

**1**

UNDERSTANDING INDIAN HISTORY

History is the study of past events. It helps us to understand those processes that enabled the early humans to successfully conquer their environment and develop the present day civilizations. It is not just a study of battles and kings as is normally understood by some. It is an analysis of society, economy and cultural trends over a long period as reflected in available sources. A historian tries to evaluate different situations over a long period and asks questions as to why certain events happened and what was their impact on society at large? Every new evidence or a fresh interpretation of existing evidence by different scholars helps in enriching our knowledge about the past. A historian differentiates between fact and fiction. However , myths which are based on oral tradition of a society may contain memories of past happenings. The historian's job is to ascertain the fact through cross checking of different historical evidence. In this lesson you will learn how India's ancient past was constructed with the help of large varieties of historical evidence and their interpretation.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- understand historical construction of India's ancient past;
- know about various types of source material used by ancient historians and
- identify changing traditions of history writing.

1.1 SOURCES FOR RECONSTRUCTING ANCIENT INDIAN HISTORY

A historian needs source material to reconstruct the past. But sources themselves do not reveal the past. They need interpretation and the historian makes them speak. In fact the historian is expected to track the source, read texts, follow clues, ask relevant questions, cross check evidence to offer meaningful explanation. For example in 1826 Charles Masson noticed the high walls and towers of an old settlement in Harappa Village of western Punjab (now in Pakistan), and five decades later Sir Alexander Cunningham collected some seals from the site, but it took archaeologist John Marshall another fifty years to identify the oldest civilization in the Indus region. We shall offer another example regarding the historian's task to cross check (corroborate) different types of evidence. Nowhere in the sources pertaining to king Harsha (seventh century AD) do we find a mention of his defeat at the hands of Chalukya ruler Pulakesin II. But the inscriptions of Pulakesin II claim a victory over Harsha. In this case it is



obvious that Harsha's biographer Bana Bhatt who wrote *Harshacharita* deliberately did not mention the defeat of his patron.

The literal meaning of the *itihasa* is 'thus it was' and it is translated as 'history'. There was a time when only written records were acknowledged as authentic source of history. Written material could be verified, cited and cross-checked. Oral evidence i.e myths and folk songs was never considered a valid source. Earlier historians used myth, fiction and oral traditions in a limited way on account of their lack of authenticity and verifiability. But today these unconventional sources are being used innovatively. Traditions and cultural traits should be studied in the light of other historical facts.

For example the *Mahabharata* is a story of conflict between two sets of warring cousins. One is not sure whether there was a real war as narrated in the epic. Some historians believe that the war did happen while others wait for corroborative evidence for the event. The original story was probably composed by bards known as *sutas* who generally accompanied Kshatriya warriors to the battlefield and recited poems in praise of victories and other achievements of their heroes. These compositions were circulated orally and preserved as part of human memory.

LITERARY SOURCES

1.2 RELIGIOUS LITERATURE

Most ancient Indian texts contain religious themes and these are known as *Vedas*. They are assigned to c. 1500–500 B.C. The *Vedas* are four in number. The *Rig Veda* mainly consists of prayers. The other three, *Sama*, *Yajur* and *Atharva*—contain prayers, rituals, magic and mythological stories. The *Upanishads* contain philosophical discussion on *atma* and *pramatma*. They are also referred to as *Vedanta*.

The two epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, seem to have been finally compiled by c.A.D. 400. Of the two, the *Mahabharata* is attributed to sage Vyasa. It originally consisted of 8800 verses and was called *Jaya gita* or a song dealing with victory. These later got expanded to 24,000 verses and came to be known as *Bharata* because it contained the stories of the descendants of one of the earliest Vedic tribes called *Bharata*. A further expanded version of 1,00,000 verses was named *Mahabharata*. Similarly the *Ramayana* of Valmiki originally consisted of 6000 verses than 12,000 verses and was finally expanded to 24,000 verses.

In the post-Vedic period (i.e. after BC600) we have recorded a large number of ritual literature on moral values called *Sutras*. Grand public sacrifices to be performed by rulers are recorded in *Shrautasutra* while domestic rituals connected with birth, naming, sacred thread ceremony, marriage, funerals etc. are prescribed in *Grihyasutras*. This literature was compiled between c. 600–300 B.C.

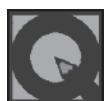
The religious books of the Jainas and Buddhists refer to historical persons and incidents connected with their respective religions. The earliest Buddhist texts were written in Pali. They are called *Tripitakas* (three baskets) viz. *Suttapitaka*, *Vinayapitaka* and *Abhidhammapitaka*. Of the most important non religious Buddhist literature are the *Jatakas*. They contain the stories of the previous birth of the Buddha. It was believed that before he was actually born as Gautama, the Buddha passed through over 550 births. Each birth story is called a *Jataka*. These stories throw invaluable light on the social and economic conditions of the period between the fifth and second centuries BC. The Jaina texts were written in Prakrit and were eventually compiled in sixth century AD at Vallabhi in Gujarat. They are called *Angas* and contain the philosophical concepts of the Jainas.

1.3 SECULAR LITERATURE

This category of literature does not have religion as its theme. To this class belongs the *Dharmashastras* or the law-books which prescribe the duties for different social groups. They set out punishments for persons guilty of theft, murder, adultery, etc. The earliest law book is *Manu Smriti*. It was the first book translated by the British and formed the basis of Hindu code of law. *Arthashastra* of Kautilya provides rich material for the study of Indian economy and polity of the Mauryan period. Works on grammar are also sometimes useful for historical reconstruction. The earliest and the most important work on grammar is the *Ashtadhyayi* written by Panini, which is dated by scholars to around 700 B.C.

The works of Kalidasa who lived during the Gupta period comprise poems and dramas. The famous among them are *Abhijananashakuntalam*, *Ritusamhara* and *Meghadutam*. Besides being great creative compositions, they provide us with glimpses of the social and cultural life of the Guptas. For the history of Kashmir we have an important book called *Rajatarangini* written by Kalhana (12th AD). Biographies or charitias are very important non-religious texts for writing history. They were written by court poets in praise of their patron rulers. As there is a tendency among them to exaggerate the achievements of the patrons they have to be studied with caution. One such important text is *Harshacharita*, written by Banabhatta in praise of Harshavardhana.

The earliest south Indian literature is called Sangam literature. It was written in Tamil and is secular in nature. It was produced by poets who joined together in assemblies (Sangam) patronized by chiefs and kings during the first four centuries of the Christian era. The literature consists of short and long poems in praise of various heroes, written probably to be recited in the courts. It also constitutes the epics called *Silpadikaram* and *Manimekali*. The Sangam literature is our major source for the study of south Indian society, economy and polity during BC300–AD300. The descriptions given in the Sangam literatures are confirmed by archaeological finds and accounts of foreign travellers.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 1.1

1. Give the names of four Vedas?
(i) _____ (ii) _____ (iii) _____ (iv) _____
2. Which is the earliest text on Sanskrit Grammar?

3. What are Jatakas?

4. What is the language of the south Indian literature called Sangam Literature?

5. What are the Upanishads?





1.4 NON-LITERARY SOURCES

INSCRIPTIONS

Inscriptions are permanent writings engraved on hard surface such as stone, metal or terracotta. Study of inscriptions is called epigraphy. The earliest inscriptions were written on stone. They usually record the achievements, activities and ideas of those who got them inscribed. So we get inscriptions which glorify the exploits of kings or mention donations made by men and women for religious purposes. Those inscriptions which are composed by poets in praise of kings and patrons are known as *prashastis*. Some inscriptions carry dates. Others are dated on the basis of palaeography or style of writing, with a fair amount of precision. The earliest inscriptions were in Prakrit, a name for a language used by ordinary people. In later times, Tamil and Sanskrit were also used to write inscriptions.

