



GAUHATI UNIVERSITY

Institute of Distance and Open Learning

B.A. First Semester
(Regular Course)

Paper: HIS-RC-1016

HISTORY OF INDIA
(FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES TO C. 1206)

(Medium: English)

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UG-HIST-I-01

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HISTORY

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HISTORY OF INDIA
(From the Earliest Times to c. 1206)
(Medium- English)



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Contributors:

Dr. Tilok Thakuria Dept. of History & Archeology, Tura Campus, NEHU	Unit- 1
Ms. Rashmita Phukan Dept. of History, Cotton University	Units- 2 & 3
Dr. Rituparna Manikiyal Bora Dept. of History, D.K.D. College, Dergaon, Golaghat	Unit- 4
Dr. Indrani Medhi Dept. of History, Dispur Law College	Unit- 5

Course Coordination:

Prof. Amit Choudhury	Director, IDOL, Gauhati University
Dr. Uttam Bathari	Associate Prof., Dept. of History, G.U.

Content Editor:

Dr. Rena Laisram (Unit: 1)	Dept. of History, Gauhati University
Prof. Paromita Das (Units: 2 & 3)	Dept. of History, Gauhati University
Dr. Radha Das (Unit: 4)	Dept. of History, Gauhati University
Dr. Doungul Letkhojam Haokip (Unit: 5)	Dept. of History, Gauhati University

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Bhaskar Jyoti Goswami	IDOL, Gauhati University
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Unit: 1

[a] Sources : literary and archaeological

[b] Indus Civilization : origin, extent, urban planning and urban decline

[c] Society, polity, economy and religion in the Rig Vedic Period

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1.1 Introduction:

India in the ancient past included the geographical landmass known as the Indian subcontinent and encompassed several countries such as the present Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, India, and Pakistan. It is the home of one of the oldest civilizations of the world, viz., the Harappan Civilization which was contemporaneous with other world civilizations such as Mesopotamia and Egypt. Human existence in the Indian subcontinent is traced to about two million years. On the basis of the different types of tools and techniques used by the early humans, the process of development are classified into different stages, viz; Palaeolithic or Old Stone Age, Mesolithic or Middle Stone Age, and Neolithic or New Stone Age. This was followed by the Chalcolithic or Copper Age when metal was used for the first time along with stone. Later, the people mastered the art of mixing copper with tin to

form the stronger metal called bronze and this ushered in the Bronze Age. The economy during the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic periods was represented by a nomadic hunter-gathering way of life. The Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods are associated with a settled life, agricultural economy, and domestication of animals.

The Harappan Civilization belonged to the Bronze Age of the Chalcolithic period and is known as the 'First Urbanization in Ancient India'. This urban culture which flourished around 2600-1500 BCE is well known for the town planning, baked brick houses, drainage system, commercial activities, weights and measures, knowledge of writing etc. The remains of the cities suggest a remarkable organization and the prevalence of some form of authority which governed the extensive civilization. Some important urban cities include Banawali, Chanhudaro, Dholavira, Kalibangan, Kot Diji, Lothal etc. The factors for the decline of the Harappan Civilization is attributed to migration and climate change.

The Harappan civilization was followed by the Vedic period (1500-600 BCE) which got its name from the sacred texts called the *Vedas*. The people who lived in this time were the Aryans, a Sanskrit speaking group of people believed to have migrated from Central Asia. The Vedic period is broadly classified into two phases, viz; the Rig Vedic Age and the Later Vedic Age on the basis of the source, chronology and geographical extent. The Aryans during the Rig Vedic period first settled in the Sapta-Sindhava region or the 'land of seven rivers' and in the Later Vedic period the people shifted eastwards towards the Indo-Gangetic plain. Archaeological excavations have revealed some potteries associated with this culture and they include: Ochre Coloured Pottery, Black and Red and Painted Grey Ware. The discovery of iron was a landmark which revolutionized the culture around 800 BCE. This is also indicated by the making and use of a new type of pottery known as the Northern Black Polished Ware. Although the Rig Vedic Age was based on tribal economy, the Later Vedic Age was to witness the emergence of the 'Second Urbanization in Ancient India' around 600 BCE.

1.2 Objectives:

This unit will discuss the sources of Indian history from the earliest times to 1206 CE, Harappan Civilization, and the Vedic Age. After going through this unit you will be able to:

- *discuss* the sources of Indian history (earliest times to 1206 CE),
- *explain* the origin, extent, urban planning and urban decline of the Harappan Civilization,
- *understand* the society, polity, economy and religion of Rig Vedic Period, and
- *understand* the society, polity, economy and religion of the Later Vedic Period.

Space for Learner's Notes

1.3 Sources: Literary and Archaeological

History may be defined as a systematic and coherent account of the past. The two major aspects of history writing are source and chronology. There are two main types of sources, *viz*; literary, and archaeological. Oral traditions such as folklore are also regarded as literary sources particularly for understanding societies which do not possess a script of their own. Primary sources are first-hand accounts of information and include sources such as *Census of India*, official documents, epigraphs, numismatics, artifacts, pottery etc. Secondary sources are published material based on earlier sources such as books. The sources of ancient India may be categorized as follows:

A. Literary:

Religious: Brahmanical Literature, Classical Sanskrit Literature, Epics, Puranas, Buddhist and Jaina Works

Secular: Biographies, Chronicles, Dramas and Plays, Grammar, and Polity

Foreign Accounts: Arab, Chinese, Greek, Roman and Tibetan

B. Archaeology:

Architectural Remains and Art, Epigraphy, Numismatics

1.3.1 Literary Sources:

Literature is a valuable source if the authenticity can be determined through rigorous techniques of historical method. It may be noted that writing was known to the Indians since the Harappan civilization though the script has not been deciphered as yet. Besides this, the Brahmi and Kharosthi are

some of the earliest scripts used for writing in ancient India. The Ashokan edicts are the oldest inscriptions which have been deciphered. It was deciphered in 1847 CE by James Prinsep, an official of the East India Company. The early Indian texts such as the *Vedas* were transmitted orally, generation after generation before it was put down to writing in the form of manuscripts. Therefore, it is important to understand the context of the text, and the change of perspective which may have taken place regarding the society, economy and other aspects about the past.

Literary sources are of three types: religious, secular and foreign accounts which are as follows:

Religious:

The oldest literary source of Indian history is the *Vedas* composed in Sanskrit language. It is a major source for the culture of the Vedic period. There are four *Vedas* viz; *Rig Veda*, *Sama Veda*, *Yajur Veda* and *Atharva Veda*. The *Rig Veda* (*rig*: praise; *vid*: knowledge) is a collection of hymns and is the oldest among all the four texts. Each *Veda* consists of four parts: the *Samhitas* or hymns, the *Brahmanas* or explanations of rituals, the *Aranyakas* ('forest books'), and the *Upanishads* ('end of the *Vedas*'). The *Vedangas* meaning 'limbs of the *Vedas*' are supplementary texts of the *Vedas* and contain narratives which played an important role in maintaining the purity of the Vedic tradition.

An important religious literature is the class of Sanskrit texts called the *Puranas* which are subdivided into 18 *Mahapuranas* (major *Puranas*) and 18 *Upapuranas* (minor *Puranas*). The Puranic literature covers a wide range of topics, such as the creation of the world, re-creation, the period of various Manus, the genealogy of gods and sages and the account of royal dynasties. However, all *Puranas* do not deal with all the five topics. The word *Purana* means 'old', and Vyasa is credited as the compiler of the *Puranas*. The texts provide a concept of time scale in ancient India according to which there are four main *Yugas*: *Krita*, *Treta*, *Dwapara* and *Kali*. Each *Yuga* consists of thousands of years, governed by cyclic decline and re-creation. Most of the *Puranas* provide mythical genealogy about past dynasties, but some of them, especially *Vayu*, *Bramanda*, *Brama*, *Harivamsha*, *Matsya* and *Vishnu Puranas* mention historical dynasties, i.e, Haryankas, Sisunagas, Nandas, Mauryas, Sungas, Kanvas and Andhras. Some of the *Puranas* were composed during the time of the Gupta dynasty, and some were composed even later during 10th-16th centuries CE. The

Puranas are also useful as source for information for ancient Indian geography. They also reflect on socio-religious beliefs and origin of certain cults mainly related to Shiva, Vishnu and Goddess Shakti. Further, some of the stories contained in the *Puranas* help to reconstruct aspects of society and culture of various communities that existed in Ancient India.

The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are the two epics composed in Sanskrit and are part of the texts known as *Smriti* ('that which is remembered'). They are important sources for various aspects of the history of India although it should be used with caution by sifting the myths from facts. Although it gives information of the political powers, conflicts and genealogy of dynasties, the problem is the lack of chronology which is a shortcoming of the texts. The *Ramayana* is the legend of Rama, the prince of Ayodhya which existed as an oral tradition for a long time. Valmiki's *Ramayana* is an epic poem of about 24, 000 verses. The text gained immense popularity by the 16th century CE. The *Mahabharata* which is attributed to Vyasa is the longest epic poem in the world which contains more than one lakh verses. Scholars believe that the *Ramayana* is older than the *Mahabharata* as events from the former find mention in the later. The narratives in the epics suggest that it relates to the period of the culture of the Vedic period and was probably put down to writing in its present form by about the 4th century CE.

The Buddhist literature known as *Tripitakas* or 'the three baskets' are written in Pali language and contain the teachings of Gautama Buddha also has reference to the society of the times. The three *Pitakas* are *Sutta Pitaka*, *Vinaya Pitaka*, and *Abhidhamma Pitaka*. The Jaina sacred texts are known as the *Agamas* and are written in Prakrit language.

Secular:

Among the secular literature the *Arthashastra* by Kautilya written in Sanskrit is a book on statecraft and a significant source of Mauryan India. Some major works of the period are: *Malavikagnimitram* by Kalidasa, *Harshacharita* by Banabhatta, *Gaudavaho* by Vakpati, *Vikramankadevacharita* by Bilhana etc. Bhasa and Sudraka are poets who have written plays based on historical events. The *Rajatarangini* written by Kalhana in the 12th century CE is a chronicle of the kings of Kashmir. It is well known for having recorded the events in a chronological form and for the impartial treatment of the historical facts. *Mahabhasya* of Patanjali

(2nd century BC) is a book on grammar. The *Dharmasastras* are law books of Ancient India and explains the rules and regulations to be followed by an ideal ruler and also the general subjects.

The Sangam Age constitutes an important chapter in the history of South India. The Tamil country was ruled by three dynasties namely the Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas during the Sangam Age. According to Tamil legends, there existed three Sangams ('Academy of Tamil poets'). The Sangam literature is a collection of poems in Tamil language composed between 3rd century BCE to 3rd century CE. It was composed in praise of their kings and some informations are also supported by inscriptions. The poems were originally transmitted in oral form before they were written down. These are valuable sources for society, polity and daily life of ancient South India, mainly of the Tamils.

Foreign Accounts:

The accounts of India by the Arabs, Chinese, Greeks, Romans, and Tibetans are noteworthy. The Arab writers record the coming of Islam to India. Alberuni was well versed in Sanskrit and his work titled *Tehqiqat-e-hind* is a mine of information about India and its people. The observations and writings of the Arab scholars are valuable for the light they throw on political events, society, geography, religion etc of ancient India. Fa-hein (399-414 CE), the Chinese monk visited India and wrote on religious and social aspects and his work is devoid of political accounts. Hiuen-tsang (629-645 CE) in his book titled *Si-Yu-Ki* has left a detailed account of political and social life of India. I-tsing (673-95 CE), visited India and his accounts are mainly religious in nature. The earliest reference to India was made by Herodotus (484-420 BCE), recording the Persian invasion in his work titled, *Histories*. Among the Romans, the contribution of Pliny and Ptolemy is remarkable. Pliny's book *Naturalis Historica* contains information about the trade relations between India and the Roman Empire. Ptolemy's book *Geography*, give a vivid account of the geographical features of India prevailing during that particular time. The *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* and Ptolemy's *Geography* primarily deal with navigational accounts. Megasthenes, the Seleucid ambassador at the court of Chandragupta Maurya remained in India for a long time and his book entitled, *Indika* contains details of Chandragupta's administration, general condition of the people, flora and fauna of India. Taranatha, the Tibetan Lama has also left valuable works in the form of *Dulva* and *Tangyur*.

1.3.2 Archaeological Sources:

Archaeological sources are material remains which help to reconstruct the past. It gives information about the physical traits of the people, their material advances, and the cultural patterns. The archaeological sources are varied and include stone and copper inscriptions, coins, seals, tools, weapons, objects of art and articles of daily use etc. The excavations at Harappa and Mohenjodaro along with thousands of sites brought to the world the knowledge of the Harappan culture. Epigraphy is one of the important primary sources for history writing. The oldest epigraphic source of India are found in the inscriptions of the Harappan Civilisation though the script is still undeciphered. Some inscriptions which have been deciphered are the Ashokan inscriptions, Allahabad Prasasti of Samudragupta etc. The earliest inscriptions were engraved on stones and later on rocks, seals, copper plates, temple walls etc. The earliest inscription yet deciphered was written in Prakrit language and Sanskrit was adopted as an epigraphic medium in the 2nd century CE.

The earliest numismatic sources in India are the punchmarked coins which were made of silver and copper and are called *satamana*, *karsapana*, and *pana*. There were coins issued by ancient dynasties such as the Indo-Greeks, Sakas, Pahlavas, Kushanas, Satavahanas, and Guptas. The Indo-Greeks were the first to issue gold coins in India. Rock paintings of Buddhist and Jaina caves depict daily lives, and tales of Buddha etc. Art, architecture and sculpture reveal the technique used and also is a source for socio-religious, political and economic life of the people of that particular age. The excavation and scientific analysis of palaces, forts, stupas, temples and residential houses and other religious and social buildings provide an estimation of the situation that existed in the ancient times.

1.4 Indus Civilization: Origin, Extent, Urban Planning and Urban Decline:

The Harappan civilization is one of the largest and prosperous civilizations in the ancient world which flourished during the 3rd century BCE. It belongs to the Bronze Age and is the first urban civilization of India. The first two cities discovered were Harappa and Mohenjodaro which were located along the Indus river and hence the culture was first called the Indus Valley Civilization. Subsequently, more than two thousand sites have been unearthed in present Pakistan and India, many of them far beyond the Indus

river and hence it is now referred to as the Harappan Civilization, from the first site discovered, that is, Harappa. It was in 1921 CE that Dayaram Sahni first discovered Harappa in the Montgomery district in western Punjab on the banks of Ravi river. In the following year, R.D. Banerjee discovered Mohenjodaro or 'Mound of the Dead' in the Larkana district of Sindh. There are several theories about the origin and decline of the Indus civilization. The Harappan script has not been deciphered and the only sources for reconstructing the history of the civilization comes from archaeology, viz; seals, terracotta images, pottery, textile impressions, architectural remains etc.

1.4.1 Origin and Extent:

The Harappan culture rose in the Northwestern part of the Indian subcontinent. A limitation of reconstructing the civilization is that the information is derived only from the archaeological sources since the script has not been deciphered as yet. There are theories which suggest that the Harappan culture may have originated from the contemporary Mesopotamian civilization. However, although there are certain similarities in material cultures due to trade establishments or exchanges but there is not enough evidence to explain the origin of the Harappan civilization. The Indus writing system is also completely different from Mesopotamian. Moreover, there are differences in town planning, water management system, seals, technology and use of metals etc. On the other hand, the archaeological discoveries of the sites discovered so far give indication that the origin took place in the Indian subcontinent. The sites may be studied in three phases: Early Harappan Phase, Mature Harappan Phase and Late Harappan Phase. The site of Mehrgarh near the Bolan Pass has established a continuous sequence of strata, showing the transition from a nomadic way of life to the high standard of the urban Harappan culture. The site exemplifies the origin and evolution of the civilization. Amri is another site which has revealed multi-phases including the Pre Harappan Phase. This culture witnessed the growth of large fortified villages and the rise of towns. The Amri people did not possess any knowledge of town-planning or of writing. Kalibangan has given the evidence of both Pre Harappan and Mature Harappan phases of the civilization. The site is distinguished by its unique fire altars and remains of a ploughed field. It is believed that the site had to be abandoned due to changing climatic conditions. At Lothal, the decline of the civilization was

noticed. The most distinctive feature of Lothal is the remains of a dockyard. The site was a busy commercial centre. The town was affected by floods, and the people eventually dispersed to nearby regions during the Late Harappan phase, which is characterized by an abandonment of the urban towns. It may be noted that all the Pre Harappan habitations preceding the phase of the Mature Harappan phase reveal evidences of people living in houses of stone and mud-brick.

The Harappan civilization was spread over a geographical area of around 1.25 million sq. kms. In Pakistan, some of the sites have been found in Baluchistan, Punjab, Sindh, and Northwestern Frontier Province of Pakistan. Altogether, more than 400 sites have been reported from Pakistan. In India, the sites are found mainly in Jammu and Kashmir, Rajasthan, Haryana, Gujarat and upper of Ganga-Yamuna doab of Uttar Pradesh, and these states together hold around 600 sites. The western outer limit of it was Sutkagendor in Makran Coast in Pakistan and the eastern outer limit was Alamgirpur in Upper Ganga-Yamuna doab of Uttar Pradesh. The northern limit was till Mandu in Jammu and Kashmir and Diamadad in Maharashtra was its extreme southern limit.

1.4.2. Urban Planning:

The Harappan civilization is the first urban culture in Ancient India and the uniform development suggests the prevalence of an efficient administrative system. The Harappan Civilization has many distinctive features among which the most important feature is its unique town planning. The Harappan economy was based on an agricultural surplus economy, canal irrigation, extensive trade and domestication of animals. The system of drainage and sanitation was elaborate and well maintained. The people followed polytheism which is belief in many gods. The Hindu tradition of reverence for *swastika* symbol, worship of Mother Goddess and Shiva is traced to this culture. An interesting discovery relates to seals which are more than 2000 in number and made of terracotta and copper. Some seals have pictorial writings and human or animal figures. Seals depicting Pasupati, unicorn and humped bull are some examples.

Some salient features which have been discovered in the Harappan cities are discussed below:

- 1. Town Planning:** All the cities were built on a uniform plan with the use of standardized bricks, weights and measures There were fortified

cities with intersecting roads at right angles, some of the cities having double fortification. In some cities there was a citadel and a lower town, and in a few sites there were towers and gates in all four directions in the fortifications. Large open spaces outside the gateways may have been used as market places.

- 2. Drainage System:** One of the most remarkable features of Harappan civilization was the underground drainage system. Each house had a drain which was covered with bricks, and this was taken to the streets and finally out of the towns. There were manholes at intervals for cleaning and clearing purposes. Each house had wells and water storage areas.
- 3. Buildings:** The houses were made of bricks and they were either single or double storied buildingd. All the houses used to open to the small roads and by lanes. The houses were designed around an open courtyard. The bathrooms had pillared halls and paved floors. There used to be places to keep the animals. Beside houses there were also other public building structures such as prayer halls, granaries, etc.
- 4. Granaries:** All the cities had granaries. In Mohenjodaro, the granary was of size 45.71×15.23 m. In Harappa two rows of six granaries were found. These granaries stored the grains, which were probably collected for revenue or store houses to be used in emergencies.
- 5. Great Bath:** The most striking feature in Mohenjodaro is the Great Bath which is a large quadrangle building with a 39×23 ft swimming pool, 8 ft deep in the centre, surrounded by rooms. The pool had steps in the either end and was connected to a well. There were drains to discharge the water. There were also arrangements of hot water in some of the surrounding rooms.
- 6. Arts and Crafts:** The Harappan culture belongs to the Bronze Age and there was specialization in arts and crafts. The people used many tools and implements of stone and copper, though they were well-acquainted with the manufacture and use of bronze. For making bronze, copper was obtained from the Khetri copper mines at Rajasthan and from Baluchistan, and tin from Afghanistan. The bronze-smiths produced not only images and utensils but also various tools and weapons such as axes, saws, knives and spears. Weaving, carpentry, boat-making and bead-making were some of the economic activities.

A piece of woven cotton has been recovered from Mohenjo-daro, and textile impressions have been found on several objects. Spindle whorls and needles have also been discovered. Some of the impressive works of the artisans included toy-carts, terracotta statuettes of women, red sandstone torso of a man, bronze dancing girl.

