.

The Mauryan Empire was a huge Iron Age empire marked by the rule of the Mauryan dynasty in India that flourished from 321 to 185 BC. According to archaeological sources, the period of the Mauryan rule in South Asia falls into the era of Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW). The *Arthashastra* and the edicts of Ashoka are the most important written sources of the Mauryan times. The chief contribution to the development of technology was, probably, made in the field of metallurgy and metal working. The shifting of the seat of power from the north-west to Magadha, was mainly due to the increasing demand for iron, copper, tin, lead and other metals. The metals were needed for making weapons and ploughshares, the two essential pillars of the Mauryan state as well as for manufacturing other goods of trade. There are careful, though brief, descriptions in the *Arthashastra* for reducing and smelting ores.

Tripathi refers to the *Arthashastra*, a treatise on statecraft composed in the fourth to third century BC, written by Chanakya during the Mauryan times. It refers to iron as *kalyasa*. There is even a discussion of mines as an important source of income for the Mauryan state. The *Arthashastra* mentions the post of superintendent of mines to supervise and manage the mines. It lays down the duties of the director of mines in detail.

The distinction between different ores, in terms of their appearance and other properties, and the corresponding distinction in processing techniques are elaborated. The metallurgy of making alloys was also developed. The finest of iron ores from different parts of the empire, especially the south, was brought for

making alloy steels. Swords made from these alloys were sold in many countries, including Greece.

The *Arthashastra* clearly specifies the different roles that the director of metals, the director of forest produce and the director of mining have to play. The director of metals was responsible for establishing manufacturing plants for the production of different metals. The director of mines had to inspect the mines. There is also a mention of counterfeit coins in the *Arthashastra*.

2. **The Gupta Period and Later Periods:** Iron technology reached new heights of excellence during the Gupta period (third to sixth centuries AD). The most famous example of the status of Indian technological excellence in the past is the magnificent Delhi iron pillar (24 feet high), weighing seven tons. This iron pillar remains an object of technological curiosity even today, and is believed to be constructed in the fourth century AD. It is asserted that this pillar has been constructed by assembling together a host of disc-shaped iron blooms. Not only the dimensions, but the fact that the Iron Pillar is completely resistant to corrosion is the most remarkable characteristic of this pillar. This must have been made possible by the high purity of the wrought iron and the phosphorus content, and the distribution of slag. Professor Balasubramaniam (Bala), a well-known metallurgist from IIT Kanpur, in his book *Marvels of Indian Iron through the Ages*, has documented the marvellous creations of the Indian craftsmen, the massive iron pillars, beams and canons produced in different parts of India by forge-welding the lumps of heated iron. The fact that these massive iron objects have not corroded even after more than two thousand years has also been explained in terms of contemporary scientific understanding by Bala in his book. Processes such as rapid cooling, carbon alloying, quenching, tempering, hardening and forge welding were known to them. Large lead baths were being used to achieve uniform heating of a bundle of wrought iron bars to the forging temperature.

The famous Iron Pillar in Delhi was set up by the ironsmiths in India in the Gupta period in a place called Udaygiri near Vidisha and Sanchi around AD 400. It was later moved to Delhi by Iltutmish in AD 1233. The excellent corrosion resistance of the Iron Pillar is attributed to the presence of phosphorous (using high phosphorous containing iron ores) in the reduced iron. A similar technology was used to produce an even longer pillar (13 metres) lying in three broken pieces in front of the Lal Masjid in Dhar, situated near Indore in Madhya Pradesh. Dhar was the capital of Malwa founded by King Bhoja (AD 1010–1053). Archaeological study indicates that the Dhar pillar was also erected during the Gupta period. Another famous iron pillar at the Mookambika temple in Kodachari hill, located in a town near Mangalore, also belongs to the same era. The iron beams lying in the Surya temple at Konark are of even larger dimensions.

These iron beams were used to support the roof stones of the famous temples at Bhubaneswar as well as Puri. In fact, these non-corroding iron beams were being used extensively in building temples in Orissa dating back to the sixth and thirteenth centuries AD.

4.2.2 Iron Smelting in India

Iron is an important metal that influenced the progress of civilization in India. The early iron encountered by man was meteoritic iron, and it has been used for over at least 5,000 years. The iron implements and weapons belonging to the fourth century BC have been unearthed at Adittanathur in Tamil Nadu comprising of agricultural implements, tools for

black smiths etc., Sushruta (third century BC), a great authority on medical science in ancient India, described in his book a hundred different surgical instruments. There is reference in the *Satapatha Brahmana* of the smelting of metallic ore. The *Manusmriti* (6.71) draws the following analogy: 'For as the impurities of metallic ores, melted in the blast (of a furnace), are consumed, even so the taints of the organs are destroyed through the suppression of the breath.'

The history of iron making by tribal artisans in various parts of India dates back from 1300 to 1200 BC. These tribal artisans such as Asur, Charas, Birziya, Agarias, etc., earned their livelihood by steel scrap fabrication in the village and town and catered to the local needs. The ancient Indian literature abounds in vivid descriptions of swords, spears and other steel weapons.

When scientists studied the excavated materials, which were as old as 1000 BC, at Komaranhalli (Karnataka), they found out that the smiths were capable of dealing with huge artefacts. This implies that experiments had been conducted for centuries, which directed attention to the presence of iron in Chalcolithic deposits at Ahar. It also suggests that 'the date of the beginning of iron smelting in India may well be placed as early as the sixteenth century BC', and that 'by about the early decade of thirteenth century BC iron smelting was definitely known in India on a bigger scale.'

4.2.3 Ancient Processes of Iron Making

The extraction of iron has been carried out with the help of direct reduction method since a long time. Iron lumps were the primary ingredient in preparing iron objects. The melting point of iron is 1540°C , and the ancient Indian furnaces could neither withstand nor attain this high temperature. The written records of this time discuss the different factors relating to the building and working of the ancient Indian iron furnaces (referred to as bloomery furnaces since the final product was an iron bloom). The ironsmiths extracted iron from iron ores. The ore that was to be extracted was determined by the end application. The ores broke when they were pre-heated; the remaining dust was separated by washing or by wind. The pre-heated iron ore and charcoal were charged in alternating layers, the furnace ignited and slowly heated to the reduction temperature (1000 to 1200°C). The records describe various designs of iron extraction furnaces. Their heights ranged from 5 to 20 feet.

Primitive Furnaces

The ancient processes used two different types of furnaces for their operation that were different in their physical forms. However, the procedure for operation was quite similar. One kind of furnace was a shaft furnace that was placed underground, while another was partly underground, and was constructed over a rectangular pit. These furnaces were as tall as 30 inches, with concave base, while the cylindrical furnace shafts rise up as chimneys. These furnaces were built of ordinary clay. The charge comprising of iron ore and charcoal was fed into the shafts. Figure 4.1 illustrates a primitive iron making furnace made of ordinary clay and bricks, a dome shaped structure with a concave bottom. One clay pipe was inserted through a parabolic opening in the bottom of the furnace which acted as a tuyere. The opening through which the tuyere was introduced was then luted with clay.

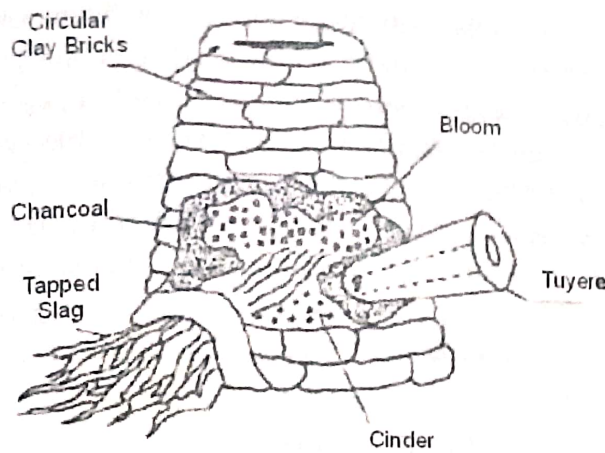


Fig. 4.1 Ancient Indian Iron Furnace

Another primitive iron making furnace comprised of the foot operated bellows. The air blast from bamboo pipes entered through the tuyeres. A temporary charcoal wall existed around the tuyeres. Air was introduced into the furnace with a tuyere that was operated using feet, with a foot on either of these bellows and a stick to serve the dual purpose of support. For manoeuvring the solid charge on top of the furnace, the operator made a walking action in a standing position. Air was let into a wooden chamber during the upward movement and forced through hollow bamboo pipes by pressing the goat skin cover during the downward movement of his feet. The goat skin cover was regularly wetted with water for effective scaling of the air-entry hole by the sole of the foot. The bamboo pipes blew the air into the mouth of the tuyere and a considerable amount of additional air was dragged in from the surroundings due to the force of the blow.

A critical analysis of ancient iron making processes

In spite of the very disturbing colonial intervention, some of our tribal communities such as the Agariyas of Mandala, Rajnadgaon and Bilaspur district of Madhya Pradesh are still practising the indigenous way of iron making. The Asur tribe of Santhal Pargana, Bihar is also practising indigenous way of iron making. Most of the Indian iron smelting furnaces used wood and charcoal at various places in India such as M.P., Bihar, U.P., Rajasthan and Southern regions. The artisans had their own judgment of temperature required in furnace, slag out timing, iron ore reduction, quality of charcoal, etc. Though the traditional processes were scientific; still, the yield and reproducibility were poor.

4.3 SETTLED AGRICULTURE IN DIFFERENT TIME PERIODS

Let us go through the various modes of agriculture practiced in different time periods.

1. Agriculture in the Indus Valley Civilization

The Indus Valley Civilization, originating sometime around 2300 BC, developed in two major city areas along the river valleys of the Indus, Ravi, and Sutlej, just beneath the Himalayan mountains in modern Pakistan and North-east India. Even though there have been several excavations which have unearthed significant information regarding the Harappan civilization, still there is much that is in the dark about this civilization. This has led to a major lack of information about this civilization, and all we are left with are the speculations.

NOTES

Check Your Progress

- Fill in the blanks.
 - _____ is an important metal that influenced the progress of civilization in India.
 - The extraction of iron has been carried out with the help of _____ since a long time.
- State whether True or False.
 - The Black and Red Ware Culture was another early Iron Age archaeological culture of the northern Indian subcontinent.
 - The ancient processes of iron making used two different types of furnaces for their operation that were different in their physical forms.

Most historians are of the view that agriculture in the Indus Valley Civilization was quite productive because it could meet the needs of a huge number of the urban population whose main occupation was not always agriculture. Agriculture lays a strong foundation for this civilization, which was chiefly made possible by efficient irrigational facilities and a fertile soil. The survival of the Indus Valley Civilization was dependent on the river Indus and the fertile soil found on its banks. Historians have been unable to find out the prevalent method of cultivation during this period, but they are sure that agriculture did form a major part of the routine life of people. The samples of wheat and barley that have been found are not wild varieties. The fact is that these varieties are still cultivated in several parts of North India today.

The parts where agriculture flourished in the Indus Valley were dry. Agriculture was not developed completely during this period, and thus, the inhabitants felt no need for deforestation. Besides, Indus Valley people did not have technology for clearing out large portions of the forest, and so, they used bronze or stone implements for this purpose. Canal irrigation was not practised by them, and neither did they have the heavy plough. The farmers grew wheat, six-row barley, melon seeds, oil crops like sesame and mustard, and dates (petrified dates have been found in the excavation of the Valley). As far as vegetables were concerned, field pea was the chief source. It will be interesting to note that the earliest traces of cotton in the world have been found in the Indus Valley. It can be speculated that cotton seeds were planted before the coming of the flood, and cotton thus grown was harvested after the retreat of the flood. There are not sufficient evidences to support this statement, but rice may also have been cultivated on the west coast. The farmers had to contribute a large portion of what they grew to the public granaries. At the Mohenjo-Daro site, there was a high loading platform above a lower spot intended for carts where the farmers were supposed to unload their contribution to the granary. It is assumed that this cart was small and powered by an ox or bullock, similar to those used in the area today. Excavators have found tiny terracotta models of bull driven carts from the Mohenjo-Daro site. It seems that these models have survived the tests of time, and have hardly changed over the course of 4,000 years. The unloading of carts was carried out at the central granary where each farmer was supposed to give away a part of their crops. These granaries were the equivalents of the state banks in today's times.

2. Agriculture in the Rigvedic, Vedic and Post-Vedic Period

The economy in the Rigvedic period was sustained by a combination of pastoralism and agriculture. According to some historians, who wrote economic history of ancient India, agriculture had been fully developed by this period. N.C. Bandhopadhyaya, a notable scholar, has supported this view by presenting the fact that the plural word used for Rigvedic Aryan was *krishti*. The main occupation of the Rigvedic people was farming. Therefore, they prayed a lot for rain and also prayed to increase the fertility of the soil. But some historians do not abide by this theory. According to them, it is said that the words used in relation to agriculture are found in the first and tenth *mandal* of Rigveda, which have been written at a much later period. They are of the opinion that cattle-rearing was the main occupation of the people of the Rigvedic times.

There are references in the Rigveda to levelling of field, seed processing, and storage of grains in large jars. It is a matter of debate whether or not the Aryans were the natives of India. However, it is clear that they formed a systematic and organized society. Farming and animal-breeding were the chief vocations of these people. The Rigveda describes them as chiefly farmers.

The use of the word *kshetra*, meaning field, in the Rigveda is evident of the fact that different kinds of fields were to be found in the Aryan society. At several places, it stands for agricultural land. The meaning of the term becomes clear in the later Vedas, especially the Atharvaveda. Predominantly, the fields could be divided into two kinds: agricultural (*apnaswati* or productive land), and non-agricultural (*artana* or non-productive land). The Rigveda indicates that generally, the fields were new. This signifies that the fields that were used for farming were owned by individuals.

