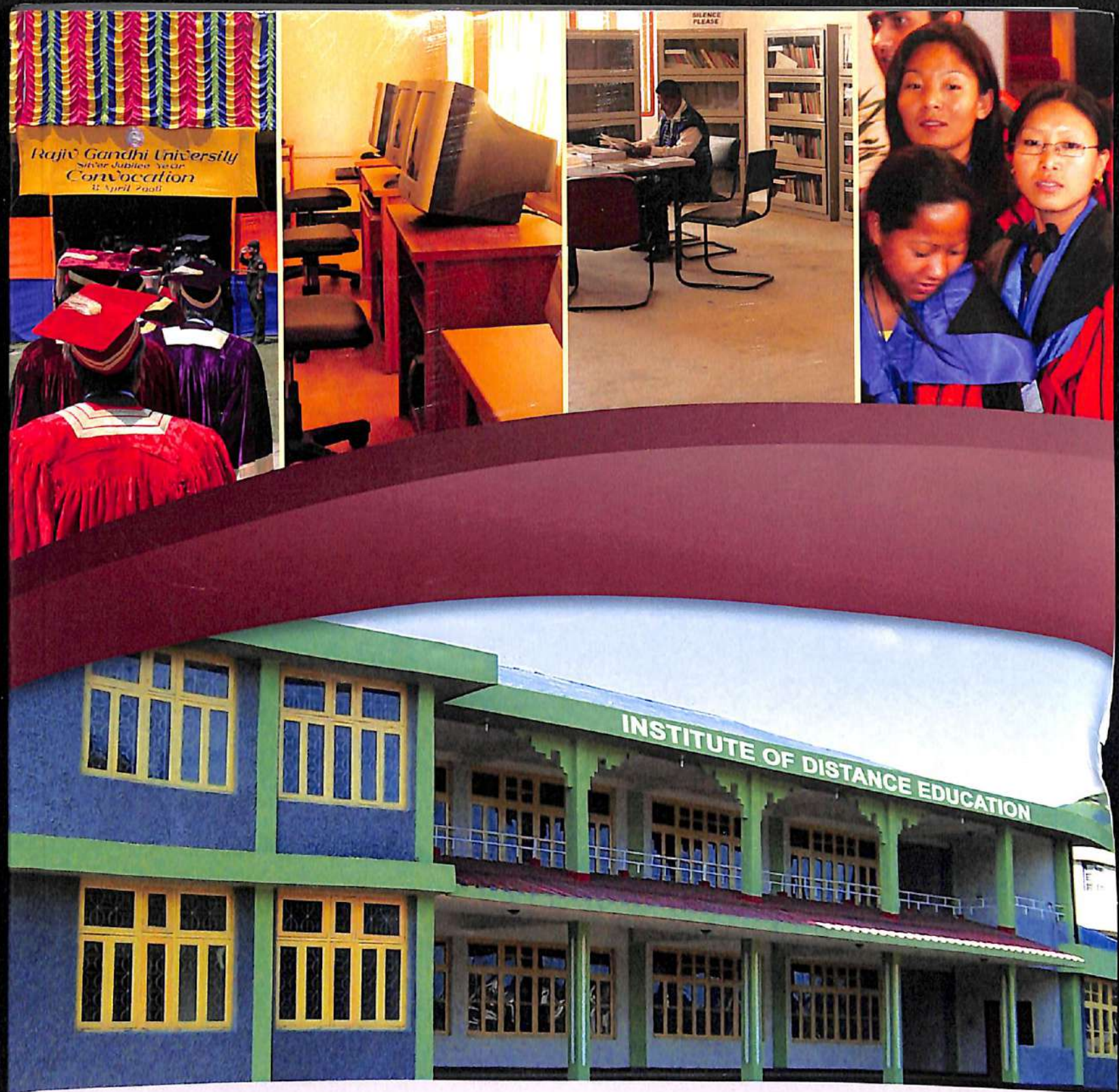

M.A. (History)

FIRST YEAR

MAHIST-401

INSTITUTE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION
Rajiv Gandhi University

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HISTORY OF INDIA
(EARLY TIMES — 1200 AD)

HISTORY OF INDIA
(EARLY TIMES – 1200 AD)

MA [History]

First Year

MAHIST - 401

RAJIV GANDHI UNIVERSITY
Arunachal Pradesh, INDIA - 791 112

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About the University

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

About IDE

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

Continuing the endeavor to expand the learning opportunities for distant learners, IDE has introduced Post Graduate Courses in 5 subjects (Education, English, Hindi, History and Political Science) from the Academic Session 2013-14.

The Institute of Distance Education is housed in the Physical Sciences Faculty Building (first floor) next to the University Library. The University campus is 6 kms from NERIST point on National Highway 52A. The University buses ply to NERIST point regularly.

Outstanding Features of Institute of Distance Education:

(i) At Par with Regular Mode

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

(ii) Self-Instructional Study Material (SISM)

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

(iii) Contact and Counselling Programme (CCP)

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

(iv) Field Training and Project

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

(v) Medium of Instruction and Examination

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

(vi) Subject/Counselling Coordinators

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

SYLLABI-BOOK MAPPING TABLE

History of India (Early Times – 1200 AD)

Syllabi	Mapping in Book
UNIT I SOURCES OF EARLY INDIAN HISTORY (a) Archaeological Sources– Exploration, Excavation, Epigraphy, Numismatics, Monuments (b) Literary Sources– Indigenous: Primary and Secondary – problems of dating, myths, legends, poetry, scientific literature, literature in regional languages, religious literature. (c) Foreign accounts: Greek, Chinese and Arab Writers	**Unit 1:** Sources of Early Indian History **(Page: 3-21)**
UNIT II PREHISTORIC AND PROTOHISTORIC PERIOD (a) Pre-historic sites and settiments– Lower Paleolithic, Mesolithic, Upper Paleolithic, and Neolithic (b) Chaleolithic Sites and settlements (c) Indus Valley Civilization– Features	**Unit 2:** Prehistoric and Protohistoric Period **(Page: 23-41)**
UNIT III THE VEDIC AGE AND SANGAM AGE (a) Early Vedic Age– Society, Religion, Economy and Polity (b) Later Vedic Age– Society, Religion, Economy and Polity (c) Sangam Age– Society, Religion, Economy and Polity	**Unit 3:** The Vedic Age and Sangam Age **(Page: 43-72)**
UNIT IV SOCIAL CHANGE AND RELIGIOUS DISSENT (a) Iron Technology, settled Agriculture (b) Rise of new classes (c) Mahavira, Jainism (d) Buddha – Buddhism	**Unit 4:** Social Change and Religious Dissent **(Page: 73-98)**
UNIT V EMERGENCE OF EMPIRES (a) 16 Mahajanapadas and Republics, Rise of Magadha (b) The Nandas and Rise of Chandra Gupta Maurya	**Unit 5:** Emergence of Empire **(Page: 99-117)**
UNIT VI THE MAURYAN EMPIRE (a) Ashoka's Reign (b) Edicts (c) The Dhamma of Ashoka – Art and Architecture	**Unit 6:** The Mauryan Empire **(Page: 119-161)**
UNIT VII POST MAURYAN ERA (a) Indo-Greeks (b) Shunga and Kharavela (c) Kushanas– Art and architecture (d) Satvahanas	**Unit 7:** Post-Mauryan Era **(Page: 163-190)**
UNIT VIII THE GUPTA PERIOD (a) Samudragupta (b) Chandragupta-II (c) Art and Culture-literature	**Unit 8:** The Gupta Period **(Page: 191-213)**

UNIT IX EMERGENCE OF REGIONAL KINGDOMS

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(d) Cholas

Unit 9: Emergence of Regional Kingdoms
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UNIT X FOREIGN INVASIONS IN INDIA

(a) Coming of the Arabs and the Turks
(b) Ghazanavias
(c) Ghoris and their impact

Unit 10: Foreign Invasions in India
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NOTES

INTRODUCTION

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

Further, the small cities and territorial states were brought under the control of Chandra Gupta Maurya who laid the foundation of the Mauryan Empire. The decline of the Mauryan Empire led to the arrival and emergence of Indo-Greeks, Shungas, Kharavelas, Kushanas and Satvahanas. India was once again politically united in the Gupta Period. The Gupta Age is marked as an era of unprecedented progress in all aspects of polity, religion, art and literature. The disintegration of the Gupta Period led to the emergence of regional kingdoms. This was followed by the arrival of Arabs and Turks in India.

This book - *History of India* (*Early Times – 1200 AD*) - has been designed keeping in mind the self-instruction mode (SIM) format and follows a simple pattern, wherein each unit of the book begins with the **Introduction** followed by the **Unit Objectives** for the topic. The content is then presented in a simple and easy-to-understand manner, and is interspersed with **Check Your Progress** questions to reinforce the student's understanding of the topic. A list of **Questions and Exercises** is also provided at the end of each unit. The **Summary**, **Key Terms** and **Activity** further act as useful tools for students and are meant for effective recapitulation of the text.

This book is divided into ten units:

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

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

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

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

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

Unit 6: Describes the Mauryan Empire which includes the rise of Chandra Gupta Maurya and rule of Ashoka.

Unit 7: States the emergence of Indo-Greeks, Shungas, Kharavela, Kushanas and Satvahanas in the Post-Mauryan era.

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Unit 8: Familiarizes with rulers, art and architecture of the Gupta Period.

Unit 9: Describes the emergence of regional kingdoms such as Chalukyas, Pratiharas, Palas and Cholas.

Unit 10: Covers foreign invasions such as those of Muhammad Ghori and Mahmud Ghaznavi in India.

NOTES

UNIT 1 SOURCES OF EARLY INDIAN HISTORY

Structure

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

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

1.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOURCES

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

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

1.2.1 Exploration

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

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

Conquests of Alexander the Great in 320 BC extended the known world to the distant East. Alexander wanted to enslave Asia and annex it to Greece, which was extended in all Mediterranean. Twenty years after Alexander's aggression in Indian territories, Megasthenes from Ionia was sent to the Indian empire. During his stay in India, he visited almost all of Northern India and also reached the Himalayas. In his efforts to record the extent of India, Megasthenes reported that the country's width from East to West was about 16.000 stages and her length from North to South 22.300 stages (1 stage = 180 metres). He also reported big rivers of country, as Ganges, Indus, and also other 58 navigable rivers in the extent of the country.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.2.2 Excavations

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

The important excavated cities and towns of ancient India include Peshawar (ancient Purushapura), Taxila, etc., in North-western Frontier Province and the Punjab; Mathura; Varanasi, Sravasti, Kausambi, Ahichchhatra, Hastinapur, etc., in UP; Rajgir (ancient Rajagriha), Nalanda, Bodh Gaya, certain parts of Pataliputra, etc., in Bihar; Vrisa, Padmavati, Ujjain, Sanchi, etc. in Madhya Pradesh; Bairat, Rairh, Sambhar, Karkotnagar, etc., in Rajasthan; Langhnaj, Anhilper, Patan, Amreli, etc., in Gujarat; Kolhapur, Kondapur, etc., in Deccan; Chandravali, Brahmagiri etc., in Mysore; Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda, etc., in Andhra; Virampattanam etc., in Madras; Paharpur, Mahasthana, Pundravardhana, Kotivarsha, etc., in Bengal; and Parihaspur, Avantipur, Martand in Kashmir.

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

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

1.2.3 Epigraphy

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

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

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

Check Your Progress

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.2.4 Numismatics

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.2.5 Monuments

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

ACTIVITY

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

Check Your Progress

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

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1.3 LITERARY SOURCES

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

1.3.1 Literary Sources: Indigenous, Primary and Secondary Sources

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

Indigenous literature

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

Primary literary sources

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

Secondary literary sources

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

1.3.2 Problems of Dating Inscriptions

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

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Regnal (relating to a king or his reign) Year

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

Year of an Era

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

Jain Nirvana Era

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

Buddhist nirvana Era

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

Vikram Era

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

Saka Era

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

Gupta or Vallabi Era

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

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

Kalachuri-Cedi Era

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

1.3.3 Oral Traditions: Myths and Legends

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

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

Myths and historical documentation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.3.5 Literature in Regional Languages

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.3.6 Religious Literature

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

Hindu religious texts

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

Buddhist religious texts

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

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

Jain religious texts

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

1.4 FOREIGN ACCOUNTS: GREEK, CHINESE AND ARAB WRITERS

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

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

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

Check Your Progress

5. Fill in the blanks.
   (a) The _____ is a collection of the religious discourses of Buddha.
   (b) The original Jain religious texts were called _____.
6. State whether True or False.
   (a) The Nitisara is written by Kautilya.
   (b) Patanjali is the author of *Mahabhashya.*

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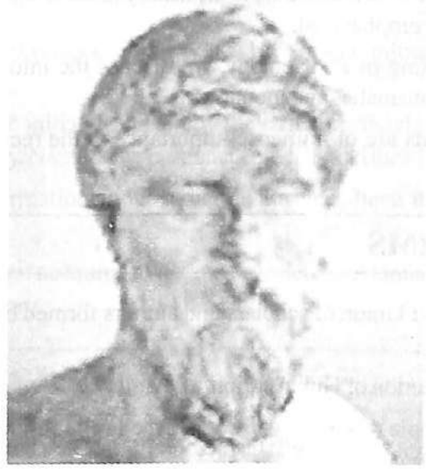

Fig. 1.1 Megasthenes

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

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

DID YOU KNOW

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

1.5 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

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

Check Your Progress

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

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

1.6 KEY TERMS

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

1.7 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

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

1.8 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

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

Long-Answer Questions

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

1.9 FURTHER READING

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UNIT 2 PREHISTORIC AND PROTOHISTORIC PERIOD

Structure

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

2.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will examine the three divisions of the Stone Age, that is, Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic Ages. During these Ages, man used to make tools and weapons with stone. In the next stage of development, man began to use metals. The earliest evidence of the use of metals is found at the sites of Indus Valley Civilization. It is also called the Harappan Civilization, as Harappa was the first site to be excavated. The sources of evidence about this civilization are the artifacts, pottery, tools, ornaments and ruins of towns. This unit will also introduce you to the various facets of this civilization.

2.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

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

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2.2 PREHISTORIC SITES AND SETTLEMENTS

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

2.2.1 Lower, Middle and Upper Paleolithic Sites and Settlements

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

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

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

(i) **Early or lower Paleolithic :** The lower Paleolithic or the early Stone Age covers the greater part of the Ice Age. The early Stone Age may have begun in Africa around two million years ago, but in India it is not older than 600,000 years. The region of Bori in Maharashtra is considered to be from this age and is said to be one of the earliest. During this age, people used hand axes, cleavers and choppers. The axes found in India are more or less similar to those of Western Asia, Europe and Africa. Stone tools were used largely for chopping, digging and skinning. When the climate became less humid, the people of the lower Stone Age principally became food gatherers. They took to small game hunting and consumed fish and birds. The early or lower Stone Age in India may be associated with the *Homo sapiens* (i.e., scientific name of man). Early Stone Age sites have been found in the valley of river Son or Sohan in Punjab, now in Pakistan. Several sites found in Kashmir, the Thar Desert and the Belan valley also show features of the lower Paleolithic Age.

(ii) **Middle Paleolithic:** The middle Paleolithic industries show the basic technological features common to the Mousterian (tool culture) of Western and Central Asia. The tools are generally small, light and based upon flakes struck from cores which, in some cases, are carefully shaped. These flakes were transformed into finished tools. There was also a marked change in the choice of raw material. Silica and minerals, chiefly chert, agate, jasper and chalcedony, became the most common media of working in most parts of the country. These enabled the middle Paleolithic man to prepare beautiful tools with better edges. In some regions, particularly, Chennai, the Deccan and Kutch, the material employed by the lower Paleolithic groups continued to be used during the middle Paleolithic Age. In such cases, the material seemed to be finely grained and carefully selected.

(iii) **Upper Paleolithic:** The Upper Paleolithic or the Late Stone Age is the third and last subdivision of the Palaeolithic age (40,000 to 10,000 BC). It is said to coincide with the appearance of behavioural modernity (a time when *Homo sapiens* began to rely on symbols to express cultural creativity). This period was marked by the appearance of many new flint industries and several figurines and other artifacts reflecting art and rituals. It was also marked by the appearance of a wide range of bone tools, including needles, fishing tools, harpoons and blades.

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Characteristics of the Paleolithic Age

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

Tools

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

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

Discovery of Fire

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

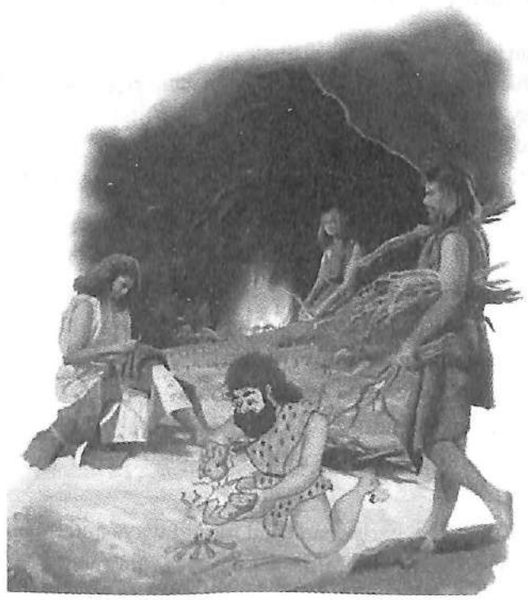

Fig. 2.1 Homo Sapiens Rubbed Two Stones Together to Make Fire

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

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

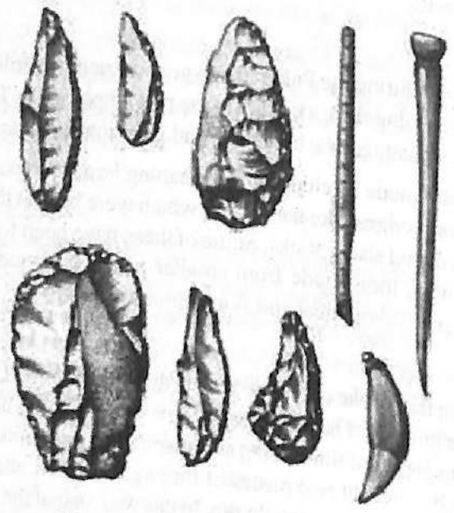

Fig. 2.2 Tools of the Palaeolithic Age

2.2.2 The Mesolithic Sites and Settlements

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

Characteristics of the Mesolithic Age

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

In the Mesolithic Age, early man tried to find ways and means to make his life more comfortable and secure and fulfill his basic requirements of food. During this period, which is called the Mesolithic Age, he learnt to make more sophisticated tools using bones and horns along with stone. Since these materials were more flexible and lighter than stone, they could also make a larger variety of things like bows and arrows and fishing hooks. Heavy tools gave way to smaller and more refined ones like arrowheads and spearheads. For most of this period, men continued to be food gatherers. It was probably towards the end of the Mesolithic Age that they learnt about cultivation. Men observed that when seeds fell on the ground and received water, they grew into plants that bore grains. Thus, another means of getting food, besides hunting and gathering, was now available to them, i.e., growing crops or agriculture.

2.2.3 The Neolithic Sites and Settlements

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

Refined Tools

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

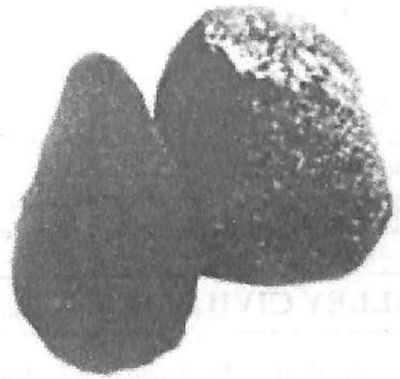

Fig. 2.3 Tools Used in the Neolithic Age

Art

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

Pottery

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

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

Invention of the Wheel

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

Religious Beliefs

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

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

2.2.4 Chaleolithic Sites and Settlements

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

2.3 INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION FEATURES

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

Check Your Progress

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

NOTES

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

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



Fig. 2.4 Important Sites of the Indus Valley Civilization

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

NOTES

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

2.3.1 Geographical Expansion of the Indus Valley Civilization

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

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

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

Check Your Progress

3. Fill in the blanks.
   (a) In 1921, two archaeologists– Dayaram Sahani and _____ carried out excavations at Mohenjodaro in Sind and at Harappa.
   (b) The term 'Mohenjodaro' means _____.
4. State whether True or False.
   (a) It is estimated that the Indus Valley Civilization existed almost at the same time as the Egyptian, Sumerian and Chinese civilizations.
   (b) The city of Mohenjodaro was 40 km away from Harappa.

2.3.2 Dress and Ornaments

The spindles found in the excavations reveal that the Indus Valley people knew the art of spinning and weaving. They were perhaps the first people to cultivate cotton to make clothes. Besides cotton, they wore woollen clothes. Men wore a piece of cloth round their waists and a shawl over their shoulders, while women wore a skirt and do not seem to have worn blouses. Archaeologists have unearthed an idol of a man covered with a shawl (see Figure 2.5). The shawl was tied under the right arm and went across the left shoulder, which left the right hand free. A cloth similar to the dhoti worn in rural India was worn at the bottom.

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



Fig. 2.5 Man Covered with a Shawl

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



Fig. 2.6 Bronze Idol of Dancing Girl

NOTES

2.3.3 Farming and Cattle Rearing

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

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

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

Domestication of animals

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

2.3.4 Pottery and Trade

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

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

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



Fig. 2.7 Indus Ornaments, Pottery and Seal

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

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

(iii) **Cremation:** In this technique, the dead bodies were burnt and the ashes were collected in pots and buried.

2.3.5 Settlement Patterns and Town Planning in the Indus Valley Civilization

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

Architecture

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



Fig. 2.8 Mohenjodaro

Check Your Progress

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

NOTES

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

Art of Making Buildings

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

Town Planning

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

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

Town hall

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

NOTES

Residential area and houses

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

Streets

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

Drainage system

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

2.3.6 Religious Beliefs and Practices of the Indus Valley Civilization

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

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

Check Your Progress

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

NOTES



Fig. 2.9 Mother Goddess

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

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

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

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

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

2.3.7 Art Practised in Indus Valley Civilization

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

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

NOTES

Check Your Progress

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

NOTES



Fig. 2.10 An Indus Valley Pictograph Appears on this Seal

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

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

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

ACTIVITY

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

DID YOU KNOW

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

Check Your Progress

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

2.3.8 Urban Decline of the Indus Valley Civilization

NOTES

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

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

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

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

2.4 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

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

Check Your Progress

13. Fill in the blanks.
    (a) In the opinion of a few scholars, this civilization was devastated due to the attack of the _____.
    (b) Some historians are of the opinion that _____ or fire destroyed the cities.
14. State whether True or False.
    (a) The Indus time and again changed its normal course, which was a frequent cause of devastation.
    (b) The Indus Valley Civilization flourished for about 1000 years with very few changes in lifestyle, customs and habits.

NOTES

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

2.5 KEY TERMS

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

2.6 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

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

2.7 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

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

Long-Answer Questions

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

2.8 FURTHER READING

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UNIT 3 THE VEDIC AGE AND SANGAM AGE

Structure

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3.0 INTRODUCTION

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

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

3.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

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

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

3.2 EARLY VEDIC AGE

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

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

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

Geographical expansion

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

3.2.1 Society

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There was continuous fighting among Aryans and non-Aryans who were called *Dasas, Dasyus, Asuras*, etc. There are many hymns in Rig Veda which prove that the Aryans constantly sought the help of their gods against non-Aryans. Indra was the main Aryan god who was credited with the honour of destroying forts or *puras* of non-Aryans in large numbers.

The Aryans were themselves divided into various kingdoms and tribes and fought amongst themselves for the extension of their territories and power. They often sought the help of non-Aryan rulers as well. The Rig Veda describes one such important battle as the *Dasrajna* or the Battle of the Ten Kings. Sudas was a Bharata king of the Tristsu family which was settled in the country which later came to be known as Brahmavarta, the land lying between the rivers Saraswati and Drishadvati. Sudas dismissed his priest Visvamitra and appointed Vasishtha in his place. Thereupon a bitter and long rivalry ensued between the two priests, and in revenge Visvamitra led a tribal confederacy of ten kings against Sudas. The federation consisted of the five well-known tribes Puru, Yadu, Turvasa, Anus, and Druhyu five tribes of minor importance, namely Alina, Paktha, Bhalanas Siva and Vishanin. Sudas won this battle. He had to fight yet another important battle in which the three non-Aryan tribes, Ajas, Sigrus and Yakshus had united against him under king Bhoda. He again emerged victorious and thus became the most powerful Aryan king of his time.

Such references in Rig Veda give us some idea about the political condition, kingdoms and various tribes of the Aryans and the non-Aryans at that time.

The social organization

The *Jana* was the highest social unit divided further into *Vish*. The former perhaps indicated a whole tribe and the latter a clan. It is now beyond doubt that the *Vish* (clan) was a fighting unit. *Vish,* it seems was divided into 'Gramas' but this division does not seem to be prevalent because of the scarcity of references of the *Grama* in the Rig Veda. In any case *Grama* was not a connotation used for 'village' rather it was used to describe various smaller tribes coming together and forming a group for the purpose of war *(Sangrama)*. The lowest unit of this Rig Vedic tribal society was the family *(Kula)* but it does not seem to be a well rooted social institution as it is today because this term *(Kula)* has not been mentioned independently even once in the text of Rig Veda. Even 'Kulapa', the head of the family, has been mentioned just once and that too as a fighter and not as a house holder.

With this kind of social structure, which was predominantly tribal in nature, it was virtually impossible for Rig Vedic people to evolve a political structure which could be termed as a state. 'Rajan' the term used for the Rig Vedic chief was more to connote a tribal chief. The tribal chiefship was associated with the territorial monarchy. The *Rajan* during the Rig Vedic phase was a tribal chief who led his tribe into warfare mainly for the purpose of cattle and slaves. Territorial ambition was non-existent.

3.2.2 Religion

Thirty-three gods have been referred to in the Rig Veda. There was no hierarchy and no recognized chief among them, though Indra was the most prominent god as nearly one-fourth of the total hymns of the Rig Veda have been sung in his praise. The basis of the religion was the worship of nature in its various forms as all of their gods represented

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

(a) The terrestrial gods such as Prithvi, Agni, Brihaspati, Soma, etc.

(b) The atmospheric gods such as Indra, Rudra, Marut, Vayu. Parjanya, etc. and

(c) Celestial gods such as Surya, Usha, Savitri, Vishnu, Moon, Varuna, etc.

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

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

(i) The religion was utilitarian as the Aryans always expected power and prosperity by pleasing their gods.

(ii) The Aryan-gods were liberal and they provided them everything if pleased.

(iii) Amongst the gods, the male-gods occupied dominant position.

(iv) There was an absence of image-worship.

(v) The religious attitude was optimistic towards life. The joys and pleasures of this life attracted them more than the life after death in heaven.

(vi) The priestly class was yet not effective in religion as most of the religious rites were performed by the master of the house, *(Grahpati)* himself.

(vii) The principles of *Karma* and that of the transmigration of soul, that is, the soul never dies and takes rebirth after the death of an individual unless it gets Nirvana, were yet not well established.

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

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3.2.3 Economy

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

3.2.4 Polity

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

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

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

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

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

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

Basis of Polity

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

The kingship

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

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

System of voluntary offerings

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

Military functionaries

There has been a reference to a functionary called *Senani* in the Rig Veda but there is no indication of a standing army. In fact, without a regular system of taxation, the concept of standing army was not possible. The term 'Sena', mentioned around 20 times in the Rig Veda, was a temporary institution which came into being through the mobilization of tribal units and clans whenever there was a possibility of war. Military functions were undertaken by the tribal assemblies. Vrajapatis, the head of the pasture land, had, in general, a peaceful duty to perform but during the time of war he undertook military responsibilities and led his tribe to the battle. The same was true for both *Kulapa* and *Gramani.* Hence, there were no regular officials to meet the military needs.

Check Your Progress

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

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Law and order

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

Officials concerned with civil administration

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

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

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

Did You Know

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

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3.3 LATER VEDIC AGE

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

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

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

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

3.3.1 Society

Family

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

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

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

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Position of women

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

Classes and caste system

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

Four ashrams

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

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

Decline in morality

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

Food and drink

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

Dress and ornaments

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

Marriage

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

Education

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

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

3.3.2 Religion

Emergence of new gods

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

Aim and mode of worship

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

Growth of ritualism

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

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

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

Significance of tapa and gyana

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

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

Philosophy

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

Belief in karma moksha

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

Asceticism

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

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Belief in magic spells and spirits

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

Donation as a means of salvation

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

Movement against rituals, etc.

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

3.3.3 Economy

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

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

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

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

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

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

Agriculture

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

Arts and crafts

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

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Domestication of animals

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

Trade

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

3.3.4 Polity

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

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

Check Your Progress

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

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

Popular assemblies

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

Larger kingdoms

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

New name instead of tribe

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

Many advisors of the king

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

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

Army and warfare

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

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Kingship

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

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

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

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

Nature of kingship

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sacrifices of the royal coronation

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

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

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

(i) The Ratninam havimshi: This included giving presents to the Mahishi and other important officials (called Ratnins).

(ii) The Abhishechaniya or the besprinkling ceremony.

(iii) The Digvyasthapana: It was the symbolic walk of the king towards various directions to indicate his universal rule.

(iv) Treading upon a tiger skin- It was believed that by doing so the candidate gained the strength and swiftness of a tiger.

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(v) Narration of the story of 'Sunehshepa' by the Holy priest.

(vi) Mimic cow raid against a relative or a dramatized fight with a member of the ruling family.

(vii) Ceremony of enthronement

(viii) A game of dice in which the king was deliberately made to triumph.

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

Ashvamedha sacrifice

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

System of taxation

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

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

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

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

Administrative structure

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

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

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

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

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

Military administration

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

The administration of law and order

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

The state of popular assemblies

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

3.4 SANGAM AGE

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

Check Your Progress

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

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

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

3.4.1 Society and Religion

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

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

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

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

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

Sangam Age: Literature and other fields

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

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

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

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

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

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

Education during Sangam Age

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

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

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

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

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

Fine arts during the Sangam Age

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

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

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

3.4.2 Economy

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

3.4.3 Polity

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

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

Check Your Progress

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Check Your Progress

9. Fill in the blanks.
   (a) The _____ literature provides us useful knowledge concerning the history of the far South till the third century AD.
   (b) The ruling class had virtually acquired the status of the _____.
10. State whether True or False.
   (a) The people in the far South accepted the Vedic religion of the Aryans.
   (b) Jainism and Buddhism were not accepted by the people in the far South.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ACTIVITY

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

3.5 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

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

3.6 KEY TERMS

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

Check Your Progress

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

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

3.7 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

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

3.8 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

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

Long-Answer Questions

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

NOTES

3.9 FURTHER READING

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UNIT 4 SOCIAL CHANGE AND RELIGIOUS DISSENT

NOTES

Structure

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4.2 Iron Technology in Post-Vedic Age
  4.2.1 Use of Iron Technology in Post-Vedic Age
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4.0 INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

4.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

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

4.2 USE OF IRON TECHNOLOGY IN POST-VEDIC AGE

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

4.2.1 Use of Iron Technology in Post-Vedic Age

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.2.2 Iron Smelting in India

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

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

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

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

4.2.3 Ancient Processes of Iron Making

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

Primitive Furnaces

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

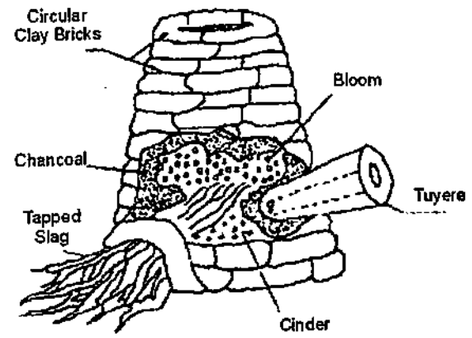

Fig. 4.1 Ancient Indian Iron Furnace

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

A critical analysis of ancient iron making processes

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

4.3 SETTLED AGRICULTURE IN DIFFERENT TIME PERIODS

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

1. Agriculture in the Indus Valley Civilization

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

Check Your Progress

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3. Agriculture in the Mauryan Period

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

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

4. Agriculture in the Post-Mauryan Period

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

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

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

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

5. Agriculture in the Gupta Period

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

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

6. Agriculture in the Post-Gupta Period

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

Check Your Progress

3. Fill in the blanks.
   (a) The Indian economy in the Mauryan period was a settled _____ economy.
   (b) _____ held a significant place in the economic life of the people during the Gupta period.
4. State whether True or False.
   (a) Agriculture was developed completely during the Indus Valley period.
   (b) Agriculture in the post-Mauryan period saw the extension of the area of cultivation.

ACTIVITY

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

4.4 RISE OF NEW CLASSES

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

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

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

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

4.4.1 Development of the Caste System

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

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

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

Gotra

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

4.5 MAHAVIRA AND JAINISM

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

4.5.1 Origin of Jainism

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

Check Your Progress

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

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

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

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

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

Early life of Mahavira

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

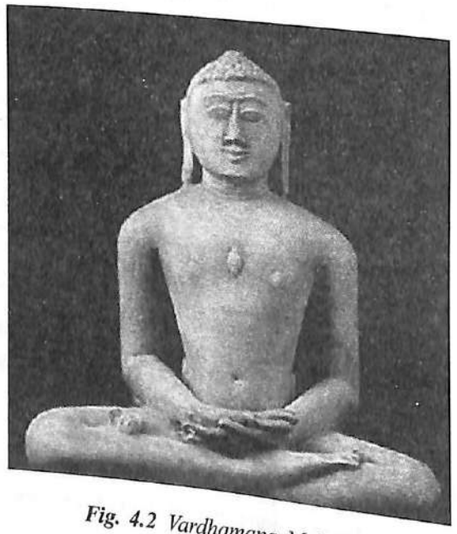

Fig. 4.2 Vardhamana Mahavira

Life of Asceticism

For twelve years, Mahavira roamed about as a naked monk doing all types of penances. During this period, he fully subdued his senses. He was attacked and ridiculed; however, he never lost his patience, nor indulged in feelings of hatred and revenge against his enemies. Within these twelve years of penance, meditation and severe asceticism, he prepared himself for the attainment of highest spiritual knowledge.

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

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

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

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

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

4.5.2 Doctrines and Philosophy

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mahavira rejected the existence of god and authority of Vedas

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

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

Principle of non-injury

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



Fig. 4.3 Ahimsa or non-injury

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

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Fig. 4.4 Symbol of Jainism

Jain sects

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

Religious texts

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

4.5.3 Rise, Spread and Decline of Jainism

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

Causes of rise of Jainism

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

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

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

Spread of Jainism

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

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

Causes of the decline of Jainism

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

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

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

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

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

Check Your Progress

7. Fill in the blanks.
   (a) The Jaina philosophy shows a close affinity to _____.
   (b) For twelve years, _____ roamed about as a naked monk doing all types of penances.
8. State whether True or False.
   (a) The general belief among the common people is that the founder of Jainism is Mahavira.
   (b) Jaina philosophy states that if one desires to attain Nirvana or salvation, it is necessary for him to destroy Karma.

4.6 BUDDHA AND BUDDHISM

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

4.6.1 Early Life of Gautma Buddha

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



Fig. 4.5 Lord Buddha

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

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

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

Great renunciation

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

Enlightenment

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

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

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

The turning of the wheel of law

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

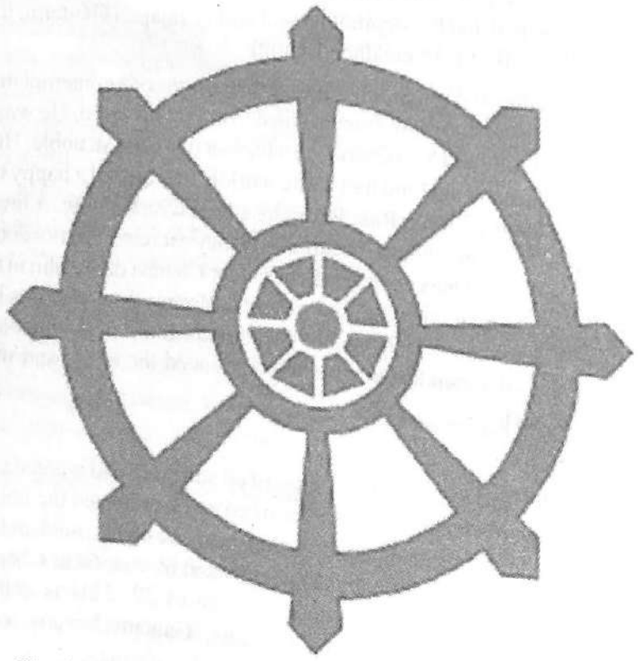

Fig. 4.6 Turning of the Wheel of Law (Dharma Chakra Pravartana)

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

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Fig. 4.7 Stupa

4.6.2 Philosophy of Buddha

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

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

Four noble truths

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

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Eight-fold path

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

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

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

Ahimsa

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

Law of Karma

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

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Morality

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

Denounced caste system

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

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

Religious texts

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

The main Buddhist sects

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

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Fig. 4.8 Bodhistava

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

4.6.3 Causes of Rise and Fall of Buddhism

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

Causes of rise of Buddhism

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Causes of the fall of Buddhism

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Did You Know

Jainism began about 2500 years ago in India.

4.7 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

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

Check Your Progress

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

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

4.8 KEY TERMS

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

4.9 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

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

4.10 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

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

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

Long-Answer Questions

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

4.11 FURTHER READING

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UNIT 5 EMERGENCE OF EMPIRE

Structure

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

5.0 INTRODUCTION

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

5.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

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

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

5.2 SIXTEEN MAHAJANAPADAS AND REPUBLICS

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

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

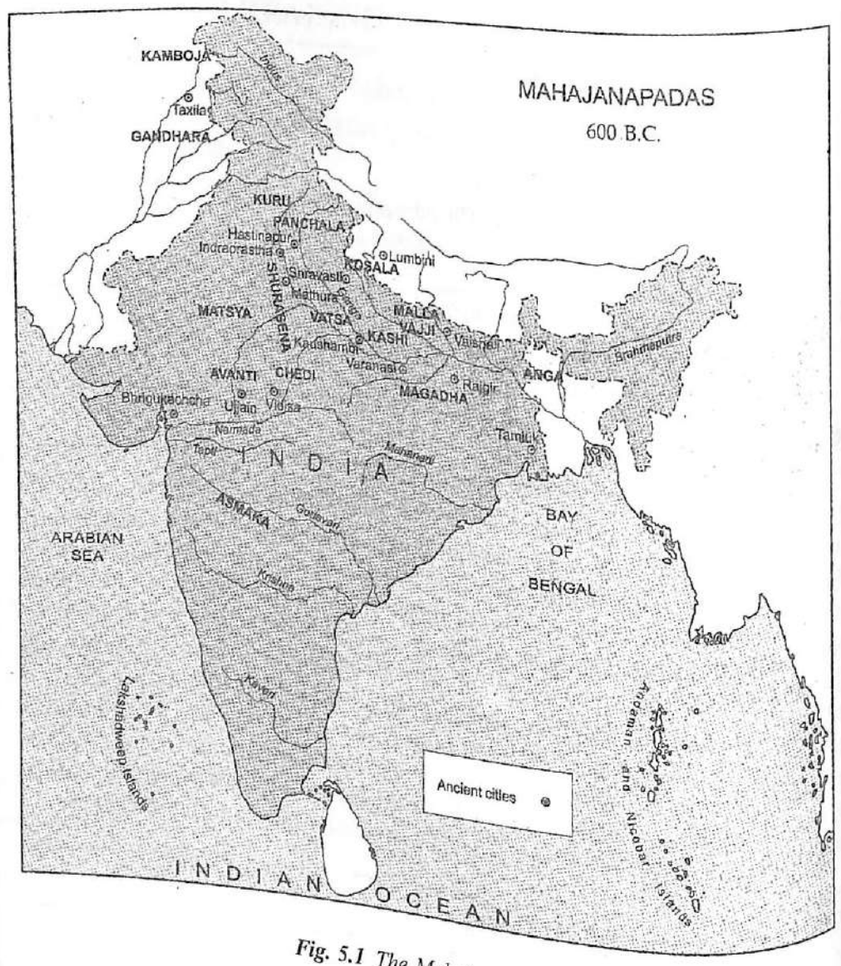

Fig. 5.1 The Mahajanpadas

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Republics and monarchies

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

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

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

5.2.1 Emergence of Cities and Territorial States

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

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

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

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

5.2.2 Republics

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

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

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

5.2.3 Administrative System of the Republics

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

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

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

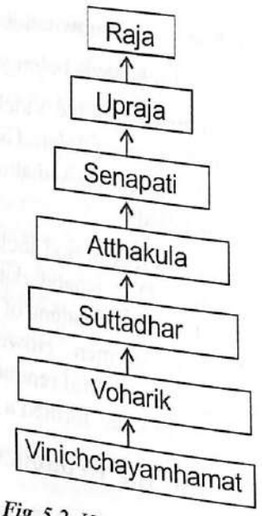

Fig. 5.2 Hierarchy of Officials

5.2.4 Advantages of the Republican System

The chief benefits of the republics were as follows:

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

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

5.2.5 Defects of the Republican System

The defects of the republican system were as follows:

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

5.2.6 Reasons for Devastation of the Republics

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

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

5.3 MAGADHA

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

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

Check Your Progress

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

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

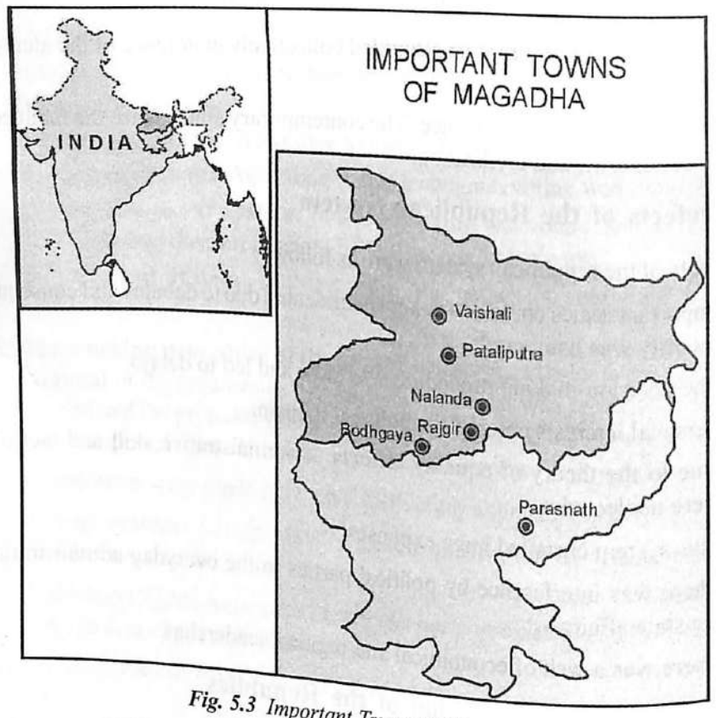

Fig. 5.3 Important Towns of Magadha

5.3.1 Rise of Magadha

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

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

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

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Fig. 5.4 Coins from Magadha

5.3.2 Life in Magadha

Position of the King

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

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

The Society

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

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

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

Religion

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

Education

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

NOTES

Agriculture, Taxation and Trade

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

5.3.3 The Brihadrathas

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

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

5.3.4 The Haryanka Dynasty

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

Bimbisara

Bimbisara was an ambitious king and he added to the prestige and strength of Magadha by his policy of matrimonial alliances and annexations. One of his queens was the sister of Prasenjit, the ruler of Kosala. She brought with her a village in Kashi, yielding revenue of a hundred thousand for bath and perfume money. Another queen of Bimbisara, Chellana, was the youngest of the seven daughters of ruler of Chetaka, the ruler of Vaishali. According to a Tibetan writer, Bimbisara had another wife called Vasavi. It is stated that she saved the life of her husband by giving him food when the latter was imprisoned by Ajatasatru. She may be the same woman as Chellana. Another wife was probably from Punjab. Her name was Khema, the daughter of the King of Madda or Madra. The matrimonial alliances must have helped Bimbisara to extend his influence both eastwards and westwards.

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

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

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

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

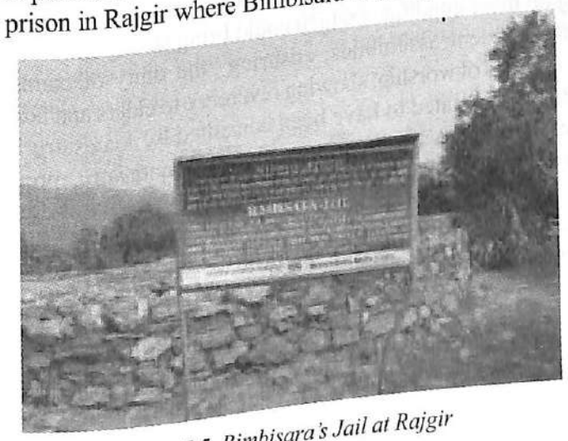

Fig. 5.5 Bimbisara's Jail at Rajgir

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5.3.5 Ajatasatru

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

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

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

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

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

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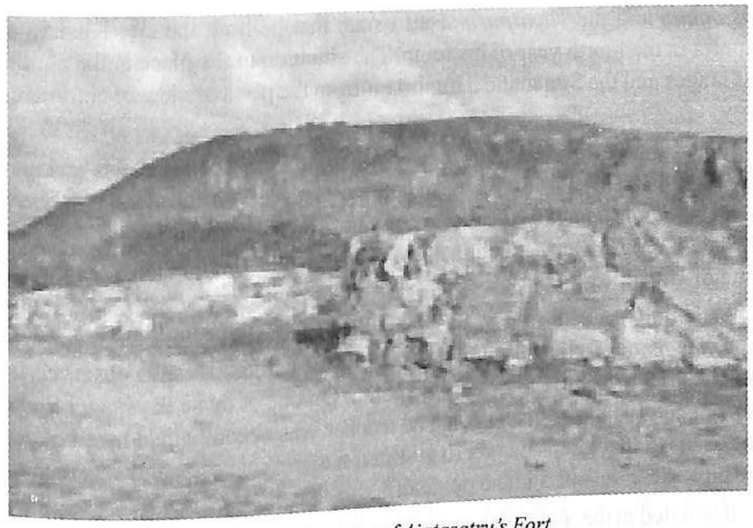

Fig. 5.6 Remains of Ajatasatru's Fort

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

5.3.6 Darsaka

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

5.3.7 Udyain or Udayabhadra

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5.3.8 Saisunaga or Sisunaga

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ACTIVITY

Make a chronological chart of the rulers of Magadha.

5.4 THE NANDAS AND THE RISE OF CHANDRAGUPTA MAURYA

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

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

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

Check Your Progress

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

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



Fig. 5.7 Silver Coins from the Nanda Dynasty

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

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

Dhanananda

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chandragupta Maurya is discussed in detail in the next unit.

DID YOU KNOW

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

5.5 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

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

Check Your Progress

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

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

5.6 KEY TERMS

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

5.7 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

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

5.8 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

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

Long-Answer Questions

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

5.9 FURTHER READING

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UNIT 6 THE MAURYAN EMPIRE

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Structure

6.0 Introduction
6.1 Unit Objectives
6.2 Chandragupta Maurya
  6.2.1 Early Career of Chandragupta Maurya
  6.2.2 Extension of the Empire
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6.3 Dhamma Chakravarti Ashoka
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6.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will discuss the rise and the achievements of the great Mauryan kings, Chandragupta Maurya and Ashoka. The Mauryan Empire successfully conquered all the small, warring kingdoms and practically brought under its wake a huge portion of South Asia also. However, the foundation of the Empire was laid in a war-ridden north India, which was under constant threat of foreign attacks.

Around 326 BC, Alexander set out to conquer the world after having conquered Greece. Alexander defeated the Persian ruler. Next, he overran Afghanistan and entered India through the Khyber Pass. At this time, North-West India was divided into small kingdoms. By destroying the small kingdoms of the north-west, Alexander paved the way for the establishment of Mauryan dynasty's rule. Alexander's army was tired and reluctant to move further ahead and face the fierce army of Chandragupta Maurya. Chandragupta was not only a great conqueror but also a great administrator. They turned back and headed for Babylon, where Alexander breathed his last in 323 BC. Chandragupta Maurya, thus, was able to lay the foundation of the Empire that would ultimately change the course of the ancient Indian history.

Ashoka was another great king not only in the history of India but also across the whole world. A lot of information about him is available through his inscriptions and the Buddhist literature. He was the son of Bindusara and the grandson of Chandragupta Maurya. In his later life after he saw the bloodshed in the Kalinga war, he renounced violence and adopted Buddhism.

With the beginning of the Mauryan Empire in around 321 BC, Indian history entered a new era as for the first time India attained political unity and administrative uniformity.

