

# EVOLUTION OF INDIAN CULTURE

MA [HISTORY]  
Second Semester  
(CDOE-HIS-101-DE-52010)



**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. Late Smt. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, laid the foundation stone of the university on 4<sup>th</sup> 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 at top 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. and M.Ed. programme.

There are 37 (thirty seven) 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 ~~and~~ 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 CDOE**

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 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 endeavour to expand e-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 and Economics & Sociology from the Academic Session-2018-19. Subsequently a Post Graduate Diploma in Mass Communication and other certificate courses also have been introduced in the University.

### **Outstanding Features of Institute of Distance Education:**

- 1. At Par with Regular Mode**  
Eligibility requirements, curricular content, mode of examination and the award of degrees are on par with the colleges affiliated to the Rajiv Gandhi University and the Department(s) of the University.
- 2. 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.
- 3. 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 (a) courses and MA the attendance in CCP will be mandatory.
- 4. Field Training and Project**  
For professional course(s) there shall be provision of field training and project writing in the concerned subject.
- 5. 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.
- 6. 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

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**UNIT – I**  
**BACKGROUND OF INDIAN CULTURE**

**STRUCTURE**

- 1.0 Introduction
  - 1.1 Objectives
- 1.2 Sources of Early Indian Histories
  - 1.2.1 Archeological sources: Excavations, Inscriptions, Numismatics and Monuments
  - 1.2.2 Literary Sources: Religious Literature and Secular Literature
  - 1.2.3 Foreign Accounts
- 1.3 Indus Valley Civilization
  - 1.3.1 Geographical extent of Indus Valley Civilization
  - 1.3.2 Characteristics or Main Features
  - 1.3.3 Social Life
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  - 1.3.6 Decline of the Civilization
- 1.4 Vedic Age
  - 1.4.1 Early Vedic Age: Society, Religion, Economy and Polity
  - 1.4.2 Later Vedic age: Society, Religion, Economy and Polity
- 1.5 Summary
- 1.6 Key Terms
- 1.7 Answer to check your progress
- 1.8 Questions and Answers
- 1.9 Suggested Readings

**1.0 Introduction**

The history of India goes by its own significance. The Indian civilization is as old as the civilization of the Nile Valley of Egypt and Mesopotamia. Many ancient civilizations of the world are now either extinct or have failed to preserve their old traditions. However, the Indian Civilization has achieved greatness in preserving its age old traditions to the present day. Though India is one of the earlier civilizations of the world, we are confronted with a serious problem of paucity of necessary records for the reconstruction of its ancient history. The study of early Indian history is important for several points of views. It tells us how, when and where the people of India developed their earliest cultures. Ancient Indian history

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

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

Towards the end of the Neolithic period began the use of metals. In Indian subcontinent first time the metal was used by the Harappan people. The evidences of the use of metals have been found in the different excavation sites of Indus Valley Civilization. The sources of evidence about this civilisation are the artifacts, pottery, tools and ornaments and ruins of towns.

A new phase of Indian history starts with the advent of Aryans. The new phase is known as Vedic period or Vedic age (1500-600 BC) in the history of northern Indian Subcontinent. It gets its named from the Vedas, which are liturgical texts containing details of religion, philosophy and social customs of Hindus. The Vedic texts along side the corresponding archaeological evidences, allow for the evolution of the Vedic culture to be traced and inferred. Early Vedic Aryans were a late Bronze Age society centered in the Punjab, organized into tribes rather than kingdoms and primarily sustained by a pastoral way of life. The second half of the Vedic period was characterized by the emergence of towns, kingdoms, and a complex social differentiation distinctive to India. The Vedic period saw the emergence of a hierarchy of social classes that would remain influential. During these

periods, many parts of the sub-continent made the transition from the Chalcolithic to the Iron Age. Historians have used the Vedic texts to identify broad patterns of historical change in the north-west and upper Ganga Valley.

This unit gives a broad over view of the major sources which are very useful to reconstruct our ancient past and also you will learn about the Harappan Culture and Vedic society.

## **1.1 Objectives**

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

- Explain the archaeological sources and the foreign accounts that provide valuable information of Indian history.
- Discuss the different literary sources, like religious and secular literatures are useful for understanding ancient history.
- Assess the importance of the accounts of foreign traveler.
- Discuss the geographical extent and various features of Indus Valley Civilization.
- Discuss the town planning system, trade and commerce, religious beliefs and practices of Indus Valley Civilization.
- Get the clear idea about the salient features of early Vedic and later Vedic period.
- Trace the expansion of the Aryans in the later Vedic period.
- Describe the material life of the later Vedic people.
- Describe what kind of religion and rituals during early Vedic / later Vedic Age.
- Compare the Indus Valley Culture and Vedic culture.

## **1.2. SOURCES OF EARLY INDIAN HISTORIES**

### **1.2.1 Archaeological Sources**

Archaeology is closely connected with history. The science which enables us to dig the old mounds in a systematic manner and to form an idea of the material life of the people is called archaeology. Material remains recovered as a result of excavation and explorations are subjected to various kinds of scientific examination. Without archaeological researches and proper examination of ancient inscriptions the history of ancient India would have remained largely unknown. Though most of the monuments of ancient India have since perished due to climatic conditions, but what ever has still come to us as a result of various

excavations. It is true that the archaeological research is comparatively new in India yet due to some European Scholars much of the details about the history of ancient India have come to our knowledge. First time the study of the Indian antiquities was initiated by scholars like Sir William Jones, who in 1774 founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal. The names of Dr. Buchanon, Hamilton, James Princep, Sir Alexander Cunningham, Sir John Marshal – all Europeans and names of Indian scholars like R.D. Banerjee, Dayaram Sahani, and K.N. Dixshit deserve special mentions

### **Excavations**

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

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

of South India are recognized on the basis of material culture excavated. The excavation at Arikamedu, Sisupalgarh reveals Roman contact of India in early historical period.

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

### **Inscriptions**

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

We have a large variety of inscription available with important historical data. The oldest inscriptions in the Indian subcontinent are found on the seals of Harappa. They have not been deciphered. The Harappan inscriptions seem to have been written in a pictographic script in which ideas and objects were expressed in the form of pictures. The series of Indian inscriptions open with Ashokan edicts on stone, which form a class by themselves. The Ashokan inscriptions which are in a number of different languages and scripts, but mostly in the Prakrit language and Brahmi Script, i.e., written from left to right. But some were also inscribed in the kharosthi script, i.e. from right to left. The deciphering of Ashokan inscriptions by James Prinsep in 1837 was one of the great wonders of archaeology. The Brahmi of Ashoka's inscriptions seems a fairly developed script and it must have had a prior history of at least a few centuries. Recently, the direct evidence that Brahmi existed in pre-Maurya times has come to the notice from the excavation sites of Anuradhapur in Sri Lanka. Other

great monarchs like Kharavela, Kaniska, Samudragupta, Harshavardhan and many others have left behind epigraphic records. Most of the official records are to be found in Prasastis i.e., eulogies of kings written by their court poets or land grants. The most important Prasasti or inscription is Allahabad Pillar inscription of Samudragupta. Similarly the royal edicts of Ashoka, the Hatigumpha inscription of king Kharavela, the Gwalior inscription of Bhoja and Aihole inscription of Phulakesin II of Chalukya are providing important historical data.

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

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

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

inscriptions have proved to be inestimable value in reconstructing the political, social, religious and economic condition of early India.

### **Numismatics**

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

The people of Stone Age had neither currency nor coinage and conducted exchanged through barter. The Harappans had a very extensive trade net work based on barter. The circulation of coins as medium of exchange was started probably in Vedic period. These ancient coins were known as *Nishka*, *Suvarna*, *Karshopana*, *Shatamana* and *Pada*. These may have been metal pieces of definite weight, not necessarily full fledged coins. The earliest definite literary and archaeological evidence of coinge in the Indian sub-continent dates from the 6<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE in a context of the emergence of Janapadas, urbancentres and trade. How the coins were manufactured in the early period is nowhere recorded in the extant literature. However, Kautilya, the minister of Chandragupta Maurya, has incidentally referred to the counterfeiters of coins in his Arthasastra, the book on statecraft, which was compiled in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE. The earliest coins which have been discovered by archaeologist in the subcontinent are punch – marked coins made mostly of silver and copper. They are usually rectangular, sometimes square or round on the basis of their manufacturing technique. These coins were made punched with various natural symbols include geometric designs, plants, birds, animals, the sun, wheel, mountain, tree, branches and human figures at the time of providing and are of different shape and weight. The early silver punch – marked coins have been found in quite large numbers, scattered all over the country in a particular area or locality and were issued by the Janapadas and Mahajanapadas.

A new phase in the history of Indian coinagd is marked by the die-struck Indo-Greek coins of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE. These are very well executed, usually round and mostly in silver. They bear the name and portrait of the issuing ruler of the obverse coins of the Sakas, Parthians and Kshatrapas follow the basic features of Indo Greek coinage. The Kushana (1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D.) were the first dynasty of the subcontinent to mint large

quantities of gold coins. The earliest Indian Kushana coins are those which were issued by Kujal Kadphises in copper. Kaniska, who like his predecessor, issued coins only in gold and copper. Kushana coins have the figure, name and title of the king on the obverse. On the reverse are deities belonging to the Brahmanical, Buddhist, Greek, Roman etc. After the fall of the Mauryan Empire, the people and principalities which were under the imperial domination came into power again and they re-established their administration – local, tribal and monarchical. These new states issued coins mostly in copper and rarely in silver. These coins are the important source of information of the history of the dynasties of northern and central India.

Before the expansion of the Magadhan Empire in the South, the Janapadas (States) like Andhra, Mulaka and Asmaka has issued coins in the Punch – marked technique. It might be interesting to know that the earliest find on the punch – marked coins in the country was discovered in the south. In 1800 A.D. Col. Caldwell had found such coins in the disfrict of Coimbatore. Some of the punch – marked coins found in various parts of South India have been identified as dynastic issues on the basis of their symbols. Alongwith epigraphic records, coins form an additional source of information for the history of the Guptas, who issued a large variety of beautiful gold coins. The obverse depicts the reigning king in various poses, usually martial ones, but there are interesting instances of coins of Samudragupta and Kumaragupta I showing them playing the vina or flute. The reverse of the Gupta coins have religious symbols indicating the king's religious affiliations. The most common Gupta coin is that which shows the king holding a bow in his left hand. No doubt, that the Gupta kings struck numerous coins which are of an improve standard. The Huna invaders, wherever they went, imitated the coinaged of their conquered territories. They introduced little that was new in their coins.

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

in London. The coins which are still available may appear to carry little historical information, but they provide clues to several important historical process.

The coins give us the names of the kings who ruled at various times in different parts of the country. They help us to fix up the chronology of the accession, important event and death of the ruler. Coins are most authentic sources of ancient India's economic life, currency system, trade and commerce and progress made in minting technology. The wide distribution of Kushana coins indicates the flourishing trade of the period. The symbol of ship on certain Satavahan coins reflects the importance of maritime trade in the Deccan during this period. Roman coins found in various parts of India provide information on a brisk trade between India and the Roman Empire. The discovery of coins of Indian origin in other countries and of other countries in India shows the sea-going activities of the people of India. Dates appear rarely on early Indian coins. Kshatrapa coins which give dates in the Saka era and some Gupta Silver coins which give regnal years of kings. The coins are indicative of the prosperity of the people and the language and script of a particular age. The figures of the deities on the coins tell us about the religion of the ruler. The image of Laxmi or Vishnu on the Gupta coins informs that they followed Hinduism. Numismatic evidence is an especially important source for the political history of India between 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries A.D. Most of the Indo-Greek rulers are known almost entirely from their coins. Coins also provide information on the parthians, Sakas, Kshatrapas, Kushanas and Satavahans. The coins are also indicative of high excellence and aesthetic taste of ancient Indian people.

### **Monuments**

Ancient monuments also provide some help in the reconstruction of history. India is full of countless historical monuments in the form of temples, stupas, monasteries, forts, caves, palaces etc. A critical study of the material used for the construction of monuments help us to understand the economic position of the people as well as their social and religious life. Most of the monuments are in ruins but still they give us evidence about the outstanding achievements of our past. The discovery of the earliest urban civilization of India at Mohenjodaro and Harappa has added new dimension to our civilization and carried back the antiquity of Indian culture by several thousands of years. The excavation of ancient sites at Taxila, Saranath and Rajgir have illuminated various aspects of life which otherwise would have been unknown to us. The caves of Khandagiri and Udayagiri in Orissa, the caves of Mirzapur and Bhimbhetka, the caves of Ajanta, Ellora, and Elephanta in Maharastra are priceless treasures of Indian art, painting and architecture. The remains of Hampi, Bijapur and Golkonda in South bear testimony to our rich culture and achievements. The temples of

Mahabalipuram, Kanchipuram, Bhubaneswar, Konark, Khajuraho and Tanjore bear silent witness to India's superb architecture unparalleled anywhere in the world. The glory of Gupta period came to light by the excavations of the temples of Deogarh in Jhansi and Bhitargaon near Kanpur. How these specimens are built and sustained economically is a part of socio-economic history. The secular and religious representations on these monuments project the contemporary society in all its varieties and splendor. These monuments speak of the artistic excellence and taste of the people of ancient India.

The monumental remains of in out side India like Angkor – Vat in Cambodia and Borobodur in Java and Angkor Thom (Kambuja) bear testimony to the cultural activities of the Indians in ancient times. The excavations in China, Baluchistan, Afghanistan and Turkestan provide us valuable information about Buddhism and India's contacts with these lands. Thus the study of monuments is an important branch of the social, religious and economic history of contemporary period.

### **1.2.2 Literary Sources**

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

### **Religious Literature**

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

#### **a. Brahmanical Literature**

The Vedas: Among the Brahmanical literature the *Vedas* are the most important source of information. The *Vedas* are the oldest surviving texts in the Indian subcontinent. The languages of *Vedas* are Sanskrit. Sanskrit belongs to the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European family of languages, as do ancient *Pali* and *Prakrit*. In the Hindu tradition, the *Vedas* have the status of *Shruti* (literally, that which has been heard). The word *Vedas* comes from the root *vid* (literally, to know) and means knowledge. Vedas deal with every branch of knowledge and provide basic knowledge of humanities, social sciences and natural and Physical sciences. The *Vedic* Aryans who came to India in or around 1500 B.C. had no system of writings. They passed the *Vedic* knowledge from one generation to other through oral tradition. However in ancient time all the *Brahmanical* literature were noticed on palm leaf manuscript for century and edited and published by indologist in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

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

The two great Sanskrit epics of Hindus, the *Ramayan* of Valmiki and *Mahabharata* of Ved Vyas provide us useful information about the social, religious, economic and political conditions of the later Aryans. The period usually has been ascribed between 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. and 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. The epics are magnificent text with powerful stories that have captured the imagination of millions of people over the centuries. Though the works are treated as

legendary, but they provide us useful information about the kings, their struggle and powerful empire. *Ramayana* is in *Adi Kavya* (the earliest narrative poem) consisting of 24,000 verses divided into seven *kandas* (books). It deals with the conflict between the Aryans and non-Aryans. The *Mahabharata* is the bulkiest epic consisting of 100,000 verses which has been divided into 18 *parvas* (books). The *Mahabharat* narrates about the conflict among the Aryans themselves – the Kauravas and the Pandavas at Kurukshetra. According to Dr. R.C. Majumdar, “The *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* have moulded the character and civilization of the Indians in a way which perhaps no other literary work can claim in any part of the world.

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

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

## **b. Buddhist Literature**

The earliest Buddhist texts were written in the Pali language. Pali was a literary language which developed out of a mixture of dialects, particularly those spoken in Magadha area of eastern India. The religious literature of the Buddhists is popularly known as *Tripitaka*. The *Tripitaka* consists of three books – the *Sutta*, *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma*. The *Sutta Pitaka* contains what Buddha himself said and Buddha's discourses on various doctrinal issues. The *Vinaya Pitaka* deals with monastic discipline, rules and regulations for monks and nuns of the Sangha. The *Abhidhamma Pitaka* is a later work, and contains a through study and systemization of the teachings of the *Sutta Pitaka*. According to Buddhist tradition, the *Sutta* and *Vinaya Pitakas* were recited at the first Buddhist Council at Rajagriha. According to Buddhists Buddha had to pass through a large number of births before he was born as a Sakya prince. Each birth story of Buddha is called a *Jataka* which is a folk tale. The birth history Buddhist religious texts provide us useful information about the polity, different rulers and their kingdoms, social, economic and religious life of the people in 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. The Srilankan chronicles, the *Dipavamsa* and the *Mahavamsa* contain a historical accounts of Buddha's life, the Buddhist councils, the Maurya emperor Ashoka, the kings of Sri Lanka and the entry of Buddhism on that land. In later years the Mahayana School of Buddhism produced works like *Vaipulyasutra* and *Lalitavistar* which deal with the life of Buddha and other aspects of Buddhism.

### c. Jaina Literature

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

Hemachandra, a Jain scholar. This book throws light on the achievement of the kings and others.

### **The Secular Literature**

Apart from religious literatures we have also a large body of secular literature in the form of biographies, dramas, historical texts and scientific and technical works which provide us useful information about ancient Indian history. Such texts are used by historians as sources of information about the times in which they were composed.

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

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

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

Some historical texts which were written during the ancient period are very helpful to know about certain aspects of history. The *Dipavamsa* (history of Ceylon) and *Mahavamsa* (the great history) are two ancient historical texts which provide us information about

Buddhism in India and Ceylon. Kalahan's *Rajatarangini* is a historical text of great value which deals with the history of Kashmir. It is a very dependable account of the kings of Kashmir. It is the only ancient Indian literature which can be regarded as an historical text in true sense. The chronicles of Gujrat likd *Rasmala*, *Kirtikaumudi* by *Someshvara*, *Pravandha Chintamani* of Merutunga and *Prabhandha – Kosa* of Rajasekhara which contain stories and fables mixed with historical anecdotes. Among other local chronicles may be mentions. *Buranji* of Ahom rulers of Assam and *Vamsavali* of Nepal contain the history of the region. Some important works on polity like Kautilya's *Arthasastra* and Kamandaka's *Nitishastra* provide us useful information about the government, law and system of administration. *Arthasastra* is a major work on statecraft. *Nitishastra* was probably written during Gupta period.

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

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

### 1.2.3 Foreign Accounts

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **1.3 INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATIONS**

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

In the subsequent years further excavations were carried out at various other sites which confirmed that Indus Civilization of Harappan Culture was not confined to the provinces of west Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan, Gujrat, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh but covered much wider area. The area of Indus Valley Civilization extended from Jammu in the North to the Narmada in the South and from Baluchistan in the west to Meerut in the north – east. The area covered by the Indus Culture much greater than that occupied jointly by the

contemporary civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia. The Harappan culture was consisting of at least three phases – the early Harappan, Mature Harappan and Late Harappan. The early Harappan phase was the formative phase of the culture. The mature Harappan phase was the urban phase. The late Harappan phase was the post-urban phase, when the cities declined.

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

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

### **1.3.1 Geographical Extent of Indus Valley Civilization**

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

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

### **1.3.2 Characteristics or Main Features**

#### **Town Planning**

Excavation at Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Kalibangan, Lothal, Surkotada and many other Indus sites show a well planned town planning of a truly amazing nature. The two cities, Mohenjodaro and Harappa were built on a uniform plan. The people of this civilization were expert in the art of town planning. The distance between Harappa and Mohenjo-daro is 483 kilometers and they were linked together by the river Indus. Each city consisted of two parts: (1) Acropolis or citadel and (2) Lower City. To the West of each was a citadel built on a high platform. The citadel is of 30-40 feet high and 400 x 200 feet in length and breadth, having bricked floors. The citadel was the central place with special buildings meant for the ruling class people. To the east were the town proper and the main hub of residential area of the ordinary people. The citadel and the town were further surrounded by a massive brick wall.

The ruins of the city reveal elaborate system of sanitation and drainage. The roads were straight and cut across one another almost at right angles. The roads of main streets were 30 to 34 feet wide which lay out with great skill, dividing the city into blocks, within which were networks of narrow lanes. There were covered drain on the both the sides of the main road. The drains of the private houses were connected with the main drain. The drainage systems were very impressive. There was also arrangement for street lighting which is evident from the discovery of light posts in the streets.

The buildings of Mahenjodaro can be divided into three groups, such as dwelling house, public buildings and the Great Bath. The dwelling houses were of different size and structure. The houses have big spacious room, kitchen, bathroom and a courtyard. Most of the houses were doubled storeyed. There were staircases leading to the upper story. Each house

was provided doors, windows, proper system of ventilation and sanitation. Almost in every house there was a bath room and near the bathroom there was a well. Both burnt and sun-dried bricks were used to construct the houses. Local made mortar was used as the binding material. The roofs of the houses were flat and made of wood.

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

### **The Great Bath**

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

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

### **1.3.3 Social Life**

#### **Society**

The Society of Indus Valley Civilization was cosmopolitan in character and composed of various races which settled down in this region on account of its fertility. There is the larger question of the analysis and assessment of the structure of Harappa Society. The

absence of deciphered written evidence is a major handicap. So we have to rely upon the archaeological data. The people who lived within the Harappan zone comprised villagers and city folk. Harappan society consists of different, occupational group such as farmers, hunter – gatherers, merchants, crafts people, sailors, rulers, carpenters, brick masons, well diggers, boat makers, shopkeepers, ritual specialist and so on. The affluent social groups would have comprised rulers, land owners and merchants. There is no proof of any division of society into caste. The social life of the people was highly developed. The people were as advanced as ancient Egyptians and Summerians.

### **Domestication of Animals**

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

### **Food Habits**

The social life of the Indus People was quite well organized. In their food habits, the people were quite advanced. The Indus Valley people were both vegetarian and non-vegetarian. Wheat and barley were their Staple food, milk, milk products, mutton, pork, fish vegetables and fruits were also commonly used. The river Indus facilitated the growth of agriculture and enabled the people to produce wheat and barley in large scale.

### **Dress and Ornaments**

As regards the dress of the people, not much evidence is available. We are to depend entirely on the indications supplied by figurines and the similar other sources. Most probably the cotton fabrics as well as woolen clothes were commonly used by the people. Men generally used a sort of shawl to cover the upper part of the body and wore a band of cloth round their loins. It appears that women put on a skirt. The terracotta figurines wearing clothes (shawl's, skirts, etc.) reflect the kinds of clothes people wore. The occurrence of needles and buttons shows that at least some of the clothes were stitched. From the ruins of Mahenjodaro a large number of spindles made of bakked earth have been discovered. From this evidence it is confirmed that the people of Indus Valley known the art of weaving

clothes. People were fond of beautiful ornaments. Ornaments were used by both women as well as men. The ornaments were made of gold, silver, copper, ivory, precious and semi-precious stones. Ornaments like necklace, armlets, pendants, finger rings, ear rings, bangles, girdles, nose studs were used by the people. However, the ornaments like girdles, earrings, nose studs, bangles, armlets were used only by women. Beautifully worked gold and silver jewellery including necklaces, bracelets, pendants and earrings have been found at Harappan sites. A hoard of jewellery made of gold, silver and semi precious stones was found at the small village sites of Allahdino, located 40 Km east of Karachi in Pakistan. The people were quite fashionable. Men kept various types of beards and whiskers. The women were quite fashionable. They generally wore fan – shaped head dress. Various objects head dressing such as ivory combs, bronze mirror, hair pins etc. have been found at Harappan sites.

### **Amusements**

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

### **Art and Crafts**

There is a great variety of standardized, mass produced craft items at Harappan sites. The artefacts are far greater in quantity and range, and show greater technical skill than those found in earlier cultural phase. The people used many tools and implements of stone but they were very well acquainted with the manufacture and use of copper and bronze. The Harappan civilization is marked by a large number of copper and bronze objects. Copper and bronze artefacts included vessels, spears, knives, axes, bows and arrows, daggers, fish hooks, needles, mirrors, rings, bangles etc. A number of copper furnaces were found at Harappa and copper workshops were found at Lothal. The Harappan people developed the art of making stone sculptures in the round. In the art of metal sculpture also, great heights were achieved. The famous bronze female figure in a dancing position has been discovered from Mohenjodaro. The dancing girl wears ornaments and has nicely combed hair style. Making of the seals, jewellery and bead are important craft of Harappa. People did not know the use of

Iron, because no iron tools or weapons have been discovered from the Indus Valley. Huge brick structures suggest that brick lying was an important craft.

### **Pottery**

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

### **Seals:**

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

### **Script and Language**

The biggest mysteries about the Indus Valley Civilization are the language and writing system. It is believed that people living in various parts of the Harappan culture zone

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

### **1.3.4 Economic Life**

#### **Agriculture**

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

#### **Industry**

From the archaeological remains it is clear that different industries developed in the Indus Valley. Though a large number of people engaged in agriculture, trade and industry also flourished during this period. Mahenjodaro was a great industrial centre. Probably, weaving was an important industry. The discovery of a large number of spindles and spinning wheels in the houses of the people confirmed it. The people of Harappan culture were using the cotton and wollen clothes in a large scale. The people also knew the art of dying. There are indications that bead industry was in flourishing condition. Beads of semi-precious stones were manufactured, even for export purpose. The remains of bead industry are noticed from the excavation site of Lothal. It seems that Shortughai an Indus city in the North – West frontiers was an important bead trade centre. Pottery was another important industry.

Probably industries for manufacturing copper and bronze implements were also there. Several weapons like axes, saw, knives, spears etc. made of bronze have been discovered. The art of brick-laying was also known to the people. This is evident from the presence of huge brick structure. It was also a flourishing industry.

### **Trade and Commerce**

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

### **Weights and Measures**

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

### 1.3.5 Religious Life

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

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

The Harappan seals, sealings, amulets and copper tablets depict a number of trees, plants and animals. Some of which may have had certain importance. The people of Indus Valley also worshipped trees. One of the sacred trees was the peepal tree. In one of the seals a

God is seen standing and surrounded by the branches of the peepal tree. This tree continues to be worshipped to this day by the Hindus.

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

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

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

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

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

Most of the historians are of the view that Harapp and Mohenjodaro was governed by a Priest-King. The stone bust of a male figure found at Mohenjodaro has been given the label 'Priest King'. Harappan society was highly disciplined and had a strong corporate element; the Harappans may have been ruled by councils rather than priest kings. The uniformity in town planning, drainage system, buildings, pottery, vessels and the seals suggests a strong

centralized authority and municipal administration as well. It appears that the life of the people and various activities were regulated to a great extent by some sorts of centralized authority.

### **1.3.6 DECLINE OF THE INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 1.4 VEDIC AGE

### 1.4.1 Early Vedic Age

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

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

completed before 1000 B.C. However, the majority scholars accept that most of the *Rig Vedic* hymns were composed between 1500-1000 B.C. The *Rig Veda* is the only source which gives most valuable information about the life of the early Vedic people and society. Though *Rig Veda* was not a historical work it provides useful information about the history of Aryans.

#### **a. Society**

The early Vedic society was a society of high moral standard. It represented human equality and simplicity. The early Vedic society was primarily pastoral in which tribal elements predominated. It showed an advanced civilization, settled life and an organized human relation. They lived in small villages and led the life of purity and chastity.

#### **Family**

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

#### **Position of Women**

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

remarry if her husband died or disappeared. There is also reference to unmarried women, such as the *Rig Vedic* seer Ghosha. The practice of levirate was allowed. Both dowry and bride price were recognized.