The Vedic literature offers very little information regarding the economic system of the villages. There is no evidence to suggest that the system of collective right over land existed in this period. However, the notion of personal rights was not unheard of. This meant that the land belonged to a whole family, and not to single individuals. Even then, we can find references to 'persons, having ambition to rule the village' (*gramkam*) in the later Samhita. This points to the fact that the king gave away the right to govern villages to people with whom he was pleased. The later Vedic period saw an overall development of the practice of farming, and many evidences and references have been made on these directions in different texts.

Beden Pavel, the author of *Indian Village Community*, opines that this thought took shape in the later times, and the king began to be regarded as the lord of the land. Another common perception during this time was that the people, who seized the land, were known as *zamindars* (landowners). But we find no references of this in the Vedic literature.

Agriculture was the primary occupation during the age of Brahmanas. The Shatapatha Brahmana mentions the different agricultural operations, such as ploughing, tilling, sowing, reaping, threshing, etc.

During the Vedic times, people were not attached to any particular geographical region as they led a nomadic life wandering in search of food from one place to another. Their affiliation was only towards the tribe which was a collection of people staying together to affect a communal living. With the passage of time, people developed ways and means to earn a source of livelihood not only by depending on the forces of nature, but by practicing agriculture and engaging themselves in the production of food. Each group came to be distinctly recognized by the production of a certain type of crop. The barter system among the various tribes for their living led them to have a newly acquired need for a settled life, and familiarizing themselves with the surrounding landscape. This was the time when they learnt to call a particular surrounding as their own. This geographical space was separated from those of the other communities (*Janapadas*), who might be friendly or hostile to them. These Janapadas characterized by cohesion inside and separation from the outside world, proved to be a seminal development in ancient India. These units or Janapadas became the centres for the development of homogenous language, customs and beliefs. From sixth century BC, villages, towns and cities were the units where people lived in a Janapada. It was at this time that the kings and monarchs emerged on the stage of history. This was also the age of intense philosophical speculation. Buddhism, Jainism and many other heterodox sects emerged during this period. We find information about the Janapadas and the Mahajanapadas from some Vedic and Buddhist texts. These texts have clear references to various regions and geographical divisions. Excavations at Hastinapur, Ahichchatra, Kaushambi, Ujjaini, Sravasti, and Vaishali suggest prosperous agricultural settlements and towns. The contemporary texts also indicate changes in society and economy which were taking place in a well-defined geographical space. With progress in agriculture and settlement, by 500 BC, the Janapadas became a common feature. Around 450 BC, over

forty Janapadas covering even Afghanistan and south-eastern Central Asia are mentioned by Panini. However, the major part of southern India was excluded. Pali texts show that these Janapadas or small principalities grew into Mahajanapadas, that is, large states. These texts mention sixteen of them. The literature belonging to our period of interest refers to various kinds of units of settlements as Mahajanapadas, Janapadas, Nagara, Nigama, Grama, etc. Janapada literally means the place where the people place their feet. In the early Vedic times, the members of *jana* were pastoral groups roaming in search of pastures. In the later Vedic phase, the members of *jana* took up agriculture, and began to lead a settled life. These agricultural settlements came to be known as Janapadas. Initially, these settlements were named after the dominant Kshatriya lineages settled in that area. The Kuru and Panchal Janapadas located around Delhi and upper UP were named after their Kshatriya lineages. With the use of ploughshares and the introduction of iron, people decided to settle down in one place and practise agriculture. The agriculturist could now clear the forestland, and make it arable with the use of iron tools and implements. The Middle Gangetic valley, i.e., the area east of Allahabad came to be recognized as best suited for wet rice cultivation. The agricultural expansion led to the growth of population. Agricultural surplus was made available. Cattle were no more considered as a major strength of wealth. Money economy had surpassed the barter system. This led to the chiefs of the lineages constantly at war with each other either to show their might or to surpass each other in financial strength. Through the process of agricultural expansion, war and conquest, the Vedic tribes had come in closer contact with each other and with the non-Aryan population. This, in fact, led to the formation of large territorial units.

3. Agriculture in the Mauryan Period

The Indian economy was by this time a settled agrarian economy. With agriculture being the backbone of the economy, it was quickly realized that land revenue was going to be a major source of income from the government. Land was subjected to regular assessments to determine its production capability, and an appropriate level of tax was levied. Industries and enterprises were also taxed, using a vast mix of techniques, all of which were derived from the original land revenue tax system. This entire system was the creation of Kautilya, the prime minister of Chandragupta Maurya. With the development of a taxation system, the government now had money to further develop the kingdom. For instance, in the field of agriculture, great advancements were made. Irrigation became an important part of the Indian agriculture. A governor of Chandragupta Maurya built a dam across the river Girnar, creating a large lake which supplied water to the surrounding region. Records indicate that the dam was maintained for almost eight hundred years after it was built. The setting up of irrigation projects brought up an interesting situation. Although it was the responsibility of the government to develop such projects, the development gave the government more control over an agrarian economy. The government also introduced the concept of state-owned farms where the king owned the land and his subjects were employed for its cultivation. This became especially prevalent when new areas like wasteland and forestland were brought under cultivation. The government had the resources to organize the procedure, and once the land was ready, it would employ the cultivator to work on the land. The crops were used to sustain the population that worked on it and the surplus was taken by the government. In *Arthashastra*, the terms used for the head of the village were *grambhojak*, *gramik* and *gramini*. He was not the owner of the land of the village, but used to collect the tax and even used it for personal use. In improving the economy of the village, the Mauryans had a big hand. They gave the Shudras the land to live that was not used for agricultural

purpose. The state provided them the money, ox and seed, and also collected less tax from them. When the harvest was ready, the Shudras used to return the money and other resources back. Therefore, there was much increase in the agricultural productivity.

4. Agriculture in the Post-Mauryan Period

Agriculture in the post-Mauryan period saw the extension of the area of cultivation. The state had less control over the agricultural sector. According to *Milindapanha*, the person who brings the land under use is known as the owner of the land. According to Manu, land belongs to him who clears it first. *Divyavadana* refers to individual farmers working hard and engaged in agriculture. It is presumed that the private ownership of land was accepted by this time. The power of gift, sale and mortgage are the requisites of ownership. According to literary evidences, there prevailed the right of alienation of land to individuals, and a number of inscriptions record gifts of land given by private individuals. Theoretically, the state was the owner of everything situated on the earth, which shows territorial sovereignty. Lands could be granted by the king to any person or organization. Initially, the administrative rights were first abandoned by the Satavahana ruler Gautamiputra Satakarni. There were few grants that were meant to bring the uncultivated land under cultivation.

The state adopted measures at times in order to increase land productivity. Kharavela in Kalinga extended an old canal, and Rudradaman repaired a large lake in Saurashtra. It is believed that tanks were constructed by the Sakas and Kushana chiefs in north-western India.

Those who stole the agricultural tools would be punished by the king. Mutilation was provided for selling false seeds, for taking out seeds already sown and for destroying boundary marks. During the rule of Satavahana and Kushana, there was a land system called *akshayanivi*. A Nasik inscription records the king giving away land according to the *akshayanivi*. There has been no reference to middlemen in the agrarian system. No grants of land have been the responsibility of administrative officers. The assignment of land is believed to be the responsibility of revenue officials who are in charge of one, ten, twenty, a hundred, or a thousand villages. Agricultural revenue was collected by the officials with the help of village headmen.

The revenue amount collected was varied. The king could take as annual revenue one-sixth, one-eighth or one-twelfth part of the produce. In ancient India, one-sixth of the crops was the rate of taxation for a long time, and the king was addressed to as *sadbhagin*. *Kara* was probably a periodical tax that was imposed on agricultural land. *Pratibhaga* was a gift consisting of fruits, flowers and roots.

5. Agriculture in the Gupta Period

Agriculture was not at all neglected during the Gupta period in spite of the spread of trade. Agriculture held a significant place in the economic life of the people during the Gupta period. Agriculture was the main occupation of the masses during that time. There was no modern zamindari system like that practised in Bengal or Uttar Pradesh. The tenants of a landlord not tilling the lands received 33 to 50 per cent of the gross produce as their share. Land was regarded as a very valuable piece of property, and it could be transferred only with the consent of the fellow-villagers, or with the permission of the village or town council. Paddy, wheat, fruits, sugarcane, bamboo, etc., were cultivated in the cultivable lands. Land revenue was collected from the various categories of land. The state also owned fields of cultivable land in various villages which was known as *rajayavastu*. The state would take over a land if there was no eligible heir, or

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if the land tax was not paid. The land actually remained as heredity to the family of the grantee. Though the king had direct control over that land, the economic prosperity reached the Indian culture and gave people the time and leisure to cultivate the finer arts of life. The Gupta kings also took special care of irrigation purposes for the promotion of agricultural economy in the Gupta kingdom. Thus, during the Gupta period, trade and agriculture both had achieved a thriving prosperity, which promoted economic life of the people, thereby attaining material prosperity.

6. Agriculture in the Post-Gupta Period

According to Kamandak (earlier part of eighth century), the person who is well-versed in cattle-rearing, agriculture and trade can never be meagre. This shows that agriculture was considered to be very important in that period also. The writers from Arabia in the ninth and tenth century have written that the land in India was very fertile, and that fruits and grains were grown in large amounts. In *Abhidhan Ratnamala*, the land has been divided in the following way – *urvara* (fertile), *usur* (erni), *maru* (desert), *atyauttam* (*mitrsa*), etc. All this description shows that agricultural science was well-known and advanced by this time. The early medieval literature has reference of all those grains that were used in the Gupta period. According to Medhâtithi (825 AD to 900 AD), we get reference of seventeen different types of grains in *Smritis* which included rice and barley. Medhâtithi also clearly mentions about sugarcane. Apart from this, it also mentions about camphor. In this period, fruits like grapes, orange, coconut, pomegranate, mango, banana, were grown. Kalhan has written that grapes were grown in Kashmir. From the writers of this period, it is known that rice was grown in a large amount, and that the rice that was grown in Kalinga was so good that it was consumed even by the kings. Marco Polo has written that ginger and cinnamon were grown in excess in this period. The amount of development that took place can be judged by the fact that there have been two books written, one in the mid of eleventh century AD named as *Krishi Parashar* and the other in the twelfth century named *Vrikshayurveda* that were totally based or related to agriculture.

Check Your Progress

3. Fill in the blanks.

- (a) The Indian economy in the Mauryan period was a settled

_____ economy.

- (b) _____ held a significant place in the economic life of the people during the Gupta period.

4. State whether True or False.

- (a) Agriculture was developed completely during the Indus Valley period.
- (b) Agriculture in the post-Mauryan period saw the extension of the area of cultivation.

ACTIVITY

Prepare a brief report on the history of agriculture in ancient India.

4.4 RISE OF NEW CLASSES

During the Later Vedic period, the earlier distinctions in society based on varna or occupation became rigid and hereditary. A person's birth became more important than his skill or merit. Each caste had its own code of laws, and marriage outside the caste was forbidden. Brahmins occupied a very high position in society as they were learned. They alone could perform the rituals and sacrifices. Only the select few amongst them could advise the king. The common people held them in high esteem.

The position of women also began to deteriorate and they were thought to be inferior to men. They were not allowed to read Vedic literature. Their main duty was to look after the house.

The family shows the increasing power of the father who could even disinherit his son. Women were generally given a lower position. Although some women theologians took part in philosophical discussions and a few queens participated in rituals, women were considered to be inferior and subordinate to men.

There is a mention of the *Ashramas* or the four stages of life—that of *brahmacharya* or bachelor student, *grihastha* or householder, *vanaprastha* or hermit and *sanyasi* or ascetic who completely renounces worldly life. Only the first three were clearly defined in the later Vedic texts; the last or the fourth stage was not well-established, though ascetic life was not unknown.

4.4.1 Development of the Caste System

Society did not remain unaffected by the changes that were taking place during this period. Aryanization promoted social differentiation. In the later Vedic texts the term 'arya' encapsulates Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra. Thus, it was the Vedic Aryans who introduced the *varna* system.

The early Vedic society came to be divided into four *varnas* called the brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra *varnas*. No doubt the division into four classes was already referred to in a late hymn of the Rig Veda but whether it bore any other traces of familiarity with the institution of caste, apart from the clear distinction between the Arya and the Dasyu is not clear. The divisions became more pronounced and the caste system was well on its way towards crystallization. The starting point of these distinctions was, of course, the colour bar, between the fair *Arya* and the dark *Dasyu*. However, the constant wars of the Aryans, the growing complexities of life and political conditions, and the tending towards specialization in labour, gradually resulted in the formation of hereditary occupational groups. Thus, those who possessed a knowledge of the sacred scriptures, officiated in religious ceremonies and received gifts were called Brahmins, those who fought, owned land and wielded political power were called Kshatriyas; the general mass of people, the traders, the agriculturists, and the craftsmen, were grouped under the class Vaishya and the Sudras reserved for the menial services were generally recruited from the conquered Dasyus. There was, however, still no unnatural rigidity of caste as in the succeeding age.

Also, the growing importance of the Kshatriyas and the Brahmins in the society made it imperative to maintain their exclusive superior status, as compared to the rest. During the later Vedic period, however, the concept of *varna* was simple in nature. The notion of untouchability was absent.

Gotra

The institution of *gotra* (literally meaning cow pen) came to be known during this period. Gotra signified descent from a common ancestor and marriages could not take place between couples belonging to the same geneology.