7. Trade and Commerce: The Harappan cities were bustling centers of industry, trade and commerce. Merchants carried on trade in cotton as well as finished goods within and outside the country. Objects like pottery, stone beads and metalware originating in one region but found in other cities are evidence of extensive trade. Harappan type seals were found in Mesopotamian cities provide evidence of extensive overseas trade. Cotton was the most important item of export. Lapis lazuli was imported from Central Asia, gold from Karnataka and copper and possibly, also tin, from Mesopotamia. Seals were affixed by merchants to the goods as trademarks of ownership. Trade was extensive and well-regulated.

8. Political Organization: The remarkable uniformity of cities and network among the cities imply a strong degree of political and administrative control. The continuance of an urban culture for a long period of time (2600-1500 BCE) spread over a huge geographical area would have been possible only with an efficient political system. The economic factor was central to its sustenance and the merchants possibly took a central role in the Harppan polity.

Stop to Consider

1. Geographical Extent of Harappan Civilization: From Mandu in the North to Daimabad in the South, and from Sutkagendor in the West to Alamgirpur in the East.
2. The Indus Valley Civilization came to be called the Harappan Civilization after the discovery of more than 1500 sites far beyond the Indus river.
3. Harappan civilization is the first urban culture in Ancient India.
4. In 1921-1922 CE, Harappa and Mohenjodaro were discovered in the Indian subcontinent. Both the cities are model sites of the civilization and are now in present Pakistan.

1.4.3 Urban Decline:

The urban culture of the civilization began to decline along with its two great cities, Mohenjodaro and Harappa from around 1800 BCE. Archaeological evidence indicate that the advanced drainage system and baths of the great cities were built over the sites or blocked indicating the lack of maintenance of the sites. Writing began to disappear and the standardized weights and measures used for trade and taxation fell out of use. Scholars have put forward various theories to explain the decline of the Harappan civilization which is as follows:

- 1. Theory of Foreign/Aryan Invasion:** Scholars such as Mortimer Wheeler and John Marshal opined that thirty skeletons that were discovered in the upper levels of Mohenjodaro indicating mass killing or a violent attack. The theory suggest that by using horses and more advanced weapons against the peaceful Harappan people, the invading Aryans may have easily defeated them. The scholars also attempted to explain it by reference to the *Vedas* and *Puranas* mentioning Indra as the 'Destroyer of Forts', who destroyed the forts of Asura and established his 'Kingdom of Gods' as indicating this Aryan migration. However, the theory which is based on the skeletons could not be confirmed as indicating an invasion. It did reveal a final phase of human occupation, with the decay of the city structures. Thus, the Aryan migration and invasion theory cannot fully explain the end of the Harappan civilization.
- 2. Theory of Environmental Change:** The change in the course of the Indus river affected the economic life and stability of the society which resulted in decline of the urban society of the Harappan Civilization. Geographically, the area was prone to earthquakes as it comes under a seismographic zone. Repeated earthquakes must have lead to erosions with impact on the agricultural economy. The presence of water-deposited silt covering the site of Mohenjodaro was identified by scholars as indication of floods. The repeated floods must have forced people to shift from those areas. Any major environmental change, such as deforestation, floods or droughts could have had disastrous effects on the Harappan society, such as crop failures, starvation, and disease. Skeletal evidence suggests many people died from diseases which would have caused a breakdown in the economy and civic order in the urban areas.

Economic degradation which happened as a result of the environmental changes led to mass migration from the major cities. The change from the Mature Harappan phase to a less organized and rural society became a common feature of the Late Harappan phase leading to the ultimate decline in 1500 BCE.

Space for Learner's Notes

Check Your Progress

1. Discuss the origin and extent of the Harappan Civilization.
2. Examine the various features of urbanization of the Harappan Civilization.
3. Explain the factors that led to the Harappan decline.

1.5 Vedic Period:

The period between 1500-600 BCE in Indian history is referred to as the Vedic Age, which acquired its name from the sacred texts called the *Vedas*. The texts are sources of the Vedic culture and it was transmitted orally from generation to generation until it was written much later than the period it is associated. The *Rig Veda* is the main source of information of the Early Vedic period whereas the *Yajur Veda*, *Sama Veda* and *Atharva Veda* are the main sources of the Later Vedic period. According to the *Vedas*, the Aryans or the Sanskrit speaking people first settled in a region called Sapta Sindhu (Land of Seven Rivers) in Punjab. Max Muller opined that the Aryans came to India from Central Asia.

The Rig Vedic phase and the Later Vedic phases are distinguished by the transformation from village economy to that of the emergence of cities which led to second urbanization around 600 BCE. The potteries which are an important archaeological source of the Vedic culture are: Ochre Coloured pottery, Black and Red Ware, Painted Grey Ware and Northern Black Polished Grey Ware. Generally, the Painted Grey Ware and the Northern Black Polished Grey Ware is associated with the early and later phases respectively. The discovery of iron around 1000 BCE is a watershed of the Vedic culture which revolutionized the socio-economic, polity and cultural aspects of the Later Vedic period. This was the factor which led to the Second Urbanization in Ancient India.

1.5.1 Society, Polity, Economy and Religion in the Rig Vedic Period

Polity:

Inter-tribal conflict was a feature of the early Aryan culture. Bharat was the most important Aryan tribe after whom the country came to be known as Bharat. Other Aryan tribes included Anu, Druhyu, Puru, Turvasu, Yadu etc. The Aryans lived as a unit called *jana*, and each *jana* has its own leader called *rajan* or 'king' who functioned more as a chief. There was no professional army but a voluntary militia. The two popular assemblies viz; *Sabha* and *Samiti* controlled the affairs of the *rajan*. The *Sabha* was the House of the Commons or National assembly of the people, while the *Samiti* was the Council of Elders, where only a few selected members were included. The *rajan* was assisted by a chief priest. Protection to his subjects from attacks of other tribal groups was the main duty of the *rajan* for which he was received *bali*, a kind of voluntary tax paid by the people. The *kula* was the lowest unit of administration followed by *gram*, *vis*, and *jana*.

Society and Economy:

The early Aryans were a semi-nomadic group of people whose livelihood was pastoralism although they started to settle down and engage in agricultural economy. Cattle rearing was an important occupation and the cow was a valuable item of wealth. The main agricultural produce was barley. Besides wheat, rice, cotton and oilseeds were also grown. The occupations of the people were as carpenters, potters, blacksmiths, weavers, and goldsmiths. The basic unit of the social organization was the family. The eldest male was known as Grihapati, who exercised control over other family members. However, women also enjoyed a very respectable position in the society and they were not barred from getting educated. Some of the notable women like Ghosha and Uppala even composed the *mantras* of the Rig Veda. Widow remarriage was prevalent and monogamy was the general system though polygamy also existed. There are also evidences of polyandry (having more than one husband). The emergence of the *varna* system at the end of the Rig Vedic Age is a notable feature of the period. It finds mention in the *Purushasukta* hymn of the *Rigveda*. According to this source, four *varnas* originated from different organs of the Purush (the Creator). From the mouth originated *brahmanas*; from arms the *kshetriyas*; from thigh/stomach originated the *vaishyas* and from the feet originated the *sudras*.

Religion:

The people of the Rig Vedic Age worshipped the forces of nature. Indra was the god of war, rain and thunder and the most important god during the Rig Vedic period. He was known as *Purandara* or 'destroyer of forts'. The other gods included Agni (fire), Varun (wind), Rita (cosmic order), and Soma who was the god of earth, moon and plants.

1.5.2 Society, Polity, Economy and Religion in the Later Vedic Period**Polity:**

The concept of the *janas* of the Rigvedic period changed with an increasing importance attached to land. The shift of the Aryans from the Saptasindhu region towards the Indo-Gangetic plains was made possible by the discovery of iron or *shyama ayas* (dark or black metal) and the heavy iron implements helped to clear forests and expand the areas for agriculture and habitation. One of the sites where iron was discovered is Atranjikhera in western Uttar Pradesh which is dated to the time of the Later Vedic period. The emergence of the *janapadas* in the Later Vedic period gave rise to territorial units. By the sixth century BCE the sixteen *janapadas* or *Mahajanapadas* brought about the notion of the state in Ancient India. The *Sabha* and *Samiti* continued to exist but became exclusive for the *brahmanas* and higher sections of the society. The other castes and women were no longer permitted to be part of these assemblies. The king and the territorial authority became more important. Their position was legitimized with the performance of *yajna* (sacrificial ritual) such as the Asvamedha or horse sacrifice. It may be mentioned that the earliest evidence of horse comes from the *Rig Veda*. The Ashvins are divine twins named for their horsemanship. The territorial units which emerged at this time were associated with new notions of kings who assumed the title of *Samrat*, or 'king of kings'. The *Sabha* and the *Samiti* were now not powerful enough to check the power of king. The office of the monarch had now become more or less hereditary. The main duties of the king were to protect his people, to punish the criminals and to administer equal justice to the subjects. The administrative system was well established and the king maintained a regular army. The administrative system included the Purohit (advisor), Senani (Army Chief), Gramini (Head of the Village), Yuvraj (Prince), Sangrahitri (Treasurer), Bhagaduga (Tax Collector) etc. There were two types of states, *viz*; republic and kingdom. The authority in the republics were the *gana-sanghas* which were not ruled by an

individual but by a group of people or assemblies. The kingdoms were monarchies ruled by kings and their outnumbered the republics. The stability of the socio-political and economic condition contributed to the emergence of urban centres in the Ganga valley.

Society and Economy:

Agriculture became the chief occupation of the people and the major crops cultivated were barely, wheat, rice, sesame and beans. During this period a great progress was made in the method of cultivation. The wooden plough of the Rig Vedic period was substituted by the heavy iron plough which required a team of six and even more oxen. The use of iron in agricultural field in the Indo-Gangetic divide and the upper and middle Ganga valley likely started during this period. Importance of agriculture increased as means of livelihood and their life became settled and sedentary, producing sufficient amount of crops and cereals for themselves, including a certain amount of surplus for the support of the priest and the ruling section. Trade was another important occupation of the people during this period. The merchants had by now organized themselves into guilds called *srenis*. These corporate bodies allowed a better organization and distribution of the various items which were produced. The term for coin was *nishka* which was made of gold. The settled life of the people facilitated an organized society with trade and commerce which also paved the way for the growth of cities. The literary sources of the Later Vedic period mentions about sea and sea voyages, indicating the use waterways for trade and commerce. This period witnessed the growth of various new arts and crafts such as metallurgy, carpentry, dyeing and pottery making. The *vaishyas* therefore played an active and important economic role in the society. Money lending became a flourishing business, as reference to it was made in the *Satapatha Brahmana*, which describes a usurer as *kusidin*.

Stop to Consider

1. The main sources of the Vedic Age are the four *Vedas*.
2. The *varna* system is first mentioned in the *Purusasukta* hymn of the *Rigveda*.
3. The discovery of iron around 1000BCE was a major factor for the emergence of cities and the second urbanization in Ancient India.

Religion:

Religion underwent a vast change during the Later Vedic period, and new beliefs and practices got incorporated in the religious traditions. Rituals became more important in this period and it became more elaborate and expensive. The *vajapeya* sacrifice was performed for seventeen days of a year, to restore the strength of a middle-aged king and to raise his status from *raja* to *samrat*. *Rajasuya*, was another complex sacrifice performed during the later Vedic period. The most important sacrifice was the *asvamedha* (the horse sacrifice), which lasted for three days, but preparatory ceremonies took almost about a year. Besides this, there were many domestic sacrifices which were also conducted during this period. The gods of the Rig Vedic period i.e. Indra and Agni lost their importance and the concept of Trinity God viz; Brahma (creator), Vishnu (preserver) and Shiva (destroyer) became popular. The *brahmanas* became more powerful in the society. The subdivision among the *varnas* according to the occupation was also introduced during this time viz; *brahmanas* as priests, *kshetrias* as warriors, *vaishyas* as traders, and *sudras* as workers for menial jobs. Although the *varna* system was introduced during the Rig Vedic period, it was to become rigid in the Later Vedic Period. The *asrama* system classified the whole life of an individual into four stages: *brahmacharya* (student life), *grihasthya* (householder), *vanaprastha* (stage of leaving materialistic world), and *sanyasa* (sage). The concept of four *purusharthas* or inherent values of the universe evolved, to regulate life of the people in the society. They were *dharma* (righteousness), *artha* (economic values), *kama* (pleasure), and *moksha* (liberation).

Space for Learner's Notes

Check Your Progress

1. Explain the changes that took place in the socio-economic life of the Later Vedic Period.
2. Discuss the *varna* system in ancient India?
3. What was the religious condition of the society during the Later Vedic Period.

1.6 Summing Up

The history of the Indian subcontinent has a rich cultural past which may be reconstructed from archaeological and literary sources. The Harappan

civilization is one of the first ancient civilizations which cover a large geographical area of present Pakistan and India. It is known for its highly developed administration and town planning and is referred to as the 'First Urbanization in Ancient India'. The decline of the urban culture by 1500 BCE was not sudden or drastic but possibly the result of climatic changes and the invasion of the Aryans. The Rig Vedic Age which followed the Harappan culture was a tribal society. The Vedic period is known for the *Veda* literature which is also the major source of the period. The *varna* and *asrama* system developed during the Vedic period and brought about new changes in the socio-economic and religious life of the people. The discovery of iron around 1000 BCE was to revolutionize the socio-economic condition of the times leading to the 'Second Urbanization in Ancient India' around 600 BCE.

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1.8. Model Questions:

1. What is the importance of archeological sources for reconstruction of Indian history?
2. Explain the factors that led to the first urbanization in Ancient India.
3. Examine the reasons that led to the decline of Harappan Civilization.
4. Discuss the *Varna* system during the Vedic period.
5. How did the discovery of iron lead to the emergence of urban culture by the end of the Later Vedic Period?
6. Write short notes on:
 - a. Literary Sources
 - b. Origin and Extent of Harappan Culture
 - c. Role of iron in the Second urbanization of India

====x====

Space for Learner's Notes

Unit: 2

- [a] Rise of territorial states– Janapadas and Mahajanapadas
- [b] Rise of new religious movements in north India- Jainism and Buddhism:
social dimension of early Jainism and Buddhism
- [c] The Mauryas - Background of Mauryan state formation
- [d] Asoka : Dhamma - its propagation; Administration and
Economy under the Mauryas
- [e] Decline of the Mauryas

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- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 Rise of territorial states- *Janapadas* and *Mahajanapadas*
- 2.3 Rise of new religious movements in north India – Jainism and Buddhism: social dimensions of early Jainism and Buddhism.
- 2.4 The Mauryas- Background of Mauryan state formation
- 2.5 Asoka: Dhamma- its propagation: Administration and Economy under the Mauryas
- 2.6 Decline of the Mauryas
- 2.7 Summing Up
- 2.8 References and Suggested Readings
- 2.9 Model Questions
- 2.10 Answers to Check Your Progress

2.0 Introduction:

The sixth century BCE is regarded as a major landmark in Indian history as it marked the beginning of a transition to a new historical scene in north India. This period of the second urbanisation (the first being the Harappan Civilisation) facilitated the establishment of kingdoms, oligarchies, and chiefdoms as well as the emergence of towns. The changes prior to the sixth century BCE were closely associated to that of confrontation between polities based on clan organisation and others experiencing the beginnings of kingship. With the emergence of *janapadas*, settlement in a particular area not only gave a geographical identity to a clan but this identity was given a concrete shape by claiming possession of the territory and naming it

after the ruling clan. Subsequently, by the sixth century, maintaining this territory required a political organisation and assertion of new forms of political authority. The transition from *janapadas* to that of *mahajanapadas* or great territorial states moreover was related to the trend of urbanisation. This is very much evident in the existence of different kinds of towns. While some towns grew out of political and administrative centres and were the hub of power such as Hastinapura, others such as Rajagriha in Magadha, Shravasti in Kosala, Kaushambi in Vatsa, etc. grew out of markets and catered to the interests of a variety of villages. These towns were usually located in areas where there was an agricultural surplus that could enter an exchange nexus. The rise of these *mahajanapadas* in the Indo- Gangetic plain also demonstrate the spread of agriculture and the use of iron tools and implements for clearing land as well as for various agricultural operations. The technological changes in the domain of agriculture were linked to a greater knowledge of cultivation of a variety of crops. With the improvements in agriculture and the growth of towns, trade received an impetus and in the long run facilitated the development of diverse arts and crafts.

The rise of the *janapadas* and later the *mahajanapadas*, along with the political, economic changes brought about the questioning of Brahmannical beliefs and practices. New religious ideologies and an attempt to establish an alternative order in this period led to the emergence of two new religions—Jainism and Buddhism. Both these religions opposed the Vedic tradition and the supremacy of the priestly community. Emphasis on ideals such as non violence, right speech, non-possession appealed to the people of humbler social background as well as to those belonging to a higher social order. Thus, the period from the sixth century BCE witnessed significant changes. The emergence of the *mahajanapadas* and the pre-eminence of Magadha as the most powerful *mahajanapada* implied changes in the arena of politics. Magadha rose to power under different dynasties such as the Haryanka, the Sisunaga and the Nandas who ruled from Rajagriha, the old capital and later from Pataliputra. The rise of Magadha as a predominant power continued into the late fourth century BCE with the coming of the Mauryas to power. Chandragupta Maurya laid the foundation of the Mauryan Empire, and his successors Bindusara and Asoka brought nearly the entire Indian subcontinent under the domination of a single paramount power. The consolidation and the expansion of the Mauryan Empire indicate the beginnings of a more evolved and complex form of state that controlled a differentiated economy. Under the Mauryas, an attempt was made in bringing

about an economic restructuring of the empire in order to increase the prospects of obtaining revenue. This is very much evident in the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya that identifies different sources of revenue collection. The control of the Mauryas and their success in carving out a vast empire also needs to be analysed in the context of Ashoka's *Dhamma* which the emperor inscribed in his rock edicts and pillar edicts.

Dhamma essentially denoted the law of righteousness. The violence of the Kalinga war resulted in the emperor abandoning the policy of conquest and leaning towards Buddhism. *Dhamma* however does not reflect affinity with any religious sect or doctrine and had an ethical base where importance was attached to certain a code of conduct. Mauryan rule however did not sustain for a long period of time after the death of Ashoka. The decline of Mauryan rule needs to be analysed in the context of the nature of the Mauryan state and its control over different sectors. The rule of a strong centre was imperative for sustaining the state. But in the long run it proved unsustainable. Ashoka's policy of *Dhamma* also needs to be critically assessed while analysing the causes responsible for the decline of Mauryan rule.

2.1 Objectives:

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

- *Discuss* the rise of *mahajanapadas* in the context of changing political, social and economic milieu.
- *Examine* the social dimensions of Buddhism and Jainism.
- *Explain* the background of Mauryan state formation and the role of the Mauryan administration, economy and Asoka's *Dhamma*.
- *Analyse* the factors responsible for the decline of the Mauryas.

2.2 Rise of territorial states- *Janapadas* and *Mahajanapadas*:

The sixth century BCE marked a transition from that of *janapadas* to that of great territorial states or *mahajanapadas*. A variety of literary sources throw light on the emergence of these *mahajanapadas*. For instance the first four books of the *Sutta Pitaka* and the entire *Vinaya Pitaka*, composed between the 5th and 3rd centuries BCE contain many references to the *solasamahajanapadas*. The *Anguttara Nikaya* provides the list of sixteen large territorial states that existed during the time of Buddha in the sixth

century BCE. With respect to Brahmannical tradition, textual sources for the period include the *Puranas* which provide useful information on dynastic history. The *Grihyasutras* and *Dharmasutras* form another significant literary category in the vast corpus of Dharmashastra literature. The *Dharmasutras* of Gautama, Apastamba, Baudhayana, Vasishtha can be mentioned in this regard. Jaina texts represent another important source for this period. Panini's grammatical treatise the *Ashtadhyayi* also provides information on the period. Apart from the indigenous literary sources, a number of Greek narratives may be mentioned that contains reference to Alexander and his military career. The accounts of Arrian, Diodorus, Plutarch, Justin are significant in this context. The political entities in the form of *mahajanapadas* emerged as a result of the second urbanisation in the form of cities and growth of city life. The Ganga valley which facilitated the emergence of these *mahajanapadas* witnessed the development of a complex socio-economic culture associated with urban life. The period under review thus marked the beginning of second urbanisation in Indian history.