### **Cast System**

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

### **Food and Drink**

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

### **Dress and Ornaments**

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

### **Amusements**

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

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

## b. Religion

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

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

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

As far as image worship was concerned, it can be observed that even when some references to symbols or sensible representations are found in the *Vedic* text, it does not deities. The *Vedic* Aryans had no special doctrines about life after death. They felt that death was not the end of all things. After his death a man was supposed to reach the *Yama's*

kingdom. Regarding life after death, the *Rig Veda* hymns have no consistent theory. As far as funerary practices are concerned, the *Rig Veda* refers to both cremation and burial. In early *Vedic* age the priestly class was yet not effective in religion as most of the rites were performed by the head of the family i.e. *Grihapati*. In a nutshell, the *Rig Vedic* religion was simple and centered round the personifications of the principal phenomena of nature.

### c. Economy

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

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

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

### d. Polity

The Aryans' came to India in an organized way. As they spread themselves in India and settled permanently, they developed political organization for better life. The family constituted the lowest political unit of Vedic Age people. Several families formed a village or the grama. The head of the *Gramma* was called *Gramani*. Several Grammas formed a *Vis* or

district. The head of the *Vis* was *Vispati*. Several district or *Vis* formed *Jana* or *Rastra*. The head of the *Rastra* was called *Rajan* or king. Monarchy was the prevailing form of government. The kingship was generally hereditary though in some cases people used to elect their kings. The king occupied the position of honour. He was appointed by the Chief Priests. The king was not an autocrat. He was rather a benevolent despot. He usually enjoyed the confidence and loyalty of the people. He governed according to the laws and customs of the land and with the help of the advice of seers, sages and elders. The primary duties of the king were collection of taxes, administration of justice and to protect his state. The king was called the protector of his tribe. He was required to protect his land and cattle and to offer prayers to gods on his behalf.

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

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

#### **1.4.2 Later Vedic Age**

The period between 1000 BC and 600 BC is commonly known as later *Vedic Age*. The history of the later *Vedic* age is based on the following sources of three *Vedic* texts i.e. the *Sama Veda*, the *Yajur Veda* and the *Atharva Veda*, the *Brahmanas*, the *Aryankas*, the *Upanisadas*, the *Sutras*, the *Puranas*, the *Ramayan* and the *Mahabharata*. Sometimes, the later *Vedic Age* and the Epic Age (period of *Ramayan* and *Mahabharat*) are treated as same period by the scholars. All these later Vedic texts were compiled in the upper Gangetic basin in 1000 – 600 B.C. Excavation of the area have brought to light nearly 700 sites inhabited for

the first time. These are called Painted Grey Ware (PGW) sites because they were inhabited by people who used earthen Bowles and dishes made of painted gray pottery. The later Vedic period witnessed the mobility of the Aryans in various directions. They did not confine themselves to the land of the Punjab and eastern Afghanistan they penetrated towards the East upto Bengal and the far South and the seat of their civilization shifted to the territory between the rivers Saraswati and the Ganges. The texts show that the Aryans expanded from Punjab over the whole of Western Uttar Pradesh covered by the Ganga-Yamuna doab.

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

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

#### **a. Society**

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

#### **Family**

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

marriage could take place between persons belonging to same gotra or having the same ancestor. The people also started to worship their male ancestors.

### **Position of Women**

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

### **Caste System**

The greatest change which the later Vedic Period saw in the Aryan society was the rise of rigid caste system. It destroyed the values of human equality of the earlier days and created distinction of their occupation. The later Vedic Society came to be divided into four *Varnas* or castes called *Brahmanas*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaisyas* and *Sudras*. During the *Rig Vedic* period there was no caste system and the people were engaged in different professions. Some performed the different mode of worship, some fought as soldiers, and some engaged themselves in cultivation and in trade and commerce. In course of time these professions of people during the later Vedic Age known as *Brahmanas*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaisyas* and *Sudras*. *Brahmanas* emerged the most important class who conducted rituals and sacrifices for their clients and for themselves. They occupied the most important position in the society. *Kshatriyas* were given the second position. They were the military and ruling class. The third category was the *Vaisya*. The *Vaisya* remained tagged to trade, agriculture and production of essential articles. The fourth category called the *Sudras* who performed all menial jobs and were looked down upon as out caste. In course of time several sub-castes followed from the caste system. Society became more complex day by day. The *Brahmanas* and *Kshatriyas* regarded themselves as higher class and made monopoly of social privileges.

According to *Satapatha Brahman*, while the *brahmanas* and *Kshatriyas* could marry women from the *Vaishyas* and the *Sudras*, the *Vaishyas* and *Sudras* could not marry *Brahmana* and *Kshtriya* girls. It was difficult to change one's caste.

### **Ashram System**

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

### **Dress and Ornaments**

There was no remarkable change in the sphere of dress during later *Vedic* Age. People used clothes made of cotton, silk and wool. Generally, the dress consisted of three garments viz. under garments (*nivi*), lower garments and Upper Garments (*Adhivasa*). People also used turban. The ornaments like armlets, finger rings, necklaces etc made of gold and silver were used by the people. Different varieties of cosmetics were also used.

### **Food and Drinks**

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

### **Amusements**

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

## Education

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

### b. Religion

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

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

Another change that took place during this period is in the mode of worship. Elaborate and complicated rituals and sanskaras were introduced during this period which

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

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

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

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

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

### c. Economy

## **Agriculture**

The later Vedic Aryans lived in the villages like their ancestors in the Rig Vedic age. With the expansion of Aryan kingdoms new dominions and new people came under the Aryan culture. Agriculture continued to be one of the principal occupations of the people. Although very few agricultural tools made of iron have been found, there is no doubt that agriculture was the chief means of livelihood of the later Vedic people. Ploughing was done with the help of oxen and wooden plough share. Therefore agriculture was primitive, but there is no doubt its wide prevalence. The *Satapatha Brahman* speaks at length about the ploughing rituals. In those days' even kings and princes did not hesitate to take to manual labour. In later times ploughing came to be prohibited for the members of the upper varnas or castes. The later Vedic people continued to produce varieties of crops like rice, barley, wheat, oil seeds etc. For the first time the Vedic people came to be acquainted with rice in doab region and its remains recovered from Hastinapur belong to the eighth century B.C. The use of rice was recommended in the rituals of the priests. The knowledge of metallurgy developed giving new ideas about tools and metal equipments. During later *Vedic Age* the transfer of land was disapproved. There are references to artificial water ways which make it certain that the system of irrigation was known to them. Manures were used by them. Cow, oxen, sheep, goat, dog, horse, donkey were their domesticated animals. Elephant was also tamed during the later *Vedic Age*.

## **Arts and Crafts**

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

people. Copper objects have been found in Painted Grey Ware sites. They were used mainly for war and hunting and also for ornaments.

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

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

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

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

#### **d. Polity**

##### **Kingdoms**

The Arayans called their state *Rashtra*. The small tribal kingdoms of the early Vedic age gave place to large territorial Kingdoms during the later Vedic age. The old tribes of *Bharatas* and *Purus* and old customs went into the background and new states emerged. A number of tribes set up their kingdoms in the later Vedic age. The new kingdoms were the *Kurus*, *Panchalas*, *Kosala*, *Kashi*, *Videha*, *Magadha* and *Kalinga*. The *Kuru-Panchalas* were

the most prominent in the new age. They were considered to be the best representatives of the Vedic culture, speakers of the best Sanskrit, performers of sacrifices with perfection, the best kings and patrons of learning. Kasi, Kosala and Videha are referred to as the seats of Vedic culture. On certain occasions, these three states joined together in a confederacy. The kingdom of Magadha located in South Bihar finds mention in Atharva Veda along with the kingdom of Anga (East Bihar). The people of Magadha were described as Vratyas in the Atharva Veda and regarded as out castes and nomads. This kingdom was probably colonized by the members of Kuru – Panchala tribe and played an important role in ancient Indian history after Alexander's invasion.

### **Kingship**

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

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

Though the kingship was absolute during this period but there were certain democratic elements in the same. Monarchy was normally hereditary but there is occasional reference that the people had a hand in the election of the king. Even after his election, the

king was always anxious to secure the loyalty and support of the people. Certain conditions were imposed on the king at his coronation. The formal enthronement had to pass through several stages. The new king had to seek the approval of the earth or the mother country by uttering certain mantras. The king and the earth were required to enter into friendly relations like those of a son and mother. The king was required to make offerings to *Savita*, *Agni*, *Soma*, *Brihaspati*, *Indra*, *Rudra Mitra* and *Varuna*. Water was collected from seventeen different sources such as river, sea, well, pool etc. That water was to be sprinkled on the king jointly by *Brahmana*, *Kshatriya* and *Vaisya*. Next the bath an oath was administered to the king before he was seated on throne. Then he took the following oath: "If I play the false, I may lose the merit of all my religious performances and gifts of my good deeds, my placed, my life, and even my progeny." The people of four casts were asked to protect their kings as a precious treasure.

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

### **Popular assemblies**

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

### **Officials**

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 1.5 SUMMARY

In this unit you have learnt that:

- The sources like archaeological, literary and foreign accounts are very helpful to construct the ancient India history.

- The coins, inscriptions and monuments provide us the knowledge about the rulers and their kingdoms.
- The literary sources are Vedas, Puranas, Samhita historical works, biographies, Buddhist texts and Jain texts.
- The Samhitas are collections of hymns and Prayers. There are four Samhitas. Rigveda is the oldest.
- The original Buddhist texts are Tripitakas, which are written in Pali.
- The Jain religious texts are called Agams. Other texts are Jaina Puranas.
- The accounts of the foreign travelers have left a lot of information about India and its rulers.
- Important developments in stone tool technology.
- Harappan civilization was the first urban culture in South Asia.
- Archaeological evidence reveals a great deal about this civilization. The town planning system and Great Bath the most imposing construction of Mohenjodaro.
- Besides Harappa and Mohenjodaro the remains of this civilization has been discovered in different parts of ancient India.
- Harappan arts, craft, trade and commerce, agriculture are the important parts of their economic life.
- The people worshipped mother Goddess, animal, trees etc.
- The different reasons for the decline of this great civilization.
- The Vedic literature includes the four *Vedas* also called *Samhitas*, *the Brahmanas*, the *Aranyakas* and the *Upanishads*, throws a flood of light on the social, economic and political life of the people of the *Vedic* Period.
- The Arayans lived in villages and there was system of Patriarchal family. Head of a village was called *gramina*.
- The king was most powerful. *Purohit*, *Senani* and *Gramina* were the Chief officials of the state. *Sabha* and *Samiti* were two different assemblies during the *Vedic* Age.
- The origin and growth of caste system.
- The Sangam literature provides sufficient information about the three important kingdoms like the Cholas, the Pandayas and the Cheras of the Sangam age.

- The ancient Tamil monarchies were hereditary. The king had absolute power. The government was centralized. The Tamil Kingdoms had trade relations with the foreign countries.

## 1.6 KEY TERMS

- Carbon 14: Scientific dating method used in Archaeology.
- Aranyakas: The forest texts.
- Upanisadas: Treatises containing sacred instructions.
- Archaeology: The study of the human past.
- Epigraphy: The study of Inscriptions.
- Paleography: The study of old writings held in inscriptions.
- Numismatics: The study of coins.
- Artefact: A portable object made by human hands.
- Ardha Magadhi: An eastern dialect of Prakrit.
- Artefact: Portable object made or altered by human hands.
- Homo sapiens: Automatically modern humans or wise men.
- Citadel: Core fortified area of a town or city.
- Steatite: Soapstone.
- Pleistocene: Geological era
- Seal: An engraved piece of metal used as a stamp for identification.
- Pebble tools: An oldest type of tool
- Janapada: A region consisting of urban and rural settlements alongwith its inhabitants.
- Rashtra: The state or tribal kingdom.
- Samhita: A collection of hymns associated with the Vedas.
- Rajan: Head of the *Rashtra* or King.
- Polyandry: A system in which a woman can have several husbands.
- Kula: A patriarchal family where the head of the family was called *Kulapati* or *Grihapati*.

## 1.7 Check your progress

### A. Fill in the blanks:

1. Asiatic society was founded by \_\_\_\_\_ in the year \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Vedas are \_\_\_\_\_ in numbers.
3. The author of Rajtarangini is \_\_\_\_\_.

4. The Harsha Charita was written by \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Grammatical works 'Ashadhyae was written by \_\_\_\_\_.
6. The study of Inscription is \_\_\_\_\_.
7. The study of coins is \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Megasthenes was from \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Indica was written by \_\_\_\_\_.
10. Hiuen-Tsang's travel account was \_\_\_\_\_.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ was the ruler when Hiuen-Tsang visited India.
12. The Great bath has been found at \_\_\_\_\_.
13. \_\_\_\_\_ was a sacred animal of Indus Valley People.
14. The Indus Valley People used garments of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
15. The Harappan people built up their houses of \_\_\_\_\_.
16. \_\_\_\_\_ And \_\_\_\_\_ were the two important assemblies of the Vedic Period.
17. The institution of *gotra* appeared \_\_\_\_\_ Vedic times.

**B. True or False.**

1. The study of coins is called numismatics.
2. The study of inscriptions is called paleography.
3. *Vedas* are three in numbers.
4. *Indica* is written by Megasthenes.
5. *Arthashastra* is written by Kalidasa.
6. Hieun Tsang was a Chinese pilgrim.
7. Patanjali is the author of *Mahabhasaya*.
8. Foreign accounts are very helpful to reconstruct the history of ancient India.
9. Two best known Tamil epics are the *Silapadikaram* and *Manimekalai*.
10. Sir William Jones was the founder of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.
11. Indus valley civilization was an urban civilization.
12. Iron tools are discovered from Harappan sites.
13. Barley and wheat was produced from the Harappan sites.
14. The people of Indus Valley worshipped mother Goddess.
15. A good number of temples have been discovered from Indus Valley Civilization.
16. The early Vedic Aryans were non-vegetarian.
17. The early Vedic Aryans believed in one God.

**Answer to check your progress**

**A**

1. a) Sir William Jones b) 1774
2. Four
3. Kalahan
4. Banabhatta
5. Panini
6. Epigraphy
7. Numismatics
8. Greek
9. Megathenes
10. Si-Yu-Ki
11. Harshavardhan
12. Mohenjodaro
13. Humped Bull
14. i) cotton ii) wool
15. Burnt bricks
16. a) Sabha, b) Samiti,
17. Later

**B**

1. Ans. 1.True 2.False, 3. False, 4. True, 5. False, 6. True, 7. True, 8. True, 9. True, 10. True, 11.True 12.False, 13.True, 14. True, 15. False, 16.True, 17. False,

**1.8 Questions and Exercise**

Short Answer Questions –

1. What is archaeology?
2. Explain the terms of the following.
  - a) Epigraphy
  - b) Numismatics
  - c) Vedas
3. What is Secular literature?
4. Who was John Marshal?
5. Write a short note on seals.
6. Write short note on Vedic literature.
7. What is meant by Painted Grey Ware culture?

**Long – Answer Questions**

1. Assess the importance of archaeological sources for the reconstruction of Ancient Indian History.
2. Discuss the importance of indigenous literary sources in the reconstruction of ancient Indian history.
3. Why are the foreign accounts of India useful for the writer to write history of India ?
4. Describe the extent of Harappan Civilization.
5. Give an account of the Arts, Crafts and technology of the Harappans.
6. Write the characteristic feature of the Indus Valley Civilization.
7. Give an account of the material life of the Rig Vedic people. Is it correct to call them an agricultural community?
8. Why the Rig Vedic society is called tribal and patriarchal?
9. How was society organized in later Vedic times?

### **1.9 Suggested Readings**

1. Basham, A.L.: The wonder that was India, London, 1963.
3. Kosambi, D.D.: The culture and civilization of Ancient India, London, 1965.
4. Lal, B.B.: Indian archaeology since Independence, Delhi, 1964.
5. Sankalia, H.D.: Pre-History and Proto-History of India and Pakistan, Bombay, 1962.
6. Ghosal, U.N., Studies in Indian History and Culture, Cambridge, 1958.
7. Thapar, Romila: A History of India Vol.I, Delhi, 2000.

**UNIT-II**  
**STATES IN EARLY INDIA**

**STRUCTURE**

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 Oligarchies and Republics
  - 2.2.1 The *Gana-Sangha*
  - 2.2.2 The Governance
  - 2.2.3 Decline of the Oligarchies and Republics
- 2.3 The Mauryan State
  - 2.3.1 Chandragupta Maurya
  - 2.3.2 Imperial Organisation
  - 2.3.3 Ashoka (273-232 BC)
  - 2.3.4 Internal Policy and Buddhism
  - 2.3.5 State Control
  - 2.3.6 Economic Regulations
  - 2.3.7 Art and Architecture
  - 2.3.8 Fall of the Mauryan Empire
- 2.4 The Imperial Gupta
  - 2.4.1 Chandragupta I (319–334 AD)
  - 2.4.2 Samudragupta (335–380 AD)
  - 2.4.3 Chandragupta II (380–412 AD)
  - 2.4.4 System of Administration
  - 2.4.5 Society during the Gupta Period
  - 2.4.6 The Origin and Growth of Bhagavatism
  - 2.4.7 Art and Literature
  - 2.4.8 Science and Technology
  - 2.4.9 Fall of the Gupta Empire
- 2.5 Summary
- 2.6 Key Words
- 2.7 Check Your Progress
- 2.8 Answers to Questions in Check your Progress
- 2.9 Questions and Exercise
- 2.10 Suggested Readings

## 2.0 Introduction

The increased usage of iron in eastern UP and western Bihar from the sixth century BC onwards established circumstances for the emergence of vast territorial states. The warrior class, armed with iron weapons, now played a significant role. The peasants were able to produce considerably more food grains than they needed for consumption thanks to the new agricultural tools and implements. The princes might gather the surplus products to fulfil their military and administrative requirements. The surplus may be distributed to the communities that sprung up in the fifth century BC. These material benefits allowed the inhabitants to stay on their property while also expanding at the expense of the surrounding territories.

This shifting material conditions largely influenced modern political processes and paved a way to formation of territorial state. However, with the establishment of great states with towns as their centers of power in the sixth century BC, the territorial notion gained traction. People owed allegiance to the *janapada* (territory) to which they belonged, according to a text from Panini. As a result, the creation of large administrations with towns as their operating base bolstered the territorial idea. People were more devoted to their *janapada*, or territory, than to their *jana*, or tribe, to which they belonged. This development of many territorial entities in various sections of the country became a significant aspect of political life which ultimately witnessed the rise of Oligarchies, Republics, the first territorial states and the first empire in India.

### 2.1 Objectives

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

- Trace the rise of territorial states in the early India.
- Understand the features of states in the early India.
- Understand the composition and system of governance in Oligarchies and Republics.
- Understand the salient features of the Mauryan state and the imperial Gupta.
- Understand the factors responsible for the downfall of these first territorial states.

### 2.2 OLIGARCHIES AND REPUBLICS

Though monarchy was usual in ancient India, tribal states also existed, which were governed by oligarchies. The term "republic" is often used for these bodies, and though it has been criticized by some authorities, it is quite legitimate if it is remembered that the *ganas* or tribes, were not governed like the Republic of India by an assembly elected by universal suffrage. The Roman Republic was not a democracy, but it was a republic nevertheless, and the

evidence shows that in some of these ancient Indian republican communities a large number of persons had some say in the government.

Vedic literature gives faint indications of such tribes at a very early date and the Buddhist scriptures recognize the existence of many republics, chiefly in the foothills of the Himalayas and in N. Bihar. These were mostly tributary to the greater kingdoms, but exercised internal autonomy. One such people were the Sakyas, who dwelt on the borders of modern Nepal, and to whom the Buddha himself belonged. Though in later legend the Buddha's father, Suddhodhana, is depicted as a mighty king living in great pomp, he was in fact a tribal chief, depending on the support of a large assembly of householders, who gathered regularly to discuss tribal politics in a meeting hall.

### **2.2.1 The *Gana-Sangha***

The *gana-sanghas* have been described as republics or oligarchies by historians. Unlike monarchical countries, authority was spread in the *gana-sanghas*, which meant that it was exerted collaboratively by a group of individuals. The *ganas* were intimately related to the kshatriyas and were named after the governing kshatriya clan; members were linked to one another by actual or claimed familial relationships. In these polities, social stratification was minimal. There were only two strata in the *gana-sanghas*: the *kshatriyarajakula*, or governing families, and the *dasakarmakara*, or slaves and labourers. The clan owned the land jointly, but the *dasa-karmakaras*, slaves and labourers, worked on it. It's also worth noting that, while family connections tied the clan together, the *kamakaras* labouring class was non-kin labour. There was no one hereditary ruler, but instead a chief known as the *ganapati*, *ganaraja*, or *sanghamukhya* oversaw governance.

Ancient Indian texts recognize the difference between the political structure and functioning of the *rajyas* and the *ganas* or *sanghas*. Two of the *mahajanapadas*, the Vajji and Malla, were *sanghas*. Buddhist texts mention others as well, the Sakyas of Kapilavastu, Koliyas of Devadaha and Ramagrama, Bulis of Alakappa, Kalamas of Kesaputta, Moriyas of Pippalivana, and Bhaggas (Bhargas) with their capital on Sumsumara hill. It is interesting to note that most of the *ganas*, especially the politically important ones, were located in or near the Himalayan foothills in eastern India, while the major kingdoms occupied the fertile alluvial tracts of the Ganga valley.

The *ganas* had greater vestiges of tribal organization than the monarchies. Some may have simply been more complex political forms of older tribal formations. Others may have been created through the subversion of monarchical rule: For instance, the Videhas were apparently originally a monarchy, but had become a *gana* by the 6th century BC. The Kurus

were a monarchy at this time, but became a *gana* a few centuries later. There were two kinds of *ganas*, those that consisted of all or a section of one clan, e.g., the Sakyas and Koliyas; and those that comprised a confederation of several clans, like the Vajjis and Yadavas. The confederacies suggest the existence of a self-conscious political identity among the *ganas*.

The Sakyas claimed to belong to the Ikshvaku family and the solar dynasty. Their principality was bounded on the east by the Rohini river, the Rapti river to the west and south, and the Himalaya mountains to the north. There is still considerable debate over the location of its capital, Kapilavastu. Some scholars locate it at Tilaurakot, but there is better reason to locate it at Piprahwa-Ganwaria. The amount of detail regarding the Sakyas in Buddhist texts is due to the fact that the Buddha belonged to this clan. The Sakyas were connected through marriage to the royal house of Kosala. Buddhist texts clearly indicate that the Sakya assembly gathered to discuss important business such as forging alliances, embarking on war, and concluding peace.

The principality of the Koliyas of Ramagrama lay to the east of the Sakyas, the Rohini river forming the boundary between the two. Some texts suggest that the two peoples were related to each other. The Bhaggas seem to have been located in the Vindhyan region, between the Yamuna and Son rivers, and were apparently subordinate to the Vatsas. Little is known about the other *ganas*.

### **2.2.2 The Governance**

Governance in these polities was certainly marked by a corporate element. The *Arthashastra*, a later text, outlines the special strategies that the would-be conqueror could use to vanquish the *ganas*. Because they were different, the strategies recommended to defeat monarchies would not work, and Kautilya's advice focused on creating dissension among their ranks.

The ancient Indian *ganas* were not, however, democracies. Power was vested in the hands of an aristocracy comprising the heads of leading Kshatriya families. There was no single hereditary monarch. Instead, there was a chief (known variously as *ganapati*, *ganajyestha*, *ganaraja*, or *sanghamukhya*) and an aristocratic council which met in a hall called the *santhagara*. Effective executive power and day-to-day political management must have been in the hands of a smaller group. Even in Athenian democracy (with which the Indian *ganas* were often compared), there was a tendency for power to be concentrated in a few hands. The political system of the *ganas* seems to have been a compromise between government by assembly and by an oligarchy within this assembly.

Later texts offer many details about the Lichchhavis. For instance, the *Ekapanna Jataka* states that in the Lichchhavi capital of Vaishali, there were always 7,707 *rajās* (kings)

to govern the kingdom, and a similar number of *uparajas* (subordinate kings), *senapatis* (military commanders), and *bhandagarikas* (treasurers). The preamble to the *Chullakalinga Jataka* refers to the 7,707 ruling families of the Lichchhavis and asserts that they were all given to argument and disputation. The Mahavastu, on the other hand, states there were twice 84,000, i.e., 168,000 *rajas* living in Vaishali. The figures mentioned in these texts cannot be taken literally, but they do suggest that the Lichchhavis had a large assembly, consisting of the heads of Kshatriya families who called themselves ‘*raja*’. They usually met once a year during the spring festival to transact important public business and elect their leader, who had a fixed tenure. The *uparajas* may have been the eldest sons of the *rajas*. It was at one of the annual meetings of the great assembly that the Lichchhavis honoured the beautiful courtesan *Ambapali*. It was also at such meetings that the *rajas*, old and new, bathed in the sacred *pokkharani* (tank) mentioned in the *Bhaddasala Jataka*. The Lichchhavi assembly had sovereign power and could pronounce punishments such as death or exile. Day-to-day administrative matters were dealt with by a much smaller council of nine, which carried out business in the name of the larger assembly. The assembly did not include women.

It is possible, even likely, that the procedures of the Buddhist monastic order (*sangha*) were patterned on the *sangha* polities, especially the Lichchhavis. The functioning of the two institutions may have been analogous, though not identical. Meetings at the *santhagara* of the *ganas* were probably announced by the beating of a drum, and there may have been a regulator of seats. Voting was done with pieces of wood known as *salakas*. The collector of votes was the *salaka-gahapaka*, chosen for this job on account of his reputation for honesty and impartiality. The *ganapuraka* was responsible for ensuring the presence of a quorum, which was required for major deliberations.

The *ganas* were closely associated with the Kshatriyas and were named after the ruling Kshatriya clan; members were linked to each other through real or claimed kinship ties. However, apart from this hereditary elite, various other groups like Brahmanas, farmers, artisans, wage labourers, slaves, etc. lived in these principalities and had a subordinate status, politically, and probably also economically and socially. They were not entitled to use the clan name and did not have rights of political participation. For instance, *Upali*, the barber who lived in Sakya territory, and *Chunda*, the metal smith who lived in Malla territory, were not part of the ruling elite and did not attend the assembly.

The powerful monarchies of the time developed a standing army, a permanent corps of troops recruited and maintained by the state. Such an organization may not have existed in

the *ganas*. The Lichchhavis had a strong army, but when not engaged in combat, the soldiers probably retired to their lands.

### 2.2.3 Decline of the Oligarchies and Republics

The *ganas*' greatest asset 'governance through discussion' was also their greatest weakness. They were vulnerable to internal dissension, especially when faced with aggressive monarchies. For instance, in the *Lalitavistara*, the future Buddha is described as sitting in heaven, thinking of his impending birth. One of the questions raised is: Which family should he be born in? The other *bodhisattvas* and gods discuss and reject the candidature of the Lichchhavis of Vaishali. They say that these people do not speak to each other in the proper manner, do not follow the *dharma*, do not preserve the ranks of social status and age, do not become anybody's disciples, and each one thinks 'I am king! I am king!' The *Arthashastra* asserts that *sanghas* were unassailable and advises the king to win over friendly ones. It suggests that the head of a *sangha* should remain self-controlled and just towards other members, and should do what is beneficial and agreeable to them all.