4.5 MAHAVIRA AND JAINISM

Jainism had left an indelible impact on the social and cultural development of India, the place of its origin. Let us explore its impact by knowing how it originated.

4.5.1 Origin of Jainism

The general belief among the common people is that the founder of Jainism is Mahavira. However, Jains believe that their religion is the product of teachings of 24 *Tirthankaras* (a saviour who has succeeded in crossing over life's stream of rebirths and has made a path for others to follow). There is no detailed information available about the first 22 *Tirthankaras*. The Jains hold that their religion is as old as the Rig Veda and their first *Tirthankara* Rishabha was the father of Bharata, the first Vedic *Chakravartin* king of

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Check Your Progress

5. Fill in the blanks.
 - (a) The early Vedic society came to be divided into four _____.
 - (b) The notion of _____ was absent in the later Vedic period.
6. State whether True or False.
 - (a) During the later Vedic period women were generally given a lower position.
 - (b) Aryanization promoted social differentiation.

India. Rishabha was followed by 23 *Tirthankaras*. Very little is known about these *Tirthankaras* except the last two.

The 23rd *Tirthankara* was Parsavanath, who was a historical figure. Parsavanath probably lived in eight century BC, and probably died 250 years before the death of Mahavira. He was a Kshatriya and the son of king Ashvasena of Vanaras. For thirty years, he led the life of an ordinary householder and then became an ascetic. He meditated for 84 days continuously and attained the highest knowledge. The next seventy years of his life were spent in spreading the highest knowledge to the people. His main four principles were as follows:

1. Non-injury to life
2. Truthfulness
3. Non-stealing
4. Non-possession

Parsava's teachings were not that rigid as that of his successor, Mahavira. He permitted his followers to lead a married life and allowed them to wear clothes to cover their body.

Early life of Mahavira

The real founder of Jainism was its 24th *Tirthankara*, Vardhamana Mahavira (Figure 4.2). His childhood name was Vardhamana. According to one tradition, Mahavira was born in Kundagrama about 540 BC. He was the son of Siddhartha, who was the chief of a Kshatriya clan called Jnatikas. His mother Trishala was the sister of Chetaka, an eminent Lichchhavi prince of Vaisali. Vardhamana was given education in all branches of knowledge, was married to Yasoda and had a daughter called Priyadrasana. After the death of his parents, he renounced the worldly life and became a monk at the age of 30. He left worldly life with the permission of his elder brother Nandivardhana and became an ascetic.



Fig. 4.2 Vardhamana Mahavira

Life of Asceticism

For twelve years, Mahavira roamed about as a naked monk doing all types of penances. During this period, he fully subdued his senses. He was attacked and ridiculed; however,

he never lost his patience, nor indulged in feelings of hatred and revenge against his enemies. Within these twelve years of penance, meditation and severe asceticism, he prepared himself for the attainment of highest spiritual knowledge.

During this period, he met an ascetic called Gosala Makkhaliputta at Nalanda. For six years, Makkhaliputta lived with Mahavira practising severe asceticism after which he separated himself from Mahavira and set up a new religious order called Ajivikas.

In the 13th year on the 10th *Vaisakh*, Mahavira acquired the ultimate spiritual knowledge (Kevalya) under a sala tree on the bank of river Rijupalika near the village Jrimbikagrama, whose identification is uncertain. Mahavira now possessed the four infinites, which were as follows:

1. Infinite knowledge
2. Infinite power
3. Infinite perception
4. Infinite joy

Thus, he became a 'Jina' (a conqueror) or Mahavira (a great hero) at the age of 42 and began his career as a religious reformer. Since then, he entered upon a new stage of life. He became a religious teacher and the head of a sect called *Nirgranthas* (free from all bonds) or 'Jains'.

Later he met the king of Magadha, Ajatashatru, and is said to have converted him. However, the Buddhists say that the king of Magadha followed Buddhism and not Jainism. Mahavira did not have many followers because of the rigorous form of life he recommended to his followers. He asked his followers to remain naked, and said that the noblest act in the life of a Jaina was death by starvation. It is known from *Kalpasutra* that he spent his time at Champa, Mithila, Sravasti, Vaisali, etc. and after 30 years of preaching, he died at Pawa near Rajagriha. We do not know the exact date of passing away of Mahavira. However, Professor Jacobi and some other eminent historians have proved that his death occurred probably in 468 BC.

4.5.2 Doctrines and Philosophy

The religious texts written in Pali language do not recognize Mahavira as the originator of a new religion, but as a reformer. Mahavira accepted most of the religious doctrines of Parsavanath though he made some alterations and additions. Parsavanath emphasized self-control and penance and advised his followers to observe the following four principles:

1. *Satya* (truth)
2. *Ahimsa* (non-violence)
3. *Aparigraha* (non-possession of property)
4. *Astheya* (not to receive anything, which is not freely given)

To these Mahavira added one more, i.e., *brahmacharya* (celibacy).

The Jaina philosophy shows a close affinity to Hindu Samkhya Darshana (or Samkhya philosophy). They ignored the idea of God, accepted that the world is full of sorrows and believed in the theories of Karma (action) and transmigration of souls. According to Mahavira, salvation can be achieved by freeing the soul from earthly bondage. This can be achieved by means of right faith, right knowledge and right action. These are called *Ratnatreya* or three jewels of Jaina religion.

Mahavira advocated a dualistic philosophy, according to which man has two-fold nature, earthly and spiritual or *Ajiva* (matter) and *Jiva* (soul). While *Ajiva* is destructible, *Jiva* is indestructible and salvation is possible through the progress of *Jiva*.

Jaina philosophy states that if one desires to attain Nirvana or salvation, it is necessary for him to destroy Karma. One can do so gradually by avoiding evil Karmas. For this, one must observe the five principles, namely:

1. *Satya*
2. *Ahimsa*
3. *Aprigraha*
4. *Astheya*
5. *Brahmacharya*

Through this process, one could attain final liberation of the soul.

Mahavira rejected the existence of god and authority of Vedas

Mahavira did not believe in the supreme creator or God. He believed that no deity has created, maintains or destroys the world; however, it functions only according to universal law of development and decay. He advocated a holy ethical code, rigorous asceticism and extreme penance for the attainment of highest spiritual state. He regarded the highest state of the soul as God. He believed man is the architect of its own destiny and could attain salvation by leading a life of purity, virtue and renunciation.

He also rejected the infallibility of the Vedas and objected to the Vedic rituals and Brahminical supremacy. He denounced the caste system.

Principle of non-injury

The Jaina philosophy believes that not only man and animals but plants also possess souls (Jiva) endowed with various degree of consciousness. Jains believe that the plants possess life and feel pain and thus lay great emphasis on the doctrine of *Ahimsa* or non-injury (Figure 4.3) to any kind of living beings. The vow of non-violence (*Ahimsa*) was practiced to the point of irrationality. Even an unconscious killing of an insect while walking was against Jain morals. The Jains would not drink water without straining it for fear of killing an insect. They also wore muslin mask over the mouth to save any life floating in the air. They had forbidden not only the practice of war, but also of agriculture, as both involve the killing of living beings.



Fig. 4.3 Ahimsa or non-injury

Commenting on this extreme form of non-injury, eminent historian V. Smith said, 'The strange doctrine affirming the existence of Jivas in objects commonly called inanimate extends the Jain idea of *Ahimsa* far beyond the Brahminical and Buddhist notions.' Figure 4.4 depicts the Jainism symbol.



Fig. 4.4 Symbol of Jainism

Jain sects

The main sects of Jainism are Svetambaras and Digambaras. The Svetambaras wear white robes whereas the Digambaras use no clothes. The Svetambaras are the followers of the 23rd Tirthankara Parsavanath while the Digambaras are followers of the 24th Tirthankara Mahavira.

Religious texts

Original texts of Jains were called Purvas and were 14 in number. In the third century BC, a Jain council was held at Pataliputra and arranged these Purvas in 12 parts, and named them *Angas*. The last *Anga* was lost and a Jain council held at Balabhi in the fifth century AD rearranged the remaining 11 *Angas*. These books were written in Prakrit language. However, the Digambara sect of Jainism did not recognize the *Angas* and constituted its own sacred texts.

4.5.3 Rise, Spread and Decline of Jainism

There were several causes, which led to the rise, spread and decline of Jainism. The main ones are as follows:

Causes of rise of Jainism

During the time of Mahavira, there arose a discontent amongst the common people against the traditional Vedic religion, as a number of weaknesses and shortcomings had crept in the latter. The Vedic religion or Hinduism had become quite ritualistic and the caste system had become predominant. Therefore, the people were disgusted and started working hard to save the society and culture from these evils. At that time, Jainism came as an alternative to the Vedic religion. It tried to clean the society and religion by introducing a number of reforms. Therefore, common people showed interest in adopting its principles.

Secondly, it has also proved to be closer to the more popular religion Hinduism and with the passage of time, the Jainas also adored Jaina *Tirthankaras* in temples and by the middle ages, their worship was very near to the Hindus with offering of flowers, incense, lamps, etc. Thus, Jainism proved more accommodating to Hinduism and did not offer any serious hostility.

Thirdly, Jainism possesses a tolerant spirit of accommodation with other religions, which helped in its progress and was responsible for its rise. Apart from it, the charismatic personality of Mahavira, simple philosophy of the religion, acceptance of common spoken language of that time as the medium of propagation and patronization of influential rulers were the major factors responsible for the rise of Jainism.

Spread of Jainism

Like Buddhism, Jainism never spread all over India or beyond its boundaries, yet it became a popular religion at that time, and still exists in many parts of the country.

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During the life time of Mahavira, it spread in Magadha, Vaisali and its nearby areas, but later, the chief activity of Jainism was shifted to Gujarat, Malwa, Rajputana and Karnataka where they are still an influential Jain community. The members of this community have also played an important role in the early literary development of South India.

Causes of the decline of Jainism

Various factors were responsible for the dramatic decline of Jainism in India. After the demise of Mahavira, Gautama Buddha emerged as a great socio-religious reformer of that period. The teachings of Buddha were simpler and people friendly. Therefore, Buddhism posed a great challenge for the existence of Jainism.

Secondly, Jainism was divided into two sects i.e. Svetambaras and Digambaras, which weakened the religion from its core.

Thirdly, the most important cause of its decline was the great revival of Hinduism. Under the Guptas, Cholas, Chalukyas and Rajput kings, Hinduism got the much needed attention and patronization of the ruling class. Reforms came in Hinduism and it became the most popular religion in India. That was the main reason due to which Jainism was confined to some pockets of India.

Apart from it, the absence of popular religious preachers after the demise of Mahavira, absence of protection by the later rulers and its hard principles led to the decline of Jainism.

Jainism could not occupy the position of a main religion in India or outside India. However, it has contributed enormously in the field of art, architecture, literature and philosophy and has made valuable contributions to the Indian culture.

Check Your Progress

7. Fill in the blanks.

(a) The Jaina philosophy shows a close affinity to _____.

(b) For twelve years, _____ roamed about as a naked monk doing all types of penances.

8. State whether True or False.

(a) The general belief among the common people is that the founder of Jainism is Mahavira.

(b) Jaina philosophy states that if one desires to attain Nirvana or salvation, it is necessary for him to destroy Karma.

4.6 BUDDHA AND BUDDHISM

Just as revolutionary as Jainism, Buddhism also became a religion that had great impact on the Indian people, society and culture.

4.6.1 Early Life of Gautama Buddha

Another great religious reformation movement of sixth century BC was Buddhism, which gave the biggest challenge to Brahmanism. Gautama Buddha (Figure 4.5), a contemporary of Mahavira, was the founder of Buddhism. He was the son of Siddhodan, the chief of the kshetrya clan of Shakyas and the raja of Kapilavastu in the Nepal *terai*. His mother was Mahamaya. Gautama was born in 563 BC.



Fig. 4.5 Lord Buddha

The *Jatakas* contain the Buddhist traditions about the birth of Buddha. They tell us that Buddha's life did not begin with his birth in the Lumbini Garden. On the other hand, Buddha was the product of an infinitely long evolution through various forms of life. Before he descended into this world, he lived in the Tusita heaven. He was then a Bodhisattava and his name was Sumedha. He was greatly touched by Buddha Dipankar, the Buddha of the previous world, and wanted to become like him. He therefore left Tusita heaven and decided to be reborn through Mahamaya.

Jatakas tell us that before the birth of Buddha, Mahamaya had a dream of white elephant with six tusks entering into her body. The astrologers were called to interpret the dream and they told Siddhodan that according to this dream, his wife would give birth to a very great man, a prophet or an emperor. In 563 BC, when she was returning from her father's house to Kapilavastu, Mahamaya gave birth to Buddha under a sala tree in the village of Lumbini. Later on in 250 BC, Ashoka set up a commemorative pillar there and in the inscription he stated 'Here, Buddha was born, the sage of the Sakyas "*(Hida Budhe jate sakya muniti)*". However, unfortunately after seven days, Buddha's mother Mahamaya died and his stepmother and aunt, Prajapati Gautami, then brought up Siddhartha (It was Buddha's childhood name).

From his childhood days, Siddhartha exhibited signs of a contemplative frame of mind. The royal pleasure and amusements failed to attract his mind. He was married at an early age to a beautiful girl Yasodhara, the daughter of a Shakya noble. However, the pleasures of the palace did not bind him to the worldly life. He led a happy married life for some time and even got a son Rahul from his union with his wife. A few incidents, which Buddhists call four great signs, occurred and they exercised tremendous influence on the future of Gautama. One evening, his charioteer Channa drove him in the city and he came across an old man. Next, he saw a man suffering from disease; however, it was the sight of a dead man, which touched the deepest chord of Gautam's heart. The fourth sign was that of a mendicant, who had renounced the world and was moving about in search of truth.