The term *janapada* literally denotes an area where a group of people or a tribe/ clan first set its foot. *Janapada* thus clearly indicates a well-defined and populated territory. The notion of a territorial entity associated with the concept of *janapada* gained prominence from the later Vedic period. Their transformation into *mahajanapadas* was facilitated by ambitious rulers who expanded their own territories at the expense of other *janapadas*. The rise of the *mahajanapadas* in north India demonstrates the co-existence of multiple powers. Political transformation with the growth of these *mahajanapadas* was closely linked to that of the emergence of states. The *mahajanapadas* were political entities characterised by a well defined territory, functioning as urban centres facilitating commercial exchange, collection of revenue from taxes as well as having diversification of arts and crafts. The state polity thus had little relevance to kinship ties between the ruler and the ruled. The most prominent monarchical *mahajanapadas* were Kosala, Vatsa, Avanti and Magadha, while Lichchhavis of Vaisali, the headquarters of the Vajjian confederacy was the most important republican state. Apart from Avanti, the location of the pre-eminent *mahajanapadas* was in the middle Ganga plains. This region was marked by the existence of fertile alluvial soil and was ideally suited for the settlement of sedentary agrarian population. The strong agrarian base along with the development of iron technology generated surplus. This in the long run supported

diversified and specialised craftsmen on one hand and on the other hand provided an impetus to commercial transactions. The rise of Magadha as the most powerful *mahajanapada* was an outcome of the rule of ambitious rulers like Bimbisara and Ajatasatru belonging to the Haryanka dynasty. Bimbisara entered into a marriage alliance with Kosala and received the village of Kasi as the *streedhan* of Kosaladevi. Bimbisara also married Chellana, the daughter of the Lichchhavi chieftain Chetaka. His son Ajatasatru however came into conflict with Kosala and the Lichchhavis of the Vajjian confederacy and emerged victorious. Magadha's favourable geographical position enabled it to control the lower Gangetic plain, its thick forests that provided valuable resources like timber and elephants. Availability of rich deposits of copper and iron for weapons and implements were other significant factors that added to the success of Magadha in the long run.

Stop to Consider

Second Urbanization:

The most significant change in the material life of northern India in the sixth century BCE was the emergence of urban centres. Some of the prominent urban centres were Rajagriha, Varanasi, Kausambi, Sravasti, etc. The growth of these urban centres was linked to the non-agrarian sector of the economy and society that was facilitated by the existence of a flourishing agrarian condition that sustained the non food producing communities. While iron technology helped in the generation of this agrarian surplus, the emergence and consolidation of the territorial states provided the political as well as administrative structure to articulate the demand for an agrarian surplus and create the mechanism for its realisation.

2.3 Rise of New Religious Movements in North India- Jainism and Buddhism: Social Dimensions of Early Jainism and Buddhism:

The sixth century BCE witnessed great changes in the political, social and economic life of the people as a result of the second urbanisation. This was manifested in the emergence of the *mahajanapadas*. The new social order necessitated significant developments in the religious sphere. The period witnessed the emergence of alternative religious world views as the existing Brahmannical world view was ill equipped to serve the new social order. Prominent among them were Jainism, Buddhism, Lokayata and the Ajivikas.

All were opposed to the Vedic tradition, its rites and rituals. They questioned the authority of the Vedas and the practice of sacrificial rituals.

Vardhamana, popularly known as Mahavira is associated with the doctrines of Jainism. However, Jain texts maintain that Mahavira was the last *tirthankaras* and was preceded by twenty three *tirthankaras* the first being Adinatha or Rishabhanatha. His beliefs and teachings were greatly influenced by them.

Stop to Consider

A *tirthankara* literally means a ford-maker. In Jainism it refers to a spiritual leader who has conquered the cycle of birth, death and rebirth and shown others the path to salvation or *kaivalya*.

Vardhamana is known as Mahavira, meaning “a great warrior” as he had discovered the path to conquer the eternal cycle of birth, death and rebirth. He thus became a “jina” or “conqueror” and hence his followers are known as Jains.

Vardhamana Mahavira was born in Kundagrama, a city near Vaishali. Mahavira laid down four fundamental principles of Jainism: non-injury to any living being, avoidance of falsehood in behaviour and speech, not coveting other's possessions and not amassing personal wealth and property. Vedic authority was not accepted by the Jainas and the existence of a deity was not central to early Jaina doctrine. The purification of the soul was given importance in Jainism and according to Mahavira it could be attained by following a monastic life. The doctrines of both Jainism as well as Buddhism stood against discrimination and favoured equality for all. The emphasis on individual efforts towards attaining salvation to a great extent challenged the notion of the *varna-jati* system that was given importance in the Brahmannical order.

However, in course of time Jainism developed into a complex belief system with a pantheon of folk deities like *yakshas* and *yakshinis* that consorted with the early *tirthankaras*, being worshipped not as teachers but as divine beings. The Digambar Jains continued to revere Mahavira and other *tirthankaras* as spiritual teachers while the Svetambaras began to worship them as deities. Moreover, as early Jainism did not give importance to the material body, and focussed upon asceticism, they did not protect the physical body or cover it with clothes. The Svetambaras began to wear white garments.

Buddha who was born as Siddhartha was the son of the chief of the Sakya clan. Buddhist tradition refers to how Siddhartha became familiar with the harsh reality of old age, sickness and death and hence wandered for six years seeking the truth. The attainment of true knowledge earned him the title of Buddha or the Enlightened One. He is also known as Tathagata, the truthful one or one who has discovered the true meaning of life and death. Buddha gave his first sermon at Sarnath and this act is known as *dharmachakrapravartana* or the Turning of the Wheel of Law. He established the Buddhist Sangha and admitted *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunis* in it. His followers ranged from monarchs to brahmanas, from rich *setthis* (merchants) to ordinary artisans and even courtesans. The central ideas of Buddhist philosophy revolves around the fact that the world is full of sorrow and suffering and the root cause of all this suffering is the existence of desires to acquire objects or reach these goals. The existence of desires leads to the perpetuation of the cycle of birth and rebirth that does not put an end to the sufferings. Buddha thus established the significance of Four Noble Truths- a) the individual existence of a person is full of sorrow and sufferings b) the origin of the sufferings can be explained c) it is possible to bring an end to the sufferings and d) there is a way to bring an end to the sufferings. Based on these four noble truths, Buddha recommended an eight fold path (*astamarga*) that enabled an individual to strive for *nirvana* or salvation. This eight fold path included right views, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.

While early followers regarded Buddha as their teacher, in course of time Buddhism developed into different sects. The Hinayana Buddhists continued to regard Gautama Buddha as a human teacher. The Mahayana Buddhists deified him and started building statues of Buddha and the *Bodhisattvas* for worship. Vajrayana Buddhism incorporated tantric modes of beliefs and esoteric practices that involved complex rituals, thus deviating drastically from early Buddhist practices.

Stop to Consider

A *Bodhisattva* is an enlightened being who forgoes *nirvana* or salvation from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth out of compassion for suffering humanity. According to Buddhist traditions the Buddha went through previous births, some in the form of birds and animals, before attaining perfect knowledge. These accounts are found in a body of texts known as the *Jatakas*. These stories have been vividly depicted in sculptural panels as well as in the Ajanta cave paintings in Aurangabad.

In analysing the social dimensions of early Buddhism and Jainism we have to understand the socio-economic background that facilitated it. The second urbanisation resulted in widespread changes. The growth of urban centres, markets, etc witnessed trade and commerce with distant places. The Vedic social norms were more suited to a rural populace. According to the *Darmasastra* lending money and charging interest on it was forbidden in the Brahmannical society. But lending and borrowing was vital for the advancement of trade and commerce. Moreover, in the traditional social hierarchy, the ruling classes and the traders and merchants occupied a position lower to that of the Brahmanas. Buddhist texts refer to different categories of public women like courtesans, prostitutes, inn keepers, vegetable sellers, etc. Brahmannical society assigned women a respectable status and space only in the domestic sphere. As kings became emperors with grandiose titles and merchants became landowners a new social dispensation became necessary. The slaughter of cattle in Vedic sacrifices had to be stopped for the growth of capital wealth of a primarily agricultural society. Hence the doctrine of *ahimsa* or non-injury was born of a necessity to protect cattle. The heterodox religions provided the people with an alternative to the existing Vedic Brahmannical religion. Jainism and Buddhism offered people a way to salvation without the Brahmana intermediary and a more equitable social status.

However, it is also important to note that though people of different social backgrounds became members of both the orders, nevertheless social prejudices existed against certain social categories. Both Buddhism and Jainism reflect negative perceptions towards women. Buddhist texts reflect stereotype ideals of submissive and obedient women. The Buddhist Sangha moreover had certain restrictions like not being open to pregnant women, not being open to women who did not have their parents or husbands' permission, subordinating the order of the nuns to that of the monks, etc. Jaina texts too present women as a danger to the celibacy of the monks. A woman's body moreover was regarded as an obstacle to her attaining salvation. Recognition of social differences and the existence of social prejudices particularly against women were important aspects of the social dimensions of early Jainism as well as Buddhism.

Check Your Progress

- Q1. Name two rulers of the Haryanka dynasty.
- Q2. What does the term *janapada* denote?
- Q3. What were the social prejudices of Buddhism towards women?

Self Asking Questions

1. Throw light on the literary sources of the 6th century BCE.
2. How would you differentiate a mahajanapada from that of a janapada?
3. Discuss the changes in Buddhism following the split in the religious doctrine.
4. Discuss the central ideas of Jainism.

Space for Learner's Notes

2.4 The Mauryas - Background of Mauryan State Formation:

The period from the sixth to the late fourth century BCE not only facilitated the emergence of territorial states or *mahajanapadas* but also witnessed the rise of Magadha as a predominant power in North India. The establishment of the Mauryan Empire denoted the evolution of a complex form of state having control and authority over a differentiated economy. With the Mauryas, a substantial part of the Indian subcontinent came within the control of a single power. The Mauryan state undertook a restructuring of the economy in order to increase the prospects of revenue. The degree of centralisation under the Mauryas also did not follow a homogenous pattern with control being exercised at different levels. The empire was founded by Chandragupta Maurya who succeeded to the Nanda throne in c. 321 BCE. The availability of a greater number of sources such as punch- marked coins, the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya, the *Indika* of Megasthenese helps in having a comprehensive understanding of the developments related to the Mauryas. The *Indika* of Megasthenese the Greek ambassador of Seleukus Nikator to the court of Chandragupta Maurya offers valuable information on the city of Pataliputra, its administration and on the Mauryan society. The *Arthashastra* of Kautilya the Prime Minister of Chandragupta Maurya is a manual on polity, statecraft and society. This text contains references to significant aspects of a state such as the importance of king, territory, treasury, force, fort, ally etc. that has relevance in understanding the nature of the Mauryan state. Apart from the literary sources, the edicts of Chandragupta's

grandson Asoka throw light on the importance of an ideology formulated by the emperor so as to maintain the integrity of the empire.

Chandragupta Maurya took advantage of the vacuum created after the departure of Alexander of Macedonia and established his authority in north western India. He next posed a challenge to the authority of the Nandas. He moved to central India and laid control over the territories north of the river Narmada. He was also in conflict with Seleucus Nikator in the north-west. This in the long run ended in his victory and conclusion of a treaty with him. The Seleucid territories of eastern Afghanistan and Baluchistan were ceded to the Mauryas. Chandragupta was succeeded by Bindusara in about 297 BCE. Bindusara is believed to have campaigned in the Deccan extending Mauryan control as far south as Karnataka. Bindusara was followed by Asoka who by conquering Kalinga on the Bay of Bengal extended the Mauryan Empire to its natural boundaries. Except for a narrow strip near present Kerala and Tamil Nadu he ruled over the largest empire in India in pre-colonial times. The discovery of Asoka's edicts in Karnataka similar to the one in Kalinga testifies to this fact. At the time of Bindusara's death, a large part of the subcontinent had come under Mauryan suzerainty. The conquest of Kalinga by Asoka was an event of great significance that needs to be related to his subsequent proclamation of the ideology of *Dhamma*. It was also during the reign of Asoka that the third Buddhist council was convened at Pataliputra.

2.5 Asoka: Dhamma- its propagation: Administration and Economy under the Mauryas

(a) Asoka- The Propagation of Dhamma:

Asoka's 'Dhamma' was an idea that was new to Indian political and social theory. Apart from the efficient administrative machinery that characterised Mauryan rule, the integration of the vast empire required an ideology so as to provide the means of accommodating the diversities operating at local and regional levels. '*Dhamma*' is the Prakrit term derived from the Sanskrit word 'Dharma'. Asoka's '*Dhamma*' is viewed in the sense of his personal religious leaning after the developments of his victory over Kalinga. The remorse for the violence in the Kalinga war made Asoka turn to Buddhism. On these grounds, Asoka has been often portrayed as being a follower of non-violence and following a pacifist policy in the long run. A critical analysis of Asoka's *Dhamma* reveals the fact that a distinction needs to be made

between his personal belief and support for Buddhism and his obligation as a king to insist that all religions were to be respected. There cannot be any element of doubt that Asoka was familiar with the canonical texts of Buddhism, but his edicts and their relation with his ideology is marked by the absence of certain essential principles of Buddhism. Asoka while speaking about *Dhamma* does not refer to the four fold path or the eight fold path that formed the core ideas of Buddhist philosophy.

The smaller group of his edicts consists of declarations made by the king and addressed to the Buddhist Sangha. These edicts reflect his adherence to Buddhism and his relationship with the Sangha. The larger group of inscriptions on rock surfaces known as the Major and Minor Rock Edicts and the Pillar Edicts were located in places where the prospect of people gathering there was more. In a situation where literacy would not be widespread, this was an attempt on the part of the emperor to propagate his ideas through oral tradition. The *Dhamma* of Asoka laid importance on adhering conformity to a social ethic rather than it being an act of piety. The principles of *Dhamma* appear to have been primarily concerned with a broader ethics to explore ways of governance and to reduce social conflict as well as intolerance. *Dhamma* aimed at creating an attitude which gave importance to the ethical behaviour of one person towards another and at the same time emphasised on respecting the dignity of human beings. The principles of *Dhamma* were such that they would have been acceptable to people belonging to any religious sect. One of the basic ideas of the *Dhamma* of Asoka was tolerance. Tolerance extended not only towards people but also to their beliefs and ideas. Tolerance in the Asokan edicts demonstrated consideration towards slaves and servants, respect to teachers, obedience to parents, generosity towards friends, relatives, brahmanas and *shramanas*, concern for all living beings and stressed upon *ahimsa* or non-injury to all living beings. This included renunciation of war and conquest as well as restraint on the killing of animals. The policy of *Dhamma* also included the state's concern for the welfare of its people. For instance, in Pillar Edict VII, Asoka refers to the planting trees on the roads for the shelter of men and animals, construction of watering places, etc. In the edict at Dhauri Asoka refers to his subjects as "his children" and states that he desires their happiness and welfare. Asoka at the same time was critical of useless ceremonies and sacrifices. To implement the policy of *Dhamma*, Asoka instituted the appointment of a special category of officers called *dhamma-mahammattas*. These high ranking functionaries propagated missions of

Dhamma to the lands of the Cholas, Pandyas, Keralaputras in South India. He entrusted his son Mahendra and daughter Sanghamitra to carry his *Dhamma* or “law of piety” to Sri Lanka. His emissaries also travelled to different states of Central Asia as well as Greece to spread his creed. Asoka thus tried to accommodate plurality through his ideology of *Dhamma*. However he clearly stated in his edicts that opposition to his central authority would not be tolerated and would be firmly dealt with. Asoka nevertheless deserves admiration for proclaiming an ideology in the context of giving importance to social ethics and a paternalistic kingship.

(b) Administration and Economy under the Mauryas:

The rulers of the Mauryan dynasty are credited for carving out a vast empire by military conquests and consolidation. The rule of the Mauryas was marked by the existence of an efficient system of administration that in the long run helped in bringing about the political integration of the empire. The prevalent economic conditions of the time that required greater mobilisation of resources often tended to give a centralized character to the Mauryan administration. However, as pointed out by historian Romila Thapar, the making and maintenance of the empire demanded constant adjustments and accommodations. The nucleus of the Mauryan system was the king. The Asokan edicts are excellent examples of how the emperor strengthened the idea of paternal kingship and the promulgations in the edicts demonstrate that these were to be obeyed by the subjects and officials. With reference to the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya that is a manual of statecraft two key offices were controlled by the central administration under the Mauryas. These were those of the treasurer and the chief collector. While the treasurer was responsible of keeping an account of the income in cash and for storing the income in kind, the chief collector was responsible for keeping a record of the taxes that came from different parts of the empire.

The Mauryan administration was further characterised by the existence of a large number of superintendents and subordinate officers who were linked both to the local administration and the central government. Among the significant superintendents that find mention in the *Arthashastra* are the superintendents of gold and goldsmith, commerce, forest produce, armoury, weights and measures, weaving, agriculture, horses, elephants, chariots, infantry, etc. The salaries of the officials and the expenditure on public works constituted a significant portion of public expenditure. Public works under

the Mauryas covered a wide range of activity such as building and maintaining roads, irrigation projects, maintaining the army, running the mines, etc. The Mauryan administration functioned primarily at three levels - the metropolitan area, core area and the peripheral area. The metropolitan area or state was Magadha which was the area of maximum centralised administration. It was the pivot of the empire that controlled income and extended its control over areas of strategic importance. The core areas were less directly under state control and more effectively under those of governors and senior officials. The core areas controlled access to important trade routes and acted as urban centres facilitating commercial exchange. The core areas included Gandhara, Suvarnagiri, etc. The peripheral areas were those areas marked by relative isolation where the Mauryan state limited its activities towards the tapping of valuable resources like timber. The Mauryas had an excellent spy system and the network of spies kept the emperor personally informed about possible dissensions and other events.

In analysing the nature of the Mauryan economy, the role of the state in collecting revenue and bringing about extension of agriculture is noteworthy. The economy under the Mauryas was predominantly agrarian and large areas were bought under cultivation. Land revenue was the primary source of income with regular assessments being undertaken to increase revenues. The administrative system of the Mauryas was primarily concerned with the efficient collection of taxes and control by the state over potential sources of revenue. Forests could not be privately cleared and clearance operations were supervised by the state so as to collect forest produce and prevent any arbitrary extension of agriculture. Extensive areas of wasteland and crown land were cultivated under the supervision of the state. The *Arthashastra* further recommends that the state should organise the clearing of new areas or deserted lands and should settle on these lands large numbers of shudra cultivators. The shudras who settled in these new lands were initially exempted from taxes, but once they started working on the land, taxes were imposed. Other categories that provided labour to the Mauryan state included the *dasa-karmakaras* that is slaves and hired labourers.

Under the Mauryas, land revenue was primarily of two kinds: *bali* which denoted a tax on the area of land cultivated and *bhaga* which was a tax on the assessment of the produce. However, the Asokan inscription at Lumbini exempts the people from *bali* but not from *bhaga*. The assessments of land revenue probably varied from region to region ranging from one-sixth to a quarter of the produce of the land. The treasury under the Mauryas moreover

collected taxes from shepherds and livestock breeders on the number and produce of the animals. Taxes for the provision of water for irrigation seems to have been regularly collected wherever the state was responsible for providing irrigation. While the agrarian economy helped the Mauryas to build an empire, economic activity in the form of trade and commerce formed another significant aspect of it. The state employed artisans such as armourers, ship builders, etc who were exempted from taxes. The sale of merchandise moreover was strictly supervised by the Mauryas where the superintendent of commerce had to enquire into the current price of the goods, supply and demand and the expenses involved in production. The availability of a great number of punch-marked coins belonging to the Mauryan period demonstrates the significance of trade and commerce.

Stop to Consider

The nature of the Mauryan state and control over the economy reflects authority being exercised by the Mauryas at different levels. While the concepts of metropolitan, core and peripheral areas predominates the structure of the Mauryan polity, identifying potential sources of revenue was of primary importance to the Mauryan state. Thus, the *Arthashastra* recommends the supervision of revenue collection from areas such as fortified urban area, mines, irrigation projects, forests, pasture grounds, trade routes, etc.