Furthermore, in the 4th century CE, Chandragupta I is known to have married a Lichchhavi princess, Kumaradevi, and this marriage was commemorated on gold coins. Samudragupta is known as Lichchhavidauhitra (grandson of the Lichchhavis) in inscriptions. Clearly, the Lichchhavis were still a political force worth making an alliance with. However, it was probably Samudragupta's military campaigns that wiped out the *ganas*, or at least reduced them to a position of political insignificance.

The history of the *ganas* of ancient India thus spans at least a thousand years, if not more. Their military defeats at the hands of monarchical states can be seen as a result of the inability of their system of governance and military organization to meet the challenges of empire building. The ambitions of monarchical states were reflected in the political vocabulary of the time, in terms such as *chakravartin*, *samrat*, and *sarvabhauma*. These signified a 'universal ruler', one who aimed at establishing his rule over all of *Jambudvipa*, i.e., the subcontinent. Several centuries later, the rulers of Magadha succeeded in translating this ambition into reality.

## 2.3 THE MAURYAN STATE

After the Nanda dynasty was overthrown in Magadha, the Mauryas arose. Their history of rule is relatively reliable due to evidence obtained from various sources. Buddhist and Jain traditions, early *Dharmashastra* texts, and material recovered from archaeological excavations remain the important basis for historical reconstruction. In addition, there are several new

sources of information about the history of Maurya. Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, for example, had a significant influence on developments during their reign. Another authentic source is the Greek account *Indika*, written by Megasthenes. Although it is only available in discrete form, it shows correspondence with the Kautilyan text in many places. However, the most authentic Maurya recordings are still the first decipherable inscriptions released by Ashoka. Found in 45 places on the highways of the Indian subcontinent and Afghanistan, in 181 versions they are composed in the Prakrit language and written in the Brahmi script in most of the Mauryan Empire, although in the northwest, they appear in Aramaic and the Kharoshthi Script. In Afghanistan, however, they are written in both the script and the Aramaic and Greek languages. The *Puranas*, belonging to a much later period, are less likely to claim authenticity without corroborating historical documents.

### 2.3.1 Chandragupta Maurya

Chandragupta, the founder of the Maurya dynasty, succeeded the Nanda throne in about 321 BC at the age of twenty-five. Indian tradition has it that the Brahmana Kautilya, also known as Chanakya or Vishnugupta, was his mentor and guide. The origin and early life of Chandragupta remain obscure, though according to the prevalent view he belonged to the Moriya tribe and his caste was low. The older theory of his base birth is no longer acceptable to most historians. Both Indian and classical Greek sources state that he overthrew the last Nanda ruler and occupied his capital Pataliputra, modern Patna. The Greek accounts add that he moved to north-west India and subdued the Greek garrisons left behind by Alexander.

Soon, however, Seleukos Nikator gained control of most Asiatic provinces of the Macedonian empire, and in 305 BC he seems to have met Chandragupta in battle. They signed a treaty and entered into a marriage alliance. Who married whose daughter is not quite clear but it seems that Chandragupta probably made a gift of 500 elephants to the Greek general and obtained territory across the Indus. Seleukos' ambassador Megasthenes lived for many years at the Maurya court at Pataliputra and travelled extensively in the country. According to Jaina sources, Chandragupta embraced Jainism towards the end of his life and stepped down from the throne in favour of his son. Accompanied by Bhadrabahu, a Jaina saint, and several other monks, he is said to have gone to Sravana Belgola near Mysore, where he deliberately starved himself to death in the approved Jaina fashion.

In 297 BC Chandragupta was succeeded by his son Bindusara, known to the Greeks as Amitrochates (Sanskrit, Amitraghata means 'the destroyer of foes'). He is said to have had contacts with Antiochus I, the Seleucid king of Syria. A man of wide tastes and interests, he requested Antiochus to send him some sweet wine, dried figs and a Sophist; the last being not

meant for export, however, could not be sent. According to the Tibetan Buddhist monk Taranatha, who visited India in the sixteenth century, Bindusara conquered 'the land between the two seas'. This has been taken to mean that he annexed to the Magadhan kingdom the peninsular region of India. Early Tamil literature, it has been pointed out, also mentions the Maurya invasion of the far south. But this does not adequately justify the assumption that Bindusara annexed the southernmost part of India to the Maurya empire. Nevertheless it is probable that his kingdom extended in the south up to Mysore region. Kalinga (modern Orissa), on the eastern coast, however, remained hostile and was conquered in the succeeding reign by Bindusara's son Ashoka.

### 2.3.2 Imperial Organisation

The Mauryas organized a very elaborate system of administration. We know about this from the account of Megasthenes and the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya. Megasthenes was a Greek ambassador sent by Seleucus to the court of Chandragupta Maurya. He lived in the Maurya capital of Pataliputra and wrote an account not only of the administration of the city of Pataliputra but also of the Maurya empire as a whole. Megasthenes's account does not survive in full, but quotations from it occur in the works of several subsequent Greek writers. These fragments have been collected and published in the form of a book entitled *Indika*, which throws valuable light on the administration, society, and economy of Maurya times.

Megasthenes's account can be supplemented by the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya. Although the *Arthashastra* was finally compiled a few centuries after Maurya rule, some of its books contain material that provides authentic information about the Maurya administration and economy. These two sources enable us to draw a picture of the administrative system of Chandragupta Maurya.

Chandragupta Maurya was evidently an autocrat who concentrated all power in his hands. If we are to believe a statement in the *Arthashastra*, the king had set a high ideal. He stated that in the happiness of his subjects lay his happiness and in their troubles lay his troubles. We do not however know how far the king acted up to these ideals. According to Megasthenes, the king was assisted by a council whose members were noted for wisdom. There is nothing to show that their advice was binding on him, though the high officers were chosen from among the councillors.

The empire was divided into a number of provinces, and each of these was placed under a prince who was a scion of the royal dynasty. The provinces were divided into still smaller units, and arrangements were made for both rural and urban administration. Excavations show that a large number of towns relate to Maurya times. Pataliputra,

Kaushambi, Ujjain, and Taxila were the most important cities. Megasthenes states that numerous cities existed in India, but he considered Pataliputra to be the most important. He calls it *Palibothra*. This Greek term means a city with gates. According to him, Pataliputra was bounded by a deep ditch and a wooden wall crowned with 570 towers, and had 64 gates. The ditch, timber palisades, and also wooden houses have been found in excavations. According to Megasthenes, Pataliputra was 9.33 miles long and 1.75 miles broad. This size tallies with that of Patna even today, because Patna is all length with little breadth. Given this conformity, it is possible to trust Megasthenes's other statements.

The Greek ambassador also refers to the administration of Pataliputra, the capital of the Mauryas. The city was administered by six committees, each of which consisted of five members. These committees were entrusted with sanitation, care of foreigners, registration of birth and death, regulation of weights and measures, and similar other functions. Various types of weights belonging to Maurya times have been found in several places in Bihar.

According to Kautilya, the central government maintained about two dozen departments of state, which controlled social and economic activities at least in the areas that were in proximity to the capital. The most striking feature of Chandragupta's administration was its maintenance of a huge army. A Roman writer called Pliny states that Chandragupta maintained 600,000 foot soldiers, 30,000 cavalrymen, and 9000 elephants. Another source tells us that the Mauryas maintained 8000 chariots. In addition to these, it appears that the Mauryas also maintained a navy. The administration of the armed forces, according to Megasthenes, was carried on by a board of thirty officers divided into six committees, each committee consisting of five members. It seems that each of the six wings of the armed forces, the army, the cavalry, the elephants, the chariots, the navy, and the transport, was assigned to the care of a separate committee. The Mauryas' military strength was almost three times that of the Nandas, and this was apparently because of a much larger empire and thus far greater resources.

According to Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, Chandragupta Maurya could meet the expenses of such a huge army by letting state control almost all the economic activities in the realm. The state brought new land under cultivation with the aid of cultivators and *shudra* labourers. The virgin land that was opened to cultivation yielded handsome income to the state in the form of revenue collected from the newly settled peasants. It appears that taxes collected from the peasants varied from one-fourth to one-sixth of the produce. Those who were provided with irrigation facilities by the state had to pay for it. In addition, in times of emergency, peasants were compelled to raise more crops. Tolls were also levied on

commodities brought to town for sale, and they were collected at the gate. Moreover, the state enjoyed a monopoly in mining, sale of liquor, manufacture of arms, etc. This naturally brought vast resources to the royal exchequer. Chandragupta thus established a well-organized administrative system and gave it a sound financial base.

### 2.3.3 Ashoka (273-32 BC)

Chandragupta Maurya was succeeded by Bindusara, whose reign is important for its continuing links with the Greek princes. His son, Ashoka, is the greatest of the Maurya rulers. According to Buddhist tradition, he was so cruel in his early life that he killed his ninety-nine brothers to win the throne. However, as this statement is based on a legend, it may be mythical. Ashoka's biography, written by Buddhist authors, is so full of fiction that it cannot be taken seriously.

The history of Ashoka is reconstructed on the basis of his inscriptions, thirty-nine, in number, that are classified into Major Rock Edicts, Minor Rock Edicts, Separate Rock Edicts, Major Pillar Edicts, and Minor Pillar Edicts. The name Ashoka occurs in copies of Minor Rock Edict I found at three places in Karnataka and at one in MP. Thus, altogether, the name Ashoka occurs four times. It is significant that Ashoka's name does not occur in any of his inscriptions from north or north-west India. The inscriptions which do not carry his name mention only *devanampiyadasi*, dear to the gods, and leave out the name Ashoka. The title *devanampiya* or 'dear to gods' adopted by Ashoka was not unique but also adopted by his ancestors. However, *piyadasi* or 'good looking' seems to have been his unique title. Ashokan inscriptions have been found in India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Altogether, they appear at forty-seven places, and the total number of versions is 182 including two edicts which are considered spurious. It is significant that Ashokan inscriptions which were generally located on ancient highways, have been found at six places in Afghanistan. Composed in Prakrit, they were written in Brahmi script in the greater part of the subcontinent. However, in the north-western part of the subcontinent they appeared in Aramaic language and Kharoshthi script, and in Afghanistan they were written in both Aramaic and Greek scripts and languages. He was the first Indian king to speak directly to the people through his inscriptions which carry royal orders. The inscriptions throw light on Ashoka's career, his external and domestic policies, and the extent of his empire.

The ideology of Buddhism guided Ashoka's state policy at home and abroad. After his accession to the throne, Ashoka fought only one major war called the Kalinga war. According to him, 100,000 people were killed in the course of it, several lakhs died, and 150,000 were taken prisoners. These numbers are exaggerated, because the number 'a

hundred thousand' is used as a cliché in Ashokan inscriptions. At any rate, it appears that the king was deeply moved by the massacre in this war. The war caused great suffering to the brahmana priests and Buddhist monks, and this in turn brought upon Ashoka much grief and remorse. He therefore abandoned the policy of physical occupation in favour of one of cultural conquest. In other words, *bherighosha* was replaced with *dhammaghosha*.

Ashoka then appealed ideologically to the tribal people and the frontier kingdoms. The subjects of the independent states in Kalinga were asked to obey the king as their father and to repose confidence in him. The officials appointed by Ashoka were instructed to propagate this idea among all sections of his subjects. The tribal peoples were similarly asked to follow the principles of *dhamma* (*dharma*). He no longer treated foreign dominions as legitimate areas for military conquest. He took steps for the welfare of men and animals in foreign lands, which was a new thing considering the conditions in those times. He sent ambassadors of peace to the Greek kingdoms in West Asia and Greece. All this is based on Ashoka's inscriptions. If we rely on the Buddhist tradition, it would appear that he sent missionaries for the propagation of Buddhism to Sri Lanka and Central Asia, and there is inscriptional evidence to support Ashoka's initiatives to propagate Buddhism in Sri Lanka. As an enlightened ruler, Ashoka tried to enlarge his sphere of influence through propaganda.

It would be wrong to think that the Kalinga war caused Ashoka to become an extreme pacifist. He did not pursue the policy of peace for the sake of peace under all circumstances, but adopted the practical policy of consolidating his empire. He retained Kalinga after its conquest and incorporated it into his empire. There is also nothing to show that he disbanded the huge army maintained from the time of Chandragupta Maurya. Although he repeatedly asked the tribal people to follow the policy of *dharma*, he threatened adverse consequences if they violated the established rules of social order and righteousness (*dharma*). Within the empire he appointed a class of officers known as the *rajukas*, who were vested with the authority not only to reward people but also to punish them when necessary. Ashoka's policy to consolidate the empire in this way bore fruit. The Kandahar inscription speaks of the success of his policy with the hunters and fishermen, who gave up killing animals and possibly took to a settled agricultural life.

#### **2.3.4 Internal Policy and Buddhism**

Ashoka was converted to Buddhism as a result of the Kalinga war. According to tradition, he became a monk, made huge gifts to the Buddhists, and undertook pilgrimages to the Buddhist shrines. His visited to Buddhist shrines is also suggested by the *dhamma yatras* mentioned in his inscriptions.

According to tradition, Ashoka held the third Buddhist council (*sangiti*) and missionaries were sent not only to south India but also to Sri Lanka, Myanmar (Burma), and other countries to convert the people there. Brahmi inscriptions of the second and first centuries BC have been found in Sri Lanka.

Ashoka set a very high ideal for himself, and this was the ideal of paternal kingship. He repeatedly asked his officials to tell his subjects that the king looked upon them as his children. As agents of the king, the officials were also asked to take care of the people. Ashoka appointed *dhammamahamatras* to propagate *dharma* among various social groups, including women, and appointed *rajukas* for the administration of justice in his empire.

Ashoka disapproved of rituals, especially those observed by women. He forbade killing certain birds and animals, prohibited the slaughter of animals in the royal kitchen, and forbade the slaughter of animals in sacrifices. He banned gay social functions in which people indulged in an excess of revelry.

Ashoka's *dharma* was not however a narrow *dharma* and cannot be regarded as a sectarian faith. His Kandahar Greek inscription preaches amity between the sects. Ashoka's inscriptions are called *dhammalipi*, which cover not only religion and morality but also embrace social and administrative matters. They can be compared to the *Dharmashastras* or law-books written in Sanskrit under brahmanical influence. Though the *dhammalipis* were written in Prakrit under Buddhist influence, they try to regulate the social order like the *Dharmashastras*. The Ashokan edicts can be also compared to the *shasanas* or royal edicts issued in Sanskrit by the brahmanized kings. The broad objective was to preserve the social order. He ordained that people should obey their parents, pay respect to the brahmanas and Buddhist monks, and show mercy to slaves and servants. Above all, the *dhammalipi* asks the people to show firm devotion (*dridha bhakti*) or loyalty to king. These instructions are found in both the Buddhist and brahmanical faiths.

Ashoka taught people to live and let live. He emphasized compassion towards animals and proper behaviour towards relatives. His teachings were meant to strengthen the institution of family and the existing social classes. He held that if the people behaved well they would go to heaven, but never said that they would attain nirvana, which was the goal of Buddhist teachings. Ashoka's teachings were thus intended to maintain the existing social order on the basis of tolerance. He does not seem to have preached any sectarian faith.

### **2.3.5 State Control**

The brahmanical law-books repeatedly stressed that the king should be guided by the laws laid down in the *Dharmashastras* and by the customs prevalent in India. Kautilya advises the

king to promulgate *dharma* when the social order based on the varnas and ashramas (stages in life) collapses. He calls the king *dharmapravartaka* or promulgator of the social order. That the royal orders were superior to other orders was asserted by Ashoka in his inscriptions. Ashoka promulgated *dharma* and appointed officials to inculcate and enforce its essentials throughout India.

An assertion of royal absolutism was a natural culmination of the policy of military conquest adopted by the princes of Magadha. Anga, Vaishali, Kashi, Koshala, Avanti, Kalinga, etc., one by one were annexed to the Magadhan empire. Military control over these areas eventually turned into a coercive control over the lives of the people. Magadha had the requisite power of the sword to enforce its overall authority. In order to control various spheres of life the state had to maintain a vast bureaucracy. In no other period of ancient history do we hear of as many officers as in Maurya times.

The administrative mechanism was backed by an elaborate system of espionage. Various types of spies collected intelligence about foreign enemies and kept an eye on numerous officers. They also promoted superstitious practices to collect money from credulous people. Important functionaries were called *tirthas*. It appears that most functionaries were paid in cash, the highest among whom, the minister (*mantrin*), high priest (*purohita*), commander-in-chief (*senapati*) and crown prince (*yuvaraja*), were paid generously. They received as much as 48,000 *panas* (*pana* was a silver coin equal to three-fourths of a *tola*). In sharp contrast to them, the lowest officers were given 60 *panas* in consolidated pay although some employees were paid as little as 10 or 20 *panas*. Thus there was great disparity in the salaries of employees.

### **2.3.6 Economic Regulations**

If we rely on the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya, it would appear that the state appointed twenty-seven superintendents (*adhyakshas*), principally to regulate its economic activities. They controlled and regulated agriculture, trade and commerce, weights and measures, crafts such as weaving and spinning, mining, and the like. The state also provided irrigation facilities and regulated water supply for the benefit of agriculturists. Megasthenes informs us that in the Maurya empire the officials measured the land as in Egypt and inspected the channels through which water was distributed into smaller channels.

According to the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya, a striking social development of the Maurya period was the employment of slaves in agricultural operations. Megasthenes states that he did not notice any slaves in India, but there is little doubt that there had been domestic slaves from Vedic times onwards. It seems that during the Maurya period slaves were

engaged in agricultural work on a large scale. The state maintained farms on which numerous slaves and hired labourers were employed. About 150,000 war-captives brought by Ashoka from Kalinga to Pataliputra may have been engaged in agriculture, but the number of 1,50,000 seems to be exaggerated. However, ancient Indian society was not a slave society. The tasks that slaves performed in Greece and Rome were undertaken by the shudras in India. The shudras were regarded as the collective property of the three higher varnas. They were compelled to serve them as slaves, artisans, agricultural labourers, and domestic servants.

Several reasons suggest that royal control was exercised over a very large area, at least in the core of the empire. This was because of the strategic position of Pataliputra, from where royal agents could sail up and down the Ganges, Son, Punpun, and Gandak rivers. Besides this, the royal road ran from Pataliputra to Nepal through Vaishali and Champaran. We also hear of a road at the foothills of the Himalayas which passed from Vaishali through Champaran to Kapilavastu, Kalsi (in Dehra Dun district), Hazra, and eventually to Peshawar. Megasthenes speaks of a road connecting north-western India with Patna. Roads also linked Patna with Sasaram, and from there they ran to Mirzapur and central India. The capital was also connected with Kalinga via a route through eastern MP, and Kalinga in turn was linked with Andhra and Karnataka. All this facilitated transport in which horses may have played an important part. The Ashokan inscriptions appear on important highways. The stone pillars were made in Chunar near Varanasi from where they were transported to north and south India. Maurya control over the settled parts of the country may have matched that of the Mughals and perhaps of the East India Company. Medieval transport improved as a consequence of more settlements on the highways and the use of stirruped horses. In the late eighteenth century, when the dominions of the Company extended up to Allahabad, tax collections were transported by boat from eastern UP to Calcutta, and the transport system was much improved when steam navigation began on the Ganges around 1830.

In the distant areas the Maurya imperial authority may not have been effective. Pataliputra was the chief centre of royal power, but Tosali, Suvarnagiri, Ujjain, and Taxila were seats of provincial power. Each of them was governed by a governor called *kumara* or prince, and thus every governor hailed from the royal family. The princely governor of Tosali administered Kalinga and also parts of Andhra, and that of Suvarnagiri ruled the Deccan area. Similarly, the princely governor of Ujjain ruled the Avanti area while that of Taxila the frontier area. The princely governors may have functioned as autonomous rulers, and although some governors oppressed their subjects, Ashoka's authority was never seriously questioned.

The Maurya rulers did not have to deal with a large population. All told, their army did not exceed 650,000 men. If 10 per cent of the population was recruited, the total population in the Gangetic plains may not have been over six and a half million.

Ashokan inscriptions show that royal writ ran throughout the country except the extreme east and south. Nineteen Ashokan inscriptions have been found in AP and Karnataka, but rigid state control may not have proved effective much beyond the mid-Gangetic zone owing to difficulty in means of communications.

The Maurya period constitutes a landmark in the system of taxation in ancient India. Kautilya names many taxes which were collected from peasants, artisans, and traders. This required strong and efficient machinery for assessment, collection, and storage. The Mauryas attached greater importance to assessment than to storage and deposit. The *samaharta* was the highest officer in charge of assessment and collection, and the *sannidhata* was the chief custodian of the state treasury and storehouse. The assessor-cum-collector was far more important than the chief treasurer. The damage inflicted on the state by the first was thought to be more serious than any inflicted by the second. In fact, an elaborate machinery for assessment was first set up during the Maurya period. The list of taxes mentioned in the *Arthashastra* is impressive, and, if these were really collected, very little would have been left to the people to live on.

The epigraphic evidence we have for the existence of rural storehouses shows that taxes were also collected in kind. These granaries were probably also meant to help local people in times of famine, drought, etc.

It seems that the punch-marked silver coins, which carry the symbols of the peacock and crescented hill, formed the imperial currency of the Mauryas. They have been discovered in large numbers. Copper coins were also punch-marked. Besides punch-marked silver and copper coins, cast copper coins and die-struck coins were also issued. Without doubt, all these different types of coins helped the collection of taxes and payment of officers in cash. Also, because of its uniformity, the currency must have facilitated market exchange in a wider area.

The term empire is used for the territories conquered by the Magadhan kings, but this pre-industrial empire was different from the colonial empire of the industrial period. The pre-industrial empire was essentially territorial, based on taxes and tributes. The pre-industrial rulers collected taxes from a limited area under their direct control but also received tributes from distant rulers who acknowledged the suzerainty of the emperor. In the colonial empires of the industrial age, the rulers obtained raw material from their dominions for the

manufacture of various goods which were sold to the dominions. Thus cotton was almost unknown to Europe, and Indian textiles were sold in Britain. However, with the establishment of their rule, the British imported huge quantities of cotton from India, and sold cotton cloth to India in addition to woollen fabrics. In this context the pre-British empires were quite different.

### **2.3.7 Art and Architecture**

The Mauryas made a remarkable contribution to art and architecture, and introduced stone masonry on a wide scale. Megasthenes states that the Maurya palace at Pataliputra was as splendid as that in the capital of Iran. Fragments of stone pillars and stumps, indicating the existence of an 84-pillared hall, have been discovered at Kumrahar on the outskirts of modern Patna. Although these remains do not recall the magnificence mentioned by Megasthenes, they certainly attest to the high technical skill achieved by Maurya artisans in polishing the stone pillars, which are as shining as the Northern Black Polished Ware. It was a very difficult task to transport the huge blocks of stone from the quarries and to polish and embellish them when they were erected. The whole process suggests a great feat of engineering. Each pillar is made of a single piece of buff-coloured sandstone. Only their capitals, which are beautiful pieces of sculpture in the form of lions or bulls, are joined to the pillars on the top. The erection of the polished pillars throughout India shows the spread of the technical knowledge involved in the art of polishing them. It also shows that transport had spread far and wide. The Maurya artisans also started the practice of hewing out caves from rocks for monks to live in. The earliest examples are the Barabar caves at a distance of 30 km from Gaya. Later, this form of cave architecture spread to western and southern India.

In the central phase of the Northern Black Polished Ware around 300 BC, the central Gangetic plains became the centre of terracotta art. In Maurya times terracottas were produced on a large scale. They generally represented animals and women. The women included mother goddesses, and animals included elephants. These terracottas were however modelled by hand. The stone statue of Yakshini in the form of a beautiful woman found in Didarganj (Patna) is noted for its Maurya polish.

### **2.3.8 Fall of the Mauryan Empire**

The Magadhan empire, which had been reared by successive wars culminating in the conquest of Kalinga, began to disintegrate after the exit of Ashoka in 232 BC. Several causes seem to have brought about the decline and fall of the Maurya empire.

The brahmanical reaction began as a result of Ashoka's policy. There is no doubt that Ashoka adopted a tolerant policy and asked the people to respect even the brahmanas, but he

issued his edicts in Prakrit and not in Sanskrit. He prohibited the killing of birds and animals, and derided superfluous rituals performed by women. The anti-sacrifice attitude of Buddhism adopted by Ashoka adversely affected the incomes of brahmanas. Further, Ashoka appointed *rajukas* to govern the countryside and introduce *vyavaharasamata* and *dandasamata*. This meant the same civil and criminal law for all varnas. But the *Dharmashastra* compiled by the brahmanas prescribed varna discrimination. Naturally this policy infuriated the brahmanas.

Some new kingdoms that arose on the ruins of the Maurya empire were ruled by the brahmanas. The Shungas and the Kanvas, who ruled in MP and further east on the remnants of the Maurya empire, were brahmanas. Similarly, the Satavahanas, who founded kingdom in the western Deccan and Andhra, claimed to be brahmanas. These brahmana dynasties performed Vedic sacrifices that were discarded by Ashoka.

The enormous expenditure on the army and payment to the bureaucracy created a financial crisis for the Maurya empire. As far as we know, in ancient times the Mauryas maintained the largest army and the largest regiment of officers. Despite the range of taxes imposed on the people, it was difficult to maintain this huge superstructure. It seems that Ashoka made large donations to the Buddhist monks which left the royal treasury empty. Towards the end, in order to meet expenses, they were obliged to melt gold images.

Oppressive rule in the provinces was an important cause of the break-up of the empire. In the reign of Bindusara, the citizens of Taxila bitterly complained against the misrule of wicked bureaucrats (*dushtamatyas*). Their grievance was redressed by the appointment of Ashoka, but when Ashoka became emperor, a similar complaint was made by the same city. The Kalinga edicts show that Ashoka was much concerned about oppression in the provinces and, therefore, asked the *mahamatras* not to tyrannize the townsmen without due cause. For this purpose he introduced rotation of officers in Tosali (in Kalinga), Ujjain and Taxila. He himself spent 256 nights on a pilgrimage which may have helped administrative supervision. All this however failed to stop oppression in the outlying provinces, and after his retirement Taxila took the earliest opportunity to throw off the imperial yoke.

We may recall that Magadha owed its expansion to certain basic material advantages. Once the knowledge of the use of these elements of culture spread to central India, the Deccan, and Kalinga as a result of the expansion of the Magadhan empire, the Gangetic basin, which formed the heart of the empire, lost its special advantage. The regular use of iron tools and weapons in the peripheral provinces coincided with the decline and fall of the Maurya empire. On the basis of the material culture acquired from Magadha, new kingdoms

could be founded and developed. This explains the rise of the Shungas and Kanvas in central India, of the Chetis in Kalinga, and of the Satavahanas in the Deccan.

Since Ashoka was primarily preoccupied with missionary activities at home and abroad, he was unable to pay attention to safeguarding the passes through the north-western frontier. This had become necessary in view of the movement of tribes in Central Asia in the third century BC. The Scythians were in a state of constant flux. A nomadic people principally reliant on the use of the horse, they posed a serious danger to the settled empires in China and India. The Chinese ruler Shih Huang Ti (247–10 BC) constructed the Great Wall of China in about 220 BC to shield his empire against the attacks of the Scythians, but Ashoka took no such measures. Naturally, when the Scythians made a push towards India, they forced the Parthians, the Shakas, and the Greeks to move towards this subcontinent. The Greeks had set up a kingdom in north Afghanistan which was known as Bactria, and they were the first to invade India in 206 BC. This was followed by a series of invasions that continued till the beginning of the Christian era.