The Mauryan king Ashoka was the first person to issue inscriptions. Most of his inscriptions are in Prakrit language written in the Brahmi script though, some in the northwest, were written in Kharosthi. The Aramaic and Greek scripts were used for inscriptions in Afghanistan so that the local people could understand their subject matter. The Brahmi script was first deciphered in 1837 by James Princep who was a civil servant during the British rule. Brahmi was written from left to right like Hindi while Kharosthi from right to left. Ashokan inscriptions help us greatly in understanding his religious and administrative policies. From the first century B.C. the kings started granting land to religious people. The Satavahans kings of the Deccan were the first ones to do so. These inscriptions record the concessions granted to the donee (the receiver of grant). Such inscriptions help us in finding out the religious and economic activities of the period. Some of these inscriptions are written on stone but most on copper plates. The copper plate charters were probably given as a record of the transaction to those who received the land and were granted concessions.

However, there are some limitations of inscriptional evidence. For example sometimes, letters are very faintly engraved, and thus reconstructions are uncertain. Also, inscriptions may be damaged or letters missing. Besides, it is not always easy to be sure about the exact meaning of the words used in inscriptions, some of which may be specific to a particular place or time.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 1.2

- What is the study of inscriptions called?

- What are *parashatis*?

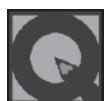
- Define palaeography?

- In which script are most of the inscriptions of Ashoka written?

1.5 COINS

The study of coins is known as numismatics. It not only includes visual elements such as script and images on the coins but also metallurgical analysis. Ancient coins were mostly minted in metals such as copper, silver, gold and lead. The earliest coins found in India contained certain symbols and were called punch-marked coins. They were made of silver and copper (c. sixth century BC onwards). The first coins to bear the names and images of rulers were issued by the Indo-Greeks, who established control over the northwestern part of the subcontinent (c. second century BC). The first gold coins were issued by the Kushanas in c. first century AD. Some of the most spectacular gold coins were issued by the Gupta rulers. Their earliest issues are remarkable for their purity of gold content.

Coin provide useful information regarding economic history as they were used as a medium of exchange. Some coins were issued by guilds or associations of the merchants and craftsmen with the permission of the rulers. This shows the influence of craft and commerce. Coins also portray kings and gods, and contain religious symbols, all to which throw light on the art and religion of the time.

**INTEXT QUESTION 1.3**

1. What is the study of the coins known as?

2. Name the metals used to make punch-marked coins?

3. Which dynasty issued the first gold coins in India?

1.6 ARCHAEOLOGY

The material remains of the past can be studied with the help of archaeology. Archaeology is a science that enables us to systematically dig the successive layers of old mounds and to form an idea of the material life of the people of the past on the basis of remains found there. Archaeology is very important to study prehistory i.e. the period before the invention of writing. History is basically based on written material. Although writing was known in India by 2500 BC in the Indus culture, its script has not so far been deciphered. Thus, though the Harappans knew how to write but the historians have not been able to read it. Their culture is placed in the period called proto-historic phase. The first script to be deciphered was Brahmi which was used in the Ashokan inscriptions and it belongs to the third century BC.

Excavations have brought to light the tools of early humans in India going as back as seven lakh years. The excavated sites belonging to the Harappan period show the layout of the settlements and the form of the houses in which people lived, the type of pottery, tools and implements they used and the kind of cereals they consumed. In south India some people were buried along with their tools, weapons, pottery and other belongings under big and heavy stones. These graves are known as megaliths. By digging them we learn about the life of people who lived in the Deccan and south India before the third century BC.



The dates of remains found in excavations are fixed by various methods. The most important of them is the Radiocarbon or Carbon 14 (C14) dating method. Carbon 14 is a radioactive carbon present in all living objects. It decays, like all radioactive substances, at a uniform rate when the object is dead. By measuring the loss of C14 content in an ancient object (wood or bone) its age can be determined.

The history of climate and vegetation is known through an examination of plant residues, and especially through pollen analysis. On this basis it is suggested that agriculture was practised in Kashmir and Rajasthan around 7000–6000 BC. The nature and components of metal artefacts can also be analysed scientifically, and consequently the mines from which metals were obtained are located and stages in the development of metal technology identified. The geological studies provide an idea of the history of soil, rocks etc, where prehistoric man lived. Human history cannot be understood without an idea of the continuing interaction between soils, plants and animal, on one hand, and humans, on the other. Taken together with archaeological remains, geological and biological studies act as important sources for the reconstruction and development of human history.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 1.4**

1. Define Archaeology?

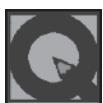
2. What is the use of C14 dating?

1.7 ACCOUNT OF FOREIGN TRAVELLERS

Indigenous literature can be supplemented by foreign accounts. To India came Greek, Roman and Chinese visitors, either as ambassadors or travellers or to seek religious knowledge from time to time. They have left behind an account of the things they saw. To the court of Chandragupta Maurya came a Greek Ambassador called Megasthenes who wrote *Indika*. Its original text is lost but parts of it have been preserved in fragments quoted by subsequent Greek writers. When read together, these fragments, furnish valuable information not only about the administration but also social classes and economic activities of the Mauryan period.

Greek and Roman accounts of the first and second centuries mention many Indian ports and commodities of trade between India and the Roman Empire. The *Periplus* of the *Erythrean Sea* and Ptolemy's *Geography*, both written in Greek, provide valuable data in this regard.

Of the Chinese travelers, mention may be made of Fa-hsien and Hsuan Tsang. Both of them were Buddhist and came to this country mainly to visit the Buddhist shrines and to study Buddhism. Fa-hsien who came to India in the fifth century AD describes the conditions in India in the age of Guptas whereas Hsuan Tsang presents a similar account of India in the seventh century during the time of king Harshavardhan. Hsuan Tsang also describes in detail the glory of Nalanda University (Bihar) during his times.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 1.5**

1. Who wrote the *Indika*?

2. Name the Chinese travelers who came to India?

3. Which Chinese traveller refers to the glory of Nalanda University?

Notes**1.8 CHANGING NOTIONS OF HISTORY**

It was suggested, particularly by western scholars that ancient Indians had no sense of writing history. But it is not true. Actually, Indian's sense of writing history was different from that of the Westerners. The people from the West recorded events in chronological order while the ancient Indians wrote in a different manner. It can be seen in the texts called the *Puranas* where four different ages called Krita, Treita, Dvapara and Kali are mentioned. And in each age we get detailed lists of the rulers and dynasties. Besides, a large number of inscriptions have been discovered. These give genealogies of kings of various dynasties and also refer to their achievements. It shows that Indians had the basic knowledge of time (period) and space where events were taking place.

Modern research in ancient India history began in 1765 when East India Company took control of Bengal and Bihar. In order to administer the Hindu law, Manu Smriti the ancient Indian text on law was translated into English in 1776. These initial efforts of the British to understand ancient laws and customs culminated in the establishment of Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784. Under its aegis and that of several other such societies Hindu religious and classical texts were translated into English. The greatest impetus to Indological studies was given by Max Mueller, a German born scholar. Soon the British realized that they needed an intense knowledge of Indian scriptures and social systems to rule them better. Even the Christian missionaries felt the need to know more about Indian laws and customs in order to convert them and help the British strengthen their rule. While translating the texts, western scholars wrote about Indian unwillingness to change and they being accustomed to despotic rule.