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The Mauryan administration was the most well-organized and efficient in ancient India. This may be corroborated by the fact that even the Gupta Empire continued to follow their patterns in administration despite themselves being brilliant in all spheres of life. The Mauryan Empire had brought to the forefront amazing dexterity in managing the vast kingdom they had. For the first time in ancient India, a dynasty managed to subjugate and control a major portion of South Asia with much élan.

6.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Describe the early career of Chandragupta Maurya
- Discuss the extension, administration and society under the Mauryan empire
- Explain the early life of Ashoka
- Explain the concept of Ashoka's dhamma
- Identify the characteristics of the Mauryan administration
- State the factors responsible for the disintegration of the Mauryan empire
- Discuss the various theories of historians regarding the downfall of the Mauryan empire

6.2 CHANDRAGUPTA MAURYA

Chandragupta Maurya was the founder of the Mauryan Empire. After establishing himself firmly on the throne of Magadha, Chandragupta set out to expand his empire. He conquered the whole of northern India up to the river Indus. Chandragupta had vast resources; hence he could maintain a huge army. In 305 BC, he defeated Seleucus Nikator and north-western India was liberated from Greek control. Seleucus surrendered Afghanistan and Baluchistan and also gave his daughter Helen's hand in marriage to Chandragupta. In return, Chandragupta presented Seleucus with 500 war elephants. Seleucus sent Megasthenes as an ambassador to the court of Chandragupta.

Megasthenes stayed with Chandragupta for over five years, travelling through the Mauryan Empire and wrote an account of his travels in the book *Indica*. Chandragupta, who ruled from 324 to 297 BC, was the architect of the first Indian imperial power whose capital was Pataliputra, near modern-day Patna in Bihar. The rule of this remarkable king came to an end in 297 BC. After ruling for twenty-four years, Chandragupta abdicated the throne in favour of his son, Bindusara, and became a Jain ascetic. According to a Jain text, he starved himself to death in order to attain *nirvana*. His son, Bindusara, extended the empire into central India and parts of southern India. Only the kingdom of Kalinga was unconquered at the time of his death. His son, Ashoka, succeeded him in 273 BC.

Early life of Chandragupta Maurya

Though much is not known about the earlier life of Chandragupta, inscriptions suggest that he was born in 345 BC in a Kshatriya family residing between present Gorakhpur and the Terai in Nepal. A number of Indian historians are of the view that Chandragupta was the illegitimate son of a king from the Nanda dynasty of Magadha from a maid named 'Mura'. The dynasty was named after Chandragupta's mother. Chanakya, a

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teacher in the Takshasila University found him playing with his friends, where he pretended to be their king. The devout wisdom in the boy impressed Chanakya who was amazed at his leadership skills and decided to make him a disciple. Chanakya trained Chandragupta in warfare and statecraft. They conquered Magadha and established a new rule in Gandhara.

Chandragupta was a great commander and an efficient warrior. The talent and ambitious attitude of Chandragupta combined with the shrewd politics of Chanakya were enough to face any opposition efficiently. Chandragupta fought many battles during his reign. He took over Magadha, fought against the Greeks, the Nanda dynasty of the east. By the time he was twenty years' old, his kingdom stretched from the Bay of Bengal in the east to River Indus in the west to the Arabian Sea in the south. Under Chandragupta Maurya, many kingdoms freed from barbaric administration on one hand and on the other hand also released from the clutches of foreign slavery. His political and soldierly achievements were great. He accepted Jainism and relinquished the throne for his son Bindusara in 320 BC.

Economy under Chandragupta Maurya

Under the Mauryan Empire, India was an agricultural country. According to Megasthenes, majority of the population consisted of agriculturists. They neither participated in warfare nor did they participate in the state affairs. They were not harmed during wars. The tillers of the soil carried on their work uninterruptedly. The land was rich and fertile. The means of irrigation were simple. Therefore, people never saw disasters caused by famines. There were two seasonal rainfalls in India, and farmers reaped harvest twice a year. Besides, there were orchards of myriad kinds. Kautilya has given a description of ploughed, fallow and rocky lands. The land was tilled with the help of oxen. The state paid special attention towards the methods of irrigation. Many officials were appointed for inspecting the towns. According to the Junagarh inscription, Pushpagupta, an official of Chandragupta got Sudarshana Lake constructed for irrigation in Saurashtra.

The following were the means of irrigation as given in *Arthasastra*:

- Canals, tanks, wells, ponds and rivers bullocks.
- Water was drawn from the wells with the help of buckets, and big leather bags.
- Building dams over the river.

Kautilya also refers to manure made from the mixtures of ghee, honey, fats, cow dung and powdered fish. It was used in order to increase the fertility of the soil. Wheat, sugar, maize, rice, barley, sugarcane, mustard, peanuts, cotton, tobacco, potatoes, watermelons, etc., were the main crops of the Mauryan times. Fruits like mangoes, grapes, lemons were aplenty.

Occupations

During the Mauryan times, the cloth industry had greatly developed. The main cloth centres were Kashi, Vatsa, Madura, Vanga, Apranta, etc. Spinning was done by the spinning wheels and big looms were used for weaving clothes. According to *Arthasastra* and Megasthenes, cotton was produced in great quantities, the weavers of cotton clothes worked round the clock. Jute too, was utilized for weaving. Magadha and Kashi were well known towns for jute production.

During those days, clothes were prepared out of the leaves and bark of the trees and the fibres of many kinds. *Arthasastra* presents an elaborate description of woollen

clothes and blankets. They were made in different ways. The woollen garments were made of wool of many colours and with strong threads. Nepal was the main centre of blanket trade. Megasthenes has pointed out that the Indians dressed in costly and beautiful attires. The people of Bengal had the chief occupation of producing muslin cloth, which was in great demand for making clothes. While cotton was grown in the country, silk clothes were imported from China.

Metallurgy

According to Megasthenes, during the Mauryan age, there was an enormous quantity of gold and silver in India. Iron, copper and brass was also available in large quantities. Iron was used for manufacture of arms. Ordinarily, the work of mining was done by the state officials. The state representative who was in-charge of the mines was known as Akradhayaksha. During the Mauryan times, ornaments were worn by members of both the sexes. The wealthy section of the society wore ornaments made of ivory.

Diving and finding pearls, jewels, shells, diamonds from the sea was the most difficult task. Ornaments studded with pearls and beads were in much demand. The Indians wore clothes embroidered with golden threads. The utensils were made of metal; the process of making pots out of metal, its casting and softening is also given in the *Arthasastra*.

Forests, in this period, constituted the property of the state. There were efficient methods of cutting and loading the wood. Bamboo, leaves and bark was used for making a number of everyday things. Wood of an excellent quality was required for making ships. *Arthasastra* gives a description of skins of different animals used for manufacturing things. During the Mauryan Age, a brisk wine trade flourished too. There is a mention of six types of wine in *Arthasastra*. Wine trade was under the complete control *of Suradhyabha*.

The state paid avid attention to the progress of every trade and occupation and traders enjoyed the security of the state. People blinding or chopping off the hands of any sculptor or craftsman were given life sentence. Traders had the privilege of enjoying feasible profit but anyone who indulged in making graft money, cheating, gaining undue profit and adulterating everyday products was severely punished. Kautilya followed the middle path in state affairs and a mutual one in professional sphere.

The external and internal trade had developed sufficiently during the Mauryan period. The internal trade was carried through safe land routes. The roads going from Pataliputra to western India were 1,500 miles long. In southern India there were important busy land routes. According to Kautilya, the southern roads going through the mines were very significant. They involved less exertion and labour. Another road ran from Pataliputra to the east. Besides these major routes, there existed many minor land routes that connected the small cities with the main roads. On the main roads there were milestones at a distance of every half a kilometre.

Judges were appointed for the regular inspection and supervision of these roads. The internal trade was also carried through rivers. Small boats and vessels were used for this purpose. In the entire kingdom every town was known for its particular product. Nepal was famous for woollen clothes, the Himalayan area for skin industries, Magadha for tree bark and clothes, Kashi for all types of clothes, Bengal for fine muslin and Kerala for pearls. The people of the professional class travelled to far off lands to sell their wares.

According to *Arthasastra*, during the Mauryan times active trade was carried on by sea routes in big ships known as *Pravana*. There were ports and harbours. The management of the ports was under a port official. The person in charge of the port had to rescue ships caught in the stormy waves of perilous seas. Pearls were imported from China. There were good commercial relations between Egypt and India. Sikandria was the chief port of Egypt and three land routes connected it with India. The existence of a special assembly for receiving the foreign ambassadors in the royal court of Mauryas indicates that there existed close relations between India and countries abroad. Thus, during the Mauryan times, kings had to maintain foreign relations and formulate appropriate external policies.

Coinage

The following were the Mauryan coins:

- Gold coins known as *Sauvamik*
- Silver coins called *Kashaparna*
- Copper coins called *Mashaka*
- *Kakni* was also a copper coin which was less valuable to Mashaka

Kautilya has divided the Mauryan coinage into two parts. These are as follows:

1. **Legal tender:** In this category were the coins collected in the state treasury. They were used for state taxation and export and import or exchange.
2. **Token money:** This was a token currency used by the people or their daily transactions. Such coins were not deposited in the royal treasury. The coins were made by the state foundries. But anyone could cast the coins at his own cost. There was no paper currency. The chief of the foundry was called *Suvarnika* or *Lakshanadhyaksha*. Figure 6.1 shows the punchmark coins of the Maurya Empire.



Fig. 6.1 Punch Marked Silver Coins of the Mauryan Empire

6.2.1 Early Career of Chandragupta Maurya

Chandragupta Maurya started his career from a very humble position and there are differences of opinion regarding his family. It is now the accepted view of a majority of scholars that Chandragupta belonged to the Kshatriya clan called the Moriyas originally ruling over Pipphalivana, which probably lay in modern Uttar Pradesh.

After the death of her husband, the mother of Chandragupta shifted to Pataliputra for safety where she gave birth to her illustrious son. Chandragupta was first brought up by a cowherd and then by a hunter. Chanakya, his mentor marked out Chandragupta for the twin tasks of winning the entire India and killing Dhana Nand. It is now generally believed that Chanakya and Kautilya, the author of *Arthasastra*, were the names of the same person.

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The classical writers have described that Chandragupta had visited Alexander who felt offended by his behaviour and gave orders to kill him. However, Chandragupta managed to escape. After the return of Alexander, he with the help of Chanakya, raised an army by recruiting soldiers mostly from the warlike people of the republican states of Punjab who had given fierce resistance to Alexander. He kept before the people the idea of turning the foreign Greek invaders out of the country and succeeded. He was supported by Parvataka–a hill-tribe chief who became his friend. Probably, Chandragupta started his war of liberation in the lower Indus Valley, before 321 or even before 323 BC and finally succeeded. By 317 BC, no Greek governor remained in India and Punjab and Sindh were occupied by Chandragupta. The desire of the Greek *Satrap* and their soldiers to go back to their own country, their mutual conflicts, the revolt of the Indian *Satraps* and the assassination of Philippus of the Upper Indus Valley in 325 BC and the death of Alexander in 323 BC facilitated the work of Chandragupta of turning the Greeks out of the Indian Territory.

The next task of Chandragupta was to conquer Magadha. He failed to achieve this objective probably once or twice but ultimately grabbed the throne of Pataliputra and killed Dhana Nand. The incompetence of Dhana Nand, his unpopularity amongst his subjects, the astute diplomacy of Chanakya and the bravery and military skill of Chandragupta were mainly responsible for the downfall of the Nanda dynasty. Chandragupta also kept Pataliputra as his capital.

6.2.2 Extension of the Empire

When Chandragupta was busy in the extension and consolidation of his empire, Seleucus, one of the able generals of Alexander who had obtained possession of the Eastern Empire of his master, proceeded towards India to recover the lost possession of the late emperor. He reached India in around 305 BC where Chandragupta faced him in a battle. The Greek writers do not give the details of the conflict. It is also not certain whether a decisive battle took place between the two or not. But, in view of the terms of peace between the two, it is definite that Seleucus failed miserably in his expedition. He had not only to abandon the idea of re-conquering Punjab but had to surrender to Chandragupta a part of his territories in the East with its capital cities Herat, Kandahar and Kabul and also the territories of Baluchistan.

Thus, this settlement between the two extended the territories of Chandragupta in the North-West up to the borders of Persia and also secured his frontiers in that direction.

No written record is available of the other conquests of Chandragupta, yet it is certain that he ruled over a vast empire. Bindusara, his successor is not known to history as a conqueror while Ashoka conquered only Kalinga.

Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that the empire of the Mauryas, (which is believed to have extended from the border of Persia in the North-West to Bengal in the East and from Kashmir in the North to Mysore in the South), was mostly built up by Chandragupta.

In his last days, Chandragupta went South with the Jain monk Bhadrabahu. The hill where he lived during the last days of his life is known as Chandragiri where a temple known as Chandragupta Basti was also erected by his grandson, Ashoka. It is in Mysore.

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6.3.3 Administration

Chandragupta was not only a great conqueror but also a capable administrator. The way he carried on the administration of his empire was pursued by his successors and no change was felt necessary except that Ashoka tried to liberalize it further and elaborated the public duties of the state officials. The basic principles of the administration of the Mauryas remained the same as established by Chandragupta till subsequently the weaker Mauryas lost their hold over it. Primarily, Kautilya's *Arthasastra* and the description of Megasthenes give us a fair idea of the administration of Chandragupta. Figure 6.2 shows an image of Kautilya.

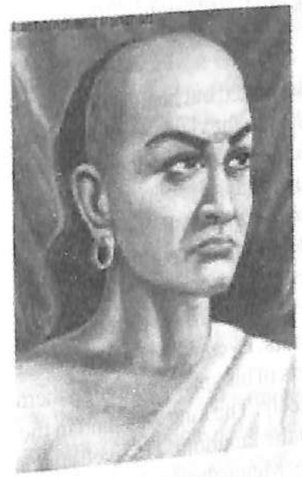

Fig. 6.2 Kaulitlya

The polity

By the time of the Mauryas, the office of the king had become hereditary and the divine origin of monarchy had attained maturity and had given the king wide powers. But, strictly speaking, as Hindu political theory vests sovereignty in the dharma or law in the widest sense of the term and the state is separated from the king who is a part of it, no king could be tyrannical or a wielder of absolute personal powers. Of course, the necessity of a strong king was stressed but it was equally emphasized that he had to rule according to the dharma and for the establishment of the dharma, which was conducive to the highest good.

The dharma actually upheld an ideal that elevated the soul to the loftiest heights and, therefore, the function of the state was to create those conditions of life which would help every citizen attain this goal. It also meant that the state would enjoy all the embracing powers. Therefore, its scope of activities was unlimited and no distinction was made between the personal and the civic rights and duties, or between the moral principles and positive law. Everything that had any bearing upon the moral, spiritual or material condition of a citizen came within the scope of the state activities. The state had the right to regulate the family life of the citizens, to promote true religion and control all professions and occupations as well. Thus, the state held the ring for the interplay of social forces, intellectual influences, economic enterprises and above all the spiritual tradition. But in no case, the extensive activities of the state and the divine origin of the monarchy meant to support the divine right of the king. Therefore, the power of the king has increased but not without an increase in his corresponding duties. No wicked son of

a king was allowed to become the successor and, consequently, the right of the people to rebel against a wicked and tyrannical king was also recognized. For the same purpose, special care was taken to impart sound education and moral training to the future king and if the prince failed to reach a requisite standard, he forfeited his right to the throne.

Regarding the inter-state relations, the *Arthasastra* states that the normal relations between the states can only be that of mutual hostility and material interests alone should guide the relations of one state with another. A ruler should adopt the policy which is calculated to increase the power and wealth of his state, irrespective of any legal justice or moral consideration and for this purpose; he should adopt any or all the four instruments, viz. *Sama* (conciliation), *Dama* (gift), *Danda* (aggressive action) and *Bheda* (sowing dimensions in a hostile state or among different enemy states).

The king

Sometimes, the king could be elected but hereditary kingship was the established practice. Females were not excluded from the right of kingship but in practice it was rarely to be found. The king was the supreme head of the state and performed military, judicial, executive and legislative functions. His permanent duty was to protect the people and seek their welfare. In *Arthasastra*, it is mentioned that the happiness of the king lies in the welfare and the ultimate good of his subjects. Therefore, the king was the busiest person in the kingdom. The twenty-four hours of each day and night were divided into eight parts and in each part he performed different duties punctually. Chandragupta could sleep hardly for six hours. Even when he was dressed and his hair being combed, he used to listen to the reports of his spies and assign them their duties. Besides, he was easily accessible to his subjects. The king was paid in the form of taxes by his subjects in return for his services to the kingdom. He lived in a large and comfortable palace, which was highly praised by Megasthenes. He was protected by lady bodyguards and every precaution was taken to protect his life from treachery and poisoning.

The council of ministers and the state council

According to Kautilya, there were two committees to assist the king in the administration. He says, 'Sovereignty is possible only with assistance.' It implied that these committees were not only necessary but also effective in administration as well. The council of ministers was a small body consisting of 3–12 members. Each of them was the head of one or a few of the administrative departments and sometimes, one of them could be appointed as the chief or prime minister. All of them were appointed by the king on merit and could also be dismissed by him. All the administrative measures were preceded by deliberations in the council of ministers. Each minister had free access to the king but in policy matters they advised the king as a body. The State Council was a large body and the number of its members varied between 12, 16 or 20 and, according to Kautilya, it could include as many members as the need of the state required. These councils played an effective role in the administration of the kingdom. Kautilya has clearly distinguished the two and has given pre-eminence to the Council of Ministers as compared to the State Council. Of course, the king had the legal power to refuse to work on their advice but, in practice, he hardly did so.

Agriculture

During the Mauryan times, India was an agricultural country. According to Megasthenes, a majority consisted of the peasants and farmers. The land used to be rich and fertile. Means of irrigation were simple and as such the people never saw the disasters caused by famines or rot, the prices of the daily necessities gained momentum. There were two seasonal rainfalls in India and the farmers reaped the harvest twice a year. The following were the means of irrigation as given by Kautilya in his *Arthashastra*:-

(i) Rivers, canals, ponds and tanks.

(ii) The water was drawn from the wells with the help of bullocks, by buckets and big leather bags.

(iii) By building dams over the rivers.

(iv) Through an air driven mill.

Water or irrigation tax collection by government

Kautilya's *Arthashastra* refers to a water tax which was regularly collected wherever the state assisted in providing irrigation. One of the Chandragupta's governors was responsible for building a dam across a river near Girnar in Western India, resulting in a large lake to supply water for the region. An inscription in the neighbourhood mentions the continuous maintenance of this dam for eight hundred years after it was built. Although the construction and maintenance of reservoirs, tanks, canals, and wells were regarded as part of the functions of the government, there is no ground for holding that the control of irrigation was the key to the political control of the country. We have epigraphic evidence for the existence of rural store-house, which show that taxes were also collected in kind and these granaries were meant for helping local people in times of famines, drought, etc.

Trade and industry

Besides agriculture, which was the main profession, trade and industry flourished well. One salient feature of the economic conditions of the Mauryan period was that major industries were under the state control and state had control over industry. Mines were nationalized and various diamonds, gems, precious stones, copper, lead, tin, iron and bitumen were managed by the state. Efficiency in administration rendered the organization of trade easier, and crafts were gradually converted into small scale industries. The state directly employed some of the artisans such as armours, ship-builders, etc., who were exempted from tax, but others who worked in state workshops, as for example the spinning and weaving shops and the state mines, were liable to tax. The rest worked either individually or, as most often was the case, as members of a guild. The guilds were large and complex in structure, and artisans found it advantageous to join them, since this eliminated the expense of working alone and having to compete with the guilds. From the point of view of the state, guilds facilitated the collection of taxes and the general running of the industry. Localization of occupation and the hereditary nature of occupations strengthened the guilds.

The bureaucracy at the centre

The Mauryan administration was carried on by an organized, efficient and a highly centralized bureaucracy. Besides the ministers who were the heads of various departments, the *Sannidhara* (Head of Treasury), the *Samawrta* (Collector General of Revenue), the *Purohita* (Chief priest), the *Senapati* (Commander of the army), the *Pratihara* (Gate-keeper or the protector of the King's palace and person) the *Antarvamisika* (Leader of the harem guards), *Durgapala* (Governor of the fort), the *Anrapala* (Governor of the frontier), *Paur* (Governor of the capital), the *Nyayadeish* (Chief Justice) and *Prasasta* (Head of the Police) were the other important officials. There were other numerous officers who worked in various other departments such as Audit and Accounts, Treasury, Records, Mines, Mint, Commerce, Excise, Agriculture,

Toll, etc. The efficiency of the Mauryan administration depended on the loyalty and capability of its bureaucracy. Prof. Nilakanta Sastri an eminent Dravidologist opines that the Mauryan bureaucracy was vast, versatile and kept itself aligned with all the aspects of the economic and social life of the state.

The provincial administration

The Mauryan Empire was divided into a number of provinces. The provinces were of two categories, viz. one which were ruled over by the subordinate rulers and the other which were created after dividing the territories under the direct rule of the Mauryas. During the reign of Ashoka such provinces, were four in number, viz. Uttrapath, Avanti-Rashtra, Kalinga and Dakhsinapath having Taxila, Ujjayani, Tosh and Suvaranagiri, respectively as their capitals. The fifth part of the empire was called Prashad, which was ruled by the emperor himself from the capital Pataliputra. In each of these provinces there was a Governor or Viceroy who was sometimes a prince of royal blood. The princes, when appointed as Viceroys, were called Kumar-Mahamartras while the rest of the Viceroys were simply designated as Mahamatras. These were the provinces which were formed as cuts of administration after dividing the imperial territories, which were under the direct rule of the Mauryas. Yet, there were another type of provinces. These were the states which had accepted the over-lordship of the Mauryas but had been left free to be governed by their own rulers. The number of provinces during the period of Chandragupta is not clear but Ashoka definitely had at least four provinces directly under his rule, which had their capitals at Taxila, Tosali, Ujjain and Suvarnagiri. Magadha and its nearby territories were administered by the emperor himself from its capital Pataliputra.

Mahamatras carried on the administration under the guidance of the emperor but it was difficult to control such a vast empire from a single centre because of the difficulty of communications in those days. Hence, they must have enjoyed wide and independent powers. It is also believed that there was an advisory committee like the council of ministers at the centre to help every Mahamatra. Besides, there were many other officers who helped a Mahamatra in carrying out the administration. Amongst them *Yuta* (tax-collectors), *Rajuka* (revenue collectors) and *Sthaniks* (district officers) were important.

The provinces were divided into districts under *Sthaniks* who were helped by another class of officers called Gopas. The village was the smallest unit of administration where an officer known as Gramika either elected by the local people or by the government, looked after the administration of the village with the help of a village-assembly. The village assembly managed cleanliness, construction of bridges and roads, justice and other things.

The administration of city

City administration was looked after in its minutest detail. Every city was divided into Wards and further into the groups of households under Sthaniks and Gopas, respectively. The entire city was under a city-superintendent assisted by a municipal corporation.

An idea of city administration can be perceived from the administration of the capital Pataliputra well described by Megasthenes. As described by him, Pataliputra was nine miles in length and 1¾ miles in breadth. It had 64 gates and 570 towers. It was protected by a wooden wall and surrounded by a 60 feet wide ditch. A commission of 30 members administered it. The commission was divided into six boards each of which had five members. Each board looked after separate work. The first two boards looked after trade and commerce, the third after manufactured articles, the fourth after foreigners, the fifth maintained the record of births and deaths and the sixth collected 1/10th of the prices of the articles sold in the market. In its collective capacity, the commission looked after all the matters of public interest and those connected with civic amenities.

Elaborate regulations were made for proper sanitary arrangements and to prevent the outbreak of fire in the city. It had temples, roads, foot-paths, wells, tanks, hospitals, gardens and various places of entertainment.

Thus, Pataliputra was a well planned, well administered and a beautiful city.

Espionage

The Mauryas had developed an efficient system of espionage. Spies were kept not only by the emperor but also by all the important officials of the state. Female spies were also quite popular. Spies were deputed to foreign countries also. Kautilya and Chandragupta had given great importance to this system in an administration. The emperor was kept informed about all the relevant affairs of his state and also about the affairs of the foreign states.

Judicial administration

Both Megasthenese and Kautilya describe that the penal code was severe. Even for ordinary offences, fines were imposed and for severe crimes there was a provision of either penalty of death or cutting off the limbs of the body. However, crimes were few.

The courts were of two types: central and local. At the centre, the king held his own court and provided justice. Besides, there was the court of the Chief Justice who arranged court with the help of four or five other judges.

The local courts were of three types. The first type of court was formed by the citizens themselves to sort out their disputes, the second type of court was formed by the business-guilds and the third were the village assemblies. Besides, there were civil and criminal courts of the state. The Civil Courts were called Dharmasthiya and the criminal courts Kantaksodhan. Prof N.K. Shastri has expressed the view that the changed economic and social circumstances had created new complications in the society at that time. The courts called Kantaksodhanas were created primarily to face the challenges posed by those complications and hence were supposed to decide the cases immediately. Ashoka had decided that the orders of death penalty would be carried out after three days.

Finance

The primary source of income for the state was land revenue. The royal share of the produce of the soil called the Bhaga generally amounted to 1/6th, but it differed and ranged from 1/4th to 1/8th. It was based on the land used by each individual cultivator, not on the village as a whole and also in accordance with the quality of the land. Ashoka had reduced it to 1/8th of the produce in the district of Lumbini where Buddha was born. The state was accepted as the owner of the land. The state had increased the area of cultivation after clearing the forests. Large number of slaves were brought to new land for cultivation from the heavily populated areas. One and a half lakh people were brought from Kalinga after the war for the clearance of the forests and cultivation of the new land.

Besides, there were various other sources of income for the state. It taxed the shepherds and the livestock breeders on the number and produce of the animals. The state charged toll-tax and trade-tax on the articles sold. There was forest tax, tax on intoxicants, mine-tax, fish tax, irrigation tax, license tax, etc. The state owned vast estates and forests. It had a monopoly of mines and traded in mineral products. It had its own

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factories which produced all sorts of articles, particularly cloth. Trade by waterways was also controlled by the state. Actually, the state not only owned but also directly participated in the organization and development of agriculture, industry and trade. The state had the right to confiscate the property of the individuals on several grounds. In times of crisis, the state organized festivals and exhibitions for earning money. All this provided some additional income to it.

The king's household, the army, salaries of officials and members of the bureaucracy and expenditure on public works were the main items of the expenditure of the state. The employees of the state were paid salaries in cash. The difference between the highest paid civil or military officer and the lowest paid employee ranged proportionally.

Roads and irrigation

Large irrigation projects and construction and maintenance of public highways were the responsibilities of the state. Megasthenese has described the main highway which ran from the North-West up-to Pataliputra and towards the East. It was 1,150 miles long and quite wide. Trees were planted on its both sides. Milestones and direction-posts were erected on it and arrangements were made for its proper maintenance. It gives us an idea of the other highways of the empire. They were safe, properly maintained, of long distances and were up to 32 feet or even more in width.

The Maurya rulers constructed large numbers of canals and set up other irrigation projects and their example was circulated by their provincial governors. One of Chandragupta's governors was responsible for building a dam across a river near Girnar in western India, resulting in a large supply of water for the region. The state, however, charged irrigation tax which ranged from 1/5th to 1/3rd of the produce.

Public health, sanitation and census

The state took proper care of the public health in general. Elaborate rules were framed for sanitation purposes, which were strictly enforced. There were hospitals not only for human beings but also for birds and animals. There was a separate department for public census and it kept records of birth and deaths at every place.

Military administration

The Mauryas kept a large and powerful standing army. Chandragupta had laid its foundation and there is no evidence to prove that even Ashoka who gave up wars of conquest after the war with Kalinga reduced the number and strength of the army. The Mauryas kept a navy also but the force consisted mainly of infantry, cavalry, war-elephants and chariots. Pliny, who based his statement on Megasthenese, puts the strength of Chandragutpta's forces at 60,000 of infantry, 30,000 of cavalry and 9,000 elephants. He did not mention the number of chariots but Plutarch placed their number at 8,000. The administration of the army was looked after by a council of 30 members, which was divided into six committees of the five members each to look after the six departments of the army, which were as follows:

- Admiralty (Navy)
- Transport
- Infantry
- Cavalry
- War-chariots
- War-elephants

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The success of Chandragupta against Seleucus and the conquest of Kalinga by Ashoka are sufficient proofs of the strength of the Mauryan army.

6.2.4 The Society under the Mauryas

Let us now turn our attention to the conditions of various classes of society in the Mauryan epoch.

Brahmin

Brahmins still maintained their position and prominence as the highest Varna. They now acted as advisors to the rulers and so Purohitas grew in importance. They got as much as 48000 panas in salary. They still had monopoly on rituals. Sacrifices were reduced in number and were not as prominent now, as they were in the later Vedic period. Apart from this, Brahmins carried on teaching and commanded respect from the other *Varnas*. Indian sources said that they were granted lands and money from the kings and so acquired property. Some also collected tax. Though not explicitly mentioned by Megasthenes, Brahmins, according to Kautilya, also formed a part of army. Though this was restricted to monarchies and republics, it was more or less same as in the early times.

According to *Arthashastra,* Brahmins were exempted from taxes but the legal privilege was now withdrawn by the king. This is a clear change from the Mahajanapada era. Kautilya enumerates some punishment for the Brahmins. If a Brahmin encroached upon the power of the state or instigated a rebellion he should be 'drowned'. If he was guilty of theft he was liable to be branded by a mark of the shape of dog and of a headless trunk if he killed a human being. *Arthashastra* also talks about Brahmin being exiled or sent to mines for his sinful deeds.

The concept of a Brahmin changing his occupation still carried on in this period and we find a number of professions attached with them.

Brahmins in this period lost their ideological predominance because of the advancement and acceptability of Buddhism and emergence of urban life and cities. Due to the growth of urban life and cities, the tradesmen became rich and grew in importance. Buddhism was by and large the most popular religion among them. But, still, the social and economic clout of Brahmins was intact primarily because of the privileges that they had access to. They were still a force to reckon with, who again grew in importance after the decline of Buddhism.

Kshatriyas

Kshatriyas during this period had various functions like *Dana, Adhyana, Yajna, Shastrajiv* (Possession and profession of arms as a source of livelihood) and *bhularakshasa* (Protection of human beings.)

Due to the emergence of large and centralized kingdoms, Kshatriyas, as a ruling class, grew in importance and as warfare was an important instrument of the state policy of these kingdoms, Kshatriyas, as soldiers, also gained prominence. What is important is the fact that warriors and soldiers were a prominent part of the society and were numerically second only to husbandmen (Peasants). Megasthenes gives an interesting account depicting the Kshatriyas as always ready for battle. Apart from this, they kept enjoying life and all their other needs were taken care of by other professionals.

Kshatriyas as a ruling class gained importance and Brahmins because of Buddhism and increase in trade activities, etc., lost some ground. Kshatriyas were always divided into rich and poor. Brahmins now favoured a union with the Kshatriyas perhaps to cash

on their growing importance and to strive to strengthen their own position. One other important reason for such efforts by Brahmins was that only Kshatriyas, as rulers, could keep the social structure intact which was so very vital for Brahmins.

Vaishyas

The main function of Vaishyas was Adhyana, Yajna, Krishi, Pashupala, Dana and Vanijya (trade). Their position enhanced in the Maurya period because of urbanization and boom in trade but socially they were still oppressed and denied by the brahmanical system. Perhaps because of this reason, they followed Buddhism quite overtly.

Second important feature about Vaishyas was the 'guild formation'. These groups gained importance in the society and in fact were running certain state institutions. Vaishyas were involved in trade, agriculture and crafts, etc. They paid the major portion of the taxes. Some owned properties also and usury (money lending on interest) was a common occupation among them. According to *Arthsasastra,* Vaishyas and Sudras are to be included in the army troops only in case of an emergency. Normally, this was an exclusive right of Brahmins and Khshatriyas.

Sudras

Sudras during the Maurya period receded further into backwardness. Their functions were Varta (Production of wealth), Karukarme (Arts), Kuslavakrama (Crafts). They could not hear sacred texts and were debarred from Samskaras. Their condition was bad. While the upper three castes were growing in some way or the other, they were almost the same as slaves, the only difference being that they were free. Kautilya gives a hint of a possible conflict between Sudras and the upper three classes as he mentions punishment for a Shudra, who called himself a Brahmin or steals the property of gods or was hostile to the king, that either he should be blinded or should pay 800 panas as punishment. For the first time during the Mauryan age we come across the people of Shudra class who, hitherto landless, acquired land in the newly developed agrarian set up. They were employed as sharecropper and *vithi (bonded* labour) was also prevalent. Special officers were employed for the procurement of *vithi.* Some of the prominent features of the society depict a few important aspects which include enhancement in the political role and prestige of Kshatriyas and the ideological decline of Brahmins though they still maintained their superiority over other classes. Vaishyas gained material prosperity in this period and Sudras went further down in their political and social role. The element of enmity between the upper two classes and the lower two classes seems to have gained momentum.

Slavery

Though Megasthenes says that no slavery prevailed in India during the Mauryan age, yet he was wrong. Slavery was prevalent but with very strict humanitarian laws in the favour or for the safeguard of the slaves. These aspects have been dealt with in *Arthashastra* where it talks about Sudras as slaves but they were not outcasts. Slaves worked in households and they were the responsibility of their masters. The chastity of slave girls was a liability of their masters and if they were raped by their masters, the latter had to compensate them adequately. If a slave girl had a child from her master, even if willingly, they both were freed and compensated. The slaves were almost a part of the family and forced labour was forbidden. Kautilya talks about upper caste slaves by calling them *Ahitikas.* He also forbids children's sale into slavery.

There were two types of slaves. One who were slaves by birth or were prisoners of war, they could never attain freedom and their subsequent generations were also compelled to work as slaves. Others were those who got into slavery because of the debts which they could not return. They could attain freedom after clearing their debt.

Religious Conditions in the Mauryan Age

Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism were the popular religions at that time. There also existed some rivalry among them. In general, a spirit of religious tolerance prevailed and people changed their religion without much disturbance to their social life. Chandragupta, Bindusara and Ashoka were the followers of Hinduism in their early life but during his later life Chandragupta accepted Jainism and Ashoka became a convert to Buddhism.

Vedic Religion

In the days of the Imperial Mauryas, the worship of the Vedic gods was still far from obsolescence. Indra and Varuna continued to be evoked. But side by side, with them appeared other deities whose popularity dates from the epic period. They are Vishnu, Shiva, and the Sun. The river Ganges is also referred to as an object of worship by the classical writers. Serpent deities or Nagas were worshipped by some. Vasudeva is mentioned in Panini though the Krishna-cult assumed importance only later. Balrama, his brother, was already the object of worship in the third century BC. Patanjali refers of the exhibition and sale of the images of Shiva, Skanda and Visakha by the Mauryas.

Hinduism had undergone certain changes. *Yajanas* were performed but animal sacrifices had lost much of their importance.

Buddhism and Other Sects

During the period of Ashoka, due to royal patronage, Buddhism had become a predominant religion. The other main sects were Jains, Sharmanas, Ajivikas, etc. Besides these there were some ascetic orders and some of them rendered social service to the people. Religious tolerance was the order of the day. State treated them impartially, and asked to show respect for truth and restraint of speech. Religious outlook of the people was by and large liberal.

Art and architecture under Mauryan Empire

Art flourished greatly during the Mauryan age. In the pre-Mauryan age, bricks and wood were used in the construction of royal palace. But during the reign of Ashoka, the use of stones of various kinds was in vogue. It was used with astonishing dexterity and skill. Some historians opine that this art was not Indian but it was a legacy of the foreigners who were in Ashoka's service. However, it can be said with all justification that this type of technique of stone building was not foreign and exotic. Ashoka was a brilliant connoisseur of architecture. He had many new cities constructed. The brilliance of Ashoka's architecture greatly surprised the Chinese traveller Fa-Hien who witnessed it seven hundred years later. It was so elegant and rich that he refused to accept that it was constructed by human hands.

Ashoka raised 84,000 stupas. Foreign travellers in India witnessed them in various parts of the country. Expressing his view about India, Yuan Ch'wang, a Chinese Buddhist monk and traveller who travelled India during AD 629–645, says that there were fascinating stupas in Takshasila, Srinagara, Thaneswar, Mathura- Kanang, Ayodhya, Kausambhi, Sravasti, Vaisali, Banaras, Gaya, etc., which were 300 feet in height and 2 to 6 inches in breadth. During the reign of Ashoka art and architecture had reached the summit of its glory. The stupas of Ashoka are the living and true symbols of art. Their beauty is ineffable and dazzling.

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The stone stupas can be divided into three composite blocks, which are the trunk, the upper part decked with flowers, ivies and birds and the third part which is made of glass with models of lion, horses and elephants. The stupas of Ashoka reveal the Mauryan art.

The Mauryan glory reached its height during the reign of Ashoka. There was absolute peace and prosperity in the country; land was fertile and revenue of the state was abundant. Export and import and inland trade was carried on profitably; literature developed to an admirable extent and art progressed by leaps and bounds. The Mauryan Empire attained its height in strength and magnificence under this able and kind administrator.

The Mauryan art is the innovator of the arts in the Indian history. The Mauryan kings were extraordinary builders. If it is said that the history of Indian art starts from the Mauuryan period, then it will not be hypothetical. No doubt there was art in the earlier period but not of this quality. Dr Vincent Smith, an eminent authority on Indian art and architecture, has rightly said, 'The art of smoothening the Stone Age had been reached till the extent that it can be said that for the mastery of the modern age art it was like a lost art.' But few historians do not accept the fineness of Mauryan art. It has been rightly said that the history of art of India is like a single sheet of paper in terms of language and like an empty almirah from the archeological point of view.

Mauryan art can be divided into the following parts:

1. **Rajprasad:** Chandragupta's *Rajprasad* or palace was located at Pataliputra. The sabha building was located on a pillar on which beautiful idols were crafted. The Rajbhavan of Chandragupta was far brilliant than the famous buildings of Susa and Ekbetan of Asia. The *Rajprasad* had three parts—rajshala and the precincts of soldiers, sabha mandap and *antpur* of the king. Fa-Hein, the Chinese traveller who visited India during the reign of Chandragupta II, opines that, 'This *Prasad* is not a creation of man but the creation of gods. The pillars of the *Prasad* are made of stone and they have magnificent drawings on them.'
2. **Stupa and Chaitya:** Stupas were round domes made from stones and bricks in the shape of a turned bowl. Above the Stupa, there was a roof of wood and stone and around it was the way for taking rounds. Figure 6.3 shows a Stupa that was constructed by Chandragupta Maurya.

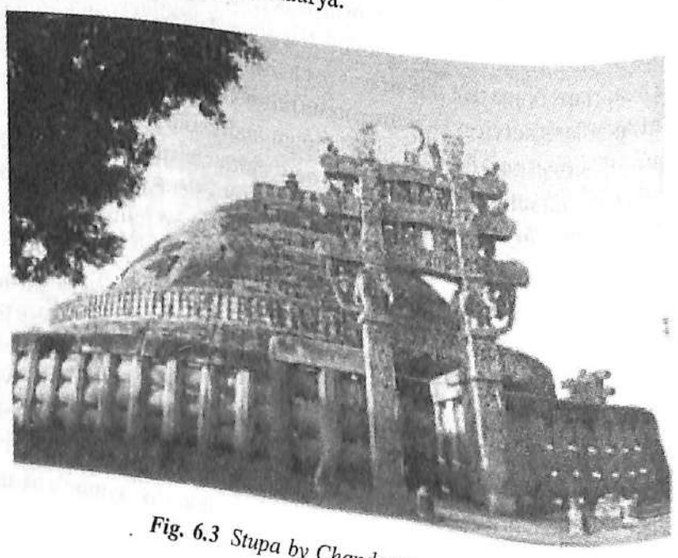

Fig. 6.3 Stupa by Chandragupta Maurya

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Ashoka is credited with having constructed 84,000 stupas. According to Vasudev Sharan Aggarwal, a Vedic Scholar, 'The picture of Vajrasanna temple, which is on the railings of Bharhut has a round dome decorated on the side of turned lotus flower with head constructed by Ashoka.'

3. **Gufa bhavan:** The caves were made by cutting the hard stones. The inner parts of the caves were made very smooth. They were the place of residence for the Bhikchus. Three caves in Barbara and four caves in the Nagarjuni collection have been found, which are considered to be Satghars. The amount of labour which was required to cut 30–40 feet long cave and to smoothen the inner part of it was not possible without deep religious feelings.
4. **Art of town construction:** Ashoka constructed two new towns Srinagar and Devpattan. Apart from this, the Sudarshan Lake was also constructed during this period.
5. **Art of making pillars**: The pillars were created with stones. The length of these stones was 40 feet and their diameter was 3 feet and 7 inches. 150 feet long pillars of this period astonish archaeologists even today. There is the idol of lion on the Lauriya Nandan Garh pillar. These 50 ton pillars had three parts.

   The first part was Aadharpithika, which was inside the land and beautiful sketches of animals and birds along with Dharmachakra were made on them. The second part was Tana, which was made up of round stones. Its thickness decreases towards the upper side. This was 50 feet long like the nose of an elephant. The third part was Shirsha (the top-most part has a bell and above this are found pictures of animals and birds). It is very difficult to find such beautiful ancient idols of birds in any country. The number of pillars unearthed is 40 among which Sarnath, Sanchi, Rampurva, Rummin Daie, Nigliva, etc., are the most important ones.
6. **Art of making idols:** The usual expressions of woman's beauty, like attractive body, sharp eyes and shy faces are the specialties of idols. The Mauryan period's special shines makes them more beautiful. The smoothness and movement of these idols made them lively. There was a mixture of religion and Greek art in the Mauryan period idol-making technique. The idols were made strong and durable. Some historians feel that Mauryan art was influenced by Persia. Their arguments are as follows:
   - The Mauryan pillars are made up of shining polish and are round in shape, whereas Greek pillars lack polish.
   - Ashoka pillars are of Ekashmak stone whereas the Persian pillars are made up of broken stones.
   - Greek monuments were made by masons and the pillars of Ashoka were made by carpenters.

The fact that Mauryan art was not influenced by the Greeks is unacceptable because the monuments reflect some influence of Persian art. The art of preparing leather and constructing the fort was a mixture of Indian and Greek art forms. Ashoka, on the basis of designs of the ancient civilizations and some foreign examples, perhaps appointed some foreign artists to make the outlay but the construction of its decoration was only done by the Indian artists and for the purity of Indian art form they were kept in that manner.

Check Your Progress

1. Fill in the blanks.
   (a) Indica was written by _____.
   (b) The Mauryan administration was carried on by an organized, efficient and a highly centralized _____.
2. State whether True or False.
   (a) Chandragupta was not only a great conqueror but also a capable administrator.
   (b) No proper care was taken by the state of public health in general.

ACTIVITY

Visit one of the stupas built by Ashoka in India.

DID YOU KNOW

Chandragupta Maurya's biggest achievements were defeating Alexander's army and taking over the Nanda Empire at a young age of just 20 years.

6.3 DHAMMA CHAKRAVARTI ASHOKA

Ashoka has an unmatched place in the history of ancient India. He is not only famous for the vastness of his empire but also for his personal character, aims and ideals. He was an able ruler and an ideal human being. Not every age and every country can give birth to such a king. Ashoka cannot be compared even today with any other ruler from the history of the world.

6.3.1 Ashoka's Reign

Ashoka was a great king not only in the history of India but also across the whole world. We possess a lot of information about him from his inscriptions and the Buddhist literature. According to the Buddhist tradition, Bindusara had sixteen wives and 101 sons. Sumana or Susima was the eldest son, Ashoka the second and Tishya the youngest son. In the northern tradition, the name of Ashoka's mother is mentioned as Subhadrangi, but in the southern tradition she is named Dharma. When Ashoka was only eighteen, he was appointed by his father the Viceroy of Rashtra with its capital at Ujjayini. It was there that Ashoka married Mahadevi and his son Mahendra and daughter Sanghamitra were born.



Fig. 6.4 Mauryan Samrat Ashoka

There was a rebellion in Taxila and Ashoka was sent to suppress the same. There was another rebellion at Taxila which its Viceroy Susima failed to suppress. It is stated that when Bindusara died Ashoka captured the throne with the help of the Ministers headed by Khallataka or Radhagupta. That led to a war of succession between Ashoka and Susima. Yuvaraja Susima, was helped by his other 98 brothers except Tishya. The story is that Ashoka killed all his 99 brothers and waded through blood to the throne and thereby got the notorious title of *ChandAshoka*. There are many stories giving details of the cruelty of Ashoka before he ultimately ascended the throne.

While it is conceded that there might have been a struggle for power, it is not admitted that Ashoka was responsible for the murder of all of his brothers except Tishya. Dr. Smith regards the story of the slaughter of his brothers as something absurd and false. He points out that even the inscriptions of Ashoka prove that his brothers and sisters were alive in the 17th and 18th years of his reign and their households were the object of his anxious care. It is pointed out that the fifth rock edict refers to the family establishments of his brothers as existing. This does not necessarily mean that his brothers were also alive. But there is nothing to show that his brothers were dead.

It is difficult to settle the controversy regarding the first four years of the reign of Ashoka. However, it is certain that Ashoka was consecrated after four years after his accession to the throne.

Ashoka took up the title of Devanampiya Piyadasi or the beloved of the gods and was of an amiable nature. The name Ashoka is found in literature and also in the Makti Edict of Ashoka and the Junagadh inscription of Rudradaman I. The name DharmAshoka is found on the Sarnath inscription of Kumaradevi. Not much is known about the early years of the reign of Ashoka. His personal reminiscences shows that he lived the life of his predecessors, consuming food freely, enjoying the pleasures, and encouraging festive assemblies accompanied by dancing and drinking. During his first thirteen years, he carried on the traditional policy of expansion within India and maintained friendly relations with foreign powers. He was aggressive at home but a pacifist abroad. He exchanged embassies with the foreign countries. He employed Yavana officials like Tushaspa.

6.3.2 The Edicts of King Ashoka

King Ashoka, the third monarch of the Indian Mauryan dynasty, has come to be regarded as one of the most exemplary rulers in world history. The British historian H.G. Wells has written: 'Amidst the tens of thousands of names of monarchs that crowd the columns of history ... the name of Ashoka shines, and shines almost alone, a star.' Although Buddhist literature preserved the legend of this ruler — the story of a cruel and ruthless king who converted to Buddhism and thereafter established a reign of virtue — definitive historical records of his reign were lacking. Then in the nineteenth century there came to light a large number of edicts, in India, Nepal, Pakistan and Afghanistan. These edicts, inscribed on rocks and pillars, proclaim Ashoka's reforms and policies and promulgate his advice to his subjects. The present rendering of these edicts, based on earlier translations, offers us insights into a powerful and capable ruler's attempt to establish an empire on the foundation of righteousness, a reign which makes the moral and spiritual welfare of his subjects its primary concern. The Australian Ven. S. Dhammika, the compiler of the present work, is the spiritual director of the Buddha Dhamma Mandala Society in Singapore.

The extent of the Ashoka's empire

Ashoka himself has given quite an explicit list of the places which were under his rule. These include Magadha, Pataliputra, Barabar hills, Kaushambi, Lumbini-gama, Kalinga, Atavi (the forest tract of mid India), Suvarnagiri, Isila, Ujjaini and Taxila. Even beyond Taxila, Ashoka's kingdom included the areas around Shahbazgarhi and Mansehra, which were adjacent to the eastern boundaries of the realm of Amityako Yonaraja (Antrochos II Theos of Syria). Exact location of this Yona country has now been confirmed as Arachosia. Apart from this, the north-west frontier of Ashoka's Empire also included Kamboja, which corresponds to Rajapur or Rajaur near punch in Kashmir, and also Gandhara, territory now west of Indus with its capital Pushkaravati. The inclusion of Kashmir in the dominions of Ashoka has been confirmed both by Hiuen-Tsang and also by Kalhana in his Rajtarangini. Kalhan mentions a number of stupas and viharas built by Ashoka. Ashoka also founded the city of Srinagara.

Apart from this, we have a clear proof that Gangaridai, i.e., the area of Bengal was under Ashoka but Kamarupa was out of his dominions. In south India, the areas up to the river Pennar near Nellore formed the frontier of Ashoka's kingdom. There is a mention of some Tamil kingdoms beyond this, which are explicitly addressed as the neighbouring states.