The Maurya empire was finally destroyed by Pushyamitra Shunga in 185 BC. Although a brahmana, he was a general of the last Maurya ruler called Brihadratha. He is said to have killed Brihadratha in public and forcibly usurped the throne of Pataliputra. The Shungas ruled in Pataliputra and central India. They performed several Vedic sacrifices to mark the revival of the brahmanical way of life, and are said to have persecuted the Buddhists. They were succeeded by the Kanvas who were also brahmanas.

## 2.4 THE IMPERIAL GUPTA

The Satavahanas and Kushans emerged as the two major powers following the disintegration of the Maurya kingdom. On the strength of their commerce with the Roman empire, the Satavahanas operated as a stabilising influence in the Deccan and the south, providing political unity and economic success. In the north, the Kushans played a similar function. In the mid-third century, both of these empires came to an end.

On the ruins of the Kushan empire arose a new empire that established its sway over a substantial part of the former dominions of the Kushans. This was the empire of the Guptas, who may have been of vaishya origin. Different titles are recommended for the different varnas by the Dharmashastras. The title *sharman* or auspicious is recommended for the brahmana, *varman* or armour for the kshatriya, *gupta* or hidden (also protected) for the vaishya, and *dasa* or servile for the shudra. Although the Gupta empire was not as large as the Maurya empire, it kept north India politically united for over a century from AD 335 to

455. The original kingdom of the Guptas comprised UP and Bihar at the end of the third century. UP appears to have been a more important province for the Guptas than Bihar, because early Gupta coins and inscriptions are largely found in that state. If we exclude some feudatories and private individuals whose inscriptions are largely found in MP, UP stands out as the most important area in relation to finds of Gupta antiquities. UP therefore seems to have been the place from where the Guptas operated and fanned out in different directions. Probably with their centre of power at Prayag, they spread into the neighbouring regions.

The Guptas were possibly feudatories of the Kushans in UP, and seem to have succeeded them without any considerable time-lag. At many places in UP and Bihar, Kushan antiquities are immediately followed by Gupta antiquities. It is likely that the Guptas learnt the use of the saddle, reins, buttoned coats, trousers, and boots from the Kushans. All these gave them mobility and made them excellent horsemen. In the Kushan scheme of things, horse-chariots and elephants had ceased to be important, horsemen playing the central role. This also seems to have been the case with the Guptas on whose coins horsemen are represented. Although some Gupta kings are described as excellent and unrivalled chariot warriors, their basic strength lay in the use of horses.

The Guptas enjoyed certain material advantages. The centre of their operations lay in the fertile land of *Madhyadesh* covering Bihar and UP. They were able to exploit the iron ores of central India and south Bihar. Also, they took advantage of their proximity to the areas in north India that conducted the silk trade with the eastern Roman empire, also known as the Byzantine empire. Given these favourable factors, the Guptas established their rule over Anuganga (along the Ganges in the mid-Gangetic basin), Prayag (modern Allahabad), Saketa (modern Ayodhya), and Magadha. In the course of time, this kingdom became an all-India empire. The Kushan power in north India came to an end around AD 230, and then a substantial part of central India fell under the rule of the Murundas, who were possibly kinsmen of the Kushans. The Murundas continued to rule till AD 250. Twenty-five years later, in about AD 275, the Gupta dynasty came to power.

#### **2.4.1 Chandragupta I (319–334 AD)**

The first important king of the Gupta dynasty was Chandragupta I. He married a Lichchhavi princess, in all probability from Nepal, which strengthened his position. The Guptas were probably vaishyas, and hence marriage into a kshatriya family lent them prestige. Chandragupta I seems to have been a ruler of considerable importance because he started the Gupta era in 319–320 AD, which marked the date of his accession. Later many inscriptions of the Gupta era came to be dated in this era.

### **2.4.2 Samudragupta (335–380 AD)**

The Gupta kingdom was enlarged enormously by Chandragupta's son and successor Samudragupta (335–380 AD). Ashoka believed in a policy of peace and non-aggression, but Samudragupta delighted in violence and conquest. His court poet Harishena wrote a glowing account of the military exploits of his patron, and, in a long inscription, the poet enumerates the peoples and countries that were conquered by Samudragupta. The inscription is engraved at Allahabad on the same pillar that carries the inscriptions of Ashoka.

The places and the countries conquered by Samudragupta can be divided into five groups. Group one includes the princes of the Ganga-Yamuna doab who were defeated and whose kingdoms were incorporated into the Gupta empire. Group two includes the rulers of the eastern Himalayan states and of some frontier states such as Nepal, Assam, and Bengal, which were made to feel the weight of Samudragupta's arms. It also covers some republics of Punjab. The republics, which flickered on the ruins of the Maurya empire, were finally crushed by Samudragupta. Group three includes the forest kingdoms situated in the Vindhya region and known as Atavikarajyas which Samudragupta brought under his control. Group four includes twelve rulers of the eastern Deccan and south India who were conquered and liberated. Samudragupta's arms reached as far as Kanchi in Tamil Nadu, where the Pallavas were compelled to recognize his suzerainty. Group five includes the names of the Shakas and Kushans, some of them ruling in Afghanistan. It is said that Samudragupta swept them out of power and received the submission of the rulers of distant lands. The prestige and influence of Samudragupta spread even outside India. According to a Chinese source, Meghavarmān, the ruler of Sri Lanka, sent a missionary to Samudragupta for permission to build a Buddhist temple at Gaya. This was granted, and the temple was developed into a huge monastic establishment. If we are to believe the eulogistic inscription at Allahabad, it would appear that Samudragupta never knew defeat, and because of his bravery and generalship he is called the Napoleon of India. There is no doubt that Samudragupta forcibly unified the greater part of India under him, and his power was felt in a much larger area than that of his predecessors.

### **2.4.3 Chandragupta II (380–412 AD)**

The reign of Chandragupta II saw the high watermark of the Gupta empire. He extended the limits of the empire by marriage alliance and conquest. Chandragupta II married his daughter Prabhavati to a Vakataka prince of the brahmana caste and ruled in central India. The prince died, and was succeeded by his young son. Prabhavati thus became the virtual ruler. As testified to by some of her land charters, which betray the influence of the eastern Gupta writing, she promoted the interests of her father Chandragupta. Thus Chandragupta exercised

indirect control over the Vakataka kingdom in central India, and this afforded him great advantage. With his great influence in this area, Chandragupta II conquered Mathura from the Kushans. More importantly, he occupied western Malwa and Gujarat, which had for about four centuries been under the rule of the ShakaKshatrapas. The conquest gave Chandragupta control over the western sea coast, famous for trade and commerce. This contributed to the prosperity of Malwa, and its chief city Ujjain. Ujjain seems to have been made the second capital by Chandragupta II.

The exploits of a king called Chandra are glorified in an iron pillar inscription fixed near QutbMinar in Delhi. If Chandra corresponds to Chandragupta II, it would appear that he established Gupta authority in north-western India and in a substantial part of Bengal. However, the epigraphic eulogy seems to be exaggerated.

Chandragupta II adopted the title of Vikramaditya, which had been first used by an Ujjain ruler in 58–57 BC as a mark of victory over the ShakaKshatrapas of western India. This Ujjain ruler is traditionally called Shakari or the enemy of the Shakas. The Vikramasamvat or era was started in 58–57 BC by Shakari. However, Chandragupta II proved to be a greater Shakari and Vikramaditya. The court of Chandragupta II at Ujjain was adorned by numerous scholars including Kalidasa and Amarasimha.

It was during Chandragupta's reign that the Chinese pilgrim Fa-Hsien (399–414 AD) visited India and wrote an elaborate account of the life of its people.

#### **2.4.4 System of Administration**

In contrast to the Maurya rulers, the Gupta kings adopted pompous titles such as *parameshvara*, *maharajadhiraja*, and *paramabhataraka* which signify that they ruled over many lesser kings in their empire. Kingship was hereditary, but royal power was limited by the want of a firm adherence to primogeniture. The throne did not always go to the eldest son, creating uncertainties of which the chiefs and high officials took advantage. The Guptas made munificent gifts to the brahmanas, who expressed their gratitude by comparing the king to different gods. He was looked upon as Vishnu, the protector and preserver. The goddess Lakshmi is invariably represented on Gupta coins as Vishnu's wife.

The numerical strength of the Gupta army is not known. Evidently the king maintained a standing army, which was supplemented by the forces occasionally supplied by his feudatories. Horse chariots receded into the background, and cavalry came to the fore. Horse archery became an important element in military tactics.

During the Gupta period land taxes increased in number, and those on trade and commerce decreased. Probably the king collected taxes varying from one-fourth to one-sixth

of the produce. In addition, whenever the royal army passed through the countryside, the local people had to feed it. The peasants had also to supply animals, food grains, furniture, etc., for the maintenance of royal officers on duty in rural areas. In central and western India, the villagers were also subjected to forced labour called *vishti* by the royal army and officials.

The judicial system was far more developed under the Guptas than in earlier times. Several law-books were compiled during this period, and for the first time civil and criminal laws were clearly demarcated. Theft and adultery fell under criminal law, disputes regarding various types of property under civil law. Elaborate laws were laid down about inheritance. As in earlier times, many laws continued to be based on varna differentiation. It was the duty of the king to uphold the law, and try cases with the help of brahmana priests. The guilds of artisans, merchants, and others were governed by their own laws. Seals from Vaishali and from Bhita near Allahabad indicate that these guilds flourished during Gupta times.

The Gupta bureaucracy was not as elaborate as that of the Mauryas. The most important officers in the Gupta empire were the *kumaramatyas*. They were appointed by the king in the home provinces and possibly paid in cash. As the Guptas were possibly vaishyas, recruitment was not confined to the upper varnas only, but several offices were combined in the hands of the same person, and posts became hereditary. This naturally weakened royal control.

The Guptas organized a system of provincial and local administration. The empire was divided into divisions called *bhuktis*, and each *bhukti* was placed under the charge of an *uparika*. The *bhuktis* were divided into districts (*vishayas*), which were placed under the charge of a *vishayapati*. In eastern India, the *vishayas* were divided into *vithis*, which again were subdivided into villages. The village headman gained in importance in Gupta times, managing village affairs with the assistance of elders. With the administration of a village or a small town, leading local elements were associated. No land transactions could be effected without their consent.

In the urban administration, organized professional bodies were given a considerable say. The sealings from Vaishali show that artisans, merchants, and the head of the guild served on the same corporate body, and in this capacity they obviously conducted the affairs of the town. The administrative board of the district of Kotivarsha in north Bengal (Bangladesh) included the chief merchant, the chief trader, and the chief artisan. Their consent to land transactions was considered necessary. Artisans and bankers were organized into their own separate guilds. We hear of numerous guilds of artisans, traders, etc., at Bhita and Vaishali. At Mandasor in Malwa and at Indore, silk weavers maintained their own

guilds. In the district of Bulandshahar in western UP, the oil-pressers were organized into guilds. It seems that these guilds, especially those of merchants, enjoyed certain immunities. In any event, they looked after the affairs of their own members and punished those who violated the laws and customs of the guild.

The system of administration described above applied only to north Bengal, Bihar, UP, and some adjoining areas of MP, which were ruled directly by the officers appointed by the Gupta kings. The major part of the empire was held by feudatory chiefs, many of whom had been subjugated by Samudragupta. The vassals who lived on the edge of the empire had three obligations to fulfil. As subordinate princes, they offered homage to the sovereign by personal attendance at his court, paid tribute to him, and presented to him daughters in marriage. It seems that in return they obtained charters to rule their areas, and these, marked with the royal Garuda seal, seem to have been issued to the vassals. The Guptas thus controlled several tributary princes in MP and elsewhere.

The second important feudal development that surfaced under the Guptas was the grant of fiscal and administrative concessions to priests and administrators. Started in the Deccan by the Satavahanas, the practice became a regular affair in Gupta times, particularly in MP. Religious functionaries were granted land, free of tax, for posterity, and they were authorized to collect from the peasants all the taxes that once went directly to the emperor. The villages granted to the beneficiaries could not be entered by royal agents, retainers, and others, and the beneficiaries were also empowered to punish criminals. Whether state officials were paid by grants of land in Gupta times is not clear. The abundance of gold coins would suggest that higher officials continued to be paid in cash, but some of them may have been remunerated by land grants.

As much of the imperial administration was managed by feudatories and beneficiaries, the Gupta rulers did not require as many officials as did the Mauryas, and also because, in contrast to the Maurya state, the Gupta state did not regulate economic activities on any substantial scale. The participation of leading artisans, merchants, elders, and others in the rural and urban administration also lessened the need to maintain a large retinue of officers. The Guptas neither needed nor had the elaborate administrative machinery of Maurya times, and in some ways their political system appears to have been feudal.

#### **2.4.5 Society during the Gupta Period**

Large-scale land grants to the brahmanas suggest that the brahmana supremacy increased in Gupta times. The Guptas, who probably were originally vaishyas, came to be looked upon as kshatriyas by the brahmanas. The brahmanas presented the Gupta kings as possessing god-

like attributes. All this helped to legitimize the position of the Gupta princes, who became great supporters of the brahmanical order. The brahmanas accumulated wealth on account of the numerous land grants made to them and therefore claimed many privileges, which are listed in the *Narada Smriti*, the lawbook of Narada, a work of about the fifth century.

The castes proliferated into numerous sub-castes as a result of two factors. A large number of foreigners had been assimilated into Indian society, and each group of foreigners was considered a kind of caste. As the foreigners largely came as conquerors they were given the status of kshatriya in society. The Hunas, who came to India towards the close of the fifth century, eventually came to be recognized as one of the thirty-six clans of the Rajputs. Even now some Rajputs bear the title Hun. The other reason for the increase in the number of castes was the absorption of many tribal people into brahmanical society through the process of land grants. The tribal chiefs were assigned a respectable origin, but most of their ordinary kinsmen were assigned a low origin, and every tribe became a kind of caste in its new incarnation. This process continued in some ways up to the present.

The position of shudras improved during this period. They were now permitted to listen to recitations of the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, and the Puranas. The epics and the Puranas represented the kshatriya tradition, whose myths and legends won loyalty to the social order. The shudras could also worship a new god called Krishna and were also permitted to perform certain domestic rites which naturally meant fees for the priests. This can all be linked to some improvement in the economic status of the shudras. From the seventh century onwards, they were mainly represented as agriculturists; in the earlier period, they generally figured as servants, slaves, and agricultural labourers working for the three higher varnas.

However, during this period, the number of untouchables increased, especially the chandalas. The chandalas entered the society as early as the fifth century BC. By the fifth century AD, their number had become so enormous and their disabilities so glaring that these attracted the attention of the Chinese pilgrim Fa-Hsien. He informs us that the chandalas live outside the village and deal in meat and flesh. Whenever they enter the town, they strike a piece of wood to announce their arrival so that others may avoid them. In the Gupta period, like the shudras, women were also allowed to listen to the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, and the Puranas, and were advised to worship Krishna. However, women of the higher orders did not have access to independent sources of livelihood in pre-Gupta and Gupta times. The fact that women of the two lower varnas were free to earn their livelihood, which gave them considerable freedom, but this was denied to women of the upper varnas. It was argued that

the vaishya and shudra women take to agricultural operations and domestic services and are therefore outside the control of their husbands. In contrast, by Gupta times, members of the higher orders came to acquire more and more land which made them more polygamous and more property-minded. In a patriarchal setup, they began to treat women as items of property, to such a degree that a woman was expected to follow her husband to the next world. The first example of the immolation of a widow after the death of her husband occurred during the Gupta period in 510 AD. However, some post-Gupta law-books held that a woman could remarry if her husband was dead, destroyed, impotent, had become a renouncer, or had been excommunicated.

The principal reason for the subordination of women of the upper varnas was their complete dependence on men for their livelihood, and lack of proprietary rights. However, the oldest Smritis or law-books state that gifts of jewellery, ornaments, garments, and similar other presents made to the bride on the occasion of her marriage were considered her property. Gupta and post-Gupta law-books substantially enlarged the scope of these gifts. According to them, presents received by the bride not only from her parents' side but also from her parents-in-law at marriage and on other occasions formed the *stridhana*. Katyayana, a lawmaker of the sixth century, held that a woman could sell and mortgage her immovable property along with her *stridhana*. This clearly implies that women received shares in landed property according to this lawmaker, but generally a daughter was not allowed to inherit landed property in the patriarchal communities of India.

*Niyoga*, according to which a younger brother or kinsman could marry the wife of the elder brother after the latter's death, was practised by the brahmanas and kshatriyas in Vedic times, but was not allowed to them by the law-books of Gupta and earlier times. Similarly, widow remarriage was not allowed to members of the higher orders, but the shudras could practise both *niyoga* or levirate and widow remarriage.

#### **2.4.6 The Origin and Growth of Bhagavatism**

Bhagavatism originated in post-Maurya times and centred around the worship of Vishnu or Bhagavata. Vishnu was a minor god in Vedic times. He represented the sun and also the fertility cult. By the second century BC he was merged with a god called *Narayana*, and came to be known as *Narayana-Vishnu*. Originally *Narayana* was a non-Vedic tribal god called *bhagavata*, and his worshippers were called *bhagavatas*. This god was conceived as a divine counterpart of the tribal chief. Just as a tribal chief received presents from his kinsmen and distributed shares among them, *Narayana* also was supposed to bestow shares or good fortune (*bhaga*) on his *bhakta* or worshippers. In return the worshippers or *bhaktas* offered

their loving devotion or *bhakti* to him. The worshippers of Vishnu and those of Narayana were brought under a single umbrella by merging Vishnu with *Narayana*. The former was a Vedic god and the latter emerged subsequently with non-Vedic associations, but the two cultures, the two types of peoples, and the two gods mingled and merged.

Besides, Vishnu came to be identified with a legendary hero of the Vrishni tribe living in western India who was known as Krishna–Vasudeva. The great epic *Mahabharata* was recast to show that Krishna and Vishnu were one. Thus, by 200 BC the three streams of gods and their worshippers merged into one and resulted in the creation of Bhagavatism or Vaishnavism.

Bhagavatism was marked by *bhakti* and *ahimsa*. *Bhakti* meant the offer of loving devotion. It was a kind of loyalty offered by a tribal to his chief or by a subject to his king. *Ahimsa*, or the doctrine of non-killing of animals, suited the agricultural society and was in keeping with the old cult of life-giving fertility associated with Vishnu. People worshipped the image of Vishnu, and offered it rice, sesamum, etc. Out of their aversion to killing animals, some of them took to an entirely vegetarian diet. The new religion was sufficiently liberal to attract foreigners. It also appealed to artisans and merchants who became important under the Satavahanas and Kushans. Krishna taught in the *Bhagavadgita* that even women, vaishyas, and shudras who were born of sin could seek refuge in him. This religious text dealt with the Vaishnava teachings, as did the *Vishnu Purana*, and also to an extent the *Vishnu Smriti*.

Bhagavatism or Vaishnavism overshadowed Mahayana Buddhism by Gupta times. It preached the doctrine of incarnation, or avatar. History was presented as a cycle of the ten incarnations of Vishnu. It was believed that whenever the social order faced a crisis, Vishnu appeared in human form to save it. Each incarnation of Vishnu was considered necessary for the salvation of dharma which coincided with the varna divided society and the institution of the patriarchal family protected by the state.

By the sixth century Vishnu became a member of the trinity of gods along with Shiva and Brahma, but was a dominant god in his own right. After the sixth century, several texts were written to popularize the virtues of worshipping him, but the most important was the *Bhagavata Purana*. The story in that text was recited by priests for several days. In medieval times *bhagavatagharas* or places meant for Vishnu worship and recitation of the legends associated with him began to be established in eastern India. Several religious recitations, including the *Vishnusahasranama*, were composed for the benefit of Vishnu worshippers.

A few Gupta kings were worshippers of Shiva, the god of destruction, but he came to the fore at a later stage, and does not seem to have been as important as Vishnu in the early

phase of the Gupta rule. Idol worship in the temples became a common feature of Hinduism from the Gupta period onwards and many festivals also began to be celebrated. Agricultural festivals observed by different classes of people were lent a religious garb and colour, and turned into useful sources of income for the priests. The Gupta kings followed a policy of tolerance towards different religious sects. We find no example of the persecution of the followers of Buddhism and Jainism. This was also due to the change in the character of Buddhism which had come to acquire many features of Brahmanism or Hinduism.

#### **2.4.7 Art and Literature**

The Gupta period is called the Golden Age of ancient India. This may not be true in the economic field because several towns in north India declined during this period. However, the Guptas possessed a large quantity of gold, whatever its source, and they issued the largest number of gold coins. Princes and the rich could divert a part of their income to support those who were engaged in art and literature. Both Samudragupta and Chandragupta II were patrons of art and literature. Samudragupta is represented on his coins playing the lute (vina), and Chandragupta II is credited with maintaining in his court nine luminaries.

In ancient India, art was largely inspired by religion. Survivals of nonreligious art from ancient India are few. Buddhism gave great impetus to art in Maurya and post-Maurya times and led to the creation of massive stone pillars, the hewing of beautiful caves, and the raising of high stupas or relic towers. The stupas appeared as dome-like structures on round bases, principally of stone. Innumerable images of the Buddha were sculptured. During the Gupta period a life-size copper image of the Buddha of more than 6 feet was made. It was discovered at Sultanganj near Bhagalpur, and is now displayed in Birmingham. Also, during the Gupta period beautiful images of the Buddha were fashioned at Sarnath and Mathura, but the finest specimens of Buddhist art in Gupta times are the Ajanta paintings. Although these paintings covered the period from the first century BC to the seventh century AD, most of them relate to Gupta times. They depict various events in the life of Gautama Buddha and the previous Buddhas whose birth stories are related in the Jatakas. These paintings are lifelike and natural, and the brilliance of their colours has not faded even after fourteen centuries. However, there is nothing to show that the Guptas were the patrons of the Ajanta paintings.

As the Guptas supported Brahmanism, images of Vishnu, Shiva, and some other Hindu gods were fashioned for the first time during their period. At many places, the entire pantheon is portrayed with the chief god at the centre surrounded by his retainers and subordinates. The leading god is represented as large in size, with his retainers and

subordinate gods drawn on a smaller scale. This reflects clear social hierarchy and discrimination.

The Gupta period was poor in terms of architecture. All that we find are a few temples made of brick in UP and a stone temple. The brick temples of Bhitargaon in Kanpur, Bhitari in Ghazipur, and Deogarh in Jhansi may be mentioned. The Buddhist university at Nalanda was set up in the fifth century, and its earliest structure, made of brick, relates to this period.

When we talk about literature, we find that the Gupta period is remarkable for the production of secular literature, which consisted of a fair degree of ornate court poetry. Bhasa was an important poet in the early phase of the Gupta period and wrote thirteen plays. He wrote in Sanskrit, but his dramas also contain a substantial amount of Prakrit. He was the author of a drama called *Dradiracharudatta*, which was later refashioned as *Mrichchhakatika* or the Little Clay Cart by Shudraka. The play deals with the love affair of a poor brahmana trader with a beautiful courtesan, and is considered one of the best works of ancient drama. In his plays Bhasa uses the term *yavanika* for the curtain, which suggests Greek contact.

However, what has made the Gupta period particularly famous is the work of Kalidasa who lived in the second half of the fourth and the first half of the fifth century. He was the greatest poet of classical Sanskrit literature and wrote *Abhijnanashakuntalam* which is very highly regarded in world literature. It relates the love story of King Dushyanta and Shakuntala, whose son Bharata appears as a famous ruler. *Shakuntalam* was one of the earliest Indian works to be translated into European languages, the other work being the *Bhagavadgita*. The plays produced in India during the Gupta period have two common features. First, they are all comedies; no tragedies are found. Secondly, characters of the higher and lower classes do not speak the same language; women and shudras featuring in these plays use Prakrit whereas the higher classes use Sanskrit. We may recall that Ashoka and the Satavahanas used Prakrit as the state language.

This period also shows an increase in the production of religious literature. Most works of the period had a strong religious bias. The two great epics, namely the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, were almost completed by the fourth century AD. Although the epics and Puranas seem to have been compiled by the brahmanas, they represent the kshatriya tradition. They are replete with myths, legends, and exaggerations. They may reflect social developments but are not dependable for political history. The *Ramayana* relates the story of Rama, who was banished by his father Dasharatha from the kingdom of Ayodhya for fourteen years on account of the machinations of his stepmother Kaikeyi. He faithfully carried out his father's orders and went to live in a forest, from where his wife Sita was

abducted by Ravana, the king of Lanka. Eventually Rama with the help of Sugriva succeeded in rescuing Sita. The story has two important moral strands. First, it idealizes the institution of family in which a son must obey his father, the younger brother must obey his elder brother, and the wife must be faithful to her husband under all circumstances. Second, Ravana symbolizes the force of evil, and Rama the force of righteousness. In the end, righteousness triumphs over the forces of evil, and a good order over a bad order. The story of Rama had a much wider social and religious appeal than the main narrative of the *Mahabharata*. There are many versions of the *Ramayana* in all the important Indian languages and also in those of Southeast Asia.

The *Mahabharata* is essentially the story of conflict between two groups of cousins, the Kauravas and the Pandavas. It shows that kingship knows no kinship. Although the Pandavas were entitled to their share in the kingdom ruled by Dhritarashtra, the Kauravas refused to give them even a single inch of territory. This led to a prolonged fratricidal war between the Pandavas, patronized by Krishna, and the Kauravas fighting on their own. Eventually the Kauravas were worsted in the battle, and the Pandavas emerged victorious. This story too symbolizes the victory of righteousness over the forces of evil. The *Bhagavadgita* forms an important part of the *Mahabharata*. It teaches that a person must carry out the duties assigned to him by his caste and rank under all circumstances without any desire for reward.

The Puranas follow the lines of the epics, and the earlier ones were finally compiled in Gupta times. They are full of myths, legends, sermons, etc., which were meant for the education and edification of the common people. The period also saw the compilation of various *Smritis* or the lawbooks in which social and religious norms were written in verse. The phase of writing commentaries on the *Smritis* begins after the Gupta period. The Gupta period also saw the development of Sanskrit grammar based on the work of Panini and Patanjali. This period is particularly memorable for the compilation of *Amarakosha* by Amarasimha, who was a luminary in the court of Chandragupta II. This lexicon is learnt by heart by students learning Sanskrit in the traditional way. Overall, the Gupta period was a bright phase in the history of classical literature and one that developed an ornate style that was different from the old simple Sanskrit. From this period onwards we find a greater emphasis on verse than on prose, and also a few commentaries. Sanskrit was undoubtedly the court language of the Guptas, and although the period produced much brahmanical religious literature, it also gave birth to some of the earliest pieces of secular literature.

#### **2.4.8 Science and Technology**

In mathematics, the period saw, in the fifth century, a work called *Aryabhatiya* written by Aryabhata who belonged to Pataliputra. It appears that this mathematician was well versed in various kinds of calculations. Aryabhata displays an awareness of both the zero system and the decimal system. A Gupta inscription of 448 AD from Allahabad district suggests that the decimal system was known in India at the beginning of the fifth century. In the field of astronomy, a book called *RomakaSidhanta* was compiled, its title indicating that it was influenced by Greek and Roman ideas.

The Gupta craftsmen distinguished themselves by their work in iron and bronze. Bronze images of the Buddha began to be produced on a considerable scale because of the knowledge the smiths had of advanced metal technology. With regard to iron objects, the best example is the iron pillar found at Mehrauli in Delhi. Manufactured in the fourth century AD, the pillar has not gathered any rust over the subsequent fifteen centuries which is a great tribute to the technological skill of the craftsmen, although the arid conditions in Delhi may also have contributed to its preservation. It was impossible to produce such a pillar in any iron foundry in the West until about a century ago. It is a pity that the later Indian craftsmen could not develop this knowledge further.