Great renunciation

At last, Gautama decided to find out the cause of all suffering and wanted to know the truth. His hatred towards the world was intensified and he realized the hollowness of worldly pleasure. After the birth of his son, Rahul, he made up his mind and decided to leave his palace and his family. One night, accompanied by charioteer Channa and his favourite horse Kanthaka, he left home at the age of 29. This is called *Maha-Bhinishkramana* or the great renunciation; thereafter, Gautama became a wandering ascetic looking for the supreme truth.

Enlightenment

For six continuous years, he lived as a homeless ascetic and sought instructions from Alara Kalama. His next teacher was Udraka Ramaputra. His new teachers failed to satisfy him. He spent some time in the caves near Rajagriha, the capital of Magadh. From Rajagriha, he went to the forest of Uruvela and spent a few years in self-mortification. He then meditated with five ascetics named Kondana, Vappa, Bhadiya, Mahanama and Assagi.

Gautama practised continuous fasting until he was reduced to a mere skeleton. He then realized that mere suffering and sacrifice could not lead to truth. He thought that he had wasted six years. The five disciples also left him alone. At last one day he sat under a Pipal tree (*Asvattha*) on the banks of River Niranjana (the modern Phalgu) at Gaya and took a vow, 'I will not leave this place till I attain the peace of mind, which I

have been trying for all these years.' Finally, Gautama attained supreme knowledge and insight. He found out the truth and the means of salvation from human sufferings. He got the highest knowledge or *bodhi*. Gautama thus became the Buddha, 'the enlightened one' or Tathagata.

The turning of the wheel of law

After attaining supreme knowledge, Buddha decided to impart the knowledge to the common people. From Gaya he went to Saranath near Banaras and he gave his first sermon to his five disciples in the deer park. These five disciples were once his comrades when he was doing penance and fasting. They hated Buddha because he had left the path of suffering. They are known as the five elders. This first sermon by which, he started converting people to his faith is known as turning of the wheel of law or '*dharma chakra Pravartana*' (Figure 4.6), which formed the nucleus of all Buddhist teachings.

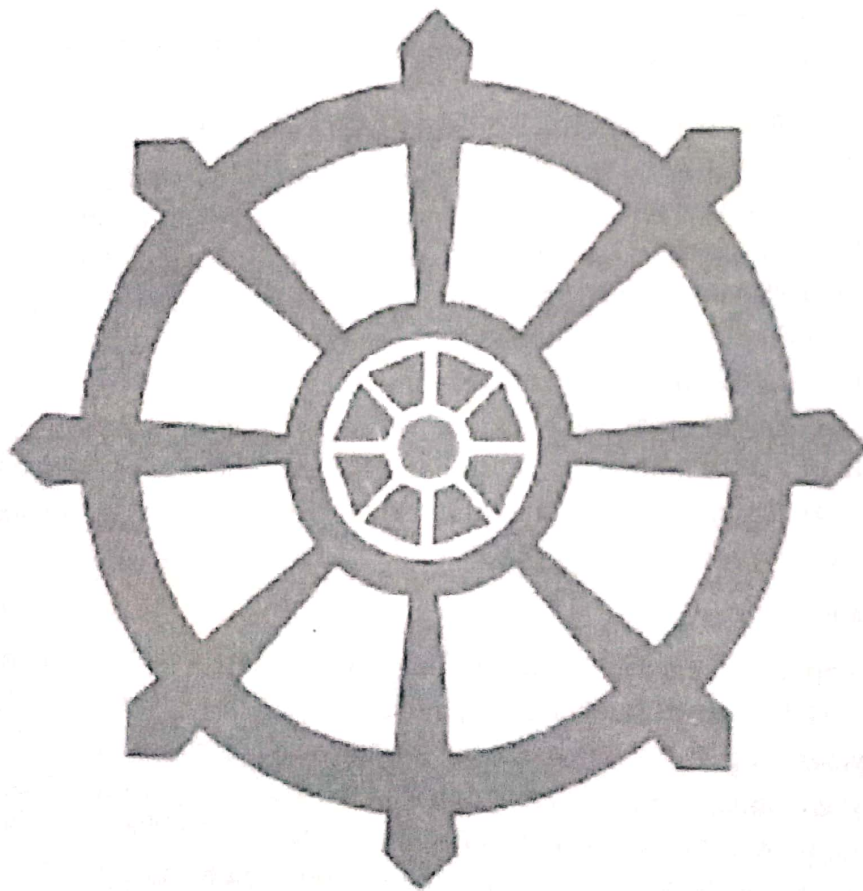


Fig. 4.6 Turning of the Wheel of Law (*Dharma Chakra Pravartana*)

For the next 45 years, he preached his gospel and message of salvation to the common people. He visited different parts of the country, spoke to the people in their local languages and illustrated his teachings. He made large conversions at Rajgriha, the capital of Magadha. He also converted his father, his son and other relatives at Kapilavastu. Kings like Prasenjit of Koshala, Bimbisara and Ajatashatru of Magadha became his followers. He died in 483 BC at Kushinagar in the district of Gorakhpur at the age of 80. Thus, Buddha attained *Parinirvana*. After his death, his remains were divided into eight parts and distributed among his followers who were spread in different parts of the country. *Stupas* (Figure 4.7) or mounds were built on these remains to preserve them.

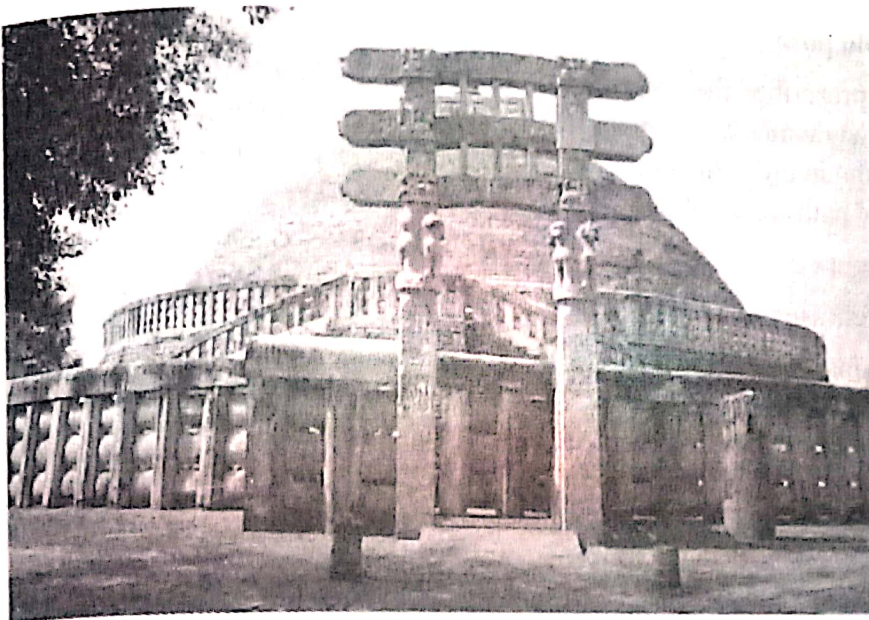


Fig. 4.7 Stupa

4.6.2 Philosophy of Buddha

Buddha realized the truth by following a life of purity and discipline and asked his followers to follow the same path. His teachings were simple and he explained them in simple ordinary man's language illustrating them with common tales. He never tried to establish a new religion but he propounded a new way of life free from dogmas and rituals.

Buddha pointed out various paths by which one could attain *Nirvana* or salvation from the cycle of birth and death. He denied the authority of Vedas and denounced the method of sacrifice and hegemony of priestly class. Unlike the Brahminical religion, he did not consider Sanskrit as a sacred language, nor rituals an essential part of religion. He was not in support of offering of prayer to god to win his favour. The philosophy of Buddha was rational in its nature. Like Jainism, Buddha denied the infallibility of the Vedas. He rejected the supremacy of the priestly class. Buddhism dislodged the principles of social immobility, inequality and injustice. It upheld the sanctity of human intellect and freedom; people irrespective of their position, caste and colour, were allowed to embrace the new religion.

Four noble truths

After attaining enlightenment at Bodhgaya, Buddha held that there was misery and sorrow all around. Man turned to god and religion to find a cure or an escape from such sorrow and trouble. To escape from the sorrow and miseries of life, he discovered the truth and its cure. His teachings begin with the four great truths relating to sorrow, the causes of sorrow, the remedy for sorrow and the ways for the removal of sorrow. These four truths are; first, there is suffering and sorrow in the world namely old age, disease and death. This sorrow or suffering is due to the existence in the world. Secondly, everything has a cause and the cause of all types of sorrow is *Trishna*, i.e., desires and cravings. Man is a bundle of cravings and desires and so long as he is a slave to these desires, he cannot escape from pain and sorrow. Third is the remedy or cessation of sorrow. This pain of sorrow can be removed by suppressing desires and yearning for possession. Fourth and the last is the true way to conquer desires and removal of sorrow. Buddha says that the desire or *Trishna* cannot be conquered in an ordinary manner. It requires a disciplined life, which he called the middle path or the noble eight-fold path.

Eight-fold path

Buddha prescribed the noble eight-fold paths (see Figure 4.6; the eight spokes of the wheel of law symbolize the eight-fold path) or the '*Astangamarga*', which every Buddhist is to follow in order to get deliverance from sufferings. These values included in the eight-fold path are as follows:

1. Right views
2. Right aspirations
3. Right speech
4. Right action
5. Right living
6. Right efforts
7. Right mindfulness
8. Right contemplation or meditation

According to the eight-fold path, the first step is the proper vision leading to the realization that the world is full of sorrow, the basis of life is sorrow and sorrow can end by controlling desires. Second step is right aspiration where one must resolve to abstain from material pleasure. Right speech is the third step and it implies the practice of truthfulness. The fourth step is right action, which means one should be vigilant while acting in life and it must ensure that nobody gets hurt mentally or physically by our actions. Right living is the fifth step, which means to earn by pure and honest means. Right efforts is the sixth step which indicates mental exercise to avoid evil thoughts and in their place to cultivate good thoughts. The seventh step is right mindfulness or correct vigilance. According to this, by self-examination and self-study, control over mind is to be acquired. The last step is right contemplation or meditation. According to this, Buddha says one can still not attain salvation without meditation. Thus, right contemplation is the final and the crown of the eight-fold path. Anyone who would follow this noble eight-fold path would attain *Nirvana* or salvation, which meant freedom from the cycle of birth and death irrespective of its social origin.

Ahimsa

One of the cardinal beliefs of Buddha was *Ahimsa*. He held that violence and cruelty against animate beings was a sin. He condemned religious sacrifices and eating of animal flesh. He said that one should cultivate love for all beings. He was opposed to all types of violence because it was against the principle of law. However, unlike Mahavira, he did not carry the *Ahimsa* principle to an extreme.

Law of Karma

Buddha however accepted the Hindu doctrine of *Karma*. He believed in the law of *Karma*, its working and transmigration of soul. He held that one of the key features of the universal law of *dharma* is 'as a man acts so shall he be', i.e., man gets the reward of its own action. The *Karma* doctrine implies that thoughts, actions and feelings of the past have determined our present and our present deeds will determine the future when we are reborn. No person can escape the consequences of his or her deeds. The deliverance from rebirth can be attained through good *Karma*, which again requires a strict moral life. According to his doctrine, not only man, but animals and supernatural spirits like angels, gods are subject to the great law of *Karma*.

Morality

Buddha laid out some principles for practical morality. He gave emphasis on purity of conduct, truthfulness, love and benevolence, respect for older and service to the humanity. Buddha considered non-violence and non-injury towards life in thought, words and deed as an integral principle of morality. Therefore, Buddhism was primarily a religion of conduct and not a religion of observances, rituals and sacrifices. This was the principal reason for the rapid spread of his teachings.

Denounced caste system

Like Mahavira, Gautama Buddha also denounced the caste system existing in the society. He denied the caste distinctions and by that raised the status of the lower class people of the society. Therefore, Buddhism spread to different parts of India and the world. In the subsequent period, the common people came closer towards this religion and, due to this; it got patronization from various liberal emperors like Ashoka, Harsha, etc.

The teachings of Buddha reveal that he originally did not establish any new religion. All what he taught was contained in the Hindu Upanishads but the difficulty was that these were written in Sanskrit and its philosophy was not followed by the masses. Buddha's greatness lies in simplifying the Upanishadic philosophy and presenting it before the common men in the language they understood and placed practical examples before them from his own life. He organized a monastic order to carry out his teaching to the different corners of the country. The monks who carried the message of Buddha to the masses led the life of a Hindu Brahmana and in course of time a new set of rules were evolved for the Buddhists and at that point, eventually, Buddhism became a separate religion.

Religious texts

Buddhist religious texts were written in Pali and are collectively known as *Tripitika* (three baskets). The first part is *Vinayapitaka*, which lays down rules for the guidance of the monks and the general management of the Buddhist place of worship. The second part is *Suttapitakas*, a collection of the religious discourses of Buddha and the third is the *Abhidhammapitaka*, which contains an exposition of the philosophical principles of Buddhism. Later, the Mahayana sect of Buddhism, created its own texts. Besides authoritative commentaries on the sacred texts, the Jatakas or the stories relating to different births of Buddha also added much to the religious literature of Buddhism.