In 1904, Vincent A Smith wrote *Early History of India*. It was the first systematic history of ancient India. In this book his approach to history was pro *British* and he tried to justify the British rule in India. It served as good propaganda material for the perpetuation of despotic British rule.

The Indian scholars, especially those who had received Western education, were upset about the way the British were presenting India history to their advantage. Guided by the Nationalist ideas some of them took upon themselves the task of rewriting history to show to the world the true glory of Indian culture. Two notable nationalist historians were R.G. Bhandarkar (1837–1925) and V.K. Rajwade (1869–1926) who reconstructed social and political history with the help of various sources. While doing so they also attacked some of the social evils like child marriage and caste

MODULE - 1

Ancient India



Notes

Understanding Indian History

system and promoted widow remarriage. The contribution of P.V. Kane (1880–1972) is remarkable. He wrote a monumental work entitled *History of Dharmashastra*. It highlights the chief elements of ancient Indian society.

These Indian scholars carefully studied ancient Indian texts on polity to demonstrate that ancient Indians had a keen sense of administration. D.R. Bhandarkar (1875–1950), an epigraphist, published books on ancient Indian political institutions. H.C. Raychaudhuri (1892–1957) reconstructed the history of ancient India and while doing so criticized V.A. Smith at many points. A stronger element appears in the writings of R.C. Majumdar (1888–1980) who edited a multi-volume *History and Culture of Indian People*. Until 1960, Indian scholars inspired by the idea of nationalism glorified the histories of their respective regions and of India as such. The merit of exploding the myth of despotism goes to K.P. Jayaswal (1881–1937). He wrote about the existence of Indian republics and self-government in ancient India.

After independence, a new trend in history writing took over. There was a shift towards the writing of non-political history with greater emphasis on society and economy. The Wonder *that was India* was one such pioneering work written by A.L. Basham (1914–1986). A further shift is evident in D.D. Kosambi's (1907 – 1966) book *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*. His treatment follows a socio-economic aspect of ancient Indian history. After him a large number of historians followed the trend and focused on social, economic and cultural history. Their main stress was on means of production and the social and economic relationship among different groups of people.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 1.6

1. Describe the trend that developed in history writing after independence.

1.9 THEMES IN INDIAN HISTORY

For an overall knowledge of the past, students are to be made aware of various aspects of society, called THEMES. These themes enable us to learn about developments in different spheres – social, economic, religious, political and cultural. The developments in these spheres are so much interlinked that they often break the boundaries between them, for example when the pastoral society of the early Vedic Age got transformed into settled agricultural society in the later Vedic Age, the political system changed as a consequence. The king who was earlier known as Gopati (lord of cattle) in pastoral society became Bhupati (lord of land) with the development of agricultural economy. And with that the wars began to be fought for acquiring more land instead of cows. The kings gradually became powerful and kingship hereditary. So, we notice that changes in different spheres are related to each other as they often influence major developments. In this course material you will learn about the development in the fields of art, architecture, caste system, science and economy, technology and also about the rise and growth of various religious sects and rituals.

**TERMINAL QUESTIONS**

1. Write a short note on secular literature of Ancient India
2. Write five sentences on coins as a source material for reconstructing history?
3. How does archaeology help us in understanding the past?

**ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****1.1**

1. Rig, Sama, Yajur, Atharva
2. Ashtadhyay
3. They contain stories of the previous lives of Gautama the Buddha
4. Tamil
5. Upanishads are the last part of the Vedas. They discuss the philosophy of atma and paramatma.

1.2

1. Epigraphy
2. Inscriptions composed by poets in praise of kings and other patrons
3. Style of writing
4. Brahmi

1.3

1. Numismatics
2. Silver and Copper
3. Kushanas

1.4

1. Science of digging to understand the past.
2. It helps in dating the bones or wood found in archaeological excavations

1.5

1. Megasthenes
2. Fa-hsien, Hsuan Tsang
3. Hsuan Tsang

1.6

1. Refer para 6 section 1.9

HINTS TO TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Refer 1.3
2. Refer 1.5
3. Refer 1.6

MODULE - 1

Ancient India



Notes

2

THE GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING AND PRE-HISTORIC CULTURES OF INDIA

The history of any country or region cannot be understood without some knowledge of its geography. The history of the people is greatly conditioned by the geography and environment of the region in which they live. The physical geography and environmental conditions of a region include climate, soil types, water resources and other topographical features. These determine the settlement pattern, population spread, food products, human behaviour and dietary habits of a region. The Indian subcontinent is gifted with different regions with their distinct geographical features which have greatly affected the course of its history.

Geographically speaking the Indian subcontinent in ancient times included the present day India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Pakistan. On the basis of geographical diversities the subcontinent can be broadly divided into the following main regions. These are:

- (i) The Himalayas
- (ii) The River Plains of North India
- (iii) The Peninsular India



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- explain the physical divisions of Indian subcontinent;
- recognize the distinct features of each region;
- understand why some geographical areas are more important than the others;
- define the term environment;
- establish the relationship between geographical features and the historical developments in different regions;
- define the terms prehistory, prehistoric cultures, and microliths;
- distinguish between the lower, middle and upper Palaeolithic age on the basis of the tools used;
- explain the Mesolithic age as a phase of transition on the basis of climate and the