#### **2.4.9 Fall of the Gupta Empire**

The successors of Chandragupta II had to face an invasion by the Hunas from Central Asia in the second half of fifth century. Although initially the Gupta king Skandagupta took effective measures to stem the march of the Hunas into India, his successors proved to be weak and were unable to cope with the Huna invaders who excelled in horsemanship and possibly used stirrups made of metal. They could move quickly, and being excellent archers they seem to have achieved considerable success not only in Iran but also in India.

By 485 AD, the Hunas occupied eastern Malwa and a substantial portion of central India where their inscriptions have been found. The intermediate regions, such as Punjab and Rajasthan, also passed into their hands. This must have drastically reduced the extent of the Gupta empire at the beginning of the sixth century. Although the Huna power was soon overthrown by Yashodharman of Malwa who belonged to the Aulikara feudatory family, the Malwa prince successfully challenged the authority of the Guptas and set up in 532 AD a pillar of victory commemorating his conquest of almost the whole of northern India. Yashodharman's rule was short-lived, but it dealt a severe blow to the Gupta empire.

The Gupta empire was further undermined by the rise of the feudatories. The governors appointed by the Gupta kings in north Bengal and their feudatories in Samatata or south-east Bengal tended to declare themselves independent. The later Guptas of Magadha

established their power in Bihar. Alongside them, the Maukharis rose to power in Bihar and UP, and had their capital at Kanauj. It seems that by 550 AD, Bihar and UP had passed out of Gupta hands. By the beginning of the sixth century we find independent princes issuing land grants in their own right in northern MP, though they used the Gupta era in dating their charters. The rulers of Valabhi established their authority in Gujarat and western Malwa. After the reign of Skandagupta, that is in 467 AD, hardly any Gupta coin or inscription has been found in western Malwa and Saurashtra. The loss of western India, which seems to have been complete by the end of the fifth century, must have deprived the Guptas of the rich revenues from trade and commerce and crippled them economically. In north India, the princes of Thanesar established their power in Haryana and then gradually moved on to Kanauj.

The Gupta state may have found it difficult to maintain a large professional army because of the growing practice of giving land grants for religious and other purposes, which was bound to reduce revenues. Their income may have been also lost by the decline of foreign trade. The migration of a guild of silkweavers from Gujarat to Malwa in 473 AD and their adoption of non-productive professions show that there was no great demand for the cloth produced by them. The advantages from Gujarat trade gradually disappeared. After the middle of the fifth century, the Gupta kings made desperate attempts to maintain their gold currency by reducing the content of pure gold in it, but this proved to be of no avail. Although the rule of the imperial Guptas lingered till the sixth century, the imperial glory had vanished a century earlier.

## **2.5 Summary**

In this unit you have learnt that:

- Though monarchy was usual in ancient India, tribal states also existed, which were governed by oligarchies. The term "republic" is also often used for these bodies by many historians.
- Chandragupta Maurya established the Maurya dynasty after succeeding the Nanda throne in about 321 BC at the age of twenty-five. Chanakya or Vishnugupta was his mentor and guide. The origin and early life of Chandragupta remain obscure.
- Chandragupta was succeeded by Bindusara and later by Ashoka. These Mauryan kings introduced a better social, political and administrative system which united India to a great extent.

- The Gupta dynasty was founded by Chandragupta I who married a kshatriya Lichchhavi princess. The Guptas were probably vaishyas, and hence marriage into a kshatriya family lent them prestige.
- The Gupta kingdom was enlarged enormously by Chandragupta's son and successor Samudragupta (335–380 AD). His court poet Harishena wrote a glowing account of the military exploits of his patron, and, in a long inscription, the poet enumerates the peoples and countries that were conquered by Samudragupta.
- The Gupta kings developed an efficient administration and adopted pompous titles such as *parameshvara*, *maharajadhiraja*, and *paramabhataraka* which signify that they ruled over many lesser kings in their empire.
- The Gupta period is called the Golden Age of ancient India as the period witnessed extensive advancement in art, literature, science, religion, etc. The Guptas possessed a large quantity of gold and they issued the largest number of gold coins. Princes and the rich could divert a part of their income to support those who were engaged in art, literature and science. The Gupta kings were great patrons of art and literature.

## 2.6 Key words

- *Arthashastra* : Practice of political diplomacy written by Kautilya.
- Dynasty : A line of hereditary rulers of a country.
- Empire : Group of states or countries ruled over by a single monarch.
- *Gana* : Tribe.
- Inscription : A thing inscribed, as on a monument or in a book.
- Monarchy : A form of government with a monarch or king at the head.
- Oligarchy : A group of people having control of a country or organization.

## 2.7 Check Your Progress

### 1. State whether true or false:

- a) The *gana-sanghas* have been described as republics or oligarchies by historians.
- b) Two of the *mahajanapadas*, the Vajji and Malla had political system of monarchy.
- c) The Greek account *Indika* was written by Megasthenes.
- d) Chandragupta Maurya succeeded the Nanda throne in about 321 BC.
- e) In 297 BC Chandragupta was succeeded by his son Ashoka.
- f) The history of Ashoka is reconstructed on the basis of his thirtyeight inscriptions.
- g) Ashoka held the third Buddhist council.
- h) Harisenawrote a glowing account of theSamudragupta's military expeditions.

- i) Samudragupta adopted the title of Vikramaditya.
- j) During Gupta period a work called *Aryabhatiyaw* was written by Aryabhata.

**2. Fill in the blanks:**

- a) In an Oligarchy the chief was known as \_\_\_\_\_.
- b) Chandragupta I is known to have married a Lichchhavi princess named \_\_\_\_\_.
- c) Kautilya was also known as \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
- d) Bindusara was known to the Greeks as \_\_\_\_\_.
- e) \_\_\_\_\_ was a Greek ambassador sent to the court of Chandragupta Maurya
- f) Ashoka propagated the principles of \_\_\_\_\_.
- g) The \_\_\_\_\_ are considered to have been of vaishya origin.
- h) The ruler of Sri Lanka named \_\_\_\_\_ sent a Buddhist missionary to Samudragupta.
- i) During the reign of Chandragupta II the Chinese pilgrim \_\_\_\_\_ visited India.
- j) The successors of Chandragupta II had to face an invasion by the \_\_\_\_\_ from Central Asia.

**2.8 Answers to Questions in Check your Progress**

**1.State whether true or false:**

- a) True      b) False      c) True      d) True      e) False      f) False
- g) True      h) True      i) False      j) True

**2.Fill in the blanks:**

- a) Ganapati   b) Kumaradevi   c) Chanakya & Vishnugupta   d) Amittrochates
- e) Megasthenes   f) Dhamma   g) Guptas   h) Meghavarmani) Fa-Hsien
- j) Hunas

**2.9 Questions and Exercise**

Short answer questions

1. What is an Oligarchy?
2. When did Ashoka convert to Buddhism? And why?
3. Why was Gupta era also known as Golden era?

Long answer questions

1. Why did the Oligarchies and Republics decline?
2. Describe the imperial organisation of the Mauryan state.
3. Outline the growth of Bhagvatism during the Gupta era and its impact on the society.

**2.10 Suggested Readings**

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4. Sharma, R.S. : India's Ancient Past, New Delhi, 2005.
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## UNIT-III

### RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

#### STRUCTURE

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 Jainism
  - 3.2.1 Origin of Jainism
  - 3.2.2 Doctrines and Philosophy
  - 3.2.3 Spread and decline
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- 3.3 Buddhism
  - 3.3.1 Origin and life of Buddha
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- 3.5 Alvars and Nayanars
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  - 3.5.3 Social Composition
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- 3.8 Check Your Progress
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- 3.10 Questions and Exercise
- 3.11 Suggested Readings

#### **3.0 Introduction**

The Sixth Century B.C. witnessed a new phase in ancient Indian history and culture. In Indian history it is known as an age of protest against the old practices. It was like a spiritual and religious awakening in the Indian society for reform and newness. The earlier

religious simplicity and social equality of the *Rig Vedic* time were no longer their. From the later Vedic time, religions lost much of its inner substance in ever increasing outer practices. Dogmas and rituals became more and more rigid. Many gods and goddesses were made to appear in religious belief. The dominations of the priests became through. They made a monopoly of both religious thinking and sacred performances. The Brahmanical supremacy closed the doors of religious quest to other social classes. As religion lost its former vitality, the society also lost its earlier strength. The people were quite fed up with the dominance of the priestly class. The people were greatly dissatisfied with the large number of sacrifices. In post – Vedic times society was clearly divided into four *Varanas* or castes. Cast system destroyed the concept of human equality and divided men into many sections. The rigidity of caste system also contributed to the discontent among the people. Most of the religious works of Hindus were composed in Sanskrit, which was not understood by the common people. This provided an opportunity to the priestly class to interpret the religion as it suited their interests. The reaction of the *Kshatriyas* against the domination of priestly class called Brahmanas, who claimed various privileges, was one of the causes of the origin of new religion. It was in this mental climate that Jainism and Buddhism rose as two mighty religious movements to user in an era of enlightened progress. Varadhaman Mahavira, who founded Jainism and Gautam Buddha, who founded Buddhism, belonged to the Kshetriya clan, and both disputed the authority of the *Brahmanas*. In fact, these movements Jainism and Buddhism are protestant Hinduism as Lutherism and Calvinism are protestant Christianity. These two creeds not only denied the authority of the *Vedas*, existence of Vedic God but also rejected many practices of Brahmanical religion.

Brahmanas, kshatriyas, vaishyas, and shudras were the four varnas of post-Vedic civilization. Each Varna was given certain responsibilities. Despite the fact that Varna was determined by birth, the two upper varnas gained power, prestige, and privileges at the expense of the smaller varnas. The brahmanas, who were given the roles of priests and instructors, claimed to be the most powerful people in society. Tensions appear to have arisen as a result of the varna-divided society. The reactions of the vaishyas and shudras are unknown, but the kshatriyas, who served as rulers, reacted fiercely against the brahmanas' ceremonial dominance, and appear to have led a protest movement against the significance placed on birth in the Varna system. One of the origins of the emergence of different faiths was the Kshatriya reaction to the brahmanas' dominance, which claimed numerous rights.

Vardhamana Mahavira, the true founder of Jainism, and Gautama Buddha, the true founder of Buddhism, were both kshatriyas who challenged the brahmanas' authority.

Another cause of the rise of these new religions lay in the spread of a new agricultural economy in north-eastern India. Before these areas were colonized on a large scale, they were densely forested and could not be easily cleared without the aid of iron axes. The use of iron tools made possible clearance, agriculture, and large settlements. The agricultural economy based on the iron ploughshare required the use of bullocks, and could not flourish without animal husbandry. However, the Vedic practice of killing cattle indiscriminately in sacrifices hampered the progress of the new agriculture. The cattle wealth was gradually decimated because the cows and bullocks were being killed in the course of the numerous Vedic sacrifices, and the non-Vedic tribal people living on the southern and eastern fringes of Magadha also killed cattle for food. However, if the new agrarian economy was to stabilize, this killing had to be halted.

Adding to that, a strong reaction against various forms of private property could also be noticed. Old-fashioned people did not like the use and accumulation of coins made certainly of silver and copper and possibly of gold. They disliked the new dwellings and clothes, new luxurious systems of transport, and disliked war and violence. The new forms of property created social inequalities, and caused misery and suffering to the mass of ordinary people. Therefore, the common people yearned to return to a primitive lifestyle, to the ascetic ideal which dispensed with the new forms of property and the new style of life. Both Jainism and Buddhism propounded simple, puritan, ascetic living.

Therefore, a sense of agitation started against the material advantages stemming from the new lifestyle of the Gangetic basin. In other words, we find the same kind of reaction against changes in material life in the mid-Gangetic plain in the sixth and fifth centuries BC as occurred against the changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution of modern times. As with the coming of the Industrial Revolution, many people yearned for a return to a pre-machine age lifestyle, so in ancient times, people yearned for a return to the pre-Iron Age style of life. This gave a great impetus to the rise of new religious movements which attracted people.

### **3.1 Objectives**

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

- Explain the causes of the origin of the new religious sects.
- Discuss the origin and development of Jainism in India.

- Discuss the teaching, spread and decline of Jainism.
- Describe the teachings of Buddhism.
- Explain the spread and decline of Buddhism.
- Trace the history of three religious sects Ajivikas, Alvars and Nayanars.
- Understand the origin and doctrines of Ajivikas
- Understand the rise of Alvar and Nayanar saints.
- Understand the role of Alvar and Nayanar in the Bhakti movement.
- Get yourself acquainted with some important Alvar and Nayanar saints and their works.
- Understand the Philosophical aspects of Ajivikas, Alvars and Nayanars.

## 3.2 JAINISM

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

### 3.2.1 Origin of Jainism

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

Jain literature throws some light on teaching of Parsavanath. He became an ascetic at the age of 30 and after performing a penance of 84 days he was enlightened. He lived two hundred fifty years before the birth of Mahavira. He taught four principles i.e., *Satya*, (truth), *Ahimsa* (non-violence), *Aparigraha* (non-possession of property) and *Astsyas* (not to receive

anything which is not given freely). To these Mahavira only adds the fifth principles, namely, to maintain celibacy or *Brahmacharya*. But the essential difference between the two was that while Parsava allowed the monks to use white garments, Mahavira forbade even this. A study of Prasavanath's teachings reveals that Mahavira was not the first founder of Jainism. Jainism had already been organized before Mahavira. Rules had also been set up even for monks, runs and Jaina *Sangha*. Mahavira, however, gave that faith its real and historical form and made it a great religion.

### **Early Life of Mahavira**

Vardhamana, the future Mahavira was born in 540 B.C. at Kundagrama a village near the ancient city Vaishali, capital of Videha. His father Siddhartha was the head of the *Kshatriya* clan called *Jantrikas*. His mother Trishla was a Lichavi princess of Videha. Mahavira had an aristocratic *Kshatriya* background. Vardhaman received the highest perfection in all branches of learning and grew up to be a householder. The *Acharanga Sutra* describes Vardhamana's parents as followers of the *Jina* Parshavanath. *Shvetambara* tradition states that Vardhamana entered the house-holder stage by marrying Yashoda and had a daughter named Priyadarshana. From his very childhood Mahavira had a bent towards meditation. Vardhamana is supposed to have renounced the world when he was 30 years old. The *Shvetambar* hagiography asserts that he did so after the death of his parents and with the permission from his elder brother, Vardhaman became ascetic.

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

supreme knowledge he became a *Jina*. The *Jina* is considered a human being endowed with super human insight and knowledge. According to Jaina tradition, he is born with certain unusual characteristics that mark him out for his future destiny. With that Vardhamana became *Jina* or Mahavira (a great conqueror). There after he proclaimed a new faith called Jainism. His followers were called the Jainas.

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

### 3.2.2 Doctrines and Philosophy

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

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

Mahavira gave the maximum stress on *Karma* and rebirth. He divided all existing things into two categories, the living and the non-living. All the living beings were described

as the *Jivas*. Since the *Jiva* existed in physical and material form, it got bound to action or *Karma*. Each *Jiva* in the body was the Atma. It was *Karma* which decided the future of the Atma. Good works in life would yield good results, as bad works lead to bad results. Each *Karma* or action would have its results. No one could escape the consequences of his *Karma*. He believed that *Karma* was the cause of rebirth. No prayer or worship could save man from his *Karma*. Responsibility was solely with man for his own future, good or bad. That is why he called upon his followers to adopt *Triratna* or Three Jewels to escape the pain of rebirth.

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

Mahavira laid great emphasis on the right conduct of man. He wanted man to conquer two weaknesses, namely, attachment and aversion. Attachment led to selfishness and greed while aversion led to hatred and anger. According to Mahavira the highest standard of conduct meant the freedom from both.

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

Mahavira asked his disciples to try to realize the supreme truth. Apart from leading a life of austerity, morality, purity and virtue, they were asked not to possess, not to acquire, not to desire and not to do injury. One should avoid evil *Karmas* in order to Nirvan or salvation. So one should observe five vows or principles. These are *Ahimsa* or non-violence, *Satya* or speaking the truth, *Astheya* or non-stealing, *Aparigraha* or non-possession and *Brahmacharya* or to maintain celibacy. According to Jainism there are 13 main sins. It has mentioned in *Avashaka Sutra*. These sins are – 1. *Himsa*, 2. Telling a lie, 3. Stealing, 4.

Masturbation, 5. Using intoxicants, 6. Anger, 7. Covetousness, 8. Pride, 9. Rage, 10 Jealous, 11. Quarrel, 12. Levying Charges, 13. Speaking ill to others.

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

### **Jain Religious Literature**

The task of arranging religious literature of Jainism was under taken by first Jains council convened at Pataliputra in 300 B.C. under the guidance of Sthulabhadra which compiled the teachings of Mahavira into 12 *Angas*. The canon was accepted only by the *Svetambar* Jainas. The *Digambaras* claimed that the old canon was hopelessly lost. The existing texts were finally compiled at second Jaina council held at Valabhi in the fifth century A.D. The sacred literature of *Jina* canon was written in a form of *Prakrit* called *Ardha Magadhi* and broadly consists of six categories of works such as: 1) the twelve *Angas*, 2) The twelve *Upangas*, 3) The ten *Prakirans*, 4) The Six *Chhedasutras*, 5) The four *Mulasutras*, 6) Miscellaneous texts.

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

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

### 3.2.3 Spread and Decline of Jainism

In order to spread the teaching of Jainism, Mahavir organized an order of his followers. This admitted both men and women. At the same time, Jainism did establish a monastic order for women. The traditional Jaina account of the growth of *Sangha* during the life time of Mahavira infact gives greater prominence to women. According to *KalpaSutra*, when Mahavira died there were 14000 monks and 36000 nuns. Nuns must have played an important role in spreading Jainism among women. Since Jainism did not very clearly mark itself out from the Brahmanical religion, it failed to attract the masses. Despite this Jainism gradually spread into South and West India. According to Jaina tradition, the spread of Jainism in Karnataka is attributed to Chandragupt Maurya ( 322-298 B.C.). In the later part of his political career, Chandragupta Maurya abdicated the throne and became a Jaina ascetic. There upon he proceeded to far South and lived at a place named Sravana Belgola in Karnataka. Another reason was that 200 years after the death of Mahavira a great famine took place in Magadha. The famine lasted for 12 years and so in order to protect themselves many a Jaina migrated to the south under the leadership of Bhadrabahu. The immigrant Jains spread Jainism in South India.

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. **Lack of Royal Patronage:** The initial tempo of royal Patronage of Jainism by Bimbisara, Ajatsatru, Udayin and Kharavela of Kalinga was not kept up by kings and princes of later times. Rather the zeal and determination of Ashoka, Kaniska and Harsha Vardhan to spread Buddhism came to eclipse Jainism. So lack of sincere and determined royal patronage came to relegate Jainism.
2. **Lack of Efforts:** There was also a decline in the missionary zeal and sincerity of the Jain mendicants. They were no more particular in undertaking the strain of spreading Jainism in villages and towns. The traders and business men still remained loyal to Jainism. But they had no time to do anything for the spread of Jainism.
3. **Severity of Jainism:** The severity of Jainism boomeranged against it, to bring about its decline. Unlike the 'middle path' of Buddhism, Jainism stood for severe penance, meditation, fasting and restraints etc. All these were too severe to endure. People soon became disillusioned with it. In course of time, Jainism, once adored, became alienated from the people.
4. **Unintelligible Philosophy:** The most of the Jain Philosophy was unintelligible for the masses. The concepts of *Jeeva*, *Ajeeva*, and *Syadbada* etc could not be understood properly by the people. Many could not accept the view that stone, water, tree and earth etc. had a soul of their own. This paved the way for its decline.
5. **Split in Jainism:** After the death of Mahavira, Jainism was divided into two sects over the issue of Jain ideology. They were divided into *Digambara* and *Svetambara* groups. The former, led by Bhadrabahu and the 'Sventamber' group, led by Stalabahu. The split weakened Jainism and as such, its spread came to be curtailed.
6. **Rapid Spread of Buddhism:** Rise and rapid growth of Buddhism came as a formidable obstacle in the path of the spread of Jainism. Buddhism was simple and intelligible. There was no severity in it. Even a householder could follow it.
7. **Role of Hindu Preachers:** Hinduism also posed threats to Jainism. Nimbarka, Ramanuja, Sankaracharya etc. came to make the foundation of Hinduism more solid and stronger. Rise of Vaishnavism, Saivism and Saktism pushed Jainism into comparative insignificance.

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

### 3.2.4 Contribution of Jainism

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

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

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

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

Fifthly, the beauty of Jainism finds its high water mark in the field of art and architecture. The Jains erected stupas, stone railings, decorated gateways and carved pillars. Their famous centre of art and architecture are located at the caves of Khandagiri and Udayagiri in Orissa, Mathura, Udayagiri Caves at Bhilsa, and Jaina Caves at Ellora. One of the best cave temples was built by them in the second century B.C in Orissa is known as Hatigumpha cave temple. The other notable architectural and sculptural feats of the Jainas include the temples of Gwalior, 57 feet high statue of Gomateswar in Sarban Belgola, temples at Khujaraho and

Mount Abu. The Jain tower at Chittore in Rajasthan is one of the best specimens of Jaina architecture. Lastly, the followers of Jainism undertook several welfare programmes of public utility for the benefit of the people. They rendered maximum service to the cause of humanity. They opened inns, hospitals schools and many other institution of public utility.

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

### 3.3 BUDDHISM

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

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

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

The luxurious life of the palace did not keep Gautam happy for ever. While his mind was in deep distress, he came across four scenes one by one which left a deep impression on his thought. On different occasions when he was travelling in the city of Kapilavastu, he came across an old man bent with age and having wrinkled skin, a diseased person and a

dead body being carried towards the burial ground. It made a deep impression in his mind and feeling of hatred towards the material world. He thought deeply about the problem of life like old age, disease and death. He was finally impressed by the peaceful life of a *Sanyasi* or ascetic. The *Sanyasi* who had renounced every thing and walking alone without any sign of worries or anxieties on his happy face. These four experiences of Gautam proved like a turning point in his life, causing him to think seriously on the meaning of human existence. He wanted to escape from the chains of the world.

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

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

From Bodh Gayua Buddha proceeded to Saranath a place near Benaras and delivered his first Sermon at Deer Park to five Brahmins. This event is called *Dharma Chakra Pravatan* (turning the wheel of *Dhamma*). These five Brahmins became his first disciples.

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

### 3.3.2 Philosophy of Buddhism

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

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

#### Noble Eight Fold Path:

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

1. By right views, Buddha meant that man should realize how sorrowful was this world for man's greeds, desires and selfishness. Man should therefore rise above for a new vision for his own happiness and for the happiness of all.
2. By Right Aims or aspiration, man should not run behind the power and wealth and should not run for passion, pleasures and enjoyment.
3. By Right speech, man should give up falsehood, lies, criticism of others and quarrels which spoil the peace of the society.
4. By Right action, man should avoid violence and killing; give up harmful acts like theft and stealing.
5. By Right livelihood, Buddha advised man to live by harmless means.

6. By Right effort meant a correct discipline in mind and action not for any evil thought or practice. Man should develop nobler feelings.
7. By Right mindfulness, Buddha wanted man to be conscious of the unrealities of his existence, unrealities of the body and attachments. Instead he was to search for the real happiness.
8. By Right meditation, Buddha wanted man to concentrate his mind on the real truth of existence.

The Noble Eightfold Path, if followed would open the eyes; bestow understanding, lead to peace of mind, to higher wisdom, to full enlightenment, to *Nirvana*. *Nirvan* was extinguishment of carvings and of desires and the consequent end of suffering. Meditation is very important in Buddhism and is the key to achieving mental calm and insight. The path taught by Buddha is often referred to as the Middle Path one between extreme indulgence and extreme asceticism. In fact Buddha did not want every householder to give up his family and go in search of truth through hard penance. Therefore, Buddha prescribed a 'Middle Path'. One could practice these noble paths even as a house holder.

### **Nirvan:**

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

### **Karma:**

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

### **Moral Code**

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

Buddha prescribed certain moral principles for his followers. In his teaching he laid greater emphasis on the cultivation of moral qualities rather than observance of superficial rituals. The most prominent features of teachings were charity, truthfulness, love and benevolence, obedience to parents, forgiveness, respect to elders, abstention from intoxicants and mercy towards all living beings.

### **Buddhist Literature**

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

### **3.3.3 Spread of Buddhism**

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

### **Personality of Buddha**

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

### **Use of Popular Language**

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

### **Defect in Hinduism**

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

### **Absent of Caste System**

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

### **Support of the Rulers**

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

## **Buddhist Sangha**

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

## **Contribution of Buddhist Scholars**

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

## **The Buddhist Councils**

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

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

### 3.3.4 IMPACT OF BUDDHISM ON INDIAN CULTURE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Lastly, the finest and most important contribution of Buddhism to Indian culture was made in the realm of architecture and sculpture. The first human statues worshipped in India were

created by Buddhists who presented Buddha in human form. The artistic activities of the people of this period are found in the pannels at Gaya in Bihar and at Sanchi and Bharhut in Madhya Pradesh. The Buddhist caves at Western India like Karle, Bhaja, Pitalkhora, Ajanta, Elora and Nasik are the best specimens of Buddhist architecture. The stupas, the chaityas, the monasteries and different religious pillars also proved the best Buddhist art.

### 3.3.5 DECLINE OF BUDDHISM

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Finally**, the division of Buddhism into two main sects also greatly contributed to its decline, Buddhism was divided into two major sects, viz. Hinayan (also known as *Theravada*) and *Mahayan* at its fourth general council held during the reign of emperor Kanishka. The followers of Buddhism who believed the original teachings of Buddha were called *Hinayan* or the Lessor Vehicle. The followers of *Mahayan* sect were different from the former. They think that the Buddha is a God and he came to this earth to help the people. So Buddha can be worshipped as a God. On the other hand *Hinayan* Buddhist thinks that the Buddha has a Human instead of a God. The members of both these sects began to expose weakness of each other in public. This gave a serious set back to the image of Buddha and people lost all respect and faith on Buddhism. In any case by the twelfth century A.D. Buddhism had practically disappeared from the land of its birth.

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

### 3.4 Ajivikas

The range of philosophical speculation in Ancient India went beyond the bounds laid down by Hinduism in its various branches, and even beyond those fixed by the great heterodox sects of Buddhism and Jainism. The presence of fully materialist groups, Carvakas or Lokayatas, which denied the existence of the soul, the gods, and the future life, is very well known. Besides these, however, were other sects which, while not denying human immortality or the existence of the gods, would not accept any of the more popular interpretations of these

doctrines, but preferred explanations which were not consistent with Hinduism, Buddhism, or Jainism. That teachers of such heretical doctrines were the contemporaries of the Buddha is proved by the *Samañña-phala Sutta*. It is clear that several such teachers gathered groups of followers together and founded *sanghas*, perhaps in some cases loosely linked one with another; and from some of these developed Ajivikism, which survived the death of its founder for nearly two thousand years, and was, at least locally, a significant factor in ancient Indian religious life.