The main Buddhist sects

After the demise of Buddha, Buddhism was sharply divided into two sects, namely Hinayana and Mahayana. The followers of Hinayana Buddhism believed in the original teachings of Gautama Buddha and did not want any relaxation. This sect was also known as the lesser vehicle; whereas, the beliefs of Mahayanism were different from the former. The one basic belief of Mahayanism is acceptance of many Bodhisattavas (Figure 4.8) i.e. persons who were in the process of attaining Buddha-hood. The belief in the Bodhisattavas and their prayers, which has been regarded as the basic features of Mahayanism, had developed much earlier than its formal establishment during the period of Kanishka in the first century AD. However, it became a completely different sect after the fourth general council of Buddhism and the credit for the establishment of this sect goes to Nagarjuna. There was no difference between the followers of Hinayanism and Mahayanism with regard to the rules of Sangha and code of conduct or morality. Both lived together in the same Sanghas. However, there were differences in philosophy and principles among them.



Fig. 4.8 Bodhistava

Hinayanism did not regard Buddha as a god free from the cycle of birth and rebirth while Mahayanism regarded Buddha as god and believed in his different incarnations to be all free from the cycle of birth. Hinayana regarded *Nirvana* as a state of permanent peace free from cycle of birth while Mahayanism regarded it as the union with *Adi Buddha*. The religious texts of Hinayanism were written in Pali; whereas, the text of Mahayanism was written in Sanskrit. The Mahayanism remained closer to the concept of Hinduism with regard to *Nirvana*, Brahman, incarnation of god, faith, etc., while Hinayanism was distinct from Hinduism.

4.6.3 Causes of Rise and Fall of Buddhism

Let us discuss the causes of rise and fall of Buddhism.

Causes of rise of Buddhism

Buddhism started as a protest movement against the complex system of Hinduism. It tried to reform the existing religious practices, social systems and dislodged the principles of social immobility, inequality and injustice. Moreover, it upheld the sanctity of human belief and its freedom. For its simplicity and people friendly principles, Buddhism spread all over India in a very short span of time.

Various causes are responsible for the spectacular rise of Buddhism in India and abroad. Due to the magnetic personality of Gautama Buddha, his simple and uncomplicated doctrine attracted many followers. During the emergence of Buddhism, the Brahminical religion had more or less stagnated with superstitions, sacrifices and predominance of priestly class. Buddha, with his simple preaching, freed the religion from all expensive and complicated rituals and enabled the poor to observe their religion with proper spirit.

His life was a living example of all that he preached and thus the rational philosophy of Buddha not only appealed to the masses, but the ruling class and the upper strata of the society as well.

Second, during that time, Hinduism had lost its appeal and people failed to understand the religion due to its complexities. Hence, the masses found an alternative in Buddhism. Buddha prescribed a middle path for the attainment of *Nirvana* by observing simple rules of morality, which did not exist in Hinduism.

Third, Buddhism did not believe in caste system. It rejected the supremacy of the priestly class. It prescribed social equality and even women got their desired position in the Buddhist ashram system as nuns. People irrespective of their position, caste and

colour were allowed to embrace the new religion. This acceptance of social equality attracted a large number of Hindus into the fold of Buddhism.

Fourth, Buddha preached in the language of the common man. During that period, Sanskrit was the medium and the common man had no idea of Sanskrit language. In contrast, Buddha preached his doctrine in Pali and Magadhi languages, a method that was easily accepted by the lower strata of the society.

Fifth, Buddhism enjoyed the royal patronage of the kings like Ashoka and Kanishka and many royal families. Ashoka elevated the religion to occupy the position of state religion during his reign. He sent Buddhist missionaries to different parts of the world to spread the message of Buddha. Even he sent his son Mahendra and daughter Sanghamitra to Ceylon with the message of Buddha. He engraved the teachings of Buddha in various pillars and rock inscriptions in different part of his empire. Powerful kings like Kanishka, Harsha, Bimbisara and Ajatasatru of Magadh, Prasnjit of Koshala and many other patronized Buddhism for which it spread in all directions during their reign.

Sixth, Buddhist Sanghas proved to be the best instruments in the propagation of Buddhism. The sanghas were also the centres of Buddhist activities, learning and spiritual exchange for the monks. They also prepared religious preachers or monks who worked for the propagation of Buddhism in India and abroad.

Seventh, after the demise of Buddha, host of Buddhist scholars and monks worked for the propagation of the teachings of Buddha. In addition, various scholars like Nagarjuna, Asanga, Basumitra, Basubandhu, Dinang, Dharamakirti, Chandrakirti etc., produced vast literature of Buddhism, which provided the base for its rise.

Apart from this, the relaxation of strict rules for masses, absence of any rival sect and lastly the great centres of higher learning like Taxila and Nalanda Universities and several other institutions played a vital role in the progress of Buddhism and established it as a global religion.

Causes of the fall of Buddhism

For many centuries, Buddhism remained as one of the foremost religions not only in India, but also in many parts of Asia. However, slowly and steadily it lost its hold and became non-existent in the place of its origin, India. Many factors were responsible for the decline of Buddhism.

First, the Buddhist Sanghas, which were created as the centres of learning activity for the nuns and monks, became centres of moral corruption. Huge wealth donated by the ruling class, and women found their entry into the Sanghas. The wealth and women completely ruined the moral character of monks.

Second, the Mahayanism, a sect of Buddhism, which introduced image worship, prayers, religious festivals and processions, brought in ritualism. Thus, effective use and display of wealth was possible. This led to the loss of moral, intellectual and spiritual strength of Buddhism. These were the primary source of strength of Buddhism and when these were lost, its very basis was lost and the entire structure crumbled.

Third, Buddhism was divided into various sects even prior to its great split into Mahayanism and Hinayanism. Each of these sects preached different philosophies and different codes of conduct, which created confusion among its followers and the rivalry between these sects destroyed the image of Buddha among the masses.

Fourth, in contrast to the practice of Buddha, the Buddhist religious texts of the Mahayanism were written in Sanskrit. As Sanskrit was not the language of common people, Buddhism lost its popular contact with the masses.

Fifth, the moral corruption of monks and nuns led to intellectual bankruptcy in Buddhism and resulted in its decline.

NOTES

Sixth, after facing challenges from both Jainism and Buddhism, the great revival of Hinduism started under the protection of Sunga dynasty, and the efforts of Gupta rulers led the religion to its former glory. Scholars like Shankaracharya, Kumaril Bhatta and many others scholars of the time established the philosophical and intellectual supremacy of Hinduism. The emergence of the Puranic traditions in Hinduism, its tolerant and liberal spirit proved its greatest asset. Even when Buddhism created the cult of Buddha, they failed to create a parallel to the God or *Brahma* of Hinduism.

Seventh, apart from these developments, many Hindu scholars simplified the language of the Hindu religious texts, reformed the society and it got the attention from the ruling dynasties. With these attractions in Hinduism, there hardly remained any difference between Buddhism and Hinduism. Therefore, Hinduism attracted the masses to its fold and once again became the principal religion in India.

Finally, the successors Ashoka did not support Buddhism and other dynasties like Sungas, Guptas and Rajputs strongly supported Hinduism. Invaders like Hunas and Turks destroyed Buddhist sanghas, monasteries, libraries, etc., and thus gave a serious blow to Buddhism. Buddhism thus lost its hold over its country of birth. The foreign invaders were only partly responsible for it but primarily its own weakness and the great revival of Hinduism were responsible for its dramatic fall.

DID YOU KNOW

Jainism began about 2500 years ago in India.

4.7 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- The Mauryan Empire was a huge Iron Age empire marked by the rule of the Mauryan dynasty in India that flourished from 321 to 185 BC. According to archaeological sources, the period of the Mauryan rule in South Asia falls into the era of Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW).
- Iron is an important metal that influenced the progress of civilization in India. The early iron encountered by man was meteoritic iron, and it has been used by for over at least 5,000 years.
- The ancient processes used two different types of furnaces for their operation that were different in their physical forms. However, the procedure for operation was quite similar.
- Most historians are of the view that agriculture in the Indus Valley Civilization was quite productive because it could meet the needs of a huge number of the urban population whose main occupation was not always agriculture.
- During the Later Vedic period, the earlier distinctions in society based on varna or occupation became rigid and hereditary. A person's birth became more important than his skill or merit.

Check Your Progress

9. Fill in the blanks.
- (a) Buddha rejected the supremacy of the _____ class.
- (b) One of the cardinal beliefs of Buddha was _____.
10. State whether True or False.
- (a) The Jatakas contain the Buddhist traditions about the birth of Buddha.
- (b) Buddha did not accept the Hindu doctrine of Karma.

- The 23rd Tirthankara was Parsavanath, who was a historical figure. Parsavanath probably lived in eighth century BC, and probably died 250 years before the death of Mahavira.
- Another great religious reformation movement of sixth century BC was Buddhism, which gave the biggest challenge to Brahmanism.

4.8 KEY TERMS

- **Irrigation:** Supplying dry land with water by means of ditches, etc.
- **Threshing:** The separation of grain or seeds from the husks and straw.
- **Canal:** An artificial waterway or artificially improved river used for travel, shipping, or irrigation.
- **Pastoralism:** The herding or tending of cattle as a primary economic activity or occupation.
- **Mortgage:** A temporary, conditional pledge of property to a creditor as security for performance of an obligation or repayment of a debt.
- **Metallurgy:** The science that deals with procedures used in extracting metals from their ores, purifying and alloying metals, and creating useful objects from metals.
- **Salvation:** Saving of the soul from sins and its consequences.

4.9 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. (a) Iron (b) Direct reduction method
2. (a) True (b) True
3. (a) agrarian (b) Agriculture
4. (a) False (b) True
5. (a) Varnas (b) Untouchability
6. (a) True (b) True
7. (a) Hindu Samkhya Darshana (b) Mahavira
8. (a) True (b) True
9. (a) Priestly (b) Ahimsa
10. (a) True (b) False

4.10 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Explain the use of iron technology in the Mauryan period.
2. Explain the practice of settled agriculture in the Indus Valley Civilization.
3. Explain the rise of new classes in the later Vedic period.
4. What is the Jaina principle of non-injury?

5. What do you understand by the Turning of the Wheel Law?
6. Write a short note on the philosophies of Buddha.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Briefly describe the ancient process of iron making in India.
2. Discuss the practice of agriculture in the Rigvedic, Vedic and Post-Vedic period.
3. Explain the practice of settled agriculture in the Mauryan and post-Mauryan period.
4. Explain the rise of new classes in the later Vedic period.
5. Discuss the doctrines and philosophies of Mahavira.
6. Briefly explain the rise, spread and decline of Jainism.
7. What were the factors that led to the rise and fall of Buddhism?

4.11 FURTHER READING

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UNIT 5 EMERGENCE OF EMPIRE

Structure

- 5.0 Introduction
- 5.1 Unit Objectives
- 5.2 Sixteen Mahajanapadas and Republics
 - 5.2.1 Emergence of Cities and Territorial States
 - 5.2.2 Republics
 - 5.2.3 Administrative System of the Republics
 - 5.2.4 Advantages of the Republican System
 - 5.2.5 Defects of the Republican system
 - 5.2.6 Reasons for Devastation of the Republics
- 5.3 Magadha
 - 5.3.1 Rise of Magadha
 - 5.3.2 Life in Magadha
 - 5.3.3 The Brihadrathas
 - 5.3.4 The Haryanka Dynasty
 - 5.3.5 Ajatasatru
 - 5.3.6 Darsaka
 - 5.3.7 Udyain or Udayabhadra
 - 5.3.8 Saisunaga or Sisunaga
- 5.4 The Nandas and the Rise of Chandragupta Maurya
- 5.5 Summary
- 5.6 Key Terms
- 5.7 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 5.8 Questions and Exercises
- 5.9 Further Reading

5.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will study about the emergence of cities and territorial states, especially the Magadha Empire. The increasing use of iron in eastern UP and western Bihar facilitated the formation of large territorial states. Due to the surplus produced (owing to the use of the new agricultural tools and implements), the people became self sufficient and remained stuck to their lands. It was now possible for them to expand at the cost of the neighbouring areas and offer their extra produce to the princes for military and administrative needs. This led to the rise of large states with towns as their centre of activity. As towns emerged as the seats of power and as the base for commercial activities, this idea strengthened the concept of territorial affiliations. The incorporation of the janapadas by powerful rulers of the mahajanapadas resulted in political conflicts among the rulers, and in a later period, to the establishment of the Magadha Empire.

5.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Discuss the rise of Mahajanapadas
- List the cities and territorial states which emerged in ancient India



- Evaluate the emergence of cities and territorial states
- Name the dynasties that ruled Magadha
- Describe the rise of Magadha and the Nanda dynasty

5.2 SIXTEEN MAHAJANAPADAS AND REPUBLICS

Ancient Buddhist texts make frequent reference to the sixteen great kingdoms and republics which had evolved and flourished in the northern/north-western parts of the Indian subcontinent before the rise of Buddhism in India.

Look at the Figure 5.1 to know the location of the mahajanapadas. Of the sixteen mahajanapadas, four were prominent monarchies—Kosala, Vatsa, Avanti and Magadha. They were constantly fighting with each other. Ultimately, Magadha emerged supreme.



Fig. 5.1 The Mahajanapadas

Republics and monarchies

Emergence of

The mahajanapadas had two kinds of political systems. They were either republics or monarchies. A republican mahajanapada was ruled by a group of people elected by the people of that tribe. There was no hereditary ruler. Decisions were taken on the basis of majority consent. So, it was a kind of a democratic system where the people of the tribe had a say in their political system. The Sakya mahajanapada, for example, was an important republic.

NOTES

Most of the mahajanapadas had a monarchical system. The king ruled according to his own wish. After his death, his son succeeded to the throne. Magadha, for example, was a monarchical mahajanapada.

The Aryans slowly and steadily expanded their civilization and culture. They expanded rapidly in northern India. Many strong Aryan centres were established till the sixth century BC and the states were being called on the basis of caste. None had full control over the whole of India, which was divided into many smaller states. In order to expand the states, the janapadas were extended and changed into mahajanapadas later.