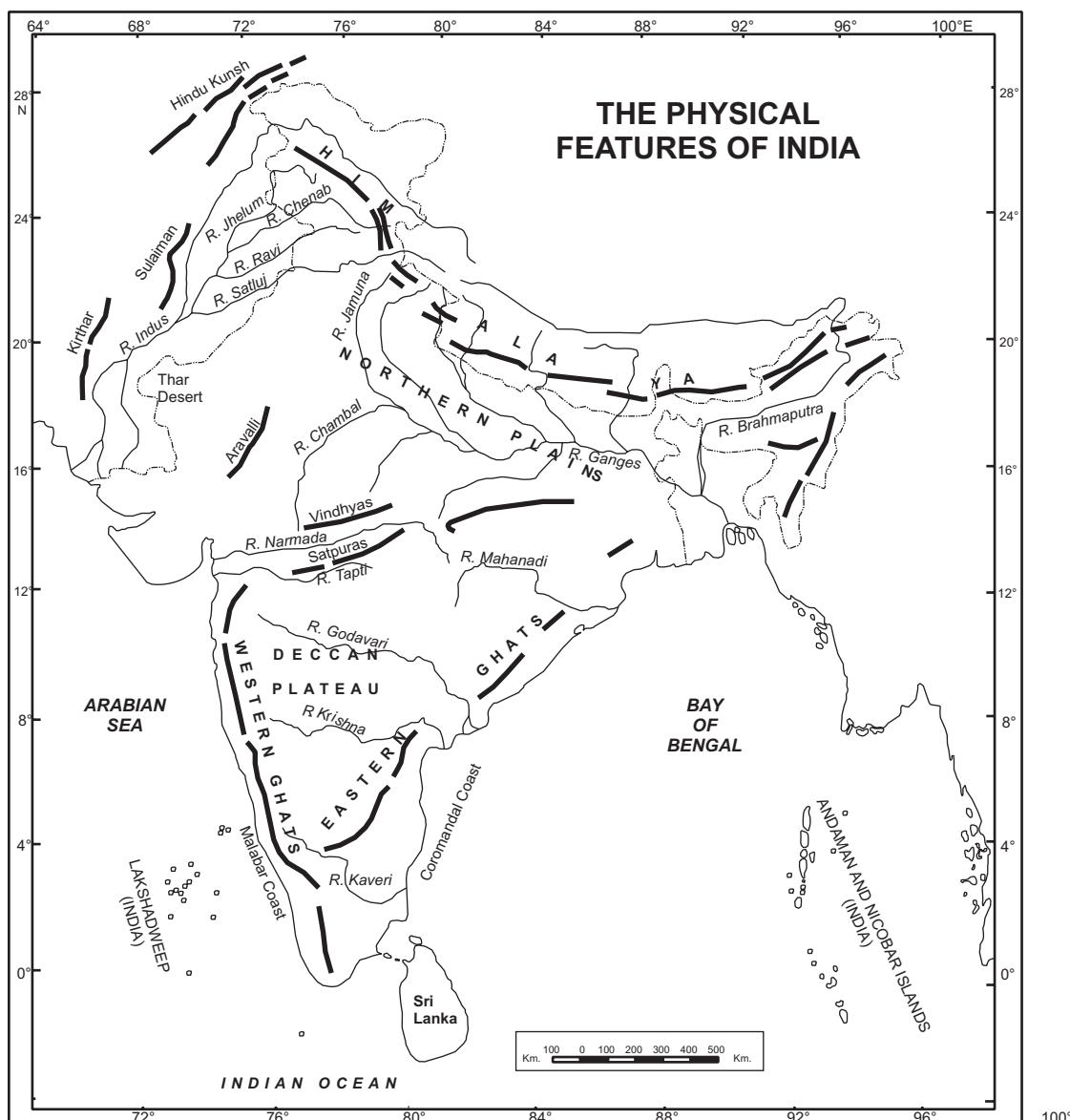
tools used;

- explain the Neolithic age and its chief characteristics;
- differentiate between Palaeolithic and Neolithic periods and
- learn about the Prehistoric Art.

Notes

2.1 THE HIMALAYAS

The Himalayas are the world's largest and the highest mountain ranges. These are approximately 2,400 kilometers long. (Map 2.1). These ranges have not only checked invasions but have also protected us from the cold winds coming from north. They also stop the monsoon winds from the seas which results in rainfall in the northern plains. However, there are some mountain passes which, though difficult, have



Map 2.1 The Great Northern Mountains



The Geographical Setting and pre-historic

provided access to determined invaders, traders, missionaries. These have helped in developing cultural contacts with Central Asia, China and Tibet in ancient times.

In the north-western direction the broken Himalayan ranges contain the major routes linking the Indian plains with Iran and Central Asia through Afghanistan. These pass through the Gomal, Bolan and Khyber passes. The Greeks, Shakas, Kushanas, Hunas and other foreign tribes reached India following these routes. Likewise, Buddhism and other Indian elements were carried out to Afghanistan and Central Asia through these mountain passes.

2.2 THE RIVER PLAINS OF NORTH INDIA

The Himalayas also provide India with three river systems dominated by the Indus, the Ganges and the Brahmaputra. These rivers made their respective regions fertile and attracted both settlers and invaders.

The Indus plains include the regions of Punjab and Sind. Irrigated by the tributaries of the river Indus, they form a vast fertile plain which have made the region the ‘bread-basket’ of the subcontinent. It is called so because this region is very important for wheat cultivation. The strategic location and richness of the Punjab region has attracted foreign invaders since ancient past. The Sind region includes the lower Indus Valley and the delta. It is the Indus plains which witnessed the development of an urbanized culture called the Harappan culture for the first time in the subcontinent. (see lesson 3)

The Gangetic basin receives more rainfall and is more humid than the Indus region. The Gangetic plains is divided into three sub-regions: Upper, Middle and Lower. The Upper plains of the river Ganges constitute the western and southern parts of Uttar Pradesh. This region has seen active cultural developments since the ancient period. This was inhabited by the Aryans in the Later Vedic period, during which they practised agriculture. The Middle Gangetic plains, which is more fertile and has more rainfall, include eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. It is the region where *mahajanpadas* (territorial states) like Kosala, Kasi and Magadha were established in the 6th century BC. The two main religions of India, Jainism and Buddhism, also took their birth here.

The lower Gangetic plains constitute the Bengal region. Its northern part is irrigated by the Brahmaputra. The high rainfall in this region created dense forest and marshy land which made it difficult for the development of settlements in the beginning. But its coastal areas served as important channels of communication with other regions of the subcontinent and also with the South-east Asian countries. Tamralipti or Tamluk was an important seaport of this region which played a significant role in commercial activities.

The Eastern India normally refers to the coastal plains formed by the river Mahanadi and other streams. The fertile coastal plains of this region helped in the development of agriculture, society and culture. This came into contact with the Gangetic culture from the time of the Nandas and the Mauryas (4th century BC). Around AD 1000 Orissa began to develop her distinct linguistic and cultural identity.

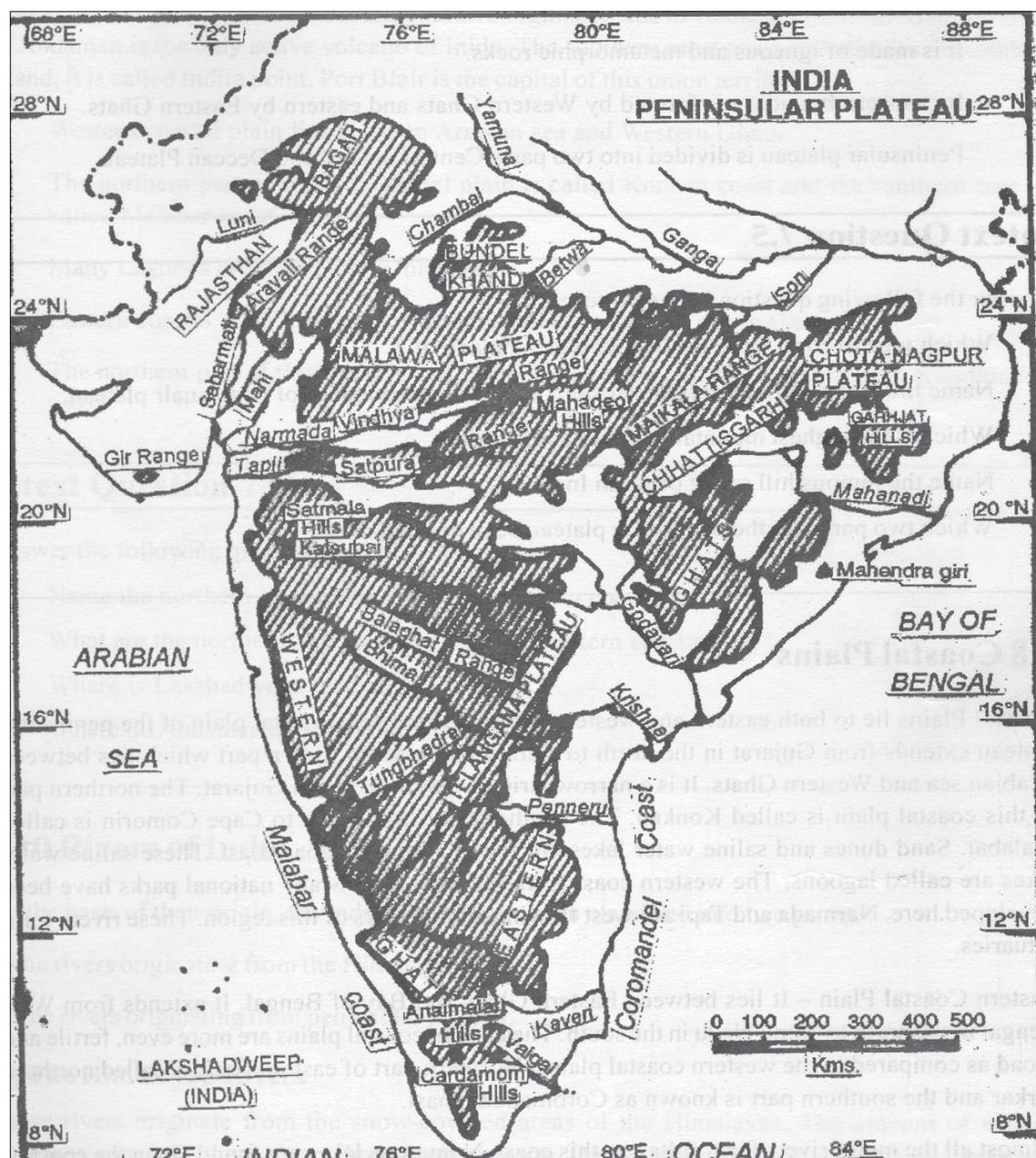
The Western India refers to the regions of the modern states of Rajasthan and Gujarat. It is known for its black soil which is good for cotton cultivation. The Thar desert of Rajasthan, surrounded by the semi-arid regions, was not as fertile as the Gangetic plains. As a result, this region was not much favourable for cultivation. However, later in the 8th century AD, with the growth of irrigation mechanism in the form of Persian