Early life

Though Ashoka is known as the greatest king of India, historians learned about him only in the nineteenth century. In 1837, a British scholar named James Prinsep deciphered the inscriptions on the pillars and rocks that are found in many parts of India. It was in Brahmi script. From these inscriptions, it was concluded that Ashoka and the ruler named *Devanampiya Priyadarsi* were one and the same person. An inscription discovered by Prinsep in 1915 used the name Ashoka along with the other name. These inscriptions gave historians valuable information about Ashoka's rule and the extent and condition of his empire. The land he ruled stretched from the Himalayas in Nepal and Kashmir to Mysore in the south, from Afghanistan in the northwest to the banks of the River Brahmaputra in the east. In the west his territory covered Saurashtra and Junagarh. Kalinga was one of the kingdoms, which remained unconquered and hostile when Ashoka succeeded to the throne. It was important to Ashoka from a geographical point of view, since the route to south India both by land and by sea passed through it. It would also bring added prosperity to the Mauryan Empire. It was for these reasons that Ashoka attacked Kalinga.

Battle of Kalinga

Kalinga was a prosperous little kingdom lying between the river Godavari and Mahanadi, close to the Bay of Bengal. It had an infantry of 60,000 men, 10,000 horsemen and 600 elephants. Ashoka wanted to capture this fertile land, and so had it surrounded. A fierce battle followed in which an enormous amount of life and property was lost. Kalinga surrendered and, for the first time in the Indian history, almost the whole sub continent except the extreme south was under a single ruler. However, this battle affected the king deeply.

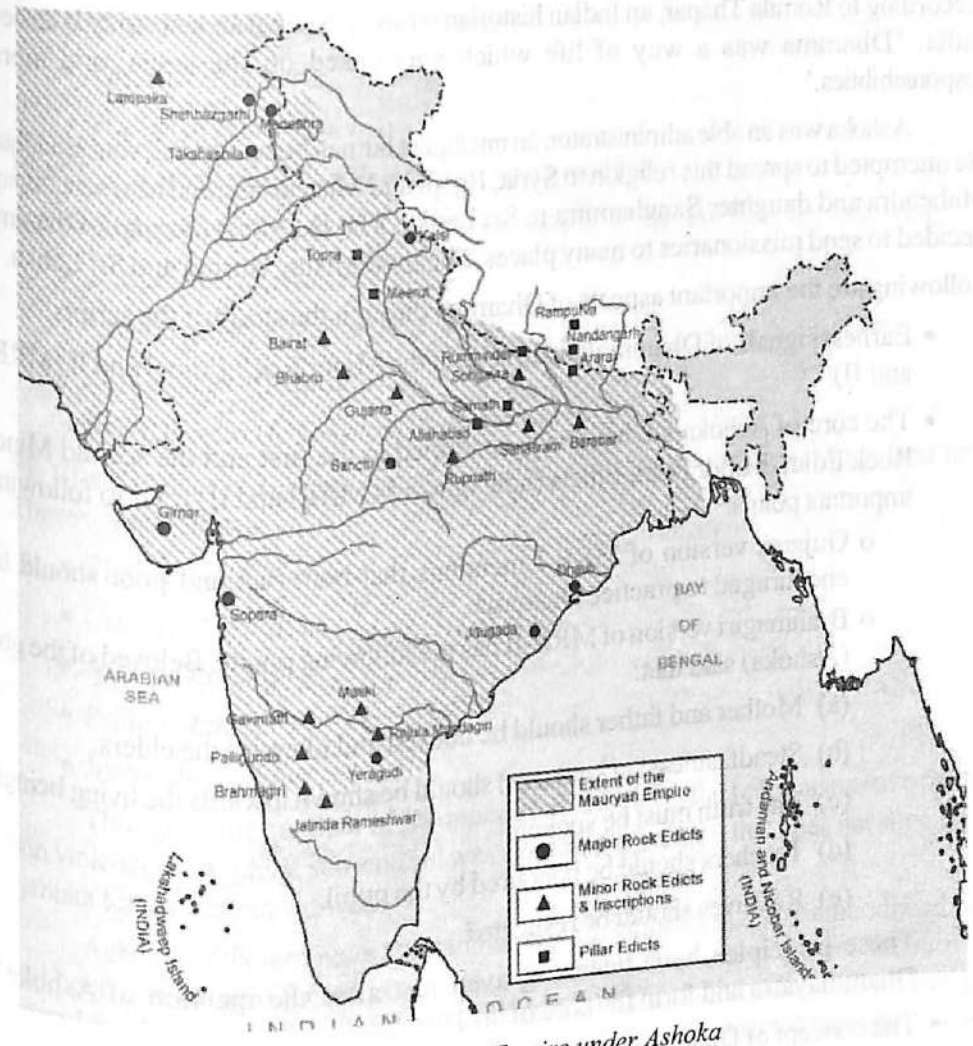

Fig. 6.5 Mauryan Empire under Ashoka

In the midst of the battlefield, Ashoka stood with the wounded, crippled and the dead all around him. The sight of the terrible carnage and the miseries of war filled Ashoka with remorse. He vowed never to make war again. The war drums (*Bherighosh*) were silenced forever and henceforth were heard only the reverberations of the *Dhammaghosh* (the call to non-violence and universal peace).

6.3.3 Ashoka's Dhamma

The word 'dhamma' was derived from the Sanskrit word 'dharma.' Ashoka followed the principles of Buddhism—that of truth, charity, kindness, purity and goodness. He wanted his people to lead pure and virtuous lives, irrespective of their religion or culture. He considered all subjects his children. He explained his ideas in his edicts by engraving his principles on pillars throughout his kingdom. The edicts were written in Prakrit, which was the language of the common people, so that they could understand and follow them. Some of the edicts such as those in Afghanistan were composed in Greek for the same reason. The purpose of the edicts was to inform the people of Ashoka's reforms and to encourage them to be more generous, kind and moral. He strictly prohibited animal slaughtering in the kingdom and asked people to be respectful of each other. People should respect nature, their parents, everything living as well as non-living. Brahmins should be treated with respect and servants should be treated as equals. Donating alms to the poor and the needy was practiced and advised by the state. He preached harmony and peace and advised people to get rid of anger, jealousy, cruelty and arrogance.

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According to Romila Thapar, an Indian historian whose principal area of study is ancient India, 'Dhamma was a way of life which was based on the social and moral responsibilities.'

Ashoka was an able administrator, an intelligent human being and a devout Buddhist. He attempted to spread this religion to Syria, Egypt and Macedonia, and also sent his son Mahendra and daughter Sanghamitra to Sri Lanka. The Buddhist *Sangha* of the time decided to send missionaries to many places, like modern day Burma and Sri Lanka.

Following are the important aspects of Dhamma through the study of the scripts:

- Earliest signals of Dhammalipi are seen in the Minor Rock Edict I and II (MREI and II).
- The core of Ashoka's Dhamma is enshrined in the first and the second Minor Rock Edict. Minor Rock Edicts (now onwards MREI and II) refer to following important points:
  - o Gujarra version of MRE-I mentions that both rich and poor should be encouraged to practice Dhamma.
  - o Brahmagiri version of MRE-II has the following points. Beloved of the god (Ashoka) said that:
    - (a) Mother and father should be obeyed and likewise the elders.
    - (b) Steadfastness (in kindness) should be shown towards the living beings.
    - (c) The truth must be spoken.
    - (d) Teachers should be honoured by the pupil.
    - (e) Relatives should be respected.

  These principles have been engraved just after the mention of Ashoka's Dhammayatra and form the core of his Dhamma.
- The concept of Dhamma was based upon the ancient values and customs. They have been repeated and stressed a number of times. There is a special stress on the following:
  - o Abstention from slaughter of life (lives) (*Arambho prananam*).
  - o Avoidance of injury to the creatures (*Avihisa Bhutanam*).
- In REIII the Government officials are asked to preach the following:
  - o Obedience to father and mother is an excellent thing.
  - o Liberty to friends, acquaintances and relatives and to Brahmins and Sramanas is an excellent thing.
  - o The abstention from slaughter of living creatures is an excellent thing.
  - o Tendency towards spending little and storing little is an excellent thing.
  - o RE IX and XI advocate a proper courtesy even towards the slaves and servants. RE VII speaks to show courtesy to miserable and wretched (*Kapanivalakesu*).

Now, dealing with the important part, let us understand the constituents of the Dhamma policy. Dhamma is clearly defined in PEII as consisting of the following:

- Freedom from sins (or few sins): *Apasinave*
- Many virtuous deeds: *Vahukayane*
- Compassion: *Daya*
- Liberality (or making gifts): *Dana*
- Truthfulness: *Satya*
- Purity (of mind): *Sochye*

PEVII adds gentleness (*Sadhve*) to the mentioned list.

According to PE VII, people of all sects should be obliged to have the following:

- Self control (*Sayame*)
- Mental purity (*Bhava shuddhi*)
- Gratefulness (*Kilanala*)
- Firm devotion (*Didhabhalila*)

PE III says that man should guard himself against those passions which lead to sin. These are as follows:

- Fierceness (*Chamdiye*)
- Cruelty *(Nilhuliye)*
- Anger *(Kodhe)*
- Pride *(Mane)*
- Jealously *(Irshiya)*

Though in the conduct of *Dhamma* (Law of Piety) the renouncement of killing, non violence, non-injury, self-control was a prominent part but that does not suggest that Ashoka totally renounced war.

Ashoka's *Dhammayatra* was initiated with Ashoka's visit to Sambodhi when he had been consecrated for ten years. He, in course of *Dhammayatas* or *Dharmayatra* visited *Brahmanas* and *Sramanas* and offered gifts. He visited elders and offered gifts of gold and made contact with the people of countryside and instructed them in *Dhamma*.

Nature of Dhamma

Scholars are not totally unanimous about the exact explanation of the nature of *Dhamma*. Rhys Davids understands it, as a whole, as the duty of laymen while Smith says that the character of Ashoka's teaching is purely human and severely practical. He also identifies the ethics in the edicts as Buddhist rather than Brahmanical. Dr. C. Sircar says that *Dhamma* was a code of morals preached by Ashoka. It was basically extracted from the teachings of Buddha. According to K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, Ashoka's *Dhamma* embraced all the living beings as it was based upon the ethics of benevolence.

In the light of this comparative analysis you may infer that the crux or core of Ashoka's *Dhamma* was to enhance the ethics and moral standards of people by preaching non-violence, respect for other sects, and respect for people in general, etc. What also seems pertinent to note here is that *Dhamma* was also driven by political and geographical compulsions. It was rather a political philosophy based upon the ancient customs to maintain peace, tranquility and harmony in such a vast empire. This seems to be an important reason for creating an administrative machinery for the dissemination of the concept amongst the people.

6.3.4 The Foreign Policy after Kalinga

After Kalinga, Ashoka renounced the path of warfare, and this is amply evident by the fact that he made no attempt to annex his neighbouring countries namely, Chola, Pandya,

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Satiyaputra, Kerelaputra, Ceylon and the realm of Amtiyako Yonaraja, who is identified with Antiochos II Theos, king of Syria and western Asia. The concept of *Digvijaya* was replaced by the concept of Dhammavijaya.

Dhamma of Ashoka brought him in contact with the Hellenistic powers. Ashoka looked towards these countries for the expansion of *Dhamma* through *Dhammavijaya*. He says, 'My neighbours too, should learn this lesson.' The text of the Rock Edict XIII says, 'Conquest of the Law of Piety... has been won by his sacred Majesty ...among all his neighbours as far as six hundred leagues, where the king of Greeks named Antiochos dwells, and beyond (the realm) of that Antiochos (where dwell) the four kings severally Ptolemy (*Turamayo*), Antigonus (*Amekina*), Magas (*Maga*), and Alexander (*Alikasudara*) (like wise) in the south (*micha*), the Cholas and the Pandyas as far as Tambapani... ... Even where the duties of his sacred Majesty do not penetrate, those people, too are hearing his sacred Majesty's ordinance based upon the Law of Piety and his instruction in the law, practice and will practice the law.'

Due to such serious efforts undertaken by Ashoka, Buddhism did make a progression in the region around west Asia. Ceylonese chronicles also mention that envoys were sent to Ceylon and Suvarnabhumi (lower Burma and Sumatra). Mahendra, perhaps the younger brother or son of Ashoka along with his sister Sangamitra, went to Ceylon and successfully secured the conversion of *Devanampiya Tissa* and many more people.

The last major recorded event in the life of Ashoka is the issuance of seven Pillar Edicts in around 242 BC. The council of Pataliputra may be placed around 240 BC. The main purpose of the council was to stop heresy, and supervise publication of special edicts to stop the schisms in the *sangha*. Some sources tell us that during his old age, Ashoka wasted huge resources of the empire to give charity to the monks and the *Sanghas*. Some others tell us that he abdicated to pursue devotion but it is not corroborated through evidence.

Though the exact knowledge as to where and how he died is not available but he died sometime around 232 BC after a reign of almost forty years. A Tibetan source tells us that he left for his heavenly abode at Taxila.

The Junagadh rock contains inscriptions by Ashoka (fourteen of the Edicts of Ashoka), Rudradaman I and Skandagupta.

Ashoka ruled for an estimated forty years. After his death, the Mauryan dynasty lasted just fifty more years. Ashoka had many wives and children, but many of their names are lost to time. Mahindra and Sanghamitra were twins born by his 2nd wife, Devi, in the city of Ujjain. He had entrusted to them the job of making his state religion, Buddhism, more popular across the known and the unknown world. Mahindra and Sanghamitra went to Sri Lanka and converted the King, the Queen and their people to Buddhism. They were naturally not handling state affairs after him.

In his old age, he seems to have come under the spell of his youngest wife Tishyaraksha. It is said that she had got his son Kunala, the regent in Takshashila, blinded by a wily stratagem. The official executioners spared Kunala and he became a wandering singer accompanied by his favourite wife Kanchanmala. In Pataliputra, Ashoka hears Kunala's song, and realizes that Kunala's misfortune may have been a punishment for some past sin of the emperor himself and condemns Tishyaraksha to death, restoring Kunala to the court. Kunala was succeeded by his son, Samprati, but his rule did not last long after Ashoka's death.

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The reign of Ashoka could easily have disappeared into history as the ages passed by, and would have had not left behind a record of his trials. The testimony of this wise king was discovered in the form of magnificently sculpted pillars and boulders with a variety of actions and teachings he wished to be published etched on stone. What Ashoka left behind was the first written language in India since the ancient city of Harappa. The language used for inscription was the then current spoken form called Prakrit.

In the year 185 BC, about fifty years after Ashoka's death, the last Maurya ruler, Brhadrata, was assassinated by the commander-in-chief of the Mauryan armed forces, Pusyamitra Sunga, while he was taking the Guard of Honor of his forces. Pusyamitra Sunga founded the Sunga dynasty (185 BC–78 BC) and ruled just a fragmented part of the Mauryan Empire. Many of the northwestern territories of the Mauryan Empire (modern-day Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan) became the Indo-Greek Kingdom.

In 1992, Ashoka was ranked 53 on Michael H. Hart's list of the most influential figures in history. In 2001, a semi-fictionalized portrayal of Ashoka's life was produced as a motion picture under the title *Ashoka*. King Ashoka, the third monarch of the Indian Mauryan dynasty, has come to be regarded as one of the most exemplary rulers in world history. The British historian H.G. Wells has written: 'Amidst the tens of thousands of names of monarchs that crowd the columns of history, their majesties and graciousnesses and serenities and royal highnesses and the like, the name of Ashoka shines, and shines, almost alone, a star.'

Buddhist Kingship

One of the more enduring legacies of Ashoka Maurya was the model that he provided for the relationship between Buddhism and the state. Throughout Theravada Southeastern Asia, the model of rulership embodied by Ashoka replaced the notion of divine kingship that had previously dominated (in the Angkor kingdom, for instance). Under this model of 'Buddhist kingship', the king sought to legitimize his rule not through descent from a divine source, but by supporting and earning the approval of the Buddhist *sangha*. Following Ashoka's example, kings established monasteries, funded the construction of stupas, and supported the ordination of monks in their kingdom. Many rulers also took an active role in resolving disputes over the status and regulation of the sangha, as Ashoka had in calling a conclave to settle a number of contentious issues during his reign. This development ultimately lead to a close association in many Southeast Asian countries between the monarchy and the religious hierarchy, an association that can still be seen today in the state-supported Buddhism of Thailand and the traditional role of the Thai king as both a religious and secular leader. Ashoka also said that all his courtiers were true to their self and governed the people in a moral manner.

Ashoka Chakra

The Ashoka Chakra (the wheel of Ashoka) is a depiction of the Dharmachakra or Dhammachakka in Pali, the Wheel of Dharma (Sanskrit: Chakra means wheel). The wheel has 24 spokes. The Ashoka Chakra has been widely inscribed on many relics of the Mauryan Emperor, most prominent among which is the Lion Capital of Sarnath and the Ashoka Pillar. The most visible use of the Ashoka Chakra today is at the centre of the National flag of the Republic of India (adopted on 22 July 1947), where it is rendered in a Navy-blue colour on a white background, by replacing the symbol of Charkha (Spinning wheel) of the pre-independence versions of the flag. Ashoka Chakra can also be seen on the base of Lion Capital of Ashoka which has been adopted as the National Emblem of India.

The Ashoka chakra was built by Ashoka during his reign. Chakra is a Sanskrit word which also means cycle or self repeating process. The process it signifies is the cycle of time as how the world changes with time.

A few days before India became independent on August 1947, the specially constituted Constituent Assembly decided that the flag of India must be acceptable to all parties and communities. A flag with three colours, saffron, white and green with the Ashoka Chakra was selected.

6.4 MAURYAN ADMINISTRATION

The Mauryas maintained a vast empire. The whole empire was divided into many provinces, which, in turn were divided into districts (towns). The lowest unit of administration was village. The Mauryas had developed a well-organized judicial, police and espionage system.

Central administration

The central administration had the following parts:

1. **King:** The form of Mauryan kingdom was monarchical. Kautilya maintains in the *Arthashastra*: 'The king should behave like a father.' The king was expected to be an efficient warrior, descendant of a high family, an able provider of justice and a wise administrator. Megasthenes opined that the king had to be just during his leisure. The king was the commander of the army and chief justice but his powers were not absolute. According to Kautilya, 'The king is not one who only enjoys the kingship but the king is one who does welfare of his subjects.'
2. **Council of ministers:** There used to be a council of ministers to provide assistance to the administrative work of the huge Mauryan Empire. The king selected only efficient people to his council. Kautilya believed that the vehicle of administration could not function on one wheel. In order to function effectively, the king had to have the council of ministers to help him administer the vast kingdom. Therefore, the king should appoint and take advice from his ministers. These ministers used to be honest, faithful and clever. Kautilya's *Arthashastra* describes about eighteen ministers with specific portfolios. Every minister used to head his department. The eighteen ministers were: Prince, Chief Minister, Commander, *Dauvarik*, *Purohit*, *Antarveshik*, Jailer, *Samaharta*, *Sannidhata*, *Pradestha*, *Nayak*, *Paur*; Chief Justice, *Karmantik*, Head of Council, *Dandpal*, Durgpal and *Antapal*. There used to be small committee of ministers to advise the king. Each committee consisted of ministers called *Mantrids*. According to Smith, 'The Mauryan kingdom was clearly divided into departments and minutely into category of workers whose works were defined in the absolute terms.'

Administration of provinces

The vast empire was divided into the following six provinces called *chakra*:

1. ***Uttarapath:*** This province included the cities of Gandhar, Kambhoj, Afghanistan, Kashmir and Punjab. The capital was Taxila.
2. ***Madhyadesh:*** This province included modern day Uttar Pradesh, Bengal and Bihar. The capital was Pataliputra.
3. ***Dakshinapath:*** This province included Vindhyachal and all the states of south India. The capital was Suvarnagiri.
4. ***Avantirashtra:*** Kathiawad, Gujarat, Rajputana and Malwa constituted this province. The capital was Ujjain.
5. ***Kalinga:*** It included modern Orissa and parts of Andhra Pradesh. Its capital was Toshali.
6. ***Griharajya:*** It covered the capital region of the empire. Its administration was looked after by the king with the help of *Mahamatras*.

The provincial administration was efficient and well organized. Every province was divided into several commissionaires and each commissionairy was further divided in districts and towns.

Town administration

The town administration of the Mauryan Empire had a very special place in the ancient Indian history. Each town was under a chief called *Nagarak*. *Gop* and *Sthanik* were the officials to assist the *Nagarak*. Megesthenes' description of Pataliputra may be sited in this regard. 'This was a very big town of India. It was established on the banks of Ganga and Son rivers. Its length was 9 ½ miles and breadth 3 or 4 miles.' For the administration of town, there were six committees of five people each. Each committee had its work schedule. These committees were Artisan committee, Foreign committee, Population committee, Commerce committee, Trade committee and Tax committee.

Village administration

Village was the basic unit of administration, where the chief official was called *Gramik*. According to the *Arthashastra*, the senior president of *Gramik* was called *Gop* who had to look after the administration of 5–6 villages. A *Sthanik* was superior to a *Gop*. The administration of village and the quality of life of the villagers were also satisfactory. The *Gramik* used to be elected by the villagers by a show of hands.

Penal and judicial system

The Mauryas had an efficient and an effective judicial system with the king as the supreme judge. According to Kautilya, 'If the king punishes anyone wrongly, then he himself should be punished three times the same punishment.' The courts were of two kinds: *Dharmasthaniya* courts, which were equivalent to modern civil courts, and *Kantakshodhan* courts, which heard criminal matters. Apart from these two courts, the village panchayats also worked in their initial stages.

The penal system was very harsh. Big punishments were given even for small crimes. Megasthenes has written that Indians had no written laws but due to harsh penal system, death penalty was awarded even for petty crimes.

Army

The highest commander of the army was the king. The Mauryan dynasty was established on bloodshed and hardships and in order to maintain it; the same discipline was required. A huge and well organized army was required for this purpose. Chandragupta maintained it religiously. The army was divided into six parts: Infantry, Navy, Cavalry, Chariot, Elephant riders and Services. Plini has written that the huge army was maintained by a commissioner.

There were five forts: stable fort, water fort, forest fort, hilly fort and desert fort. There were several factories for manufacturing arms and weapons. Megasthenes maintains 'The soldiers got encugh wages so that they could live life comfortably. Chandragupta with the help of powerful army succeeded in establishing the vast empire.'

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Police and espionage systems

The Mauryan espionage system was very efficient. Its chief official was *Mahapatra Pasarp* to whom secret agents called *Char* reported. The secret services comprised:

1. ***Sansthas:*** They stayed at one place and delivered secret news and consisted of students and common men.
2. ***Sancharas:*** They travelled from one place to another and gathered news. Apart from this, secret writing was also known.

Socio-economic Changes under the Mauryan Empire

The chief source of revenue was the land. The income from the state's land was called *sita,* while the income from the farmers' land was called *bhag*. 1/6 part of a farmer's total produce was taken by the state as revenue. The income from the towns was called *durg*. People were generally affluent and behaved kindly with the have-nots.

Welfare measures

The Mauryan state carried out welfare activities for the needy and cared for the holistic upliftment of people at large. The state developed transportation facilities and constructed rest houses on highways. It also arranged for shadowy trees and drinking water for travellers. Apart from these, the state also constructed hospitals for the poor.

The Mauryan administration was very well organized. The Mauryas formed a kind of administrative set up that the Gupta rulers followed in the later times. Raichaudhary opines: 'In order to unite the bits and pieces of India, to give a practical form to the ideals of the universal king and to bring this country with the rest of the world, a courageous and gallant man was needed and it was the luck of this country that very soon it got such a universal king called Chandragupta. He founded a well organized kingdom.'

Mauryan society

The Mauryan period is famous for the organization of the society in the Indian history. The chief specialties of the social organization of this time may be discussed under the following heads:

- **Social condition:** People were happy and affluent during this period. Not only the necessities of personal life but the pleasure of social life was also available to these people.
- **Varnashram system:** The society was divided into various *varnas*. According to *Arthashastra*, the society was divided into four varnas: Brahmanas, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra, but Megasthenes has written that the society was divided into seven castes. These castes were farmer, philosopher, *gop shikari*, labourer, kshatriya, president and minister or *sabhasad*. Once someone relinquished his profession, he was not allowed to practise the profession again. The description of seven castes by Megasthenes does not seem proper, but it was definite that the caste system had become complex. Life was divided into four *Ashramas: Brahmacharya, Grihasthashram, Vanprasthashram* and *Sanyas*. According to Kautilya, truth, *suchita*, non-violence, compassion, forgiveness, etc., were necessary for all the varnas. Slavery was also in vogue.
- **Marriage:** The basis of family life was marriage. The main reason for marriage was the production of children. Usually marriages took place within the same castes. It was considered to be a main ritual. Marriage was of eight types: *Brahma, Dev, Arya, Prajapatya, Aasur, Gandharv, Rakshas* and *Paisach*.

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- **Condition of women:** The condition of women in the Mauryan age was worse as compared to the Vedic period. Sati and widow remarriage was practised. After the death of husbands, the wives happily burnt themselves on the pyre of their husbands and those who restrained from doing so were not considered respectful. Women had no individual, civil or political rights. There are also evidences of prostitution. Kautilya maintained that a prostitute gave a part of her income as tax. Women had right to basic education.
- **Sources of entertainment:** The abundance and variety of sources of entertainment reflect the affluence of the materialistic life of the common people during the Mauryan period. The chief sources of entertainment were hunting, wrestling, chariot racing, horse racing, animal fights, dance, *chaupad* and music. People celebrated many festivals.

Economic condition

The economic life during the Mauryan period had prospered abundantly. Agriculture, trade and industry developed and strengthened the economic conditions of people. The chief occupation in the Mauryan period was agriculture. The economic life was dependent on agriculture. There were three types of lands: *krista* (arable land), *akrista* (non-arable land) and *sthal* (barren land). The chief produces were wheat, rice, legume, cotton and sesame, of which a certain percentage was taken by the state as tax. Megasthenes has written that India had never experienced famine; the farmers were affluent and happy.

Religious life

The foundation of the Mauryan Empire witnessed a major transformation in religious beliefs of the Indians. In this period, brahminical religion was in dominance. People believed in rituals promoted by the Brahmins and prayed to various Vedic gods and goddesses like Indra, Varun, Skandh, Shiv and Vishnu. Yagna and other rituals were performed for personal benefits. Buddhism became famous due to Ashoka's propagation of it. Apart from Buddhism; Jainism was also practised. One other religion which was constantly growing during this period was *Bhagwat* religion, which gave more emphasis on the complete devotion and surrender to one's own divine.

Trade and commerce in the Mauryan period

The Mauryan period saw an unprecedented development of trade and industries. Kautilya's accounts state that homemade silk and Chinese silk industry was quite developed during the Mauryan period. Apart from these, the industries producing metal and ivory objects were also developing. Pot makers, blacksmiths and carpenters had also diversified their profession.

Commerce

Imports as well as exports were in vogue during this period. Clothes, jewellery, artefacts, scent, horses, etc., were exported. According to Greek writers, trade was carried out on land as well as sea routes. Mention of weaver and blacksmith organizations, which had political and economic powers, is also available in contemporary accounts. The foreign and inland trade got promotion from affluent industries.

Trade

The growth of agriculture and different professions gave a great fillip to trade. There was a brisk internal trade. Fa-Hein's description reveals that traders were given full

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freedom. They could easily move from one place to another. During this period, a good trade relation existed with foreign countries also. For internal trade, there were good means of transportation. The people carried their goods from place to place through seas and land routes. In those days, Ujjain, Banaras, Vaisali, Gaya, Prayaga, Pataliputra and Mathura were the important centres of trade. These towns were linked through a network of roads. The roads were safe and Fa-Hien did not come across any road accident. The merchants carried their goods on bullock carts. Rivers Ganga, Krishna, Godavari and Brahamaputra were utilized for trade. Trade commodities are not known definitely but it can at least be said that it must have been carried on in cloth, wheat, spices, salt, diamonds and precious stones.

Trade through rivers proved cheap and comfortable. During this period, the ship-building industry also flourished. Tamralipti, a port in Bengal, was an important centre from where trade was carried on with the eastern countries like China, Ceylon, Java and Sumatra. In Andhra, there were many ports on the banks of rivers Godavari and Krishna. Tondai was a famous port of the Chola state. These ports not only helped trade flourish but also carried Indian culture and civilization in all parts of Asia. Ports also helped trade with western countries. There are various evidences on the basis of which it can be said that the Roman merchants used to trade through these ports. On important places, lighthouses were erected for sailors' convenience. Kalyana, Chol, Broach, Cambay were the important ports of South India through which pearls, precious stones, clothes, scents, spices, medicines, coconut and ivory were exported. Copper, tin, lead, dates and horses were other important articles of import.

6.4.1 Ashoka's Art and Architecture

Influence of foreign art on Mauryan art

Scholars have expressed different opinions regarding the influence of foreign art on the Mauryan Art. Yet most of them agree that the Mauryan art was influenced by Persian and Greek art, particularly in the field of sculpture and architecture. According to Ferguson, the honey-suckle ornament on the Allahabad pillar is a copy of that used by the Greeks with the Ionic order. Dr. Niharranjan Ray has expressed the view that Indians were in political and cultural contact with the Persians and the Greeks for a long time and the Mauryans had good relations with the Greek rulers of the Northwest. Therefore, the Indians were acquainted with that art which had developed in Iran because of the mutual contacts of the Greeks and the Persians. Bachhofer remarks that the powerful impulse came from Persia and the Mauryan art was considerably influenced by Persia. Grunwedel observes that all that has been preserved in Mauryan art shows undoubted Persians influence in their style. Ashoka borrowed the bell-shaped capital and the smooth unfluted shafts of his pillars from the Persian models. If these statements are to be believed, one can easily conclude that no art traditions existed before the Mauryans and all that the Mauryan artists achieved was based on and borrowed from the Persian and Greek models. Such a presumption would be a grave injustice to the great artists of the Mauryan times. The fact is that, as the rock-hewn monasteries and Chaitya-halls had their prototypes in the wooden and brick-structures, the monoliths of Ashoka probably had their wooden prototypes. The tradition of erecting pillars was not completely due to Persian models. Indians knew the art of sculpture and wood and clay art pieces were prepared by the pre-Mauryan Indians. Indians had the tradition of erecting Yajna Yupa, stone pillar in memory of sacrifice. Thus, the Mauryan art had its limitations. Yet, it was remarkable and occupies an important place amongst the art of India. The Mauryan contribution to Indian art has been unique. The Mauryan Stupas, the pillars, the edicts,

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the rock-cut caves, etc., gave to the country a visible unity of culture. The Mauryan Kings patronised arts and consequently all branches of art had achieved great excellence during the Mauryan period. According to Sir John Marshall, the extraordinary precision and accuracy which characterizes all Mauryan art has never been surpassed even by the finest workmanship of Athenian buildings.

Gandhara School of Art

The foreign princes became enthusiastic patrons of Indian art and literature, and they showed the zeal characteristic of new converts. The Kushan Empire brought together masons and other artisans trained in different schools and countries. Indian craftsmen came into contact with the Greeks and the Romans, especially in the north-western frontier of India in Gandhara. This gave rise to a new kind of art in which the images of Buddha were made in the Greeco-Roman style. It was distinct in all respects from the early Indian Art of Sanchi and Bharhut. A feature of this art was the representation of the forms of Buddha who had never been depicted in stone by the older artists of central India. There seems to have grown up in this locality a band of sculptors who were influenced by the examples of foreign art, for in their executions Greeco-Roman influence is palpable. But though the form might have been foreign, the subject matter was always Indian, being drawn from Buddhist legends and mythology. The foreign influence does not seem to have been directly due to the Greek rule of Punjab, for the images mostly belong to the reign of the Parthians and the Kushans and not of the Indo- Greeks. That is why, the Gandhara art is also known as the Indo-Greek art or Greeco Buddhist art. Dr. R.C. Majumdar has rightly remarked that the Gandhara art had the hands of a Greek and the heart of an Indian (Figure 6.6).

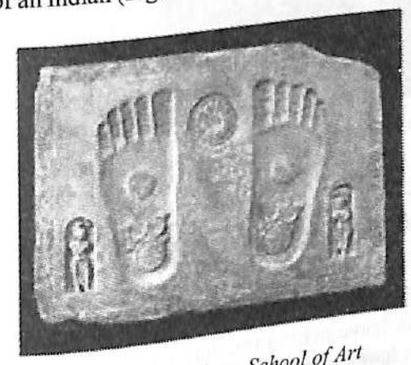

Fig. 6.6 Gandhara School of Art

Thus, the new form of Buddhism or Mahayanism was the main theme of the Gandhara art. The full-size statues of Buddha and the images of the Kushan rulers were produced by employing this new style of art. The statues and images were made of black stone. The different parts of the body, especially muscles and moustaches, were shown in a natural setting. Besides this, the clothes, hair style, decoration and ornamentation clearly indicate the influence of Greek style. The statues of Buddha appear similar to the statues of Greek God, Apollo. Actually, the Gandhara Art is a lively commentary on the life and deeds of Lord Buddha.

Mathura School of Art

The influence of Gandhara art also spread to Mathura although it was primarily a centre of indigenous art. Mathura produced beautiful images of the Buddha, but is also famous for the headless erect statue of Kanishka whose name is inscribed on its lower part. It also produced several stone images of Vardhaman Mahavira. The Mathura school of art

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flourished in the early centuries of the Christian era, and its products made of red sandstone are found even outside Mathura. At present, the Mathura museum possesses the largest collection of sculptures of Kushan times in India. The Mathura specimens do not compare favourably with the Gandhara productions, but they have a definite place in the history of Indian art. The Mathura school is more national in the sense that it inherited some traditions of the Bharhut and Sanchi artists, but in some respects the influence of Gandhara art too is visible. The Mathura figures often have a stiff and unrefined look and lack the elegance of the contemporary Gandhara images. (Figure 6.7).



Fig. 6.7 Mathura School of Art

Check Your Progress

5. Fill in the blanks.
   (a) The lowest unit of administration was _____.
   (b) Scholars have expressed different opinions regarding the influence of _____ art on the Mauryan Art.
6. State whether True or False.
   (a) The town administration of the Mauryan Empire had a very special place in the ancient Indian history.
   (b) The condition of women in the Mauryan age was better as compared to the Vedic period.

6.5 DISINTEGRATION OF THE MAURYAN EMPIRE

After Ashoka's death the Mauryan Empire began to decline. Unfortunately the later Mauryan rulers did not leave behind much recorded material for us to draw a clear picture of exactly what happened. It appears that the empire was divided amongst his sons, each founding his own separate kingdom. The process of decay soon began setting in as once a strong central authority ceased to exist, many of the outlying provinces ceded away. By about 200 BC many former Mauryan provinces were independent kingdoms. The process was accelerated by the foreign invaders that began attacking the country, seeing an opportunity to seize control in the absence of any strong power. Antiochos III a greek conqueror who was the great great grandson of Seleukos, the general of Alexander, whom Chandragupta Maurya had defeated to found the Mauryan dynasty, is reported to have attacked and if some accounts are to be believed reached as far as Pataliputra.

The disintegration of the Mauryan Empire was perhaps inevitable; Ashoka's complete distance from violence was perhaps what weakened the empire. After the famous Kalinga war which changed Ashoka completely, he had ordered sweeping changes in the empire. Armed conquest was discontinued and even the royal hunt was stopped.

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So for the twenty nine remaining years of his rule, the Mauryan army remained largely inactive. Mauryan kings that followed soon began to lose touch with the army, and eventually when the battles came they were no match for a more motivated army. The kings, unlike in the past, did not command the respect of the soldiers, and could not take the field and lead the army in war. Once an empire of its size was without a strong ruler or an army, the disintegration that took place could only be expected. The Mauryan dynasty finally came to an end when Brihadratha was assassinated in 187 BC by his general Pushyamitra Shunga, who went on to found the short lived Shunga dynasty. India once again disintegrated into a series of smaller kingdoms and it was not until 320 AD, almost five hundred years later when the Gupta dynasty founded India's next major empire.

Other political factors for disintegration

The disorder that emerged in the administrative machinery after the death of Ashoka is regarded as one of the important factors for the disintegration of the Mauryan Empire. The immediate problem for Ashoka's successors was whether to continue his policy of Dhamma and its predominance in the government. This had truly been an unconventional way of governance and not a very easy way of comprehending the functioning of government. Ashoka had been successful because he had the unique vision of understanding the complex social problems of a society and also he had accepted the importance of the principle of Dhamma in all its dimensions. It is not clear whether despite Ashoka's personal exhortations his successors attached the same 'kind of importance to Dhamma', as he himself had done.

Another related feature of the political importance of Dhamma was the existence of a large body of officials of the State called Dhammamahamattas. It has been suggested by some historians that they had become very powerful and oppressive during the latter half of Ashoka's reign. Ashoka himself in the First Separate Edict to the Mahamattas, stationed at Dhauli and Jaugada, asked them to ensure against oppression and to be just and humane. Though there is no doubt that Ashoka was in firm control of the administration, this cannot be said of the later kings.

It was not simply the question of the direct contact with the Dhamrnamahamattas to ensure that they did not misuse their powers, but that of controlling the whole of the Mauryan bureaucracy that was at stake. The nature of the Mauryan state necessitated a king of strong abilities. It was a system which required the king to be in direct touch with all aspects of the state's functionaries. Since these functionaries were ultimately held together by a power structure with the king at its centre, once the king became, weak, the whole administration naturally weakened. Once the centre became weak, the provinces too started breaking away.

The officials of the State were personally selected by the king and owed loyalty only to him. Once weak rulers came, and ruled for short durations of time, it resulted in an overwhelming number of new officials constantly emerging and owing only personal loyalty to their respective kings and not to the State. This norm of personal loyalty had the danger of the officials either forcefully supporting the new king or opposing him. The later Mauryan kings were probably constantly faced with this situation. In fact, it was the local rulers and princes that found it easy to emerge with these traditional ties to support them, as important centres of power. Though one cannot accept the notion that there were popular uprisings wrecking Mauryan state control, one can strongly suggest that the social basis of the Mauryan bureaucracy was under stress and strain resulting in an inefficient administration unable to maintain social order in general.

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Whereas under the first three Mauryas the extremely complex system of spies employed for filtering in information on erring officials had worked efficiently, under the later Mauryas it collapsed. There was thus, no means through which the kings could either gauge the public opinion in the empire, or, check on the corruption which had inevitably set in once weak rulers were in power at the centre.

A conscious loosening of military control on behalf of the Mauryan kings has also been suggested by some scholars as a major political reason for their decline. At this stage we need to emphatically state that the decline of the Magadhan Empire cannot satisfactorily be explained by merely stating that there were weak successors or, that there was military inactivity or, that there were popular uprisings. Each of these was in fact, fundamentally linked to the particular nature of the Mauryan imperial bureaucratic set-up and once this started cracking up the whole political structure was at stake.

Many scholars have opined that either Ashoka's political decisions or the effects of these decisions were responsible for the disintegration of the Mauryan Empire. Their arguments generally focus on the drawbacks of Ashoka's religious policy. These arguments have two strands:

1. First, there are those scholars who maintain that Pushyamitra Sunga, who killed the last Mauryan emperor, represented a strong Brahmanical reaction against the pro-Buddhist policy of Ashoka and the pro-Jain policy of some of his successors. Moreover, the Satavahanas who rose to power in the Deccan after the Mauryas were also said to have been Brahmins. These scholars list a series of acts done by Ashoka himself which may have antagonized the Brahmins. For example the ban on animal sacrifices is considered one which was especially resented, since this action was taken by a Shudra King (according to the Purana accounts the Mauryas are listed as Shudras). They suggest that the Dhammamahamattas, as special officers of Dhamma appointed by Ashoka, destroyed the prestige of the Brahmins. These officials disallowed Brahmans to continue their traditional laws of punishment and other-Smriti injunctions.

   However, there are no direct evidences to support the above arguments. These are broad inferences which can be equally questioned. For example, the Ashokan inscriptions clearly say that the Dhammamahamattas were to respect the Brahmans and the Sramans alike. It is, however, possible that in the later years these officials may have become unpopular among the people. This can be deduced on the basis of stories in the Buddhist sources. As officials meant for the establishment of Dhamma undoubtedly had special powers and sanctions of the king and were therefore, feared by the people as a whole. Once they began to wield great control, it prevented Ashoka's direct contact with the people. But this does not mean that these officials were specifically antagonistic to the Brahmins. Thus, to argue that the interests of the Brahmins were harmed by Ashoka's policy and that Pushyamitra, a Brahman general engineered a revolt cannot be accepted for the simple reason that if Ashoka's polices were so harmful, this should have happened immediately after his death. In fact, Pushymitra Sunga's action should at best be understood as a coup d'etat made at an opportune time, having assessed the weak nature of the king's power, rather than looking for any deliberate anti-Brahman policy of either Ashoka or his successors.

2. According to another group of scholars emphasis should be given to Ashoka's pacifist policies as a factor for Mauryan decline. Non-violence on the part of the king also meant that he no longer exerted his control over officials particularly in the provinces who had become oppressive and ought to have been controlled. Citing examples from Buddhist stories in the Divyavadana, this argument goes on to show that revolts in the provinces had been taking place.

   The above image of Ashoka is far from correct. Just as the theory of anti-Brahmanical activity under Ashoka's reign has been discounted as a factor for Mauryan decline, so also the impression of an over pacifist Ashoka, lacking in vigour and determination to rule has to be discarded. It is true that Ashoka believed in non-violence as vital to Dhamma. There was however, no extreme stand on this issue. A dislike for killing of animals for food and sacrifice did not in fact terminate the policy of the palace to continue killing animals for food, though on a reduced scale. Also in governance and criminal justice, death penalty should have been done away with but this was not so.

Further, we have no evidence of the army having been demobilized, nor, even a hint in the inscriptions to such a policy being intended. The evidence one has is that of only one campaign conducted against Kalinga which had ended in a ruthless defeat of the latter. Had Ashoka been such a pacifist he should have reinstated Kalinga as an independent kingdom but, as a practical ruler, he maintained the supremacy of Magadha over it. There are innumerable other indications of Ashoka's assertion of his control over the different people of his empire, particularly his warning to the tribes.

He had made it very clear that the misconduct of the tribes living within his empire would be tolerated up to a point only and not beyond that. All these steps were taken by Ashoka to see that the empire was kept secure.

Thus, to conclude, the policy of Ahimsa in no way weakened the army and administrative machinery of the Mauryan Empire. Pushyamitra Sunga was after all a general of the Mauryan army and even half a century after Ashoka he is said to have prevented the Greeks from entering Madhyadesa. According to Romila Thapar even an entire generation of pacificism cannot weaken an empire and lead to its disintegration: 'Battles and territorial acquisition are not alone responsible for the creation and destruction of Empires. The causes must be sought in other directions as well.'

Economic problems faced by Mauryas

D.D. Kosambi stressed on the economic problems that the Mauryas faced. These contributed substantially to the decline of the Mauryan Empire. His agruments centre around two themes indicating that there were financial constraints on the Mauryan economy:

1. That the State took excessive measures to increase the taxes on a variety of things, and
2. That the punch-marked coins of this period show evidence of debasement of the currency.

The latter argument is based on his statistical analysis of the punch-marked coins of the period.

Some of Kosambi's views which have now generally been accepted as crucial factors in bringing about major changes in the Magadhan Empire and thereby, its ultimate decline are briefly as follows:

- It is suggested that gradually the State monopoly of metals was being lost. The demands on iron, so crucial for the expanding agrarian economy, could no longer be met by Magadha alone. In fact, there were attempts to locate and develop

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new sources of it in the Deccan. Though such pockets of iron ore were found in Andhra and Karnataka, the Magadha state found it a costly operation to tap these pockets. Of the many problems they faced in this connection was also the protection of the mining areas from intrusion by the local chiefs.

- The other point which is stressed is that expansion in cultivation, extensive use of forest wood and deforestation in general may have led to famines. There is in fact evidence of a big famine in north Bengal in the Mauryan period. Thus, many factors may have combined to bring down drastically the amount of the state revenue. In years of famine, the state was expected to provide relief on a substantial scale.

In a centralized administrative system, the problem of not having enough revenues created many other acute difficulties. To enhance the revenues, Arthasastra suggested that taxes should be imposed on actors, prostitutes and so on. The tendency to tax everything that could be taxed emerged out of the necessity of the treasury needing more funds or, the currency having become debased due to inflation. The measures suggested by Arthasastra to be adopted in times of emergency are interpreted in this light. Further, the decreasing silver content of the punch-marked coins attributed to the later Maurya rulers indicate that debasement had actually taken place to meet the needs of a depleted treasury.

The burden of expenditure had also increased. This can be seen in the large amount of money spent under Ashoka for public works. Also his tours and those of his officials meant using up the surplus wherever it was available. The earlier stringent measures of the state's control on its finances had thus begun to change even during Ashoka's reign.

Romila Thapar has further commented on these issues. According to her the debasement of coins need not necessarily have meant a pressure on the general economy. In fact, it is difficult to say precisely when and where the debasement of coinage took place. In positive terms she argues that for many parts of the Indian sub-continent the general picture of the economy on the basis of the material evidence in fact indicates an improvement. This is particularly seen in the use of better quality material which indicates a technical advance. There may have been debasement of coinage but in her opinion it was not because of a decline in material standards, but rather, because of extreme political confusion, particularly in the Ganges Valley. This must have led to hoarding of money by merchant classes and debasement of coinage. However, she concludes: 'There is no doubt of the economic prosperity that prevailed with the political decline of the Mauryan Empire.'

Growth of local parties

If the material and technical advancement of the country was not hampered by the political decline of the Mauryas, it can then be said that the material basis of many of the local political kingdoms was strong enough for them to emerge with renewed strength in the post-Mauryan period. The Mauryas in fact, had directly governed only the major and vital areas of the empire, the centre of which was Magadha. It is most probable that its governors/officials administering the core areas were selected from amongst the local people. These officials were often very powerful and acted as a check on the Viceroy or representative of the kings. As mentioned earlier, the political loyalty of these officials was crucial for the imperial structure to continue. A change of king meant a re-alignment of these loyalties. If this happened often, as it did in the post-Ashokan period, fundamental weaknesses would begin to inevitably creep in and prove the system unsuccessful.

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The half dozen kings that had succeeded Ashoka had made no basic change in the policy of governance adopted by the first three Mauryas. It has also been suggested that some of these kings probably ruled more or less concurrently over several parts of the empire. This indicates a segmentation of the empire even under the Mauryas.

Major kingdoms

The disintegration of the Mauryan Empire was followed by the rise of a number of kingdoms in different parts of India. Immediately after the Mauryas, Pushyamitra established the Sunga dynasty and the Sungas were able to control only a part of the erstwhile Mauryan Empire. The Sunga family had held the Viceroyship-at Ujjain in western Malwa or the neighbouring region of Vidisha in eastern Malwa under the Mauryas. The Sungas tried to revive Vedic practices and sacrifices which may have perhaps been necessary to face the new invaders, namely the Greeks, and to establish their strength after their first king had usurped the throne. The Sungas were followed by the short-lived rule of the Kanvas. The Greeks, however, in due course of time became exceedingly successful in most parts of north-west India. Their rule could only be terminated by the Sakas who had settled along the Indus. The Parthian or Pahlavas also made inroads in north-western India. But, the most successful foreign intrusions were made from the first half of the first century AD with the establishment of the Kushana Empire.

In the Ganga valley, Rajasthan, eastern India and the Deccan many ruling families came to power. It is clear that under the Mauryas the maximum settlements of villages had been in the Ganga Valley. The hills and plains of Assam and Bengal still remained to be opened up. Similarly, the south and south-east of India had contact with the Magadhan Empire but a large scale agrarian economy was yet to come up in these regions. After the decline of Mauryan rule many local rulers started ruling in regions like Vidarbha, eastern Deccan, Karnataka and western Maharashtra. Gradually, the family of the Satavahanas built up an empire in the Deccan by bringing together many local centres.

At about the same time when the early Satavahanas were establishing themselves, Kharavela of Kalinga emerged as a powerful king in the Mahanadi region. In an inscription written during his reign and found at the Hathigumpha cave of Udayagiri hill near Bhubaneshwar, Kharvela claims that he was the third ruler of the Mahameghavana family of Kalinga and that this family was a branch of the ancient Chedi family. He is said to have raided a major part of the country including Magadha and the Satavahana and Pandya countries. He was an ardent follower of Jainism.

In the extreme south, the three important chiefdoms that continued to be prominent from the Maurya period were the Cheras who controlled the Malabar area, the Cholas who held sway on the south-eastern coast and the Kaveri Valley and the Pandyas whose power centre lay around the tip of the Peninsula. The Sangam texts of this period give us a considerable amount of information on the society, ecology, polity and economy of the region these three kingdoms ruled.

The above outline briefly discusses the geographical areas and the political complexion of the major foreign and indigenous kingdoms which became powerful for varied periods of time in the immediately post-Mauryan period.