5.2.1 Emergence of Cities and Territorial States

Although there has not been enough evidence concerning mahajanapadas, important Buddhist and Jaina books provide the following information about the sixteen major mahajanapadas:

1. **Anga:** This was situated near modern Bhagalpur (located on the borders of modern Bihar and Bengal). Champa was its capital. Champa has been considered one of the six great cities in the sixth century BC. It was famous for its trade and commerce. Anga was an enemy of Magadh. It was defeated by Magadh by mid-sixth century BC.
2. **Magadh:** It was situated where modern Patna and Gaya districts of Bihar are located. Its capital was at Rajagriha. Rajagriha was an impenetrable place surrounded by five hills. The remains of the walls of Rajagriha provide the earliest evidence of fortification in the history of India. In the fifth century BC, the capital was shifted to Pataliputra, which was the seat of the early Magadha kings. Magadha rose to prominence because its fertile agricultural tracts were best suited for the cultivation of wet rice. Further, it had iron ore deposits of south Bihar (modern Jharkhand) which were under its control. Last but not the least, the open social system of the Magadh Empire made it the most important monarchy in the years to come.
3. **Kashi:** Of the sixteen mahajanapadas, Kashi was the most powerful in the beginning. It was located in and around modern Varanasi. Its capital Varanasi was the foremost city of India situated on the confluence of the Ganges and the Gomati river and in the middle of the most fertile agricultural areas. It emerged as a leading centre of textile manufacture and horse trade in the time of Buddha. However, by the time of the Buddha, the Kashi mahajanapada had been taken over by Kosala and was a cause of war between Magadha and Kosala kingdoms.
4. **Kosala:** Kosala was bounded on the west by the river Gomati, on the south by the Sarpika, on the east by the river Sadarvira (Gandak) and on the north by the Nepal hills. Kosala mahajanapada emerged out of an assimilation of many smaller principalities and lineages. Hiranyanabha, Mahakosala Prasenjita and Suddhodhana have been named as rulers of Kosala in the sixth century BC. Saketa, Shravasti

Self-Instructional
Material



(modern Sahet-Mahet) and Bahravich districts of Uttar Pradesh were three important Kosala cities. The capital of Kosala was Shravasti. King Prasenjita was a contemporary and friend of the Buddha. Later, Kosala emerged as one of the most powerful rivals to the emergent Magadha Empire.

5. **Vajji:** This was located in contemporary Bihar. This mahajanapada came into existence by the coming together of several castes. Its capital was Vaishali.
6. **Malla:** There were two branches of the Mallas, namely Kushinagar and Pava. This was a federal democracy.
7. **Vatsa:** Vatsa was one of the most powerful mahajanapadas with its capital at Kaushambi (near modern Allahabad) on the bank of the Yamuna. This means that the Vatsas were settled around modern Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh. Bhasa, one of the greatest Sanskrit dramatists in ancient India, has immortalized Udayan, a Vatsa king, in his plays. These plays are based on the story of the love affair between Udayana and Vasavadatta, the Princess of Avanti. These plays also point to the conflict among the powerful kingdoms of Magadha, Vatsa and Avanti. Vatsa lost its significance in the ensuing struggle because the later texts do not refer to them with great importance.
8. **Chedi:** Contemporary Bundelkhand and its nearby landmass came under Chedi. Its capital was Shaktimati or Sandhivati.
9. **Kuru:** This mahajanapad covered the regions of Thaneshwar, Delhi and Meerut. Its capital was Indraprastha.
10. **Surasena:** This was located to the south of Matsya state. Its capital was Mathura.
11. **Panchal:** This was located in the territory between rivers Ganga and Yamuna. It also had two branches. The capital of northern Panchal was Ahichatrapur, while that of southern Panchal was Kampilya.
12. **Matsya (Maccha):** This was located in modern Jaipur, Alwar and Bharatpur regions of Rajasthan. Its capital was Viratnagara.
13. **Avanti:** Avanti was one of the most powerful mahajanapadas in the sixth century BC. The central area of this mahajanapad or kingdom roughly corresponds to Ujjain district of Madhya Pradesh. The kingdom was divided into two parts. Its southern capital was Mahasmati, while its northern capital was Ujjain. The latter was more important. The kingdom controlled the trade with the south. According to a legend, from an enemy he became father-in-law of Udayen who ruled over Vatsa kingdom.
14. **Ashmak:** This region was located in south India. Its capital was Paudanya(Potan).
15. **Gandhara:** The states of contemporary Taxila and Kashmir came under this region. It had two capitals, namely Pushkalavati and Taxila. Taxila was a famous centre of learning.
16. **Kambhoj:** This janapad was located to the north of Gandhar at Pamir and Badakshan. Its capital was Rajpur.

5.2.2 Republics

We get the knowledge about the republics of the sixth century BC from Buddhist books. These republics were as follows:

1. **Shakyas of Kapilvastu:** It was located on the border of Nepal on the foothills of the Himalayas. This republic was located in the western part of contemporary Gorakhpur. Gautam Buddha was born in this state. Its capital was Kapilvastu. The people of this area considered themselves to be the descendants of Eshvak. This was a major site of learning.
2. **Bulis of Allakappa:** This area was located between the contemporary districts of Shahabad and Muzaffarpur. According to Dhammapada this area was situated near the Veth Island.
3. **Kalamas of Kesputta:** The spiritual guru of Buddha, Aalar Kalam, belonged to this dynasty. This dynasty is related to the Panchal Keshis as described in Shatpath Brahman.
4. **Bhaggas of Susamagiri:** According to Sanyuttamkaya, this area was situated in Bhargadisa. Contemporary Mirzapur was located near this area.
5. **Kolis of Ramgram:** This republic was situated in the east of Shakyas of Kapilavastu.
6. **Mallas of Pava:** This dynasty was ruled by the kshatriyas of the Vashistha gotra. The Mallas were settled in contemporary Padrauna in Uttar Pradesh.
7. **Mallas of Kushinagar:** They were the second branch of Mallas. Buddha attained Parinirvana here.
8. **Moris of Pippalivan:** According to Mahavansh, the Moris were earlier known as the Shakyas. However, later they shifted to a hilly region of the Himalayas due to the brutality of Vidudabh where they established the Pippalivan city. This city has always been famous for the sound of peacocks and as a result is referred to as 'Moris'.
9. **Videhas of Mithila:** Mithila was a renowned learning centre.
10. **Lichchavis of Vaishali:** The Lichchavis belonged to the Kshatriya clan.
11. **Naga of Vaishali:** The combination of the Videhas and the Lichchavis led to the establishment of the federation of Vajji. There was also a federation of Lichchavis and Nagas which was called Asthakul in which Videhas, Yangyik, Lichchavi and Vajji were included.

Thus, the powerful republics of this period included the Shakya, Lichchavi, Videha, Vajji and Malla. According to D.R. Bhandarkar, an authority on the ancient history of India from 650BC – 325 BC, 'The meaning of republic and federation was a group of well decided and well organized men.' However, it seems that a unit of a federation was usually called a republic. Several republics made a federation. Thus, many grihas made a kul and a group of kulas formed a republic.

5.2.3 Administrative System of the Republics

The chief features of the administrative system of the republics were as follows:

1. **King:** The king was the head of executive of the entire state. He was an elected member. He had no absolute powers.
2. **Council of ministers:** There were nine members in the council of ministers, which constituted only the best people taken from the noble. However, we find mention of four members in the Malla republic, nine in the Lichchavi republic and eighteen in the Videha republic.

3. **Organization of executive:** The executive was also known as the sansthagar. The Lichchavis considered themselves to be the king. If there were conflicts in matters of war, peace, religious and social issues, voting was done. If due to any reason consensus was not achieved, a committee was appointed which was called udayvahika.
4. **Process of voting:** Four techniques were in use for the purpose of voting. These are as follows:
 - (i) **Secret system:** According to this technique, voting was done secretly.
 - (ii) **Open system:** According to this technique, voting was done openly.
 - (iii) **Mouth-to-ear system:** In this technique, the voters cast their votes by revealing their preferences by whispering in the ears.
 - (iv) **Evident system:** In this system, the names of voters were declared evidently.
5. **The working procedure of the organization:** Fixed rules were made for the proposal of the organization. Usually the proposal was repeated thrice and if not resisted the proposal was accepted. But if resisted the proposal was set for vote by special rules. This voting was done secretly.
6. Committees were made to resolve conflicting issues and questions.
7. **Group system:** Groups existed based on division of votes, debates and important concerns.
8. **Judiciary:** There were seven types of courts in existence. The king was the chief justice of the judiciary.
9. The hierarchy of the officials in the republics was as shown in Figure 5.2.

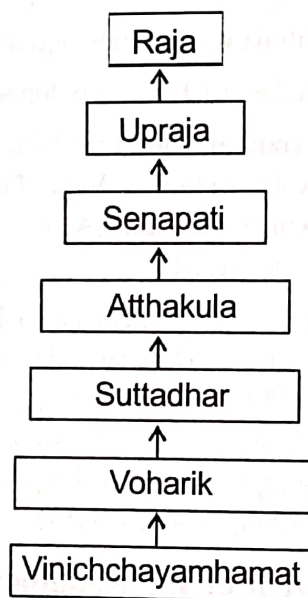


Fig. 5.2 Hierarchy of Officials

5.2.4 Advantages of the Republican System

The chief benefits of the republics were as follows:

1. The king had no absolute powers.
2. All citizens took equal part in the administrative work of the republics.

3. The social rules were kept safe by voting.
4. There was no influence of the hereditary. Honesty, sense of responsibility, and experience were the chief qualities sought in a leader, even if he had a low social status.
5. During war the entire state struggled collectively in defence of the ideals of its republic.
6. There was financial affluence. The contemporary states were the main centres of culture, art and civilization.

5.2.5 Defects of the Republican System

The defects of the republican system were as follows:

1. Important issues could not be kept confidential due to debates and consequently security was hampered.
2. The decision-making procedure was slow and led to delays.
3. Personal interests entered the political domain.
4. Due to the theory of equality, defects of administrative skill and tactfulness were neglected.
5. This system curtailed huge expenses.
6. There was interference by political parties in the everyday administration of the state affairs.
7. There was a lack of economical and regional leadership.

5.2.6 Reasons for Devastation of the Republics

The following were the chief reasons for the devastation of republics:

1. Lack of equality
2. Birth of landlordism during the period of Buddha
3. Defects in the judicial system
4. Landlordism, which led to the decline of the system of self administration
5. Popularity of monarchy

5.3 MAGADHA

Magadha had many geographical advantages, which helped to make it strong and powerful in comparison to other kingdoms. The Gangetic plain had a very fertile soil. The dense forests yielded timber and were rich in iron ore deposits. The river and its ports helped inland trade with other cities. Thus, both agriculture and trade flourished which provided the king with high revenues. This, in turn, allowed the king to maintain a large army and protect his territories.

The first important ruler of Magadha was Bimbisara. During his reign Magadha rose to power. He ruled in the middle of the sixth century from his capital at Rajagriha. He expanded his empire and strengthened his position by marriage alliances and military conquests. Ajatasatru succeeded his father Bimbisara. He ruled over Magadha from 493 BC to 461 BC and waged wars with smaller states. He controlled the Gangetic plain by fortifying the city of Pataliputra (modern day Patna), which was his capital.

NOTES

Check Your Progress

1. Fill in the blanks.
 - (a) A _____ mahajanapada was ruled by a group of people elected by the people of that tribe.
 - (b) Magadha was a _____ mahajanapada.
2. State whether True or False.
 - (a) The Lichchavis belonged to the Kshatriya clan.
 - (b) Avanti was one of the least powerful mahajanapadas in the sixth century BC.

After Ajatasatru, the Nandas emerged as the last powerful dynasty before Chandragupta Maurya captured the throne of Magadha. Figure 5.3 shows the locations of important towns of Magadha.