wheel (*rehat*), many settlements emerged here. Rajasthan is also the home of the Rajput clans. In Gujarat the fertile plains of the rivers Sabarmati, Mahi, Narmada and Tapti brought prosperity. A very long coastal line too helped Gujarat to develop contacts with other countries through its ports. The most important sea port of this region has been Brigukaccha or Bharuch (Broach).

Notes

2.3 THE PENINSULAR INDIA

Peninsular India includes the Deccan plateau and the coastal plains of South India (Map 2.2). The plateau is situated to the south of the Vindhya mountains. It is divided into three major regions which largely correspond to the modern states of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. The northern Deccan plateau comprises of a part of Maharashtra. A number of Chalcolithic sites inhabited by people using copper and stone tools have been found in this region. Karnataka includes the southwestern



Map 2.2 Peninsular India



The Geographical Setting and pre-historic

Deccan. This region with the availability of water and other resources had been more suitable for human settlements than the northern part. The Raichur doab for its rice cultivation has been known as the ‘rice-bowl’ of South India. It has been the bone of contention between different kingdoms. These regions were inhabited right from the prehistoric times.

The plateau region also has hilly terrains in the Western and Eastern Ghats. The Western Ghats rise sharply close to the western coast, tapering eastwards into the plateau. They are cut by a series of passes at Junnar, Kanheri and Karle. These served as trade routes connecting the ports along the west coast. At the southern end of the Western Ghats is the Palghat pass which linked the west coast to the Kaveri valley and played an important role in the Indo-Roman trade in ancient period. The Eastern Ghats merge more gradually into the plateau and the coastal plain.

The coastal plains constitute the states of Tamil Nadu in east and Kerala on west. In Tamil Nadu the rivers are seasonal. As a result, the people of this region have depended more on the tank irrigation since the early times. However, Kaveri delta has been the major region of human attraction. It provided opportunity for the cultivation of rice and witnessed the flourishing of the Sangam culture in the early historical period. The ports such as Arikamedu and Kaveripattinam gave impetus to the Indo-Roman Trade in early centuries of Christian era. The Tamil region evolved a distinct linguistic and cultural identity of its own.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 2.1

1. Name the important mountain passes in the north-western part of the Indian subcontinent.

2. Who inhabited the upper plains of the river Ganges during the later Vedic period.

3. What were the two important religions which took birth in the middle Gangetic plains.

4. In which state has tank irrigation been popular since the ancient period.

5. The Kaveri delta is famous for which crop?

6. Name any two foreign tribes that reached India through north-western mountain passes in ancient times.

7. Which region is known as the ‘breadbasket’ of the subcontinent?

2.4 INFLUENCE OF ENVIRONMENT

The settlement of people in any region is very much dependent on its environmental conditions. Environment is taken as the surroundings or conditions in which various species (men, animals and plants) exist and function. The environment mainly comprises of elements such as climate, landscape, rivers, species of plants and animals (flora and fauna), etc. Now, let us see how environment has influenced the life of people and their history since ancient past.

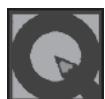
A semi-arid region is advantageous to people for settlement purpose. For example, the Sind region having this type of climate in ancient period, resulted in the flourishing Harappan civilization. It also helped the growth of urban settlements. Similarly, the rise of Pataliputra and the importance of Magadha in Bihar can also be explained in relation to its physical features and environment. Pataliputra was surrounded by the rivers namely the Ganges, Son and Gandak which provided natural defence as well as internal communication. Moreover, the fertile Indo-Gangetic plains helped in the maintenance of a strong population base.

The environmental conditions also determine the resource potential of a region. The forested region can be a rich source of timber, whereas the coastal regions yield the sea products. The hilly regions with rocks containing the mineral ores can lead to the development of metallurgy. The extraction of metals and their use for tools and other purposes may add to the standard of living. For example, Magadha was located in proximity to the iron ore mines and sources of stone and timber in the region of Chhotanagpur plateau. This strengthened the position of Magadha.

The subsistence pattern is also influenced by the environmental conditions. The regions covered by the river plains have alluvial soil. The fertility of soil helps in surplus production. The type of soil also determines the crop pattern. For example, black soil is good for growing cotton. The surplus production results in exchange activities which develop into trade on a larger scale.

An area gifted with navigable rivers has well developed trade and communication networks. Our ancient literature like the *Jatakas* and other texts, mention many riverine routes in ancient India. Similarly, the coastal routes promote the long distance trade with different countries. The mountain passes are also very important in this context. For example, the Palghat pass linked the east and west coasts and thus helped in the growth of Indo-Roman trade in ancient times.

Thus, we find that the physical features and environment help us to unfold the historical processes of a region. The diversity of Indian subcontinent presents an uneven pattern of historical developments. The areas which were rich became important while those with less resources lagged behind. It is important to observe that the settlement pattern and mode of life depend on the local resource utilization which in turn is dependent on the technological developments in that region.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 2.2**

1. Name the rivers which provided a natural defence to Pataliputra (modern Patna).

2. Which region supplied iron ore and timber to Magadha?





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3. Which type of soil is good for growing cotton? (Black / Red / Sandy).