Local kingdoms

Numerous local or sub-regional powers also grew in this period either under the stimulus of the advancing agrarian economy or, in some regions under the stimulus of trade. Various Indian literary sources, like the Puranas, mention of such tribal names as Naga, Gardabhila and Abhira during this period. They were being ruled by their kings. Thus

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four Naga kings, seven Gardabhila kings, thirteen Pusyamitras, ten Abhira kings of the post-Mauryan period are listed. The Gardabhilas probably emerged from the large Bhila tribe (the Bhils) of the forests of central and western India. Some of the Abhiras are known to have developed into Ahir castes, some of them famous as pastoralists. Along with these we have other tribes who underwent change during this period and are known through the coins they minted in their own names or with names of their janapadas. Yaudheyas were famous even in the time of Panini as professional warriors and during this period were said to have been suppressed by Rudradaman, the Saka king. Their territory is said to have comprised the land between the Sutlej and the Yamuna. Similarly, to the south-east of Mathura, the Arjunaya had established their autonomy towards the end of the Sunga rule.

In Punjab, occupying the land between the Ravi and the Beas we have mention of the Audumbaras. The Kunindas are said to have become prominent between the Beas and the Yamuna around the foothills of Sivalik hills. Other tribal republics, as they are popularly known, for this period are those of the Sibis, Malavas, Trigartas and so on. These janapadas interspersed the region of northern and north-western India and at the same time independent principalities like Ayodhya, Kausharnbi, Mathura and Ahichchhatra also re-asserted their power having earlier succumbed to the Mauryas.

For the Deccan we have some information mainly derived from coins of many minor local rulers and ruling families over whom the Satavahanas were able to establish their supremacy. For example, the families of Maharathis, Kuras and Anardas are known from Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra. Besides, many local chiefs of the Deccan who issued coins emerged during this period. For the extreme south we know that the chiefs of the three main chiefdoms (Cheras, Cholas, Pandyas) were constantly at war with the minor chiefs of the less developed regions. The Velir chieftains, for instance, were famous as they controlled important outlets to the Roman trade on the south-east coast.

Though attempts were made in the post-Mauryan period by various dynasties to build empires, there were several instances of each of them contending the other. Further sub-regional powers could not totally be suppressed. Whereas, on the one hand, the political decline of the Mauryas created a situation for many of these local powers to arise, on the other, the economic expansion witnessed in the Mauryan period continued unabated. The crisis in the Magadhan Empire under the Mauryas was thus one of organization and control of its resources and not a lack of them.

In 184 BC, the last Mauryan king Brihadratha was killed by his commander Pushyamitra Shunga, who then established the Shunga dynasty in Magadha. Several reasons were responsible for the decline of the Mauryan Empire. Some of them are discussed as follows:

1. **Monarchical type of government:** Monarchical type of government in itself is a great weakness. A day is bound to come when strong kings will be followed by weak ones and the empire will inevitably decline. Dr J.N. Sarkar, a prominent historian, has pointed out, 'If we turn the pages of Indian history we shall not come across even a single dynasty which might have produced more than five powerful kings. So a day is bound to come when strong kings will be followed by weak kings and the empire would decay.' Ashoka too was succeeded by weak kings who neither possessed the same personality nor the same prowess, so the empire followed the path of disintegration.
2. **Ashoka's propagation of ahimsa:** Some writers ascribe the downfall of the Mauryas to Ashoka's policy of Ahimsa. Ashoka after the Kalinga war did not wage war and instead of conquest of territories, he began with the conquest of dharma. As a result of which, the military strength of the Mauryan Empire declined, and the militant attitudes also began to be absent from the minds of the people. Ashoka's successors too followed the path of Ahimsa which further rendered the empire militarily impotent. It was due to this reason that Mauryan Empire could not survive long after Ashoka's death.
3. **Oppressive attitude of the official:** In the outlying provinces of the Mauryan Empire the governors tyrannized and oppressed people due to which revolts were a common occurrence. During the reign of Bindusara the people of Takshasila rose into rebellion against the bad administration and the oppressive rule of the governors. Such revolts were there even during the reign of Ashoka. After the death of Ashoka, Takshasila was the first province to declare its independence.
4. **Wide extent of empire:** The Mauryan Empire had become sufficiently vast which could only be controlled by a strong hand like Ashoka or Chandragupta Maurya. Ashoka's successors, as weak they were, could not control such a vast empire. Moreover, the lack of the means of transportation and communication also loosened the hold of central authority on far-off cities. The result was the disintegration of the entire empire.
5. **Division of empire:** Ashoka's death was followed by the division of empire amongst his sons and grandsons. While Jalauka became the ruler of Kashmir, Virasena established his sway over Gandhara. The remaining empire was divided between Samprati and Dasratha. This division sounded the death knell of the Mauryan Empire.
6. **Lack of law of succession:** There existed no definite law of succession in the Mauryan Empire, as a result of which there followed a war of succession amongst the sons and grandsons of Ashoka. The palace had become a virtual centre of conspiracies. It is believed that as a result of such conspiracy, Kunala was blinded by his stepmother.
7. **Disloyalty of the officials:** During the later Mauryan kings, the court and the palace had become centres of conspiracies and the officials had become disloyal. The example of Pushyamitra is a testimony to this belief.
8. **Deterioration in financial conditions:** Now it is also believed that proper care was not taken to collect the revenues as a result of which the later Mauryan kings had to face financial crisis. The internal rebellions too emptied the treasury. The administration also suffered and so the empire became weak.
9. **Ambition of Pushyamitra:** Pushyamitra Sunga was the Commander-in-Chief of the last Mauryan king, Brihadratha. He was an ambitious man. He took full advantage of the weak position of the king and killed him, thereby becoming the ruler. He also laid the foundation of the Sunga Empire in Magadha.

Shastri's theory of Mauryan decline

In 1910, Haraprasad Shastri, a Bengali histographer and academician, propounded this theory of Mauryan decline according to which Brahminical reaction sapped the vitality of Mauryan authority and shattered its very foundation. Shastri has advanced the following arguments in support of his theory:

- The first and the foremost cause of the alienation of the Brahmins was Ashoka's edicts against the animal sacrifice. Shastri maintains that these edicts were directed against Brahmins as animal sacrifice formed an important part of Brahminical rituals. As a result of which the Brahmins felt offended and they revolted against the Mauryas.

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- Having referred to the prohibition of animal sacrifices, Shastri goes on to say, 'This was followed by another edict in which Ashoka boasted that those who were regarded as gods on earth have been reduced by him into false gods. If it means anything it means that the Brahmins who were regarded as Bhudevas or gods on earth had been shown up by him.'
- The appointment of Dharma–Mahamatras, i.e., Superintendent of Morals was a direct invasion on the rights and privileges of Brahmins, which the Brahmins could not tolerate.
- Another cause of the alienation of Brahmins was a passage where Ashoka insisted upon his officers strictly observing the principles of *Danda-Samata* and *Vyavahara-Samata*. Shastri takes his expressions to mean equality of punishment and equality in law-suits irrespective of caste, colour and creed, and adds that this order was very offensive to the Brahmins who claimed many privileges including immunity from capital punishment.
- In conclusion, Pandit Shastri refers to the assassination of the last Maurya king Brihadratha by Pushyamitra Sunga. He says, 'We clearly see the hands of the Brahmins in the great revolution.' Pshyamitra killed Brihadratha because he was a Brahmin.

Raychaudhri's objections

Dr Hemachandra Raychaudhri has not accepted the arguments advanced by Haraprasad Shastri in support of his theory. He has criticized all the arguments in the following manner:

- As regards the first point, Dr Raychaudhri has pointed out that prohibition of animal sacrifices did not necessarily imply hostilities towards the Brahmins. Long before Ashoka, the *Sruti* literature contained references against sacrifices and in favour of Ahimsa. In the *Chhadogya Upanisad*, Ghora Angirasa lays great stress on Ahimsa and non-killing of animal. If Ashoka prohibited animal sacrifice there was no question of the alienation of Brahmins.
- As regards the second argument advanced by Pandit Shastri, Raychaudhri says that the former has not followed the correct interpretation. The meaning of the entire passage is 'during that time the men in India who had been unassociated with the gods became associated with them.' There is thus no question of 'showing up' anybody.
- The appointment of *Dharma Mahamatras* was not a direct invasion upon the privilege of the Brahmins. As first of all they were not simply superintendents of morals, they also had other enormous duties. Moreover, there is nothing to show that the Dharma Mahamatras were wholly recruited from non-Brahmins.
- By *Danda-Samata* or *Vyavahara Samata* (equality of treatment or punishment) Ashoka did not want to infringe the rights and privileges of the Brahmins; rather, he was desirous of introducing uniformity in judicial procedure in his empire. It is to be understood in connection with the general principles of decentralization. It did not necessarily infringe on the alleged immunity of the Brahmins from capital punishment.
- As regards the fifth argument advanced by Pandit Shastri, there is no denying the fact that the last Mauryan King Brihadratha was put to death by Pushyamitra who was a Brahmin, but we must not forget that Pushyamitra was also the Commander-in-Chief of the forces of Mauryas, and he took advantage of his position. Such rebellions are numerous in history. Moreover, if relations of the Mauryas and the Brahmins would not have been cordial, how could it be possible that a Brahmin might assume the office of the Commander-in-chief?

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6.6 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learned that:

- Chandragupta Maurya was the founder of the Mauryan Empire.
- The rulers of the Mauryan period organized the administration system, which resulted in the all round development of India. India constructed a new world on the basis of peace, brotherhood and cultural unity under the rule of the Mauryas.
- Under the Mauryans, India was an agricultural country. According to Megasthenes, majority of the population consisted of the agriculturists. They neither participated in warfare nor did they participate in the state affairs. They were not harmed during wars. The tillers of the soil carried on their work uninterruptedly.
- During the Mauryan times the cloth industry had greatly developed. The main cloth centres were Kashi, Vatsa, Madura, Vanga, Apranta, etc.
- Spinning was done by the spinning wheels and big looms were used for weaving clothes. According to *Arthasastra* and Megasthenes, cotton was produced in great quantity; the weavers of cotton clothes worked round the clock.
- Various kinds of coins where used in the Mauryan era. Some of them were as follows:
  - o Gold coins
  - o Silver coins
  - o Copper coins
- In 1837, a British scholar named James Prinsep deciphered the inscriptions on the pillars and rocks that are found in many parts of India. The script was identified as Brahmi and it was concluded that Ashoka and the ruler named Devanampiya Priyadarsi were one and the same person.
- An inscription discovered by James Prinsep in 1915 used the name Ashoka along with the other names. These inscriptions gave historians valuable information about Ashoka's rule and the extent and condition of his empire.
- The land Ashoka ruled stretched from the Himalayas in Nepal and Kashmir to Mysore in the south, from Afghanistan in the northwest to the banks of the river Brahmaputra in the east.
- In the west, the territory of Ashoka covered Saurashtra and Junagarh.
- Kalinga was one of the kingdoms, which remained unconquered and hostile when Ashoka succeeded to the throne.
- The word 'dhamma' was derived from the Sanskrit word 'dharma'.
- Ashoka followed the principles of Buddhism—that of truth, charity, kindness, purity and goodness. He wanted his people to lead pure and virtuous lives, irrespective of their religion or culture. He considered all subjects his children. He explained his ideas in his edicts by engraving his principles on pillars throughout his kingdom. The edicts were written in Prakrit, which was the language of the common people, so that they could understand and follow them.

Check Your Progress

7. Fill in the blanks.
   (a) The Mauryan dynasty finally came to an end when _____ was assassinated in 187 BC.
   (b) The disintegration of the Mauryan Empire was followed by the rise of a number of _____ in different parts of India.
8. State whether True or False.
   (a) After Ashoka's death the Mauryan Empire began to decline.
   (b) Some scholars refer to Ashoka's pacifist policy as a factor for Mauryan decline.

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- In the Mauryan period, art and architecture flourished.
- Stupas, pillars, caves and edicts are examples of the patronage that art and architecture had received.
- The Mauryan administration had several components. The king was the absolute centre of power and justice. He was helped by the Council of Ministers in state administration.
- The Mauryan Empire was divided into six provinces called chakra. Provincial administration was efficient and well-organized.
- The town administration of the Mauryan Empire has a very special place in ancient Indian history. Every town was under a chief called *Nagarak*.
- *Gop* and *Sthanik* were the officers to assist the Nagarak.
- Village was the basic unit of administration, where the chief official was called *Gramik*. According to *Arthasastra*, the senior president of *Gramik* was called *Gop*, who had to look after the administration of 5–6 villages.
- The Mauryas had an efficient and an effective judicial system with the king as the supreme judge.
- The courts were of two kinds: *Dharmasthaniya* courts, which were equivalent to modern civil courts, and *Kantakshodhan* courts, which heard criminal matters. Apart from these two courts, the village panchayats also worked in their initial stages.
- The chief source of revenue under the Mauryas was the land. The income from the state land was called *Sita*, while the income from the farmers' land was called *Bhag*. 1/6th of a farmer's total produce was taken by the state as revenue. The income from the towns was called *Durg*.
- The Mauryan period saw an unprecedented development of trade and industries. Kautilya's accounts state that homemade silk and Chinese silk industry was well developed during the Mauryan period. Apart from these, the industries producing metal and ivory objects were also developing. Pot makers, blacksmiths and carpenters had also expanded their profession.
- The causes for the downfall of Mauryan dynasty were many, among which the most important were as follows:
  - The vastness of the empire
  - Incapable successors
  - Deteriorating financial position
  - Disloyalty of the chief army officials

6.7 KEY TERMS

- **Espionage:** The act or practice of spying or of using spies to obtain secret information.
- **Kalinga:** A prosperous, small kingdom lying between the river Godavari and Mahanadi, close to the Bay of Bengal.
- **Chakra:** Is a Sanskrit word which also means cycle or self repeating process.

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6.8 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. (a) Megasthenes (b) Bureaucracy
2. (a) True (b) False
3. (a) Kalinga (b) Ashoka Chakra
4. (a) False (b) True
5. (a) Village (b) Foreign
6. (a) True (b) False
7. (a) Brihadratha (b) Kingdoms
8. (a) True (b) True

6.9 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on the early career of Chandragupta Maurya.
2. What was the nature of society that existed under the Mauryas?
3. Write a short note on Ashoka's Dhamma.
4. What was Ashoka's foreign policy after the Kalinga war?
5. What are the political factors responsible for the disintegration of the Mauryan Empire?
6. What were the economic factors responsible for the downfall of the Mauryan Empire?

Long-Answer Questions

1. 'Chandragupta is an able administrator.' Discuss.
2. Explain the art and architecture under the Mauryan Empire.
3. Discuss the Mauryan administration.
4. Discuss the growth of trade and commerce under the Mauryan rulers.
5. Elaborate on Shastri's theory of Mauryan decline.

6.10 FURTHER READING

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UNIT 7 POST-MAURYAN ERA

Structure

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7.2 Indo-Greeks
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7.0 INTRODUCTION

The great Mauryan Empire did not last long after the death of Ashoka and ended in 185 BC. Weak successors of Ashoka and the unmanageability of a vast empire caused the rapid decline of the Mauryas. Pushyamitra Shunga, a Brahmin general, usurped the throne after slaying the last Maurya king and presided over a loosely federal polity. The post-Mauryan period saw the emergence of a number of kingdoms all over the Indian subcontinent. A number of foreigners came to India in successive waves of migrations between 200 BC and AD 100. These people settled down in different parts of India. They brought with them their own distinct cultural flavour, which, after mixing with the local cultures, enriched the cultural ethos of India.

In this unit, you will study about the arrival of Indo-Greeks, Shunga and Kharavela, the art and architecture that flourished during the Kushanas and lastly the Satavahanas.

7.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Analyse the emergence of Indo-Greeks
- Interpret the origin of Shungas
- Describe the art and architecture under Kushans
- Explain the arrival of Satvahanas

7.2 INDO-GREEKS

Following Alexander the Great, the Greek Seleukidan dynasty of Persia continued their hold on the trans-Indus region. In 303 BC, Chandragupta Maurya overpowered Seleukos Nikator and brought the trans-Indus region under his control.

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In Iran, the Parthians became independent and were succeeded by the Sassanians in AD 226. Similarly, the Greeks of Bactria rose in revolt under the leadership of Diodotus. These Greeks were later known as the Indo-Greeks when they gained a foothold in the Indian subcontinent.

Bactria was a fertile area situated between the Hindu Kush and the Oxus. It had control over the trade routes from Gandhara to the West. The Greek settlements in Bactria took shape in the fifth century BC when Persian emperors allowed the Greek exiles to settle in that area. In history, Bactria finds mention due to Diodotus' revolt against the Seleukidan king Antiochus. However, the relationship was restored by the Seleukidans in 200 BC by offering a Seleukidan bride to Enthymemes, the grandson of Diodotus. Around the same time, King Subhagasena met with defeat at the hands of the Seleukidan king who crossed the Hindu Kush in 206 BC, taking advantage of the unguarded northwestern region of India.

From here begins the history of the Indo-Greek, which is primarily gathered from the coins of their time. The evidence is quite confusing in places because there were many kings with similar, even identical, names.

Demetrios, the son of Euthydemos, not only conquered what is present southern Afghanistan and Makran but also took over some portions of Punjab. Another Bactrian, Eukratides began ruling the homeland of the Bactrians around 175 BC. His son Demetrios-II went along the river Indus and deeper into Punjab till Kutch.

The name most well known in Indo-Greek history is that of Menander who is responsible for the work, *The Questions of King Milinda*, a Buddhist treatise on the discussion between Menander and Nagasena, the Buddhist philosopher. Menander continued his reign of Punjab from 160 to 140 BC.

Menander managed to stabilize his power and also expand his boundaries. His coins are found in the areas extending from Kabul to Mathura near Delhi. Although he tried to conquer the Ganga valley, he did not succeed and is said to have been defeated by the Sungas.

Strato is said to have succeeded Menander at a time when Bactria was under the reign of a different group of Bactrians. Probably Mithridates - I of Persia annexed Taxila during the third quarter of the second century BC.

Later, Antialkidas took over as the inscriptions of Besnagar and Bhhilsa. This inscription is said to have been ordered by Heliodoros, an envoy of Antialkidas in the court of Besnagar. Heliodoros ordered the construction of a monolithic column in the honour of Vasudeva. This laid the foundations of the Bhakti cult of Vasudeva.

Hippostratos and Hermaeus were the last of the Greek kings known about. While the former was overpowered by Kadphises, the latter met defeat at the hands of Moga, the first Saka king.

Indo-Greek impact began to wane when the Scythians, nomads from Central Asia, attacked Bactria.

Ancient Indian government, society, literature, art and religion was deeply influenced by the arrival of the Indo-Greeks and by the penetration of the Sakas, Pallavas and Kushanas. India was able to easily absorb these foreign influences because of the youthfulness of its civilization. Greek impact on India occurred following Alexander's invasion of the Greek settlements in the Bactrian areas. It is not right to hold Alexander alone responsible for bringing Greek heritage and influence. When Alexander and his soldiers proceeded towards the east, Greek culture was already on the wane. Even though Alexander and his men were not the actual torch bearers of Greek culture in the east, traces of Greek influence were definitely present in the Indian civilization.

Alexander's invasion did not affect the Indian civilization too much. Indian rulers continued practising their military tactics without adopting Alexander's tactics. Whatever little Greek influence that was there was felt beyond the Hindu Kush in the Mauryan period but not anywhere in interior India.

Greek influence is seen in the use of stone in buildings and sculptures during the Mauryan age. Constructions in Taxila definitely carry Greek influence in the columns.

Even before the power of the Indo-Greek rulers was established in India, the services of the Greeks were utilized. In fact, Ashoka had employed a Greek as a viceroy of his province; a Greek was looking after engineering work during the period of the Kushanas. Many Greeks are mentioned in the inscriptions of the Karle caves. Greek hair style and the practice of eating in a reclining posture became common. Indo-Greeks who settled in India became traders and wealthy merchants. Tamil literature mentions Greek ships arriving with cargo and the wealthy Greek settlements of Kaveripatnam. Some Tamil kings even employed Greeks as bodyguards.

The high level of knowledge possessed by Greek scientists is acknowledged by modern scientists also. According to the Gargi Samhita, Greeks were like gods in science. Varahmihira is known to have used several Greek terms in his works during the Gupta age. Even Charaka, it is said, was deeply influenced by Hippocrates, who is considered the 'father of medicine.' With no concrete proof, it is not easy to establish the extent to which the Greeks influenced scientific knowledge in India.

7.2.1 Influence on Art and Religion

Influence on Art

- The Indo-Greeks made significant contribution to the art of die cutting.
- They were skilled at making portraits of rulers.
- Greek kings promoted some indigenous methods of minting coins. Greek influence on Indian coins is very evident.
- The art of striking coins with two dies (obverse and reverse side) was a Greek technique adopted by Indians.
- Open air theatres found in India are also a Greek legacy.
- The term 'Yavanika' used for 'curtain' also shows Greek influence.
- The Gandhara art form of the Kushana period is the best example of Greek influence on sculpture. The Gandhara school began in the Kabul valley where Greek influence was said to be the maximum.
- Terracotta toys and plaques also reflected Greek influence.

Influence on Religion

Various inscriptions and studies reveal Greek influence in the field of religion in India. It changed Hindu iconography significantly. Several Iranian and Babylonian gods were incorporated in Hinduism. There were also many deities adopted by the Kushanas and the Parthians. However, it is difficult to specifically name the gods and goddesses that were adopted in the Indian pantheon of gods.

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Greek influence gave a boost to Mahayana Buddhism and made the Bhakti aspect of religion (led by the Vasudeva cult) popular.

All said and done, art was greatly influenced by the Greeks.

The Hellinistic impact on Indian art and architecture was evident in the form of the Gandhara school of Art. This influence moved on from Taxila to Mathura and Sarnath. This art was mainly centred around Gandhara.

Emergence of schools of art

After Alexander's invasion of India in 326 BC, the Indo-Greek, Indo-Scythian and Kushana kings ruled over its north-western territories. They promoted a distinct style of sculpture called the Graeco-Buddhist or Gandhara art or Hellenistic art. It combined Hellenistic, West Asiatic and native features. Modifications were made to Greek and Roman techniques to suit Indian requirements. This period lasted from the fourth century BC to 1st century AD.

The symbolic representation of Buddha gave way to the representation of Buddha in human form. Henceforth, the main element of sculpture was the image which later came to be worshipped by the Buddhists.

Mahayana Buddhism helped the growth of this art which was found predominantly in Gandhara. This province was the meeting ground for Indian, Chinese, Iranian and Graeco-Roman cultures. Therefore, the art of Gandhara was influenced by these foreign cultures, especially the Graeco-Roman culture. This art originated in Bactria and Parthia under Greek rulers. In this art, the statues and images of Lord Buddha were made according to the Greek technique. However, the idea, spirit and personalities were Indian. Hence, the name Graeco-Buddhist art or Indo-Greek art or Hellenistic art.

Main features

1. The statues of Buddha and Bodhisattvas were made to resemble Greek Gods.
2. The images were realistic with accurate anatomical features.
3. Refinement and polish were emphasized.
4. Grey stone and slate were commonly used.
5. Greek-style ornaments were highlighted.
6. Gandhara images seem to resemble the Greek god, Apollo. Most images show Buddha seated in a typical Yogic posture.

In addition to Gandhara, Mathura, another school of art also developed simultaneously during this period. Artists at Mathura chose red sand stone to sculpt their statues and images. The headless statue of Kanishka is an important creation of the Mathura school of art.

Art work belonging to the Gandhara school has been found at Bimaran, Hastanagar, Sakra, Dheri, Hadda and various parts of Taxila. Most specimens are placed in the museum of Peshawar. The images of Buddha are the most notable among these. This school also affected the art and sculpture of China and central Asia.

Check Your Progress

1. Fill in the blanks.
   (a) Following Alexander the Great, the Greek _____ dynasty of Persia continued their hold on the trans-Indus region.
   (b) Bactria was situated between the Hindu Kush and the _____.
2. State whether True or False.
   (a) Mahinder is a name associated with The Questions of King Milinda.
   (b) Chandragupta Maurya had employed a Greek viceroy in one of his provinces.

7.3 SHUNGA AND KHARAVELA

The Mauryas were succeeded by the Sungas who ruled for 112 years from about 185–73 BC. Pushyamitra, the Mauryan Commander-in-Chief, killed the last Mauryan king, Brihadratha and ruled the kingdom for thirty-six years. Pushyamitra was successful in usurping the throne on account of a general feeling of dissatisfaction against the weak Mauryan rulers who had failed to protect the people against the Greek invaders. These invaders had succeeded in penetrating the kingdom up to Pataliputra.

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Origin of Sungas

There are many theories with regard to the origin of the Sungas. The Sungas appear to have been Brahmins. The celebrated grammarian, Panini, connects them with the Bharadvaja family, and in the *Asvalyana Srautasutra* the Sungas are known as teachers. They were Brahmins who occupied a high position in the theological world. Pushyamitra belonged to a family of the royal chaplain or *Purohita*. The later Mauryas were politically weak and Pushyamitra was forced to kill Brihadratha in the interest of the empire which was threatened by foreign invaders.

7.3.1 Pushyamitra Sunga

Pushyamitra (see Figure 7.1), according to historians, ruled for thirty-six years. There are references not only to his son, but also to his grandson taking part in the administration of the country.



Fig. 7.1 Pushyamitra Sunga

War and Vidarbha

The first major event during Pushyamitra's reign was his conflict with Vidarbha. According to the *Malvikagnimitram* (a play in sanskrit by Kalidasa), the kingdom had been newly established and its ruler Yajnasena, who was related to the minister of the fallen Maurya, is described as a 'natural enemy' of the Sungas. Perhaps, the former had made himself independent in Vidarbha in the confusion following Brihadratha's murder, and as soon as Pushyamitra felt his position secure on the throne he demanded Yajnasena's allegiance. The course of the tussle is obscure but it seems Agnimitra, who was Pushyamitra's son

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and responsible for the victory at Vidisa, carried on hostilities. He won over to his side Yajnasena's cousin, Madhavsena and when the struggle ended, Vidarbha was divided between the two cousins.

Yavana incursions

The throne which Pushyamitra ascended was not a bed of roses. He had to meet difficulties from various quarters. It is contended that there were two Yavana wars which Pushyamitra had to fight—one in the beginning of his reign and the other at the close of his reign. The invasion of the Yavanas—which is mentioned in the *Gargi Samhita*—was a formidable one wherein it is stated that after conquering Saketa, Panchala and Mathura, the Yavanas reached Kusamadhvaja or Pataliputra and retired without fighting. There is no mention in literature that Pushyamitra lost his capital to the foreign invaders. Demetrios, the leader of the foreign invaders who reached as far as Pataliputra is mentioned in the *Gargi Samhita*. Demetrios had to retire from India on account of troubles at home. Eukratides had revolted in Bactria and Demetrios had to go back to fight him.

There is a reference to the second conflict with the Yavanas in the *Malvikagnimitram* written by Kalidas. By this time, Pushyamitra had grown old. Vasumitra, the grandson of Pushyamitra fought against the Yavana invaders. The battle was fought on the river Sindhu, Menander, in which the Yavana leader was defeated. It is pointed out that Menander is credited to have conquered more nations than Alexander. He was also the person who came after Demetrios. Coins from this period show that his territory extended up to Mathura. Buddhist accounts maintain that Menander converted to Buddhism and his court at Sakala or Salkot became a refuge for Buddhist monks.

***Asvamedha* sacrifice**

The performance of the *Asvamedha Yajna* was one of the notable events of Pushyamitra's reign. It is referred to in the *Malvikagnimitra*. In fact, Patanjali, the sage who is considered the father of Yoga officiated as priest in this sacrifice. The Ayodhya inscription further informs us that Pushyamitra performed not one, but two horse sacrifices.

Extents of the kingdom

Pushyamitra's jurisdiction extened to Jalandha and Sakala in Punjab according to accepted testimony of the Tibetan historian Taranatha and the Buddhist text, *Divayavadana*. The latter also indicates that Pataliputra continued to be the royal residence. Pushyamitra's sway over Ayodhya is proved by an inscription found there. According to *Malvikagnimitra*, however, his dominion comprised Vidisha and the southern region as far as the Narmada. Pushyamitra appears to have virtually made a feudal division of his extensive territories, as one version of the *Vayu Puranas* states that all eight sons of Pushyamitra ruled simultaneously.

Pushyamitra's persecutions

According to the *Divyavadana,* Pushyamitra was a persecutor of Buddhists. He is said to have made the notorious declaration at Sakala setting a price of one hundred gold dinars on the head of every Buddhist monk. Taranath also affirms that Pushyamitra was the ally of non-believers and participated in burning monasteries and slaying monks.

Pushyamitra's successor

Pushyamitra passed away in about 148 BC and was succeeded by his son Agnimitra who was then the viceroy at Vidisa. He had ample experience of the methods of administration followed by his father. He ruled for a brief period of eight years and was followed by Sujyestha or Jethamitra (as mentioned in contemporary coins) who was perhaps his brother. Jethamitra was succeeded by Agnimitra's son Vasumitra. In his earlier days, he defeated the Yavanas who had tried to obstruct the progress of the Ashwamedha Yagna. The Sunga dynasty consisted of ten rulers but history has not condescended to record anything of note about the others.

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7.3.2 Kharavela

Kharavela was the warrior king of Kalinga and was contemporary of the Sungas. The Kharavelas ruled from second century BC to seventh century BC. The Kalinga Kingdom was located in central-eastern India. Ashoka brought this kingdom under his control in middle of fourth century BC. In Post-Mauryan period this kingdom was ruled by Cheta or Chaitra dynasty. The Kharavelas belonged to the Chaitra dynasty. Kharavela became prince after completing his 15th year and obtained the King status as soon as he completed his 24th year.

Details about the Kharavelas are available in the Indian history only from the inscription found at Hathigumpha. Hathigumpha is a Jain cave contributed by Kharavela which contained the inscription about them in Prakrit Language. This has been dexterously prepared for publication by K.P.Jayaswal and R.D. Banerjee. This inscription gives an account of the history of Kharavela based on the years they ruled. However, it provides information only about thirteen regnal years.

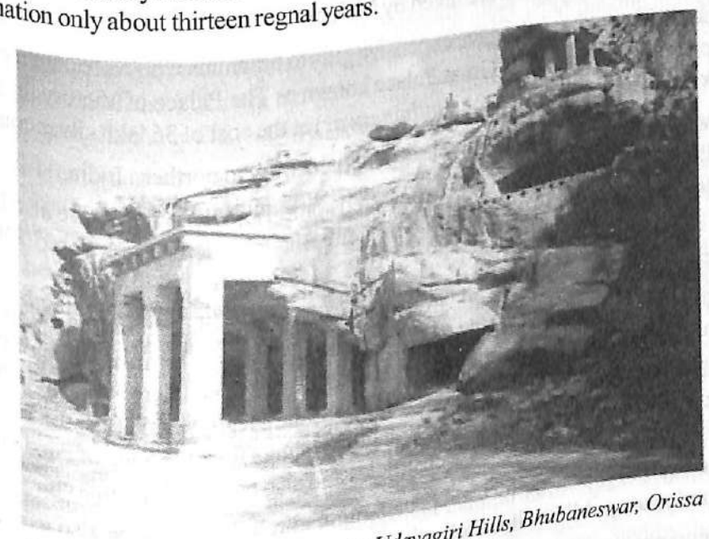

Fig. 7.2 Hathigumpha, Jain cave on Udayagiri Hills, Bhubaneswar, Orissa

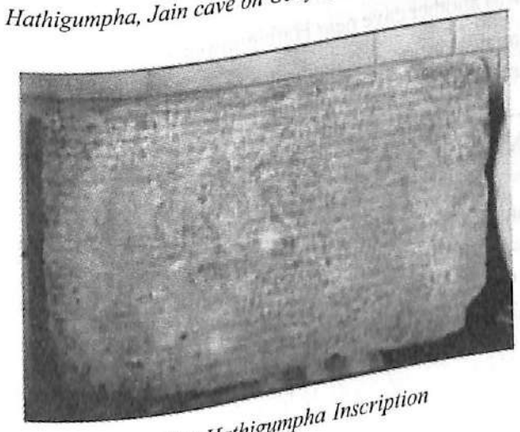

Fig. 7.3 Hathigumpha Inscription

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13 reginal years of Kharavela according to Hathigumpha Inscription are:

1. In his first regnal year, the capital city of Kalinga was restored and improved with reservoirs and given a face-lift with gardens.
2. In the second year, a massive army was sent to assist the Kasapa Kshatriyas. He overpowered Satakarni and capital of Mushika was taken over.
3. In the third year, of his reign, Kharavela, organized thearitical performances, dances and other shows through which he amuses the capital.
4. In the fourth year, he defeated the Rashtrikas and Bhoja kingdoms. He also revamped some sacred buildings.
5. In the fifth year, he mended and widened an old canal into the capital. This canal was primarily built by Nandas 300 years before.
6. In the sixth year, Kharavela granted some concessions to the Paura and Janapada corporations.
7. There are no records for the seventh year of rule. It seems that he got married in this year.
8. In the eighth regnal year, Kharavela assaulted Magadha. He brought the idols of Tirtankaras back, which were taken by Mahapadmananda from them before.
9. In the ninth regnal year, he gave expensive gifts to brahmins who were convinced to accept them. He built a Great Palace known as The Palace of Victory on the banks of the river Prachi (*near Bhubaneswar*) at the cost of 36 lakh silver coins.
10. In the tenth regnal year, Kharavela sent a giant army to northern India.
11. In the eleventh regnal year, he overpowered some Tamil Kingdoms. He also led in demonstration the wooden statue of Ketu-Bhadra who had prospered 1300 years before.
12. In his twelfth regional year, Kharavela invaded Magadha again and brought enormous wealth and used the same in constructing Jain Temples. One of the Basadi (a Jain shrine or temple, including residences of scholars attached to the shrine) built by him was found at Amaravati (Maha MeghaVerma Basadi). In the same year he brought many precious things to Kalinga from the King of Pandyans which include precious stones, rich articles and also horses, elephants etc.
13. In the thirteenth year he focused his attention to religious acts, he also carried forward many public welfare activities.

Ranigumpha was another cave near Hathigumpha contributed by Kharavela.

According to an inscription of Satakarni, Satakarni - II conquered Kalinga and consolidated the entire territory with his kingdom after Kharavela.

Check Your Progress

3. Fill in the blanks.
   (a) The Mauryas were succeeded by the _____.
   (b) _____ was another cave near Hathigumpha contributed by Kharavela.
4. State whether True or False.
   (a) The Sungas appear to have been Brahmins.
   (b) Kharavela was the warrior king of Kalinga and was contemporary of the Sungas.

7.4 KUSHANAS

The Chinese historians tell us that the Kushanas were a section of the Yueh-chi race. The Yueh-chi were nomadic horde who inhabited the borders of modern China. In the middle of the second century BC, they came into conflict with a neighbouring barbarian tribe known as Hsiung-nu. The king of the Yueh-chi was defeated by the Hsiung-nu and killed in that battle. The latter made a drinking vessel of his skull. The Yueh-chi, under the leadership of the widow of the slain Yueh-chi king, refused to submit to the victors and decided to move westwards in search of fresh pasture grounds. The number of persons who migrated is estimated to be between six and ten lakhs. While they were moving, the Yueh-chi came into conflict with another smaller horde known as the Wu-sun, which occupied the basin of the Ili river and its tributaries. The Wu-sun were no match for the Yueh-chi and consequently they were defeated and their king was killed. At this time, the Yueh-chi was divided into two sections. Those Yueh-chi who settled on the border of Tibet came to be known as the Little Yueh-chi and those Yueh who continued the westward march, came to be known as the Great Yueh.

The Yueh-chi had to meet the Sakas next who were occupying the territories west of the Wu-sun and to the north of the Jaxartes. The Sakas tried to defend themselves but were defeated. They were forced to vacate their pasture-ground in favour of the Yueh-chi who occupied them. The Sakas had to migrate in search of new homes and they made their way into India through the northern passes.

For about 15 or 20 years, the Yueh-chi remained undisturbed in the territory occupied by them. However, they were defeated by the son of the chieftain (who had been killed by the Yueh-chi) with the help of the Wu-sun who had brought up the infant son under their care. The Yueh-chi were driven out from the lands which they had snatched from the Sakas and were forced to resume their march. They occupied the valley of the Oxus and reduced to subjection its peaceful inhabitants. It is possible that the domination of the Yueh-chi extended over Bactria to the south of the Oxus. In course of time, the Yueh-Chi lost their nomadic habits and settled down.

Fa Hien has given the following account of the Yueh-chi: 'In old days the Yueh-chi were vanquished by the Hsiung-Nu. They then went to Tahia and divided the kingdom among five Hsi-h (e) on or Yabgous, viz. those of Hsiumi, Shuangmi, Kuei-shuang, Hsitun and Tumi. More than hundred years after that, the Hsihhou or Yabgou (Yavuga) of Kueishuang (Kushan) named K'iutsiu-k'io attacked and annihilated the four other His-hou and made himself king or lord (Wang), he invaded Nagad-si (the Arsakid territory, i.e. Parthia) and took possession of the territory of Kaofou (Kabul), overcome Pota and Ki-pin and became complete master of these kingdoms. K'iutsiu-k'io died at the age of more than eighty. His son Yen-kao-tchen succeeded him as king.' In turn, he conquered Tien-tchou (India, on the banks of a great river, apparently the kingdom of Taxila referred to by Philostratos), and established there a chief for governing it. From this time the Yueh-chi became extremely powerful. All the other countries designated them Kushan after their king, but the Han retained the old name and called them Ta-Yueh-chi.

Kadphises I

The leader of the Kushans then was Kadphises I. He adopted the title of *Wang* or king. He also invaded and captured the kingdom of Parthia, Kabul and Kafistan. Kujala Kadphises or Kadphises I died at a mature age of 80. On the basis of contemporary sources it is also believed that he also embraced Buddhism at the end of his reign. He also sued a number of coins which were directly imitated from the coins of Augustus (27 BC-AD 14). Tiberius Kadphises, who died at the ripe old age of more than eighty, may be assigned roughly to the period AD 15-55.

Vima Kadphises or Kadphises II

KadhisesII (AD 78-120) extended his kingdom over a good portion of northern India and governed the Indian provinces through military deputies. He had trade relations with

China and the Roman Empire. He issued both gold and silver coins on which life-like representation of the king was inscribed. From these coins it appears that he was the worshipper of Shiva.

Kanishka

After a brief interregnum Virna was succeeded by Kanishka, whose relationship with the two preceding kings is uncertain. The Kushana dynasty flourished under him. The date of his accession is a matter of inconclusive debate, but AD 78 seems to be the most probable of the dates suggested so far. This year marks the beginning of an era which came to be known as the Shaka Era. Under Kanishka the Kushana Empire reached the height of its power and became a mighty force in the world of its day. He was a capable administrator. He kept his vast empire intact during his lifetime. He himself ruled the territories around his capital Purushpura (Peshawar) while his *Kshatrapas* (governors) ruled over distant provinces under his directions. These provincial governors enjoyed vast powers in relation to their territories, yet there is no evidence of any revolt against the emperor.

Kanishka was undoubtedly the most striking figure from the Kushana dynasty. A great conqueror and a patron of Buddhism, he combined in himself the military abilities of Chandragupta Maurya and the religious zeal of Ashoka. However, there is no unanimity among scholars regarding the date of his accession to the throne even though most of them believe that Kanishka was the founder of the Saka era, which started in AD 78. He ascended to the throne in the same year.

Kanishka's public works

Like Ashoka, Kanishka was a great builder of Stupas and cities. He erected in his capital a monastery and a huge wooden tower in which he placed some relics of the Buddha. An important relic of this period is a statue of Kanishka with a missing head. Besides the Shah-ji-ki dheri at Peshawar, his important buildings and works of art are found in Peshawar, Mathura, Kanishkapura and Takshasila. Mathura became an important centre of art during the time of Kanishka. Kanishka beautified the city with a large number of monasteries, statues and sculptures.

Kanishka's religion

The question of Kanishka's religion is a controversial one. He helped in the spread of Buddhism, many old monasteries were repaired and many new ones were also built. Kanishka invited scholars for the fourth Buddhist Council, which was attended by five hundred monks. The truth is that before his conversion to Buddhism, he believed in many gods, which is clearly reflected in his earlier coins. However, he ultimately embraced Buddhism and promoted it as the state religion. Figure 7.4 shows the expanse of the Kushana Empire.

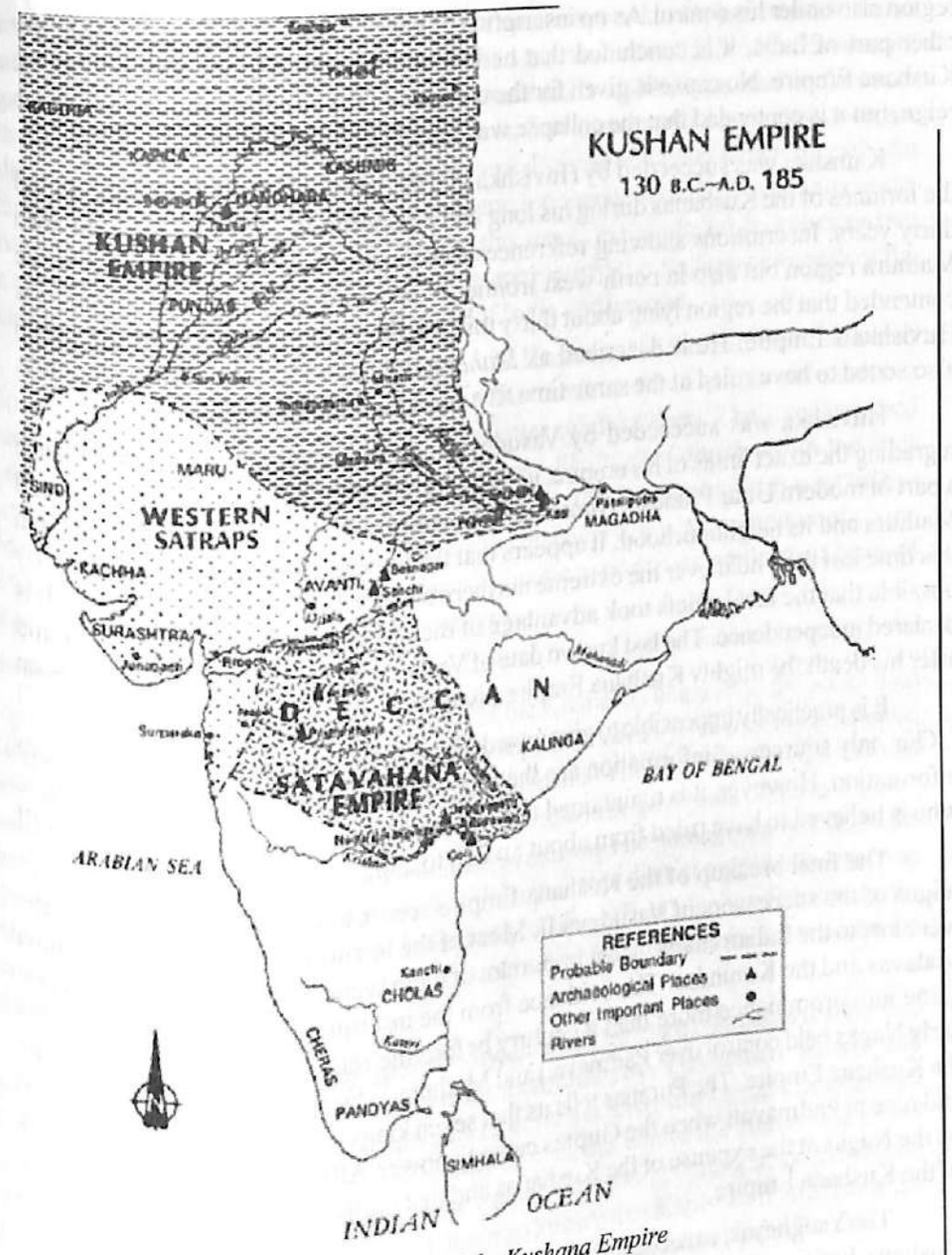

Fig. 7.4 Expanse of the Kushana Empire

Kanishka's estimate as a ruler

Kanishka was undoubtedly one of the greatest kings of ancient India. He was an excellent warrior, an efficient empire-builder and a brilliant patron of art and learning. No Indian ruled over such a vast empire as was done by Kanishka. He was the only Indo-Asiatic king whose territories extended beyond the Pamirs.

Kanishka occupied a unique position in Indian history. He was not only a great conqueror, but also a great administrator. It is worthy of note here that not a single revolt was reported during his reign.

Downfall of the Kushana Empire

The mighty Kushana Empire reached its zenith during the time of Kanishka I. Under him, the Kushanas were feared not only in India, but also in Central Asia. However, his successors failed to maintain his feat. Vasishka, the successor of Kanishka I, is stated to have ruled only over Mathura and its surrounding regions. Probably, he had the Sanchi

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region also under his control. As no inscription of Vasishka has been discovered in any other part of India, it is concluded that he lost control over the distant parts of the Kushana Empire. No cause is given for the collapse of the Kushana power during his reign, but it is contended that the collapse was merely a temporary one.

Kanishka was succeeded by Huvishka and the latter is stated to have recovered the fortunes of the Kushanas during his long and prosperous rule lasting for more than thirty years. Inscriptions showing references to Kanishka were found not only in the Mathura region but also in north-west frontier India and in eastern Afghanistan. It is contended that the region lying about thirty miles to the west of Kabul was included in Huvishka's Empire. He is described as *Maharajadhiraja* Huvishka. Kanishka II is also stated to have ruled at the same time as a contemporary of Huvishka.

Huvishka was succeeded by Vasudeva I. Even though there is no evidence regrading the exact limits of his empire, it is assumed that his rule did not extend beyond a part of modern Uttar Pradesh. Almost all the Brahmi inscriptions have been found in Mathura and its neighbourhood. It appears that the imperial Kushanas of India had by this time lost their hold over the extreme northern and north-western parts of India. It is possible that the local chiefs took advantage of the weakness of the central power and declared independence. The last known date of Vasudeva is around AD 176–77 and soon after his death the mighty Kushana Empire dissolved away.

It is practically impossible to give an orderly account of the successors of Vasudeva I. Our only sources of information are the coins and they do not give us any definite information. However, it is maintained that Vasudeva was succeeded by Kanishka III who is believed to have ruled from about AD 210 to 230.

The final breakup of the Kushana Empire seems to have happened during the reigns of the successors of Vasudeva II. Most of the territories in the interior of India were lost to the Indian chiefs. Most important of them were the Nagas, the Yaudheyas, Malavas and the Kunindas. The evidence from the inscriptions tells us that the Nagas came into prominence more than a century before the reign of Chandragupta II. The early Nagas held control over Padmavati and Mathura, which were formerly included in the Kushana Empire. The Puranas tells us that seven kings had already ruled at Mathura and nine at Padmavati when the Guptas came to power. All these must have been done by the Nagas at the expense of the Kushanas and that partly explains the disappearance of the Kushana Empire.

The Yaugheyas, a martial tribe, also had a significant role in the destruction of the Kushana Empire. Their rule over the areas on the banks of the Sutlej as far as the borders of Bahawalpur lasted for more than a century. The copper coins of the Yaudheyas are similar to those of Kushanas. It appears that the Yaudheyas made these coins after the Kushanas were overthrown.

The Malavas and the Kunindas became independent after successfully revolting against the authority of the Kushanas. They divided between themselves the territories formerly held by the Kushanas. While the Malavas made Malvanagar in Rajputana their capital, the Kunindas occupied the territory between the Yamuna and the Sutlej as well as the upper courses of Beas and Sutlej.

Another cause of the downfall of the Kushana Empire was the rise of the Sassanian Satraps and the Satavahana power in Iran. The Sassanian Empire was founded in AD 225–26 by Ardeshir I and from the very beginning its rulers turned their attention towards the east. Ardeshir I came as far as Khorasan. It is stated that the Kushana Shah or ruler sent his envoy to Ardeshir I to acknowledge his suzerainty. Gradually, the Sassanian

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power extended towards Seeistan. In course of time, it spread over parts of western and central India and the north-western regions and borderlands of India. The Sassanian expansion towards western and central India was made at the expense of the Western Satraps and the Satavahanas. Not only Bactria, but also the whole of north-western India became important provinces in the eastern division of the Sassanian Empire. An attempt was made by the Kushanas to become independent of the Sassanians in the time of Emperor Varhram II (AD 276–93) but this seems to have failed. It is obvious that the rising power of the Sassanians dealt a severe blow to the declining strength of the Kushanas in the northern and western parts of India and beyond.

It appears that in due course of time, the Kushanas on the border of India and also in Punjab intermingled with other tribes. They continued their chequered existence even up to the time of Samudra Gupta and the latter subdued them. They are described in the Allahabad Pillar inscription as *Daivaputra Shahi Shahanushahi*. In the later part of the fourth century and early fifth centuries, the Kushanas got a new title—Kidara. Their existence has been proved by the discovery of a large number of coins. However, it is difficult to say anything about the exact period of their rule, their order of succession and even the limits of their territory.