### 3.4.1 Origin

The Ajivikas were an unorthodox group that arose at the same time as Buddhism and Jainism. It was a group of ascetics who followed a strict discipline, akin to the Jainas', that required full nudity. The ideas of Gosala Makkhali, also known as Makkhali Gosala, the sect's founder, are similar to those of Mahavira, a contemporary and former friend. He, like Mahavira, looked back to ancient instructors and ascetic societies, reviving and developing their beliefs. Gosala was of humble birth, according to Buddhist and Jaina tradition, and he died a year or two before the Buddha, in around 484 BC, after a violent confrontation with Mahavira in the city of Sravasti. His disciples appear to have merged with those of other teachers, including antinomian Purana Kasyapa and atomist Pakudha Katyayana, to establish the Ajivika sect.

Jaina and Buddhist traditions give accounts of the birth and parentage of Makkhali Gosala, but these seem aimed at giving an etymology for his name and ascribing a low social origin to him, and may therefore have no historical basis whatsoever. The Jaina *Bhagavati Sutra* tells us that his father was a *mankha*, an exhibitor of religious pictures and a singer of religious songs named Mankhali. His mother was *Bhadda*, a name for mothers in the Jaina myths. His parents are said to have named him Gosala because he was born in a cowshed in Saravana village, as his parents could find no other place to stay. Buddhaghosha's commentary on the *Samannaphala Sutta* also gives the story of Makkhali's birth in a cowshed, but adds that he was a slave. The *Bhagavati Sutra* states that Makkhali initially followed his father's profession of a *mankha*, moving around with a picture board in his hand. Jaina texts refer to his long association with Mahavira as a disciple who wandered around with him for many years. The stories present Makkhali in a poor light, as a ludicrous figure who constantly gets beaten up, far inferior to Mahavira in terms of knowledge.

The Ajivika monks practised asceticism, because the force of destiny compelled them to do so, although their religious opponents accused them of licentiousness and immorality. Pali texts describe these ascetics to have lived in a state of nakedness. They even had regular

gathering locations known as *sabhas* where major rites and gatherings were held. This indicates that they had a corporate structure.

They possessed canonical writings, which are quoted or paraphrased in Buddhist and Jaina scriptures. The Ajivika monks ate very little food and appeared to have followed *ahimsa* (non-violence), albeit not as severely as the Jainas, as the *Bhagavati Sutra* says that they were permitted to consume meat.

The Ajivika sect did not discriminate on the basis of caste or social status, and its ascetics and laypeople came from all walks of life. Some were Kshatriyas, such as a close relative of King Bimbisara. Panduputta, the ascetic, was the son of a wagon-maker, a low-status member of society. MakkhaliGosala made his Shravasti headquarters in the workshop of a lady potter named Halahala. The Ajivika order appears to have had Prasenajit, King of Kosala, as a sponsor. Aside from monarchy, notable members of the laity included urban and trade organisations.

### 3.4.2 Doctrine of the Ajivikas

Due to unavailability of any Ajivika texts, what little we know about them is from Buddhist and Jain polemic literature. The cult was unmistakably atheistic, with severe determinism as its defining trait. The Ajivikas denied the usual doctrine of *karma*, which taught that though a man's present condition was determined by his past actions he could influence his destiny, in this life and the future, by choosing the right course of conduct. They rather believed in a central idea of *Niyati* (fate), the principle that ultimately determined and controlled everything. Human effort was of no consequence in this strictly deterministic doctrine. *Karma* and transmigration existed, but human effort played no role in it, as the paths for souls over thousands of years had already been mapped out.

Therefore, according to the Ajivikas, the whole universe was conditioned and determined to the smallest detail by an impersonal cosmic principle, *Niyati*, or destiny. It was impossible to influence the course of transmigration in any way. Buddhist and Jaina sources agree that Gosala was a rigid determinist, who exalted *Niyati* to the status of the motive factor of the universe and the sole agent of all phenomenal change. This is quite clear from *Samañña-phala Sutta*.

This absolute determinism did not preclude a belief in karma, but for MakkhaliGosala the doctrine had lost its moral force. Karma was unaffected by virtuous conduct, by vows, by penances, or by chastity, but it was not denied. The path of transmigration was rigidly laid out, and every soul was fated to run the same course through a period of 8,400,000 *mahakalpas*. This figure is corroborated by independent testimony, and is a measure of the

gigantic and weary universe of the Ajivika cosmologists. This process of regular and automatic transmigration seems to have been thought of on the analogy of the development and ripening of a plant. The Ajivikas believed that all beings were developed by Destiny (*Niyati*), chance (*sangati*), and nature (*bhava*). This process was completely predetermined.

The Dravidian Ajivikas developed their doctrines in a way resembling Buddhism of the Great Vehicle. Gosala became an ineffable divinity, like the Buddha in the Mahayana system, while the doctrine of destiny evolved into a Parmenidean view that all change and movement were illusory, and that the world was in reality eternally and immovably at rest.

### 3.2.4 Decline of Ajivikas

Ajivikas flourished during the Mauryan periods, the narrative of an Ajivika fortune-teller in the Maurya ruler Bindusara's court, who predicted Ashoka's future glory, is told in the *Divyavadana*. Ashoka dedicated certain caves to Ajivika ascetics, according to inscriptions in the Barabar hills. Inscriptions in the neighbouring Nagarjuni hills chronicle Ashoka's successor, Dasharatha, dedicating three caves to them. The seventh pillar edict of Ashoka orders the *dhamma-mahamatas*, or religious officers, to deal with the issues of sects, including the Ajivikas.

However, the Ajivikas were harshly criticised in Buddhist and Jaina scriptures, indicating that they were seen as worthy opponents. Makkhali Gosala is described by the Buddha in the *Anguttara Nikaya* as a stupid man who, more than anyone else, has brought misery and suffering to gods and humanity. He is compared to a fisherman that casts his net at the river's mouth, catching and destroying a large number of fish. His concept was clearly regarded by Buddhists as the deadliest and most hazardous of the *samana* systems. The scriptures of the Jainas also show severe rivalry and warfare with the Ajivikas. The *Bhagavati Sutra* portrays a violent feud between Makkhali Gosala and Mahavira, in which the former cursed the *Tirthankara* and attempted to destroy him with his great powers, but failed. It is evident from these that Ajivikas had great differences with the Buddhist and Jaina sect which became a great hurdle for propagation and growth of their religion.

Therefore, the sect quickly declined after the Mauryan period, and only retained some local importance in a small region of Eastern Mysore and adjacent parts of Madras. In South India it survived longer, Ajivika ascetics reached the Tamil country probably in the Mauryan period, and the communities which they founded survived at least until the fourteenth century, after which we hear nothing more about it.

### 3.5 Alvars and Nayanars

The history of south Indian religions from the seventh century onwards is defined by a fervent devotion to a particular deity, which was expressed in various devotional songs that were eventually collected and edited into a canonical form. The *Bhakti* movement, which flourished in south India from the seventh through the twelfth century CE, was influenced by the northern model in some way. The Bhakti movement is of crucial importance in studying the history of Indian religion because it was one of the most extensive and widespread religious movements in the sub-continent. It spread from the South to the North. It was started by two groups: Shaiva and Vaishnava. Nayanars were Shiva worshipers, and Alvars were Vishnu devotees in present-day Tamil Nadu around the 6th century. Thus, the Alvars, who were Vishnu worshippers, and the Nayanars, who were Shiva devotees, headed the first Bhakti movements. The Bhagavata movements in the South initially had a small number of non-Brahmins and women, but this changed subsequently. These early movements coincided with the establishment of early mediaeval kingdoms that supported them, such as the Pallavas, Cholas, Pandyas, and Cheras. Heterodox traditions, on the other hand, did not gain political support in north India at the time.

The Sanskrit term *Bhakti*, which means "partaking (of god), participation, loving devotion" and is derived from the root *bhaj*, has been used to refer to both a style of religion and the popular movements that promoted devotional religion in India. By extension, the *bhakta* is one who shares or participates in the divine. The Tamil word that is used by Alvars and Nayanars to express their devotion to their god was *anbu*, which means love. The use of the term *bhakti*, or its Tamil version *patti*, is fairly late. The relationship between devotee and god was perceived as a reciprocal one, and the term used to refer to the love of the god for his devotee was *arul*.

The Alvars' bhakti movement in Tamil land led to the demise of the Jain and Buddhist religions and the emergence of brahmanical worship as the supreme religion. The Shaiva Nayanar saints Appar and Sambandar played a vital role in this movement. By debating and producing miracles, they openly questioned the authority of the Jaina and Buddhist faiths. Sundarar and subsequently Manikkavacakar, two more Nayanar saints, continued their animosity and antagonism to the heretical cults. The Alvar saints, on the other hand, silently preached Vishnu bhakti and chanted praises to their Lord. The four thousand devotional lines they penned illustrate their spiritual rigour and continual adoration.

According to tradition, there were 12 Alvars and 63 Nayanars. The hymns of these saints are still sung in temples. The saints themselves are worshipped, a practice that goes back to the Chola period. Images or paintings of the Nayanars are usually found in the hall

around the sanctum and are worshipped. Vishnu temples generally have a separate shrine for images of the Alvars. There is uncertainty about the historicity of some of the saints and it is often difficult to disentangle fact from myth in their hagiographies. The male saints were not recluses or ascetics. They lived their lives as a part of society and most of them were married.

Alvar and Nayanar poetry reflects a devotion that is at once intimate, intense, and ecstatic. The poets visualized their god in various ways; as friend, mother, father, master, teacher, and bridegroom. Many male saints took on the feminine voice of a lover or bride when expressing their longing for union with god. For instance, Manikkavachakar spoke of his lord as the eternal bridegroom. Nammalvar spoke of the lord having such an overwhelming maleness that the *bhakta* loses his own maleness. Apart from the fact that the objects of devotion were male, given prevailing gender roles, the female voice was probably considered especially appropriate for the expression of complete love and surrender.

The Nayanar saints did not refer to themselves by this name; they described themselves as *atiyar* (servant) or *tontar* (slave), indicating that they considered themselves servants or slaves of Shiva. Out of the 63 Nayanmars, Sambandar, Appar, and Sundarar, known as the *muvar* (three revered ones) are considered especially important, and their images are sometimes housed in a special separate shrine in temples. They are occasionally accompanied by an image of Manikkavachakar.

### 3.5.1 The Alvars

'Those who are engaged with the divine' is what the name 'Alvar' signifies. A total of twelve Vaishnava saints exist. Separate shrines with stone or bronze sculptures of the twelve Alvars are common in Vishnu temples. The Vedic and Puranic scriptures have a significant influence on Alvar philosophy. The Alvars were also familiar with the *agamas*, which allowed them to practise physical icon worship. The Alvar saints believed that Transcendent being is also the godhead that mankind knows and loves, since he is present with man and reveals Himself to him.

The hymns of the twelve Alvars were collected in the 10th century by Nathamuni in the *NalayiraDivyaPrabandham* (Four Thousand Holy Hymns), which constituted the Vaishnava canon. The first major hagiography of the Alvar saints was a 12th century work called the *Divyasuricharitam* by Garudavahana. In Alvar bhakti, the relationship between the devotee and Mayon or Mal (Krishna) was often expressed in terms of the lover-beloved relationship. In some instances, the mother-child relationship was also invoked. For a devotee of the lord, the performance of sacrifices or actions conventionally considered as marks of religious piety were meaningless. The focus was entirely and exclusively on love for the god.

Alvar's poems used the style of the older *akam* poems with a new symbolism, the relationship between devotee and deity being described as analogous to that between lover and beloved. The mythology of Krishna and his association with the gopis, including one named Pinnai, lent itself well to an emphasis that was at once emotional and erotic. The erotic element found its fullest expression in the poems of the woman-saint Kodai, who came to be known as Andal, meaning 'one who rules'. Andal's poems are laced with the pangs of separation and a longing for union with her lord.

### **The Alvar Saints**

Poykai, Putam, and Pey are the first three Alvars. They went from one temple to the next, looking for god. Saint Poykai, the first Alvar saint, intuited god's existence through transcendent knowledge, saint Putam, through maturing gnosis into devotion, and saint Pey, through the intuitive conjoining of knowledge and devotion, attained the supreme vision of Garudavahana's *Divyasuricharitam*, written in the 12th century. In Alvar bhakti, the devotee's bond with Mayon (Krishna) was frequently described as a lover-beloved relationship.

The first stanza of Poykai Alvars exposes the wondrous nature of god's creative being, which is depicted using similes borrowed from everyday life. The Alvars were overwhelmed by the notion of the Trivikrama myth, which Poykai continued to use in his songs. In his lyrics, Putam recounted the deeds of Vamana-Trivikrama, the Putanavadh event, the Varahaavatara, and the Shaktasura tale, indicating that he was conversant with Vishnu's incarnations. Pey symbolised the three pearls of god's spiritual experience: having Shri in His divine heart, being the most beautiful and fulfilling Being, being the most kind, and being the healer of all sorrows and abolisher of sin and death dread. The first three Alvars were worshipped as incarnation of Vishnu.

Kulashekhara is another important Alvar. In many respects, he stands apart among the Alvars. He appears to have a strong command of the Tamil and Sanskrit languages. Kulashekhara narrates the evolution of his consciousness in his Perumal Tirumoli hymns to the highest godhead (Perumal). The Tirumoli is broken into ten divisions and contains 105 hymns.

The Sri Vaishnava philosophy is said to have been founded by Saint Nammalvar. Born into a poor caste, he spent his life fasting and, by God's help, mastered the breath that causes transmigration. *Tiruviruttam*, *Tiruvasariyam*, *Tiruvayamoli*, and *PeriyaTiruvandadi* are his four works. He is known as Nam-Alvar or 'Our' Alvar since his lyrics brought poetry to the common people.

### **3.5.2 The Nayanars**

The number of Nayanars, or adiyars, has been estimated to reach sixty three in later legends. 'Leader' is the meaning of the word Nayanar. The majority of them were individuals, while a group of believers was occasionally recorded under one name. While all sixty-three saints are revered, a particular status is bestowed on a group of three saints who have risen beyond the others. Appar, Sundarar, and Sambandar are the three Shaiva saints known as Muvar or "Three Revered Ones." This group of three is sometimes enlarged into the Nalvar, or "Four Revered Ones," by including the significant saint Manikavachakar, who was not among the original sixty three saints but lived a century after the last of the groups.

The idea of a community of Shaiva poet-saints goes back to the early 8th century, when Sundarar wrote a poem titled *Tiruttondar Tokai* (Assembly of Sacred Slaves), which listed 62 Nayanars. In the early 10th century, Nambi Andar Nambi wrote a work called the *TiruttondarTiruvantai* (Sacred Poem of the Holy Slaves), wherein he gave a short hagiography of these 62, adding Sundarar's name to the list. He also collected the songs of the saints. In the mid-12th century, stories of the saints' lives were put together in a work called the *Periyapuramam*. This forms the 12th and final book of the canon known as the *Tirumurai*. The collection of hymns known as the *Tevaram* is part of this larger work.

In Shaiva bhakti, the relationship between the god and his devotee was often expressed as analogous to that between master and slave. The poems of Manikkavachakar frequently refer to the experience of 'melting' before the lord. There is a deprecation of the body and the corporeal state. There are descriptions of ecstatic worship, where the devotee stammers, tears pour out, when he dances and feels as though he is melting. The tone is frenzied and the poet often reviles himself for his shortcomings. He also talks to the god in familiar tones. An example is Manikkavachakar's song in which he threatens to revile the god Shiva as a madman (*pitta*) if he abandons him.

### **The Nayanar Saints**

First among the *Tevaram* trio was *Tirunavukkarasu* which translates to 'king of the holy speech or tongue' also known as Appar. He was a *Vellala* (peasant proprietor) from Tiruvamur, believed to be a contemporary of the Pallava king Mahendravarman I. though born in an orthodox Shaiva family he was attracted to Jainism in his early life, and joined the monastery as a monk. Appar's sister Tilakavatiyar, a devout Shaiva convinced him to put his faith in Shiva. Angered by the poet's devotion to Shiva, the Jains persecuted and torture him, but he emerged safe from all his trials and succeeded in reconverting the Pallava king to Shaivism. In iconography, the saint is often portrayed holding the hoe with which he cleared

the temple courtyards of weeds and grass. This image is suitable both for the Tamil Shaiva ideal and of humble service (*tontu*) and Vellala farmer's attachment to the land.

Sambandar, whose popular name is a shortened version of *Nanacambandar* or *Tirunanacambantar*, began composing hymns when he was a child. In one of his hymns, the renowned philosopher Shankara alludes to Sambandar as the "Tamil Child." Sambandar is reported to have mastered Vedic learning by the age of three, when he suddenly got the gift of holy poetry from Shiva himself. He was born into a brahmana household at Cirkali, a seaside village near Chidambaram on the mouth of the Kaveri. The young saint began a life of extraordinary religious activity. Sambandar undertook four major pilgrimages to Shaiva sanctuaries in the Tamil area, accompanied by followers. He created Tamil hymns in varied difficult metres and rhythms for each site.

NampiArurar or Sundaramurti, also known as Sundarar, meaning "the handsome one", was a Shaiva brahmana who was born in Tirunavalur on the Pennai River. On the day of his wedding, Shiva came in the audience and claimed him as his bondservant and devotee. In Tiruvennyenallun, the saint obtained Siva's blessing. Despite the fact that he spent most of his time at Tiruvarur, he conducted pilgrimages to several Shaiva temples and penned hymns there. His hymns are replete with personal information, particularly in relation to his weddings to temple dancer Paravai in Tiruvarur and Vellala lady Cankili in Tiruvorriyur. The Chera king Ceraman Perumal and the Pallava feudatory NaracinkaMunaiyaraiyan are among the rulers and local leaders mentioned by the saint as his friends and benefactors. The saint is claimed to have risen to heaven with his companion, the Chera monarch, atop an elephant.

Manikavachhakar came a little later than Sundarar. In a hamlet near Madurai, he was born into a brahmana family. His name literally means 'one with ruby-like speech.' According to his hagiography, he was a Pandyan king's minister. At Chidambaram, he is supposed to have debated Buddhists from Ceylon. The *Tiruvacakam* (Sacred World) is the eighth portion of the Tamil Shaiva canon, and it contains his hymns. His poems demonstrate his fervent devotion to Shiva as well as his aversion to *Vedanta*. His opposition to *advaita-vedanta* is crucial since it is the foundation of the bhakti cult.

### 3.5.3 Social Composition

The Alvar and Nayanar saints came from varied social backgrounds. A significant proportion of about two-thirds were Brahmanas, as were some of the most important saints. But there were also people from other social backgrounds such as kings, minor chieftains, civil and military officials, merchants, and landowners. The saints also included a cowherd, washerman, weaver, potter, toddy fermenter, hunter, fisherman, and highway robber.

Two saints, the Shaiva saint Nandanar and the Vaishnava saint Tiruppan Alvar are described as ‘untouchables’. Nandanar earned his living by slaughtering animals for the leather used to make drums and gut for stringed musical instruments. According to his hagiography, Shiva ordered the priests of the Chidambaram temple to light a fire in front of the temple, through which Nandanar passed unscathed. His desire to see his lord being fulfilled, he is said to have disappeared under the foot of the dancing Shiva. Tiruppan Alvar longed to see lord Vishnu at Shrirangam. According to his hagiography, the god appeared to one of the Brahmana temple priests in a dream and instructed him to place Tiruppan on his shoulder and carry him into the inner sanctum. This is how the Alvar saint managed to enter the temple and see his lord. Having done so, he sang his last song and merged into the image of Vishnu.

The stories of Nandanar and Tiruppan Alvar’s life can be read in two ways. On the one hand, they suggest that the path of the preeminent *bhakta* was open even to those whom society considered ‘untouchable’. On the other hand, it is a poignant fact that the entry of these saints into their god’s sanctum was not an easy one. It required divine intervention and resulted in death.

The implication of bhakti for women was a complex issue. Works such as the *Shaiva Periyapuranam* in places have a negative portrayal of women. There are very few women among the Alvar and Nayanar saints. Three women figure among the Nayanars are KaraikkalAmmaiyar, Mangaiyarkkarasiyar, and Isainaniyar. Andal was the only woman Alvar. The fact that a few women figure among the bhakti saints is significant, but on the whole, the leadership was predominantly and overwhelmingly male. As far as larger participation is concerned, it can be noted that the *mathas* did not admit women. It was only in 11<sup>th</sup> century during the time of Ramanuja and with the increasing impact of the Virashaiva movement from the 12th century onwards, that women devotees were given a greater participatory role in Shaiva bhakti.

Also, in the case of South Indian bhakti, the hagiographies and songs indicate that there was a fundamental difference in the experience of bhakti for men and women. In the case of male saints, there was no contradiction between the life of a householder and devotion towards the god. However, the female body directly impinged on the path of the *bhaktin*. Youth and beauty were a burden, and the *bhaktin* could not combine marriage and family with devotion.

### 3.6 Summary

In this unit you have learnt that:

- Origin of Jainism is shrouded in mystery. According to Jaina tradition all the teachings contained in Jainism are the contribution of 24 *Tirthankaras*.
- Mahavira was a great preacher. He believed in three principles namely Right Faith, Right knowledge and Right conduct. The Jains stress on right conducts. Jainism does not believe in the existence of God.
- Buddhism is one of the greatest religions of the world. Buddhism follows a code of morality. Buddha's teaching can be divided as philosophical and moral. The four noble truths and eight fold paths are the most important doctrine of Buddhism.
- Buddha believed in theory of *Karma* and rebirth. *Nirvana* was a basic principle of Buddhism and could be attained in this world. Buddha condemned violence, cast system, costly rituals and sacrifices.
- Different factors were responsible for the rapid growth and decline of Buddhism.
- Contribution of Buddhism to India was in the field of art, architecture, sculpture and literature. Buddhism established an intimate contact between India and foreign countries.
- GosalaMaskariputra, also known as MakkhaliGosala, founded the sect known as Ajivikas. They were an unorthodox group that arose at the same time as Buddhism and Jainism. It was a group of ascetics who followed a strict discipline.
- The Ajivikas believed in a central idea of *Niyati* (fate), the principle that ultimately determined and controlled everything.
- Ajivikas flourished during the Mauryan period. Ashoka dedicated certain caves to Ajivika ascetics, according to inscriptions in the Barabar hills. Inscriptions in the neighbouring Nagarjuni hills chronicle Ashoka's successor, Dasharatha, dedicating three caves to them. The seventh pillar edict of Ashoka orders the *dhamma-mahamatas*, or religious officers, to deal with the issues of sects, including the Ajivikas.
- The Ajivikas quickly started declining after the Mauryan period and after the fourteenth century we hear nothing more about it.
- The Bhakti movement was started in south India by two groups: Shaiva and Vaishnava. "Nayanaras" were Shiva worshipers, and "Alvars" were Vishnu devotees in present-day Tamil Nadu around the 6th century.

- According to tradition, there were 12 Alvars and 63 Nayanars. The hymns of these saints are still sung in temples. The saints themselves are worshipped, a practice that goes back to the Chola period.
- Alvar and Nayanar poetry reflects a devotion that is at once intimate, intense, and ecstatic. The poets visualized their god in various ways; as friend, mother, father, master, teacher, and bridegroom.
- The Alvar and Nayanar saints came from varied social backgrounds. A significant proportion of about two-thirds were Brahmanas, as were some of the most important saints. But there were also people from other social backgrounds such as kings, minor chieftains, civil and military officials, merchants, and landowners.
- The implication of bhakti for women was a complex issue. There were very few women among the Alvar and Nayanar saints. The fact that a few women figure among the bhakti saints is significant, but on the whole, the leadership was predominantly and overwhelmingly male.

### 3.7 Key Words

- Moksha : Salvation
- Tirthankara : Path finder
- Ardha-Magadhi: an eastern dialect of praurit.
- Boddhisativa : a future Buddha
- Chaitya : a Buddhist Shrine
- Dharma : a Sanskrit word, ideal conduct of a person.
- Jatakas : containing the stories of the previous birth of Buddha.
- Pali : an ancient language
- Prakrit : an ancient language.
- Sangha : the Buddhist monastic order.
- Asceticism : Severe self-discipline and avoiding of all forms of indulgence, typically for religious reasons.
- Doctrine : A belief or set of beliefs held and taught by a religion, political party or other group.
- Hagiographies : A biography that treats its subject with undue reverence.
- Heterodox : Not conforming with accepted or orthodox standards or beliefs.
- Hymn : A religious song or poem of praise to God.

- Sect : A group of people with somewhat different religious beliefs from those of a larger group to which they belong.

### 3.8 Check your progress

#### A. Fill in the blanks

1. \_\_\_\_\_ was the 23<sup>rd</sup> *Trithankaras* of Jains.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ was the real name of Mahavira.
3. The original religious texts of Jainism were called \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Buddha gave his first religious message at \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Buddha died at \_\_\_\_\_.
6. The *Pitakas* were written in \_\_\_\_\_ language.
7. The third Buddhist council was held at \_\_\_\_\_.
8. The *Bhagavati Sutra* states that Gosala initially followed his father's profession of a \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Inscriptions in the Nagarjuni hills chronicle speaks of \_\_\_\_\_ dedicating three caves to the Ajivikas.
10. Makkhali Gosala is described by the \_\_\_\_\_ in the *AnguttaraNikaya*.
11. The hymns of the twelve Alvars were collected in the 10th century by \_\_\_\_\_.
12. In Alvar bhakti, the relationship between the devotee and \_\_\_\_\_ was often expressed in terms of the lover-beloved relationship.
13. Appar, Sundarar, and Sambandar are the three Shaiva saints known as \_\_\_\_\_.
14. Three women figure among the \_\_\_\_\_ are KaraikkalAmmaiyar, Mangaiyarkkarasiyar, and Isainaniyar.
15. \_\_\_\_\_ name literally means 'one with ruby-like speech'.

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

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

7. Buddhist texts *Tripitaks* were written in Pali language.
8. Both Jainism and Buddhism believed in cast system.
9. Ajivikas were a group of ascetics who followed a strict discipline, akin to the Jainas', that required full nudity.
10. The Ajivikas had regular gathering locations known as *Samiti* where major rites and gatherings were held.
11. According to the Ajivikas, the whole universe was conditioned and determined to the smallest detail by an impersonal cosmic principle of destiny.
12. An Ajivika fortune-teller in the Maurya ruler Bindusara's court predicted downfall of Mauryan Empire.
13. The Alvar saints did not refer to themselves by this name, they described themselves as servant or slave.
14. Poykai, Putam, and Pey were the first three Alvars.
15. In Shaiva bhakti, the relationship between the god and his devotee was often expressed as analogous to that between master and slave.
16. Two saints, the Shaiva saint Nandanar and the Vaishnava saint Tiruppan Alvar are described as 'Brahmanas'.

### 3.9 Answer to check your learning

- A. 1. Prasavanath, 2. Vardhaman, 3. Purvas, 4. Sarnath, 5. Kusinagar (UP), 6. Pali, 7. Pataliputra, 8. Mankha, 9. Dasharatha, 10. Buddha, 11. Nathamuni, 12. Krishna, 13. Muvar, 14. Nayanars, 15. Manikavachhakar
- B. 1. True, 2. False, 3. True, 4. False, 5. True, 6. True, 7. True, 8. False, 9. True, 10. False, 11. True, 12. False , 13. False, 14. True, 15. True, 16. False

### 3.10 Questions and Exercise

#### A. Short answer questions

1. Write the central teaching of Jainism.
2. Write a short note on eight fold path.
3. Write a note on the role of Buddhist Sangha.
4. Write in brief the art and architecture of Jainism.
5. Write a short note on Buddhist councils.
6. What was the impact of Varna system in the post vedic society?
7. What is the meaning of Bhakti?
8. Who were Alvars and Nayanars?