4. Which famous mountain pass linked the east and west coasts of India?

2.5 PREHISTORIC CULTURES

Prehistoric period is that period of our ancient past for which we do not have written records. Therefore our knowledge of the cultures, which developed in this period, is based only on the materials found in the archaeological excavations. The earliest man living during this period made tools and implements of stone found in his surroundings. These tools helped him to hunt and gather food in order to satisfy his hunger. Since the earliest tools used by humans were made of stones, this phase of human development is known as the Stone Age. In this lesson we shall trace the evolution of prehistoric man from a hunter and food-gatherer to a food producer. This change did not take place all of a sudden and took several hundred thousand years. On the basis of the different type of tools and techniques the stages of human development in prehistoric period are described as the Palaeolithic or Old Stone Age, the Mesolithic or Middle Stone Age, and the Neolithic or New Stone Age.

2.6 THE PALAEOLITHIC CULTURES

The term Palaeolithic is derived from the Greek word ‘*palaeo*’, which means old and ‘*lithic*’ meaning stone. Therefore, the term Palaeolithic age refers to the old stone age. The archaeologists have dated this culture to the Pleistocene period about two million years ago. The Pleistocene period is the geological period of the age when the earth’s surface was covered with ice, and weather was so cold that human or plant life could not survive. But in the tropical region, where ice melted, the earliest species of men could exist.

The people lived near the hillocks and used only stone tools for hunting and their protection. However, the choice of raw material used for tool-making varied from region to region and depended upon its availability. The material used was quartzite available in hilly areas of different regions, basalt found in Maharashtra region and limestone in Karnataka region. On the basis of the nature of progress made in tool types and techniques the Palaeolithic cultures have been divided into three phases. These are – (i) Lower or Early Palaeolithic, (ii) Middle Palaeolithic, (iii) Upper or Late Palaeolithic. These phases covered a long period ranging broadly from 5,00,000 to 10,000 B.C.

(a) Tools of the Palaeolithic Period

The main tools of lower Palaeolithic phase were handaxes, cleavers and choppers. (Fig 2.1) These are called chopping tools. These were rough and heavy and were made by chipping the sides of the stones. Gradually, sharper and less heavy tools came to be made.

The flake tools or chipped pieces were the chief tools during the middle Palaeolithic period. (Fig 2.2) The tools of the upper Palaeolithic period primarily consisted of burins and scrapers. (Fig 2.3)

Let us now discuss in brief the chief features and uses of some of the tools mentioned above. In handaxes, the butt end is broader and the working edge is narrow. These

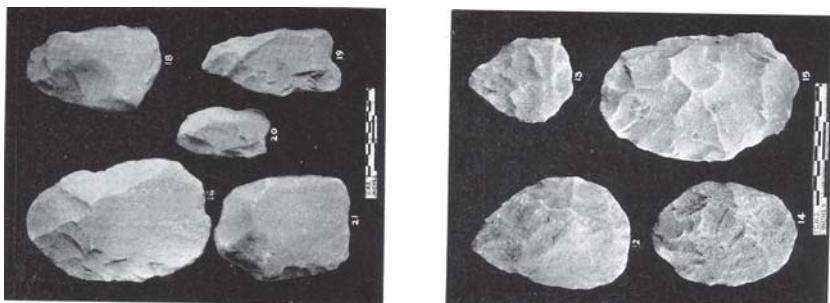


Fig 2.1 Chopping Tools & Hand Axes of Lower Paleolithic Age

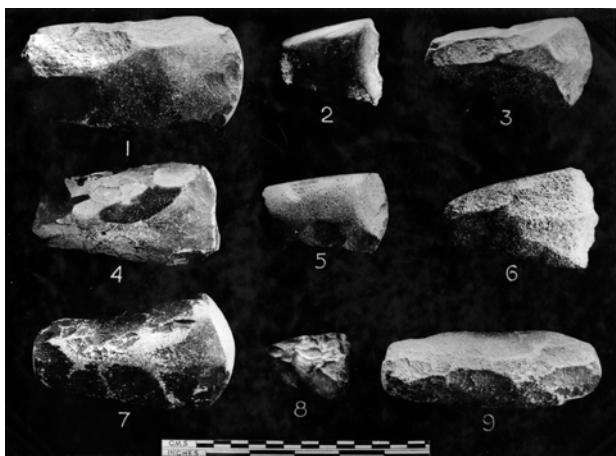


Fig 2.2 Chopping Tools & Hand Axes of Lower Paleolithic Age



Fig 2.3 Chopping Tools & Hand Axes of Lower Paleolithic Age

were used for cutting the trees or digging the roots. The cleavers had a bifaced edge. These were meant for splitting objects like the trunks of trees. The choppers were the massive core tools with a unifacial working edge, and were used for chopping purposes. The burins were like flakes or blades. These were used for engraving on soft stones, bones or rocks. The scrapers were also made of flakes. These tools served the purpose of obtaining barks of trees and skins of animals.