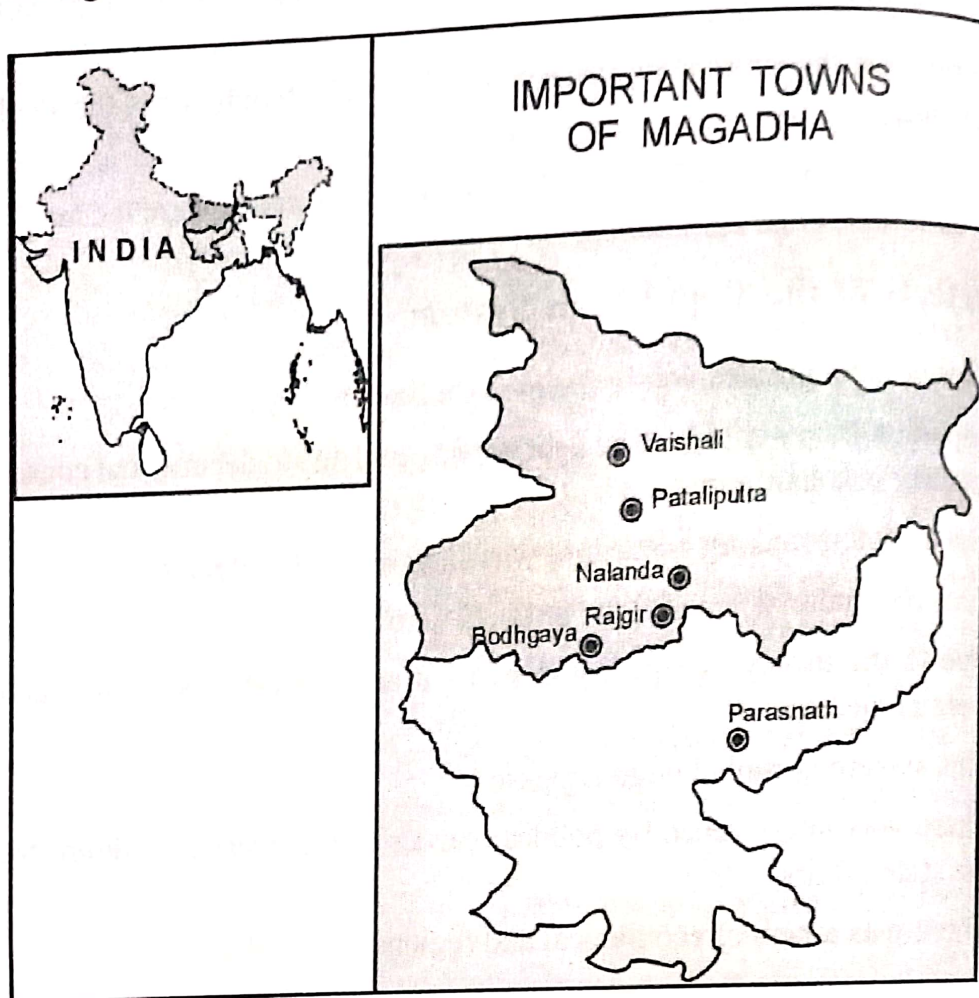


Fig. 5.3 Important Towns of Magadha

5.3.1 Rise of Magadha

Magadha embraces the districts of Patna and Gaya in Bihar. It was bound on the North and the West by the rivers Ganges and Son, on the south by the spurs of the Vindhya and on the east by the river Champa. Its earliest capital was Griivraja or Rajagriha near Rajgir. The other names for the city were Magadhapura, Brihadrathapura Vasumati Kusagrapura and Bimbisarapuri.

H.C. Raychaudhuri, an Indian historian known for his studies on ancient India, states, 'The early dynastic history of Magadha is shrouded in darkness. We have occasional glimpses of war-lords and statesmen, some probably entirely mythical, others having the appearance of a leader. The history commences with the famous Bimbisara of the Haryanka Kula.'

There is a reference in the Rigveda to a territory called Kikata which was ruled by a chief named Pramaganda. Kikata is described as a synonym of Magadha. The Yajurveda refers to the bards of Magadha. Figure 5.4 illustrates ancient coins from Magadha.



Fig. 5.4 Coins from Magadha

5.3.2 Life in Magadha

Position of the King

The king had absolute powers, as sanctioned by the Brahmins. The king, in turn, held the Brahmins in great respect. He performed sacrifices such as the *Ashwamedha yajna* to establish his supremacy. He ruled with the help of other officials, such as the *Senani* (commander-in-chief) and *amatyas* (officers in charge of revenue collection).

The king had the right to collect taxes. This money was spent on maintaining the army; paying salaries to the officers; building roads, wells and canals; and supporting the Brahmins. The king had to maintain a huge army as the *majahanapadas* were always fighting with each other. He also had his capital fortified.

The Society

The society remained divided into the four main *varnas*—Brahmins, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas* and *Sudras*. The first three classes enjoyed all the privileges. The Brahmins framed laws, which the rest of the society had to follow. The position of the *Sudras* remained inferior to others. Inter-caste marriages were not permitted.

Child marriage and polygamy were common and women continued to have a lower status in the society. They were expected to serve the menfolk.

The system of *varnashrama* was more rigidly established. Man's life continued to be divided into four main ashramas.

Religion

Brahmanism was the dominant religion. The Brahmins conducted all the rituals and ceremonies in Sanskrit, a language not understood by the common people. The *yajna* or sacrifices were very expensive. The common people, especially the poor, felt sidelined and resented this. This paved the way for the rise of Buddhism and Jainism.

Education

The *gurukul* system of education continued. Important centres of learning were Kashi, Ujjain and Taxila.

Agriculture, Taxation and Trade

1. Wheat, rice, cotton, sugarcane, vegetables and oilseeds were the main crops grown. Rice was the staple food. Agriculture was the main source of revenue for the state.
2. The peasant had to pay one-sixth of his produce to the king. This was called *bhaga* or share. In the beginning, taxes were collected in kind, in the form of products or services (barter system). For example, hunters would pay taxes in the form of animal or animal produce. Artisans and craftsmen also had to pay taxes. A weaver or blacksmith would work for the king one day every month.
3. Later, this barter system changed and coins of silver, copper and gold were issued by the state.
4. Taxes were levied on traders.
5. Hunters also had to pay taxes in kind, i.e. some part of his hunt. When coins were introduced, taxes were collected in cash. Special officers were appointed as tax collectors.
6. Artisans and craftsmen organized themselves into guilds. These professions were hereditary.
7. The introduction of coinage provided a boost to trade. People settled near market centres to trade. These trade centres developed into cities. Pataliputra, Ayodhya, Mathura and Vaishali were important cities. Rivers were used as trade routes.
8. Champa was an important river port. Sopara was an important seaport. The chief articles of trade were silk, muslin, ivory, jewellery and perfumes.
9. Thus, the political and economic developments of the sixth century BC paved the way for establishment of empires later in history.

5.3.3 The Brihadrathas

According to the Mahabharata and the Puranas, the earliest dynasty of Magadha was founded by Brihadratha, the father of Jarasandha and the son of Vasu. According to the Ramayana, Vasu himself was the founder of Griveraja or Vasumati. In the Puranas, we come across a list of the kings of this dynasty. The chronology of the kings as given in the Puranas and the order of their succession may not be true.

The Jain writers refer to two early kings of Rajagriha named Samudra Vijaya and Gaya. The latter is stated to have been taught by the Jains and reached perfection. However, there is no corroboration of the facts stated by the Jain writers.

5.3.4 The Haryanka Dynasty

There is no definite data regarding the origin of the Haryanka dynasty. Bimbisara was not the founder of the Haryanka dynasty as it is stated in the *Mahavamsa* that he was anointed king by his father when he was 15 years of age.

Bimbisara

Bimbisara was an ambitious king and he added to the prestige and strength of Magadha by his policy of matrimonial alliances and annexations. One of his queens was the sister of Prasenjit, the ruler of Kosala. She brought with her a village in Kashi, yielding revenue of a hundred thousand for bath and perfume money. Another queen of Bimbisara, Chellana, was the youngest of the seven daughters of ruler of Chetaka.

the ruler of Vaishali. According to a Tibetan writer, Bimbisara had another wife called Vasavi. It is stated that she saved the life of her husband by giving him food when the latter was imprisoned by Ajatasatru. She may be the same woman as Chellana. Another wife was probably from Punjab. Her name was Khema, the daughter of the King of Madda or Madra. The matrimonial alliances must have helped Bimbisara to extend his influence both eastwards and westwards.

Bimbisara had many sons and they gave him a lot of trouble. According to the Jain writers, Kunika or Ajatasatru, Halla, Vehalla, Abahya, Nandisena and Megha Kumara were the six sons of Bimbisara. The first three were the sons of Chellana and the fourth was of Amrapali, the courtesan. Buddhist writers refer to Ajatasatru, Vimala, Kondanna, Vehalla and Silavat.

The King of Taxila was harassed by his enemies and he asked Bimbisara to help him. Although the ambassador from Taxila was well received, no help was given to the king as Bimbisara was not prepared to alienate other rulers. It is stated that Bimbisara sent his physician Jivak to cure the king of Avanti who was suffering from jaundice. Bimbisara conquered and annexed the kingdom of Anga after defeating Brahmadata. The conquest of Anga is proved by the evidence of the *Digha Nikaya* and *Mahavagga*. According to Hemachandra, the Jain writer, Anga was governed as a separate province by the crown prince who had his headquarters at Champa. The conquest of Anga must have added to the material prosperity of Bimbisara. It is stated that Champa was one of the six cities of the Buddhist world. There are references to its gate, walls and a watch tower. Its traders went as far as Suvarnabhumi. The other important towns of Anga were Apana and Assapino.

The territory of Bimbisara included 80,000 villages and covered an area of 300 leagues. A number of republican communities under the *Rajakumaras* were also included within the territory.

There are different accounts with regard to the death of Bimbisara. According to the *Avashyakasutra* of the Jains, Bimbisara decided to appoint Ajatasatru as his successor in preference to his other sons. However, Ajatasatru became impatient and imprisoned his father where he was looked after by Queen Chellana. Later, Ajatasatru came to know from his mother that his father had loved him very much and on one occasion had sucked his swollen finger to relieve his pain. Ajatasatru was repentant and decided to break his fetters with an iron club. However, Bimbisara suspected foul play on the part of his son and committed suicide by taking poison. Figure 5.5 illustrates the prison in Rajgir where Bimbisara was imprisoned by Ajatasatru.



Fig. 5.5 Bimbisara's Jail at Rajgir

5.3.5 Ajatasatru

Ajatasatru is stated to have ruled from about 551 to 510 BC. It was during his reign that the Haryanka dynasty reached the highest point. Ajatasatru added to the prestige and glory of his dynasty by his conquests.

According to the Buddhist tradition, when Bimbisara died, his queen Kosala Devi also died on account of her love for her husband. A village in Kashi had been given to Bimbisara as bath and perfume money as a part of Kosala Devi's dowry. After the death of the lady, the king of Kosala decided to take away that village. The result was a war that took place between Kosala and Magadha. There were many ups and down in the war. It is stated that on one occasion the king of Kosala was defeated and he had to flee to his capital. On another occasion, Ajatasatru was defeated and captured. However, the king of Kosala agreed to marry his daughter, Vajra, to Ajatasatru and bestow upon her the village of Kashi for her bath and perfume money. It is further stated that the king of Kosala was ousted from his throne by his commander-in-chief who put prince Vidudabha on the throne. The king of Kosala decided to seek the help of his son-in-law and set out for the capital of Magadha but unfortunately he died outside the gates of the capital due to exposure.

Ajatasatru also fought against Vaishali. It is stated by Jain writers that Bimbisara gifted Halla and Vehalla his two elephants, named Seyanaga and Sechanaka, and a large necklace of 18 strings of jewels. Halla and Vehalla were born from Queen Chellana, the daughter of king Chetaka of Vaishali. When, Ajatasatru became king after the death of his father, he asked Halla and Vehalla to return the elephants and the necklace. They refused and Ajatasatru put pressure on Chetaka to hand over Halla and Vehalla to him but he refused to do so. Under the circumstances, war started between Magadha and Vaishali.

According to Buddhaghosha, a fifth century Indian *Theravadin* Buddhist commentator, there was a mine of gems at the foot of a hill near a port on the Ganges. There was an agreement between Ajatasatru and the Lichchavis that they were to divide the gems equally. However, the Lichchavis did not keep their promise and took away all the gems. That led to a war between the two kingdoms. It is also stated that Ajatasatru was instigated to start war against the Lichchavis by his wife Padmavati.

The war against the Lichchavis was not an easy one and is stated to have lasted for at least sixteen years. The Lichchavis were at the height of their power and prosperity. Buddha's own view was that the Lichchavis were invincible because they were observing all those conditions which could bring strength to a republic, such as holding full and frequent assemblies, ensuring the unity of counsel and policy, maintaining institutions of worship, showing reverence to elders and honouring women and ascetics. Buddha is stated to have been consulted by Ajatasatru in the matter of the conquest of Vaishali. Vassakara, a minister of Ajatasatru, pretended to have quarreled with his master and took refuge with the Lichchavis. After winning over their confidence, he tried to create dissensions among them. This he was able to accomplish within three years and when the Lichchavis were attacked by Ajatasatru, they were defeated. Figure 5.6 illustrates the remains of Ajatasatru's fort in Bihar.



Fig. 5.6 Remains of Ajatasatru's Fort

Ajatasatru also fought against Avanti. King Pradyota of Avanti made preparations to avenge the death of Bimbisara. It is stated in the *Majjhimaniikaya* that on one occasion Ajatasatru had to fortify his capital as he was afraid of an invasion by Pradyota. It is not clear whether the invasion actually took place or not. However, the fact remains that Ajatasatru was not able to conquer Avanti.

5.3.6 Darsaka

According to the Puranas, Ajatasatru was succeeded by Darsaka and he ruled for twenty five years. According to Geiger, a renowned scholar of ancient India, it is a mistake to say that Ajatasatru was succeeded by Darsaka as it is definitely stated in Pali literature that Udayibhadda was the son of Ajatasatru and probably his successor. In the Kathakosha and the Parisishtaparavan, Udayin or Udaya has been mentioned as the son of Ajatasatru and also his immediate successor. It is stated in the *Svapnavasavadatta* that Darsaka was a ruler of Magadha and a contemporary of Udayana. However, on account of what is to be found in Buddhist and Jain literature, it cannot be stated that Darsaka was the immediate successor of Ajatasatru on the throne of Magadha. It is possible that he might have been merely a Mandalika Raja. D.R. Bhandarkar, an authority on the studies of ancient Indian history, identifies Darsaka with Naga-Dasaka who is mentioned in the Ceylonese chronicles as the last king of Bimbisara's line. It is to be noted that the *Divyavadana* does not mention the name of Darsaka in the list of Bimbisarids.

5.3.7 Udyain or Udayabhadra

According to the *Mahavamsa*, Udayabhadra ruled for 16 years. The *Katha kosha* describes him as the son of Ajatasatru by his wife Padmavati. He is represented in Buddhist literature as a parricide like his father. Hemachandra Suri, a renowned Jaina scholar of the twelfth century, states that Udayabhadra was overwhelmed with grief at the death of his father.