Kushana administration

A critical study of the coins and inscriptions of the Kushanas helps us to gather an idea of India under the Kushanas. We find that the administrative systems of the Kushanas were a mix of both foreign elements and Indian elements. The important foreign element was the government by *satraps*. The latter were viceroys or governors of the provinces. There were some functionaries who had foreign names. The name *strategos* stood for a general or military governor, while *meridach* represented district magistrate. *Amatyas* and *mahasenapatis* were officers of Indian origin. The officers having foreign names were stationed in the north-west, while officers having Indian names were stationed in the interiors.

Kingship was the prevailing type of polity, although there are references to republics also. The Kushana rulers took up such titles as *Mahisvara, Devaputra, Kaiser* and *Shahi-Sahanushabi*. There was a tendency to deify the ancestral kings. The Mathura inscription of Huvishka refers to a *devakula* or a shrine where the statue 'the grand father of Kanishka' was installed. A strange system of two kings ruling at the same time also prevailed during the Kushana period. It is also known that Kanishka II and Huvishka ruled jointly. It is possible that this institution was borrowed from the Indo-Greeks.

The Kushana kings are said to have had unfettered powers. Although there is a reference to an advisory body to assist the king in Buddhist literature, it is not safe to assert that such a council existed in the Kushana period as there is no reference to such a body in the Kushana records.

The satraps in India were called *mahakshatrapas* and *kshatrapas*. Some of them are mentioned as *rajan mahakshatrapas*. These officials had powers to issue coins. The assumption of the title points its conferment by some overlord. The term *kshatrapas* in Sanskrit literature is used in the sense of dominion, rule and power, as exercised by gods and men. It is used in the sense of a ruler in the Rig Veda. Even before the Kushanas, there were *Kshatrapas* of Kapisa and Abhisara Prastha and of Mathura. The Kushana rulers followed the system of their predecessors. Kanishka's *kshatrapas* enjoyed a position different from that of the western kshatrapas. It is pointed out that if the kshatrapas had been independent, their names would have occurred in the inscriptions and not those of Kanishka or Huvishka alone.

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The terms *dandanayaka* and *maha dandanayaka* formed a link in the Kushana administrative machinery. These terms occur for the first time in the Kushana records. The term *dandanakaya* has been translated as 'magistrate', 'the leader of the four forces of the army,' a fortunate general, 'commander of force', a 'judge', 'administrator of punishment', 'criminal magistrate', 'the great leader of the forces', 'prefect of police' and 'Commissioner of Police'. It is maintained that *dandanayakas* were feudatory chiefs who were appointed by the king. They owed allegiance to the king and were required to render civil and military service. The civil aid was in the form of personal service for maintaining law and order. The Kushanas were the first to introduce this system which was later followed by the Guptas. The names of all the *kshatrapas, mahakshatrapas* and *mahadandanayakas* appear to be foreign and that explains the absence of Indian official heads at the higher level.

There are references to *gramikas* and *padrapalas*. The term *gramika* was used for the head of the village while *padrapala* was a local head. Some historians hold the view that the Kushana administration must have ensured safety as there are references to people coming to Mathura from Abhisar, Nagara, Odayana and even Wokhana or Badakshan. The administration was responsible for the safety and security of the common people that helped in the progress and prosperity of the country. This was evident from the life of people in general and a large number of welfare schemes that were initiated by the rulers of the state.

Wars and conquests of Kanishka

Kanishka was a doughty warrior and a great conqueror. Figure 7.5 shows an image of Kanishka embossed in a coin. He believed in the policy of aggression and aggrandizement and in this respect, he may be compared to Akbar and Samudragupta. He conquered many states in India as well as abroad and incorporated them into his empire. At the time of his accession Afghanistan, Batria, Parthia, Sindh and Punjab were included in his empire. He extended his empire by the following wars:

- **Kashmir:** First of all Kanishka conquered Kashmir where he built many monuments. He laid the foundation of a town Kanispura. He too, like Jahangir, liked the Kashmir valley very much. The natural scenery of the valley was a great attraction for him. It is also said that he wished that after his death he should be buried in Kashmir. Kalhan the author of Rajtarangini writes that Kashmir was under Kanishka and he used to spend his summer there. It was Kashmir where he called the fourth Buddhist Council.



Fig. 7.5 Image of Kanishka embossed on a Coin

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- **Magadha:** Secondly, Kanishka invaded Magadha and conquered it. It is said that after the conquest he demanded from the Magadhan king the compensation for the war. The Magadhan ruler gave Ashvaghosh, a great scholar, as compensation and Kanishka brought Ashvaghosh with him.

His other wars

He carried on a successful warfare against Parthia. About the close of first century AD the Chinese General Pau-Chao steadily advanced to the west and brought to submission the trans-pamir regions of Kashagar, Yarkand and Khotan and threatened the eastern frontier of the Kushana Empire. About AD 90 Kanishka challenged the supremacy of the Chinese emperor and asserted his equality with him by demanding a Chinese princess in marriage. General Pau-Chao, who considered the proposal as an affront to his master, arrested the envoy and sent him home. At this, Kanishka sent an army of 70,000 cavalry under his general Si to attack the Chinese across Pamirs. Kanishka's forces were totally defeated and he was compelled to pay a tribute to China. Some years later he himself led another expedition across the plateau of Pamir to avenge his former defeat. Now he was successful against the Chinese but was killed by his own soldiers and commanders during this very expedition. His soldiers had become tired of constant fighting, and, therefore revolted and killed him. Yet his military success proves that he was a great commander and conqueror.

Kanishka and Buddhism

Kanishka was a great warrior and conqueror. There can be no two opinions about it; at the same time he was a great devotee and a patron of Buddhism.

Today, his fame rests upon his being a Buddhist. Like Ashoka the great he, too, took up the task of spreading Buddhism both in and outside the country. About this time two sects arose in the Buddhist religious philosophy, (1) Hinayans which wanted to retain the simple creed of Buddha, and (2) the Mahayans, which preferred to worship the image of Buddha and preached personal devotion to him.

Kanishka built a remarkable tower over the relics of Buddha. Its fourteen storey carved timber surmounted by an iron column rose to a total height of 194 metres. Both Hiuen Tsang and Alberuni have stated that the great monastery of Peshawar was built by him and Peshawar became a great centre of Buddhist culture during his time. The fourth Buddhist council, which was not recognized by the followers of the Hinayana sect, was held during the age of the famous author Vasumitra either in Kashmir or in Gandhara or Jalandhara. Limited excavations at Peshawar have succeeded in providing a plan of the stupa, the location of the Vihara, a few examples of figurative sculptures in stone and the celebrated Kanishka reliquary.

Several Buddhist theologians are associated with Kanishka such as Ashvaghosha, Vasumitra, Parshva, Sangharaksha, Dharamatrata and Matricheta. But Kanishka's patronage of Buddhism seems to have been essentially political. Legends apart, there is little evidence to suggest that his conversion to Buddhism was a profound experience. Buddhist emblems appear on his coins but they are very few and are outnumbered by other types.

- ***Building Activities:*** Kanishka was a great builder. He got constructed many cities and beautiful buildings. He constructed a 600 ft. high citadel in his capital Purushpur. It had fourteen storeys. Its top was made of iron. All round the citadel many statues of Buddha were erected. After conquering Kashmir he constructed

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the city of Kanishkapura near Srinagar, which exists even today as a big village. He constructed many stupas, monastries and shrines in Mathura as well. Gandhara school of Art attained popularity mainly due to Kanishka's efforts. Kanishka was a great builder and a patron of art, who patronized architecture and sculpture.

- ***A Patron of Learning:*** Kanishka was a lover of knowledge. He patronized many scholars. Buddhist scholar Ashvaghosha was a great poet, play-wright and musician. Nagarjuna and Vasumitra were great Buddhist philosophers of the time of Kanishka. It not only caused the collection of Mahabhash but also of the Ayurvedic book *Charak Samhita*.

Causes for Kanishka being called the Second Ashoka

Similarities between Ashoka and Kanishka

(i) Kanishka was also like Ashoka in many of his qualities and pesonality.

(ii) Like Ashoka, Kanishka had embraced Buddhism after his accession to the throne.

(iii) Like Ashoka he not only caused the spread of Buddhism in the neighbouring areas of his vast empire but sent missionaries in some foreign countries also.

(iv) Like Ashoka, Kanishka also desired the welfare of his people and he also carried many related activities.

(v) Like Ashoka, Kanishka also patronized literature, art and extended patronage to many scholars.

(vi) Like Ashoka, Kanishka was blood thirsty before he came to throne, and like Ashoka he was touched by the bloodshed and suffering caused by wars.

(vii) Ashoka called the Third Buddhist Council at Pataliputra whereas Kanishka called the Fourth Buddhist Council at Kashmir.

(viii) Like Ashoka, Kanishka also built monastries, stupas and vihars.

Dissimilarities between Kanishka and Ashoka

(i) Kanishka propagated Buddha's faith through art forms mainly the images and status of Buddha whereas Ashoka built pillars and inscribed the main teachings of Buddha on these pillars and rocks.

(ii) Kanishka belonged to the Mahayana sect whereas Ashoka belonged to the Hinayana sect of Buddhism.

(iii) Kanishka continued to wage wars against his neighbours even after his conversion to Buddhism whereas Ashoka gave up wars and embraced non-violence after his conversion.

Successors of Kanishka and the Fall of Kushan Empire

If we accept AD 78 as the year of accession, then Kanishka's rule ended about AD 101. He was succeeded by Vasishka, who possibly ruled jointly with Huvishka. Though the latter ruled from his capital Mathura, his rule still extended in the north-west over Afghanistan. The last great king of the line in India was Vasudeva (AD 145-76). By the time of his reign, the Kushans had probably lost their hold on the northwestern part of their kingdom. The Kushan empire lasted till about AD 220. It ended about the same time as the Satavahanas kingdom in Andhra disappeared. It suffered a loss of territory and influence as a consequence of various political factors operating in India and abroad.

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7.4.1 Art and Architecture under Kushanas

Gandhâra style of Buddhist art is a consequence of merger of Greek, Syrian, Persian and Indian art traditions. The development of this form of art started in Parthian Period (50BC–75AD) and achieved its peak during the Kushana period. Mathura School of art is regarded as a centre of Indian ancient art. The period of Mathura school of art coincided with the rule of the Kushanas. This school also reached the zenith of success during the reign of the Kushanas and expanded further in the Gupta period. The artists of Mathura school of Art created sculptures which are immortal in the history of art in India. Amaravati School of art and sculpture evolved during the Satavahana period. Amaravati School is credited with depicting Buddha in the human form for the first time.

1. Mathura School of Art

Mathura art form originated in the second century BC and within a short span of time, it had become one of the chief centres of art. The art pieces of this school became so popular that they were in demand even in far off places. Within four hundred years, this school prepared a variety of sculptures and many other pieces of art for the followers of Buddhism, Jainism and Brahmanism. Apart from producing sculptures related to various faiths, they also produced images of kings and other notable personalities. This indicates that Mathura artists had knowledge about a variety of art activities of that period. This helped them to cater to the needs of various social groups of Indian as well as non-Indian origin. The use of local red stone in making sculptures and art piece was a unique characteristic of Mathura school of art.

Another remarkable attribute of this school was the representation of various patterns of life on votive pillars. Many scenes were created on these pillars such as men and women collecting flowers from forests; women offering fruits to birds and women playing in gardens. The votive pillars from 'Kankali Tila' represent the feminine beauty in a remarkable manner. In fact, a wide variety of themes have been used by the artists of Mathura. For instance, in Sanchi and Bharhut, elements from nature have been used by the artist. The sculptures were carved out of red sandstone, which was easily accessible in the nearby areas. Thematic details of the sculpture belonging to the Mathura school are as follows.

The Buddha idols

Many archaeologists believe that the idols of Bodhisattvas and Buddha were prepared at Mathura and were sent to other regions. The Samath image, established in the period of Kanishka-I, was made at Mathura. This idol of Bodhisattvas is in the standing posture. Mainly, Buddha images are found in two postures- one is sitting and the other is standing. The idol of Buddha found at Katra (in sitting posture) is among the oldest idols. In this idol, Buddha is sitting under a Bodhi tree, his right hand is in abhaya posture and he is holding Dharma chakra and tri-ratna in his palms and at the bottom of the feet.

Some of the unique features of the idols of Buddha are as follows (see Figure 7.6):

- They are carved out of red stone which has white spots on it.
- The idols are in round shape so that they are visible from every side.
- The face as well as head is shaven.
- The right hand is in abhaya posture.
- Forehead does not have any mark.

- They are wearing a tight-fitted dress
- There is a frill on the left hand of the idol.

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Fig. 7.6 Idol of Buddha

Jaina specimens

Mathura was as much a sacred centre for the Jains as it was for the followers of Buddhist and Brahmanical faiths. There are a number of inscriptions of Jainism in Mathura. For example, in the middle of the second century BC, a dedication by a Jaina Sravaka was named Uttaradasaka. Kankali Tila was the chief Jaina site at Mathura as there were a large number of monuments, ayaqapatas or stone slabs with Jaina figures in the centre. Jaina Stupas found in Mathura were objects of worship. A wide variety of architectural fragments like pillars, crossbars, capitals and railing - posts have also been found in Mathura.



Fig. 7.7 Seated Tirthankar

The images of the Jainas or the Tirthankaras on the ayaqapatas (see Figure 7.7) existed even before the Kushana period but regular images of Jainas became common

from Kushana period onward. Some of the Tirthankara images are quite difficult to identify. However, Parsvanatha is identifiable due to his canopy of snake hoods and Rishabhanatha due to hair falling on his shoulders.

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Brahmanical images

Brahmanical images have also been found in Mathura.

Some of the representations are of Siva, Surya, Lakshmi and Sankarshana or Balarma. During Kushana period, Kartikeya, Kubera, Sarasvati, Vishnu, and some other gods, such as Naga images, were carved in sculpture. Images of this period have some of iconographical features that differentiate deities from one another. Figure 7.8 shows the Hindu Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh.



Fig. 7.8 The Hindu Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh

For instance, Shiva represented in the 'linga' was carved in the form of Chaturmukha linga. The word 'Chaturmukha' means four faces, thus it denotes that the linga had four human faces of Shiva in all the four sides. Figure 7.9 shows the picture of a Shiva linga.

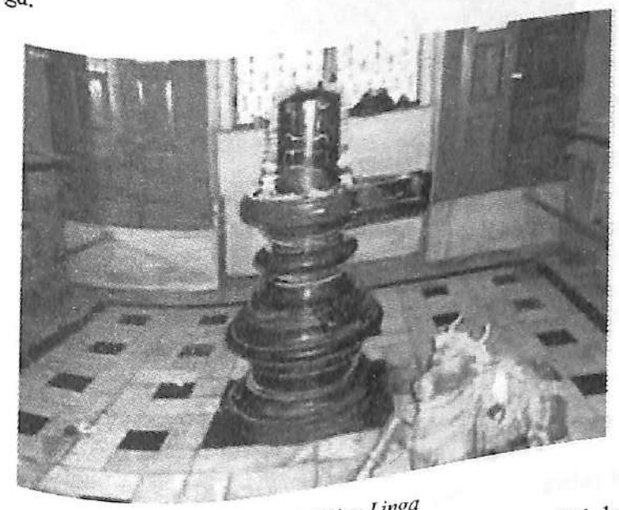

Fig. 7.9 Shiva Linga

The idol of surya in the Kushana period is shown riding a beautiful chariot, which is driven by two horses. In this idol, he is wearing a heavy coat on the upper body and a

salwar-like dress in the lower half of the body. He has a lotus in one hand and a sword in the other. One of the images of Surya in Kushana period is shown in Figure 7.10.



Fig. 7.10 Surya Stone Sculpture from Mathura

The image of Balarama has a turban on the head

Saraswati is shown in a sitting posture with a heavy manuscript in her hands. She is not adorned with ornaments and there are two more figures along with the figure of Saraswati.

Durga is represented as the killer of buffalo demon. This form is also known as Mahisha-mardini form of Durga (see Figure 7.11). Images of Yakshas and Yakshinis have also been found in Mathura. Such images are associated with all the three religions popular in Mathura-Buddhism, Jainism and Brahmanism. The image of Kubera has also been found which is shown as a deity with bulging belly and is associated with wine. He looks like Bacchus and Dionysius who are Roman and Greek gods of wine respectively.



Fig. 7.11 Durga Slaying the Buffalo

The images of rulers

Mat village in Mathura had large images of Kushana Kings (see Figure 7.12) and other notables like Kanishka and Chastana. Some of the historians believe that the idea of building structures for housing portrait-statues of rulers and other notables of the state came from Central Asia. It is because many of the dresses worn by dignitaries in these statues are of Central Asian origin. Large portrait-statutes of rulers were made to give them a divine status.



Fig. 7.12 A Kushana King

The fact that many heads of Scythian notables have been found at Mat shows that Mathura was the one of the most significant centres of Kushana Empire especially in the eastern part. They forcefully suggest contact between art forms of Gandhara and Mathura. In due course of time, Mathura art forms also contributed considerably to the growth of Gupta art forms.

2. Gandhara School of Art

Gandhara, which integrated the valley of Peshawar, Svata, Buner and Bajjora, is located in the north-west part of the Indian sub-continent and covers the area of both the banks of Indus river. As a result, this place has a mixed culture. Mainly, its art form was Buddhist but due to the mixed culture, it was highly influenced by Hellenistic art. Shakas and the Kushanas were the chief patrons of Gandhara art.

Art pieces of Gandhara School have mainly been found from Jalalabad, Begram, Barnaran, Hadda and Taxila. Gandhara art may be categorized into two schools- early and later. The early school existed during first and second century AD and schist stone of blue-grey colour was used to make idols during this period. However, the later school used mud, lime, pilaster and stucco to make the idols. These idols show limbs and other organs of the body very clearly, thus, they are known to be realistic in nature. They depict features of human body with anatomical accuracy. In addition to the idols, reliefs and bas-reliefs have also been carved beautifully and these represent the life of Buddha and Bodhisattvas.

For example: At Shah-ji-kidheri, a bronze reliquary (see Figure 7.13) was found from the Stupa. It represents Buddha, flying geese and Kushana kings (all these are symbolic of wandering monks).

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Fig. 7.13 A bronze Reliquary

The Gandhara art had many other attributes. For example, in Bamaran, a gold reliquary has been found which has a number of figures enclosed within an arcade. Figure 7.14 shows the Gandhara image of Buddha.



Fig. 7.14 Gandhara Image of Buddha

Check Your Progress

5. Fill in the blanks.
   (a) _____ is located in the north-west part of the Indian sub-continent and covers both the banks of Indus river.
   (b) Many archaeologists believe that the idols of Bodhisattvas and Buddha were prepared at _____ and were sent to other regions.
6. State whether True or False.
   (a) Mat village in Mathura had large images of Kushana Kings.
   (b) Brahmanical images have also been found in Mathura.

ACTIVITY

Take a blank map of India and mark the regions on it where the Mathura School of art flourished during the Gupta Empire.

DID YOU KNOW

The Kushans were one of five branches of the Yuezhi confederation.

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7.5 SATVAHANAS

The word *Satavahana* represents a *kula* or family while Andhara is the name of *ajati* or tribe. The Satvahana family of Andhra Yatf established an independent kingdom in the west and east of South India in the first century AD. It has also been said that originally the Satavahanas did not belong to the Andhra stock. But, when in later times their political authority was confined to the territory at the mouth of the river Krishna, the name Andhra was applied to them.

However, there is no doubt that the Satavahanas belonged to the Dravadian stock and, later on, were accepted within the Aryan fold. Dr K. Gopalacharya has regarded Satavahana rulers as Kshatriyas while Dr Raychaudhuri has stated that they were Brahamins with a little mixture of Naga blood. A majority of scholars have accepted them as Brahamins.

There is a difference of opinion amongst scholars regarding the chronology of Satavahanas. The *Matsaya Purana* states that the family ruled for 400 years and had thirty kings though it names only ninteen of them. The *Vayu Purana* states that it ruled for 300 years and had only ninteen rulers. Therefore, Dr Raychaudhari has concluded that the main family ruled for 300 years and had 19 rulers while some off shoots of the family ruled for another hundred years and had 11 more rulers. However, it is generally accepted that after the downfall of the Mauryas, the Andhras established an independent kingdom in the south-west. Simuka, in the late first century BC, laid the foundation of this great family and it ruled up to the middle of the third century AD.

Important rulers

The founder of the rule of this dynasty was Simuka. He found his independent kingdom in the later period of the first century BC and ruled for 23 years.

He destroyed the Kanvas of Magadha and, later, the Sungas of Vidisha and occupied a part of Central India. Simuka was succeeded by his brother Krishna who ruled for 18 years. He included Nasik in his kingdom. Krishna was succeeded by his son Satkarni-I. He proved himself an illustrious king and performed one Rajasuya and two Asvamedh *yajans*. He conquered western Malwa, Vidbarbha (modern Eerar) and parts of the South and assumed the title of *Dakishna-Pathapati*. It is believed that the Satavahanas ruled over vast territories for about a century, which included South India except Kalinga and the kingdoms of far south, a part of the kingdom of Magadha, entire Malwa and the larger part of Central India. This great empire was established primarily by Satkarni-I. However, after his death the empire lost its strength. The widow of Satkarni, queen Nayanika, ruled for some time as guardians of her sons Saktarsi and Vedsri but could not become much successful. Besides, the Satavahana rulers had to battle with the Greeks, the Sakas and the Parthians at that time. The Sakas conquered Malwa and Kathiawar and in the later part of the first century AD they succeeded in snatching away from Satavahanas the north-western part of the South including Nasik. Thus, not only the greatness of the Satavahanas was lost but, at that time, it seemed that the entire South India would be lost to foreigners.

The situation was saved by Gautamiputra Satkarni (AD 106-130) who proved to be the greatest ruler of the Satavahanas and saved South India from the onslaught of the Sakas. The central point of the politics of South India at this time was the conflict between the Sakas and the Satavahanas. Gautamiputra succeeded in this conflict. The

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Saka *satrap* (king) Nahapana had successfully damaged the prestige and power of the Satavahanas. But, now, Gautamiputra defeated him near about AD 124-125 and occupied most of his territories. He also overthrew the Greeks and the Parthians. Thus, he succeeded in defeating all these foreigners and snatched away from them Gujarat, Kathiawar, Western Rajputana, Malwa, Berar and North Konkan. Besides, he was successful in extending his kingdom towards the South as well. Thus, he restored and further extended the power and prestige of the Satavahanas and built up a strong kingdom in the South, which extended over the whole land from river Krishna in the South to Malwa and Saurashtra in the north and from Berar in the east to the Konkan in the west. Probably, the rulers of the far South accepted him as their overlord because he claimed a sort of suzerainty over the whole of trans-Vindhyan India. He assumed the title of *Rajaraja* and the lord of the Vindhya. Besides, being a conqueror, Gautamiputra was a good administrator and a just ruler. In a contemporary inscription he has been described as a social reformer as well. Therefore, Gautamiputra has been regarded as the greatest Satvahana ruler. But during his last days he became invalid and therefore the Sakas again became aggressive. Probably, the Sakas recovered most of their territories from him before his death in AD 1300.

Gautamiputra was succeeded by his son Puloma, i.e., Vasishtiputra Pulumavi. Puloma ruled for nearly 29 years (AD 030-159). During his rule, the pressure of the Sakas from the north-west increased. Some modern scholars think that he was defeated twice by his father-in-law, the great Saka *satrap* Rudradaman. Certainly, he failed to resist the Saka invasions and, therefore, Saurastra, Gujarat, Malwa, Rajputana and North Konkan were lost to them. However, Puloma extended the territories of his kingdom towards the south-east, and Andhra Pradesh was conquered by Poluma. It is probable that while Gautamiputra began the conquest, it was completed by Puloma. That is why Puloma has been regarded as the first Andhra King. Puloma certainly increased the strength of the navy of the Satavahanas, which resulted in the increased foreign trade through sea and, thereby, also the economic prosperity of the kingdom. Paloma built up the city of Navalagarh and the *stupa* of Amravati was renovated and enlarged during his time.

There were probably four or five more Satavahana rulers after Puloma but their time did not prove glorious. Their power was reduced by the growing power of the Sakas with whom they had now matrimonial relations. The last important ruler of the Satavahana dynasty was Yajnasri Satakarni (AD 174-203). He certainly ruled over Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and north Konkan. His weak successors, however, lost what he had achieved. The internal conflicts and the attacks of the foreigners contributed towards the disintegration of the Satavahana kingdom. By the middle of the third century AD, the Satavahana kingdom was divided into five small kingdoms though the function of each kingdom claimed to be the descendent of the great Satavahana dynasty. Afterwards, the Vakatakas rose into prominence in South India and the Satavahans did not play any part in the politics of the South.

The Importance or the contribution of the Satavahanas

The credit of establishing the first empire in South India goes to the Satavahanas. Except the far South, the territorial South of the rivers Krishna and Tungabhadra where the Pandyas, the Cholas and the Cheras had their kingdoms, the entire South India and a part of North India were conquered by the Satavahanas at the time of the zenith of their power. No such empire ever existed in South India prior to the Satavahanas. They defended the South for quite a long period from the invasions of the foreigners, particularly the Sakas, which was a creditable achievement.

The Satavahanas provided a sound administration to their empire. The head of the state was the king and all powers were concentrated in him. But the Satavahana were not cruel despots and did not rule according to their personal desires. They ruled according to the laws of *Dharmasastras*. The rulers did not either support the divine rights of kings or assumed high titles. They were satisfied with the titles of *Raana, Rajaraja* or lord of the Vindhya though some of them were good conquerors and even performed *Rajasuya* and *Asvamedh yajnas*. The primary duties of the king were that of the extension of the kingdom, protection of its territories and commanding the army in the battle. The king was helped in the administration by the ministers called *Amatyas*. Only sometimes we find a reference to ministers designated as *Rajamatyas and Mahamatyas*. The kingdom was divided into *Janapadas* (provinces), which were further sub-divided into *Aharas* (districts) for the purpose of administration. *Rajyaputra, Maharathi, Mahabhoj* and several other officers looked after the administration of *Janapadas* and *Aharas*. The city administration was looked after by the municipal-boards while village-assemblies looked after the administration of the villages with the help of local officers called *Gramikas*. Every district had a cantonment where the soldiers were kept permanently to maintain order and peace in the district. The taxation system of the Satvahanas was liberal and it did not put any heavy financial burden upon the subjects. Land-revenue, monopoly of salt-trade and gifts from dependent rulers were the primary sources of income of the state while a large part of it was spent on the army, civil administration and personal expenditure of the king. Most of the scholars agree that Satavahana rulers had succeeded in providing a good administration to their subjects. They had drawn something from the Mauryan administration and themselves made certain successful innovations and all that proved so successful that the Gupta rulers of North India and the Pallava rulers of South India followed some of their administrative measures as model examples.

The pattern of social divisions was somewhat mixed. The basis of social divisions seemed to be economic as well as hereditary and caste based. Thus, society was divided into four castes as well as on the basis of class specific professions. In the first section were the central, provincial district officers like *Mahasenapati, Mahabhoj, Maharathi* etc., in the second were included *Amatyas, Mahapatars, Sresthin* and businessmen etc., the third constituted of doctors, men of learned professions, goldsmiths, and the fourth included carpenters, weavers and blacksmiths. The primary unit of the society was the family. The eldest male member of the family was the master of the family (*Grahapati*) and every member of the family followed his instructions. Women commanded good respect in the society, which is clear from the fact that Satavahana rulers included the names of their mothers along with their names. Women participated in the administration also. The widow of Gautamiputra, Satakarni looked after the administration of the state as the guardian of her sons. Not only inter-caste marriages were prevalent but marriages with foreigners were also permitted and they were accepted within the Hindu society. Satavahana rulers themselves had entered into matrimonial alliances with the Sekas. Even widows were respected in the society. There were no restrictions on foreign travel. Rather, due to the increased maritime activities, people, particularly those belonging to the business community, paid frequent visits to distant foreign countries. The attitude of the people in general was liberal and progressive and

the Satavahana society was free from many narrow attributes, which had found their place amongst the people in the society of the North.

The people enjoyed economic prosperity during the period of the Satavahanas. Agriculture, trade and handicrafts were the main professions of the people. However, the primary reason for the increased economic prosperity was foreign trade. A large part of the sea-coast, both in the east and the west, was within the territories of Satavahana rulers, which helped in increasing foreign trade with the countries of the West and South-East Asia. Bharoach, Kalyan, Sopal, etc., were the important ports within the Satavahana empire while Vajyanti, Nasik, Junnar, etc., were the centres of internal trade. The state had provided safety to trade and commerce and had built up roads connecting various parts of the empire to facilitate communication and transport. The main items of foreign trade were cotton cloth, silk, spices, medicinal herbs, skins of animals, ivory, pearls, etc. These brought large assets to the empire. The traders had their organized guilds, which served the purpose of modern banks also. These guilds gave money on varied rates of interest to different castes. From the Brahamanas, the interest charged was only 2 per cent, Kshatriyas paid 3 per cent interest, Vaisyas paid 4 per cent and the Sudras paid 5 per cent interest. The workers, too, had their separate guilds to look after their interests.

There were coins of gold, silver and copper for the purpose of exchange. The gold coin was called *Suvarna* while the silver and copper coins were called *Karsapana.*

The most popular religions at that time were Hinduism and Buddhism. The different religious sects co-existed with each other and their mutual relations were based upon tolerance. Both Hinduism and Buddhism drew large converts from amongst foreigners and this factor proves the liberal religious spirit of the age. The Satavahana rulers were also tolerant towards all faiths. All of them followed Hinduism, yet protected all the other sects and gave them liberal grants of money and land. The cave dwelling of Nasik was built by Balsri mother of Gautamiputra Satkarni for the purpose of Bhadrayan. Buddhist Sangha and the cave-dwelling of Karle were built up by Vasisthaputra for the purpose of Mahasanghika Buddhist Sangha.

Literature and fine arts also developed during the period of the Satavahanas. The kings mostly gave encouragement to Prakrit language. Amongst the literary text of this period, the grammar of Prakrit language prepared by Saraverma, *Gathasaptasati* of king Hala and *Brihatkatha* of Gunathya are the most prominent. Among fine arts, particularly architecture, the cave-dwellings and *Chaityas* (Prayer-halls) of Karle, Nasik and Kanaheri have been regarded as fine specimens of art of this age. A few *Stupas* and images of males and females of this period have also been found.

Thus, the Satavahana rulers made a significant contribution towards the history and culture of India. The Mauryas had built the first great empire in North India. The credit of building up the first empire in the south went to the Satavahanas. The Satavahanas also fought against the foreign invaders and, particularly, were successful in checking the penetration of the Sakas in the South. Besides, the foreigners were absorbed into the Indian society, a clean administration was provided to the subjects. A liberal social order, which gave an honourable place to women was supported. Foreign trade and maritime activity was encouraged, Prakrit language was revived, religious toleration was practised and fine arts was encouraged under the active patronage of the rulers. All this was a fair contribution of the rule of the Satavahana dynasty towards the history and culture of India.

7.6 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- Following Alexander the Great, the Greek Seleukidan dynasty of Persia continued their hold on the trans-Indus region. In 303 BC, Chandragupta Maurya overpowered Seleukos Nikator and brought the trans-Indus region under his control.
- The Mauryas were succeeded by the Sungas who ruled for 112 years from about 185 – 73 BC. Pushyamitra, the Mauryan Commander-in-Chief, killed the last Mauryan king, Brihadratha and ruled the kingdom for thirty-six years.
- The Chinese historians tell us that the Kushanas were a section of the Yueh-chi race. The Yueh-chi was nomadic hordes who inhabited the borders of modern China. In the middle of the second century BC, they came into conflict with a neighbouring barbarian tribe known as Hsiung-nu.
- The word *Satavahana* represents a *kula* or family while Andhara is the name of *ajati* or tribe. The Satvahana family of Andhra Yatf established an independent kingdom in the west and east of South India in the first century AD.

7.7 KEY TERMS

- **Portrait:** A painting, photograph, sculpture, or other artistic representation of a person, in which the face and its expression is predominant.
- **Schist:** A type or quality of stone formed through layers.
- **Ivory:** Images or figures made from the bones, primarily of elephant.

7.8 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. (a) Seleukidan (b) Oxus
2. (a) False (b) True
3. (a) Sungas (b) Ranigumpha
4. (a) True (b) True
5. (a) Gandhara (b) Mathura
6. (a)True (b)True
7. (a) Satavahana (b) Simuka
8. (a) False (b) True

7.9 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a note on how the Indo-Greeks came to exist.
2. Write short notes on (a) Shungas (b) Kharavela.
3. Explain the arrival of Satvahanas.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Identify and discuss the unique features of Buddha idols in the Mathura school of art.
2. Explain the characteristics of brahmanical and Jaina images created by Mathura artists.
3. Explain the salient features of Gandhara School of art.

7.10 FURTHER READING

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UNIT 8 THE GUPTA PERIOD

Structure

8.0 Introduction
8.1 Unit Objectives
8.2 Early Guptas
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8.5 Chandragupta II
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8.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit deals with the Gupta Dynasty and evaluates the Golden Age in ancient Indian history. The Gupta Dynasty, famous as 'Golden Age' of ancient India, has a special importance in the history of India. The Gupta rulers re-established the political unity that existed during the Mauryan period, and ruled over a large principality of northern India. The Gupta Age is marked as an era of unprecedented progress in all aspects of polity, religion, art and literature. Indian history is proud of the Gupta emperors who nurtured Indian culture and protected Indian nationalism. In this unit, you will learn about the rise of the Gupta empire, the reign of Chandragupta I, Samudragupta, Chandragupta II Vikramaditya, Skandagupta and the downfall of the Gupta empire and also the development of art and architecture in the Gupta period.

8.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Recall the early history of the Gupta Empire
- Discuss the achievements of Chandragupta I
- Describe the reign of Samudragupta
- Evaluate the reign of Chandragupta II Vikramaditya
- Recall the reign of Skandagupta
- Assess the causes of disintegration of the Gupta Empire

- Discuss the development of art, architecture and sculpture during Gupta period
- Describe the development of paintings and music during the Gupta period

8.2 EARLY GUPTAS

The Guptas came to the centre of the political stage, as it were, by the will of God. They were not among the powers that challenged the Kushanas; they did not come up in consequence of their decline. Among their contemporaries, they were undoubtedly the only power determined to restore to the country its lost political unity. They brought the region between 'the Godavari and the Sutlej' under their direct authority and also indirectly ruled over most of other parts of the country. They commanded respect for their powerful war machine, military process and political acumen. They massacred the Huns. No one else could do it anywhere in the contemporary world. Their government was based on the accepted principle of centralization and progressive decentralization. The central government was powerful, yet in 'the district headquarters, the officials of the Central Government were assisted and controlled by popular councils, whose sanction was necessary even if the state wanted to sell its own wasteland. Villages had their own popular councils which administered almost all the branches of administration, including collection of taxes and settlement of village disputes.' The local opinion was given due cognizance, laws were effective and humane. Public welfare was attended to; poor and sick were provided relief. Roads were well protected. 'Gupta peace' brought in its wake all-round prosperity. Agriculture improved, industry progressed, commerce expanded, shipbuilding and foreign trade gained new dimensions. Gold and silver flowed into the country from abroad. Coins of precious metals were in circulation; people lived in comfort. As evidenced by contemporary literature and paintings, they used fine clothes and ornaments.

The improved means of communication and transport, movement of men and ideas and the enrichment of urban life stimulated de-linking of varna and vocation, encouraged caste mobility, brought about the transformation of tribes into castes and the assimilation of the foreign racial stocks into the social whole. The position of women remained distinct. The emphasis on the concept of 'ideal wife' inculcated deeper and there was a wider sense of family correspondence and social intercourse.

The orthodox and heterodox religions existed side by side everywhere, at all levels and even in the individual families. Freedom of belief and expression was valued and cherished. Thinkers and writers, debaters and preachers by their erudite postulation of dogmas and theories presented a feast of intellectuality and rationality to the interested. Conflict of views was assumed. Mutuality and harmony among the believers in the rival dogmas prevailed as a measure unknown anywhere in human civilization. It was accepted as part of the social order. The harmony of beliefs stimulated bhakti. It developed as the concomitant of people's religious belief. Religion was understood to be for the good of all. Preachers carried this message to the people beyond the heights of mountains and the expanses of the oceanic waters.

Education received full attention. The endowment of Agrahara villages made the local institutions financially independent. Scholars discussed the contributions of other people in learning. They looked out for new ideas, appreciated others' points of view and were completely free from 'self-complacency and narrowness of the outlook'. The intellectual urge of the age strengthened the rational attitude in matters that were ecclesiastical and temporal.

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Sanskrit language was the vehicle of this great intellectual efflorescence. Immense literature was produced on numerous disciplines. This language was adopted as the medium of expression in quarters where Prakrit had all along held the sway. It became the link language between India beyond the frontiers and the people here.

Art touched a high standard; *sundaram* and *roopam* characterized it. It was worshipped in order to deepen the consciousness of the soul and awaken it to a new sense of spiritual joy and nobility. Kalidasa, the supreme genius and poet of this age, has expressed this attitude of life devoted to beauty in a sentence addressed to *Parvati*, the goddess of personal charm, by her consort *Shiva*: 'O fair damsel, the popular saying that beauty does not lead to sin is full of unexceptional truth.' The path of virtue is the path of beauty—this appeared to be the guiding impulse of life in the Gupta age. 'To create lovely forms and harness them to the needs of higher life—this was the golden harmony that made Gupta art a thing of such perpetual and inexhaustible attraction.'

All over the country, there developed a peculiar uniformity of social pattern, domestic order and of individual role in a particular situation; of religious practices and social ethics; ritual and ceremony and of manners and behaviour. People acquired a spirit of oneness and a sense of belonging—the hallmark of heritage. They impressed this on everything they touched and carried it along wherever they went.

The origin and the early history of the Guptas are not clear. The locality they ruled remains unspecified. The first two kings of the dynasty, Sri Gupta and his son Sri Ghatotkacha are called *Maharaja*. It has made several historians say that they might have been feudatories; but, their paramount ruler is not mentioned. It is, therefore, held that they may have been petty rulers, and like some of that class assumed the title *Maharaja*. The son of Maharaja Sri Ghatotkacha, however, assumed a higher title of *Maharajadhiraja,* implying obviously that he was a more powerful ruler than his predecessors. He may have given extension to his patrimony, gained greater authority and thus assumed a higher title.

I Tsing, who travelled to this country during AD 671–695, referred to a king Sri Gupta who happened to have raised a temple for Chinese pilgrims in Magadha. Some scholars identified him with the founder of the dynasty of the same name, traced the temple in Magadha and consequently, placed his kingdom in Magadha. There is, however, no justification for the view that the temple which this king built for the Chinese was situated in Magadha. 'The bearing and the distance given by the Chinese Pilgrim place it in the western borders of northern or central Bengal and this is corroborated by some other details mentioned by him. We may, therefore, hold that Sri Gupta's kingdom comprised a portion of Bengal.'

Sources of information

The sources of information for the Gupta period comprise both literary and archaeological. These are found all over the country from Bengal to Kathiawar. They are comparatively richer and fuller in content and character and have proved very helpful in reconstructing the main outline of the history and chronology with greater degree of certainty.

Literary sources: The Puranas, especially the *Vayu, Brahmanda, Matsya, Vishnu* and the *Bhagvat Purana* are a rich source of information. They indicate the extent of the domination of Chandragupta I; make a distinction between the territory that the Guptas had under their direct control and over which they exercised paramount control and provide information on the princes subordinate to them and on their contemporaries. The Puranas, infact, received their touch during this period. The *Smrities*

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of Vyas, Pitamaha, Pulastya and of Harita though assigned to this period are available only in the quotations found in the Dharmasastras. Among the Dharmasastras, those of Katyayana, Narad and of Brihaspati belong to this period. They provide rich information on the social and religious conditions of the people.

Some dramatic works with political bearing on the Gupta period are obviously helpful. Thus, the *Kaumudi Mahotsava* depicts the political condition of Magadha during the beginning of this period. It is of considerable importance for the origin and the rise of the Gupta power. The *Devichandraguptam* by Vishakhadatta throws light on the manner in which Chandragupta II came to the throne and married Dhruvadevi. It is available, however, only in quotations. Another work of the same author, the *Mudrarakshas,* though an important source of information on the rise of Chandragupta to power, mentions people and tribes such as the Yavanas, Sakas, Kiratas, Cambojas, Bhalikas, Parasikas, Khasas, Gandharas, Cinas, Kaulutas, Maghas and others who existed during the reign of Chandra Gupta II. The *Kamandaka Nitisara,* said to have been the work of Sikhara, the chancellor of Chandragupta II, upholds the murder of the Saka king through disguise.

The accounts left by the Chinese travellers are a rich source of information. Fa-Hien travelled across this country in the reign of Chandragupta II and his record and *Fo-Kuo-ki or Record of Buddhist Kingdom* throws considerable light on the condition of the country during the period.

Archaeological sources: Numerous archaeological source materials on the Gupta period are available. The numerous types of coins that the Guptas issued throw great light on their rise and fall and on the economic condition of the people. The coins both of the early and of the later Guptas have been listed in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum.* In the book of Catalogue of the Coins of the Gupta Dynasty, you can see a systematic study of the coins.

The epigraphic evidence available from the Allahabad Pillar Inscription and the Eran Stone Inscription throws light on the military strength and the territorial expansion of Samundragupta. The Mehrauli Iron Pillar Inscription refers to one king Chandra, who defeated a confederacy of enemies, conquered the Vanga countries and defeated Vahlikas across the seven mouths of river Sindhu. He thus achieved sole supremacy in the world.

The Mathura Stone Inscription, the Sanchi Stone inscription, the Gadhwa Stone Inscription and the Udayagiri Cave Inscription of Chandragupta II give ample information on several aspects of his polity. Some details about Kumara Gupta I are available from the Gadhwa Stone Inscription, the Bilsad stone Pillar Inscription and the Mankuwar Stone image Inscription. The Junagadh Rock Inscription, the Kahaum Stone Pillar Inscription, the Indore Copper Plate Inscription, the Bihar Stone Pillar Inscription in two parts and the Bhitari Stone Pillar Inscription refer to Skandagupta. The Bhitari Pillar Inscription of Skandagupta records his fight with Pushyamitra and probably also with the Huns during the reign of his father Kumara Gupta I.

A large number of seals recovered at Vaishali (in the Muzaffarpur district) give an idea of the provincial and local administration of the period and provide a nomenclature of the officers.

Of the Gupta architecture and art, whatever has come down to us remains a rich source of information. The temples at Udayagiri, Pathari, Deogarh and Aihole reveal much about the evolution of temple architecture and point to the popular gods and goddesses. The sculptural remains are indicative of both their artistic richness and aesthetic appeals and hence of cultural maturity.

Check Your Progress

1. Fill in the blanks.
   (a) The Guptas massacred the _____.
   (b) The numerous types of _____ that the Guptas issued throw great light on their rise and fall and on the economic condition of the people.
2. State whether True or False.
   (a) The Puranas, especially the *Vayu, Brahmanda, Matsya, Vishnu* and the *Bhagvat Purana* are a rich source of information.
   (b) The accounts left by I-Tsing are a rich source of information.

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8.3 CHANDRAGUPTA I

After Ghatotkach, his son Chandragupta I (AD 319–324) became king of this dynasty. He was the first independent ruler of this dynasty as the previous Gupta rulers were feudatories/vassals. He adopted the tile of 'Maharajadhiraja'. He was an imperialist and an important ruler than his predecessors. Chandra of Maharauli is also equated with Chandragupta I, but unfortunately, not much information is available about him.

The main event of the age of Chandragupta was to enter into marital alliance with the Lichchhavis, who were very powerful during that time. He strengthened his position by establishing matrimonial relationship with the Lichchhavis and expanded his empire from Awadha and Magadha to Prayaga in the coastal areas of the Ganges. Chandragupta married Lichchhavi princess Kumar Devi. This marriage had political importance. There are several evidences of this marriage. This marriage not only increased immensely the power and grandeur of the Guptas but it also made Kumar Devi the princess of the Lichchhavi kingdom which she inherited from her father. As a result, the entire Lichchhavi kingdom came under the control of Chandragupta I.

Chandragupta not only received Vaishali on account of his marriage but also expanded his kingdom. Mehrauli pillar informs that he, having crossed Sindh, fought a severe battle with Bactria and conquered it. On one side its boundary touched Bengal while on the other side it touched Central India and Punjab. This victory over the Northwest and Balkh took Chandragupta from Indus to Saurashtra.

Chandragupta started a new era, known as Gupta Samvata. Although, controversial, it is believed that Chandragupta began his accession to the throne by founding a samvata, the first year of which was AD 319–320.

8.4 SAMUDRAGUPTA

After Chandragupta, his son Samudragupta (AD 325–375) became king of the Gupta dynasty. He established a vast kingdom by conquering different battles and strengthened the Gupta dynasty for centuries. On account of his immense talent, Chandragupta chose his successor in his own life. Samudragupta was an able emperor, skilled commander and a man of great personality. He was a great conqueror; hence, he is compared with Napolean. It is popularly said that Ashoka is famous for his peace and non-violence while Samudragupta is famous because of his victories.

Conquests of Samudragupta

Samudragupta, having established political unity, united entire India under one umbrella. He not only conquered North India but also hoisted his flag of victory over South India including some principalities of abroad. His victories are described as follows:

First expedition of Aryavarta: The land between the Himalayas and Vindhyas was called Aryavarta. It is known that Samudragupta launched victorious expeditions twice over Aryavarta. In his first expedition, he vanquished the following kings:

- **Acyuta:** The first king Samudragupta defeated in Aryavarta was Acyuta. He was the king of Ahichchhatra. His kingdom was around modern Ram Nagar in Barelli.
- **Nagasena:** It is known from the coins of Naga dynasty of Narwar, situated in Gwalior that he was the king of Naga dynasty and his capital was Padmavati. In

Check Your Progress

3. Fill in the blanks.
   (a) After Ghatotkach, his son _____ became king of this dynasty.
   (b) Chandragupta I strengthened his position by establishing matrimonial relationship with the _____.
4. State whether True or False.
   (a) Chandragupta extended his Empire from Indus to Saurashtra.
   (b) Chandragupta started a new era, known as Das samvata.

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Prayaga Prashasti, the letters before 'ga' has been destroyed but the letter 'ga' is readable. Perhaps he might have been the ruler Ganapatinaga.

- **Kotakulaja:** Samudragupta defeated this Kota king as well.

But, several scholars have expressed their views regarding the first Aryavarta expedition. Some scholars consider that the first Aryavarta battle was not his expedition of victory but a defensive battle.

Second expedition of Aryavarta: In his second expedition, he defeated many kings. Some of them are described as follows:

(1) **Rudradeva:** King Rudradeva was king Rudrasena I of Kaushambi.

(2) **Matila:** A coin has been found in Bulandashahara, which contains the symbol of Matil and Naga. Probably he was a king of the Naga dynasty.

(3) **Nagadatta:** He was a king of Mathura and belonged to the Naga dynasty.

(4) **Chandraverma:** There is a dispute regarding this entry. Some consider him the king of Pusakarana while others consider him the king of Eastern Punjab.

(5) **Ganapatinaga:** He was a ruler of Vidisha and belonged to the Naga dynasty.

(6) **Balaverma:** He was a predecessor of king Bhaskarverma of Kamrupa.

(7) **Nandi:** It is mentioned in the Puranas that Shishunanda Shivanandi was the King of Central India and belonged to the Naga dynasty.

It is mentioned that Samudragupta defeated all the dynasties of North India. He annexed all these kingdoms to his empire.

He made all the kings of *vana* (forest) his slaves. When he proceeded to conquer South India after his conquest of North India, he subjugated all Atavika kings lying on his way to southern conquest. It is assumed that Atavika state was spread from Gazipur to Jabalpur.

South expedition

Samudragupta conquered south after his first expedition of Aryavarta. He defeated twelve kings of the south and thereafter he returned their kingdoms and made them his loyalists. Thus, on one hand, these kings were independent while on the other, they accepted the suzerainty of Samudragupta. Samudragupta's conquest had three features: to imprison enemies, to free them and to return the kingdoms of the defeated king after the acceptance of conqueror's suzerainty. These kings were as follows:

- **Mahendra of Kaushal:** Mahendra was the king of Kaushal. Modern districts of Raipur, Sambhalpur and Vilaspur were included in it.
- **Vyaghraraja of Mahakantara:** Vyaghraraja was the king of Mahakantara, which was the forest area of Orissa.
- **Mantaraja of Koral:** It was the central part of Orissa and Tamil Nadu and the king of this area was Mantaraja.
- **Mahendragiri of Pishtapur:** Pishtapur in Godavari district is modern Pithapurama.
- **Swamidatta of Kottura:** Kottura is equated with Coimbatore.
- **Daman of Erandapalla:** Erandapalla is considered as Erandola of Khanadesh. Its relationship is also established with Erandapalla near Chinkokole on the coast of Orissa.