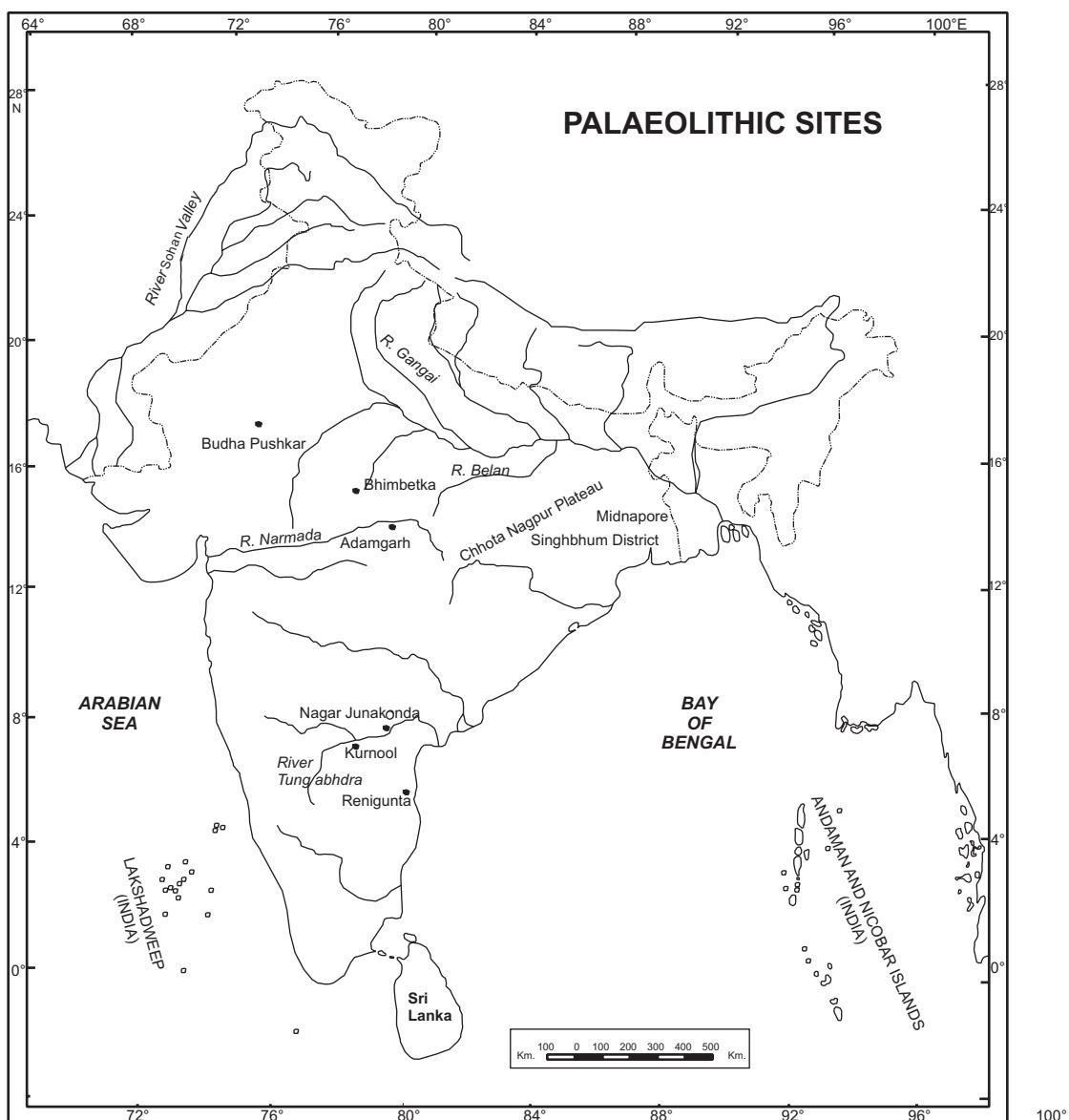




(b) Geographical Distribution of the Palaeolithic Sites

The geographical distribution of the Palaeolithic sites suggests that this culture was spread throughout the length and breadth of the Indian subcontinent. (Map 2.3) In the north, Kashmir Valley and the Sohan Valley in Rawalpindi (now in Pakistan) have yielded Palaeolithic tools. In Rajasthan, Palaeolithic tools were found at the sites along the river Luni. In Western India, the Palaeolithic tools were also discovered from the sites of the rivers Sabarmati, Mahi and their tributaries in Gujarat. In Maharashtra, the most important sites are Nevasa on a tributary of Godavari and Patne in the Tapti river system. In Madhya Pradesh, the rock shelters at Bhimbetka (near Bhopal) and Adamgarh in the district Hoshangabad have yielded tools from the Palaeolithic to the Mesolithic period.

In Uttar Pradesh, the Belan Valley (the region broadly from Allahabad to Varanasi) is the most prominent site. It shows human occupation of the area continuously from the Palaeolithic period.



Map 2.3 Paleolithic Sites

Towards the east, Assam and neighbouring areas including Meghalaya (Garo Hills) have yielded prehistoric artifacts. Palaeolithic tools have also been found at various sites in Bengal, Orissa and Bihar. In Peninsular India, Palaeolithic tools have been reported from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. In Tamil Nadu, an important site is Attirampakkam in Chingleput region. The subsistence of the Palaeolithic cultures was based mainly on hunting animals and gathering fruits and roots. In other words, the people were primarily hunters and gatherers with no settled habitation.

On the basis of above discussion, we can conclude that the Palaeolithic cultures of the prehistoric period were wide spread throughout the Indian subcontinent. The study of the tools indicates a gradual progress in tool technology which must have led to better availability of resources.

(b) Subsistence Pattern

The Palaeolithic people practised hunting and food-gathering for their subsistence. They made simple stone tools for hunting, cutting, digging and other purposes. They led a nomadic life and migrated to places where plant and animal resources along with water were easily available.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 2.3

1. Which were the two main occupations of man in Palaeolithic age?

2. What were the various purposes for which prehistoric man made tools?

3. Name the main tools of the Lower Palaeolithic age:
(a) _____ (b) _____ (c) _____

2.7 THE MESOLITHIC CULTURES

The term Mesolithic is the combination of two words, *meso* and *lithic*. In Greek ‘*meso*’ means the middle and ‘*lithic*’ means stone. Hence, the Mesolithic stage of prehistory is also known as the Middle Stone Age. It was the transitional phase between the Palaeolithic and the Neolithic Ages. On the basis of archaeological discoveries, the beginning of the Mesolithic Age in Indian subcontinent is dated to around 10,000 BC.

This period witnessed the rise in temperature, as a result of which the climate became warm. These changes further resulted in melting of ice of the earlier period and brought about changes in flora and fauna. Though man was still in hunting-gathering stage, he now started fishing and some domestication of animals. The main tools they used are called the microliths or small stone tools. The Rock paintings found at Bhimbetka (near Bhopal) belonging to the period indicate the artistic taste of the people.

(a) Tools of the Mesolithic Period

The microliths used during the mesolithic period were very small in size varying in lengths from 1 to 8 centimeters and were largely made out of chipped or flaked pieces. (Fig 2.4) Some of these tools have geometric forms such as triangles, lunates and trapezes. These tools could be tied or fixed in other objects to form an arrow or a spear.



(b) Geographical Distribution of the Mesolithic Sites

The distribution of Mesolithic sites indicates that the Mesolithic cultures covered almost the entire India from north to south and east to west. Important sites of this culture are Langhnaj (District Mehsana) in Gujarat; Bhimbetka (near Bhopal) in Madhya Pradesh; Chopani Mando (near Allahabad in Belan Valley) in Uttar Pradesh; Birbhanpur (District Burdwan) in West Bengal; Sanganakallu (District Bellary) in Karnataka; and Tuticorin in southern Tamil Nadu.

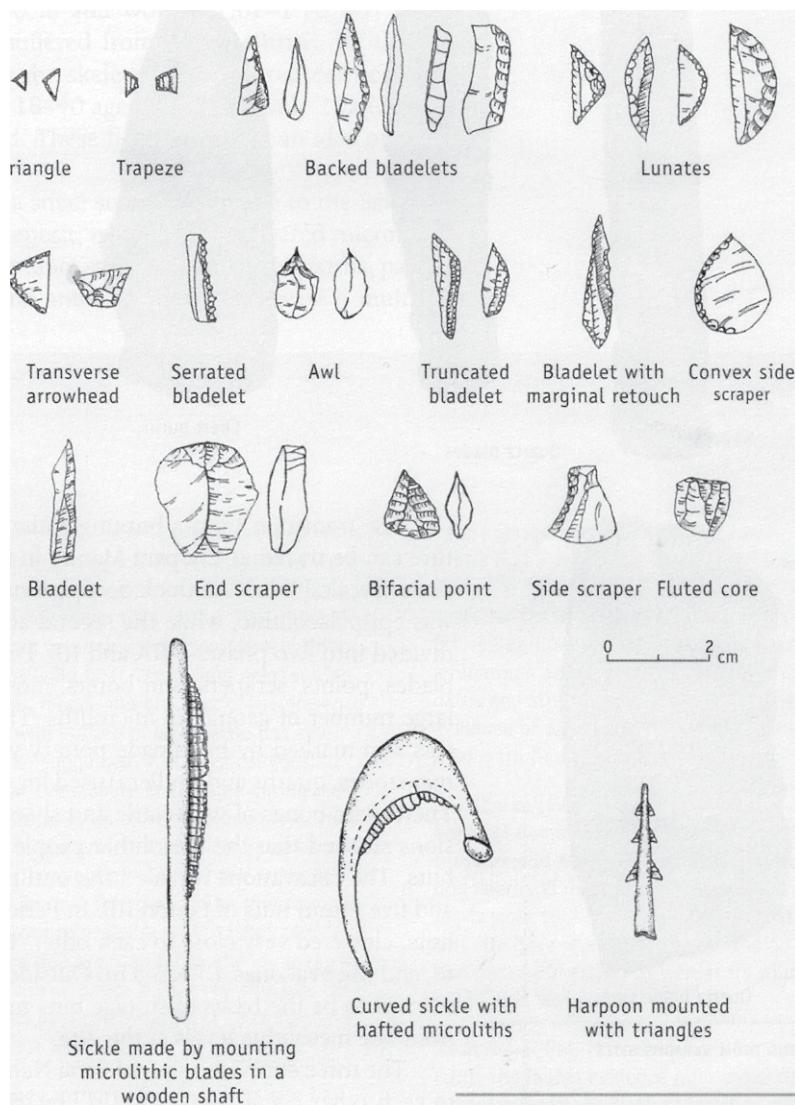


Fig 2.4 Tools of the Mesolithic Age

(c) Subsistence Pattern

The Mesolithic people still subsisted on hunting and gathering, but now there was a shift in the pattern of hunting from the big animals in the Palaeolithic period to the smaller animals which could be attacked with the help of bows and arrows. In addition to this, fishing and fowling also became important. The faunal remains of cattle, sheep, goat, buffalo, pig, rat, bison, hippo, dog, fox, lizard, tortoise and fish etc. have been found from different Mesolithic sites.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 2.4**