2.6 Decline of the Mauryas:

The pan- Indian power of the Mauryas however was not a long lasting one. The *Puranas* refer to the fact that around 187 BCE, the Mauryan Empire collapsed when the last ruler of the dynasty Brihadratha was overthrown and killed by his military commander Pushyamitra Sunga who was the founder of the Sunga dynasty. While the Puranic genealogies make it difficult to ascertain as to how many rulers ruled after Asoka, on the basis of later Buddhist legends, historian Romila Thapar states that the division of the empire into two halves cannot be ruled out. Some other historians like H.C Raychaudhuri and B.N Mukherjee ascribe the decline of the Mauryas to the weak successors of Asoka. The demise of a formidable empire like that of the Mauryas however cannot be satisfactorily explained by lack of personal capabilities of one or two rulers. The political integration of the Mauryan Empire could have been threatened by the invasions of the Bactrian

Greeks from the early second century BCE. Asoka's pacifist policy has also been highlighted to explain the decline of the Mauryas. This essentially revolves around the Dhamma of Asoka, where through this policy Asoka invited the discontentment of the Brahmanas, made the Mauryan army weak that threatened the strong character of the Mauryan state. However, a critical examination of the Asokan edicts does not contain references of Asoka disbanding the Mauryan army after the Kalinga war. *Dhamma* also denoted respect and tolerance to all religious groups that negates the theory of Brahmanical discontentment. The root cause of decline of Mauryan rule lay in the strong centre as well as the necessity of mobilising resources to maintain the army and the administration, and the Mauryan state may have faced a situation of financial constraint in the later days. Lack of any representative institutions to know about public opinion might also be regarded as a factor in bringing about the decline of Mauryan rule.

Self Asking Questions

1. Throw light on the polity of the Mauryas.
2. Highlight the salient features of the Mauryan economy.
3. How far does Asoka's *Dhamma* reflect conformity with Buddhism?
4. Assess the responsibility of Ashoka in the decline of the Mauryas.

2.7 Summing Up:

From the foregoing discussion, we have seen how the emergence of territorial states or *mahajanapadas* introduced new changes in the domain of polity, society, economy and religion. The introduction of technological changes in the form of iron technology as well as the phenomena of second urbanisation brought about diversification of arts and crafts. The changing material milieu of the sixth century BCE coincided with the emergence of Jainism and Buddhism as important religious movements that challenged the predominance of the Brahmanical class. With Magadha and its capital Pataliputra predominating the political scenario, the rule of the Mauryas and the foundation of the Mauryan Empire introduced significant changes in the administrative structure as well as in the economy. Asoka's *Dhamma* moreover constituted an important ideology in maintaining the political integrity of the Mauryan Empire. Mauryan rule however did not sustain for a long period of time and witnessed a decline after the death of Asoka.

2.8 References and Suggested Readings:

D.N Jha *Ancient India in Historical Outline*, Manohar Publishers Distributors, New Delhi, 1998

Ranabir Chakravarti *Exploring Early India up to c. AD 1300*, Macmillan Publishers India Ltd, New Delhi, 2013

Romila Thapar *Early India From the Origins to AD 1300*, Penguin Books, London, 2002

Romila Thapar *From Lineage to State*, Oxford University Press, 1999

2.9 Model Questions:

- a) What changes were visible in the polity and economy of India during the sixth century BCE with the emergence of the *mahajanapadas*?
- b) Assess the factors responsible for the rise of Magadha as the most powerful *mahajanapada*.
- c) Discuss the central ideas of Buddhism.
- d) Give an outline of the factors responsible for the decline of the Mauryas.

2.10 Answers to Check Your Progress:

1. Two rulers of the Haryanka dynasty are Bimbisara and Ajatasatru.
2. The term *janapada* denotes a settled territory where the *jana* (people) had set its foot (*pada*).
3. Prejudices of Buddhism towards women is noticeable owing to certain rules framed in the Buddhist Sangha where pregnant women could not enrol, women had to take permission from their husband and the path of salvation was not very easily made acceptable for women unlike the monks or *bhikkhus* who could attain salvation.

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Unit: 3

[a] Post–Mauryan period : The Sungas, Chedis

[b] Kharavelas and Satavahanas

[c] Sangam Age: literature, society and culture in South India

Contents:

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 Post- Mauryan period: The Sungas, Chedis
- 3.3 Kharavela and Satavahanas
- 3.4 Sangam Age: Literature, Culture and Society in South India
- 3.5 Summing Up
- 3.6 References and Suggested Readings
- 3.7 Model Questions
- 3.8 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 3.9 Possible Answers to Check our Progress

3.0 Introduction:

The reconstruction of the history of the Indian subcontinent after the end of Mauryan rule is based on a variety of sources. The dynastic genealogies that find mention in the early *Puranas* throw light on the political history of the period under review i.e the post- Mauryan period. While analysing the literary sources of the period, mention may be made of the *Dharmashastras* that were primarily normative in nature. They provide an understanding of the changing social structure in post- Mauryan times. The most significant among the *Dharmashastra* literature is the law book of Manu known as the *Manusmriti*. Literary texts such as the *Gargi Samhita* and the *Mahabhashya* of Patanjali, Buddhist Jatakas, and other texts like the *Divyavadana*, *Mahavastu* and the *Milindpanho* are useful in understanding the political, social and economic developments of the post- Mauryan period. Though this period was marked by the absence of a large empire comparable to that of the Mauryas, the five centuries following their rule were historically important and witnessed significant developments. The period saw greater

contacts with Central and West Asia as well as with China and to a certain extent with South- East Asia. These developments promoted active interaction between India and the outside world. They also facilitated the assimilation of elements which added new dimensions to Indian culture and enriched it in many ways. During this phase moreover, the region of the Deccan witnessed the emergence of several political entities that witnessed the process of state formation for the first time.

Political events in India after the Mauryan period involved multiple powers that in the long run shaped the emergence of regional states in the next few centuries. While in north India the period following the downfall of the Mauryan Empire saw the rise of the Sungas as well as of the Chedis, with Pushyamitra Sunga and Kharavela associated respectively with both the dynasties, in the Deccan the period was marked by the rise of the Satavahanas. The transition to a state polity in the Deccan and the spread of urban culture and trade led to important developments in coinage. For instance, in the Deccan, the Satavahanas issued coins of silver, copper, lead and potin (an alloy of copper, tin and lead). The changing aspects of polity and society in the Deccan are reflected in the Sangam literature which is the earliest Tamil literature. The term 'Sangam' denotes literary gatherings and includes anthologies of poems and songs. The themes of love, war that finds mention in the Sangam literature were modelled on the bardic songs of the older times that were orally transmitted for an indefinite period before they were written down. The period also marked the advent of Sanskrit drama and the composition of royal eulogies.

3.1 Objectives:

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- *describe* the rise of the Sungas and Chedis
- *examine* the significance of the rule of King Kharavela.
- *discuss* the importance of the reign of the Satavahanas
- *analyse* the significance of Sangam literature

3.2 Post- Maurya period: The Sungas and Chedis:

In north India, the immediate successors of the Mauryas were the Sungas. Pushyamitra Sunga, a brahmana was the commander-in chief of the last

Mauryan king Brihadratha. He killed Brihadratha while the latter was inspecting a parade of the army, and ascended the throne of Magadha, thus inaugurating the rule of the Sunga dynasty. He was succeeded by nine rulers of the same family, the last of whom was assassinated by his minister Vasudeva who in turn inaugurated the rule of the Kanvas. The chief sources of information for reconstructing the history of the Sungas are the *Puranas*, the *Harshacharita* of Banabhatta and the *Mahabhashya* of Patanjali as well as Kalidasa's drama *Malavikagnimitra* that contains reference to Agnimitra, the son of Pushyamitra. The centre of the kingdom of Pushyamitra was Vidisha, in present day Madhya Pradesh. While the control and authority of Pushyamitra Sunga extended only over a part of the erstwhile Mauryan Empire, Pataliputra and Saketa (Ayodhya) were also included in his dominion. According to the Buddhist text *Divyavadana*, Pushyamitra's empire also included Jalandhara and Shakala (Sialkot) in Punjab. The *Malavikagnimitra* of Kalidasa refers to Agnimitra as the viceroy of Vidisha which indicates that Pushyamitra placed viceroys in some parts of his empire. The reign of Pushyamitra Sunga was marked by conflicts with the *Yavanas*, or Bactrian Greeks. The invasion of the *yavanas* finds mention in the *Gargi Samhita* as well as in the *Mahabhashya*. They refer to the expansion of the Bactrian Greeks and state that "after reducing Saketa, Panchala and Mathura to submission, they advanced as far as Kusumadhvaja (Pataliputra) which continued to remain the capital during the reign of the Sungas. The invasion of the Bactrian Greeks was led by Demetrius who reached as far as Pataliputra. The *Malavikagnimitra* also refers to the second conflict with the *yavanas* that involved Vasumitra, the grandson of Pushyamitra. In this conflict the Bactrian Greeks were led by Menander. In a fierce battle on the river Sindhu (Indus) Menander was defeated by Vasumitra.

During the reign of Pusyamitra's son and successor Agnimitra there was internal turmoil. The *Malavikagnimitra* of Kalidasa refers to his conflict with the region of Vidarbha. Yajnasena, the king of Vidarbha was initially serving as the governor of Vidarbha during the time of the last Mauryan ruler Brihadratha. He probably declared himself independent after the usurpation of the throne of Magadha by Pushyamitra. Yajnasena came into conflict with his cousin Madhavasena who sought the aid of Agnimitra. The conflict ended with the victory of Agnimitra over Yajnasena and the accession of Madhavasena.

The reign of the Sungas also witnessed the performance of *ashvamedha* or horse sacrifice. The Ayodhya stone inscription refers to Pushyamitra as a performer of two *ashvamedhas*. Buddhist tradition, particularly the text *Divyavadana* and the account of Taranatha, the Tibetan historian describes Pushyamitra as a great persecutor of Buddhism. The Buddhist sources claim that Sunga rule brought about the persecution of Buddhists as well as destruction of monasteries and their places of worship. However, archaeological evidence indicates that many Buddhist monuments like the Great Stupa at Sanchi and the Bharhut Stupa were repaired and renovated. The portrayal of Pushyamitra as a persecutor of Buddhists in Buddhist texts probably indicates loss of patronage to Buddhism and revival of Brahmanical practices like performance of *asvamedha* and other sacrifices. The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are believed to have been compiled under the patronage of the Sungas. Ten Sunga kings are supposed to have ruled with the last ruler of the line being Devabhuti or Devabhumi. This finds mention in the *Puranas*. The *Harshacharita* of Banabhatta moreover states that Devabhuti became a victim of a conspiracy by his Brahmana minister Vasudeva, who later founded the Kanva dynasty in 73 BCE. Sunga rule probably survived in central India for some time till the rise of the Satavahanas.

The decline of the Sunga power that was followed by the rise of the Kanvas, witnessed a significant development in the region of Kalinga in the second half of the first century BCE. This was the rise of the Chedi dynasty. With the emergence of the Chedis, Kalinga witnessed the beginnings of a monarchical polity. The most important ruler of the Chedi dynasty was Kharavela who traced his lineage from Mahameghavahana. The Hatigumpha rock inscription records his exploits regarding the extension of the power of Kalinga.

Stop to Consider

The post-Mauryan period witnessed the emergence of multiple powers in the political domain. The period facilitated exchange of new ideas in the domain of art, architecture as well as promoted interactions with the outside world. The availability of a great number of coins in the form of gold, silver, copper as well as Roman coins indicates a prosperous trade network. This period moreover established close links between religion and patronage. This is evident in the donations made for the *stupa* at Sanchi as well construction of *chaityas* and *viharas*. The present state of Bihar came to be so called due to the presence of numerous *viharas*.

3.3 Kharavela and the Satavahanas:

The Mahameghavahana dynasty that was related to the Chedis rose to prominence during the second half of the first century BCE in the region of Kalinga, in the coastal and eastern part of Odhisa. The predominance of this dynasty was an outcome of the rule of Kharavela. The emergence of a monarchical system in Kalinga demonstrates the example of a secondary state formation as Kalinga had been a core area and had already experienced the beginnings of a state under Mauryan administration. Kalinga moreover was associated with Jaina monasteries and this is clearly reflected with Kharavela being a devout Jaina follower. Kharavela's inclination towards Jainism is known exclusively from his inscriptions particularly from the Hatigumpha inscription, found in the Udayagiri Hills near Bhubaneswar in Odhisa. It is a *prasasti* (eulogy) in Prakrit that contains details of Kharavela's military exploits and other achievements. Kharavela repaired the gates, walls and buildings of the city of Kalinga. In the second year of his reign, Kharavela sent a strong army comprising of elephants, chariots, cavalry, and infantry to the western regions controlled by Satakarni, of the Satavahana dynasty. The inscription also records the extension of an irrigation canal by Kharavela that was originally built by the Nanda king. He also performed the *rajasuya* sacrifice. Kharavela was a devout Jain and offered maintenance and gifts to the monks of a Jain monastery. King Kharavela also convened an assembly of ascetics and monks for the compilation of Jain texts.

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THE HATIGUMPHA
INSCRIPTION OF
KING KHARAVELA
OF KALINGA, AT
UDAYAGIRI HILLS
NEAR
BHUBANESWAR,
ODHISA.

The political expansion under Kharavela as is evident from the Hathigumpha inscription reflects his westward campaign towards parts of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. He is also said to have defeated rulers such as the Rathikas and Bhojas possibly belonging to the region of Vidarbha. His conduct of successful raids in Magadha brought him into conflict with the *yavana* ruler compelling the latter to move to Mathura. The military achievements of Kharavela include his campaigns in the far south where the inscription refers to his victory over Pithunda in coastal Andhra. The Hathigumpha inscription of Kharavela is historically significant because it indicates the beginning of a style of writing corresponding to that of a royal genealogy. The attributes such as those of patronage, conquest and welfare of the subjects constitutes the core elements of this *prasasti* of Kharavela. Kharavela however did not issue coins though the use of punch-marked coins continuation in this period. Kharavela's achievements nevertheless did not ensure a long period of rule for the Meghavahana dynasty in Kalinga. Following Kharavela's reign the name of only one of his successors namely Vakradeva is known.

The rule of the Satavahanas in the Deccan coincided with the emergence of a monarchical polity under them. However, this transition to a monarchical set up as has been argued by historians such as B.D Chattopadhyaya took place before the advent of the rule of the Satavahanas. Chattopadhyaya emphasized the importance of numismatic evidence in analysing the existence of numerous small political principalities that emerged in the Deccan after the decline of the Mauryan Empire. The existence of officers like *Rathikas* and *Bhojas* that finds mention in the Asokan inscriptions got transformed to *maharathis* and *mahabhajakas* in pre-Satavahana times. This indicates an increase in the power and status of local elites during the 2nd-1st centuries BCE. Inscriptions, coins and the *Puranas* provide information about the origin of the Satavahanas. However, these sources provide different origin theories. While the *Puranas* identify the Satavahanas as Andhras and Andhrabhryas, inscriptions belonging to their reign use the term Satavahana. Mention of the Andhras in the Asokan edicts indicates that the Satavahanas may have been a particular branch or 'clan' of the Andhra tribe. Moreover there is difference of opinion regarding the chronology of the Satavahana dynasty. While some historians place the beginning of Satavahana rule in c. 271 BCE, others place it in c. 30 BCE. It is quite likely that the rule of the Satavahana dynasty began in the mid 1st century BCE and ended in the early 3rd century CE. Historians are also divided on whether the Satavahanas came to power in eastern or western Deccan. According to the evidence of

the *Puranas*, the Satavahanas originally belonged to the Andhra region. Following the discovery of some early Satavahana coins in the Karimnagar district of Andhra Pradesh, it has been pointed out that the Satavahanas began their rule in the eastern Deccan. On the other hand, inscriptions of the Satavahanas recovered from Nasik and Nanaghat point to their original centre of power being located in western Deccan. It is likely that the Satavahanas established their control over the area of Pratishthana in the western Deccan, from where they expanded their kingdom into eastern Deccan, Andhra and the western coast.

Kharavela, the Chedi king of Kalinga claims in his Hatigumpha inscription to have defeated a king by the name of Satakarni as well as the Rathikas and the Bhojas. The latter were probably subordinates of the Satavahanas. While some historians opine that these developments took place during the reign of the Satavahana ruler Satakarni I, others are of the opinion that these events occurred during the reign of a later king with the same name. The political expansion of the Satavahanas also brought them into conflict with the Sakas, a nomadic people of Central Asian origin. As this period was marked by a prosperous network of trade and commercial exchange, control over premier ports such as Barygaza, Kalyan and Sopara were important factors of the conflict between different ruling powers. During the reign of the ruler Gautamiputra Satakarni, the empire reached its zenith. In his inscription found from Nasik, Gautamiputra is described as the destroyer of the Sakas, *yavanas* and a restorer of the glory of the Satavahanas. His inscriptions at Nasik and Karle moreover record granting of land to Buddhist monks. Gautamiputra re struck the coins of the Sakakshatrapa Nahapana after defeating him. His coins have also been found in eastern Deccan. Gautamiputra's rule extended probably from Malwa and Saurashtra in the north to the river Krishna in the south and also included the regions of Berar and Konkan. The Satavahanas however suffered loss of territories owing to the conflict with the Saka chieftain Mahakshatrapa Rudradaman. The latter's Junagarh inscription contains reference to the political expansions undertaken by him. These included control over the Kathiawad peninsula, the region of Kutch, lower Indus valley, etc. The Junagarh *prasasti* of Rudradaman states that he twice defeated Satakarni and spared him on account of his being a relative. An analysis of the Saka- Satavahana rivalry reflects certain common grounds of contestation. The primary motive was to establish control over the region of Malwa that served as a strong link between northern and peninsular India. Secondly, the western part of Malwa

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provided contact with the Gujarat coast and control over ports like Sopara, Kalyan, etc. vital for overseas trade.

The Satavahanas like the Sungas and Kanvas were Brahmans by caste and we find references to the performance of sacrifices by Satakarni I in the Nanaghat inscription. The performance of sacrifices was probably an important means of acquiring political legitimacy. The rule of the Satavahanas is also characterised by the use of metronymic by the kings of the Satavahana dynasty. Their mothers' names prefix the names of rulers like Gautamiputra Sri Satakarni and Vasisthiputra Sri Pulamavi. However we do not have enough evidence to assert that a matriarchal or matrilineal system prevailed among the Satavahana ruling family.

In the domain of administration and political structure, the Satavahanas like the Sakas and the Kushanas had a number of subordinate rulers or chiefs under them who acknowledged their political suzerainty. The *maharathis* and *mahabhojas* who emerged as powerful local elites in the pre-Satavahana times were subsequently integrated in the Satavahana polity and their existence continued to be important even after the establishment of Satavahana rule. The authority enjoyed by the *maharathis* and *mahabhojas* under the Satavahanas is evident from their mention in the Satavahana inscriptions where they appear as donors at important Buddhist cave sites in the western Deccan. Their importance is also exemplified by the existence of matrimonial ties not only with the Satavahanas but also among themselves. The empire of the Satavahanas was divided into a number of administrative divisions known as *aharas*. Associated with these administrative changes is the existence of different categories of officials under the Satavahanas such as *amatyas*, *mahamatras*, *mahasenapatis* as well as record keepers and village headmen or the *gramika*. The rule of the Satavahanas also demonstrates changes in the economic structure in the form of royal grants of land including those related to tax exemptions. The Nanaghat inscription belonging to the period of the Satavahanas contains references to villages which were among the items given as *dakshina* to officiating priests who performed sacrifices. An inscription in the Nasik caves belonging to the reign of Gautamiputra Satakarni highlight certain specific privileges and tax exemptions accompanying a gift of land. It further states that the land was not to be entered by royal troops, was free from the control of state officials and was to enjoy all sorts of immunities. The reign

of the Satavahanas thus was marked by political conflict as well as changes in the economic structure. They may be said to have initiated a feudal structure that would further develop under the Imperial Guptas.