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- **Vishnugopa of Kanchi:** It was the capital of Pallava. Modern Kanjeevaram near Madras is Kanchi.
- **Nilaraja of Avamukta:** It was a small kingdom in the neighbourhood of Kanchi and Vengi states. Its king Nilaraja was a member of the Pallava confederacy.
- **Hastivarman of Vengi:** It was in existence near Peduvengi in Ellore. Its king belonged to Shalankayana dynasty.
- **Ugrasena of Palakka:** It was near Palakollu on the coast of Godavari.
- **Dhananjaya of Kusthalapur:** Kuhalur, situated in Arakar district, was Kusthalapur.
- **Kubera of Devarashtra:** It was Yellamanchili in Andhra Pradesh. Some historians believe that southern rulers formed a confederation against Samudragupta and halted Samudragupta near a famous lake, known as Kolekha. Samudragupta conquered this confederation.

Subjugation of frontier states: It is clear that the frontier states, having seen the conquest-expedition of Samudragupta, accepted his suzerainty. These states were: Samatata, Davaka, Kamrupa, Nepal and Karttripur.

There were nine republics on the western frontier which accepted the suzerainty of Samudragupta. These were Malava, Arjunayana, Yodheya, Madraka, Abhira, Prarjuna, Sanakanika, Kaka and Kharaparika.

Policy towards the frontier states: Samudragupta adopted three kinds of policy against these states, such as *Sarvakara*, i.e., these states accepted to pay all types of tributes, *Ajnakarana*, i.e., these states carried out the order of Samudragupta, and *Pranamakarana*, i.e., they appeared individually and greeted the king.

Conquest of foreign states

Some of the foreign states, such as Daivaputra, Shahi, Shanushahi, Shaka, Murunda, Saimhal, etc., were also conquered by Samudragupta. They accepted defeat and offered their daughters to him.

Extent of Samudragupta's kingdom

Samudragupta's empire extended from the Himalayas in the north to Vindhyas in the south and from Bay of Bengal in the east to Eastern Malawa in the west. He had indirect influence over Gujarat, Sindh, Western Rajaputana, West Punjab and the frontier states of Kashmir, and he had friendly relations with Saimhala and the other islands. Samudragupta adopted the policy of expansion of his empire. The main aim of his conquest was to hoist his flag of victory.

Horse-sacrifice

Samudragupta performed horse-sacrifice in the beginning of his reign. His coins also carry depiction of horse sacrifice.

Estimate of Samudragupta's reign

Samudragupta's name is lettered in golden ink in Indian history for his talent and conquests. He was an extraordinary warrior, victor of thousands of battles and emerged invincible during his time. He was a valiant and brave king; able politician and warrior; famous musician; and well-versed and a good-hearted poet. Although he inherited a very small kingdom from his father, he expanded the boundaries of his kingdom beyond India by his talent and valour. He is regarded as the first Indian king who defeated southern and

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foreign rulers by his prowess. He was considered a unique emperor. The strength of his arms was his only companion in the different battles he ably fought. He was famous for his valour and his body was adorned with several wounds and was immensely beautiful.



Fig. 8.1 Samudragupta's Gold Coins

8.5 CHANDRAGUPTA II

Ramagupta ascended to the throne after the death of Samudragupta but he could not hold on to his empire. Therefore, Chandragupta II (AD 380–412) ascended to the Gupta throne in AD 380. Like his father he proved to be a brave, valiant, invincible and able emperor. He was adorned in his coins with the titles of Devashri Vikramanka, Vikramaditya, Simha, Vikrama, Ajivikram, Simha-chandra Apratiratha, etc. Although there is no unanimity regarding the date of accession of Chandragupta II, his reign is considered from AD 380 to 412.

Matrimonial alliances

Chandragupta II adopted both the policy of matrimonial relationship as well as war for strengthening his empire. His contemporary Naga dynasty was very strong and had influence over several regions of North India. Establishment of matrimonial relationship with the Nagas helped him much in strengthening his sovereignty over the newly established empire. Matrimonial alliances with Vakatakas helped him a lot. Therefore, Chandragupta II gave his daughter Prabhavatigupta in marriage to Vakataka king Rudrasen II. Vakataka King had control over such geographical region where from he could have assisted or opposed the Northern aggressor against the Shaka vassals of Saurashtra. This matrimonial alliance proved much important for him. It is evident from the Talgund inscription that the princess of Kuntal, King Kakustha Verma was married in the Gupta dynasty.

Conquests of Chandragupta II

Like his father, Chandragupta II expanded his empire by conquering many states. The most important victory of Chandragupta II was over the Shaka. The kingdom of the Shakas was spread in Gujarat, Malwa and Saurastra. Having defeated the great Shaka vassal Rudrasimha III, Chandragupta II took the title of Shakari. Chandragupta II's war minister has written in the Udayagiri cave inscription that he came to Eastern Malwa along with his master (Chandragupta II) who aspired to conquer the whole world. With this victory, he not only ousted the foreigners from India but also ensured its monopoly over western trade by extending his empire upto the western coastal ports.

Check Your Progress

5. Fill in the blanks.
   (a) Samudragupta conquered ____ after his first expedition of Aryavarta.
   (b) Samudragupta adopted _____ kinds of policy against the frontier states.
6. State whether True or False.
   (a) Samudragupta was a great poet.
   (b) Samudragupta's coins also carry depiction of horse sacrifice.

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There were several small republics such as Madra, Kharapatika, etc. He conquered them and ended their existence by annexing them into his empire. It is known from the Mehrauli iron pillar that Chandragupta II conquered Vahlikas by crossing over five mouths of Indus: Bengal and other eastern states formed a confederation due to the inability of Ramagupta. Chandragupta II conquered this confederation.

Horse-sacrifice

Several evidences maintain that Chandragupta II performed horse-sacrifice. A stone-horse has been discovered from Varanasi on which the word Chandraguh (Chandragupta) is inscribed. Besides, Punadanapatra referred to the donation of several cows and thousands of coins (*aneka gau hiranya koti sahasra padah*) by Chandragupta II from which it seems that Chandragupta might have organized horse-sacrifice after his conquests.



Fig. 8.2 Chandragupta II on Horseback as Depicted on a Coin

Extent of Chandragupta II's empire

The empire of Chandragupta Vikramaditya was larger than that of Samudragupta. His empire expanded from the Himalaya in the north to river Narmada in the south, and from Bengal in the east to Arabian Sea in the west. Many famous trading cities and ports were included in his vast empire. Due to the expansion of his empire, he made Ujjain his second capital.

Estimate of Chandragupta II

Chandragupta II was one of the greatest rulers of India. Under him, the governments, expansion of empire, art, economic or social aspects of life were at its zenith. 'Chandragupta tested the sharpness of his sword against the wicked and unrighteous Shakas and defeating them, he expanded his empire immensely and by conquering the unconquered states, he increased the extent of his empire more than the extent of his father's empire. He destroyed the Shakas and restored the glory of Hindu civilization and culture. The reign of Chandragupta II is also considered as the golden age of the

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Gupta period. Chandragupta II took his empire to a new era of maturity of political greatness and cultural revival. The governance of India had never been better than the rule of Chandragupta II Vikramaditya.

8.6 SKANDAGUPTA

Skandagupta (AD 455–467) ascended to the throne after the death of Kumaragupta. His reign was full of difficulties and upheavals. He had inherited such a vast empire that it was difficult to keep it intact. He was a great conqueror, the liberator of the nation, the restorer of the pride of imperial Guptas and above all the founder (head) of benevolent administration. It was said if Samudragupta was *Sarvarajochccheta* and Chandragupta was *Shakati*, Skandagupta was Huna-conqueror. He was in no way less than any other Gupta kings. Skandagupta had proved his talent during the lifetime of his father when he defeated Pushyamitras, but he had to face more fierce battles during his reign.

Victory over Hunas

After his victory over Pushyamitras, he fought a fierce battle against the Hunas. The Hunas were barbarians. They had, over the years, become terrors for kingdoms in Asia and Europe. The Bhitari inscription maintains that 'when the Hunas faced Skandagupta in battle the earth began to tremble by his valour of the strength of arms and there raised a great whirlpool.' Finally, the Guptas defeated the Hunas. It is difficult to say at which place and where the Hunas were defeated, but this victory made him famous all over. Skandagupta deserved the highest praise as he was the first brave warrior of Europe and Asia who defeated the Hunas. Skandagupta made a great service to the nation by stopping the destruction of the nation by the Hunas for the next fifty years.

The Junagarh inscription referred to defeat of the serpent kings by Skandagupta. Vakatakas had captured Malwa during Skandagupta's reign by taking advantage of the numerous wars that Skandagupta was fighting simultaneously. Therefore, Skandhagupta had to remain satisfied by appointing Pranadatta in the region. Govindgupta was the son of Chandragupta II and he was the governor of Vaishali. Historians believe that he revolted after the death of Kumaragupta in western Malwa, but Skandhagupta crushed his rebellion successfully.

Extent of Skandagupta's empire

His empire was spread from the Himalayas to Narmada and from Saurashtra to Bengal. In one of the inscriptions it is mentioned that heads of hundreds of kings bowed to his feet. He was the emperor of hundreds of kings. He was equivalent to Indra and was the founder of peace in his empire. It is mentioned in the Junagarh inscription that he established his suzerainty over the earth surrounded by four seas. Praising him, it is said that his brave actions justified the title Vikramaditya which he assumed like his grandfather.

Estimate of Skandagupta's reign

Skandagupata was the last powerful and effective emperor. He always worked for the integrity of his empire. He was a brilliant example of courage. Valour ran in his blood. His image of chivalry frightened even his strongest enemies.

Check Your Progress

7. Fill in the blanks.
   (a) Bengal and other eastern states formed a confederation due to the inability of _____.
   (b) Under Chandragupta II, all the aspects of socio-political life of the common man reached its _____.
8. State whether True or False.
   (a) The empire of Chandragupta Vikramaditya was smaller than that of Samudragupta.
   (b) The Mehrauli iron pillar maintains that Chandragupta conquered Vahlikas by crossing over five mouths of Indus.

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ACTIVITY

On a map of India, mark the conquests of the major Gupta kings. Read about the social conditions of the people under these kings in detail and make a presentation on this topic.

8.7 DISINTEGRATION OF THE GUPTA EMPIRE

The Gupta dynasty had the distinction of providing to the country a galaxy of great kings. Comparatively, they stayed longer at the top. They trained their successors well in the art and science of maintaining a huge empire, peace and fighting wars; and kept the inevitable at bay. They avoided the pitfalls such as neglect of training the successors, single-track approach in polity, dominance of ideology to the neglect of other vital interests, concentration of power at the top, state monopoly in trade, top heavy and expensive bureaucracy and neglect of the war machine. On the political front, however, there is nothing to distinguish the Gupta monarchs from those who preceded and succeeded them. They did not discard the ancient belief that the local power in the interest of total unity should be eradicated and institutions should be developed to train leadership and to encourage people to participate in decision-making at higher levels. It appears that people had no direct role in administration and politics. They seem to have been mute witnesses to the succession or elimination of kings and to matters of peace and war. Over time, the dynasty suffered loss of vitality, vigour and authority. In addition, as the succession conflicts, internal challenge and external pressure developed, there followed the squeezing of the empire territorially to nothingness and with it, its grandeur too obscured. The causes of disintegration of the Gupta Empire are as follows:

1. **Internal dissensions:** The post-Skandagupta period was characterized by internal dissensions within the reigning family. Though the records are silent on the course of events, it is in view of the available information assumed that the dissensions created factions, generated divided loyalties, weakened the political system, rendered the central authority weak and lowered the prestige of the emperor. The death of Samundragupta was tantamount to the removing of the cornerstone of the edifice.
2. **Confused succession:** In the present state of knowledge, scholars have not been able to fix among the later Guptas the order of succession and duration of the reigns of several kings whose names have been revealed by the coins and inscription. Some appear to have ascended the throne only to be removed later. The stress and strain under which the political system and administration must have operated is imaginable. It must have caused severe weakness the system.
3. **Short reigns and quick successions:** The later Guptas present a spectacle of short reigns and quick successions. The reigning heads must have been unable to consolidate their position and make their authority felt. Especially, in view of the situation that a king was the pivot around whom everything moved, and that his personality influenced the policy and administration, short reigns and quick success of kings must have wrecked the system in several directions.
4. **Centrifugal tendencies:** Factionalism was thus dominant and its impact was percolative. Once the central authority developed infirmities, local chiefs asserted

Check Your Progress

9. Fill in the blanks.
   (a) The _____ inscription referred to the defeat of the serpent kings by Skandagupta.
   (b) Skandagupta always worked for the _____ of his empire.
10. State whether True or False.
   (a) Skandagupta ascended to the throne on AD 455.
   (b) Skandagupta defeated Pushyamitras during his father's reign.

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their strength. Thus, Budhagupta, though acknowledged as the paramount authority, had to make an awkward compromise to maintain the apparent in installing a successor of Bhatarka to the royal status in Malwa. It could never have been to his pleasure. The other provincial heads too made their offices hereditary. Some among them assumed royal titles. The emperor in his high position must have felt his empire crumbling and imagined the inviolable. The centrifugal forces thus demolished the empire steadily.

5. **Inability of the reigning heads:** None among the later Guptas had the ability to check the rot that the system had developed from within. The crowned heads failed to stand up to the challenge and arrest the forces of decline. They were mute witnesses to the tragic spectacle.
6. **Lack of political comprehension and mental vigour:** The later Gupta kings lacked these qualities substantially. Budhagupta, Baladitya and others had hardly any leadership qualities. They were unable to play their rightful role. The case of Baladaliya is highly illustrative in this connection. On coming to know that an attack by Mihirakula, the Hun was imminent, he summoned his ministers and as narrated by Hiuen Tsang, told them: 'I hear that these thieves are coming and I cannot fight with them (their troops;) by the permission of my ministers I will conceal my poor person among the bushes of the morass.' The story may or may not be correct, but it is obvious that the later Guptas did not have the qualities to sustain their authority and integrity of the empire. Their political thinking and military ability was not in agreement with the requirement of their high office.
7. **Depredations caused by Toramana and Mihirakula:** The Guptas, unlike the Mauryas neglected the defense of the north-western region. They did not maintain effective control over the mountain passes and the plains of Punjab. Thus, the Huns came down to the plains unhindered. They caused devastation in the region and had to be fought back on the plains. Later, the region fell to the depredations of Toramana and Mihirakula for the same reason. The wars they engendered and the devastation they caused weakened the central authority and the political system. The depredations caused by Toramana and his son Mihirakula exhausted the nerve of the empire even though both of them were ultimately defeated. Yet it humiliated royalty and frustrated the common man. It must have torn apart the prestige of the great empire in a tragic way. The western part of the empire was most subjected to the barbaric vandalism.
8. **Economic disruption:** The depredations caused by Toramana and Mihirakula must have disrupted the economic activity, destroyed security and arrested social mobility. The scarcity of gold coins brought in circulation by Budhagupta and his later debasement of the gold coins indicates that the economic prosperity had suffered a severe dent. The western part of the country had been rendered unsafe.
9. **Challenge and rebellions:** The disruption and insecurity was rendered worse by the challenge the rebels threw to the emperor. Harisena (AD 475–510), the Vakataka ruler was the first to unfurl his standard of rebellion. He occupied Malwa and Gujarat. Yasodharman, a local chief of Malwa, established independent authority and carried raids all around and wrecked the empire. Others followed the course. It is difficult to say which of the several causes were more significant than the rest that brought about the end of the empire. It is clear, however, that the story commenced with the internal dissensions. The crowned heads did not show the ability to meet the challenge. The adverse

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effect of the raids of Toramana and Mihirakula on the course of events cannot be denied. It is, however, obvious that the decline was not sudden. It followed its natural course.

8.8 ART, CULTURE AND LITERATURE DURING THE GUPTA PERIOD

The foundation of the Gupta Empire in the fourth century AD describes the beginning of another era. The Gupta monarchs had power up to the sixth century in North India. Art, science and literature thrived greatly during this time. The iconographic canons of Brahmanical, Jain and Buddhist divinities were perfected and standardized. It served as ideal models of artistic expression for later centuries, not only in India but also beyond its border. It was an age of all round perfection in domestic life, administration, literature, as seen in the works of Kalidasa, in art creations and in religion and philosophy, as exemplified in the widespread Bhagavata cult, which recognized itself with a rigorous cult of beauty.

The Gupta Period (AD fourth–seventh) is usually called as the golden age of art and architecture in India. During this period, Sarnath came up as a school similar in quality as the Buddhist art. Some of the most stunning images of Buddha are creations of this school. One of the finest sculptures from Sarnath portrays Buddha giving his first sermon. The images of the Buddhist pantheon comprise the following:

- Indra
- Yakshas
- Dwarapalas
- Winged horses
- Surya
- Yakshis
- Mithuna couples

8.8.1 Gupta Temples

This period saw a huge resurrection of Hinduism when it became the official religion of the Gupta Empire. As a result, this era was also marked by the appearance of countless images of popular Hindu Gods and Goddesses. Images of Lord Vishnu, Lord Shiva, Lord Krishna, Surya and Durga were created in this period. The Udaigiri caves in Madhya Pradesh had a huge image of Lord Vishnu. Other statues of this period found in various temples and museums are analytic of the various aspects of early Hindu art and sculpture. During the Gupta period, when basic elements of the Indian temple comprising a square sanctum and pillared porch emerged, a solid foundation of temple architecture was laid.

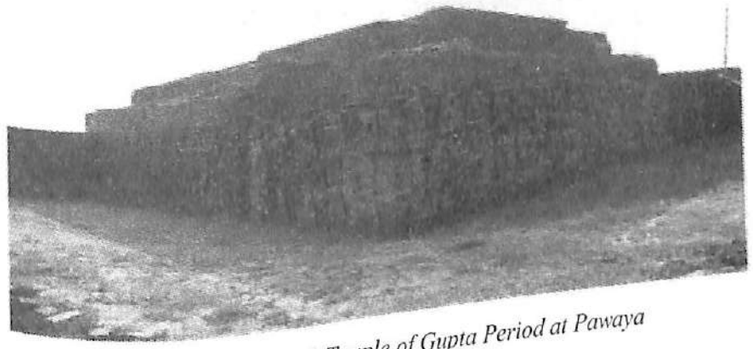

Fig. 8.3 First Brick Temple of Gupta Period at Pawaya

Check Your Progress

11. Fill in the blanks.
    (a) The later Guptas present a spectacle of _____ reigns and quick successions.
    (b) The centrifugal forces thus demolished the _____ empire steadily.
12. State whether True or False.
    (a) Centrifugal tendencies were a cause for the downfall of the Gupta Empire.
    (b) The depredations caused by Toramana and Mihisakula dispruted the economic activity and social nobility.

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The evolved Gupta temple also had a covered processional path for circumambulation that outlined a part of the worship-ritual. Former temples of the period had a flat slab-roof, often monumental, but the later temples in brick and stone developed a shikhara. The unhurried development of the Gupta style can be traced by growth of the plan and the decoration on the pillars and door-frame. The frames were decorated with goblins, couples, flying angels and door-keepers.

Sculptures of deities and their consorts, heavenly beings, couples, directional deities, composite animals and decorative motifs consisted of the majority of images which decorated the walls of the temples. The deities blessed in the chambers were carved firmly according to religious cannons and were fixed by carrying out a unique sanctification ritual. The brilliance of the Indian sculptor rested in his mental picture of the deities' ideal proportions, youthful bodies and kind appearances. Temple sculptures were not essentially religious. Many drew on worldly subject matters and ornamental designs. The scenes of everyday life consisted of military parades, royal court scenes, musicians, dancers, acrobats and passionate couples. Another group of non-religious figures were the apsaras or devanganas (celestial women) and vyalas (composite animals). The Parvati temple at Nachana, the temple of Bhitaragaon, the Vishnu temple at Tigawa, the Shiva temple at Bhumara and the Dasavatara temple at Deogarh are among the top models of the Gupta style of temple architecture.

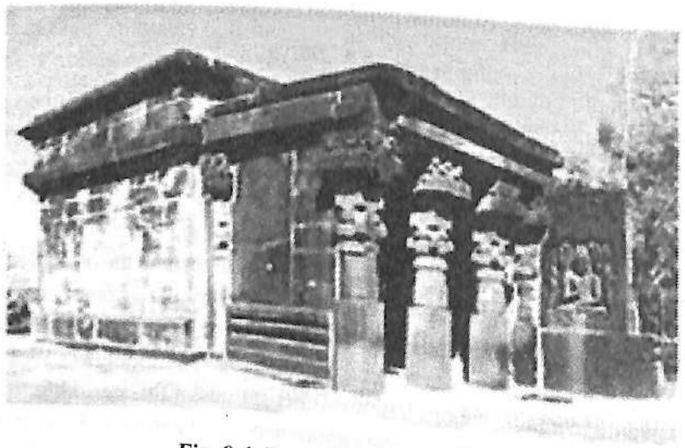

Fig. 8.4 Parvati Temple at Nachna

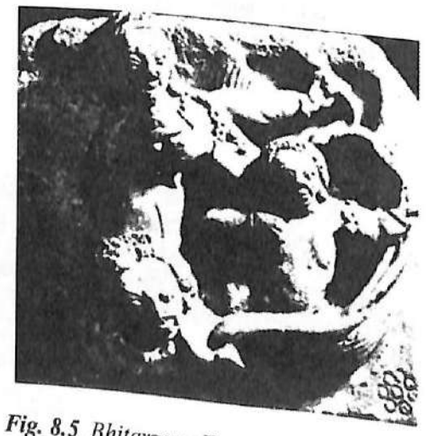

Fig. 8.5 Bhitargaon Temple of Gupta Period

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Fig. 8.6 Dasavatara Temple at Deogarh

8.8.2 Cave Architecture

The cave architecture also achieved a huge level of enhancement during the Gupta period. The Chaitya and Vihara caves at Ajanta and the Ellora caves are the perfect specimens of cave-architecture of the period. The rock-cut caves at Khandagiri, Udayagiri and Undavalli also belong to this period.



Fig. 8.7 Cave-cut Architecture at Ellora in the Gupta Period

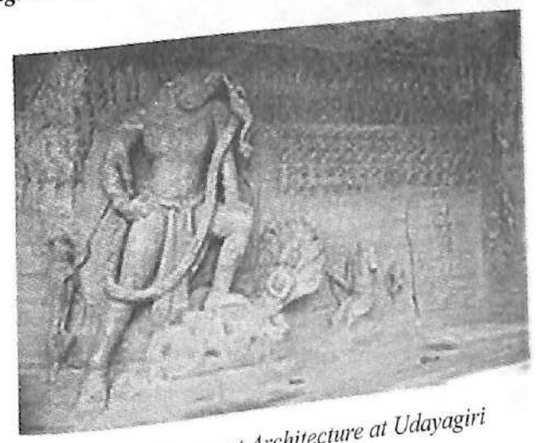

Fig. 8.8 Cave-cut Architecture at Udayagiri

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8.8.3 Gupta Sculpture

With the Gupta period, India entered a classical phase of sculpture. By the efforts made over centuries, techniques of art were perfected, definite types were evolved, and ideals of beauty were formulated with precision. There was no more experimentation. A quick grasp of the true objectives and necessary principles of art, a vastly developed aesthetic sense and proficient execution by skilled hands made those outstanding images that were to be the perfect model and despair of the Indian artists of successive ages. The Gupta sculptures not only proved to be models of Indian art for the coming ages but they also provided a perfect model for the Indian colonies in the Far East. In the Gupta period, all inclinations and drives of the artistic searches of the scheduled phases reached their peak in a united plastic tradition of ultimate significance in Indian history. Gupta sculpture was the logical result of the early classical sculpture of Amravati and Mathura. Its gracefulness was received from that of Mathura and its elegance from that of Amravati. Yet a Gupta sculpture seemed to belong to an area that was completely different. The Gupta artist seemed to have been working for a higher ideal. A new direction in the attitude towards art is seen in the endeavour to create a closer synchronization between art and thought, between the outer forms and the inner intellectual and spiritual ideas of the people.



Fig. 8.9 Mathura Sculpture of Indra



Fig. 8.10 Buddha Image of Gupta Period

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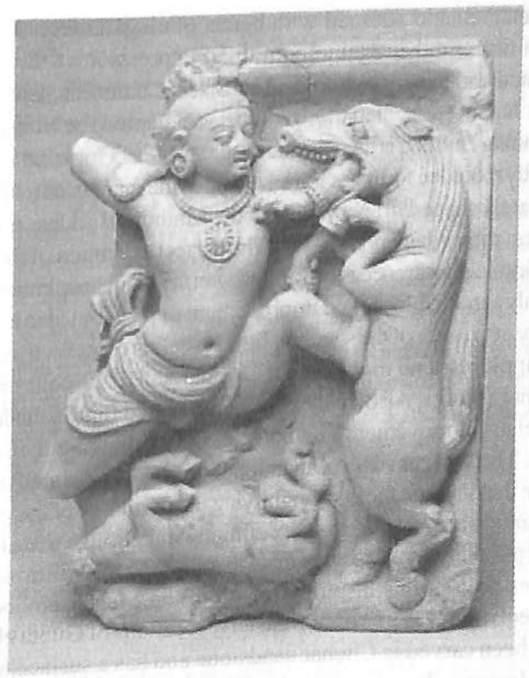

Fig. 8.11 Krishna killing the Horse Demon Keshi

Art of Bharhut, Amravati, Sanchi and Mathura came closer and closer; merging into one. In the composition, it was the female figure that now becomes the focus of attraction and nature recedes into the background, but in doing so it leaves behind its unending and undulating rhythm in the human form. The human figure, taken as the image, is the turn of Gupta sculpture. A new canon of beauty is evolved leading to the appearance of a new aesthetic ideal. This ideal is based upon an explicit understanding of the human body in its inherent softness and suppleness. The soft and flexible body of the Gupta sculpture with its smooth and shining texture facilitates free and easy movement, and though seemingly at rest the figure seems to be infused with an energy, which proceeds from within.

This is true not only of the images of divine beings, Buddhist, Brahmanical and Jain but also of the ordinary men and women. It is the sensitiveness of the plastic surface that the artist seeks to emphasize and for this; all superfluities, etc. that tend to cover the body, are reduced to the minimum. So, the wet or transparent clinging drapery became the fashion of this era. But the sensuous effect of these draperies particularly in the case of female figures was restricted by a conscious moral sense, and nudity as a rule. It was eliminated from the Gupta sculpture. The great artistic creations of the period were invested with sweet and soft contours, restrained ornamentation and dignified repose. Under the patronage of the Guptas, the studies of Mathura and Sarnath produced several works of great merit. Though Hindu by faith, they were tolerant rulers.

The wonderful red sandstone image of the Buddha from Mathura is a remarkable example of Gupta workmanship datable to the fifth century AD. Buddha is revealed standing with his right hand in abhayamudra, giving shelter and the left holding the edge of the garment. The smiling expression with unhappy eyes is robed in spiritual happiness. The robe covering both shoulders is dexterously depicted with carefully covered graphic folds and clings to the body. The head is covered with graphic spiral curls with a central

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bulge and the detailed halo adorned with bands of elegant decoration. The finished mastery in execution and the regal tranquility of expression of the image of Buddha came to be adopted and locally customized by Siam, Cambodia, Burma, Java, Central Asia, China and Japan, etc., when these countries accepted the Buddhist religion. The image of the standing Buddha is an outstanding example of Gupta art in its maturity from Sarnath. The softly moulded form has its right hand in the manner of reassuring protection. Unlike the delicately shaped drapery folds of the Mathura Buddha, only the edge of the almost transparent robe is here pointed out. The perfect execution of the figure compared by its serious spiritual appearance is truly praiseworthy of the inspirational being. Sarnath describes not only a gracefulness and improvement of form but also a calm approach by bending the body in the case of the standing figure, slightly on its own axis, thus conveying to it a certain suppleness and movement in comparison to the columnar inflexibility of analogous Mathura works. Also, in the case of the seated figure, the lean physiognomy expresses a feeling of movement, the body, closely following the modeling in all its delicate shades. The folds have been abandoned in general; a signal of the drapery only stays alive in the thin lines on the body signifying the periphery of the garment. The folds which fall separately are given, again, a definitely muslin-like texture. The body in its soft and shining plasticity comprises the main theme of the Sarnath artists. The conclusion of these features seen in this inspiring image of the Master embodied in the act of turning the Wheel of Law is one of the masterly creations of Gupta classical sculpture. The image has been carved in Chunar sandstone and has a surface texture of faultless softness. The Master is shown as seated in Vijraparyanka with the hands held near the breast in Dharmachakrapravartana Mudra (the sign of preaching). A fine order infuses the whole figure, both physically and mentally. It is obvious as much in the even and recurring treatment of the body as in the ethereal face reminiscent of a mind absorbed and in calm delight of spiritual ecstasy. A clean decorative backdrop is provided by the throne and a circular nimbus (*Prabha*) exquisitely carved with a broad foliated ornament within beaded borders. The decorative *prabhas* are characteristic of Mathura images.

During the Gupta period, the characteristic elements of the Indian temple emerged and the plastic forms began to be used admirably as an integral part of the general architectural scheme. The stone carving in the temples at Deogarh and those in temples of Udayagiri and Ajanta are perfect specimen of figure sculpture in their decorative setting. The large panel of *Sheshashayi* Vishnu from the Deogarh temple, representing the Supreme Being sleeping wakefully on the serpent Ananta, the symbol of eternity, in the interval between the disbanding of the universe and its new creation, is a magnificent example.

The four-armed Vishnu is reclining elegantly on the coils of the Adisesha, whose seven hoods form a cover over his crowned head. His companion Lakshmi is sitting by his right leg and many gods and celestials are lingering nearby. In the lower panel, the two demons Madhu and Kaitabha, in an aggressive manner, are confronted by the four personified weapons of Vishnu. The whole masterpiece styled with a masterly skill, breathes an atmosphere of peace and apprehension, making it an excellent piece of art.

A wonderful illustration of Vishnu belongs to the Gupta period and it comes from Mathura. The typical gown, the *vanamala*, the charming string of pearls coiled round the neck, the long and elegant *yagnopavita* are all features of early Gupta work.

Ganga and Yamuna, two life-sized terracotta images that were originally installed in places flanking the main steps leading to the upper terrace of the Shiva temple at Ahichhatra are from the Gupta period. In the image, the Ganga stands on her vehicle,

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the *makara* and Yamuna on the *cacchap*. Kalidas describes that the two river goddesses are attendants to Shiva and it is a regular feature of temple architecture from the Gupta period onwards. Clay figurines (Terracottas) have great value as sources of social and religious history. In India, the art of making figurines of baked clay is of great antiquity as you have already seen at Harappa and Mohenjodaro where terracottas have been discovered in huge numbers.

The Head of Shiva is a graceful example of Gupta terracottas, portrayed with matted locks, tied in a famous and graceful top knot. The look on the face is notable and both the figures, of Shiva as well as Parvati, are two of the most delightful specimens from Ahichhatra.

The Vakatakas were dominant in the Deccan, contemporary with the Guptas in the North. The high watermark of excellence in art attained in their region can be best seen in the later caves at Ajanta, the early ones at Ellora and those at Aurangabad.

8.8.4 Gupta Paintings

Painting made great progress in the Gupta period. The most famous paintings of the Gupta period were the caves of Ajanta (Maharashtra) and Bagh (Madhya Pradesh).

Ajanta paintings

There are thirty caves in Ajanta of which 9, 10, 19, 26 and 29 are chaitya-grihas and the rest are monasteries. These caves were discovered in AD 1819 and were rebuilt. All paintings have heavy religious influence and centre on the following:

- Buddha
- Bodhisattvas
- Incidents from the life of Buddha
- Jatakas

The paintings are accomplished on a ground of mud-plaster in the tempera technique. In the caves of Ajanta, the artists observed a specific technique for doing their work. The rock walls of the cave were covered with a mixture of clay, cow dung and smashed rock. On its top a thin coat of lime plaster is applied. It was then smoothened and kept damp. On the surface the outline of the design was first sketched in dark colours such as dark brown or black. After this was done it was filled in, using a variety of colours like white, red, blue, dull green and brown. The theme of these paintings was from the Jataka tales, which is a collection of stories about the life of the Buddha. The paintings describe Buddha in various stages of his past and present lives. According to art critics, the Gupta paintings possess delicacy of lines, brilliancy of colours and richness of expression.

For long there existed a flawed assumption that the Ajanta cave paintings were frescoes. But the making of a fresco entails the application of colours to moist lime plaster whereas the Ajanta paintings were done on dry wall. The plaster made of clay, hay, dung, lime, etc., was applied to the wall and the artisans sketched beautiful drawings using vegetable colours. The brush for painting was made of animal hairs and twigs of certain plants.

The creation of these intricate Ajanta cave paintings still is a mystery due to the obvious lack of natural light inside the caves. Only thin streaks of light infuse inside, which is hardly sufficient for conducting such a painstaking craft. Historians have said that ancient artistes either used oil lamps or employed mirrors for reflecting and magnifying little natural light inside the cave.

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Fig. 8.12 Ajanta Painting

Bagh paintings

The Bagh caves are a group of nine rock-cut monuments. They are situated among the southern slopes of the Vindhyas in Kukshi tehsil of Dhar district in Madhya Pradesh state of central India. These monuments are located at a distance of 97 km from the town of Dhar. They are renowned for mural paintings by master painters of ancient India. A cave is a bit of a misnomer as these are not natural, but instead are examples of Indian rock-cut architecture.

The Bagh caves, like those at Ajanta, were dug up by master craftsmen on perpendicular sandstone rock face of a hill on the far bank of a seasonal stream, the Baghani. Buddhist in inspiration, of the nine caves, only five have survived. All of them are *viharas* or monasteries having quadrangular plan.

8.8.5 Development of Music during Guptas

Music has been an essential part of the cultures existing in India. The range of musical phenomenon in India extends from tribal to folklore to classical to modern style. The flavour of music depends on various aspects of the culture, like social and economic organization and experience, climate and access to technology.

The conditions in which music is played and listened to, and the attitudes towards music players and writers all vary between regions and periods. Indian music has a very ancient tradition and an accrued heritage of years. Indian music has developed due to interface between different people of varied races and cultures.

The Gupta period (AD 320–480) was the golden era in the history of Indian music. The Guptas ruled in most of northern India. The Gupta period was the period of Greater India. During this period, a huge range of cultural activities occurred in India in this period that influenced the neighbouring countries as well. The Guptas not only improved the Indian culture but also had a global impact. Many music treatises like *Natya Shastra* (by Bharat *Muni*) and *Brihaddeshi* (by Matanga) were written during this period.

Natya Shastra

The *Natya Shastra* is an ancient Indian treatise on the performing arts, comprising theatre, dance and music. The *Natya Shastra* was incredibly wide in its scope. While it basically deals with stagecraft, it has influenced music, classical Indian dance and literature as well. It consists of stage design, music, dance, makeup and basically every other aspect of stagecraft. It is very important to the history of Indian classical music as it is the only text that gives such detail about the music and instruments of the period.

After the Samaveda that dealt with ritual utterances of the Vedas, the *Natya Shastra* was the first major text that dealt with music at length. It was considered the crucial treatise of Indian classical music until the thirteenth century, when the stream split into Hindustani classical music in North India and Pakistan because of the influence of Persian and Arab music and Carnatic classical music in South India, the stronghold of the Hindu kingdoms.

While most of the discussion of music in the *Natya shastra* concentrates on musical instruments, it also emphasizes several theoretical aspects that remained fundamental to Indian music. *Jatis* are elaborated in greater detail in the text *Dattilam*, which was composed around the same time as the *Natya Shastra*.

The *Natya Shastra* also hints at several aspects of musical performance, specifically its application to vocal, instrumental and orchestral compositions. It also deals with the *rasas* and *bhavas* that may be evoked by music.

Brihaddeshi

Brihaddesi authored by Sangit Acharya Matanga Muni (AD 500–700) is the most important work between *Natya Shastra* (2nd century BC) and *Sangita Makarand* (AD seventh - eighth century). Brihaddesi is incomplete. Parts of it appear to be lost. It is the first major and available text for describing the ragas.

Sage Matanga's important contribution to musicology was his scholarly focus on the regional element in music.

Did You Know

After Emperor Ashoka it is said that, the empire of Samudragupta was the supreme.

8.9 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- During the rule of the Guptas, the central government was powerful, but in 'the district headquarters, the officials of the Central Government were assisted and controlled by popular councils, whose sanction was necessary even if the state wanted to sell its own wasteland.'
- Villages during the Gupta period had their own popular councils which administered almost all the branches of administration, including collection of taxes and settlement of village disputes. Public welfare, attending to poor and sick were given prominence.
- The origin and the early history of the Guptas is not clear. The first two kings of the dynasty, Sri Gupta and his son Sri Ghatotkacha were called Maharaja.
- The son of Maharaja Sri Ghatotkacha assumed a higher title of Maharajadhiraja, implying that he was a more powerful ruler than his predecessors.

Check Your Progress

13. Fill in the blanks.
    (a) With the Gupta period India entered a classical phase of _____.
    (b) The _____ also achieved a huge degree of refinement during the Gupta period.
14. State whether True or False.
    (a) The magnificent red sandstone image of Buddha from Mathura is a most remarkable example of Gupta workmanship.
    (b) The most famous painting of the Gupta period are the caves of Ajanta and Bagh.

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- After Ghatotkacha, his son Chandragupta I became king of the Gupta dynasty. He was the first independent ruler of this dynasty. He was an imperialist and important ruler than his predecessors.
- After Chandragupta I, his son Samudragupta became king of the Gupta dynasty. He established a vast kingdom by conquering different battles and strengthened the Gupta dynasty for centuries.
- Ramagupta ascended to the throne after the death of Samudragupta but he could not hold to his empire. Therefore, Chandragupta II ascended to the Gupta throne in AD 380. He was also a brave, valiant, invincible and able emperor. He was adorned on his coins with the titles of Devashri Vikramanka, Vikramaditya, Simha, Vikrama, Ajivikram, Simhachandra Apratiratha, etc.
- Skandagupta ascended to the throne after the death of Kumaragupta. His reign was full of difficulties and upheavals. He had inherited such a vast empire that it was difficult to keep it intact. He was in no way less than any other Gupta kings. Skandagupta has proved his talent during the lifetime of his father when he defeated the Pushyamitras.
- Internal dissension, weak central authority, lack of proper succession laws, brought about the disintegration of this empire.
- The Gupta Period (AD fourth–seventh) is usually called as the golden age of art and architecture in India. This period saw a huge resurrection of Hinduism when it became the official religion of the Gupta Empire. The cave architecture also achieved a huge degree of refinement during the Gupta period.
- In the Gupta period, all trends and tendencies of the artistic searches of the proceeding phases reached their peak in a united plastic tradition of supreme importance in Indian history.
- The wonderful red sandstone image of Buddha from Mathura is a remarkable example of Gupta workmanship datable to the fifth century AD.

8.10 KEY TERMS

- **Accession:** The action or process of formally joining or being accepted by an association.
- **Conquest:** The subjugation and assumption of control of a place or people by the use of military force.
- **Sculpture:** A three-dimensional artwork created by shaping or combining hard materials (such as stone, glass and wood).

8.11 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. (a) Huns (b) Coins
2. (a) True (b) True
3. (a) Chandragupta I (b) Lichchhavis
4. (a) True (b) False
5. (a) South (b) Three

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6. (a) True (b) True
7. (a) Ramagupta (b) Zenith
8. (a) False (b) True
9. (a) Junagarh (b) Integrity
10. (a) True (b) True
11. (a) short (b) Gupta
12. (a) True (b) True
13. (a) Sculpture (b) Cave architecture
14. (a) True (b) True

8.12 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What were the literary sources for the early Guptas?
2. Write a note on the rise of Chandragupta I.
3. Write a note on Chandragupta II.
4. What were the causes of the downfall of the Gupta Empire? Analyse any three in detail.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Analyse the political conquests of Samudragupta.
2. Discuss the development of temple architecture during the Guptas.
3. Evaluate the main features of the Gupta sculpture.
4. Discuss the beauty of Gupta paintings in your own words.
5. How did music develop during the Gupta reign?

8.13 FURTHER READING

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NOTES

UNIT 9 EMERGENCE OF REGIONAL KINGDOMS

Structure

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  9.5.1 The Rulers
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9.9 Questions and Exercises
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9.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will study about the emergence of regional kingdoms like Chalukyas, Pratiharas, Palas and Cholas.The Pratiharas seem to have been a section of the larger tribe called Gurjaras who immigrated into India after the Hunas. The fact that the Pratiharas belonged to the Gurjara stock is proved by the inscriptions and the writings of Arab writers like Abu Zayd and Al Masudi. During 6-12 centuries AD, the Chalukya dynasty controlled large parts of southern and central India. During this period, they ruled as three related yet independent dynasties. These dynasties were the Chalukyas of Badami, the Chalukyas of Kalyani and the Eastern Chalukyas of Bengi.

9.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- State in detail the genealogy of the Pratiharas
- Interpret the causes of the downfall of the Pratiharas

- Classify the main attributes of the Pala dynasty of Bengal
- Classify the Chalukya rulers of Badami, Kalyani and Vengi

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9.2 THE CHALUKYAS OR THE SOLANKIS OF ANHILWADA (GUJARAT)

It is not clear whether the Chalukyas of Gujarat were in some way related to the Chalukyas of south India. Most probably, it was a different dynasty which existed prior to the rise of the Chalukyas in the south. The dynasty grew into prominence and assumed imperial dignity during the rule of its founder ruler, Mulrajaa I, who conquered large territories and made Anhilwara his capital. In his old age, Mulraja abdicated his throne in the favour of his son, Vallabharaja and, after his death, to his second son Durlabharaja. During the later period of his reign, Durlabharaja gave his throne to his nephew Bhimraja I. By that time, the empire of the Chalukyas had become quite powerful in northern India.

The Chalukyas grew powerful in the Deccan towards the middle of the sixth century AD. As to who they were is a matter of great controversy. Different scholars hold different opinions regarding the origin of the Chalukyas.

The inscriptions reveal that the Chalukyas originally lived in the north. Smith considers the Chalukyas as the descendents of a foreign race, Gurjara. But Indian scholars do not agree with him. There is no evidence to prove them as foreigners; they were most probably Indian. According to the traditional legends and myths, the Chalukyas took their origin from the palm of Brahma in order to safeguard and protect religion. But from the historical point of view, these legends do not hold much importance. Dr. Ray Chaudhary has observed that inscriptions distinguished between the Chalukyas and the Gurjaras.

Dr. D.C. Sarkar also disagrees with the view and opines that the Chalukyas belonged to the Kannad family. They professed themselves to be Kshatriyas. The Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang also holds the opinion that the Chalukyas were Kshatriyas. However, the rule of the Chalukyas of south began in the sixth century AD. From sixth to eighth century A D, the Chalukya dynasty was one of the powerful dynasties of the south. There were three main branches of the Chalukyas:

(i) The Chalukyas of Badami or the early Western Chalukyas
(ii) The Later Western Chalukyas of Kalyani
(iii) The Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi

The Chalukyas of Badami or Vatapi or the early Western Chalukyas ruled for two centuries till the middle of the eighth century. Thereafter, their rule came to an end as they were defeated by the Rashtrakutas. Towards the later part of the tenth century, the later Western Chalukyas of Kalyani established their rule after defeating the Rashtrakutas and ruled up-to the end of the twelfth century. The Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi ruled from seventh century AD to eleventh century AD. Jayasimha the son of Ranaraga was the first Chalukya king. The great works of Jayasimha are not very informative but he was the son of Krishna, and thereby, re-established the Chalukya dynasty. Since there is no reference of it in the Aithole inscription, it cannot be fully accepted.

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9.2.1 The Chalukyas of Badami

Pulakesin I and Pulakesin II were the two most important kings of this dynasty.

Pulakesin I

Pulakesin I was the founder of the majestic grandeur of the Chalukyas of Vatapi. He is said to have captured Vatapi and made it his capital. He performed a horse-sacrifice after his accession to power. His sons, Kirtivarman I and Mangalesa extended the empire in all directions by defeating the neighbouring rulers including the Mauryas of Konkan, the Kadambas of Vijayanti and the Kalachuris of Northern Maharashtra and Malwa.

Pulakesin II

The greatest ruler of this dynasty was Pulakesin II, who came to the throne in the beginning of seventh century AD and ruled for 34 years (AD 608-642). He was a contemporary of Harsha of Kannauj (AD 606-647). He greatly extended the extent of his empire by his all round conquests. The Aihole Inscription (dated AD 634) mentions that he defeated the Latas of Gujarat, Gangas of Mysore, Alupas of Malabar, Mauryas of North Konkan, the Malwas and Gurjaras of Brigu-Kacha. But his greatest achievement was his victory against Harshavardhan of Kannauj in AD 620. This victory greatly enhanced his prestige and made him an undisputed master of the south. The rulers of Kosala and Kalinga became so terror stricken that they at once submitted to him. Pulkesin II established diplomatic relations with Persia also. It was during his reign that Hiuen Tsang visited the Chalukya Empire.

The kingdom having enormously grown in dimensions, Pulkesin II entrusted the administration of the eastern territories to his younger brother Kubja Vishnuvardhan in about AD 615. The latter made some additions to his charge by his conquests but he does not appear to have broken away from Vatapi. It was perhaps his son Jayasimha I who asserted his independence towards the south. Pulkesin II defeated the Pallava king and threatened his capital Kanchi. As a result of this victory, his power and influence greatly increased. Now he was regarded as the most powerful ruler in the south. He also subjugated the Cheras and the Pandyas of the deep south.

Pulkesin II had not only distinguished himself in warfare but also cultivated the softer art of diplomacy to strengthen his position. According to the Arab writer Tabari, Pulakesin II maintained friendly relations with Khusrau, the second king of Iran or Persia, who received from his Indian contemporary a special envoy in AD 625 bearing letters and presents. The Persian sovereign, too, sent an embassy to the Chalukya court, and it is generally supposed by the scholars that the reception of the Persian mission is portrayed in one of the Ajanta cave paintings. This view is, however, doubted by noted orientalist Dr. Sten Konow.

Hiuen Tsang visited *Mo-ha-lacha* (Maharashtra) in about AD 640 when Pulkesin II was on the throne of Chalukyas. The Chinese pilgrim speaks very favourably of the administration and economic condition of the country and the proud and war-like spirit of the people who were undaunted in war, revengeful for wrongs and grateful for the favours of the king. He says that *Pu-Lo-Ke-she* (Pulkesin), a Kshatriya by birth and the head of the valiant people, was an object of fear to his neighbours, but the benevolent nature of his administration made them vassals of his dominions and the kings served

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Literature

The Chalukyas were great patrons of literature. Most of the rulers of this dynasty had scholars in their court. Bilhan and Gyaneshwar were the famous scholars in the court of Vikramditya II. Bilhan wrote the *'Vikramadevcharit* and Gyaneshwar composed the *'Mitantera'*. The Chalukyas were lovers of art and literature.

DID YOU KNOW

The earliest dynasty, known as the 'Badami Chalukyas', ruled from Vatapi.

9.3 THE PRATIHARAS

The glory of Kannauj was again re-captured by the Gurjara-Pratihara dynasty which made it the capital and again built up a strong and extensive empire in north India. Many scholars expressed the view that the Gurjaras were foreigners who came to India, probably, along with the Hunas towards the close of the fifth century AD. They established themselves in Punjab, Rajputana and Gujarat. Their main settlements were in the west of the Aravalli hills in Rajputana which up to the sixth and seventh centuries were called *Gurjarastra.* However, this view has been opposed by many other scholars who claim that the Gurjaras were purely Indians. The ruling family of the Gurjaras belonged to their Pritahara clan. So, the empire created by them came to be called the Gurjara-Partihara Empire.

The foundation of the Pratihara Kingdom was laid by Harichandra near modern Jodhpur in the middle of the sixth century AD. Harichandra was a *Brahmin* and his sons from his *Kshatriya* wife established the ruling dynasty of the Pratiharas.

Harichandra, his successors and other branches of the family ruled over Jodhpur, Nandipura, Broach, and Ujjayani (Avanti). The foundation of the greatness of the Pratihara dynasty was laid by Nagabhata I, the ruler of Ujjayani. Nagabhata I ruled from AD 730 to756 and came into prominence because of his successful resistance to the Arabs. He successfully claimed suzerainty over the Pratihara rulers of Jodhpur and Nandipuri thereby establishing an empire which extended from Gujarat to Gwalior and resisted the Arab invasions towards further east of Sindh. Probably, he fought against the Rashtrakuta ruler Dantidurga as well and was defeated by him. However, the success of Dantidurga was short-lived and Nagabhata left to his successor an extensive empire which included Gujarat, Malwa and a part of Rajputana.