According to *Parisishtaparavan* of Hemachandra, Udyain founded a new capital on the banks of the river Ganges and it came to be known as Pataliputra. The

Gargisamhita and the *Vayu purana* also state that he built the city Kusumpura or Pataliputra in the fourth year of his reign. The situation of the place at the confluence of the Ganges and the Son made it important from the point of view of commerce and strategy.

It is stated in the *Parisishtaparavan* that the king of Avanti was an enemy of Udyain. The fall of Anga, Vaishali and Kosala had left Avanti as the only rival of Magadha and consequently there was bound to be rivalry and enmity between the two Kingdoms. The war that begun at the time of Ajatasatru, must have continued at the time of Udyain as well.

According to the *Avasyakasutra*, Udyain was responsible for the construction of *chaityagraha* or a Jain shrine in the heart of the capital. He also observed fast on the eighth and fourteenth days of every month. On one of those days, a teacher came to his place to give him a discourse. The teacher was accompanied by a novice who murdered the king with his dagger. It is stated that the king of Avanti was responsible for the plot which resulted in the death of Udyain.

It is stated in the *Avasyaka-sutra* that the king of Ujjain was defeated by Udyain on many occasions.

According to historians, one of the Patna statues in the Bharhut Gallery of the Indian Museum in Calcutta is that of Udyain. According to the Puranas, Udyain was succeeded by Nandivardhana and Mahanandin. However, it is stated in the *Parisishtaparavan* that Udyain left no heir. The *Dipavamsa* and the *Mahavamsa* put Anurudha, Munda and Naga Dasaka after Udyain. It is also stated in the *Angutaranikaya* that Munda was the king of Pataliputra. The name of Munda is also mentioned in the *Divyavadana*.

5.3.8 Saisunaga or Sisunaga

It is stated in the Ceylonese chronicles that Sisunaga was an *amatya* and was acting as a Governor at Benaras. He was put on the throne of Magadha by the people who revolted against the dynasty of parricides. He had a second royal residence at Vaishali, which ultimately became his capital. The monarch (Sisunaga), not unmindful of his mother's origin, re-established the city of Vesali (Vaishali) and fixed in it the royal city which she never afterwards recovered.

The most important achievement of Sisunaga was that he destroyed the glory of the Pradyota dynasty of Avanti.

The Puranas seem to be wrong in making Sisunaga a predecessor of Bimbisara and Ajatasatru. It is stated in the Puranas that Sisunaga destroyed the fame of the Pradyotas of Avanti and also started living at Girivraja after placing his son at Benaras. The hostility between Magadha and Avanti dates from the time of Ajatasatru and not Bimbisara. Benaras was conquered by Ajatasatru and was a part of Magadha under Sisunaga. All this fits in properly only if we put Sisunaga after Bimbisara and Ajatasatru and not before them as contended by V.A. Smith, a great scholar and author of Oxford History of India.

According to the Puranas, Sisunaga was succeeded by Kakavarna. However, according to the Ceylonese chronicles, he was succeeded by Kalasoka. It is suggested by Bhandarkar, Jacobi (a German classicist and historian) and Geiger that Kakavarna and Kalasoka are the same person. According to *Asokavadana*, Mundavas was succeeded by Kakavarna.

The second Buddhist Council met at Vaishali in the time of Kalasoka. He also transferred his capital to Pataliputra. It is stated in Bana's *Harshacharita* that Katavarna was killed by a dagger thrust into his throat. Diodorus states:

'The king of the Gandaridal, (i.e., King Nanda) was a man of quite worthless character, and held in no respect, as he was thought to be the son of a barber. This man, the king's father was a comely person, and of him the Queen had become deeply enamoured. The old king had been treacherously murdered by his wife and the succession had devolved on him who now reigned.'

Most probably, the successors of Kalasoka were his ten sons who ruled simultaneously. According to the *Mahabodhivamsa*, their names were Bhadrasena, Korandavarna, Mangura, Sarvanjaha, Jalita, Ubhaka, Sanjaya, Koravya, Nandivardhana and Panchamaka. However, the name of Nandivardhana alone has been mentioned in the Puranas. Efforts have been made to read his name in the Patna statue and also in the Hathigumpha inscription of Kharavela of Kalinga. However, it is pointed out that there is nothing in the Puranas to show that Nandivardhana ruled Kalinga. The only thing that is stated is that while the Saisunagas and their predecessors were reigning in Magadha, 32 kings ruled in Kalinga at the same time. Thus, we should identify Nandaraja of the Hathigumpha inscription who held possession of Kalinga either with the all conquering Mahapadma Nanda or one of his sons.

ACTIVITY

Make a chronological chart of the rulers of Magadha.

5.4 THE NANDAS AND THE RISE OF CHANDRAGUPTA MAURYA

The Nandas were the successors of the Sisunaga dynasty. The Puranas refer to the nine Nandas who ruled for 100 years. The nine Nandas mentioned in the *Mahabodhivamsa* are Urasena, Panduka, Pandugati, Bhutapala, Rashtrapala, Govishanaka, Dasaisddhaka, Kaivarita and Dhana. While the *Mahabodhivamsa* calls the first Nanda by the name of Ugrasena, the Puranas call him by the name of Mahapadma or Mahapadmapati. The Puranas also describe him as a son of the last Kshatrabandhu, king of the preceding line by a Sudra mother. According to the *Parisishtaparvan*, the first Nanda was the son of a courtesan by a barber. Quintus Curtius Rufus, a first century BC Roman historian, in reference to the Nandas, states:

'His father was in fact a barber scarcely staving of hunger by his daily earnings, but who from his being not uncomely in person, had gained the affections of the queen and was by her influence advanced to too near a place in the confidence of the reigning monarch. Afterwards, however, he treacherously murdered his sovereign, and then under the pretence of acting as guardian to the royal children, usurped the supreme authority, and having put the young princes to death begot the present king.'

Mahapadma Nanda has been described in the Purans as the destroyer of all the Kshatriyas (Sarva Ksbatrantaka). He has also been described as a second Parsurama or Bhargava and the sole sovereign who brought the whole earth under his authority. He defeated the Ikshvakus, Panchalas, Kasis, Haihayas, Kalingas, Asmakas, Kurus,

NOTES

Check Your Progress

3. Fill in the blanks.
 - (a) The first important ruler of Magadha was _____.
 - (b) After Ajatshatru, the _____ emerged as the last powerful dynasty before Chandragupta Maurya captured the throne of Magadha.
4. State whether True or False.
 - (a) According to the Mahabharata and the Puranas, the earliest dynasty of Magadha was founded by Jar-sandha.
 - (b) According to the Puranas, Ajatasatru was succeeded by Darsaka.

Maithilas, Surasenans, Vitihotras, etc. The Jain writers also refer to the extensive territory of Mahapadma Nanda. The classical writers also refer to the Prasii (Prachyas) and the Gandaridae as being under one sovereign with their capital at Pataliputra. According to Pliny, a Roman author, naturalist and natural philosopher, the Prasii excelled every other people in India and their capital was located at Palibothra or Pataliputra. The *Kathasaritsagar* refers to the camp of king Nanda in Ayodhya. There are some inscriptions from Mysore which state that Kuntala was ruled by the Nandas. The Hathigumpha inscription of Kharvela refers to the constructive activity of Nanda Raja in Kalinga and his conquest of some place in the country or the removal of some sacred object. It is possible that Mahapadma was responsible for the conquest of Asmaka and other regions lying further south. It is also possible that his dominion covered a considerable part of the Deccan. Figure 5.7 illustrates the rare silver coins from the Nanda dynasty.



Fig. 5.7 Silver Coins from the Nanda Dynasty

According to Curtius, the first Nanda king had about a cavalry of 20,000 horses, 200,000 infantry, 2,000 four-horsed chariots and more than 300 elephants

According to the *Matsya Purana*, Mahapadma Nanda ruled for 88 years. However, the *Vayu Purana* says that he ruled only for 28 years. According to Taranath, a Tibetan Buddhist monk and historian, Mahapadma reigned for 29 years. According to Ceylonese chronicles, the Nandas ruled only for 22 years.

Dhanananda

According to the *Mahabodhivamsa*, Dhanananda was the last king of the Nanda dynasty. It is suggested that he should be identified with the Agrammes or Xandrames of the classical writers. George Turner, the translator of *Mahavamsa* into English, has provided the following information:

‘The youngest brother was called Dhana Nanda from his being addicted to hoarding treasure.....He collected riches to amount of 80 kotis in a rock in the bed of the river (Ganges). Having caused a great excavation to be made, he buried the treasure there....levying taxes among other articles, even on skins, gums, and stones. He amassed further treasure which he disposed of similarly.’

It is stated that Alexander got information regarding the military strength and unpopularity of the last Nanda king. King Porus stated that the king of Gangaridai was an insignificant person and was not held in high esteem. He was considered to be the son of a barber. Plutarch, a Greek historian, tells us that Androkottos or Chandragupta Maurya had stated that the Nanda king was disliked and looked down upon by his

subject on account of his evil nature and the unkindness of his origin. It is possible that the cause of the unpopularity of the Nandas was their financial extortion.

After Alexander's departure, Chandragupta Maurya took advantage of the weaknesses of Dhanananda and destroyed the power of the Nandas of Magadha (320–21 BC). The Puranas refer to a dynastic revolution by which the Nandas were overthrown by the Mauryas. A detailed account of the same is given to the *Mudrarakshasa*.

The Puranas refer to the Nandas as irreligious or *adharmikah*. It appears that they had their leanings towards Jainism. It is stated that minister Kalpaka was instrumental in the execution of the programme of the extermination of all Kshatriya dynasties of the time. The other ministers were his descendants. Sakatala was the minister of the ninth Nanda. It is stated in the *Mudrarakshasa* that Chanakya selected a Jain as one of his chief agents. Jain influence is visible in the whole of the drama.

Nandas are also stated to have possessed a lot of wealth. A reference has already been made to the riches of Dhana Nanda. *Krishnaswamy Aiyengar*, a Tamil historian and writer, refers to the wealth of the Nandas in the *Beginnings of South Indian History*. Hiuen Tsang, a Chinese traveller, tells us that the Nandas had five treasures. The *Kathasaritsagar* also says that the Nandas had 990 millions of gold pieces. There are similar references in the accounts of the classical writers.

Chandragupta Maurya is discussed in detail in the next unit.

NOTES

DID YOU KNOW

Magadha became the foremost of Indian kingdoms with the new capital *Pataliputra*, a port city on the banks of the river *Ganges*.

5.5 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- The Aryans moved eastwards into eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar by the 6th century BC. Of the sixteen mahajanapadas, Kosala, Avanti, Vatsa and Magadha were prominent.
- Magadha was the most powerful during the reign of Bimbisara and his son Ajatashatru. The king in this period was powerful and assisted by ministers.
- According to the *Mahabharata* and the Puranas, the earliest dynasty of Magadha was founded by Brihadratha, the father of Jarasandha and the son of Vasu. According to the *Ramayana*, Vasu himself was the founder of Griveraja or Vasumati. In the Puranas, we come across a list of the kings of this dynasty.
- The territory of Bimbisara included 80,000 villages and covered an area of 300 leagues. A number of republican communities under the *Rajakumaras* were also included within the territory.
- According to the Buddhist tradition, when Bimbisara died, his queen Kosala Devi also died on account of her love for her husband. A village in Kashi had been given to Bimbisara as bath and perfume money as a part of Kosala Devi's dowry. After the death of the queen, the king of Kosala decided to take away that village. The result was a war that took place between Kosala and Magadha.

Check Your Progress

5. Fill in the blanks.
 - (a) The Nandas were the successors of the _____ dynasty.
 - (b) The _____ refer to the Nandas as irreligious or Adharmikah.
6. State whether True or False.
 - (a) According to the Mahabodhivamsa, Dhanananda was the last king of the Nanda dynasty.
 - (b) Sakatala was the minister of the first Nanda ruler.

- According to the *Avashyakasutra* of the Jains, Bimbisara decided to appoint Ajatasatru as his successor in preference to his other sons. However, Ajatasatru became impatient and imprisoned his father where he was looked after by queen Chellana.
- According to the *Mahavamsa*, Udayabhadra ruled for sixteen years. The *Kathakosha* describes him as the son of Ajatasatru by his wife Padmavati. He is represented in Buddhist literature as a parricide like his father.
- It is stated in the Ceylonese chronicles that Sisunaga was an *amatya* and was acting as a Governor at Benaras. The most important achievement of Sisunaga was that he destroyed the glory of the Pradyota dynasty of Avanti.
- The Nandas were the successors of the Sisunaga dynasty. The Puranas refer to the nine Nandas who ruled for 100 years. The nine Nandas mentioned in the *Mahabodhivamsa* are Urasena, Panduka, Pandugati, Bhutapala, Rashtrapala, Govishanaka, Dasaisddhaka, Kaivarita and Dhana.

5.6 KEY TERMS

- **Republic:** A form of government where an elected group of people were the rulers.
- **Monarchy:** A political system with hereditary rule of the king.
- **Puranas:** Sacred texts of Hinduism that describes the history of the universe and Hindu philosophy.

5.7 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. (a) Republican (b) Monarchical
2. (a) True (b) False
3. (a) Bimbisara (b) Nandas
4. (a) False (b) True
5. (a) Sisunaga (b) Puranas
6. (a) True (b) False

5.8 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. List the important republics of the sixth century BC.
2. State the main features of the administrative system of the republics.
3. Write a note on Ajatasatru's rise to power.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the emergence and rise of sixteen mahajanapadas.
2. Trace the rise of Magadha under the leadership of Bimbisara.
3. Discuss the legends concerning the first Nanda.

5.9 FURTHER READING

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