Space for Learner's Notes

Check Your Progress

1. Name two literary sources of the Sunga period.
2. Who was Kharavela?
3. What is a metonymic?

Self Asking Questions

1. Throw light on the political expansion of the Sungas.
2. Trace the origin of the Satavahanas.
3. Give a background of the literary sources that throw light on the political developments in the post-Maurya period.
4. Who was Rudradaman?

3.4 Sangam Age: Literature, Culture and Society in South India:

Sangam literature denotes the earliest Tamil literature that is considered as an source for understanding the early stages in the history of Tamil Nadu. Literary traditions from the eighth century refers to the emergence of Sangam literature, so called as it was produced by an academy of poets called 'Sangam' under the patronage of the Pandya kings. The first of these gatherings was believed to have been held at Madurai, the second at Kapatapuram and the third in Madurai. The similarity of language and style of the Sangam corpus suggests the possibility of these being a part of some literary gathering. While the historicity of the three Sangams or gatherings are not clearly established, the term 'early classical Tamil literature' is sometimes used instead of Sangam literature. The main body of Sangam literature consists of eight anthologies of short poems called Ettutokai and ten long songs or Pattu-pattu. This genre of the Sangam literature includes nearly 2400 poems of lengths ranging from three lines to eight hundred lines believed to have been composed by 473 poets. The style and historical references found in the poems suggest their composition to have taken place between the 3rd century BCE and the 3rd century CE. Sangam literature also includes a text named *Tolkappiyam* which is essentially a work on grammar and includes discussions on phonology, literary conventions, and the like. Two themes predominate in the Sangam poems- *akam* and *puram*. *Akam* poems had love as their theme while the *puram* poems were mostly

about war. The themes of *akam* poems has been termed as 'interior' because they dealt primarily with love and family life. *Puram* poems on the other hand are classified as 'exterior' because they dealt with worldly themes such as those of community and kingdom.

The nature of Sangam literature indicates that these were composed and sung in the praise of kings and chiefs. These compositions may have been sung by bards and were probably oral in nature before they were compiled and written down. However, the poems in the existing anthologies are believed to have been composed by literate poets known as *pulavar*. The *pulavar* or the literate poets used the oral bardic conventions that were practiced by the traditional bards known as *panar*. The geographical aspect of Sangam literature reflect their concentration in the southern part of Tamil Nadu. The social aspects of Sangam literature is important in the context of the reflections of social life that are found in the poems. Since the poets who composed these poems came from cities and villages and had diverse social and professional backgrounds, the varied themes and authorship of the Sangam poems offers a glimpse of contemporary life of the people.

The historical significance of Sangam literature lies in its references to the networks of commercial exchanges in the form of contact with the western world. The Sangam corpus mentions about the coming of *Yavanas* to the coastal towns for trading purposes. This is further supported by archaeological evidence in the form of Roman coins and availability of Arretine pottery, characteristic of the exotic items from Rome. The significance of ports in conducting this trade is moreover found in other works of the period. In this regard, mention may be made of the accounts of Pliny, Ptolemy, etc. that mentions about ports like Muziris on the Kerala coast. References in the Sangam poems to episodes relating to raids and plunder also highlight that some Sangam poets belonged to the early first century BCE or a little earlier. The episodes as discussed in the Sangam literature bear close resemblance with epic literature. What is particularly remarkable in these poems is the awareness that they show of the environment and the correlation of activities to ecological perceptions. The use of natural geographical ecotypes referred to by the term *tinai* constitutes a predominant theme of the *akam* poems of Sangam literature. Five ecological zones are listed and each of these zones were named after a flower that is typical of the respective geographic region. The geographical divisions of the zones are in the form of hilly region, forest region, fertile riverine region, coastal region and arid region. The *puram* poems on the

other hand provide references to *tinai* or ecological zones but does not contain any discussions on geographical locations or ecotypes. Instead the ecological zones are mentioned in the *puram* poems by the predominance of war themes that are denoted by the symbolism of flowers. This is taken as the basis of classification of the *tinai*s in the *puram* poems.

The description of the flora, fauna, people, economic activities characteristic of each of the eco-regions not only throw light on the nature of poetic conventions but also gives importance to their sociological and economic activities. Each of the eco-regions concerned was related to a specific economic activity for subsistence. These include hunting gathering, pastoral activity combined with forms of cultivation, practicing agriculture using irrigation, fishing, salt making and maritime activities. Moreover, the Sangam literature throws light on the names of the patrons which included the chiefs and kings and events associated with them. In analysing the social aspects visible in the Sangam literature, it is significant to note that the heads of the households were important but higher status was given to the *velir* or chiefs. Since the bardic tradition is closely linked to the Sangam literature, it signifies that the bard was held in high esteem. The economy in these societies moreover was tied to kinship relations and kinsmen assisted the chiefs in conducting raids, and were rewarded with a share of the booty. Apart from social themes, glimpses of religious life are also visible in the Sangam poems. For instance, the Sangam poetry known as *Paripatal* contains poems about Vishnu, Shiva, Durga, etc.

Since the Sangam poems demonstrate the changes associated with the transition from chiefdoms to kingdoms in the southern part of India, the notion of urban life and their depictions in the literature are historically important. Descriptions of cities of the Cholas, Cheras and Pandyas like Vanji, Uraiyur, Madurai finds mention in the Sangam poems. Apart from the cities, mention of ports like Kaveripattinam, Puhar, Korkai are historically significant because of the networks of trade in South India. Two significant epics of Sangam literature are the *Silappadikaram* and the *Manimekalai*. The *Silappadikaram* is placed in the genre of *kavya* literature and was composed by Ilangovalikal, supposed to be a Chera prince. The *Manimekalai* on the other hand was composed by a Buddhist poet Sittalai Sattanar that incorporates many stories of the Buddhist Jataka literature. In relation to the prevalence of the *varna* system and their importance in the

Sangam age, though the concept of *varna* division was brought by the immigrating Brahmanas, society was primarily divided into Brahmanas and non- Brahmanas. In understanding the social life of the period as depicted in Sangam literature, the position of women can also be analysed. References can be found to women poets like Avvaiyar and Nachchellaiyar who contributed to Tamil literature. Sangam literature thus provides a comprehensive understanding of the polity, society and economy of the region of Tamilakam in early India. The compositions of Sangam literature reflect the changes in the political structure in the southern part of India as well as the beginnings of a monarchical polity. Elements of a hierarchical structure are visible in the Sangam poems as indicated by references to three different polities- *Ventar*, *Velir* and *Kilar*. The depictions of urban life and references to different occupations in the context of the environment form other significant characteristics of Sangam literature.

Stop to Consider

The *Silappadikaram* and the *Manimekalai*, the two epics of Sangam literature revolves around the characters of Kovalan(a merchant), Kannagi (Kovalan's wife) and Madhavi (a dancer). The story narrates how Kovalan goes to the city and falls in love with Madhavi. Later he is held guilty of stealing the queen's anklet and is beheaded by the king. Kannagi avenges the death of her husband and this gives shape to the concept of the Kannagi cult or the ideal wife who is given the status of a goddess. The *Manimekalai* similarly is about the daughter of Kovalan and Madhavi and describes how she becomes a Buddhist nun and preached the principles of Buddhism.

Check your Progress

Discuss the significance of the rule of Kharavela. (20+60 words)

Self Asking Questions

1. Throw light on the different components of Sangam literature.
2. Assess the significance of Sangam literature as a historical source.
3. Discuss the primary themes of the *Silappadikaram* and the *Manimekalai*.
4. How are networks of trade reflected in Sangam literature?

3.5 Summing Up:

From the foregoing discussion, we have seen how the decline of the Mauryan Empire was marked by the emergence of multiple powers in the political domain. The Sungas were the immediate successors of the Mauryas. Pushyamitra Sunga laid the foundation of the Sunga dynasty. Their rule was marked by conflict with the *yavanas* or the Bactrian Greeks. In the region of Kalinga, the Chedis emerged as a prominent ruling house with its most significant ruler being Kharavela. The Hathigumpha inscription of Kharavela throws light on his military exploits and indicates political expansion under his reign. The rise of the Satavahanas in the Deccan also reflects a changing political structure in the region. The rule of the Satavahanas was marked by conflict with the Sakas and political expansion. Their epigraphic records indicate the beginnings of a land grant economy. The system of tax exemptions were a distinctive character of these grants. While analysing the rise of chiefdoms in the region of Tamilakam in early India, mention may be made of the Cholas, Cheras and the Pandyas. The history of these powers is visible in the early Tamil literature known as Sangam. Sangam compositions primarily include songs and poems that highlight the changing aspects of polity, society and economy in the South.

3.6 References and Suggested Readings:

Noboru Karashima *A Concise History of South India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2014

Nilakanta Sastri *A History of South India From the Prehistoric Times to the Fall of Vijaynagar*, Oxford India Paperbacks, 1997

Ranabir Chakravarti *Exploring Early India up to c. AD 1300*, Macmillan Publishers India, 2013

Romila Thapar *Early India From the Origins to AD 1300*, Penguin Books, London, 2002

3.7 Model Questions:

- a) Assess the nature of political expansion under the Satavahanas.
- b) Highlight the significance of the rule of Pushyamitra Sunga.
- c) Examine the historical importance of the Hathigumpha inscription of Kharavela.
- d) Throw light on the importance of *tinais* in Sangam literature.

3.8 Answers to Check Your Progress:

1. *Mahabhashya* of Patanjali and Kalidasa's *Malavikagnimitram*.
2. Kharavela was a ruler of the Chedi dynasty who belonged to the Mahameghavahana lineage.
3. Metronymics was a practice prevalent among the rulers of the Satavahana rulers of prefixing the names of their mothers before their own names.

3.9 Possible Answers to Check our Progress:

The rule of Kharavela, who was an important ruler of the Mahameghavahana lineage of the Chedi dynasty, is a significant chapter in the history of the post- Maurya period. His rule symbolised the beginnings of a monarchical polity in the region of Kalinga. The Hathigumpha inscription of Kharavela describes his military victories which refer to the subjection of *rathikas* and *bhojas*, to the construction of a canal as well as the convening of an assembly of Jaina monks. Kharavela's reign is also significant for the use of Sanskrit for composing a royal eulogy.

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Unit: 4

- [a] Central Asian contact and its Impact: The Indo-Greeks, Sakas and Kushanas
- [b] The Gupta Empire- state and administration
- [c] Post Gupta period : Vardhanas and Palas

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4.1 Objective

4.2 The Indo-Greeks: Extent of the empire and significance

4.3 The Guptas: Extent and Administration

4.3.1 Decline of the Gupta Empire

4.3.2 Administration under the Guptas

4.4 The Post-Gupta Rulers: Vardhanas and Palas

4.4.1 The Vardhanas

4.4.2 The Palas

4.5 Summing Up

4.6 References and Suggested Readings

4.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

4.8 Model Questions

4.0 Introduction:

The Political disintegration of the Great Mauryan dynasty paved the way to several foreign intruders from Central Asia to expand their empire over the north western parts of India. The Indo-Greeks, Sakas and the Kushanas were the most remarkable in this regard. They have not only played an important part in the ancient Indian politics but also in the field of literature, art and architecture. After the downfall of the Kushanarulers' political disturbance, conflict and disorder became one of the major character of the political system of India for more than a century. According to V.A.Smith "The period between the extinction of Kushanas and Andhra dynasties and the rise of the imperial Gupta dynasty, is one of the darkest in the whole range of Indian history" (*Smith; Early History of India, p-292*). But with the foundation of the Gupta empire under Sri Gupta in the beginning of the

4th Cen C.E introduced a new epoch in the history of India. Under them the country made rapid progress in the field of politics, administration, economy and culture. Samudra Gupta and Chandra Gupta II, the most remarkable rulers under the Guptas extended the boundaries of the empire in all directions towards north, east, west and south of India. They were not only great conquerors but also efficient administrators. They had an excellent system of running the empire. Under them art and culture also received royal patronage. Besides new economic strategies were also introduced to bring economic prosperity to the empire. It was due to this all-sided development that the reign of the Imperial Guptas has been called the 'Golden Age' in the annals of the Indian history. The internal conflicts of the Royal family, revolts of the provincial governors, the Hunas' invasion and the negligence of the frontier policies of the Gupta rulers started the process of political disintegration which led to its rapid downfall. The Kingdom of Thaneswar grew over the ruins of the Gupta Empire. Thaneswar was under the influence of Vardhan dynasty. Harsha Vardhan was the ablest and the greatest king of this dynasty who imparted political unity to India which was lost under the later feeble kings of the Gupta empire. The Palas were the rulers of Bengal (Gauda). After the death of Sasanka, anarchy and confusion reigned in Bengal which were came to an end with the succession of Gopala to the throne of Bengal. He was succeeded by an able successor Dharmapala and Devapala respectively. However the Palas saw their downfall under Gopala II and Vignahapala II.

4.1 Objectives:

This unit is an attempt to study the history of the major political powers ruled from the period 200 Cen BCE to 800 Cen CE India. The unit will highlight the impact of the Indo-Greek invasion, the political accomplishment and the administrative features of the Guptas, the achievement of Harsha Vardhan and the place of Palas in the history of India. After going through this unit, it will enable to

- *know* how the invasions from the north-west led to a westward shift in the focus of political power away from the Magadha region.
- *explain* the expansion of the Gupta Empire under Samudra Gupta, Chandra Gupta II and Skanda Gupta.
- *understand* the administrative organisation of the Guptas.

- *elaborate* the revival of Buddhism under Harsha Vardhan.
- *know* how the eastern part of India came under the roof of north Indian politics under the Palas.

Space for Learner's Notes

4.2 The Indo-Greeks: Extent and Impact:

The Indo-Greeks were the foreign intruders from Central Asia who ruled over the parts of north-west India between the 2nd century BCE and the early 1st century CE. Bactria and Parthia were the two provinces under Seleucid Empire of West Asia. After the death of Selucus Bactria and Parthia became independent in 248 cen BCE and 250 cen BCE respectively. Bactria is the ancient name of the area lying to the south of the Oxus river and north-west of the Hindu Kush mountains, and corresponds to the northern part of Afghanistan. They were the Greeks who were originally satraps (subordinate rulers) under Selucus and were also known as the Indo-Bactrians or Indo-Greeks.

The names of many Indo-Greek rulers are known from their coins. Not only that the Indo-Greek coinage has initiated a new era in the history of South Asian coinage. Their coins contain details about the issuing authority, name, year of issue and the portraits of the reigning monarch. Besides, the representation of Indian religious figures and symbols in Indo-Greek coins has a great importance for the cultural history of South Asia. The cultural and religious interaction between India and Greece can be well evident from the Indo-Greek coinage.

Demetrius I was the founder of the Indo-Greek dynasty in India. He was succeeded by Demetrius II, Appollodotus, Pantaleon and Agathocles respectively. These Bactrian rulers have extended their rule to the south of the Hindukush into north-western India.

One of the most remarkable Indo-Greek rulers was Menander (165-145 BCE). His rule was extended both over the parts of Bactria and north-western India with his capital at Sakala or modern Sialkot. Menander was a follower of Buddhism who poses a number of questions to monk Nagasena in the Buddhist text, the *Milindapanha*. After the death of Menander queen Agathokleia may have ruled jointly with her son Strato, whose joint coin issues have been found. Their rule over the Gandhara region came to an end due to conflicts with the Parthians and the Shakas. The Greek rule over this region is remarkable due to the introduction of Hellenistic art features in the north-west frontier of India, giving rise to the Gandhara art.

- The Gandhara school of art flourished between the 1st and 5th centuries C.E. it continued till the 7th century in parts of Kashmir and Afghanistan.
- Most of the Gandhara Sculptures are made of stone.
- Apart from Buddha figures, the Gandhara artists also carved *bodhisattva* images.
- Much attention was paid to carving and elaborate ornamentation.

The Shakas were belonged to Scythian ethnic stock who were displaced from Central Asia by the Yueh Chi tribe during 2nd century BCE. They moved southwards into Afghanistan and thence into north-western India. In the 1st century C.E part of their territory had been fallen into the hands of the Parthians.

The Parthians or Pahlavas were the people of Khurasan and the adjoining area in the south-east of the Caspian Sea. The people of this area were known as Parthians. Like the Shakas they were also belonged to Scythian ethnic stock. The history of the Parthians rule in India is known largely through inscriptions and coins. The earliest among the Shaka-Parthian rulers was Moa or Moga. He was followed by AzesI, Azilises and AzesII. They have extended their control into north-west of Indian subcontinent and further east towards Mathura.

Gondophernes, another Scytho-Parthian ruler who have continued the Parthian empire after AzesII. He is identified with king Guduvhara mentioned in an inscription found at Takht-i-Bahi which attributes his rule in the mid 1st century CE.

One of the significant features of the Shaka and Scytho-Parthian rule was they ruled their empire through subordinate rulers known as *Kshatrapas* and *Mahakshatrapas*. Rajuvula was a *Kshatrapa* of Azilises, who played an important role in extending the empire towards Mathura area.

The Kushanas were one of the five clans of Great Yueh-chi tribe. In early 1st century C.E Kujula-Kadphises amalgamated the five clans and laid the foundation of a unified Kushana empire. Among the Kushanas Kanishka

was the most efficient and remarkable ruler who ascended the throne in 78 C.E. The Kushana empire reached its zenith during the reign of Kanishka. His reign was considered as the beginning of the Shaka era. The successors of Kanishka also dated their inscriptions in an era beginning with this year i.e, 78 C.E. The great empire of Kanishka was extended from Kashmir in the north to Sanchi in the south and from Beneras in the east to the Indus valley in the west. Purushpura or Peshawar was the capital of Kanishka's empire.

Kanishka believed in divine right of kingship and took the ancestral style of epithet *Deviputra*. The Buddhist texts mentions Kanishka as a great patron of Buddhism. He is supposed to have enshrined the Buddha's relics in a *Stupa* at Purushpura, which became the center of a major monastery. The famous Fourth Buddhist Council was convoked at Kundalavana Vihara in Kashmir during his reign. Kanishka is said to have patronized Buddhist scholars like Ashvaghosha, Charaka, Nagarjuna and Vasumitra. Besides missionaries were also sent to Kashgar, Yunan and China. Kanishka's reign is a landmark in the realm of art and architecture. Four eminent schools of sculpture developed from four centres: Sarnath, Mathura, Amaravati and Gandhar.

Stupas:

Stupas are semicircular dome-like structure made of stone or brick with a thick layer of plaster. Stupas were normally built to enshrine the sacred relics of Buddha. The railings and gateway of Sanchi stupa was later enlarged by Sunga rulers. Other important stupas of the period are Bodh Gaya, Taxila, Amaravati, Nagarjunaakonda etc.

The impact of the Shaka-Kushana phase can be witnessed in various fields such as structures of pottery, trade and technology, polity, religion, art, science and technology, literature and learning. In course of time the Greeks, the Shakas, the Parthians and the Kushanas lost their own identity and became completely Indianized. Some of the foreign rulers were converted to Jainism and few other adopted Buddhism. There were also some changes in Indian religions i.e. Buddhism which developed new forms called *Mahayana* and *Hinayana*. Indian craftsmen came into contact with the Greeks and the Romans, especially in the north-western frontier of India in

Gandhara. The *Mathura Schools of Art* flourished in the early centuries of the Christian era, and its products made of red sandstone are found even outside Mathura. In South, *Amaravati art* became famous.

Check Your Progress (A)

Q1: Mention two features of the Mathura School of Art.

Q2: Who was the author of the text *Milindopanha*?

Self Asking Questions

Q1: Do you consider the reign of Kanishka as one of the remarkable period in the history of India.

4.3 The Guptas: Extent and Administration:

It was perhaps in the middle of the third century, the Gupta dynasty was founded by Sri Gupta. The different literary, epigraphic and numismatic sources throw light on the history of the Guptas. Literary sources like the Puranas, Dharmasastras and the Dramas such as KaumudiMahotsava depicts the dynastic list and extent of the gupta empire, Besides the Fa-hien's account 'The Record of Buddhist Kingdoms' is an another literary record in this regard.

The epigraphic records also throw ample light on Gupta history. The Allahabad Prasasti of Samudra Gupta composed by the poet Harisena, depicts the conquests of Samudragupta, The Udaygiri cave inscription, Sanchi stone inscription, Meharauli inscription of Delhi, Bhitari Pillar inscription, the Junagarh and Supiya inscriptions provides information about the Gupta period.