9.3.1 Vatsaraja (Nearly AD 778-805)

Nagabhata was succeeded by his brother's sons, Kakkuka and Devaraja. However, nothing is known about them. Devaraja was succeeded by his son Vatsaraja who proved a powerful ruler. Vatsaraja was an ambitious ruler and tried to be the lord of north India. He snatched away the central Rajputana and a part of north India towards the east from the hands of the Bhandi, the ruling dynasty which probably was related to Vardhana, the imperial dynasty of Kannauj. His ambition to capture Kannauj led him into conflicts with the Pala ruler Dharamapala and the Rashtrakuta ruler Dhruva. He succeeded in defeating Dharmapala but was defeated by Dhruva who afterwards captured Kannauj.

Check Your Progress

1. Fill in the blanks.
   (a) Hiuen Tsang visited the _____ empire.
   (b) _____ subjugated the Cheras and the Pandyas of the deep South.
2. State whether True or False.
   (a) Pulkesin II's death was followed by the temporary decline of the Chalukya power.
   (b) The Chalukyas followed the policy of toleration.

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9.3.2 Nagabhata II (AD 805-833)

Vatsaraja was succeeded by his son Nagabhata II who revived the lost prestige of the empire. After the defeat of Vatsaraja by Dhruva, the Pratihara empire got limited to the Rajputana. Nagabhata II revived the policy of conquest and the extension of the empire. He defeated the rulers of Andhra, Saindhava, Vidarbha and Kalinga. He subdued Matsyas in the north, Vatsas in the east and Turks (Muslims) in the west. He attacked Kannauj and occupied it after defeating Chakrayudha. This led him into a conflict with the Pala ruler Dharmapala. The KakkaPrati-bara of Jodhpur, the Chalukyas of the southern Kathiawar and the Guhilot of Mewar supported him in this conflict. He succeeded in defeating Dharmapala and entered into his territories as far as Monghyer in Bihar. But he could not enjoy his success for long. The Rashtrakuta ruler Govind III was equally ambitious to capture Kannauj, and attacked north India. Probably, Govind III was invited by Dharampala and Chakrayudha to avenge their defeat by Nagabhata as they readily submitted to Govind III when he reached the north. The battle between Nagabhata and Govind III took place sometime in AD 909 or 910 in which Nagabhata was defeated. After the battle Govind III retired to the south and, therefore, the Rashtrakutas did not get time to interfere in the politics of northern India for about half a century. Yes, the power of the Pratiharas was weakened and they lost hold over Malwa and Gujarat. It also gave an opportunity to the Pala king Dharmapala and his son Devapala to regain and increase their power in the north. However, Nagabhata having lost his western part of the empire to the Rashtrakutas tried to extend his empire towards the east and succeeded in conquering the territories as far as Gwalior, Kalinjar and Kannauj.

9.3.3 Mihirbhoj (AD Nearly 836-882)

Rambhadra, the son and successor of Nagabhata II, proved incapable and lost some of his territories probably to the Pala ruler Devapal. He ruled only for three years and was succeeded by his son Mihirbhoj.

Mihirbhoj proved an ambitious and a capable ruler and began a new and glorious chapter in the history of the Pratiharas. He made Kannauj his capital and succeeded in consolidating his power and influence in Malwa, Rajputana and *Madhya-Desh.* But he had to face many challenges and initially he failed. He had to fight against Devapal and was defeated, a fact which checked the extension of his power towards further east. Again, when he tried to take advantage of the internal conflicts of the Rashtrakutas and attacked south India from AD 845-860 he was defeated by Dhruva, the ruling king of the Gujarat-branch of the Rashtrakutas. He was also defeated by the Kalachuri King. These successive defeats resulted in weakening his hold over the Rajputana and even the feudatory Pratihara ruler of Jodhpur became independent.

Yet, these reverses failed to subdue the ambition and spirit of Mihirbhoj. He remained patient and waited for the right opportunity. The death of Devapal, the ruler of Bengal, and thereafter his weak successors gave him an opportunity to revive his strength towards the east and the peaceful policy pursued by the Rashtrakuta ruler Amoghavarsha encouraged him to take his chances towards the south. First, he defeated the Pala king Narayanapala and snatched away from him a considerable part of his western dominions. Next, he took offensive against the Rashtrakuta ruler Krishna II and defeated him on the banks of the river Narmada. Thereafter, he occupied Malwa and Kathiawar. He fought once again against the Rashtrakuta ruler Krishna II at Ujjayini. This time he was defeated. But, whether he lost Malwa or not is not clear.

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Yet, Mihirbhoj succeeded in reviving the glory of the Pratiharas and became the ruler of Kannauj. He had an extensive empire which included Kathiawar, territories up to Punjab in the north-west, Malwa and *Madhya-Desh*. He had consolidated his power in Rajputana and the Kalachuris of Bihar and Chandelas of Bundelkhand had accepted his sovereignty. Dr. R.C. Majumdar writes that Bhoja consolidated a mighty empire in northern India for which Vatsaraja and Nagabhata had fought in vain and he also raised Kannauj to the position of an imperial city.

9.3.4 Mahendrapala I (AD Nearly 885-910)

Mahendrapala I succeeded the throne of his father, Mihirbhoja. He not only succeeded in maintaining the empire of his father but also extended it further.

Rajatarangini of Kalhana suggests that he lost some territory in Punjab to Sankaravarman, the king of Kashmir, but this is doubtful. He conquered Magadha and a part of northern Bengal. It is believed that his empire extended from the Himalayas to the Vindhyas and from the eastern to the western ocean.

9.3.5 Mahipala (AD 912-944)

Mahendrapala was succeeded by his son Bhoja II but his cousin, Mahipala, dethroned him and became the ruler of Kannauj. During his period, the Rashtrakutas again interfered in the politics of north India. The Rashtrakuta king, Indra III, attacked between AD 915-918 and defeated Mahipala of Kannauj, occupied Kannauj and pursued Mahipala as far as Allahabad. But, as on previous occasions, the Rashtrakutas did not stay long enough to consolidate their conquests in the north. So, after the retirement of Indra III to the south, Mahipala again consolidated his position and recovered a large part of his lost empire. But, in the meantime, the Pala rulers took advantage of his weakness and captured some eastern parts of his empire. Once more, in about AD 940, the Rashtrakutas attacked the north and occupied the forts of Kalinjar and Chitrakuta. Thus, though Mahipala succeeded in recovering a large part of his empire, the attacks of the Rashtrakutas lowered the power and prestige of the Pratiharas. The advantage was drawn not only by the Palas but also by the feudatory rulers. The Chandelas, the Chedis, and the Paramaras succeeded in asserting their independence. Thus, though Mahipala could safeguard a large part of his empire, yet this period marked the beginning of the decline of the power of Partiharas.

9.3.6 The Successors of Mahipala and the Fall of the Pratihara Empire (AD 944-1036)

Mahipala was succeeded by his son Mahendrapala II. He ruled only for a year. Afterwards, we find no less than four successors during a period of fifteen years. Devapala, Vinayakapala II, Mahipala II and Vijayapala ruled in succession over the throne of Kannauj but none of them proved to be a capable ruler. Rather, the quick succession of these rulers proves that the family feuds had started among the Pratiharas. This resulted in the disintegration of the Pratihara Empire from the period of Devapala (AD 948). Near about AD 963, the Rashtrakuta king Indra III again attacked northern India and gave the final blow to the Prartihara domination in Central India. The central authority of the Pratihara empire was broken and out of its ruins arose the independent kingdoms of the Chalukyas in Gujarat, the Chandelas in Jejaka bhukti, the Kalachuris in Central India, the Paramaras in Malwa, the Guhilas in south Rajputana, and the Chauhans in Sakambhari. Thus, by the time Rajyapala ascended the throne of Kannauj late in the tenth century, he was no more a ruler of an empire but that of a small kingdom.

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The Pratihara Empire had vanished by the time the Turks invaded India during the reign of Rajyapala. The challenge from the north-west was met by the Brahminshahi kingdom on the borders of Afghanistan. Rajyapala supported the Brahmanshahi ruler Jaipala against Sabuktagin in AD 991 and then his son Anandapala against Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni in AD 1008. Ultimately, Mahmud succeeded in destroying the Brahminshahi kingdom and attacked Kannauj in AD 1018. Rajyapala did not fight against him but fled. Feeling dissatisfied with the shameful behaviour of Rajyapala against a foreign attacker, the Chandella ruler Ganda sent his son Vidyadhar to attack Kannauj. Vidyadhar defeated and killed Rajyapala and placed his son Trilochanapala on the throne of Kannauj. Trilochanapala was defeated by Sultan Mahmud in AD 1019 though he remained alive till AD 1027. His successor and the last ruler of Pratihara dynasty was Yasapala who remained a petty ruler up to AD 1036. Thus, ended the mighty Pratihara Empire. In fact, the power of the Pratiharas had declined during the reign of Mahipala in the late tenth century though, in name, it survived a little longer.

Noted historian Dr R.C. Majumdar has given a respectable position to the Pratiharas in the history of India. He describes that the credit of the last great empire in Hindu India does not go to emperor Harsha but to the Pratiharas. One after the other, Vatsaraja, Nagabhata II, Mihirbhoj and Mahendrapala I brought glory to the Pratiharas and succeeded in creating an extensive empire in northern India even after fighting against the powerful Palas and Rashtrakutas.

Another achievement of the Pratiharas was to check the penetration of the Arabs in the interior of India. Elphinstone and all other historians after him expressed surprise at the fact that the Arabs failed to penetrate deeper into India even at the zenith of their power. The reason was that they were checked by the power of the Pratiharas. The Arabs themselves have given a glorious account of the bravery and prosperity of the Pratiharas. The Arab traveller Sulaiman described Mihirbhoj as the greatest enemy of Islam. Thus, there is no doubt that the Pratiharas effectively checked the progress of the Arabs beyond the confines of Sindh which must be regarded as a significant contribution of the Pratiharas to the history of India. Besides, even when the power of the Pratiharas was in a broken state, the Pratihara king Rajyapala supported the Brahmanashahi rulers Jaipala and Anandapala against Sabuktagin and Mahmud of Ghazni. This proves that Rajyapala was also anxious to pursue the traditional policy of the Pratiharas to check the penetration of the Muslim invaders into India though, of course, he himself fled from the mighty power of Sultan Mahmud.

Thus, the Pratiharas maintained the dignity of a great empire in north India for about a century and fulfilled their duty to fight against the foreign invaders. Besides, the empire of the Pratiharas proved more durable as compared to their contemporary empire builders -the Palas and the Rashtrakutas. Thus, the Pratiharas played a significant role in the history of India after the fall of the empire of Harsha and were the last empire-builders of Hindu India.

ACTIVITY

Visit a library and gather relevant literature about the Pratihara dynasty. Make extensive notes on the same.

Check Your Progress

3. Fill in the blanks.
   (a) The capital of Mihirbhoj's reign was _____.
   (b) Harichandra was a _____.
4. State whether True or False.
   (a) The foundation of the Pratihara Kingdom was laid by Harichandra.
   (b) Vatsaraja was succeeded by his son Nagabhata II who revived the lost prestige of the empire.

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9.4 THE PALAS

Another great empire in northern India was established by the Palas in the middle of the eighth century AD. Nothing is certain about the antecedents of the Palas but it is quite confirmed that their homeland was Bengal. The Palas contested for the sovereignty of Kannauj against the Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas, and established an extensive empire with Bengal as its base. They provided it unity, prosperity and glory for about four centuries.

9.4.1 Gopala (AD 750-775)

Sasanka, the contemporary ruler of emperor Harsha, had established a powerful empire in Bengal. But after his death, anarchy prevailed in Bengal for about a century. The absence of a powerful king remained its primary cause. Being troubled by the unsettled state of affairs of Bengal, the nobles elected Gopala as their leader who laid the foundation of the mighty empire of the Palas in Bengal. Gopala was a Kshatriya by caste and had proved his valour and capability as a successful leader prior to his election as king. His original kingdom was Vanga or east Bengal. He was a devotee of Buddha but pursued the policy of war and conquest to extend his empire. Even after him, the Pala rulers kept their faith in Buddhism though they fought against their rivals to safeguard and extend their empire.

9.4.2 Dharmapala (AD 770-810)

Dharmapala was the son and successor of Gopala and proved to be a great ruler. He understood the feeling of sacrifice and devotion of the people of Bengal and utilized it properly by successfully converting the kingdom of Bengal into one of the foremost empires of northern India. When he ascended the throne, the Pratiharas who had established their power in Malwa and the Rajputana were gradually extending its power towards the east. Moreover, the newly established power of the Rashtrakutas in the Deccan desired to possess the plains of north India. Each of them tried to capture Kannauj which was regarded as the key-centre and a prestigious state of north India at that time. Dharmapala desired the same and, therefore, came in conflict with both the Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas. Dharmapala first fought a battle against the Pratihara ruler Vatsaraja in the Ganga-Yamuna Doab and was defeated. But before Vatsaraja could exploit the situation in his favour the Rashtrakuta ruler Dhruva attacked north India and forced Vatsaraja to seek safety in Rajputana. Dhruva proceeded and defeated Dharmapala as well but he retreated to the south soon.

The attack of Dhruva in the north and even his own defeat did not harm Dharmapala. On the contrary, it helped him indirectly. Dhruva had given a powerful shock to the growing power of the Pratiharas, which helped Dharmapala in consolidating his power in northern India. Dharmapala attacked Kannauj, deposed Indrayudha and placed Chakrayudha on the throne under his sovereignty. Though details are not available about the wars of conquest of Dharmapala, yet it is certain that Bengal and Bihar were under his direct rule. The ruler of Kannauj was under his suzerainty and many other rulers of the Punjab, Rajputana, Malwa and Berar also acknowledged his overlordship.

Dharmapala's position was again challenged by the Pratihara ruler Nagabhata II, the son and successor of Vatsaraja. Nagabhata attacked Kannauj and turned out Chakrayudha who was under the soveregnity of Dharmapala. Therefore, Dharmapala

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had to fight against Nagabhata. The battle between the two was fought near Monghyr (Bihar) in which Dharmapala was defeated. But, once again, the interference of the Rashtrakutas in the politics of the north proved effective. The Rashtrakuta king, Govinda III, attacked north India. Chakrayudha and Dharmapala accepted his suzerainty without fighting. Probably, both of them had invited the Rashtrakuta king to avenge their defeat at the hands of Nagabhata who fought against Govinda III but was defeated. Again, the defeat of the Pratiharas by the Rashtrakutas gave Dharmapala an opportunity to consolidate his power in the north. The power of the Pratiharas being shattered, he again asserted himself after the retirement of Govinda to the south and gained large territories for his empire. He left a large empire to his son and successor Devapala.

Dharmapala was a capable king. Of course, the transformation of Bengal from a kingdom to an empire was the creation of the spirit of self-sacrifice and political wisdom displayed by the people of Bengal at that time. But, the credit of this achievement goes to king Dharmapala as well. He was a courageous commander and a good diplomat. He fought many battles, was defeated by the Pratiharas twice, yet he kept up his courage and determination to create an empire. He took great advantage of the conflict of the Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas in the politics of north India and succeeded in establishing an empire and also governing it well. He assumed the high sounding titles of *Parmeswara, Paramabhattarak* and *Maharajadhiraja.* For the first time he certainly assigned the empire of Bengal a significant position in the politics of north India. Reverend historian Dr R.C. Majumdar holds the opinion that Dharampala managed to integrate the divided and segregated territories of northern India. Dharmapala distinguished himself in the peaceful pursuits of life as well. He founded the famous Vikramsila monastery which afterwards developed into a great centre of Buddhist learning. He also founded a great Buddhist *Vihara* in the Rajshahi district. In his old age Dharampala married Rannadevi, the daughter of the Rashtrakuta king Parabala, who gave birth to his son and successor Devapala.

9.4.3 Devapala (AD 810-850)

Devapala was a worthy son of a worthy father. He not only kept intact the empire which he inherited from his father but also extended it further. Devapala followed an aggressive imperialist policy and spent a great part of his life in military campaigns. Again, the main rival to the Palas proved to be the Pratiharas. The Pratihara ruler Nagabhata II had occupied Kannuaj. Devapala forced him to retreat and then proceeded to conquer north India. It has been suggested that he made attacks from the Himalayas in the north to the Vindhyas in the south. In the north-west he attacked the territories of Kamboja and Punjab. He forced the rulers of Assam and Utkal to accept his suzerainty, attacked the boundaries of the empire of the Pratihara ruler Nagabhata and, probably, fought wars against the Rashtrakutas or the Pandyas of the south. He also defeated the Pratihara ruler Mihirbhoj. Thus, his military campaigns were successful. Certainly his direct rule was limited to the territories of Bengal and Bihar but most of the rulers of northern India acknowledged suzerainty while the Pratiharas, his powerful rival in the North, failed to check his progress. The Pratihara ruler Mihirbboj could get success and restore the glory of the Pratihara Empire only after the death of Devapala.

Devapala ruled for nearly forty years. Leaving apart the success of military campaigns, he has been accepted as a patron of Buddhist religion, literature and fine arts. The Arab traveller Sulaiman described him as comparatively more powerful than

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his contemporary Pratihara and Rashtrakuta rulers. Devapala succeeded more than his father. Dr R.C. Majumdar writes that the reigns of Dharmapala and Devapala constitute the most brilliant chapter in the history of Bengal.

9.5 THE CHOLAS

The Chola kingdom was a very ancient one. There is a reference to the Cholas in the *Mahabharata.* They are also mentioned in the account of Megasthenes and the inscriptions of Ashoka. Katyayana also refers to the Cholas. The *Mahavamsa* refers to the relations between the Cholas and the rulers of Ceylon. Ptolemy also refers to the Cholas. The *Sangam* literature refers to many Chola princes who were models of justice. The Periplus gives us information about Poms and inland towns of the Chola territory. The kingdom of the Cholas included modern Madras, several others districts of Tamil Nadu and the greater part of the Mysore State.

9.5.1 The Rulers

Important Chola rulers and their achievements are discussed as follows:

Vijayalaya (AD 850-871)

The founder of the Chola dynasty of Tanjore was Vijayalaya. He was a feudatory chief of the Pandyas. He also conquered the valley of Kosala and the lower valley of Kaveri.

Aditya I (AD 871-907)

The independent kingdom of the Cholas was created by Aditya I, the son and successor of Vijayalaya. Aditya helped his overlord, the Pallava king Aparajita, against the Pandyas but did not remain loyal to him for long. Near about AD 893, he fought against Aparajita and killed him in a battle. He then occupied the entire territory of Tondaimandalam and became a sovereign ruler. He also occupied most of the territories of the Pandyas and the Western Gangas. He made Tanjore his capital, beautified it, and built several temples of Siva there. Thus, the foundation of the greatness of the Cholas was laid by Aditya I.

Parantaka I (AD 907-953)

Parantaka I was an ambitious ruler and engaged himself in wars of conquest from the beginning of his reign. His main conquest was that of Madura. The Pandya ruler, Rajasinha II, sought the help of the Ceylonese king. Yet, he could not defend his kingdom against the attacks of Parantaka. It was a difficult task but Parantaka succeeded in capturing Madura and reduced it to obedience and order though the task kept him busy for many years. Parantakas also defeated the Bana Country with the help of his ally Prithvipati II, the Western Ganga ruler. Thus, by his successive victories, he established an extensive empire.

The Rashtrakutas could not tolerate the new rising power of the Cholas in their neighbourhood. The Rashtrakuta king Krishna III attacked Parantaka I and defeated the Cholas in a decisive battle at Takkolam in AD 949. This defeat gave a rude shock to the imperialist ambitions of the Cholas. Rather, for the next thirty-two years they remained an insignificant power in the politics of the south, though sometime during

Check Your Progress

5. Fill in the blanks.
   (a) _____ followed an aggressive imperialist policy and spent a great part of his life in military campaigns.
   (b) Devapala defeated the Pratihara ruler _____.
6. State whether True or False.
   (a) Dharmapala was the son and successor of Gopala and proved to be a great ruler.
   (b) The kingdom of Palas was established in the middle of ninth century AD.

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the reign of Sundara Chola or Parantaka II, the successors of Parantaka I, the Cholas, probably, succeeded in recovering Tondaimandalam from the Rashtrakutas.

Rajaraja the Great (AD 985-1014)

The credit for reviving the lost glory of the Cholas went to Rajaraja who proved himself as the great ruler of the Cholas. He pursued a policy of war and conquest and defeated the Western Gangas, the Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi, the Pandyas of Madura, the Gangas of Kalinga, and the Cheras of Kerala and, thus, extended his empire and influence to the far south. Rajaraja also laid the foundation of the greatness of the navy of the Cholas. He conquered Kurga, the entire Malabara coast and a part of Ceylon, with the support of its navy. He also conquered the Maldives islands and attacked the islands of the south-east. He befriended King Tungavamana of Srivijaya Empire of the South-East Asia. He placed Vimaladitya, the younger brother of Saktivarman I, on the throne of Vengi and married his daughter to him which ultimately prepared the way for the union of the Eastern Chalukyas and the cholas. Thus, Rajaraja succeeded in the establishment of a fairly extensive empire in the far south.

Rajaraja was one of the greatest rulers of south India. He was a conqueror, an empire builder, a good administrator and a patron of art and literature. He laid the foundation of the greatness of the navy of the Cholas who, afterwards, became one of the foremost naval powers in south east Asia. He also laid the foundation of the local self-government in the administration of the Cholas. The navy and the local self-government were primarily the contributions of Rajarara to the chola Dynasty. Rajaraja was a Saiva. He constructed the saiva-temple of Rajmajeshwari which has been regarded as a remarkable specimen of Tamil architecture. But he was a pious and a tolerant ruler. He also patronized Buddhist *Viharas* and monasteries.

Rajendra I (AD 1014-1044)

Rajendra pursued the policy of conquest and annexation adopted by his father and raised the power and prestige of the Cholas to its highest. His period was the period of zenith of the glory of the Cholas. He defeated and annexed the kingdoms of the Pandyas and the Cheras of the extreme south, he conquered Ceylon, though, in AD 1029 south Ceylon became free from his control. He foiled the attempt of the Chalukya Jayasimha to conquer Vengi and, during his later years, attacked and plundered the kingdom of the Chalukya king, Somesyara I. The Western Chalukyas accepted the river Tungabhadra as the dividing line between their boundary and the boundary of the Chola kingdom. Proceeding through Kalinga, Orissa and Bastara, Rajendra attacked West Bengal and defeated the Pala ruler Mahipala. But he annexed no territory in north India. His main purpose in attacking the north was to get fame. His navy attacked the Srivijaya Empire which was a great naval power in South-East Asia at that time and forced it to accept his suzerainty. Thus, he increased the prestige of his naval power in the Arabian Sea and succeeded in safeguarding the trade of his empire on high seas.

Rajendra, thus, was a great conqueror. He was the first Indian ruler who established the supremacy of Indian Navy in the Arabian Sea. Besides, he was a capable ruler and a good administrator. He patronized art and learning. He gave liberal grants to educational institution. He founded the city of Gangaikonda-Cholapuram and made it his capital. Therein he built beautiful palaces and temples and a lake named Cholagangam which was sixteen miles in length. Rajendni proved even greater than his father, Rajaraja the Great, and expanded the glory of the Cholas which was established by his father.

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Rajadhiraj I (AD 1044-1052)

Rajendra was succeeded by his son Rajadhiraj I. Mostly, he remained busy in suppressing the revolts in Ceylon and the Pandya territory. In AD 1052, he succeeded in defeating the Chalukya ruler Somesvara but was himself killed during the course of the battle. He was succeeded by his younger brother, Rajendra II.

Rajendra II (AD 1052-1063)

Rajendra fought against the kings of Ceylon and the western Chalukyas and succeeded in defending the frontiers of his empire.

Virajendra I (AD 1063-1970)

Rajendra II was succeeded by his younger brother Viranjendra I. He kept his suzerainty over Ceylon and Srivijaya empire and defeated the Chalukya rulers Somesvara I and and Somesvara II.

Athirajendra

He succeeded his father Virajendra but he was soon killed in a rebellion. The main dynasty of the Cholas ended with the death of Athirajendra. After him Kulottunga I (AD 1070-1118) the great-grandson of Rajaraja I, ascended the throne. Kulottunga I defeated the ruler of the Pandya kingdom and that of Kerala. He married his daughter to a Ceylonese Prince and kept diplomatic relations with Kannauj, Kamboja, China and Burma. He also brought prosperity to his empire.

Kulottunga I

He was succeeded by Vikram Chola, Kulottunga II, Rajaraja II, Rajadhiraja II, Kulottunga III, Rajaraja III and Rajendra III respectively, who, put together, ruled for more than a century. But the powers of the Cholas gradually declined during their reign. The neighbouring rulers of Pandya, Hoysala, Kakatia and Eastern Gangas constantly threatened their territory and went on occupying parts of it. Ultimately, in AD 1258, the Pandya ruler Sundara forced the Chola Rajendra III to accept his suzerainty and that finished the independent status of the Cholas.

9.5.2 Importance of the Cholas

The Chola dynasty was one of the most important ruling dynasties in ancient India. It maintained a well organized administrative system. It is famous for its promotion to local-self government.

The central and provincial administration

The king was the head of the administration and all powers were concentrated in his hands. The Chola king assumed high sounding titles. Tanjore, Gangaikonda-cholapuram, Mudikondan and Kanchi remained the various capitals of different Chola rulers at various times. The Chola Empire was extensive and prosperous and the rulers enjoyed high powers and prestige. The images of the kings and their wives were also maintained in various temples which indicated that they believed in the divine origin of kingship. Yet, the Chola rulers were not despotic rulers. They accepted the welfare of their subjects as their primary duty. The Chola rulers started the practice of electing their successor or *Yuvaraja* and of associating him with administration during their life-time. That is why there were no wars of succession among the Cholas. The

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position of the king was hereditary and, normally, the eldest son of the king was nominated as the successor. But sometimes, if the eldest was found incompetent, the successor was chosen from amongst the younger sons or the brothers of the king.

The king was assisted by ministers and other high officials of the state in administration who were given high titles, honours and lands as *Jagirs*. The Cholas had organized an efficient bureaucracy and their administration was successful.

Army and warfare

The Cholas maintained powerful armies and navies. The infantry, the cavalry and the war elephants constituted the main parts of the army of the Cholas. It seems that the Cholas had seventy regiments. Probably, the army consisted of 1,50,000 soldiers and 60,000 war elephants. The Cholas spent huge amounts to maintain an efficient cavalry and imported the best horses from the Arab countries to equip their army. During peace time, the army remained in cantonments where proper arrangements were made for its training and discipline. The kings kept their personal bodyguards, called the *Veiaikkaras,* who were sworn to defend the persons of the king at the cost of their lives. The soldiers and the officers, who distinguished themselves in war, were given titles like *Kshatriyasikhamani.* The credit of maintaining a strong navy, both for offensive and defensive purposes, went first to the Cholas among Indian rulers. The Cholas attacked and forced the kings of Ceylon and Srivijaya Empire to accept their suzerainty, defended their trade on high seas and became the masters of the Bay of Bengal. But, the Cholas did not observe the Hindu morality of warfare, i.e., *Dharma Yudha.* The Chola army caused much injury to the civil population, including women. The soldiers engaged themselves in loot, destruction, killing of civil population and dishonouring of woman during warfare.

Revenue system

The primary source of the income of the state was land revenue. Rajaraja I took one-third of the produce as land revenue from his subjects. The revenue was collected both in cash and kind. The land was divided into different categories on the basis of its productivity and it was measured and revenue was charged upon the actual produce. The revenue was charged directly from the cultivators but, in certain cases, from the entire village as one unit. The officers observed severity while collecting the revenue. However, the Cholas also tried their best to develop artificial means of irrigation. They built several dams on the river Kaveri and also made lakes for the purposes of irrigation. Besides land revenue, taxes on trade, various professions, forests, mines, irrigation, salt etc., were other sources of the income of the state. The main items of expenditure of the state were the expenses of the king and his palace, the army, the civil services and public welfare works.

Administrative divisions

The empire was divided into *Mandalas* for the convenience of administration. They were either seven or eight in number. The *Mandalas* were divided into *Nadus* and *Nadus* into *Kurrams* or *Kottams*. Every *Kurram* had several villages, which were the smallest units of administration.

Local self-government

The arrangement of local self-government has been regarded as the basic feature of the administration of the Cholas. Probably, no other ruling dynasty of either north or south

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had such an extensive arrangement of local self-government at different units of the administration as the Cholas. The *Mahasabha* of the village played an important role in the administration of the village. Besides, there was a provision of representative bodies at the level of *Kurram, Nadu* and *Mandal* as well, which all helped in the administration. An assessment can be made of the nature of the local self-government by the rights and duties of the *Mahasabha* of the village.

For the formation of *Mahasabha,* first a village was divided into thirty wards. The people of each ward used to nominate a few people possessing the ownership of about an acre and a half of land, residence in a house built at one's own site, aged between thirty-five and seventy, possessing knowledge of one Veda and a Bhahsya. Moreover, he or any of his relations must not have committed any wrong or received punishment. Besides those who had been on any of the committees for the past three years and those who had been on the committee but had failed to submit the accounts, were excluded from being the nominees. From among the persons duly nominated, one was chosen from every ward to be the member of the *Mahasabha.* At this stage the members were not chosen by election but by the lot-system. Names of persons were written on palm-leaf tickets which were put into a pot and shuffled and a young boy was directed to take out the ticket. The same procedure was followed for the formation of the different committees of the *Mahasaha.* Thus, the *Mahasabha* of a village was constituted of educated and economically independent persons of the village and in all, had thirty members. There were also different committees of the *Mahasabha* to look after different things concerning the village like the judicial committee, the garden committee, the committee to look after tanks and irrigation, etc.

The *Mahasabha* enjoyed wide powers. It possessed proprietary rights over community lands and controlled the private lands within its jurisdiction. The central or the provincial government consulted the *Mahasabha* of the village concerning any change in the management of the land of the village. It helped the officials of the government in the assessment of production and revenue of the village. It collected revenue and, in cases of default, had the power to sell the land in question by public auction. It looked after the reclamation of waste land and forest which were within its jurisdiction. It imposed taxes and appointed paid officials to look after the administration of the village. The judicial committee of the *Mahasabha,* called the *Nyayattar,* settled cases of disputes, both civil and criminal. It looked after the roads, cleanliness, lighting of temples, tanks, rest-house and security of the village.

Thus, the *Mahasabha* looked after the civic, police judicial, revenue, and all other functions concerning the village. It was an autonomous body and functioned mostly independently. The central government interfered in its working only when it was felt absolutely necessary. Thus, the villages under the administration of the Cholas were practically 'little republics' which drew admiration from even British administrators. Dr K.A. Nilakanta Sastri maintains that it was an able bureaucracy which in various ways fostered a lively sense of citizenship. There was a high standard of administrative efficiency and purity. The highest ever attained by the Hindu state.

Social condition

Society was based upon *Varnaashramdharma* but different varnas or castes lived peacefully with each other. Inter-caste marriages were permitted and it had led to the formation of different sub-castes. The position of women was good. They were free

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from many restrictions which came to be imposed on them by the Hindu society later on. There was no *purdah* system and women participated freely in all social and religious functions. They inherited and owned property in their own right. There were stray cases of *Sati* but it was not a widely practiced system. Normally monogamy was the prevalent rule but the kings, the Samantas and the rich people kept several wives. The *Devadasi* system was also in vogue and there were prostitutes in cities. The slave system was also prevalent.

Economic condition

The Chola Empire enjoyed a widespread prosperity. The Cholas had arranged for proper means of irrigation which had helped in the reclamation of waste land and increased agricultural production which provided the base for the prosperity of both the rulers and the ruled. The Cholas maintained peace and security within their territory, constructed well-connected roads, provided safety to travellers and traders and, above all, kept a strong navy on high seas. In such conditions, trade, both internal and external, grew which resulted in increased prosperity of the state. The traders had brisk trade with China, Malaya, Western gulf and the island South-East Asia. Industries also grew up under the protection of the Cholas. Cloth, ornaments, metals and their different products, production of salt and constructions of images and temples were a few important industries which grew and prospered under the protection of the Cholas.

9.6 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- The Chalukyas grew powerful in the Deccan towards the middle of the sixth century AD. As to who they were is a matter of great controversy. Different scholars hold different opinions regarding the origin of the Chalukyas.
- There were three main branches of the Chalukyas: (i) The Chalukyas of Badami or the early Western Chalukyas (ii) The Later Western Chalukyas of Kalyani (iii) The Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi.
- The foundation of the Pratihara Kingdom was laid by Harichandra near modern Jodhpur in the middle of the sixth century AD. Harichandra was a *Brahmin* and his sons from his *Kshatriya* wife established the ruling dynasty of the Pratiharas.
- The Palas contested for the sovereignty of Kannauj against the Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas, and established an extensive empire with Bengal as its base. They provided it unity, prosperity and glory for about four centuries.
- The kingdom of the Cholas included modern Madras, several other districts of Tamil Nadu and the greater part of the Mysore state.

9.7 KEY TERMS

- **Purdah:** Practice of concealing women from men.
- **Devadasi:** A religious tradition in which girls are dedicated to a deity or to a temple.
- **Nadu:** One of the important administrative units of the Cholas.
- **Kurram or Kottam:** A group of villages.

Check Your Progress

7. Fill in the blanks.
   (a) The _____ arrangement of _____ has been regarded as the basic feature of the administration of the Cholas.
   (b) In the Chola Kingdom, the Mandalas were divided into _____.
8. State whether True or False.
   (a) For the formation of a Mahasabha, a village was divided into fifty wards.
   (b) The Hindu morality of warfare is called Dharma Yudha.

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9.8 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. (a) Chalukya1 (b) Pulkesin II
2. (a) True (b) True
3. (a) Kannauj (b) Brahmin
4. (a) True (b) True
5. (a) Devapala (b) Mihirbhoj
6. (a) True (b) False
7. (a) Local self-government (b) Nadus
8. (a) False (b) True

9.9 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. List the main Pala rulers.
2. Who were the Pratiharas? List the primary rulers with a special reference to their kingdoms.
3. What were the primary causes behind the fall of the Pratiharas?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Do you agree that the Chola kingdom was the most powerful empire of the South? State your reasons for the same.
2. Give an account of the socio-economic and political conditions of the Chola Empire.
3. Discuss the features of the local self-government system under the Cholas.

9.10 FURTHER READING

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UNIT 10 FOREIGN INVASIONS IN INDIA

Structure

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10.0 INTRODUCTION

In the 10th and 11th centuries, small regional kingdoms emerged in north India. Beyond the north-west frontiers of India, in Central Asia, kingdoms and empires were rising to prominence under Islamic influence. During that process, two kingdoms emerged prominent around the two cities of Ghazna and Ghur. The situation in Central Asia brought the rulers of these two kingdoms to India which led to the foundation of the Delhi Sultanate being laid.

In this unit, you will study about the numerous foreign invasions that took place in India namely, by the Arabs and the Turks which ultimately led to the establishment of the Muslim rule in India.

10.2 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Interpret the establishment of the Turkish rule in India
- Discuss the various invasions of Mahmud Ghaznavi
- Analyse the causes of downfall of the Ghaznavid Empire
- Describe the invasions of Muhammad Ghori
- Explain the causes behind the success of the Turks

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10.2 COMING OF THE ARABS AND TURKS

Towards the end of the ninth century, feudal lords of Persian origin ruled over Transoxiana, Khorasan and some parts of Iran. They had to engage constantly in a fight against the Turkish tribes on their northern and eastern frontiers. This conflict led to the emergence of a new type of soldier known as Gazi. The Turks were mostly worshippers of natural forces and so were Kafirs in the eyes of the Muslims. Therefore, the Gazi soldiers fought against them for political and religious causes. With the passage of time, many Turks became Muslims and started propagating and protecting Islam. They came into conflict with the non- Muslim Turkish tribes. A Turkish slave of the Samanid dynasty named Alaptigin who was the governor of Khurasan supported the opposing faction in the struggle for succession in Bokhara. Fearing punishment, he proceeded towards Ghazni and subsequently consolidated his position there. He occupied certain parts in Central Asia and laid the foundation of an independent dynasty at Ghazni and started ruling from Ghazni as his capital.

On the other side, the Samanid dynasty fell and the Gaznavids undertook the task of protecting the Islamic regions against the non-Islamic tribes of central Asia. After Alaptigin, his son Abu Izhak and then slaves such as Baltagin, Pirai and Subuktugin became his successors. Subuktugin was the only one who was successful. Subuktigin (977–999) turned his attention towards India. Around AD 980, he dispatched a Turkish army against Jaipal in which Jaipal's army had to suffer a heavy loss and he was forced to surrender for peace. He is said to have occupied the whole of Balkh Khurasan, Afghanistan and in addition, the north-western frontier of India before his death. He was succeeded by his son Mahmud (999–1030) to the throne of Ghazni. With his accession, a new chapter started in the history of Islam. He defeated the ruler of Seitain, Khalif-bin- Ahmad and obtained the title of Sultan. Though his empire and his title enjoyed the sanction of the Khalifa but the basis of his power was conquest. Medieval Indian historians consider Mahmud of Ghazni as a soldier of Islam because of his struggle against the tribal invaders of Central Asia.

Many scholars consider him as the first Sultan-i-Azam. This title is not found inscribed on his coins where he is simply referred to as Amir Mahmud and also, this title was not given to him by the Khalifa. The saying of Barthold appears to be correct that in the times of Mahmud Ghazni the Ghaznavid Empire appeared in its best form. He first obtained the province of Mansur from Caliph Kadir and then acquired legal recognition and prestige for his empire. The sentiment of Ghazni became more consolidated during his reign. Besides, at this time, the Turks gained predominance in the army and administration taking place at this time. The proud Persians had never accepted the language and culture of the Arabs. Thus, before their advent in India, the Turks had not only become the followers of Islam but also had become Persianised. This very culture was propagated by them in India from AD 1200 onwards. Between AD 1000 and AD 1026, Mahmud of Ghazni carried out seventeen invasions of India. His chief invasions were against the Hindushahi rulers of Punjab – Jaipal (AD 1000– 1001) and Anandpala (1008–1009), against Nagarkot (Kangra) (1009), Thaneswar (AD 1014), Mathura and Kanauj (1018–1019), against Kalinjar (1021), and Somnath in AD 1020. Mahmud Ghazni died in AD 1030 (see Figure 10.1).

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Fig. 10.1 Empire of Mahmud of Ghazni

Historians do not agree on the motives inspiring Mahmud of Ghazni for his Indian invasions. Some historians describe him as a soldier in the cause of Islam and say that he exhibited his religious fanaticism by breaking the idols of Hindu Gods and forcibly converting people to Islam. However, nowadays this opinion is not accepted. Actually, his main ambition was to acquire wealth even though he was a breaker of idols. He had no wish to squander away this wealth in India itself. He wanted to utilize it for establishing a vast central Asian empire. This is accepted without any controversy that he had no wish to establish a permanent empire in India because he always returned to Ghazni. He made no arrangements regarding his conquered areas nor did he annex the conquered areas to his empire. Only Punjab and Multan were made an integral part of his Ghaznavi Empire.

The question now arises that if Mahmud had so desired, he could have established his empire in India. It is not easy to answer this question. From one point of view, it can be said that it was impossible for him to do because neither did he desire it himself nor perhaps was it possible then to keep a vast country like India under control. There were no Muslim settlements at that time. The small number of people who had embraced Islam had not perhaps done so willingly and apart from other problems, language itself presented a serious problem. Probably his soldiers also did not want to stay permanently in India. Under such circumstances, it was not possible for him to set up a permanent empire in India. On the other hand, seeing the contemporary political conditions, it can be maintained that if he wanted he could have done it because there was no powerful Central Government in India at that time. The country was divided into many small states and they were jealous of each other. The feeling of nationalism was totally absent and they gave more importance to their selfish interests than to the national interest. Hindu society was suffering from many evils like the caste system;

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the special prerogatives were acceded to the Brahmins and Kshatriyas. This also could have been a boon for Mahmud. But the historical fact is that Mahmud could not take advantage of this. The credit for this goes to Ghori and his successors. In fact, Mahmud was a conqueror and not an empire builder. So neither did he evince any interest in it nor could he do it.

10.2.1 Alberuni

Coming to India at the time of Mahmud Gaznavi's Indian invasion, Abu Rehn Alberuni's real name was Muhammad bin Ahmad. He was originally an inhabitant of Khiva in the kingdom of Khwarizam. He was born in AD 973. Mahmud had acquired him during his Khwarizam campaign in AD 1017. He wrote a book called *Tehkikat-e-Hind*. He remained in India for many years and studied Indian philosophy, astrology and Sanskrit language. He translated many Sanskrit works into Persian. He wrote a book *Alkanunal-Masudi* on astrology. In his work *Tehkikat-e-Hind,* he has beautifully analysed Indian mathematics, history, geography and astronomy.

Alberuni's description of India

(i) **Social conditions:** Alberuni writes that the contemporary Indian society was ridden with the rigid caste system. The country was suffering from many evil practices like child marriage, prohibition of widow remarriage, Sati and Johar. There was no feeling of unity and equality in the Indian society. In his *Tehkikate-Hind* he mentions the narrow outlook of Indians as saying that Hindus are of the belief that there is no country like India, no king like theirs and no science like theirs. The caste system had reached its peak during the time of Mahmud's invasions. Alberuni mentioned that in the society only Brahmins had the right to attain salvation. Apart from getting high posts, Brahmins were exempted from payment of taxes. However, it is the caste system that helped the Turks to achieve success in India. The system was bad even from individual and social angles. It led to the degradation of the individual and social interests and also infused hatred in the minds of the individuals towards each other.

(ii) **Religious conditions:** Alberuni's account tells us that at that time, idol worship was prevalent in the country and there was a lot of wealth in the temples. Common people believed in many gods but the scholars and educated people believed in the unity of the Godhead. Alberuni writes that the Hindus believed in one God who is permanent, all powerful and all pervading. Speaking about the evils of Brahmanism, he says that the Brahmins have the sole privilege for many things like offering prayers, reading the Vedas and performing sacrifices before the fire. These things could not be done by anybody else. If it was revealed that the Sudras and the Vaishyas had tried to read the Vedas, they were considered guilty and their tongues were cut.

(iii) **Political conditions:** It is clear from Alberuni's account that the country was divided into many small parts at that time, more famous among them being Kanauj, Kashmir, Sind, Malwa, Gujarat and Bengal. In the South also there were many small kingdoms. All these kingdoms were independent, jealous of each other and were constantly engaged in quarrels against one another. According to him, the Hindushahi dynasty ruled in Kabul and Punjab. In the ninth century, the place of Hindushahi was taken by Brahmanshahi whose important ruler was Anandpala. Alberuni makes a mention of the absence of the feeling of nationalism among the Indians and that they gave more importance to their individual selfish interest as

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compared to the national interests. About the Indian judicial system he writes that the criminal law was mild in India and the Brahmins were exempted from death punishment. The limbs of serious offenders were amputated. The judges dispensed justice based on the evidence of the witness. Punishment was given according to the cost of the theft committed. About the land system and taxation, Alberuni mentions that the king was not the owner of the land; he took only the land tax. The king took from the peasants 1/6th of the produce as tax but the Brahmins were exempted even from this.

(iv) **Indian philosophy:** Alberuni has unreservedly praised Indian philosophy. He was especially impressed by the Upanishads and the spiritual philosophy propounded in the Bhagvad Gita. But he also mentioned that the Indians did not evince much taste for writing chronological history. According to him, the Indians knew very little about the chronology of historical events and if pressed too much, they start narrating stories. He also points out towards the fact that the Indians do not give much importance to the exchange of knowledge. In brief, Alberuni was a great scholar of his time. He was accorded great honour in the court of Mahmud. His description is very useful. His descriptions about India and his other works are of great value. That is why, in November 1971, the scientists, historians, linguists and sociologists of Asia in a conference held at New Delhi had requested UNESCO to get his works translated in all-important languages of the world. Till now many of his works have been translated into many languages of the world. Alberuni's account of India is very useful for the students of Indian history.

Check Your Progress

1. Fill in the blanks.
   (a) The _____ were mostly worshippers of natural forces.
   (b) _____ has unreservedly praised Indian philosophy.
2. State whether True or False.
   (a) After the fall of the Samanid dynasty, the Gaznavids undertook the task of protecting the Islamic regions against the non-Islamic tribes of central Asia.
   (b) According to scholars, under Mahmud Ghazni, the Ghaznavid Empire appeared in its worst form.

10.3 GHAZANAVIS

Mahmud Ghaznavi carried out 17 invasions of India between AD 1000 and 1028. A brief description of which is as follows:

Invasion of the frontier regions

Mahmud Ghaznavi established his control over some cities of the north-western frontier and a few forts in the vicinity of Peshawar for the first time in AD 1000. After making administrative arrangement for them, he went back to Ghazni.

Attack on Peshawar

In AD1001 Mahmud invaded Peshawar, an important part of Jaipal's dominions. Jaipal sent a big army of 12000 horses, 30000 infantry and 300 elephants to face 15000 horses of Mahmud but Jaipal was defeated and imprisoned along with a few of his soldiers. He concluded a treaty with Mahmud by which he promised 25 elephants and 25000 Dinars to Mahmud. Due to a feeling of severe humiliation, Jaipal could not survive for long and he committed suicide after giving over the kingdom to his son, Anandpal.

Attack on Mera and Bhatinda

In AD1004 Mahmud attacked Mera and Bhatinda. The ruler Biji Raj defended the fort bravely for 3 days but had to surrender on the fourth day. He had to hand over to Mahmud 280 elephants and enormous wealth. Like Jaipal, he also ended his own life.

Attack on Multan

In AD1005-6, Mahmud attacked the ruler of Multan – Abul Fath Daud (who was a follower of the Ismaili sect which Mahmud considered a rival sect). Abu Fath was

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defeated and gave 20000 gold Dirhams to Mahmud. Mahmud handed over the administration of Multan to the grandson of Jaipal called Sevakpala or Sukhpala who embraced Islam and got the name of Naushashah.

Attack on Naushashah of Multan

Naushashah gave up Islam after Mahmud went back and declared himself as an independent ruler with the name of Sukhpala. So Mahmud had to invade Multan again. Sukhapla paid him 40000 Dirhams but Mahmud kept him as a prisoner throughout his (Sukhapala's) life.

Attack on Anandpala

In AD1008, Mahmud attacked the ruler of Lahore, Anandpala. At the latter's behest the rulers of Gwalior, Kalinjar, Kanauj, Ujjain, Delhi and Ajmer formed a military confederacy. About 30,000 Khokhars of Multan also joined them. According to historian Farishta, a severe battle took place and within a short time the Khokhars murdered about 5,000 Muslims. However, an arrow hit the eye of Anandpal's elephants and he ran away from the battlefield carrying Anandpala with him. With the defeat in this battle, the joint efforts of the Hindushahis failed, Indian people and the rulers were now terrified by Mahmud.

Attack on Nagarkot

In AD 1009, Mahmud launched an attack on Nagarkot (Kangra). He plundered enormous wealth from its temples.

Attack on Daud, the ruler of Multan

In AD 1011, Mahmud Ghaznavi again attacked Daud because he had declared himself independent. He was defeated and imprisoned by Mahmud.

Attack on Thaneswar

In AD 1014, Mahmud attacked Thaneswar, plundered its temples and broke its idols. He brought the fort under his control.

Attack on Trilochanpala

In AD 1013, Mahmud attacked Nandan, the capital of Anandpala and his successor, Trilochanpala (near the salt mines of Khakda on Jhelums). He was defeated and his kingdom was annexed to Mahmud's empire.

Attack on Kashmir

In AD1015, Mahmud proceeded against Bhimpala, the son of Anandpala, in Kashmir. Kashmir was plundered and thousands of persons were taken away as slaves.

Attack on Mathura and Kanauj

In AD 1018, Mahmud attacked Mathura. At that time it was the most thickly populated and prosperous city of northern India. Mahmud ransacked the city and after deserting the temples and idols proceeded to Kanauj. The King of Kannuaj, Rajpala fled from the city upon hearing about the arrival of Mahmud here also. Mahmud exhibited his barbarism. He took away from this city 2 crore Dirhams, 53000 prisoners and 350 elephants.

Attack on Kalinjar and Gwalior

In protest against the cowardice exhibited by the ruler of Kanauj, king of Kalinjar and his son Vidyadhar entered into a treaty with the king of Gwalior and attacked Kanauj. When Mahmud heard of this development, he attacked Kalinjar and Gwalior and established his control over them.

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Attack on Punjab and its incorporation into the Ghaznavid Empire

In AD1021, he attacked those areas of Punjab which were free till that time. Many people were robbed, murdered or forced to embrace Islam. After this, Punjab was fully annexed to the Ghaznavid Empire.

Attack on Kalinjar

In AD1022, Mahmud again attacked Kalinjar with the object of acquiring wealth. Laden with enormous wealth he again went back to Ghazni.