9. Who were the three Revered Ones?

B. Long answer questions

1. Trace the origin and development of Jainism in India.
2. Discuss the contribution of Jainism of Indian Society.
3. Discuss the various causes which led to the decline of Jainism.
4. Describe the life and teachings of Buddha.
5. Why did Buddhism spread in India and abroad?
6. Account for the decline of Buddhism.
7. Highlight the background that led to the rise of new religious movements in India?
8. Give a detailed account of the Ajivika doctrine.
9. What were the factors that led to the decline of the Ajivikas?
10. Describe the social composition among the Alvar and Nayanar saints and how was it different from the religions today.

### **3.11 Suggested Readings**

1. Basham, A.L.: The wonder that was India, London, 1963.
2. Basham, A.L. : History and Doctrines of the Ajivikas, a vanished Indian Religion, Delhi, 1951.
3. Jha, D.N. : Ancient India in Historical Outline, New Delhi, 1977.
4. Sharma, R.S. : India's Ancient Past, New Delhi, 2005.
5. Singh, Upinder : A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India, New Delhi, 2009.
6. Thapar, Romila : Early India: From Origin to AD 1300, New Delhi, 2003.

**UNIT-IV**  
**LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND ART**

**STRUCTURE**

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Objectives
- 4.2 Language
  - 4.2.1 Sanskrit
  - 4.2.2 Prakrit, Pali and Tamil
- 4.3 Literature
  - 4.3.1 Vedic
  - 4.3.2 Epic
  - 4.3.3 Sangam
- 4.4 Art
  - 4.4.1 Gandhara School
  - 4.4.2 Mathura School
- 4.4 Summary
- 4.5 Key Words
- 4.6 Check Your Progress
- 4.7 Answers to Questions in Check your Progress
- 4.8 Questions and Exercise
- 4.9 Suggested Readings

**4.0 Introduction**

India has a long and illustrious linguistic, literary, and cultural tradition. Throughout the ages, it has grown and evolved. They absorbed numerous cultural, religious, social, political, and developmental features of Indian culture, despite the fact that some of them no longer exist. By delving through the flexibility and depth of Indian language, literature, and art, one may gain a thorough understanding of countless shifts that happened in ancient Indian history.

**4.1 Objectives**

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

- Trace the history of some important Languages, Literatures and Arts in ancient India.
- Understand the origin of many important Language, Literature and Art.
- Understand the important elements of ancient India's Languages, Literatures and Art.

- Understand how social developments and changes resulted to growth and evolution in the field of Language, Literature and Art in ancient India.
- Understand how these Languages, Literatures and Arts affected the society.

## 4.2 Language

India has a rich linguistic and literary legacy. Many languages have emerged throughout the centuries. Although some of them are no longer spoken, they have left a rich literature and a lasting impact on practically all Indian languages. Many of the Hindu, Buddhist, and Jaina religious literature are available in these languages, which include Sanskrit and Pali.

India's languages may be classified into two groups: Indo-Aryan and Dravidian. The majority of northern Indian languages belong to the former, whereas the languages of southern India belong to the latter.

It's important to note that these languages didn't develop in isolation. Languages and literature have affected each other in both families. The Indo-Aryans spoke Sanskrit as their language. In the 4th century BCE, Panini standardised it and gave it a highly scientific grammar. It was a language spoken by upper-class and caste people. For centuries, it was the court language, and it was widely employed in literature. The ordinary people spoke a variety of dialects in addition to Sanskrit. Prakrits was their name. Pali, a Prakrit language, is used in Buddhist literature. Many spoken varieties known as "*apabhramsas*" emerged over time in various parts of the nation. These *apabhramsas* evolved into regional dialects. Tamil is the oldest of the Dravidian languages. During the first millennium of the Common Era, other languages emerged.

### 4.2.1 Sanskrit

In ancient India, oral sources were rigorously maintained; they were so diligently remembered that the text virtually became frozen, as was the case with Vedic ceremonial compositions. The Vedas were written in a more ancient version of Sanskrit known as old Indo-Aryan. This set it apart from Classical Sanskrit, which was a later type of Sanskrit. The Indo-Aryan language belongs to the Indo-European language family.

It has long been universally accepted that Sanskrit is a remote cousin of all the languages of Europe, with the exception of Finnish, Estonian, Hungarian, Turkish and Basque. The other European tongues look back to a common ancestor in a group of dialects spoken by tribesmen in the steppelands of South Russia some 2,000 years BC. The relationship of Sanskrit to the languages of the West is indicated by several obvious resemblances, such as *pitr*, "father", and *matr*, "mother", and many others.

In many ways, Vedic Sanskrit is closer to the parent tongue or tongues than any other Indo-European language, and it was the discovery of Sanskrit that allowed Bopp, Rask, and other early twentieth-century scholars to establish a close relationship between Indo-European languages and to develop comparative philology.

The earliest surviving form of Sanskrit, that of the *Rig Veda*, bears about the same relation to the classical tongue as does Homeric to classical Greek. At all its stages Sanskrit is a language of many inflexions, but the Vedas contain numerous forms which later went out of use. The verb is of a complexity rivalling the Greek, with a bewildering array of voices and moods, later much simplified. The Vedic noun, as in later Sanskrit, has eight cases, and both verb and noun have dual numbers.

A striking feature of Vedic Sanskrit is the tonic accent. Every important word had an accented syllable, which was not necessarily stressed, but on which the voice rose in pitch, as in classical Greek. The tonic accent of a Sanskrit word is, with exceptions due to the special rules of the languages, the same as in the cognate Greek word.

After the composition of the *Rig Veda*, Sanskrit developed considerably. In the early centuries of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC old inflexions disappeared, and the grammar was somewhat simplified, though still remaining very complex. New words, mostly borrowed from non-Aryan sources, were introduced, while old words were forgotten, or lost their original meanings. In these circumstances doubts arose as to the true pronunciation and meaning of the older vedic texts, though it was generally thought that unless they were recited with complete accuracy they would have no magical effectiveness, but would bring ruin on the reciter. Out of the need to preserve the purity of the Vedas India developed the sciences of phonetics and grammar. The oldest Indian linguistic text, *Yaska's Nirukta*, explaining obsolete Vedic words, dates from the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, and followed much earlier work in the linguistic field. Panini's great grammar, the *Ashtadhyayi* ("Eight Chapters"), was probably composed towards the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC. With Panini the language had virtually reached its classical form, and it developed little thenceforward, except in its vocabulary.

By this time the sounds of Sanskrit had been analysed with an accuracy never again reached in linguistic study until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. One of ancient India's greatest achievements is her remarkable alphabet, commencing with the vowels and followed by the consonants, all classified very scientifically according to their mode of production, in sharp contrast to the haphazard and inadequate Roman alphabet, which has developed organically for three

millennia. It was only on the discovery of Sanskrit by the West that a science of phonetics arose in Europe.

The great grammar of Panini, which effectively stabilized the Sanskrit language, presupposes the work of many earlier grammarians. These had succeeded in recognizing the root as the basic element of a word, and had classified some 2,000 monosyllabic roots which, with the addition of prefixes, suffixes and inflexions, were thought to provide all the words of the language. Though the early etymologists were correct in principle, they made many errors and false derivations, and started a precedent which produced interesting results in many branches of Indian thought.

Though its fame is much restricted by its specialized nature, there is no doubt that Panini's grammar is one of the greatest intellectual achievements of any ancient civilization, and the most detailed and scientific grammar composed before the 19<sup>th</sup> century in any part of the world. The work consists of over 4,000 grammatical rules, couched in a sort of shorthand, which employs single letters or syllables for the names of the cases, moods, persons, tenses, etc. in which linguistic phenomena are classified. The great terseness of Panini's system makes his work very difficult to follow without preliminary study and a suitable commentary. Later Indian grammars are mostly commentaries on Panini, the chief being the "Great Commentary" (*Mahabhasya*) of Patanjali in 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC and the "Banaras Commentary" (*KasikaVrtti*) of Jayaditya and Vamana in 7<sup>th</sup> century AD.

The grammar of Panini was universally recognised. Panini's language was set in stone, and it could only evolve within the confines of his laws. From the time of Panini onwards, the language was referred to as *Sanskrita*, which means "perfected" or "refined," as opposed to *Prakritas*, which means "natural" and refers to the common dialects that had formed spontaneously. Panini's work was most likely inspired by the dialects of the north-west.

A language tends to evolve as long as it is spoken and written, and that evolution is typically in the direction of simplicity. Sanskrit could not grow freely in this fashion due to Panini's control. Some of Panini's minor restrictions, such as those pertaining to the usage of past tenses, were discreetly disregarded, and authors began to employ imperfect, perfect, and aorist interchangeably; nonetheless, Panini's inflexion regulations had to be followed. Sanskrit could only grow away from inflexion by constructing compound nouns to replace the sentence's clauses.

Sanskrit acquired a liking for extended phrases as complex compounds became more common. Single sentences occupy two or three pages of type in the literary works of Bana

and Subandhu, written in the seventh century, and the writings of many of their predecessors. To compound these problems, writers employed every known language trick, resulting in Sanskrit literature being one of the world's most ornate and artificial.

Sheldon Pollock divides the shifts in culture and power in pre-modern India into two periods in his book *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Pre-modern India*. The first was around the beginning of the Common Era, when Sanskrit, a holy language that had hitherto only been used for religious purposes, was recreated for literary and political purposes. According to him, this event signalled the start of a "great career" that saw Sanskrit literary culture flourish over most of southern Asia, from Afghanistan to Java. The second phase began around the turn of the century, when indigenous speech varieties were acknowledged as literary languages and began to compete with Sanskrit for poetry and polity, eventually replacing it.

#### **4.2.2 Prakrit, Pali and Tamil**

When the hymns were written, the *Rig Veda's* language was already somewhat antiquated, and the common Aryan tribesman spoke a simpler vernacular that was more closely related to classical Sanskrit. There is evidence of dialectal diversity in the Veda itself. By the time of the Buddha, the majority of people spoke languages that were far less complex than Sanskrit. These were the Prakrits, of which there were various dialects.

The unorthodox faiths, whose early texts were written in languages similar to those spoken by the people, have mainly preserved the daily speech of ancient India for us. The majority of pre-Guptan inscriptions are in Prakrit, particularly the large collection of Asokan edicts, and the ladies and lower characters in Sanskrit theatre are made to talk in codified Prakrit of various dialects. Prakrit was used in a few pieces of secular literature. As a result, there is a wealth of information for recreating popular languages.

In terms of sound and grammar, Prakrits were more easier to learn than Sanskrit. Except for some easy-to-pronounce combinations, such as doubled consonants or compounds with a nasal letter as the initial component, consonant groups were greatly simplified. Those at the extremities of syllables vanished, while single consonants in the midst of words were deleted in certain dialects. The dual number vanished, and the inflexions of the noun and verb were much reduced, since the principles of euphonic combination were largely ignored.

Pali, which became the language of the *Sthaviravadin* Buddhists, was an important early Prakrit. Buddha most likely preached in Magadhi, but his teachings were modified to local languages as they travelled across India. The Sthaviravadins picked a Western language, possibly spoken in the Sanchi and Ujjayini regions. Pali, which is currently the holy language

of Buddhists in Ceylon, Burma, and Southeast Asia, appears to be more Vedic than classical Sanskrit.

The Mauryan court's official language was Magadhi, and Ashoka's edicts were written in it, albeit the language in which they were engraved in different regions of India was clearly influenced by local vernaculars. Later, a hybrid Magadhi, influenced by Western Prakrits and known as *Ardha-magadhi* ("Half Magadhi"), became the Jainas' sacred language, with a huge literature composed in it.

Sauraseni, which originated in the western region of modern Uttar Pradesh, and Maharastri, which originated in the north-western Deccan, were two more prominent Prakrits. Sauraseni was especially popular in play, where it was utilised for the speech of ladies and respectable lower-class people. Maharastri was a literary language that was particularly well-known for lyric music. There were a few additional Prakrits who were less important. The Prakrits had become standardised and had lost their regional identity by the time of the Guptas. They had already progressed beyond the vernaculars. Others did to the Prakrits what Panini did to Sanskrit, and they started to show little relation to the languages actually spoken. Dramatists, who used a variety of Prakrits by convention, thought in Sanskrit first and then produced their Prakrit passages by mechanically following the grammarians' rules for language conversion.

*Apabhramia* ("falling away"), a Western Indian vernacular that acquired literary form in the Middle Ages and was utilised by Jaina poets in Gujarat and Rajasthan to compose poetry, was another step in the evolution of Indo-Aryan languages. Its most distinguishing feature, similar to current Indian languages, is the further loss of inflexions, which are partially replaced by postpositions. A degraded form of Prakrit was utilised by a few late Buddhist poets in Bengal, and it is the progenitor of modern Bengali.

The following stage witnessed the creation of modern North Indian languages, which is outside the purview of this study, albeit the earliest of their literature dates from around the same time as ours. By this time, however, one Indo-Aryan vernacular had a lengthy history: Sinhalese, whose growth may be tracked in inscriptions and literature from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC to the present day. The early settlers of Ceylon spoke a prakritic dialect that was already a long way from the original Sanskrit. Sinhalese evolved quickly and independently, influenced by local speech as well as Tamil. The aspirated letters, which are common in most Indo-Aryan languages, were quickly lost. Vowels were reduced, and the short vowels *i* and *o*, which were absent from most Indo-Aryan languages, as well as a whole new vowel, *a*, which resembled the English *hat*, arose. Many aboriginal and Tamil terms were included into the text.

Sinhalese was no longer a Prakrit at the start of the Christian period, but a unique language. The oldest surviving Sinhalese literature comes from the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD, but much older material is undoubtedly gone.

While the modern Indo-Aryan languages, with the exception of Sinhalese, had not found literary expression at the time of the Muslim invasion, the Dravidian languages had been flourishing for centuries.

### **Dravidian Languages**

Tamil, Canarese, Telegu, and Malayalam are four of these languages with separate scripts and written literatures. Tamil is spoken in the south, from Cape Comorin to Madras, Canarese is spoken in Mysore and portions of Andhra Pradesh, Telegu is spoken north of Madras to the Orissan border, and Malayalam is spoken in Kerala. Tamil is unquestionably the oldest of these languages, with literature dating back to the early years of the Christian period.

Some experts believe the Dravidian languages are related to the Finno-Ugrian language family, which includes Finnish and Hungarian. If this is the case, it has fascinating implications for prehistoric racial migrations, although the idea is not conclusive. Dravidian is a nearly self-contained collection of languages with a unique personality. Its sound system is strong in retroflex consonants, giving it a sharp quality, and its various vowels (including *i* and *o*, which are not found in Sanskrit) set it apart from northern languages, which mostly use the vowels *a* and *ā*. It features a complex euphonic combination system, similar to Sanskrit. The special phonetic principles of Tamil do not accept the aspirated consonants of Indo-Aryan languages, hence Sanskrit *bhuta* ("ghost") becomes Tamil *puda*.

Tamil is not inflected in the same way that Sanskrit is, but suffixes, which may be stacked on top of one another endlessly, illustrate the relationships between words and the number, person, and tense of verbs. Sanskrit had an early influence on the language, and by the Middle Ages, knowledgeable people regarded their suffixes as nominal and verbal ends, similar to Sanskrit. However, in the earliest texts, these suffixes are sparingly used, and related words are grouped together in clusters with few if any indications of their relationship to one another; a system akin to Sanskrit's great compound words, and one that presents significant difficulty to all but the most seasoned readers.

The oldest Tamil literature has a small number of Sanskrit loanwords, and those that do exist have been converted to the Tamil phonetic system. In the Middle Ages, the progressive spread of Aryan influence resulted in the borrowing of many additional terms, frequently in their true Sanskrit form. Sanskrit had a much stronger effect on Telegu and

Canarese, which are spoken further north. Canarese initially occurs in inscriptions towards the end of the sixth century, and the first preserved literature is from the ninth century. Telegu did not become a literary language until the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and it was only under the Vijayanagara Empire, when it was the court language, that it became truly prominent. By the 11<sup>th</sup> century, Malayalam, which is quite similar to Tamil, had evolved into its own language.

### 4.3 Literature

The breadth of Indian literature is one of its most notable characteristics. It has absorbed many cultural, sociopolitical, and political aspects and developments. One can have a clear grasp of numerous transitions that occurred in ancient Indian history by wading through this huge ocean of information. Understanding history necessitates a thorough understanding of the period's thought, which is reflected in the period's books.

#### 4.3.1 Vedic

The Vedas hold the status of *shruti* (literally, 'that which has been heard') in Hinduism. They are said to represent a timeless, self-existent truth discovered by rishis (*seers*) in meditation or revealed to them by the gods. The Vedanga, Puranas, epics, Dharmashastra, and Nitishastra are among the *smriti* (literally, 'remembered') texts.

The name Veda means 'knowledge' and is derived from the root *vid* (literally, 'to know'). *Rig*, *Sama*, *Yajur*, and *Atharva* are the four Vedas. The *Rig Veda* contains some of the world's oldest surviving poetry, some of which is both beautiful and philosophically profound. The Samhita, Brahmana, Aranyaka, and Upanishad are the four components of each Veda, with the final three blending together at times.

The Rig Veda is a Hindu scripture. Samhita is a collection of 1,028 hymns (*suktas*) arranged in 10 books (*Mandalas*). The *Sama Veda* is made up of 1,810 verses, most of which are taken from the *Rig Veda* and structured according to musical notation. However, the original melodies have been lost. The *Yajur Veda* is concerned with the specifics of ritual performance. The *Atharva Veda* is the most recent Veda, and it includes hymns (some of which are from the *Rig Veda*), as well as spells and charms that represent common beliefs and customs. The Brahmanas (not to be confused with the Brahmana varna or caste) are prose explanations of the *Samhita* chapters that outline and explain sacrifice rites and their results. The Aranyakas (forest writings) give a symbolic and philosophical interpretation of sacrifice ceremonies. There are 108 Upanishads, with 13 considered the most important. The Upanishads contain a wide range of philosophical ideas concerning sacrifice, the body, and the world, but the notions of *atman* and *brahman* are most intimately linked with them. The Rig Veda Samhita's Books 2–7 (known as the family books) are considered the earliest in the

Vedic corpus as a whole; the subsequent sections of this Samhita, together with all other Vedic writings, make up later Vedic literature.

There are multiple Vedic recensions (*shakhas*) linked with various Vedic study and interpretation schools (*charanas*). The sole surviving recension of the *Rig Veda* is the *Shakalashakha*. The *Shukla* (White) and *Krishna* (Black) schools of the *Yajur Veda* each have their own set of scriptures. The *Madhyandina* and *Kanva* are the recensions of the *Shukla* (also known as *Vajasaneya*) *Yajur Veda*. The Kathaka, Kapishtala, Maitrayani, and Taittiriya recensions reflect the Black school. The fundamental distinction between the two schools' texts is that the White school's *Samhitas* only include *mantras* (prayers and sacrifice formulas), but the Black school's texts include a commentary that describes and discusses many aspects of the sacrificial rites. The Kauthuma, Ranayaniya, and Jaiminiya (or Talavakara) are *Sama Vedic* recensions, whereas the Shaunaka and Paippalada are *Atharva Vedic* recensions. Other recensions of the Vedas that formerly existed but are now gone are mentioned in inscriptions.

Vedic writings are sacred literature, and there are limited references to historical events. For example, the *Rig Veda Samhita's* Book 7 describes a war of ten kings in which Sudas overcame a number of foes who had banded together against him. Historians have attempted to recreate many parts of the Vedic civilization, but interpreting this huge and dense literature is difficult.

The challenge of dating the *Rig Veda* is a key issue when considering the Vedas as a source of history. The dates for the writing of this book have been estimated to be between c. 6000 BCE and 1000 BCE. Many historians date the writing of early Vedic literature to around 1500–1000 BCE, and later Vedic texts to around 1000–500 BCE. This timeline is mostly based on Max Müller's approximate dates from the nineteenth century.

A subset of Brahmana males preserves and transmits Vedic literature, which is an essential aspect of the Brahmanical legacy. It represents their religious convictions, practises, and viewpoints. These texts are used as historical sources to learn about life in portions of northwestern and northern India between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> millennia BCE. Apart from the issue of dates, there are a number of issues in correlating Vedic data with archaeology.

Vedanga (literally, 'limbs of a Veda') is a collection of supplemental literature intended at assisting in the appropriate recitation, usage, and comprehension of the Vedas. Phonetics (*shiksha*), metre (*chhanda*), grammar (*vyakarana*), etymology (*nirukta*), ritual (*kalpa*), and astronomy are among the topics covered (*jyotisha*). Vedanga literature was composed roughly between 600 and 200 BCE. *Yaska's Nirukta*, a work on the etymology of

words in the *Rig Veda* from the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, is a study on the etymology of words in the *Rig Veda*.

### 4.3.2 Epic

The *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* are two Sanskrit epics that come under the categories of *smriti* and *itihasa* (traditional history), however the *Ramayana* is often categorised as *kavya* (poetry). Language and stylistic similarities indicate that they arose from the same cultural background. The *Mahabharata* refers to Valmiki and the *Ramayana*, and includes a portion called the *Ramopakhyana* that tells the Rama tale. The Kurus, Hastinapura, and Janamejaya are mentioned in the *Ramayana*, but the *Mahabharata* conflict is not mentioned. At least in their final phases of creation, the two epics were plainly aware of one other. The *Mahabharata* was written between 400 BCE and 400 CE, and the *Ramayana* was written between the 5<sup>th</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> century BCE and the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE. Historians have lately proposed a shorter writing time for the *Mahabharata*, ranging from the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE to the year zero. The fact that the many periods in the production and evolution of the epics might have lasted several years, if not a millennium, should explain why most historians no longer use the term "epic age."

The epics are wonderful writings with compelling storylines that have captivated millions of people throughout history. It is important to discover their internal chronological layers in order to utilise them as historical sources, which is not a simple operation. Rama lived in the *treta yuga* (age), while the *Mahabharata* conflict occurred later, in the *dvapara yuga*, according to legend. Some scholars suggest, however, that the *Mahabharata's* events and characters occur at a time that is slightly earlier than the *Ramayana's*. This is because the *Mahabharata* takes place in the Indo-Gangetic split and the upper Ganga valley, but the *Ramayana* takes place in the middle Ganga valley, where the political centre of gravity has obviously migrated eastwards. The *Mahabharata's* strong female characters point to an earlier era of societal evolution, when women were less submissive to males than they are now. The *Mahabharata's* practise of *niyoga* (levirate; when a husband deputises his conjugal rights over his wife to another man in order to have an heir) also shows a societal stage before the *Ramayana*, which exhibits even tougher regulations over women.

The *Mahabharata* is divided into 18 *Parvas* (books) and two recensions, one northern and one southern. The central plot is around a feud between two sets of cousins: the Kauravas and the Pandavas, and a massive battle that took place at Kurukshetra. However, there is a significant quantity of material in the book that has little or no relevance to the primary tale. It is said to have been penned by Vyasa, although it is apparent that it is not the product of a

single person in its current form. The *Mahabharata* is truly an encyclopaedic work, and it boasts of this fact. Over the years, numerous different stories, sermons, and didactic pieces carrying teachings were added to the heart of a heroic storey. The Bhishma lecture on *dharma*, delivered as he lay dying on a bed of arrows, and Krishna's rousing address to Arjuna on the eve of the battle, known as the Bhagavad Gita, are among the new additions.

It is impossible to confirm or reject the existence of a violent conflict between the Pandavas and the Kauravas. It's possible that a small-scale struggle was converted by bards and poets into a massive epic war. Some historians and archaeologists believe that the fight took place about 1000 BCE.

The *Ramayana* is split into two recensions: northern and southern; the northern recension is further divided into north eastern, north-western, and western recensions. The northern recension's vocabulary is more refined and sophisticated than the southern one. The epic is divided into seven *Kandas* (books), the first (*Bala Kanda*) and last (*Uttara Kanda*) of which are later additions. The core tale revolves around Rama, prince of Kosala; his banishment to the forest owing to his wicked stepmother's intrigues; Ravana, the king of Lanka's kidnapping of his wife Sita; Sita's rescue; and Rama's return to the capital, Ayodhya, to become king. The text's small vocabulary and style suggest that it was written by a single person, often referred to as Valmiki. Valmiki appears in both the *Balakanda* and the *Uttarakanda*, when he is inspired to write the epic and offers sanctuary to Sita, who has been rejected by Rama.

Excavations at the Ayodhya site have shown the presence of a village from the Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW) period, which dates back to around 700 BCE at the earliest. However, like with the *Mahabharata*, archaeological evidence does not reveal whether the events or characters in the *Ramayana* have any historical validity.

Apart from the Valmiki *Ramayana* (which appears to be the oldest version), there are numerous other versions of the Rama storey, including a Jaina version (the *Paumachariu* of Vimalasuri in Prakrit), a Buddhist version (the *Dasharatha Jataka* in Pali), a 12<sup>th</sup> century Tamil version by Kampan (the *Iramavataram*), and the *Ramcharitmanas* (16<sup>th</sup> century) by Tulsidas, to name a few there are several oral variations of the narrative as well. The Rama narrative is also famous in other regions of Asia, with different versions of the story being told in Tibet, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, and Indonesia.

Characters and events are shaped in varied ways, and the numerous tellings typically have distinct starts and finishes. Ravana, for example, is depicted in the *Paumachariu* as a tragic hero who is murdered by Lakshmana rather than Rama (who embodies all the Jaina

virtues, including non-violence). The *Ramayana* has been the subject of art and performance, including sculpture, painting, theatre, dance dramas, and television serials, in addition to written and oral interpretations of the narrative.

From a historical standpoint, the epics may be interpreted in a variety of ways. While the majority of historians have concentrated on challenging the historical accuracy of their events, some have attempted to characterise their numerous cultural layers. Another strategy is to understand such works as a reaction to a certain historical situation. For example, James L. Fitzgerald has argued that the *Mahabharata* was a Brahmanical response to certain historical developments: the rising popularity of religious traditions such as Buddhism and Jainism, as well as the rise of dynasties such as the Nandas and Mauryas who supported them, were seen as threatening the Brahmanical order by a section of the Brahmanas. Their reaction to this imagined catastrophe was the Mahabharata.

### 4.3.3 Sangam

The Sangam was a Tamil poets' college or conference convened under the patronage of leaders or monarchs. The earliest literature of South India is represented by this group of texts in old Tamil, often collectively are referred to as Sangam literature. The available Sangam literature, which was produced by these assemblies, was compiled in 300-600 AD. However, parts of this literature look back to at least the second century AD.

According to a Tamil commentary from the middle of the eighth century, three Sangams lasted 9990 years, were attended by 8598 poets, and were patronised by 197 Pandya rulers. All of this is a complete fabrication. All that is known is that a Sangam was held in Madurai under royal patronage.

Three Sangams, or literary conferences, were held in ancient times, according to a legend preserved in post 7<sup>th</sup> century writings. The first is said to have lasted 4,440 years in Madurai, the second for 3,700 years in Kapatapuram, and the third for 1,850 years in Madurai. Although the facts of this account are clearly impossible to verify, the Sangam corpus's closeness in language and style implies that they were the result of some form of literary assembly. Some of the rulers and poets connected with the third Sangam are real individuals, which supports its historicity. On the other hand, it's possible that the Sangams mythology was inspired by a completely other event: the formation of the *Jainasangha* in Madurai during the 5th century. Because of the debate regarding the three Sangams' heritage, some historians prefer to refer to it as "early classical Tamil literature" rather than "Sangam literature."