Moreover the coins issued by Chandragupta I, Samudra Gupta and Chandragupta II throw interesting light on Gupta history and extent of foreign influence on Gupta coinage. The Gupta empire stretched across northern, central and parts of southern India between c320 and 550 C.E. The period is noted for its achievements in the arts, architecture, sciences, religion and philosophy for which it is considered as the Golden age of India.

Chandra Gupta I (320 C.E – 335 C.E) grand son of Sri Gupta and son of Ghototkacha Gupta was the first great ruler of this line. By matrimonial alliances and conquests he had increased the power and prestige of the Gupta empire to a great extent. He married Kumaradevi, the Lichchavi princess. His empire included the modern Bihar, Oudh and Allahabad. He assumed the high sounding title *maharajadhiraj*.

Chandra Gupta I was succeeded by Samudra Gupta (350 C.E – 375 C.E). Most of the information regarding the reign of Samudra Gupta is provided by the Allahabad Prasasti, composed by his court poet Harisena. Samudra Gupta believed in the political unification of India and for that he has adopted the policy of *Digvijaya* and *Dharmavijaya*. He set out to expand the boundary of his northern campaign he followed the policy of *Digvijaya* according to which he defeated his enemies and annexed their kingdoms. In the south he pursued a policy of *Dharmavijaya* according to which he defeated the enemies but did not annex their kingdoms. For his military achievements he has been aptly called as the Indian Napoleon.

CONQUESTS OF SAMUDRA GUPTA

Conquest in the North.

- He defeated the confederacy of the three Naga Kings i.e. Nagasena, Ganapati Nag and Nandi.
- He defeated the Kota kings.
- He conquered the forest states in Gahazipur-Jabalpur region.
- He subdued the non-monarchical tribes such as Malvas, the Yaudheyas, the Madras, the Abhiras and Arjunayanas.

Conquest in the South.

- He defeated Mahendra, the prominent ruler of Kosala.
- He had to face a powerful confederacy of the Deccan rulers under the leadership of Vishnugupta, the powerful ruler of Kanchi.

Conquest of Frontier states.

- Among the frontier states those who accepted the vassalage were the rulers of Samatata, tribal republics of Kamrupa, Davaka, Nepal and Katripura.

Check Your Progress (B)

- Q1: What is the main source of information of the conquests of Samudragupta?
- Q2: Where was the centre of higher education during Gupta period?
- Q3: Name the Chinese pilgrim who visited India during the Gupta period.
- Q4: Who was the author of *Raghuvamsa*?

Self Asking Questions

- Q1: Discuss the political conquests of Samudragupta with special reference to his Digvijaya and Dharmavijaya policy.
- Q2: Do you consider the Gupta age as the Golden age of ancient India.? Give reasons to your answer.

Samudra Gupta performed a horse sacrifice after his conquest as fitting crown to his glorious career. Horse sacrifice is regarded as a symbol of imperialism. Samudra Gupta issued gold coins to commemorate his glory and the coins bore the legend "Asvamedhaparakrama". The performance of horse sacrifice denoted the re-emergence of Brahmanical Hinduism in India.

After Samudragupta the throne of Gupta empire was ascended by Chandragupta II in 375 C.E. The conquest of Malwa, Gujrat and Kathiwar from the western SakaKshatrapas were the greatest achievements of Chandragupta II. The victory over the SakaKshatrapas united India with the rest of northern India. It extended the western limit of the Gupta empire towards the Arabian Sea which had opened up the free access to the ports in the western coast. Chandragupta II adopted the title of *Vikramaditya* as a mark of victory over the SakaKshatrapas of western India. The court of Chandragupta II at Ujjain was adorned by numerous scholars including Kalidas and Amarasimha. Moreover, the Chinese pilgrim Fa-hien also visited India during his reign.

Chandragupta II was succeeded by Kumaragupta I and Skandagupta. Nothing much is known about the political career of Kumaragupta I, but the numismatic and epigraphic evidence indicates that the strength, unity, and prestige of the empire remained unshaken in his reign. Towards the

close of his reign, he successfully repulsed the menacing invasion of Pushyamitra.

Skandagupta was the last great ruler of the Gupta dynasty who ascended the throne while the hostilities of Pushyamitra were still there. The early years of Skandagupta's reign were fully of civil war between the different sons of Kumaragupta I. The Bhitari Pillar inscription and the Junagarh inscriptions provides the important information of the historical events of his reign. The two inscriptions mentions a number of enemies against whom he had to fight. Skandagupta defended the Gupta empire from the invasion of the powerful tribe of Pushyamitra. The tribe of the Pushyamitra cannot be properly identified, According to Fleet they were probably belonged to the Naga stock. (*Chatopadhyaya, S, Political History of North India, p-179*). According to H.C. Raychaudhury Skandagupta had some conflicts with the Vakatakas of Deccan who probably tried to infiltrate in Central Indian region of the Gupta empire. But they were successfully repulsed. (*Raychaudhury, Political History of Ancient India, 289*).

4.3.1 Decline of the Gupta Empire:

The decline of the Gupta empire began soon after the death of Skandagupta. In spite of his military success against the Pushyamitra and the Vakatakas, the strain of constant war depleted the resources of the empire. Besides, the invasion by the Hunas, rise of feudalism, weak successor, financial difficulties, decline of foreign trade, absence of large professional army to maintain the vast empire were some of the causes that brought an end to the glory of the Gupta empire.

4.3.2 Administration under the Guptas:

The imperial Gupta rulers were not only great conquerors but also great administrative organisers. It was their organisation and administrative skill that gave stability to their conquests. Discussing the nature of the Gupta administration R.N. Salatore and Romila Thapar remarks that the Gupta built their administration on the model of the Mauryas or the system of the Gupta administration was superficially akin to that of the Mauryas.

The different literary sources depicts that the king or *Samrata* was the head of the government. He ruled by hereditary rights. The inscriptions reveals that the Gupta kings adopted the high sounding titles of

Maharajadhiraja, Parambhattaraka etc. For better governance the empire was subdivided into a number of provinces or *Bhuktis*. The provinces were divided into districts or *Vishayas*, a part of the *Vishaya* was called the *Vithi* and the villages were the lowest administrative units.

Division of the Gupta Empire:

- i. The Empire-under the King
- ii. *Bhukti*- under *Uparika*
- iii. *Vishaya*- under *Vishayapati*
- iv. *Vithi*- part of the *Vishaya*
- v. Village- under the village headman (*Gramika*)

Regarding the judicial administration the *Katyayana-Smriti* mentions that the king was the highest judge. He personally attended the court to listen to the cases and was also assisted by a body of *Amatyas*(ministers)among which *Mahadandanayaka* was the chief justice.

The study of the different inscriptions and literary texts indicates that the main source of royal revenue were the various land revenues (*bhaga*), fines realised for offences, commercial taxes and taxes on salt, mines and forests. The important officials in-charge of revenue administration were the *Uparikas, Ayuktas* etc.

IMPORTANT OFFICIALS UNDER GUPTA ADMINISTRATION

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| i. Mahabaladhikrita | Commander-in-chief |
| ii. Mahadandanayaka | Chief justice. |
| iii. Mahasandhivigrahak | An official for post-war conciliation. |
| iv. Bhandagaradhikreta | Head of Royal treasury. |
| v. Vinayasthithisansthapak | Head of the education department. |
| vi. Sarvadhyaksha | Inspector for the all central departments. |
| vii. Yuktapurusha | Office to keep account of war body. |
| viii. Mahashwapati | Controller of cavalry. |
| ix. Mahamahipilapati | Controller and executer of elephantry. |
| x. Ranabhandagarika | Office-in-charge of army stores. |

The Gupta administration had a benevolent character and people lived happily under it. Besides the account of Fa-hien also reflects the same nature of the Gupta administration where he states that the people were numerous and happy. They were not required to register their households or attend to any magistrates and their rules. Only those who cultivated the royal land had to pay portion of grain to the government as tax. The character of the government was extremely mild. Most crimes were punished only by fines. The king governed without capital punishment (*Maiti, P. Studies in Ancient India, p-573*).

4.4 The Post Gupta Rulers : The Vardhanas and Palas

4.4.1 The Vardhanas:

With the decline of the imperial Guptas, Magadha and its capital Pataliputra, which since the Sixth cen B.C had been the centre of political activity in North India, lost their importance when Harshavardhana united his ancestral kingdom of Thanesar with the Maukhari kingdom of Kanauj and shifted his capital to Kanauj.

According to the traditions a man named Pushyabhuti founded the kingdom of Thanesar, which had an uneventful history till the accession of Prabhakarvardhana on its throne in 580 C.E. Prabhakarvardhana was succeeded by Sasanka, the ruler of Gauda. After him Harshavardhan ascended the throne in 606 C.E.

The reign of Harshavardhan constitutes an important epoch in the history of India. The principal sources of our information about the reign of Harshavardhan are the Harshacharita of Banabhatta, The Si-Yu-Ki of Hiuen-Tsang and the epigraphic records such as the Nalanda Seals, Aihole inscription of Pulakesin II and the Sonapat copper seal inscription. Harshavardhan was the most renowned ruler of the Vardhan dynasty. At the height of Harsha's power the empire covered much of North and north western India, extended east till Kamarupa and south until Narmada river and made Kanauj as his capital.

The success of Harsha's administration is testified by Hiuen-Tsang. He was highly impressed by the character of Harsha's civil administration, which was considered to be founded on principles. Instead of relying on the services of trained bureaucracy, the king himself supervised the administration and

constantly toured the provinces and extended justice to all. The king was assisted by a council of ministers. It advised him on all important affairs concerning the state and on matters of foreign policy. The whole empire of Harsha was divided into a number of *bhuktis* which were subdivided into *vishayas*. The *vishayas* consisted of *gramas*. The provincial governors were the *lokapalas*. The village officer was called *grama-aksha-patalika*.

Harsha strengthened the defence system of his kingdom not only by raising a strong army. Besides he concluded alliances with his neighbouring states to enhance his military strength. An undying alliance was made with Bhaskarvarman of Kamarupa. Harsha gave his daughter in marriage to Dhruvasena, the king of Valabhi and made matrimonial alliance with this kingdom.

State revenue was drawn from various sources such as land, customs, tolls etc. Taxes were mainly of three kinds : *bhaga*, *hiranya* and *bali*. *Bhaga* was the land tax and it was the principal source of revenue usually amounting 1/6th of the produce of land. *Hiranya* was the tax paid in cash either by the peasants or merchants. *Bali* was probably an extra tax collected in emergency from peasants and others.

THE RELIGIOUS ASSEMBLY AT KANAUIJ

Harsha convened a religious assembly in Kanauj in honour of Hiuen-Tsang. It was attended by twenty kings including Bhaskarvarman of Kamarupa and Buddhist, Jaina and Brahmanical scholars and priests. Everyday a small statue of Buddha was carried with accompaniment of a gorgeous procession led by Harsha, Bhaskarvarman and twenty kings. Learned men were assembled to discuss the philosophical principles of the religion. In this assembly Hiuen-Tsang was accorded the highest place of honour as the "Lord of discussion".

Check Your Progress (C)

- Q1: Give a brief note on Nalanda University,
Q2: Name the three Sanskrit plays which were written by Harshavardhana.

Harsha was a man of learning and culture. He is well remembered by posterity as a patron of learning. He was also a patron of education and scholarship. He was the author of three Sanskrit plays: *Nagananda*,

Ratnavali and *Priyadarsika*. Moreover he had patronised scholars like Banabhatta, Divakara and Mayura. Harshamaintained a literary circle in his court, the brightest gem of which was Banabhatta, the famous author of *Kadambari* and *Harshacharita*. Harshavardhan had also patronised the University of Nalanda, which was the greatest centre of Buddhist learning. Hiuen-Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim also studied Buddhist philosophy at Nalanda for two years.

Space for Learner's Notes

Self Assessment Questions

- Q1. Make an estimate of the achievements of Harshavardhan with special reference to the Hiuen-Tsang's account.
- Q2. Discuss the administration under Harshavardhan.

4.4.2 The Palas:

The Palas were the most powerful rulers of Gauda (western and eastern Bengal) who came into power during mid-eight century C.E. Prior to that the whole region was shared by the Later Guptas and the Khadga dynasty. The decline of the Later Guptas created a state of anarchy because there was no central authority which could control the state of anarchy (*Matsyanaya*). The political disintegration led to a deplorable state of chaos affecting the life of people. At this stage the different section of people raised to the throne a chief named Gopala, who brought the blessings of peace to the distracted land.

Gopala, the founder ruler of the Pala dynasty claimed descent from the solar race and also from the sea. The main achievement of Gopala was that he established peace in Bengal by removing the prevailing state of anarchy. His consolidation paved the way for the imperial expansion under his son Dharmapala. In contemporary records the earliest kings of this line are called *Vangapati* and *Gaudesvara*, showing that they ruled over the twin kingdoms of Eastern and Western Bengal.

Dharmapala, the son of Gopala was destined to be the greatest king that ever ruled in Bengal. Bengal played a great role in North India's history under him. He ruled during the period 780-815 century C.E. In the course of a long reign of at least thirty-five years he raised Bengal to the position of the premier state in Northern India, and did much to restore the greatness of the old imperial city of Pataliputra. Bengal, Bihar and probably Nepal were under the direct rule of Dharmapala. A long stretch of territory between

the borders of Bihar and Punjab formed the dependency of Kanauj over which ruled the nominee and subordinate chief Chakrayudha whose status was inferior to that of other vassal chiefs of the Pala king. In the south, it was extended upto Malwa and Berar. These territories acknowledged the suzerainty of Dharmapala, but retained their entities as states under their own rulers. For this Dharmapala came to be known as *Uttarapathaswamin*. (Majumdar, R. C. *Early History of Bengal*, p-169) Dharmapala was a great patron of Buddhism. He founded the great *Vikramasila Vihara* in Magadha and probably the monastery of Odantapuri. The Sompura Vihara owes its origin to him. The great scholar Haribhadra flourished in his reign. In spite of Buddhism, he was also tolerant towards Brahmanical Hinduism and other creeds. Even his minister Garga was also a Brahmin. Besides Dharmapala made several land grants for worship of Hindu gods.

After the death of Dharmapala in 815 C.E. his son Devapala succeeded the throne of Bengal. His reign is considered a glorious one due to his political achievements. He continued the struggle with the Gurjaras or the Pratiharas of the west and the Dravidians of the south. His troops claimed victorious not only over neighbouring realms of Orissa and Assam but also over the Huns. Few epigraphic sources also claim that his arms reached the Kamboja territory in the north and the Vindhya hills in the south. Besides, Devapala have also granted five villages to a monastery built by Balaputradeva, ruler of Suvarnavipa at Nalanda (R. C. Majumdar, H. C. Raychaudhuri, *Kalikinkar Dutta An Advance History of India*, p-212). After Devapala, probably for two decades the political sovereignty of Bengal was under the control of the weak rulers, which had shaken the glory of the Palas.

But the fortunes of the Pala family was again restored by Mahipala I. He is referred to as the overlord of Gauda in a record of 1026 C.E. From Bangarh and Tippera inscription it is known that Mahipala recovered his paternal kingdom i.e. northern, western and eastern Bengal from the grasp of the Kambojas and the Chandras who had usurped the Pala territories. The most important event of Mahipala's reign was the invasion of Bengal by Rajendra Chola. He won a victory over Mahipala which ended the glory of the ruler.

Check Your Progress (D)

- Q1. The title of *Vangapati* and *Gaudesvara* were adopted by the rulers of which state?
- Q2. Who founded the *Vikramashila Vihara*?

After the downfall of Mahipala I, a series of rulers like Nayapala, Vighrapala III, Mahipala II, have ascended the throne of Pala dynasty. But due to their weak succession and lack of farsightedness the Pala empire was depended on the support of military aristocracy recruited in the other provinces. Taking the advantage of this situation Divvoka, a Kaivarta chief revolted against the king Mahipala II. According to Ramacharita Mahipala II rashly fought against the confederacy of the Kaivarta chiefs but was killed. Mahipala's brothers Surapala and Ramapala escaped to Magadha and later in 1077 C.E. Ramapala ascended the throne to restore the lost glory of the Palas. He was regarded as the third founder of the Pala empire. He extended his sway over Bengal and the border kingdoms of Assam and Orissa. His rule over Bengal brought an era of peace and prosperity. With the death of Ramapala the strength of the Pala dynasty began to vanish. However the internal dissensions, feudal revolts and the foreign invasions also contributed to its extinct.

4.5 Summing Up:

After going through this unit you have learned about the political developments in the post-Mauryan period. The Indo-Greek invasion, emergence of the Guptas and rise of the Vardhanas and Palas were the most significant political development of this period. Along with the political events it will also enable you to study the other aspects of the socio-economic and religious life of that period.

4.6 References and Suggested Readings:

- Romila Thapar- *The Penguin History of Early India from the Origin to AD1300.*
- R.C.Majumdar- *Ancient India.*
- Upinder Singh- *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India.*
- R.S.Tripathi- *History of Ancient India.*
- R.S.Sharma- *India's Ancient Past.*
- D.N.Jha- *Ancient India in Historical Outline.*

4.7 Answers to Check Your Progress:

Check Your Progress (A)

1. Two features of Mathura School of Art:
 - a) The Mathura school of Art is purely indigenous in its style.
 - b) They used spotted red sandstone.
2. Nagarjuna.

Check Your Progress (B)

1. Allahabad Pillar Inscription
2. Nalanda.
3. Fa-hien.
4. Kalidas.

Check Your Progress (C)

1. Nalanda was the most renowned educational institution established by the Gupta ruler Kumragupta during 5th cen C.E. Later it was patronised by Harshavardhana. It was situated in the Indian state of Bihar. Nalanda became a great center of learning, especially of Mahayana Buddhism. Chinese pilgrims like Fa-hien, Xuanxung and Hiuen –Tsang have visited Nalanda for the study of Buddhist philosophy.
2. *Ratnavali, Priyadarshika and Nagananda.*

Check Your Progress (D)

1. Bengal.
2. Dharmapala.

4.8 Model Questions:

- Give an account of the Indo-Greek invasion of India.
- “Kanishka was not only a great conqueror but also an able administrator and a patron of art and literature.” Discuss.
- In the light of different sources discuss the political conquests of Samudragupta.
- Make an estimate of the administrative organisation of the Guptas.
- Why is the period of the Guptas known as the golden age of India?
- Review the political and cultural achievements of Harshavardhana.
- Discuss the rise and the fall of the Palas of Bengal.

====x====

Unit: 5

- [a] Political development in the South – the Pallavas, the imperial Cholas, the Rashtrakutas and the Chalukyas
- [b] The Arabs and the Turks in Indian politics – Ghaznavides and the Ghorid invasions
- [c] Indian Society during 650 – 1200 A.D.-literature & language, temple architecture and Sculpture

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5.0 Introduction:

All lands south of the Narmada are compendiously called *Dakshinapatha* from which the word Deccan has been derived. The geographical site of

the Deccan or *Dakshinapatha* can roughly be described the area between the Vindhya mountain range and the Tungabhadra river. With the collapse of the Guptas the centre of interest of India shifted southwards to the Deccan and south India where the Pallavas, the Cholas, the Rashtrakutas and the Chalukyas established powerful empires of long traditions. A synthesis of the dominant cultural strain of the time emerged-the assimilation of Aryan culture with that of Dravidian pattern. The institutions of south India was firmly established and maintained with notable continuity. The kingdoms of the Deccan acted as the connection between the north and the south facilitating the spread of ideas from one area to the other.

The period between 650 to 1200 C.E was also significant for a number of other reasons. Here mention can be made of the Muslim invasions in their attempt to enlarge their religion an objective of looting the fabulous wealth of India played a significant part in the history of India. This changed the very destiny of India with the establishment of the Muslim rule in India.

Besides political conflict, the period also witnessed the outburst of cultural growth. It ushered in a glorious era of remarkable progress in the field of art, literature architecture, sculpture, printing and music. All these influences overran into the numerous Hindu colonies across the sea.

5.1 Objectives:

- a) To study the political development in south India in the post Gupta period- the Pallavas, the imperial Cholas, the Rashtrakutas and the Chalukyas.
- b) To study the Arabs and Turks invasions in India and the impact of their rule in Indian politics.
- c) To study the Indian society from the period 650 to 1200CE with special emphasis on literature, language, temple architecture and sculpture.