Attack on Somnath

Among the invasions of Mahmud Ghaznavi, his invasion of Somnath (Kathiawad) is the most famous. He proceeded from Ghazni at the head of a big army on 17 October, 1024. In January 1025, he reached Anilwara, the capital of Gujarat, from where he proceeded towards the famous Shiva temple of Somnath. Famous historians have described the glory of Somnath on the basis of contemporary accounts saying that more than 1 lakh pilgrims used to assemble every day, one thousand priests used to perform the worship ceremony, thousands of devdasis performed dances and songs. Various kings of India had granted about 1000 villages to the temple. The temple had about fourteen beautiful golden minarets. It is said that Bhimdev, the king of Gujarat ran away without resisting Mahmud. The common people gave resistance for three days. After fierce bloodshed, Mahmud entered the temple. The priests repeatedly sent requests to Mahmud to take away as much wealth as he liked but to spare the Sivalinga but Mahmud paid no heed to this and broke the idol of Siva into pieces. The loot of the temple yielded wealth worth more than 20 lakh Dinars. But on way back he faced resistance by the Jats. He reached his Capital Ghazni in 1026.

His last attack against the Jats

In AD1027, Mahmud attacked the Jats inhabiting the area between the Indus river and Multan with the help of a navy. Jats fought bravely but were defeated. After loot and plunders, Mahmud reached Ghazni. He died there in AD 1030. At that time, he was 59 years of age.

Motive behind Mahmud's invasions

(i) ***Acquisition of wealth:*** Most historians are of the opinion that the major aim of Mahmud's Indian invasions was the acquisition of wealth with which he aimed to establish an empire in Central Asia. That was the reason behind his making the temples and idols the target of his attack. The temples were the repositories of gold, silver, diamonds and cash money. Famous historians Habib and Zafar are the propagators and supporters of this view. According to Prof. Habib it was not strange that like the Catholic Church of Europe, the Hindu temples also attracted powerful and cruel invaders to do some unholy act. To call Mahmud's invasions 'Jihad' would be a big mistake. It would be more appropriate to say that he carried out terrible raids on the temples in order to seek their wealth. This fact can be corroborated by the fact that during peacetime no raids on temples were carried out. It was only at the time of the war that the temples were deserted in order to win the sympathy and support of the Muslims and Mahmud took away enormous wealth. Similarly, historian Zafar writes that Mahmud was more a conqueror than a religious propagator. To say that he carried out repeated attacks on India in order to spread Islamic religion would be wrong both historically and psychologically.

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Lanepoole also expressed similar views and wrote that if Mahmud could hope to acquire wealth by looting Baghdad, he would have attacked and plundered that famous seat of Caliphate in the same cruel manner as he attacked and looted the Hindu temple of Somnath. Now the most important object of Mahmud's attacks is considered to be his ambition to acquire wealth. Some other objectives are as follows:

(ii) **Religious motive:** According to contemporary Muslim historians, the object of Mahmud's Indian invasions was the propagation of Islam. According to them, Mahmud had vowed at the beginning of his reign that he would carry out an annual invasion on India to propagate his religion. The court historian of Mahmud, Utbi, has written that Mahmud at first wanted to attack Seistan but later on thought it proper to carry on a Jihad against India. Many historians agree with this and hold that because of this motive, Mahmud carried out seventeen invasions of India, attacked the temples and broke the idols. He forced many non-Muslim people to embrace Islam. It is said that the contemporary Muslim world praised these efforts of Mahmud. The Caliph held a special Durbar to felicitate him. But modern historians Muhammad Habib, Khalik Ahmad Nizami and Zafar have disproved this theory by citing many examples. Prof. Habib writes that the barbaric acts of Mahmud did not help in the propagation of Islam but downgraded it in the eyes of the world. Habib and Nizami, at other places, said that there is no principle in Islamic law which supports or encourages temple destruction. Mahmud attacked India thinking that it would prove his faith towards Islam and he would acquire prestige in the Muslim world. Still, the basic motives behind his invasions were the acquisition of wealth and political motives (see Figure 10.2).

(iii) **To gain elephants:** Some historians consider that the acquisition of elephants from India was an additional cause behind his Indian invasions. They say that in all his invasions of India after AD 1000 Mahmud made use of elephants. Therefore, it can be surmised that Mahmud attacked India to in order acquire elephants for his army. From India he got both the elephants and the 'Mohave's'.

(iv) **Ambition for prestige:** Another point of view is that Mahmud carried out repeated attacks on India inspired by his desire to acquire prestige. He had come to know of the weakness of Indian rulers during the lifetime of his father. He had full hope of success in India. Many Muslim travellers had been to India before the Indian invasions of Mahmud. From them he had acquired the necessary geographical information which was helpful to him in carrying out his Indian invasions. Like many other conquerors, Mahmud also was desirous of extending his empire and acquiring prestige. He had annexed many parts of western Punjab to his empire with this explicit purpose only.

(v) **Acquisition of artisans:** Some scholars held that one object of Mahmud's invasions was the acquisition of skilled artisans. He was very fond of constructing beautiful buildings. With this aim he had carried with him many skilled artisans.

(vi) **Political motives:** Many historians hold that the basic and real motive of Mahmud's invasions was political. Their contention is that his Indian invasions were a mere instrument for the acquisition of wealth. The ultimate objective was the establishment of a Turk-Persian empire in Central Asia. This has been proved undoubtedly that Mahmud's aim was definitely not the establishment of a permanent empire in India. He used to return to Ghazni after every successful invasion. In fact, Mahmud considered it impossible to rule over two empires – that of Ghazni and India. Even a fertile land like Punjab was annexed by him to his Ghaznavid Empire as late as AD 1021–1022.

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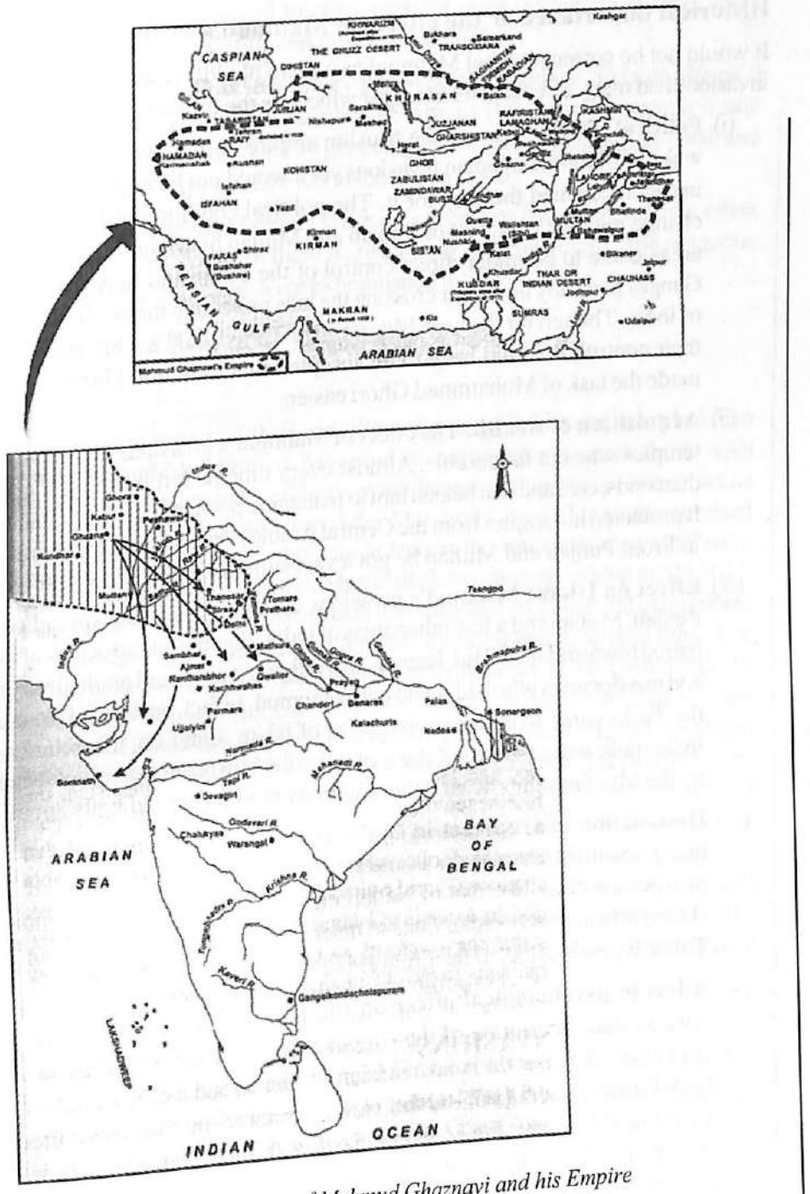

Fig. 10.2 Campaigns of Mahmud Ghaznavi and his Empire

In essence, it can be said that the nature of Mahmud Gaznavi's Indian invasion was not religious. His purpose was to amass wealth from India to gain assistance for the establishment of a vast and permanent Ghaznavid empire in Ghazni. He did not try to establish an empire in India. He made no permanent administrative arrangement for his conquered territory. In his reign of 27 years, he carried out 17 invasions in India. Thus, he could not literally fulfill his ambition of an annual invasion of India because many a times he got entangled in the wars in Central Asia. From every Indian invasion he got enormous wealth. He invaded areas from Kashmir in the north to Kalinjar in the south and Kanauj in the east to Somnath in the west. He was most vigorously opposed by the Shahi ruler Jaipal. His invasions of Nagarkot, Mathura, Kanauj and Somnath yielded him enormous wealth.

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Historical importance or the effects of Mahmud's invasions

It would not be correct to label Mahmud as a mere plunderer and ignore his role. His invasions had many effects chief amongst which are the following:

(i) **Political effects:** Though the Muslim empire in India was not founded in the wake of Mahmud's Indian invasions yet it would not be improper to say that his invasions opened the way for it. The political condition of India underwent a change with the conquest of Punjab and Multan by Mahmud Ghaznavi. These areas came to be under direct control of the Turks and they could invade the Ganges plain any time after crossing the hills protecting the north western frontier of India. Though for the next 150 years the Turks could not bring this area under their control, it would have to be accepted that Mahmud Gaznavi's invasions made the task of Muhammad Ghori easier.

(ii) **Acquisition of wealth:** The effect of Mahmud's invasions on Indian cities and temples was not favourable. Almost every time he left laden with gold, silver, diamonds, etc., and that helped him to maintain a powerful and large standing army. It protected his empire from the Central Arabic powers and helped him to expand it. From Punjab and Multan he got a vast sum of money every year as tax.

(iii) **Effect on Islam:** Mahmud's invasions definitely led to the spread of Islam in Punjab, Multan and a few other areas of India. Equally, his atrocities also inspired hatred towards Islam. But, later on, this religion was spread gradually by the saints and missionaries who had come with Mahmud. In fact, because of these invasions the Turks came to be the propagators of Islam. Later on, this religion affected Indian policies and society. Zafar writes that the Muslim invaders were accompanied by the Muslim saints as well those who worked for spreading Islam in India.

(iv) **Destruction of art pieces in India:** Because of the 17 invasions of Mahmud, many beautiful temples, idols and artistic pieces were destroyed. He destroyed prosperous cities like that of Nagarkot, Mathura, Kanauj and Somnath. Many skilled artisans were either done to death or were carried away by him as slaves. This adversely affected the progress of these artistic pieces.

(v) **Adverse psychological effect on the Rajputs:** Some historians are of the opinion that the morale of the Rajput rulers was weakened because of their continuous defeat at the hand of Mahmud Ghazni and they made no effort to gain back Punjab and Multan. But this view does not seem to be very correct because for the next 150 years the Turks could not establish their empire in India and in the first battle of Tarain in 1191, Muhammad Ghori was defeated by Prithviraj Chauhan. However, there is no doubt that the Rajputs of the period did not give up their traditional rivalries and jealousies and did not try to save Punjab from the clutches of the invaders.

(vi) **Spread of Indian art in central Asia:** Mahmud took with him many artisans. Through their creations, they not only gave prestige to Mahmud but also enriched Central Asia by contributing Indian culture.

(vii) **Description of Alberuni:** With Mahmud of Ghazni also came Muhammad bin-Ahmad who is generally known as Alberuni. His work *Kitab-ul-Hind (Tehkikat-e-Hind)* is a valuable source of information about India. In it, Alberuni had given a critique of Indian social, religious and political condition, Indian philosophy, mathematics, geography and astronomy.

(viii) **Spread of Persian culture:** After Mahmud's invasion, Lahore gradually became the centre of Persian culture. From Punjab many Persian scholars, missionaries, traders, etc., began to travel to other parts of India. In course of time, Indo-Persian administrative institutions developed in India.

(ix) **Appointment of Indians to military posts:** Some historians hold that Mahmud and his successor Mansur gave livelihood to many Hindus in the army. It is said that Mansud's army comprised 50 per cent Indians. Some of them like Tilak and Sewand Ram were appointed even at the higher posts.

(x) **Effect on royal houses:** Mahmud Gaznavi's invasions had a very adverse effect on the royal houses. Many of them were so weakened that they could not retain their hold for long and some were extinguished totally.

10.3.1 Successors of Mahmud Ghaznavi

Masud

Mahmud Ghaznavi died in AD 1030. There followed a struggle for succession between his two sons Masud and Muhammad. Mahmud is said to have expressed this wish before his death that Muhammad should rule over Ghazni and his Indian empire while Masud should get Khurasan, Iraq and Iran. After Mahmud's death, his courtiers raised Muhammad to the throne. Masud, who was in Iraq at the time, attacked Ghaznavi, imprisoned and blinded Muhammad. Thus, Masud declared himself the king in AD 1037. Indian historian, Ishwari Prasad, says that Masud was truly like his father, full of ambition, bravery and a crusading spirit. But he was a great drunkard and a corrupt man. The affairs of kingdom were looked after by his able minister Khwaja Ahmad Maimandi. In the very beginning of his reign, his Governor in Lahore – Eriarik declared himself independent. Masud defeated him and kept him prisoner. In his place, Ahmad Niyaltigin was appointed as the governor of Punjab who attacked Benaras successfully and plundered enormous wealth. But one of his associates Qazi Shiraz became jealous of him and instigated the Sultan against Niyaltigin. To punish him, the Sultan sent forces. Niyaltigin was defeated and done to death. In October 1037, Masud invaded India and advanced as far as Hansi as the head of a large army. He looted Sonipat as well and went back carrying enormous booty. But in the absence of Masud of Ghazni, the Turks of the Seljuk Empire invaded Khurasan and on 24 March AD 1040, Masud was defeated by the Seljuk Turks at a place called Dandankan and fled to Lahore.

Muhammad

Masud's army revolted against him and after deposing him raised his blind brother Muhammad to the throne. Masud was imprisoned and murdered in AD 1041. Muhammad ruled for some time but soon after the son of Masud, called Maudud, took revenge of his father's death. He got his uncle Muhammad murdered and himself became the Sultan with the help of a few of his chiefs.

Maudud

He ruled from AD 1041 to 1049. Undoubtedly, he succeeded in strengthening his position in Punjab but he could not suppress the Seljuk Turks. The Ghaznavid Empire now remained confined only to Ghazni and Punjab. The Hindu rulers of Delhi seized Hansi and Thanesor from him.

Successors of Maudud

Maudud died in AD 1049. From then to about AD 1186, twelve different Sultans of the Ghaznavid dynasty ruled over their empire. Though the Gaznavids occasionally came and plundered the Gangetic plain and the Rajputana but they were no longer a military threat to India. During this period a struggle started between the Ghaznavid Sultans and the rulers of Gor (Gor was a hilly kingdom between Ghazni and Herat). The last Sultan

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of the Ghaznavid dynasty, Khusru Malik was defeated by the Gorido ruler Muizzuddin Muhammand bin Sam also known as Muhammad Ghori. Khusru Malik took refuge in the Ghaznavid area of Lahore but here also the Gorids established their control and finally in AD 1192, Muhammad Ghori got Khusru Malik murdered.

10.3.2 Causes of the Downfall of the Ghaznavi Empire

There are many causes of the downfall of the Ghaznavi Empire which are as follows:

(i) **Lack of foresightedness on the part of Mahmud Ghaznavi:** One significant cause of the downfall of the Ghaznavid Empire was that Mahmud had paid no attention towards the consolidation of administration alongside conquest. British orientalist and archeologist Stanley Lane-Poole has written rightly that Mahmud did not have a creative mind. One does not hear of any institution which Mahmud initiated. He only tried to maintain external security in his empire and never made any plans for organizing and consolidating his empire. That is why he left behind him only an uncoordinated and disorderly empire. As soon as he breathed his last, the empire started disintegrating.

(ii) **Absence of any law of succession:** There was no definite law of succession in the Ghaznavid Empire. Therefore, after his death, there was constant warfare and intrigues in the reign of his successors. This dealt a blow to the prestige and stability of the empire.

(iii) **Incompetent successors:** Mahmud Ghazni had established a rigid military dictatorship. This sort of regime can go on only till one capable and powerful ruler succeeds another. Mahmud's successors were all incapable sovereigns. All of them were lazy and addicted to luxury. Therefore, they could not stop the advance of the Seljuk Turks and their increasing influence.

(iv) **Increasing power of the Seljuk Turks:** Mahmud's death was followed by the rise of another powerful empire, that of the Seljuks. This empire included Syria, Iran and Trans-Oxiana. This empire came into conflict with the Gaznavids for control over Khurasan. In a famous battle Ghaznavid Maudud was badly defeated and fled for refuge to Lahore. Next Ghaznavi Sultan Bahram became a puppet in the hands of the Seljuks. Actually, it was because of the Seljuks that the Ghaznavid influence became confined only to Ghazni and Punjab.

(v) **Rise of the kingdom of Ghor:** Ghor was situated between Ghazni and Herat. This small kingdom presented a big danger to the declining empire of Ghaznavi. In 1155, its ruler Alauddin Hussain invaded Ghazni, plundered it and burnt it to ashes. After the shrinking of the Ghaznavid Empire to Ghazni and Punjab only, Ghor became all the more powerful. Muhammad Ghori who had been appointed by his brother as the ruler of Ghazni gradually conquered Punjab and in AD 1192, imprisoned and murdered the Ghaznavid Sultan Khusru Malik.

Check Your Progress

3. Fill in the blanks.
   (a) Mahmud took with him many _____.
   (b) Mahmud's death was followed by the rise of another powerful empire, that of the _____.
4. State whether True or False.
   (a) Mahmud Ghaznavi carried out 17 invasions of India.
   (b) There was a definite law of succession in the Ghaznavid Empire.

ACTIVITY

Visit your nearest library and collect some interesting facts about Mahmud Ghaznavi.

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DID YOU KNOW

The most remarkable event in the history of medieval Iran was the rise of the Ghaznavid Empire.

10.4 GHORIS AND THEIR IMPACT

Muhammad Ghori (who is also known as Muizuddin Muhammad bin Sam) was the younger brother of the ruler of Ghor, Ghiyas-ud-din. He was raised to the throne of Ghazni in AD 1173. Still, he remained loyal to his brother and kept good terms with him. Though he ruled over Ghazni virtually as an independent ruler till AD 1206, he got his brother's name inscribed on his coins and behaved towards him as a feudatory does towards his lord. He carried on many invasions of India only as his brother's associate and opened the way for the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate.

10.4.1 India on the Eve of Invasion of Muhammad Ghori

Shihabuddin Muhammad Ghori was appointed as ruler of Ghazni by his brother Ghiyas-ud-din in AD 1173. Between AD 1175 and 1205, Muhammad Ghori carried out a number of invasions to deal with the enemies of the Ghor kingdom viz., Ghaznavids of Lahore and the rulers of Khwarizam. The political condition of India was as unstable at that time as it had been at the time of the last invasion by Mahmud Ghazni in AD 1027 (about 148 years before). The dominance of Gurjar Pratiharas had come to an end and there was no defector or demure monarch in India. The whole country was divided into many small kingdoms which were engaged in mutual jealousy and conflict. For the sake of convenience of study, we can divide the states of the time into three parts namely,

(a) Muslim kingdoms
(b) Rajput kingdoms and other states
(c) States of southern India

(a) Muslim states of the north

(i) **Ghaznavid kingdom of Ghazni:** In the north the Gaznavids were ruling over Punjab and their capital was at Lahore. Their hold extended from Peshawar in the northwest to Jammu in the northeast. The Southern boundary of the kingdom was unstable. They had snatched the regions of Hansi and Bhatinda from the Chauhans of Delhi. At the time of Ghori's invasion the rein of this kingdom was in the hands of an incapable and luxury loving ruler Khusru Malik.

(ii) **Multan:** The chief city of the southern part of the Indus Valley was Multan ruled at that time by Ismailia Shias. At the time of the invasion of Ghori, Carmethian dynasty ruled over his part.

(iii) **Sind:** The kingdom of Sind was under a local dynasty, the Sumras. They were also Shia Muslims. Any Muslim invader was not likely to experience much trouble in invading and conquering the above mentioned kingdoms because not only were their resources limited but also they lacked popular cooperation. The rulers of these kingdoms were all incapable and luxury loving and for the other people of these areas the success of any Muslim conqueror merely meant the replacement of one Muslim state by the other.

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(b) Rajput and the other kingdoms of north

Apart from the three Muslim kingdoms, there were many small Rajput kingdoms in the east and north of India. The following four were more prosperous of the states of north India and there were some others as well.

(i) **Chauhans of Delhi and Ajmer:** At the time of Muhammad Ghori's Indian invasions, Delhi and Ajmer were being ruled by the Chauhan ruler Prithviraj III. He was also famous as Rai Pithora. The account of Prithviraj's conquest available in Chand Bardai's *Prithviraj Raso* is not to be wholly believed; still it appears that he had impressed upon his neighbouring kingdoms his bravery and courage. He defeated and humiliated the Chalukya kings of southern India, seized Mahoba from its Chandel ruler Paramdev. The frontier forts of this kingdom were Hansi, Pakpottan and Bhatinda. Prithviraj III had forcibly carried away from the swayamvar, Sanyogita, the daughter of his neighbour king, Jaichand of Kanauj and so Jaichand harboured intense hostility towards him.

(ii) **Chalukyas of Gujarat and Kathiawad:** The most important kingdom was those of the Chalukyas in western India. Anhilwara (Paatan) was their capital. The most famous king of this dynasty was Jai Singh Siddharaj (AD 1102–1143). He defeated the Paramaras of Malwa and Guhilots of Chittor. After that, the kingdom disintegrated and only Gujarat and Kathiawad were left. At the time of Muhammad Ghori's Indian invasions, the ruler was Kanauj II.

(iii) **Gahadwalas or Rathors of Kanauj:** The kingdom of Kanauj comprised Kashi, Benaras, Allahabad, Kanauj, Oudh etc. Jaichand was its ruler when Muhammad Ghori invaded India. He had intense enmity with the ruler of Delhi and Ajmer, Prithviraj Chauhan.

(iv) **Chandelas of Bundelkhand:** In the Chandela kingdom were included Mahoba, Kalinjar, Khajuraho, Jhansi, Ajaygarh, etc. In the last quarter of the century, its ruler was Parmardidev. Prithviraj Chauhan of Ajmer had defeated him and annexed quickly a large part of his kingdom. Apart from the above mentioned four Rajput States, Pala and Sena kingdoms were other States of northern India which deserve to be mentioned.

(v) **Pala kingdom of North Bengal (Modern Bihar):** At one time the Palas ruled over entire Bengal and Bihar but their power declined in the twelfth century. Later, kings of this dynasty like Kumarpala (1126–1130), Madavpala (1130–1150) were all very weak. Many parts of the kingdom became independent. At the time of Muhammad Ghori's attack, the dominance of the Palas was limited to some parts of Bihar only.

(vi) **Senas of Bengal:** The Senas are said to have come from South India and settled in Bengal. Originally they were feudatories of the Palas. In the eleventh century they declared themselves independent in eastern Bengal. When Muhammad Ghori attacked India, Lakshman Sena (1170–1206) was ruling over eastern Bengal.

(c) Kingdoms of South India

At the time of Muhammad Ghori's invasions, the Yadavas were ruling over Devgiri, the Kakatiyas in Warrangal and the Hoysalas in Dowrasamudra. In the far south, the Cheras were ruling in Kerala and the Pandyas in Madura. All the kingdoms of south were mutually jealous of each other. They had no interest in the politics of north India and therefore no influence as well. In brief, then, at the time of Muhammad Ghori's invasion India was divided into many states. Every kingdom was busy extending its area and influence. Despite invasion by the foreign Turks, they did not apply common sense of

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putting an end to mutual quarrels in which case they might have sent their spies to read the internal situation in the Turkish kingdom. The Rajputs did not do this. The outlook of the ruling Rajputs was so narrow at the time that even at the time of external danger staring at their faces, they felt happiness at defeating their neighbouring king with the help given by the invader. This foolishness of the Rajputs became one of the causes of their downfall.

Social condition of India

The social condition of India was very defective at the time of Ghori's attack. Though in this period, a brave caste was born in the form of the Rajputs but they were often luxury-loving and fond of dance and wine. They were excessively proud by temperament. Exhibiting cunningness in war, according to them, was a very wrong thing. They never wanted to deviate from their self-imposed ideals. Indian society was ridden with untouchability, caste system, sati custom, etc. Brahmins still enjoyed a privileged position. Unity and mutual cooperation were totally lacking in the Indian society.

Religious conditions

Even before Muhammad Ghori, Islam had become popular in Sind, Multan, Lahore, etc. In rest of India, Hinduism prevailed. With the efforts of Shankaracharya, Ramanujacharya, Kumaril Bhatt and Mahadevacharya etc., Hinduism had just been reinvigorated. Other religions were Buddhism and Jainism but both of them were declining. Many orthodox people believed that God will come to their aid at the time of war or danger. In the twelfth century, a progressive and popular movement started in India known as the Lingayats who were the devotees of Shiva. They strongly criticized the caste system and boycotted practices like sacrifice, keeping fasts and going on pilgrimages. In the social sphere, they opposed child marriage and supported widow remarriage. But the influence of this sect was very limited.

Cultural conditions

Rajput rulers patronized and encouraged architecture, dancing, music and literature etc. During this period many works were composed in Sanskrit and regional languages. The capital of Paramara's Ujjain, and Vikramshil and Vikrampur etc., were important centres of education. Buddhist monasteries were also performing a useful function in this direction. Many of the Rajput kings themselves composed literary pieces. King Bhoj of Dhar was a great scholar. The famous Chalukyan minister, Bhima was not only a patron of scholars but also a great writer himself. The Jain scholars of the period also made important contributions. Most famous amongst them was Hemchandra who composed in Apabhramsh language apart from Sanskrit. After the Brahmins rose to power, Sanskrit took the place of Apabhramsh and Prakrit among higher classes. Despite this, such languages which were very close to the popular language remained prevalent and work were composed in them. Among them, popular languages like Rajasthani, Brij, Bangla, Marathi, Hindi language etc., of northern India developed. The Rajput kings got many temples, swimming pools and water reservoirs for the purpose of irrigation. In South India also there was the period of flowering of Indian civilization and culture. In the Chola period many temples were constructed in the Dravidian style. The Kailashnath temple of Kanchipuram is its best example. After the decline of the Cholas, the Chalukyas and the Hoysolas continued the task of construction of temples.

Many temples were constructed during this period in Dharwar district and in Helevid, the capital of the Hoysalas. The most beautiful among them is the Hoysaleshwar

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temple. It is the best example of the Chalukyan style. In this period, apart from statues of gods and goddesses, Yakshas and Yakashinis such as *'chitrapatas'* were also constructed in the temples in which various aspects of life like love, war, music, dance, hunting etc. are portrayed. They exhibit the deep relationship existing between the social and religious life during that period. For the common people the temple was not only a place of worship but also a centre of social and cultural life. In south India, many works were composed in Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu and Kannada languages. The period between the later half of the eleventh century and the beginning of the twelfth, also referred to as the age of Kamban, was the golden age of Tamil language. The Ramayan composed by Kamban is a classic piece of Tamil language. In this period, the literary form of Kannada language came into prominence. The Chalukyas and the Hoysalas extended their patronage to the Kannada literature also along with Telugu literature. A scholar, Nannaiya Begaa began translating the Mahabharata into Telugu in the time of the Chalukyas. The work was completed by Tikkana in the thirteenth century.

10.4.2 Indian Invasions of Muhammad Ghori

Muhammad Ghori launched his first attack on India in AD 1175. Passing through the Gomal Pass, he came as far as Multan and Uchh and brought these two areas under his control.

Unsuccessful attempt to reduce Gujarat

In AD 1178, he invaded India a second time through the Rajputana desert in Gujarat. But the ruler of Gujarat (Mulraj II or Bhimdeva I) defeated him badly near mount Abu and he fled for his life. After this, the defeated Ghori came to the conclusion that it was essential to have Punjab as the base for the conquest of India.

Conquest of Peshawar, Lahore, Deval and Sialkot

In AD 1179, Muhammad Ghori began his efforts to end the dominance of the Gaznavids in Punjab. At that time, the Ghaznavid ruler of the Punjab was Malik Khusru. Muhammad defeated the luxury loving and incapable ruler very easily and in AD 1179–1180 established his control over Peshawar. Now, his target was Lahore. After a number of military campaigns, he finally occupied Lahore and Sialkot as well. By AD 1190, the whole of Punjab had been made a part of the Ghor Empire and Ghori began to make preparations for attacking Delhi and the Doab.

First battle of Tarain (AD 1191)

After his conquest of Punjab the frontiers of Ghori's empire had reached up to Delhi and Ajmer ruled by Prithviraj Chauhan or Prithviraj III. Like Muhammad Ghori, Prithviraj was also an expansionist. He had brought under his control not only the smaller states of the Rajputana but also the Chandela king of Mahoba. The first battles between the two adversaries were fought for the ownership of Tabarhind or Bhatinda. Prithviraj was supported by many Rajputs but Jaichand kept aloof. Muhammad Ghori's army suffered a defeat in the battle of Tarain near Thaneswar. Muhammad Ghori's life was saved by a Khilji horseman. Prithviraj next advanced towards Bhatinda and after a siege of about 13 months brought it under his control.

Prithviraj became rather contented with this conquest and did not make any further efforts to drive out the Gaznavids from Punjab completely. Shahabuddin ascribes this defeat of his to the carelessness of his Afghan, Khilji and Khurasani leaders. He humiliated many of them and imprisoned them. It is said that for one whole year Muhammad Ghori made preparations to wipe out the blot caused by his defeat in the first battle of Tarain.

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Second battle of Tarain

Muhammad Ghori launched another attack on Prithviraj Chauhan in AD 1192 to avenge his defeat in the first battle of Tarain. This time he is said to have with him about 120,000 soldiers most of were armed cavalrymen and 10,000 were horse-men carrying bows and arrows with them. Prithviraj Chauhan sent an appeal for help to all Rajput kings. This time all the other Rajput kings also joined Prithviraj with the exception of Jaichand. Prithviraj's army is said to have comprised about 30,000 soldiers and 300 elephants, soldiers comprising horse-men as well. The Turkish army this time was much more organized. Muhammad Ghori divided his army into 5 parts, four flanks to attack the Rajputs and one kept in reserve. (See Figure 10.3) Minhaj-us-Siraj wrote, 'Sultan stationed his army according to a well laid out plan. This strategy led to the defeat of the Kafirs. Allah made us victorious and enemy forces ran away.' Many Indian soldiers were killed in this battle. The Turkish army occupied the forts of Hansi, Sursuti and Samana and also conquered Ajmer. Prithviraj Chauhan was captured near Sursuti or Sirsa and was murdered either immediately or sometime after.

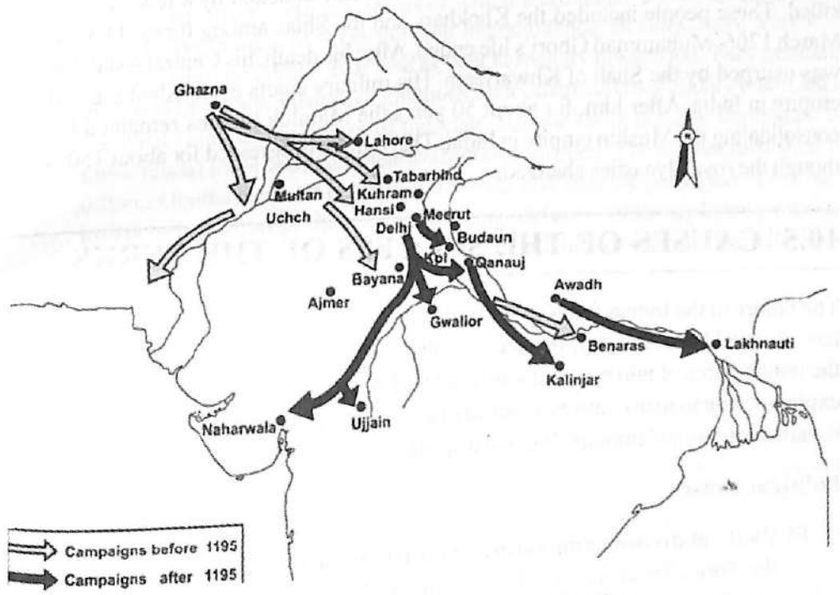

Fig. 10.3 Effects or Consequences of the Wars

The Second Battle of Tarain is very significant historically because it gave a new turn to Indian history. Delhi and Rajasthan came under the occupation of the Turks after this battle. This conquest made the determination of Ghori to establish his empire in India almost definite. The power of the Chauhans having been broken, the predominance of the Turks increased rapidly. Because of this victory, the military phase of the Turkish conquest ended and the way was now opened for the administrative organization of the Delhi Sultanate. Muhammad Ghori went back after this victory leaving the Indian possession in charge of his faithful slave, Qutubuddin Aibak. Subsequently, a central organization was established which went on till a long time. Between AD 1192 and 1206, the Gangetic – Jumna Doab was occupied by the Turks and, soon after, they conquered Bengal and Bihar as well. After establishing their hold in the Doab, the Turks had first to deal with the king of Kannuaj, Jaichand. Within the next two years Qutubuddin Aibak conquered Meerut, Baran and Koil (Aligarh) as well. Subsequently, the Turks consolidated

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their southern frontiers by conquering Bayana and Gwalior. Then Aibak took away from the Chandelas their territories of Kalinjar, Mahoba and Khajuraho. He also defeated Bhim-II-the ruler of Gujarat and Anhilwara and plundered many cities. At the time when Aibak was busy effecting the conquest of Central India, another general of Ghori Khliyasruddin Bakhtiyar Khilji (AD 1197) conquered Chunar and attacked Uddandpur, the Capital of Bihar. The ruler Indravarman surrendered and accepted his sovereignty without giving any fight. Aibak ordered Khilji to carry on the administration of the area. Then Khilji conquered Bengal from Lakshman Sen. Muhammad Ghori inherited the empire. Ghori, after the death of his brother (AD 1202), attacked the Shah of Khwarizam but he had to face defeat (AD 1203). Hearing the news of Ghori's defeat, the Khokhars of Punjab revolted against him but the rebellion was suppressed by him with the help of Qutubuddin Aibak.

From here, Ghori proceeded to Lahore and after establishing the administrative arrangement in Punjab sent Aibak for the Delhi region and himself proceeded towards Ghazni. On his way to Ghazni, when he was offering his evening prayer on the bank of Indus at a place called Damyak, Ghori was suddenly attacked by a few persons and killed. These people included the Khokhars and the Shias among them. Thus, on 10 March 1206, Muhammad Ghori's life ended. After his death, his Central Asian Empire was usurped by the Shah of Khwarizam. His military chiefs established the Muslim empire in India. After him, for about 50 years the Mamluk Sultans remained busy in consolidating the Muslim empire in India. That empire progressed for about 150 years, though the royal dynasties changed.

Check Your Progress

5. Fill in the blanks.
   (a) Muhammad Ghori opened the way for the establishment of the _____.
   (b) In AD 1179, Muhammad Ghori began his efforts to end the dominance of the _____ in Punjab.
6. State whether True or False.
   (a) Muhammad Ghori was raised to the throne of Ghazni in AD 1173.
   (b) The Second Battle of Tarain is very significant historically because it gave a new turn to Indian history.

10.5 CAUSES OF THE SUCCESS OF THE TURKS

The failure of the Indian states ruled by the Rajputs to withstand the Turkish onslaught has assumed historical significance. In a short span of fifteen years (AD 1192–1206), the major states of northern India surrendered before the Turkish army. The failure is explained due to many causes which are put together under the four heads of political, social, religious and military. We will discuss some of the major factors here.

Political causes

(i) **Political division and natural conflict and disunity:** Before the invasion of the Turks, India was divided into many states. Their rulers constantly fought against one another for the extension of their empire and the prestige of their dynasty. This resulted in an intense jealousy against each other. Due to this mutual jealousy, they could not combine against the Turks and because of their mutual conflict they became hollow from inside. The Rajputs considered it as humiliating to accept the suzerainty of any other dynasty than their own. In AD 1192, Jaichand of Kanauj did not give any help to Prithviraj against Ghori. The mutual jealousy and disunity amongst the Indians raised the morale of Shahabuddin in the same manner as the German states were defeated by Napoleon.

(ii) **Wrong criteria of choosing the rulers and administrative officials:** In India, the succession was hereditary. A person related to the ruling family only could become a king howsoever incapable he might be and a person unrelated to the ruling dynasty could not become the ruler how so ever capable he might be. According to the Islamic law the choosing of a ruler was necessary. Anybody could become a ruler if he was capable. Thus, under the Turks only those persons could enjoy power who were either capable themselves or enjoyed the loyalty of the faithful followers. These Turkish rulers invaded India. Under the Rajputs, even the basis of selection of the administrative officials was wrong. Only Rajputs or the Brahmins were appointed to high posts in the administration and in the army and that too on the basis of hereditary succession. This bred indifference among the common people towards the administration and led to the appointment of incapable persons on administrative posts on the basis of hereditary success. As against this, Turks considered all the Muslims equal without any difference on the basis of birth or caste and gave them equal opportunities. Therefore, the Turkish Sultan got the cooperation of everybody as also the suitable officials for various posts as well.

(iii) **Neglect of popular welfare activities:** Rajput rulers spent a major portion of their income not on popular welfare but on the maintenance of the army and meeting their administrative expenditure. This cut them off from their people and the public naturally remained unconcerned towards the impending danger to the state at the time of foreign invasions.

(iv) **Feudal system:** Rajput states were influenced by the feudal system. Under every ruler, there were certain areas which were under the vanquished rulers who always thought of declaring their independence. Besides, there were such officials who considered their land as their hereditary possession. They gradually assumed many administrative functions under themselves. Feudal system led to the weakening of the power of the king. He gradually became dependent on those feudal lords who had their independent armies. The armies furnished by different feudal lords did not have uniformity and after the defeat they went back to their respective areas. Since the Rajput kings did not establish diplomatic relations with the foreign countries, neither they nor their feudatories could learn the latest war strategy or tactics.

Social causes

(i) **Caste system:** Due to the caste system, Indian society was divided into many castes and subcastes. Practices like untouchability and inequality had really weakened the society. One particular section of the society had to constantly suffer the hatred of other sections. Untouchability rendered the task of division of labour in the army also impossible. It forced one single person to do all the jobs from actual fighting to filling water. The feeling of racial superiority engraved in the Rajputs made them brave and self-confident on the one hand but also made them quarrelsome, insolent and proud on the other. These factors aided in the defeat of their self imposed dignity. Rajputs very often cared only to die in the battlefield which was admirable from the point of view of a war strategy.

(ii) **Other social evils:** During the Rajput period, evil social practices like drinking, polygamy, gambling, inferior social position of women, Sati, Jauhar, female infanticide, etc., had considerably weakened the society. They adversely affected the capacity and character of the official and ruling class.

(iii) **Exploitation of landless farmers:** During the Rajput period, many landowners exploited the agriculturist's peasants and labourers. This exploited class could not be expected to fight to the best of their capacity against the foreign invaders for the defence of the country or state.

(iv) **Separatist tendencies:** The society of Rajput period having boycotted foreign contact and considering itself as the best civilization in the whole world opened

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the way for its cultural decline as well. The account of Alberuni who had come to India during the period of Mahmud Ghazni was clear proof that Indians during this period had become very separatist and narrow minded. He wrote that the Hindus believed firmly that there was no country like theirs and no scriptures like theirs; their ancestors were not so narrow minded as the contemporary generation was. He wrote that if they travelled and met others, their view would change. This separatist tendency dealt a blow to the progress of knowledge and science.

(v) **Defective basis of social division:** During the Rajput period, division of work was not according to aptitude and capability but on the basis of family and caste and so the defence of the country was the sole work of the kshatriyas. As war was considered the special function of one particular class only, a majority of population became indifferent to it. This resulted in the lack of general feeling of nationalism and so the Turks had to fight not against Indians but only a few ruling dynasties rendering their task of conquest easy.

Religious causes

(i) **Religious enthusiasm of the Turks:** Many historians ascribe the defeat of the Rajputs and the victory of the Turks to the religious enthusiasm of the Muslims which according to these historians gave them a new vigour and spirit. But historians like Habib and Nizami do not agree with this view and say that it would be a historical mistake to search in the religious enthusiasm of the Muslims the cause of their success. The religious spirit of the Arab conquerors was not an inspiring factor for them anymore. It was a temporary rather than a permanent feature or the inspiring motive of their military campaigns. About this, it can be said that many a time the leaders encouraged the soldiers by playing upon their religious sentiments though they generally did not have that religious enthusiasm which the initial Arab invaders possessed.

(ii) **The qualities of the followers of Islam:** Sir Jadunath Sirkar says that Muslims were successful because Islam had imbued some good qualities in them viz., equality and social unity, fatalism born out of complete reliance on the will of Allah and abstinence from drinking. These qualities aided to some extent the success of the Muslims and the defeat of the Rajputs.

(iii) **Ahimsa and simplicity of nature:** Some historians like Elphinston say that the Turks were by nature war like whereas Indians were by nature non-violent and simple minded. Therefore, the Turks defeated them easily. But Prof. Habib says that the argument that Indians were defeated because they were peace loving and hated war does not appear to be correct historically because in the time of the Rajput's Buddhism and Jainism had declined and in Hindu religion it was the duty of the Kshatriyas to fight. Therefore, the opinion of Elphinston does not appear to be correct. Actually, Rajputs were also war loving. The history of India during the Rajput period is a history of continuous struggles.

(iv) **Religious diversities and fatalistic attitude:** The Turks had a common religion – Islam. India was religiously divided into many religious sects so India did not have that religious and cultural unity which Islam had given to Turks. Indian religions had enjoined the theory of reward or retribution for one's acts and their fatalistic philosophy had made the Indians habituated to tolerate the miseries. This attitude of fatalism leads to many Hindu chiefs just not offering any resistance to the Turks. This also made the task of the Turks easier.

Military Causes

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(i) **Absence of any permanent standing army or feudal basis of the army:** According to the modern historians, the causes of the defeat of the Rajputs are of military character. The development had weakened the military organization of the Rajput army. The basis of their army was feudal. The various feudal contingents who together formed the Indian army made it heterogeneous whose nature or loyalty was not uniform. On the other hand, the Turks had developed a well-organized army. They recruited their soldiers at one place, trained them together, one lord disbursing the pay to all of them or the Sultan assigned an Iqta to a general to manage the army. That army was loyal only to one commander or one Sultan.

(ii) **Defective war strategy:** Undoubtedly, many of the Rajput kings (Jaipal, Bhima, Ganaj, Bhoja, Paramara, and Prithviraj Chauhan III) were no less brave than the Turks but their war tactics were backward as compared to the Turks. Habib and Nizami have written correctly that from the point of view of force, war tactics, Indian army was not aware of the development in the war strategy, taking place in the Central Asia. Mahmud Ghazni as well as Muhammad Ghori kept before them the ideal of crusade because of which the Rajputs came to be inferior commanders in their comparison. There was a difference between the organization of the armies on the battlefield and the principles of their warfare. The Turks used to divide their armies into many divisions and brought them against the enemy in turns. The Rajputs thrust their entire army in the battlefield together. Many a times the reserve army of the Turks launched a fresh assault against tired Rajput army. They encircled the Rajputs killing them in large numbers.

(iii) **Use of cavalry and use of bows and arrows by the Turks:** The basic principle of the military organization of the Turks was mobility. That was an age of horses and the greatest demand of the time was a mobile cavalry. Turkish army was greatly adept at bowmanship. Turkish horses were of a superior breed as compared to the Indian horses. Rajput army was slow and depended more upon the elephants. The Turks made an easy prey of elephants with their bows and arrows. Very often, the wounded elephants ran back trampling their own army under their feet. No doubt, even the Turks made use of the elephants in the battlefield but they used them only in the last phase of the war for the face conflict.

(iv) **Neglect of frontier security by the Rajputs:** The Turks invaded India from north-west frontier side. The Rajputs had paid no attention towards the north western frontier so it was not easy for the Turks to establish control over the fertile land of Punjab. After the occupation of Punjab, they could easily occupy other areas because if an enemy checked at the frontier itself his morale becomes low. The Rajputs neither built forts nor did they make adequate arrangement for the security of the frontier. They themselves never invaded any country outside the natural frontiers of India. They did not give importance to the fact that offense is the best defence.

(v) **Idealist attitude of the Rajputs on the battlefield:** The Rajputs considered it a great cowardly act to run away from the battlefield even in the event of defeat. For them war was a sport. Unlike the Turks whose strategy was to extricate as many of their soldiers to safety as possible, the Rajputs considered it a great

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quality to fight till the last. This consistently weakened their military power. The last soldier of the Rajput army used to die on the battlefield. Following just hollow ideals, the Rajputs considered it against their pride to attack any wounded, unarmed or fleeing enemy. The Rajputs remained struck to these ideals whereas the Turks gained victory over them. Briefly then, it can be said many political, social, religious and military factors helped in the victory of the Turks and the defeat of the Rajputs. However, the military superiority of the Turks, their superior war strategy, mobile cavalry, skill in archery and new technique of warfare in Central Asia viz., scientific division of the army, keeping a part of the army in reserve, sudden attack on the enemy in order to encircle the enemy pretending to run away themselves were some of the factors which played a role in the defeat of the Rajputs.

10.6 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- Towards the end of the ninth century, feudal lords of Persian origin ruled over Transoxiana, Khorasan and some parts of Iran. They had to engage constantly in a fight against the Turkish tribes on their northern and eastern frontiers.
- Coming to India at the time of Mahmud Gaznavi's Indian invasion, Abu Rehn Alberuni's real name was Muhammad bin Ahmad. He was originally an inhabitant of Khiva in the kingdom of Khwarizam.
- Mahmud Ghaznavi established his control over some cities of the north-western frontier and a few forts in the vicinity of Peshawar for the first time in AD 1000. After making administrative arrangement for them, he went back to Ghazni.
- There are many causes of the downfall of the Ghaznavid Empire.
- Muhammad Ghori (who is also known as Muizuddin Muhammad bin Sam) was the younger brother of the ruler of Ghor, Ghiyas-ud-din. He was raised to the throne of Ghazni in AD 1173.
- Muhammad Ghori launched his first attack on India in AD 1175. Passing through the Gomal Pass, he came as far as Multan and Uchh and brought these two areas under his control.
- The failure of the Indian states ruled by the Rajputs to withstand the Turkish onslaught has assumed historical significance. In a short span of fifteen years (AD 1192–1206), the major states of northern India surrendered before the Turkish army.

10.7 KEY TERMS

- **Fanaticism :** Belief or behaviour involving uncritical zeal, particularly for extreme religious or political causes.
- **Plunder:** Steal goods typically using force and in a time of war or civil disorder.
- **Polygamy:** The practice or custom of having more than one wife or husband at the same time.

Check Your Progress

7. Fill in the blanks.
   (a) Before the invasion of the Turks, India was divided into many _____.
   (b) The Turks invaded India from _____ frontier side.
8. State whether True or False.
   (a) The Turks had a common religion – Islam.
   (b) Rajput states were not influenced by the feudal system.

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- **Separatist:** A person who supports the separation of a particular group of people from a larger body on the basis of ethnicity, religion, or gender.
- **Annex:** Adding a territory to one's own territory by appropriation.

10.8 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. (a) Turks (b) Alberuni
2. (a) True (b) False
3. (a) Artisans (b) Seljuks
4. (a) True (b) False
5. (a) Delhi Sultanate (b) Gaznavids
6. (a) True (b) True
7. (a) States (b) north-west
8. (a) True (b) False

10.9 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What were the motives behind Mahmud's invasion?
2. Write a short note on the various successors of Mahmud Ghaznavi.
3. What were the causes of the downfall of the Ghaznavid empire?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the situation of India on the eve of invasion of Muhammad Ghori.
2. Describe the various Indian invasions of Muhammad Ghori.
3. Discuss the causes of the success of the Turks.

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