Six of the eight anthologies of poetry included in the *Ettutokai* (The Eight Collections) and nine of the ten *pattus* (songs) of the *Pattuppattu* are part of the Sangam corpus (The Ten Songs). The poems were written between the 3rd century BCE and the 3rd century CE, based on their style and historical allusions. Around the middle of the eighth century, they were collected into anthologies. These anthologies were compiled into the *Ettutokai* and *Pattuppattu* super-anthologies (i.e., anthologies of anthologies) a few centuries later. Sangam literature includes the first two books of the *Tolkappiyam*, as well as the initial sections of the first two books of the *Tolkappiyam*. The *Tolkappiyam* is primarily a grammar book, although it also discusses phonology, semantics, syntax, and literary norms.

*Akam* and *puram* are the two types of Sangam poetry. The focus of *akam* poetry was love, but *puram* poems were usually about battle. *Puram* poetry, according to A. K. Ramanujan (1999), was "public poetry" that dealt with a variety of topics other than love, such as good and evil, community, and kingdom. The poems were based on previous bardic chants and were passed down orally for an undetermined amount of time before being written down. There are 2,381 poems in the anthologies, attributed to 473 authors, 30 of them are women. The poets hailed from a variety of socioeconomic and professional backgrounds and came from both cities and rural. Teachers, merchants, carpenters, astrologers, goldsmiths, blacksmiths, warriors, ministers, and monarchs were among those there. Sangam poems, with their diverse subjects and authorship, provide a fair picture of ordinary life at the time when they were written.

In the post 5<sup>th</sup> century, a number of Tamil didactic writings were composed. Tiruvalluvar's *Tirukkural*, a text on ethics, polity, and love composed around 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century, is the most renowned of them. The *Silappadikaram* and *Manimekalai* are two of the most well-known Tamil epics. Although the former is a bit older than the later, they were both written in the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century CE.

### **Two types of Sangam Literature: Narrative and Didactic**

The Sangam literature can roughly be divided into two groups, narrative and didactic. *Melkannakku* or Eighteen Major Works are the narrative texts comprising of eighteen major works consisting of eight anthologies and ten idylls, and *Kilkanakku* or Eighteen Minor Works are the didactic texts.

#### **Narrative**

Sangam literature, both narrative and didactic, suggests multiple periods of social growth. The narrative writings are considered heroic poetry, with heroes being exalted and constant conflicts and livestock raids being referenced regularly. They show that the early Tamil

people were primarily pastoral. The Sangam writings include evidence of early megalithic life. Although they grew rice, the early megalithic people appear to have been predominantly pastoralists, hunters, and fisherman. Many sites in Peninsular India include hoes and sickles, but no ploughshares. Wedges, flat celts, arrowheads, long swords and lances, spikes and spearheads, horse-bits, and other iron artefacts are examples. These weapons were designed primarily for use in battle and hunting. The Sangam scriptures, which tell of continual battle and livestock raiding, have some parallels to this. According to the literature, war booty was a significant source of income. They also claim that when a hero dies, he is transformed into a stone. This reminds us of the megalithic people's stone circles that were constructed above their graves. This may have prompted the subsequent habit of erecting virarkal (hero stones) in honour of heroes who had perished battling for kine and other things. The oldest stage of societal evolution shown in the Sangam works is most likely related to the early megalithic period.

The narrative Sangam writings depict a political structure in which the army was made up of groups of warriors, and a primitive taxation system and court emerged. Trade, merchants, artisans, and farmers are all mentioned in the writings. Kanchi, Korkai, Madurai, Puhar, and Uraiyur are among the towns mentioned. Puhar or Kaveripattanam was the most significant of them all. Greek and Roman records, as well as excavations of Sangam sites, back up the Sangam allusions to cities and commercial activity.

### **Didactic**

Many of the Sangam literature, notably the didactic ones, were authored by Prakrit or Sanskrit brahmana intellectuals. The didactic books date from the early Christian era and establish a code of conduct for not just the monarch and his court, but also for other social classes and jobs. These classifications could only have been conceivable during the fourth century, when the number of brahmanas increased under the Pallavas. The texts also mention village grants as well as kings descended from the solar and lunar dynasties.

### **Others**

Besides the Sangam texts, we have a text called *Tolkappiyam*, which deals with grammar and poetics. Another important Tamil text deals with philosophy and wise maxims, and is called *Tirukkural*. In addition, we have the twin Tamil epics *Silappadikaram* and *Manimekalai*. The two were composed around the sixth century. The first is considered to be the brightest gem of early Tamil literature. It deals with a love story in which a dignitary called *Kovalan* prefers a courtesan called Madhavi of Kaveripattanam to his wedded wife Kannagi from a noble family. The author apparently seems to be a Jaina and tries to locate

the scenes of the story in all the kingdoms of the Tamil state. The other epic, *Manimekalai*, was written by a grain merchant of Madurai. It deals with the adventures of the daughter born of the union of Kovalan and Madhavi. However, this epic is of greater religious than literary interest. It is claimed in the prologues to the two epics that the authors were friends and contemporaries of the Chera king Senguttuvan, who ruled in the second century AD. Though the epics cannot be dated so early, they throw light on the social and economic life of the Tamils up to about the sixth century.

Before the Christian period, the Tamils were most likely familiar with the skill of writing. In the south, twelve Ashokan inscriptions in Brahmi script have been discovered, three in Andhra Pradesh and nine in Karnataka. Over seventy-five short inscriptions in the Brahmi script have been discovered in natural caves, mostly in the Madurai region, dating from around two centuries later. They offer examples of the oldest form of Tamil, which contains Prakrit terms. They date from the second and first century BC, when Jaina and Buddhist missionaries arrived in the region. During recent digs, inscriptions on potsherds have been discovered in many locations; these inscriptions give evidence of Tamil language around the beginning of the Christian period. Significant Sangam literature was generated in the early decades of the Christian period as a result of the practise of writing, however it was eventually collated by AD 600.

#### **4.4 Art**

Almost all of ancient India's artistic relics are religious in character or were created for religious purposes. King's resided in luxurious palaces, filled with exquisite wall-paintings and sculpture, however all of these have perished, indicating that secular art existed. Since European taste began to question the old canons of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and looked to Asia and Africa for fresh aesthetic experience some sixty years ago, much has been said and written about Indian art. Since then, most experts on the subject, both Indian and European, have emphasised the religious and mystical aspects of Indian art. They have read the truths of Vedanta or Buddhism into the artistic remains of our period, and have interpreted them as expressions of deep religious experience, sermons in stone on the oneness of all things in the Universal Spirit, while acknowledging the realism and earthiness of the earliest sculpture.

The north-west was a melting pot of cultural influences and sculptural forms. The ancient city of Kapisha is represented by Begram. It has generated a large number of interesting archaeological material due to its location at the crossroads of the subcontinent and regions to the east and west. This contains a fantastic pile of riches that must have once belonged to a highly wealthy individual with impeccable taste. Hellenistic plaster casts of

metalwork patterns, Syrian glassware, Roman and Alexandrian sculptures, Chinese lacquer work, and over 1,000 carved ivory and bone pieces undoubtedly of Indian provenance are among the items on display.

The 'Begram ivories,' which date from the late 1st century BCE/early 1<sup>st</sup> century CE to roughly the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE, represent a variety of styles. A pair of ladies are seen on several carved panels standing beneath a torana (gateway) with three architraves, similar to the Sanchi gateways. Another enormous ivory sculpture may symbolise Ganga, the Hindu deity. Hunting scenes carved in the Parthian double-line style are among the ivory artefacts. An ornately carved coffer top from the second century CE features an intriguing mix of Graeco-Roman flower motifs on the edges and a distinctively Indian portrayal of the feminine figure. The carvings on the Begram ivories appear to have some parallels to the later sculptures of Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda. Similarities with some of the bone and ivory artefacts discovered amidst a hidden wealth in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE–3<sup>rd</sup> century CE Jetavana mound in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka, are even more intriguing.

Another noteworthy object discovered in Afghanistan's Kapisha area is a gold reliquary studded with rubies discovered near Bimaran, which dates from the late 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE. Two groups of three figures are depicted on the reliquary: a standing Buddha flanked by the gods Indra and Brahma. One of the earliest instances of a Buddha image may be seen here.

The Swat valley in Pakistan has produced a number of Buddhist sculptures that are aesthetically tied to Iran's Parthian art, rather than the Graeco-Roman influences that are so prevalent in Gandhara's modern art. A relief sculpture of a seated haloed Buddha figure flanked by a standing Brahma and Indra, dating from the early 1st century CE, is one of the most notable pieces. The characters' face characteristics, the deeply carved lines, and the style all display a distinct Parthian mark. Images like this show that the oldest stone Buddha images predate the Kushana period and that some iconographic norms were already well established in pre-Kushana periods.

Similarly, the foreign rulers became passionate benefactors of Indian art and literature in ancient India, displaying the fervour typical of new converts. Masons and other craftspeople from many schools and nations were brought together by the Kushan kingdom. As a result, various art schools arose, including Central Asian, Gandhara, and Mathura. Sculptures from Central Asia demonstrate a fusion of indigenous and Indian features influenced by Buddhism.

Indian craftspeople interacted with Central Asians, Greeks, and Romans, particularly in Gandhara, India's northwestern boundary. This spawned a new genre of art in which depictions of the Buddha were created in the Graeco-Roman manner, complete with Graeco-Roman hairstyles.

Mathura, which was predominantly a centre of indigenous art, was also influenced by Gandhara art. Mathura is known for its exquisite Buddha statues, but it is also known for the headless erect statue of Kanishka, whose name is carved on its bottom end. It also created a number of Vardhamana Mahavira stone images. Although Mathura is considered Krishna's birthplace and the location of his early life, its pre-Gupta art and inscriptions disregard him. The Mathura school of art flourished in the early Christian ages, and its red sandstone goods may be seen even outside of Mathura. Currently, India's biggest collection of Kushan sculpture is housed in the Mathura Museum.

Beautiful works of art were made south of the Vindhyas during the same time period. Maharashtra has several amazing Buddhist caves carved out of rock. In AP, Nagarjunakonda and Amaravati were important Buddhist art centres, with stories about the Buddha depicted on countless panels. The earliest Buddhist panels date from the second century BC and may be discovered in Bodh-Gaya, Sanchi, and Bharhut. However, in the early decades of the Christian period, sculpture progressed farther.

#### **4.4.1 Gandhara School**

The art of the Roman Empire clearly impacted the Gandhara school, and some of its craftsmen may have been Westerners. The Greek kingdoms of Bactria and North West India were perished by the time this school arose, despite the fact that it was sometimes referred to as Greco-Buddhist. This syncretistic school must be attributed not to Alexander's Greco-Bactrian descendants, but to commerce with the West, which was aided by Rome's expanding wealth and the eastward march of her armies. The Greeks left just a few fine silver pieces, gorgeous coins, and one or two other artefacts, maybe acquired from the West; it was Kanishka and his successors, as well as their affluent people, who provided the encouragement and assistance that allowed the Gandhara school to thrive. The new devotional Buddhism wanted images for worship, thus statues of the Buddha and *Bodhisattvas*, as well as miniature votive plaques portraying scenes from the Buddha's life or Jataka tales, were mass-produced in vast numbers.

The Gandhara school flourished between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries CE in parts of Kashmir and Afghanistan, and it lasted until the 7<sup>th</sup> century in parts of Kashmir and Afghanistan. The first impetus came during the Indo-Bactrian era, although activity peaked in

the first two centuries CE. The majority of the sculptures in Gandhara are made of stone. Sculptors employed blue schist and green phyllite as their primary materials in the beginning. Stucco (lime plaster) was first utilised in the first century CE, and by the third century, it had nearly totally supplanted stone.

The Gandhara school, like the Kushana coinage, is syncretistic in nature. Although the subject were Indian, the style was Graeco-Roman. Images of Buddhas and *bodhisattvas* were popular subjects, leading to the term Graeco-Buddhist art. The facial features and curly or wavy hair, the strong torso, and the delicate, finely outlined folds of the robes all have a Graeco-Roman influence. Standing Buddha images are rather frequent, and they generally include the following characteristics: With one leg slightly bent, the Buddha stands barefoot. His robe is so thick that it covers both shoulders. His left hand appears to be clutching his robe, while his right hand is bowed and has the palm elevated in the *abhaya mudra*, which grants protection. His curly hair is piled in a knot on top of his head (known as the *ushnisha*). His lengthy earlobes harken back to his days as a royal, when ear jewels weighed him down. His head is encircled by a halo. There are also depictions of sitting Buddhas. The *dharmachakra mudra* (teaching stance) and the *dhyana mudra* are two of the *mudras* (the meditative pose). A moustache may be seen on some of the Buddha statues. Many depictions of the Buddha reclining in meditation were made by the Gandhara school.

The Gandhara artists also sculpted *bodhi-sattva* images in addition to Buddha statues. Although it is impossible to identify all of them, Maitreya appears to have been the most often shown. Another well-known figure was Avalokiteshvara (Padmapani). The vase in Maitreya's left hand distinguishes him from Padmapani, who is holding a lotus. The *bodhisattvas*, unlike Buddha statues, are frequently richly decorated, have intricate hairdoes and/or turbans, and wear sandals. Many of them sport beards.

Scenes from Gautama Buddha's life, as well as Jataka scenes, are shown in sculptures and relief panels. While the Gandhara painters carved many of the images that had captivated the artists of central India's and Andhra's early Buddhist monuments, they approached these topics in distinct ways. Maya clutching the boughs of a *sal* tree, the infant coming from her right side or standing at her foot, for example, is shown in the Gandhara reliefs as the scene of the Buddha's birth. Many attendants are there, including the deity Indra, who stands ready to receive the newborn. The ruler of the *yakshas*, Panchika, and his spouse Hariti are two more commonly represented sculptural motifs. Panchika was linked with prosperity, whereas Hariti was a *yakshi* who, according to Buddhist legend, was turned from a kid devourer to a child protector once the Buddha intervened.

A metal reliquary discovered in a big ruined stupa at Shah-ji-ki-dheri (near Peshawar), the location of Kanishka's capital Kanishkapura, is one of the rare metal sculptures of the Gandhara school. The three images on the box's lid are a Buddha seated on a lotus, surrounded by Indra and Brahma. Images of seated Buddhas surrounded by Indra and Brahma, as well as a standing figure that might be Kanishka, adorn the coffin. It is believed that this coffin was originally placed in a large stupa in the capital city during the period of this Kushana ruler, given Kanishka's name is carved on it.

#### 4.4.2 Mathura School

Mathura was one of the pre-eminent cities of north India. It was the southern capital of the Kushanas and an important centre of crafts and trade, religious activity, and artistic production. The Mathura school most likely began around the end of the first century BC, while some sources place it later. It created works that were disseminated far and wide, and had a great effect on later sculpture, working for centuries in the locality's white-spotted red sandstone. Some of the school's inspiration came from Jaina, and Mathura artisans were manufacturing votive plaques picturing the crosslegged nude figure of a *Tirthankara* in meditation at the time, which may have influenced the Buddhists to represent their own master. The *yaksis* from the railings of a stupa, which was most likely Jaina, are among the most spectacular relics of the Mathura school. These richly jewelled ladies, with exaggeratedly broad hips and slender waists, stand in pert attitudes reminiscent of the Indus dancing-girl, and their gay and frank sensuality in a context of piety and renunciation provides another example of the remarkable antinomy of the ancient Indian outlook on life, which found nothing incongruous in such a juxtaposition.

The Kushana royal sculptures, most of which were discovered in the adjacent village of Mat, where the kings very certainly had a winter house and a church in which the memory of earlier rulers and princes was cherished, are somewhat beyond the primary spectrum of Mathura art. Successive monarchs have virtually all shattered the figures, and the huge Kanishka, the most outstanding of the sculptures, is now without its head. The king stands with his legs apart in an authoritative posture, wearing Central Asian garb such as a long coat and quilted boots and wielding a sword and its sheath in one hand. Technically, this statue might be critiqued for having little feeling of depth and being almost two-dimensional. The sculptor was clearly working on a topic with which he was unfamiliar, yet he succeeded in creating a powerful sculpture that evoked Egypt's hieratic royal statues.

The early Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the Mathura school are plump, joyful figures with little spirituality, but they grew in grace and religious sensibility throughout time.

Though the Mathura school was influenced by previous Indian traditions, it also borrowed from the North-West and used several Greco-Roman themes. Mathura was the birthplace of the Gupta style, which produced some of India's finest devotional sculpture.

The Mathura style may be considered as a continuation of the sculpting traditions of places like Besnagar, Sanchi, and Bharhut. *Yakshas*, *yakshis*, *nagas*, *nagis*, Buddhas and *bodhisattvas*, Jainatirthankaras, and Hindu deities were among the subjects.

Several sitting Buddha statues from the Mathura school are still extant. The Buddha normally sits cross-legged on a throne (in some cases a *simhasana*, or lion throne) with his right hand raised in the *abhaya mudra*, however there are exceptions. He has a coiled *ushnisha* (a protuberance or a topknot of hair) that resembles a seashell, and his head is shaved or has curly hair. He's dressed in a translucent *dhoti* with one end draped across his chest and over his left shoulder. His head is encircled by a halo with scalloped borders, with a *pipal* tree sculpture above it. Either two little *bodhisattvas* or the gods Indra and Brahma flank him. The *bodhisattvas*, particularly Maitreya, Vajrapani, and Avalokiteshvara, have their own representations. Artists in Mathura also sculpted reliefs depicting incidents from the Buddha's life. The Mathura style is also represented by a huge Buddha figure unearthed at Sarnath.

At KankaliTila near Mathura, a huge number of Jaina pictures were discovered. A pillar fragment with four standing *tirthankaras* with long arms carved on all four sides was among them. A sitting *tirthankara* figure with its head shattered was present. The *tirthankara* pictures are comparable to Buddha depictions in certain ways. They have long earlobes, just like the Buddhas, and some of them have an auspicious mark between their brows known as an *urna*. Their nuance and the symbols on their chests are the distinguishing features.

In the early centuries CE, iconographic norms for depictions of several Hindu deities were created. Images of Shiva, Vishnu, Surya, Durga, and Lakshmi have been discovered among the numerous stone sculptures excavated in the Mathura region. The moustache, tunic, boots, and ringed crown of a sitting Surya figure discovered at KankaliTila have West Asian influences. Shaiva pictures include anthropomorphic or *linga* representations of the god, as well as *mukhalingas* and *vigraha-lingas*. An architectural remnant discovered in Mathura, Bhuteshvara, depicts a Shiva *linga* under a tree, encircled by a fence, and venerated by winged creatures. Early Shiva pictures from the region display a broad, but formative, iconographic background. They depict Shiva alone or with the Nandi bull, Shiva with his bride Parvati, and Shiva in different incarnations such as *Chaturvyuha Shiva* (Shiva with

three emanations), *Ardhanarishvara* (half-woman deity), and *Harihara* (a combination of Vishnu and Shiva).

The number and diversity of Vaishnava pictures produced in the Mathura area exploded in the early centuries CE. According to Doris M. Srinivasan (1989), Mathura became the principal centre for the propagation of Vaishnava sculptural art during this time. Kinship triads showing Vasudeva Krishna, his brother Baladeva, and their sister Ekanamsha were among the sculptures. Many separate representations of Vasudeva Krishna exist, as well as ones of Vishnu (four-armed), Vishnu on *garuda*, and Vishnu as an anthropomorphic pig. The *avatara* concept was definitely in its early stages, and the *chaturvyuha* (Vishnu's four emanations) was first mentioned in the late Kushana period. A huge Narayana picture unearthed in Mathura is also worth mentioning.

Apart from unnamed female deities, Matrikas, and yakshis, Lakshmi and Durga stand out among the goddesses of Mathura. A gorgeous picture, commonly known as Shri Lakshmi, may be mentioned. The figure is supported by two lotus blossoms that sprout from a vase of plenty (*purna-ghata*). She appears to softly massage her right breast with her left hand, as if providing milk, while holding a fruit with her right hand. She certainly suggests fertility and sustenance, whether or not she symbolises Lakshmi. Mathura was a major artistic style setter in north India, and pictures created there were transferred to towns such as Kaushambi, Ahichchhatra, and Sarnath, as well as Mahasthangarh in the east.

#### 4.4 Summary

In this unit you have learnt that:

- In ancient India, oral sources were rigorously maintained; they were so diligently remembered that the text virtually became frozen, as was the case with Vedic ceremonial compositions. The Vedas were written in a more ancient version of Sanskrit known as old Indo-Aryan. This set it apart from Classical Sanskrit, which was a later type of Sanskrit.
- It has long been universally accepted that Sanskrit is a remote cousin of all the languages of Europe, with the exception of Finnish, Estonian, Hungarian, Turkish and Basque. The other European tongues look back to a common ancestor in a group of dialects spoken by tribesmen in the steppelands of South Russia some 2,000 years BC.
- The unorthodox faiths, whose early texts were written in languages similar to those spoken by the people, have mainly preserved the daily speech of ancient India for us.

The majority of pre-Guptan inscriptions are in Prakrit, particularly the large collection of Asokan edicts, and the ladies and lower characters in Sanskrit theatre are made to talk in codified Prakrit of various dialects. Prakrit was used in a few pieces of secular literature. As a result, there is a wealth of information for recreating popular languages.

- Pali, which became the language of the Sthaviravadin Buddhists, was an important early Prakrit. Buddha most likely preached in Magadhi, but his teachings were modified to local languages as they travelled across India. The Sthaviravadins picked a Western language, possibly spoken in the Sanchi and Ujjayini regions.
- Tamil, Canarese, Telegu, and Malayalam are four of these languages with separate scripts and written literatures. Tamil is spoken in the south, from Cape Comorin to Madras, Canarese is spoken in Mysore and portions of Andhra Pradesh, Telegu is spoken north of Madras to the Orissan border, and Malavalam is spoken in Kerala. Tamil is unquestionably the oldest of these languages, with literature dating back to the early years of the Christian period.
- The Vedas hold the status of *shruti* (literally, 'that which has been heard') in Hinduism. They are said to represent a timeless, self-existent truth discovered by rishis (*seers*) in meditation or revealed to them by the gods. The Vedanga, Puranas, epics, Dharmashastra, and Nitishastra are among the *smriti* (literally, 'remembered') texts.
- The *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* are two Sanskrit epics that come under the categories of *smriti* and itihasa (traditional history), however the *Ramayana* is often categorised as *kavya* (poetry). Language and stylistic similarities indicate that they arose from the same cultural background.
- The Sangam was a Tamil poets' college or conference convened under the patronage of leaders or monarchs. The earliest literature of South India is represented by this group of texts in old Tamil, often collectively are referred to as Sangam literature.
- The Gandhara school flourished between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries CE in parts of Kashmir and Afghanistan, and it lasted until the 7<sup>th</sup> century in parts of Kashmir and Afghanistan.
- The Gandhara school, like the Kushana coinage, is syncretistic in nature. Although the subject were Indian, the style was Graeco-Roman. Images of Buddhas and bodhisattvas were popular subjects, leading to the term Graeco-Buddhist art.

- The Mathura school most likely began around the end of the first century BC, while some sources place it later. It created works that were disseminated far and wide, and had a great effect on later sculpture, working for centuries in the locality's white-spotted red sandstone.
- The Mathura style may be considered as a continuation of the sculpting traditions of places like Besnagar, Sanchi, and Bharhut. *Yakshas*, *yakshis*, *nagas*, *nagis*, Buddhas and *bodhisattvas*, *Jainatirthankaras*, and Hindu deities were among the subjects.

#### 4.5 Key Words

- Vernacular : The language or dialect spoken by the ordinary people in a particular country or region.
- Phonetic : Relating to speech sounds.
- Recension : A revised edition of a text.
- Recitation : The action of repeating something aloud from memory.
- Epic : A long poem, typically one derived from ancient oral tradition, narrating the deeds and adventures of heroic or legendary figures or the past history.
- Narrative : A spoken or written account of connected events or a story.
- Corpus : A collection of written texts, especially the entire works of a particular author or a body of writing on a particular subject.
- Anthology : A published collection of poems or other pieces of writing.
- Didactic : Intended to teach, particularly in having moral instruction as an ulterior motive.
- Indigenous : Originating or occurring naturally in a particular or native place.

#### 4.6 Check Your Progress

##### 1. State whether true or false:

- a) India's languages may be classified into two groups: Indo-Aryan and Dravidian.
- b) The oldest Indian linguistic text, *Yaska's Nirukta*, explaining obsolete Vedic words, dates from the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC.
- c) The majority of pre-Guptan inscriptions are in Prakrit.
- d) The Mauryan court's official language was Magadhi.
- e) Some experts believe the Prakrit languages are related to the Finno-Ugrian language family.
- f) The *Rid Veda* is concerned with the specifics of ritual performance.

- g) The *Mahabharata* is divided into 18 *Parvas*.  
 h) Three Sangams, or literary conferences, were held in ancient times, according to a legend preserved in post 7<sup>th</sup> century writings.  
 i) The Mathura school flourished between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries CE in parts of Kashmir and Afghanistan.  
 j) At KankaliTila near Mathura, a huge number of Jaina pictures were discovered.

**2. Fill in the blanks:**

- a) India's languages may be classified into two groups: \_\_\_\_\_ and Dravidian.  
 b) The great grammar of \_\_\_\_\_ effectively stabilized the Sanskrit language.  
 c) In terms of sound and grammar, \_\_\_\_\_ were more easier to learn than Sanskrit.  
 d) Pali became the language of the \_\_\_\_\_ Buddhists.  
 e) The \_\_\_\_\_ includes hymns as well as spells and charms that represent common beliefs and customs.  
 f) The *Ramayana* is divided into \_\_\_\_\_ *Kandas*.  
 g) The \_\_\_\_\_ is primarily a grammar book, although it also discusses phonology, semantics, syntax, and literary norms.  
 h) The \_\_\_\_\_ school of art had features like curly or wavy hair, the strong torso, and the delicate, finely outlined folds of the robes.  
 i) The most of the Kushana royal sculptures were discovered in the village of \_\_\_\_\_.  
 j) At \_\_\_\_\_ near Mathura a huge number of Jaina pictures were discovered.

**4.7 Answers to Questions in Check your Progress**

**1. State whether true or false:**

- a) True      b) False      c) True      d) True      e) False      f) False  
 g) True      h) True      i) False      j) True

**2. Fill in the blanks:**

- a) Indo-Aryan b) Panini      c) Prakrits      d) Sthaviravadin      e) Atharva Veda f) Seveng) Tolkappiyam h) Gandhara      i) Mat j) KankaliTila

**4.8 Questions and Exercise**

Short answer questions

1. How did Panini stabilize the Sanskrit language?
2. What is a Sangam?
3. What was the impact of the art of Roman Empire on the Gandhara school of art?

Long answer questions

1. Describe the differences between Gandhara and Mathura Schools of art.
2. Throw light on how Sanskrit developed as a mature language with time.
3. Discuss the composition of Sangam literature. What are the contributions of Sangam literature to the Indian society?

#### **4.9 Suggested Readings**

1. Basham, A.L. : The wonder that was India, London, 1963.
2. Jha, D.N. : Ancient India in Historical Outline, New Delhi, 1977.
3. Kosambi, D.D.: The culture and civilization of Ancient India, London, 1965.
4. Sharma, R.S. : India's Ancient Past, New Delhi, 2005.
5. Singh, Upinder : A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India, New Delhi, 2009.
6. Thapar, Romila : Early India: From Origin to AD 1300, New Delhi, 2003.