5.2 Pallavas:

The origin of the Pallavas remains ambiguous. According to V.A. Smith the Pallava were not one distinct tribe or class but a mixed population composed of partly foreigners and partly south Indian tribes or castes different in race from Tamils and taking their name from their presumptuous foreign dynasty

which obtained control over them and welded them into an aggressive political power.

The growth and development of the Pallava dynasty becomes more definite from the second half of the 6th century. Simhavishnu was the founder of the Pallava power. He suppressed the Kalabras and conquered the whole country of Kaveri. He came into conflict with the Pandyas and the ruler of Ceylon. On his death his son Simhavarman ascended the throne 575 CE. He defeated his contemporary Tamil ruler. Ceylon also formed a part of his kingdom.

Mahendravarman the successor of Simhavarman was powerful ruler and a man of multifaceted talents. He fought wars against the Chalukyan ruler Pulakasein II. The Aihole inscription gives vivid descriptions about the Pallavas and the Chalukyans. He also introduced the rock cut temple architecture.

Mahendravarman was succeeded by Narshimavarman, the greatest of the Pallava rulers. His reign was famous for a number of reasons. It was during his reign the famous Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang visited the Pallava kingdom. He gives an interesting account of the Pallavas and the people. According to his account there were several monasteries and Buddhist temples and the people lived happily. There was abundance of agricultural produce.

He also sent a naval expedition to Ceylon to reinstate the Sinhalese prince. He also beautified the port of Mahabalipuram. He conquered the Chalukyan capital on 642CE

Narshimavarman was succeeded by Mahendravarman II who ruled from 668 to 670 CE. He was succeeded by Parameswarvarman who ruled from 670 to 695 CE. During his tenure the Pallavas got a setback from the Chalukyans and their capital Kanchi was occupied by the Chalukyans.

Parameswarvarman was succeeded by Narasimhavarman II who ruled from 695 to 722 CE. A ruler of peaceful temperament he built the Kailashnatha temple at Kanchi and Dandin the great Sanskrit poet adorned his court. He was succeeded by his son Parameswarvarman II who ruled from 722 to 730CE. He had an eventless reign except that he had to face an invasion of the Chalukyan ruler Vikramaditya II.

Nandivarman II was the next important ruler. He fought against the Pandyas and the Rashtrakutas. The Pallava-Chalukya conflict also started during his reign. He was a builder of several temples. The Kuktesvara temple at Kanchi

was build under his patronage. He was also a scholar of great repute and patronized learning. Thriumangal Alvar the famous saint was his contemporary. Dantivarman succeeded his father Nandivarman II. The later Pallavas declined and lived as mere feudatories.

Stop to Consider

The Pallavas was one of the dynasty that emerged in the second half of the 6th century CE. Although Simhavishnu is credited as the founder of the Pallava dynasty but it was under the rule of Mahendravarman that the Pallavas raised to great heights of glory and the tradition continued till the rule of Nandivarman II. The Pallavas were the pioneers of the Dravidian style of temple architecture. Besides they also patronized scholars of great repute.

Self Asking Questions

- Q.1 Who was the founder of the Pallava Dynasty?
- Q.2 During whose reign did Hiuen Tsang visited the Pallava kingdom?
- Q.3 State the importance of the Pallava rule?
- Q.4 Who was the greatest king of the Pallavas?

5.3 The Imperial Cholas:

The rise of the Cholas may be dated to the middle of the 9th CE. They emerged from anonymity and soon displaced the remnants of the Pallava power to north of their capital Tanjore and subdued the Pandyas.

It was Vijayalaya an erstwhile vassal of the Pallavas who founded the new line of the imperial Cholas.

Aditya I the son and successor of Vijayalaya was a powerful monarch who captured Tondaimandalam by defeating the Pallava king Aparajitavarman. He also occupied Kongu and overran the western Gangas. His kingdom extended from Madras in the north to Kaveri in the south. The Rashtrakuta king Krishna II gave his daughter in marriage to Aditya I.

Aditya I was succeeded by Parantaka I, the first important ruler of the Cholas. He was an ambitious ruler and was engaged in the wars of conquest

from the very beginning. He conquered Madurai and assumed the title of Madurikonda. His successor Rajaditya however lost to the Rashtrakuta king Krishna III at the battle of Tokkolam and had to cede Tondaimandalam to the adversary.

It was Rajaraja I who took the Cholas to great heights of glory. His accession to the throne opened up an illustrious chapter in the history of the Chola imperialism.

The Cholas grew under him an extensive and well knit empire efficiently organized and administrated and possessing a powerful army and navy. He defeated a confederation of rulers of the Pandyas, Kerala kingdom and Ceylon and “islands of the sea”. He also annexed Maldives several parts of Modern Mysore and Coorg.

Great as he was as a conqueror, he was greater as an administrator and builder. He divided his empire into eight provinces with Kurram and Kottam as immediate subdivision. And it was local self government and village assembly which was the main support of his administration.

He also built the magnificent temple at Brihadeswara or the Rajaraja temple at Thanjaur which is considered as a remarkable piece of architecture of South Indian style.

Rajaraja was succeeded by his son Rajendra Chola I who also followed the policy of conquest and annexation and further raised the reputation of the Cholas. He followed an expansionist policy and made extensive conquest in Ceylon.

Three kings of Bengal, king Govindachandra, Mahipala and Ranasura were defeated. To commemorate his victory over the Gangetic valley he assumed the title of Gangaikondachola and founded the capital called Gangaikondacholapuram.

The maritime power which was established by his father was further augmented by him. With his naval forces he invaded the Malaya peninsula and the Srivijaya Empire that extended over Sumatara, Java and the neighbouring islands. He also sent two diplomatic missions to China for political and commercial reasons.

Rajendra I was succeeded by Rajadhiraja I. He kept the rebellious Pandya and the Cheras well under control. He also put down the hostile forces of Ceylon. But very shortly after this he was killed in the battle field by the western Chalukya king at Koppam on the banks of Tungabhadra.

His brother Rajendra II was crowned in the battle field. He carried on a life long struggle with the western Chalukyas. But in 1068CE the rivalry between the Chola was replaced by a bond of matrimony. His reign was followed by confusion in which his son Abhirajendra was killed and the throne was seized by Kulottunga I, in whose veins flowed both the Chola and Chalukya blood.

He succeeded in amalgamating the Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi and the Cholas of Thanjaur. The most important reform under taken by him was the re-survey of the land for taxation and revenue purpose.

The Chola Empire continued for more than a century after him. The shattering structure of the Cholas fell into pieces during the reign of Rajendra IV and the Pandyas and the Kakatiyas dividing it among them.

Stop to Consider

The Cholas rose into power towards the middle of the 9th century CE. It was Vijayalaya who laid the foundation of the new line of the imperial Cholas. However it during the reign of Rajendra I who placed the Cholas in their coveted position. He made his reign splendid in the annals of the Cholas. It was him who brought in the concept of decentralization by dividing the kingdom into provinces, the lowest unit being the villages where a good deal of autonomy existed. They were also patrons of art and literature. They also erected new temples and stupendous irrigation structures.

Self Asking Questions

- Q.5. Who laid the foundation of the imperial Cholas?
- Q.6. Who is considered as the greatest of the Chola rulers? State the reasons for it?
- Q.7. Who was the Chola king who entered into a matrimonial alliance with Chalukyas?
- Q.8. Who was the last king of the Cholas?

5.4 The Rashtrakutas:

The rise of the imperial Rashtrakutas can be described as memorable phenomena in the history of south India. They emerged as a powerful ruler

after overthrowing the Chalukyas and carved out an independent kingdom. The real founder of the Rashtrakutas was Dantidurga. (735-756).

He had spectacular exploits over Kanchi, Kalinga, Malava, south Gujarat and other small principalities. By 750CE he was almost the master of Central and southern Gujarat and the whole of Madhya Pradesh and Berar. He also assumed imperial titles like Maharajadhiraja.

Dantidurga was succeeded by Krishna I. He defeated the Western Ganga dynasty of Mysore and the Shilaras of South Konkan. He also defeated the Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi and Konkan. He thus became the overlord of the whole of Maharashtra and Central India.

His most monumental work was the Kailashnatha temple at Ellora which according to V.A. Smith was “the most marvelous architectural feat in India.”

The next important ruler was Govinda III who won over several North Indian kingdoms. It was during his reign that the tripartite struggle for the control of Kannauj was at its peak between the Palas, Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas.

While busy with his adversaries in the north, the southern states of the Cholas, the Pandyas, the Cheras and the Pallavas made a common cause against Govinda III only to ultimately recognise his over lordship. Dr. A.S. Altekar has given a deserving tribute: “Govinda III was undoubtedly the ablest of the Rashtrakutas emperors, unrivalled in courage, generalship, statesmanship and martial exploits. His invincible armies had conquered all the territories between Kannauj and Cape Comorin and Banaras and Broach.”

Govinda III was succeeded by Amogavarsha, who is considered as the greatest ruler of the Rashtrakutas. He ruled over sixty four long years. He was mostly occupied in suppressing the pro-independence tendencies within his kingdom and tightening his grip over the Gangas of Mysore and Chalukyas of Vengi.

Amogavarsha was more famous for the literary pursuits and artistic projects. Though a Hindu, but he was tolerant towards other faiths. He was a patron of art and also authored “Kavirajamarga” in Kannada language.

Sulamain the Arab traveler acknowledged him as one of the four greatest ruler of the world. He established the Rashtrakutas at Malkhand which remained the capital of the empire till its collapse.

He assumed the title of Viranarayana after defeating the Eastern Chalukyas. His reign was more or less peaceful and enriched the arts, literature and religion. For all these reasons he is often described as the Asoka of the south.

Krishna II succeeded Amoghavarsha. His reign witnessed the revolts of the eastern Chalukyas of Vengi. By wanton aggression upon the Cholas he had to buy a humiliating peace.

Krishna III was the last important ruler of the Rashtrakutas. He consolidated the empire which had become scattered due to a series of weak king who had preceded him. He defeated the Cholas and expanded the empire further to Rameshwaram where the pillars of his victories marked the southernmost addition of his empire.

He also built Gangamartandamitya and Krisheshwara temple at Rameshwaram. During his reign the great Kannada poet Poona wrote Shantipurna.

The great imposing edifice of the Rashtrakutas began to decline after Krishna III and by 973 CE the empire was extinguished by Amoghavarsha IV, the Chalukya king.

Stop to Consider

The period of Rashtrakuta ascendancy comprise an important chapter in the history of Deccan . No other ruling dynasty played an important role like that of the Rashtrakutas in the Deccan. Dantidurga laid the foundation of the Rashtrakuta dynasty. However it was under Amogavarsha that the dynasty reached to its great heights of glory. His reign was a peaceful one and enriched the arts, literature and religion of the empire. The Rashtrakutas spiritualised their subjects by encouraging religious activities and building up temples.

Self Asking Questions

- Q.9. Who laid the foundation of the Rashtrakuta dynasty?
- Q.10. Who is considered as the greatest king of the Rashtrakutas?
- Q.11. Who built the Kailashnatha temple?
- Q.12. How did the Rastrakutas became famous?

5.5 The Chalukyas:

From the sixth 6th to 8th centuries and from the 10th to 12th centuries the history of Deccan was the history of the Chalukyas. Because of their different units and shifting of the capitals we study the Chalukyas as -The Chalukyas of Vatapi ,Chalukyas of Kalyani and the Chalukyas of Vengi. Opinions differ regarding the origin of the Chalukyas. But it is generally presumed from the various theories that the Chalukyas were the original inhabitants of North India and came to Deccan to settle permanently.

5.5.1 The Chalukyas of Vatapi:

Definite information is lacking regarding their rise to power or about the size of their kingdom. The Chalukyas rose into power from the time of the third king Pulakasein I. He is regarded as the real founder of this dynasty. He consolidated his power over the territories around modern Bijapur. He fortified the city of Badami and garrisoned it.

His son and successor, Kirtivarman I followed his father's policy. He reigned from 566 to 567 CE and extended his kingdom over Northern Konkan, Kanara and to Bellary and Kurnool districts. The conquest of Konkan successfully brought the important part of Goa, then known as Revatidvipa, into the growing empire. Upon his death, his son Pulakesin II was a minor, so his Mangalesa held power as regent. Mangalesa continued the policy of invading and raiding adjacent territories. When Pulakesin II came of age, his uncle did not want to abdicate the throne. This call for a civil war wherein Pulakesin II with his own martial prowess defeated Mangalesa and killed him. Pulakesin II proclaimed himself king on 609-10 C.E.

Pulakesin II who carved his access to the throne by dint of his sword was undoubtedly the greatest of the Chalukyas. He assumed pompous title like 'Parmeswara-Sri-Prithvi-Ballava-Satya-Shraya'.

He described his military achievements in his famous Aihole *Prasasti* dated 634CE. According to the description in the Aihole Pulakesin II defeated the Kadambas, the Gangas of south Mysore, Moriyas of Konkana. He also humbled other races like the Latas, the Malavas, and the Gurjaras and later offered their submission to Pulakesin. In far south he attacked the kingdom of the Pallavas and forced Mahendravarman I to acknowledge his suzerainty. Thus he succeeded in bringing the whole of Deccan under his control.

By the time when Pulakasein II emerged as the master of the entire south, Harshavardhana the ruler of Kannauj advanced up to south with his army against Pulakasein II who was no less powerful to allow his northern invader to enter into his empire. With a huge army he faced Harsha's army and both the sides fought a fierce battle, where Pulakasein II challenged the army of Harsha. Narmada was recognized as the frontier lines between the empires of the "lord of the North" Harsha and "Lord of south" Pulakasein II.

Pulakasein II was not only a powerful king from the point of view of military success but also regarded as one of the most benevolent administrator of southern India. The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang came to Deccan in the reign of Pulakasein II. He paid glowing tribute to the great hero of India.

The rule of Pulakasein II did not come to a peaceful end. Because of his yearn for power and ever aggressive character he again invaded the Pallava kingdom when his earlier adversary's son Narshimavarman I ruled. In retaliation the Pallava king Narashimavarman invaded the Chalukyan kingdom and in that resistance Pulakasein II lost his life in 642CE.

After the death of Pulakasein II dark clouds descended over the Chalukyas. Although his son Vikramaditya I was able to hold the empire intact for some time, his successors were unable to hold the empire for long. By 8th century CE the Deccan saw the rise of the Rashtrakutas to power and thus brought down the curtain upon the Chalukyas.

5.5.2 The Chalukyas of Kalyani:

After the disintegration of the empire of the Chalukyas of Vatapi, the Rashtrakutas became the overlords of Vatapi. Although some branches of the Chalukyas continued but they became subordinates to the Rashtrakutas. But when the power of the Rashtrakutas began to wane the Chalukyas staged a comeback. Thus the rule of the Kalyani line of the Chalukyas started, probably the collateral branch of the Chalukyas of Vatapi

It was Taila or Tailapa II a feudatory of the Rashtrakuta who established his independence by assuming the title of Maharadhiraja. Tailapa made extensive conquests over Chedi, Orissa, Nepal and Kautala kingdom. He reigned from 793 to 797 CE.

After him Satyasraya, Dasavarman, Vikramaditya V, Jayashima I and Jagadevamalla sat on the throne. All these kings had insignificant reigns.

Somesvara I came to the throne in 1042 CE. It was he who shifted his capital to Kalyani from Manyakheta. He conquered the cities of Malavas, Mandu, Dhara, and Ujjaini. At the end of his reign he was defeated by Rajendra Chola.

He was succeeded by Somesvara II. He was the greatest king of the western Chalukyas. His accession is marked by a new era called by the Chalukyas-Vikrama Kala. He foiled the attempt of the independence of the Chalukyas of Vengi. The greatest writer Bilhana and Vinasesvara the author of Mitashakra an authoritative work on Hindu law adorned his court.

He was succeeded by his son Someswara III who like his father was also a patron of art and literature. With his poetic eulogy he claimed to be the suzerain of Andhra, Dravida, Magadha and Nepal.

The reign of Somesvara III was followed by a reign of insignificant rulers. It was finally under the rule of Yadavas of Devagiri and the Hoyasalas that the fate of the Chalukyas was sealed.

5.5.3 The Chalukya of Vengi:

Pulakasein II of the Chalukyas of Vatapi controlled Andhra where he placed his brother, Kubja Vishnuvardhana as the viceroy over the area from Vizagapatam to Nellore district by about 631 C.E. But very soon he shook the authority of his brother yoke and carved out a new kingdom for himself with his capital at Vengi. According to K.A. Nilkanta Sastri, Vishnuvardhana a new dynasty, i.e. Eastern Chalukya dynasty after obtaining his brother's approval. This new line came to be known Chalukyas of Vengi.

Kubjavishnuvardhana ruled for eighteen years. He was followed by his son Maharaja Jayashima I who reigned from 633 to 663 CE. He was followed by insignificant rulers. Vijayaditya I was the next important king. He was confronted by a host of enemies like that of the Gangas and the Rashtrakutas.

After him came king Vijayaditya III who ruled from 844 to 888CE, who defeated the Rashtrakuta king Krishna II and destroyed his capital Manyakheta. He also subdued the Gangas. Thus he was one of the greatest personalities of his dynasty.

He was followed by Bhima, Ammavishnuvardhana VI and Vijayaditya VI. It was towards the close of the 10th century that the Eastern Chalukyas was overran by the Cholas ruler Rajaraja I. In the later centuries the power of the Chalukyas of Vengi perished.

Stop to Consider

The history of Deccan from 6th to 8th century and from 10th to 12th was the history of the Chalukyas. Because of their varied units and shifting capitals we study the history of the Chalukyas as the Chalukyas of Vatapi, the Chalukyas of Kalyani and the Chalukyas of Vengi. The Chalukyas had built a well knit empire and for a time were the masters of Deccan. They achieved the political unity of Deccan. They were also contributors to art and architecture of the period.

Self Asking Questions

Q.13. When did the different branches of the Chalukyas came to power in Deccan?

Q.14. Who was northern Indian ruler contemporary to Pulakasein II?

Q.15. Who were the scholars who adorned the court of Somesvara II?

Q.16. How many Chalukyas were there?

5.6 The Arabs and the Turks in Indian politics: Ghaznvides and the Ghorid invasion:

The rise of Islam and its rapid spread forms an important chapter in the history of Medieval India. The simplicity and the missionary zeal contributed a lot towards its spread. The Arabs had been the carriers of Indian trade to Europe. After the conversion to Islam they began to cast their covetous eyes on the wealth of India as well as eager to propagate their new religion in India.

The much awaited opportunity to invade Sindh came at the beginning of the 8th century CE.

In 712CE the Arabs under Muhammad Bin Qasim invaded and conquered it, although it did not had any lasting impact with the result that Islam did not spread till Muhammad Ghazanvi and Muhmmad Ghorid invaded it.

Several reasons have been put forward for the Arab conquest of Sindh. Firstly the Muslims were ambitious to establish their political suzerainty in India. The wealth of the country also attracted the invaders.

Secondly the missionary spirit of the Muslims were high and they were interested in converting the Indians to Muslim religion.

However the immediate cause that led to the invasion was Raja Dahir the ruler of Sindh's refusal to punish the pirates who had carried valuable gifts for the Khalifa. A protest was lodged to Raja of Dahir and compensation was demanded. But refusal to hold himself responsible on the plea that Debal port which was plundered did not fall under the jurisdiction of king Dahir. To avenge this the Khalifa sent his young energetic, nephew and son-in-law Muhammad –Bin –Qasim to invade India and Sindh.

The invaders had around 6000 horses, 9000 camels and many troopers. Debal was captured without much difficulty. Then he proceeded to Rawar where king Dahir offered stiff resistance with a good force and the final clash of arms took place on June 20th 712 C.E. Though he fought bravely but was assassinated on the battlefield.

After his victory over Rawar he proceeded to Brahmanabad where he was opposed by Dahir's son, but unfortunately Brahmanabad also fell. Thereafter he took Alor, the capital of Sindh thereby completing his victory over Sindh.

In 713 C.E. he captured Multan. The twin victory of Sindh and Multan gave name and fame to Muhammad Bin Qasim.

The Arabs no doubt conquered Sindh but it did not leave any lasting impact. Neither they were able to hold Sindh for a long time nor were they able to take any practical step towards the permanent conquest of Sindh. According to Lanepole "The Arab had conquered Sindh, but the conquest was only an episode in the history of Islam, triumph without results."

But still the Arab conquest left some effects though not permanent in nature. By conquering Sindh, the Arabs exposed the weakness of India. Thus, India became a prey to foreign invasion one after another. Secondly, failure of the Arabs in establishing a permanent empire in India brought another fact of importance before the foreigners that it was very difficult to conquer India while beginning from the Sindh side. Sindh was a wrong quarter to proceed with the task of conquest of India. The Arab themselves wrote about Sindh that "water is scarce, fruits are poor and the robbers are bold. If a few troops are sent, they will be slain if many they will starve."

But there were also other results of their conquest. The Arabs were Muslims in their faith and as a result of their conquest they won many followers of their faith. There was an increase in trade contacts and the Arab merchants settled in the port cities on the sea coast.

In the cultural side the Indians taught a good deal to the their Arab merchants The Arabs learned from Indian philosophy, astronomy, mathematics and medicine and many Indian works like the Brahma sutra and Panchatantra was translated into Arabic. A great deal of Arabian culture, which had such a marvelous effect upon the European civilization was borrowed from India. Thus the India civilization was much on the intellectual plane.

Stop to Consider

The Arabs invaded Sindh in about 712 CE. A number of causes were accountable for the invasion. The real cause was the religious zeal of the Arabs. They were adamant to spread their faith in the distant land. Moreover the wealth of India also attracted them to carry on their invasion. But the immediate cause of the invasion was to punish the pirates of Debal who had plundered their ships. It was Muhammad Bin Qasim who headed the army and invaded in about 712 CE. But the invasion failed to leave any permanent impact on the history of India politically. But it did left a cultural impact on history.

Self Asking Questions

Q.17. Why did the Arabs invade Sindh?

Q.18. Who headed the army of the Arabs?

Q.19. What were the effects of the Arab conquest of Sindh?

5.6.1 The Ghaznavid Invasion of India:

The Arabs were the first Muslim conquerors to invade India and the work began by them was completed by the Turks. The Turks by the 8th and 9th centuries had established their supremacy over Caliph of Baghdad. The Turks who first came into contact with India belonged to an upstart ruling family of Gjazni.

Of the Turks Alaptgin established his rule over Ghazni, in 962 C.E., followed by his successor Subuktgin, the first Turkish ruler to invade India. He attacked the Shahi dynasty. Jayapala who organized a confederacy of some of the reigning kings of Northern India fought against Subuktgin, but the confederation was defeated.

Encouraged by the victory over the reigning confederacy of northern Indian kings Subuktgin son Muhammad of Ghazni invaded India seventeen times and every time he took away with him huge amounts of war indemnities.

The primary objective of Ghazni was to plunder the wealth of India. He fully exploited the religious sentiment of his followers in order to satisfy his personal and hidden motive of amassing the fabulous wealth of India. The invasion ruined the economy of the country. Cities and temples were looted. Important structure was destroyed.

The invasion also weakened the political and military power of the Rajputs.

In the words of R.C. Majumdar “Big cracks were made in the great fabric of Indian polity, and it was no longer a question of time when the age old structure would fall. Neither the Arabs nor the Ghazanavid Turks succeeded in adding India to the growing empire of Islam, but it paved the way for the final struggle which overwhelmed the Gangetic kingdom some hundred years back.”

Moreover as a result of Muhammad's invasion the Muslim faith won many new followers. A great many Indians embraced Islam. Moreover “in the train of the Muslim warriors and warlords came Muslim saints and servants who permeated (or increased the number of) the Indian society, propagated Islam in India and won a number of converts.”

5.6.2 Muhammad Ghori invasion of India:

The intermitting invasion of Muhammad Ghazni opened the flood gates of future Turkish invasions which in the long run led to the establishment of the Turkish rule in India in the hands of Muhammad Ghori.

Like his predecessor Ghori also invaded India several times which in words of Lanepoole “recalled the glorious days of idol breakers (i.e. Muhammad) nearly two centuries earlier. His main objective was to establish an empire in India and spread Islam to achieve personal glory.”

For about thirty years from 1175 to 1206 he led a number of expeditions against India. He first invaded Multan in 1175CE. Thus within 1175 to 1186 he made himself the undisputed master of the whole of Punjab and Sindh.

After getting rid of all his Muslim rivals in India he was yet to fight with the Rajputs, who had greatly recovered themselves since the days of Muhammad.

Prithvi Raj Chauhan the powerful Rajput ruler of Delhi and Ajmer could not tolerate the rise of a powerful Muslim state in his neighbourhood.

And when in 1191 Muhammad Ghori advanced towards Delhi and laid siege to Sirhind, Prithvi Raj Chauhan marched against him. The two armies met at the historic plain of Panipat, where the Muslims were utterly defeated. In the words of Ishwari Prasad, "Never before the Muslims had experienced such a terrible rout in the hands of the infidels." Thus ended the battle which is generally known as the first battle of Tarain in the annals of history.

The very next year i.e. 1192 Muhammad Ghori once again invaded India at the head of a large army. On the other hand Prithvi Raj Chauhan also made huge preparation. A fierce battle was fought on the plain of Tarain once again. The Rajputs were taken aback and were killed in large numbers.

In the words of V.A. Smith "The second battle of Tarain may be regarded as decisive contest which ensured the ultimate success of Muhammadan attack of Hindustan. All the numerous subsequent victories were mere consequences of the overwhelming defeat of the Hindu league on the historic plains to the north of Delhi."

He then defeated Jai Chand the ruler of Kannauj in 1194. The fall of Jai Chand made Muhammad Ghori the master of the political as well as the religious capital of Hindusthan.

The next few years he was busy in the politics of Central India followed by wars with kings of northern India.

After these conquests Muhammad Ghori appointed Qutb-uddin-Aibak as his viceroy in India who further consolidated these conquests and laid foundation of the Sultanate of Delhi.

The main reason for the success of Turks in India was their superiority in military organisation, discipline and strategy. Another reason of their success was the religious fanaticism of the Turks which helped to win wars. They thought that they were for the glory of their religion. The Indians on the other hand failed to learn lesson from the past. Lack of unity among the rulers proved catastrophic to the Indians.

Thus by the end of the 12th century a new era ushered under the five Sultan of five successive dynasties of the Delhi Sultanate.

Check Your Progress

The Ghaznavid and Ghori invasions of India led by Muhammad of Ghaznavi and Muhammad of Ghori respectively holds an important place in the history of India. The Turks were new converts to Islam and therefore, proved more fanatical in their religious zeal. Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni was the first to penetrate deep into India. However the credit of establishing the Muslim empire in India goes to Muhammad of Ghori who followed him after a lapse of nearly 148 years and established the Turkish rule in India.

Space for Learner's Notes

Self Asking Questions

- Q.20. Who attacked 17 times on India?
- Q.21. Why did Muhammad of Ghazni invade India?
- Q.22. When was second battle of Tarain fought? Examine the consequences of the battle.

5.7 Indian Society during 650 to 1200 CE: Literature, Language, Temple architecture and sculpture:

The period between 650 to 1200CE opened a new chapter in the development of literature, language, temple architecture and sculpture in India. The rulers of this period extended patronage to the development of education, literature and various arts.

From the literary point of view, the period witnessed remarkable progress. The Post-Gupta rulers actively encouraged Sanskrit language and literature. Besides Sanskrit religious literature, secular and regional works were also composed in the Post-Gupta period in Tamil as well as Prakrit. These literary developments took place simultaneously both in north as well as in south India.

Sanskrit religious literature includes the *Puranas* which were eighteen in number. Though originally composed hundreds of years ago, these texts were passed down orally from one generation to another. But they were compiled and written down during this period. Some of the *Puranas* are the *Agni Purana*, *Vayu Purana*, *Visnu Purana*, *Siva Purana*, In Kamarupa (ancient Assam) was composed the *Kalika Purana* that deals with the establishment of the worship of the Goddess Kamakhya as well as the political and cultural history of ancient Assam.

Many scholars of repute enriched the intellectual life of the age by their writings. Among them, Bharavi wrote *Kiratarjunia*, Bhatti wrote *Ravana Vadha* and *Bhakti Kavya*, Magha wrote *Sisupala Vadha*, Kshemendra wrote *Bhirathakatha Manjuri*, the *Dasavataracharita* and *Kala Vilasa*, Sriharsha wrote the *Khandana Khandakhadya*, Padma Gupta wrote the *Navasahanka Charita*, Bilhana wrote *Vikramanadevacharita*, Bhavabhuti wrote the *Mahavira Charita*, Malti Madhava and Uttara Ram Charita, Bhadrinarayana wrote *Venisankara*, Jayadeva wrote the *Prasana Raghava*, Rajashekhara wrote *Bala Ramayana* and *Koorpoora Manjuri*, Dandi wrote *Kavayadarsha*, Hemchandra wrote the *Chandonushana* and Domadara Misra wrote *Vanobhushna*. Besides, collections of fables and morality tales like the *Hitopadesha* of Narayan Pandit and the *Kathasaritasagar* of Somadeva are considered as other great works of this period.

Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* is another work of this period. It is a history of Kashmir. In this work, Kalhana has given a descriptive account of the kings of Kashmir. Besides it also contains reference to the history of other part of India. Therefore, Dilip K. Chakrabarti has remarked, "Apart from Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, a twelfth century AD text dealing with the history of Kashmir, there is no text which deals specifically with the dynastic history of any part of India."

Besides popular literature in different languages also produced up during this period. They were in poetic form. The *Amarakosa* by Amarasingha, the *Varjayanti* of Yadava, and the *Abhiyana Chintamani* of Hemchandra are the examples. Biographical literary works were also composed in Kannada language. The earliest extant work in Kannada is the *Vaddaradhane* of Sivakoti which consists of nineteen stories based on Harisena's *Brihatkathakosa*.

Check Your Progress

Make a list of different works composed during the period between 650 to 1200 CE.

Self Asking Questions

Q.23. What does Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* deal with?

Q.24. What does *Kalika Purana* deal with?

5.7.1 Development of Temple Architecture:

The period also witnessed the growth of fine arts particularly the art of architecture and sculpture. In the words of Upinder Singh, temples and images of Gods and goddesses were constructed in great numbers during this period and they were of superb quality which have assigned this period a distinguished place in the history of India. The distinctive style of temple construction was a consequence of geographical, climatic, religious and linguistic diversity.

The growth of sculpture and architecture and sculpture of this period can be divided into two periods. The first period include the period between 600 to 900 CE. The specimen of this period was the Kailash temple of Ellora, Ratha temple of Mamallapuram and the images of Elephanta caves near Mumbai particularly the Trimurti (Visnu, Siva and Brahma)

The next period falls between 900 to 1200 CE. During this period the temples of Khajuraho, Orissa and Rajputna were constructed. It also includes the temples built by the Cholas, Pallavas and the Rashtrakutas.

From the point of style the art of this period can be divided into two parts: the north Indian style being called the *Nagara* style and the south Indian style is called the *Dravida* style.

The *Nagara* style confined within the land between the Himalayas and the Vindhya mountain. The *Nagara* style of temples had two parts_a square sanctum known as *Grabhagriha* surmounted by a curvilinear *Sikhara* or dome generally led by a rectangular *Mandapa* or pillared hall with flat roof in the form of a stepped pyramid. A *Nagara* style of temple has projections known as *Rathas* in centre of each side of both of the *Grabhagriha* and the *Mandapa*. These features are visible in the temples of northern India-the Lingaraja temple and the Parasuramesvara temple of Bhuneswar.

The *Dravida* style of temple architecture arose in the 5th century in the region south of the Vindhya mountains. The temples of the Dravida style are found in places like Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. Different royal dynasties like the Pallavs, Cholas, Rashtrakutas and the Chalukyas in the early period contributed to the evolution of the Dravidian form of temple architecture. “the most striking feature of the *Dravida* temple is its pyramidal *Sikhara* which consist of progressively smaller and smaller storey's, culminating in a slender pinnacle surmounted by small dome.”

Dravida temples have a lofty *Gopuram* at the entrance of the temple complex.

The Pallavas were the pioneers of the *Dravida* style of temple architecture. Numerous rock cut temples were constructed under the patronage of Mahendravarman and Narshimavarman.

The Cholas who succeeded the Pallavas made even more elaborate temples. By the end of the Chola period all the elements of the typical *Dravida* temple had emerged. The Chalukyas who ruled in the southern part of India from 973 CE and 1180 CE also patronized.

Check Your Progress

Form a list of Nagara and *Dravida* Style of temple architecture during the period between 650-1200.

5.7.2 Growth of Fine Arts:

Stupendous development was witnessed in the field of Indian sculptured art during the period of 650 to 1200CE. The period thrived with both stone and metal sculptures.

Stone sculptures were found primarily on the walls and pillars of the temples built under the royal patronage. It consisted of icons as well as figures of men and women from different walks of life. Trees, animals, floral and geometric motifs were utilized to adorn the temples.

Metal sculptures on the other hand were represented in deities and were small in size than stone sculptures.

The sculptures of *Bhuvansewara* occupy a revered place among the images. Next in importance were the sculpture of *Kharjuraho* which depicts the popular images of those of *Vishnu*, *Siva*, *Kali*, *Karitikeya* and Brahma. The bronze image of *Nataraja*(*Siva*) have drawn high admiration from all art critics.

In Deccan some of the sculptures of Ellora, Kailash temple and the relics of Elephanta are finest examples of the sculpture of that age. Besides the sculptures of *Uma*, *Mahesvara* of Bengal, “*Arjuna Penance*” or the descent of *Gangas*” at Mahabalipuram is considered to be significant of all the sculptural art.

Self Asking Questions

- Q.25. What were the different form of temple architecture that arouse between 650 to 1200 CE?
- Q.26. Who was the pioneers in constructing the Dravida style of temple architecture?
- Q.27. What were the two medium upon which sculptures were curved?

Space for Learner's Notes

5.8 Summing Up:

After going through this unit we have learnt that:

- i. With the collapse of the Guptas the centre of interest of India shifted southwards to the Deccan and south India where the Pallavas, the Cholas, the Rashtrakutas and the Chalukyas established dominant empires of long traditions.
- ii. Art and architecture made remarkable progress under the Pallavas, Cholas, Rashtrakutas and the Chalukyas They built some magnificent temples.
- iii. The period from 650 to 1200 also witnessed the invasion of the Arabs and the Turks. The missionary zeal to convert the people of India to Islam as well as the wealth of India attracted the invaders. Thus by the end of the 12th century CE a new era ushered in the history of India under the Sultans of the five successive dynasties of the Delhi Sultanate.
- iv. Indian society in the field of literature, language, temple architecture and sculpture also progressed during this period. Sanskrit literature reached its climax in the period from 650 to 1200 CE. This period witnessed developments in both prose and poetry compositions. Works on regional language also advanced during this period
- v. The period also witnessed great developments in secular literature or non-religious literature. Many books on astrology, astronomy, medicine, history and science were produced during this period.
- vi. The period also witnessed continuous development of temple architecture and the emergence of different styles like the *Nagara* and *Dravida*.

- vii. There was significant progress in the field of sculpture in the Post-Gupta period. The royal dynasties such as the Pallavas, Cholas and Rashtrakutas, were great patrons of art and sculpture. The whole sculptural style in the period from 650 to 1200 CE was embodied by stone and bronze sculptures and divine images. The most famous bronze images are those of Siva as Nataraja, created by the Chola artists.

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Space for Learner's Notes

5.10 Model Questions:

A: Short question

- i) Thirumangal Alvar was the contemporary to which Pallava king?
- ii) Who was the Sanskrit poet who adorned the court of Narashimavarman?
- iii) Who was the Chola king who laid the foundation of local self government or village assembly?
- iv) Who was the author of Kavirajamarga?
- v) Name the Chinese traveler who visited the court of Pulakesin II
- vi) When did the Arab invasion of Sindh take place?
- vii) Who was the ruler of Sindh when the Arabs invaded Sindh?
- viii) Who was the Rajput king who led the Rajput forces in the 1st and 2nd battle of Tarain?
- ix) How many Puranas are there?
- x) Who wrote Kiratarjunia?
- xi) Who wrote Amarakosa?
- xii) Where is the famous sculptural art of Arjuna's penance located?
- xiii) What is the Nagara style of architecture?
- xiv) What is the Dravida style of architecture?

B: Long questions

- i) Write in brief the rise of the different dynasties in the Deccan in the post Gupta period?
- ii) Why the Arabs conquest of Sindh did not prove permanent?
- iii) Who led the Turkish invasions in India? What was the ultimate effect of the Turkish invasions in the political history of India?
- iv) Trace the development of literature in the period between 650 to 1200 CE?

- v) Describe the basic features of a typical Dravida temple. How do they differ from the Nagara temple architecture?
- vi) Trace the development of sculptural art during the Post-Gupta period.
- vii) Discuss the development of Sanskrit literature in the period between 650 to 1200 CE?

5.11 Answers to Self Asking Questions:

Ans No1: Simhavishnu was the founder of the Pallavas.

Ans No2: It was during the reign of Narshimavarman, I that the famous the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang visited the Pallava kingdom.

Ans No3: The Pallavas were the pioneers of the Dravidian style of temple architecture. They also patronized scholars of great repute.

Ans No4: Narshimavarman, was the greatest of the Pallava rulers.

Ans No5: Vijayalaya laid the foundation of the imperial line of the Cholas.

Ans No6: Rajendra I is considered as the greatest of the Cholas kings. He placed the Cholas in their coveted position. He made his reign splendid in the annals of the Cholas. It was he who brought in the concept of decentralization by dividing the kingdom into provinces. He also built the magnificent temple at Brihadeswara.

Ans No7: Rajendra II entered into a matrimonial alliance with the Chalukyas.

Ans No8: Rajendra IV was the last king of the Cholas.

Ans No9: The founder of the Rashtrakutas dynasty was Dantidurga. (735-756).

Ans No10: Amogavarsha, is considered as the greatest ruler of the Rashtrakutas.

Ans No11: Krishna I built the Kailashnatha temple at Ellora.

Ans No12: The Rashtrakutas became famous by encouraging religious activities and building up temples.

Ans No13: The three branches of the Chalukyas were the Chalukyas of Vatapi, the Chalukyas of Kalyani and the Chalukyas of Vengi.

Ans No14: Harshavardhana was the contemporary northern Indian ruler to Pulakesin II.

- Ans No15: The greatest writer Bilhana and Vinasesvara the author of Mitashakra an authoritative work on Hindu law adorned the Somesvara II court.
- Ans No16: There were three branches of the Chalukyas.
- Ans No17: The Muslims were ambitious to establish their political suzerainty in India. Moreover the wealth of the country also attracted also the invaders. Another cause which led to the Arab invasion was the missionary zeal of the Muslims who were interested in converting the Indians into Muslim religion. However the immediate cause that led to the invasion was Raja Dahir the ruler of Sindh's, refusal to punish the pirates who had carried valuable gifts for the Khalifa.
- Ans No18: Muhammad Bin Qasim headed the army of the Arabs.
- Ans No19: Although the invasion failed to leave any permanent impact on the history of India politically. But it did left a cultural legacy on the history of India.
- Ans No20: Muhammad of Ghazni invaded India seventeen times.
- Ans No21: The primary objective of Ghazni was to plunder the wealth of India.
- Ans No22: The second battle of Tarain was fought in the year 1192. The second battle of Tarain may be regarded as decisive contest for it finally led to the establishment of the Muslim rule in India.
- Ans No23: Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* is a history of Kashmir. In this work, Kalhana has given a vivid account of the kings of Kashmir. Besides it also contains reference to the history of other part of India.
- Ans No24: The *Kalika Purana* that deals with the establishment of the worship of the Goddess Kamakhya as well as the political and cultural history of ancient Assam.
- Ans No25: *Nagara* and *Dravida* were the two different style of temple architecture that arouse between 650 to 1200 CE.
- Ans No26: The Pallavas were the pioneers in constructing the *Dravida* style of temple architecture.
- Ans No27: Stone and metal were the two different medium upon which sculptures were curved.

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