1. What name has been given to the tools of the Mesolithic Age?
-

2. Name a few tools made during the Mesolithic period?
-

3. Name any two sites of the Mesolithic period?
-

2.8 THE NEOLITHIC CULTURES AND THE ADVENT OF FOOD PRODUCTION

The last phase of prehistory is termed as Neolithic. The term Neolithic is derived from Greek ‘*neo*’ which means new, and ‘*lithic*’ meaning stone. Thus, the term ‘neolithic Age’ refers to the ‘New Stone Age’ of human culture. In Indian subcontinent it is dated back to around 8000 BC. The term ‘Neolithic’ was coined by John Lubbock. The chief characteristic of this age was the new type of ground and polished stone tools. This period also marked the beginning of cultivation of plants and the domestication of animals. It led to the beginning of settled life and the growth of village settlements. The Neolithic culture had following characteristics:

- (i) Beginning of agricultural activities
- (ii) Domestication of animals
- (iii) Grinding and polishing of stone tools having sharper edges
- (iv) Use of pottery

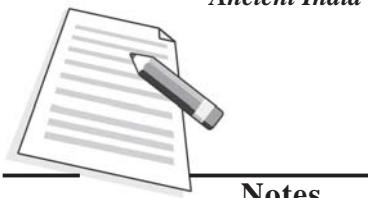
(a) Meaning of the ‘Neolithic Revolution’

Some times this period is termed as the ‘Neolithic Revolution’ on the basis of important changes in man’s socio-economic life. The use of the sharp and polished neolithic tools made it easier to cultivate the soil. It was accompanied by the practice of domestication of animals. These changes in turn resulted in the emergence of settled agricultural communities. The Neolithic people also produced pottery for the purpose of storing grains. As the redevelopment in the Neolithic phase greatly affected the human life, some scholars have used the term “the Neolithic Revolution” to signify those changes. But most of the scholars believe that these changes though significant, should be viewed in the context of earlier progress during Paleolithic and Mesolithic ages, and thus, should be considered as ‘evolution’ rather than ‘revolution’.

(b) Tools of the Neolithic Period

The Neolithic tools consist of the ground tools having smooth surfaces, and well-rounded and symmetrical shapes. The grinding made the tools sharper, polished and more effective than those in the earlier period. (Fig. 2.5) The ground stone tools of the Neolithic period included different types of axes called ‘celt’. Besides the stone tools, the sites of this period have also yielded various types of bone objects such as needles, scrapers, borers, arrowheads, pendants, bangles and earrings. (Fig 2.6)

Notes



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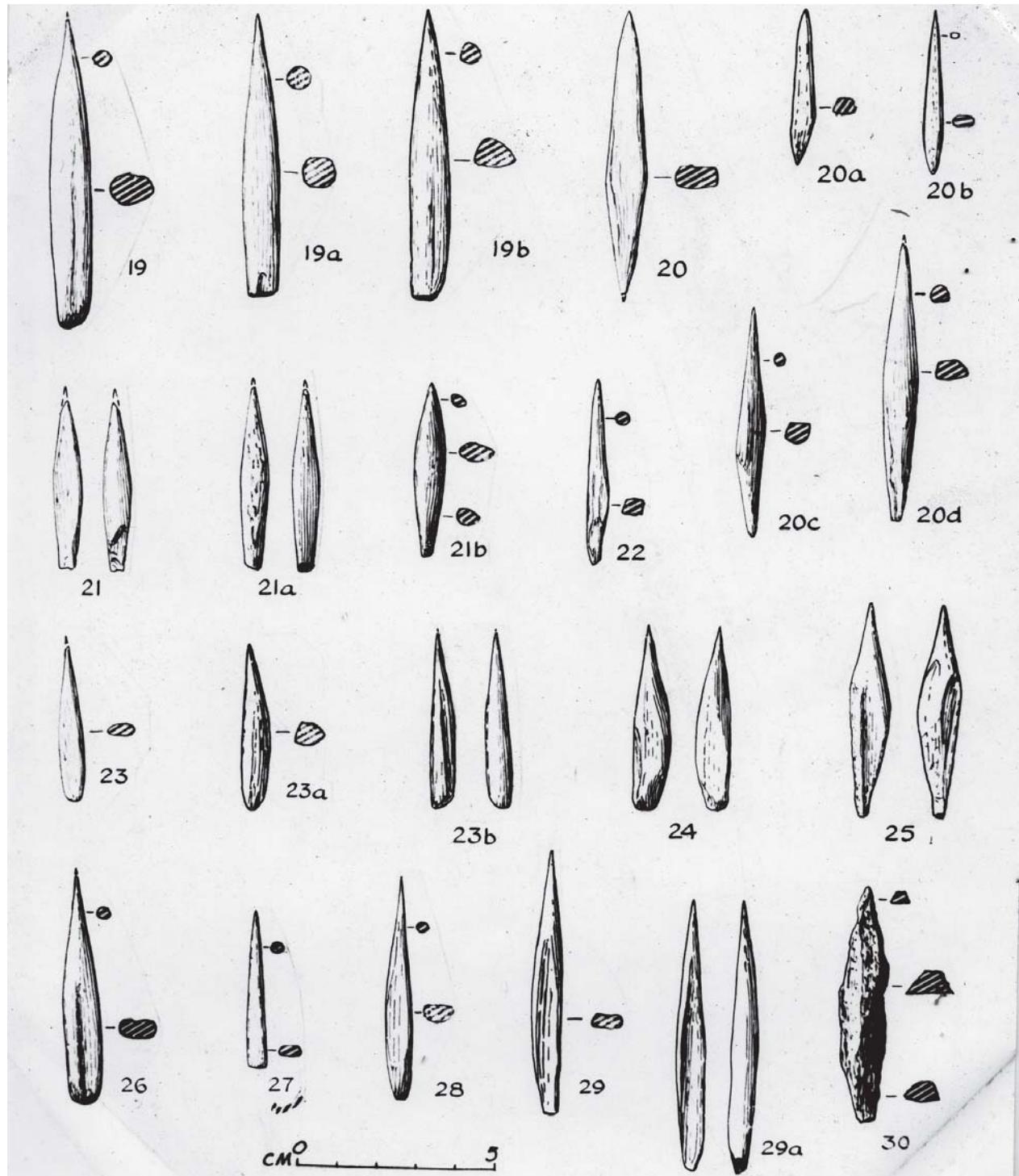


Fig 2.5 Neolithic Age tools



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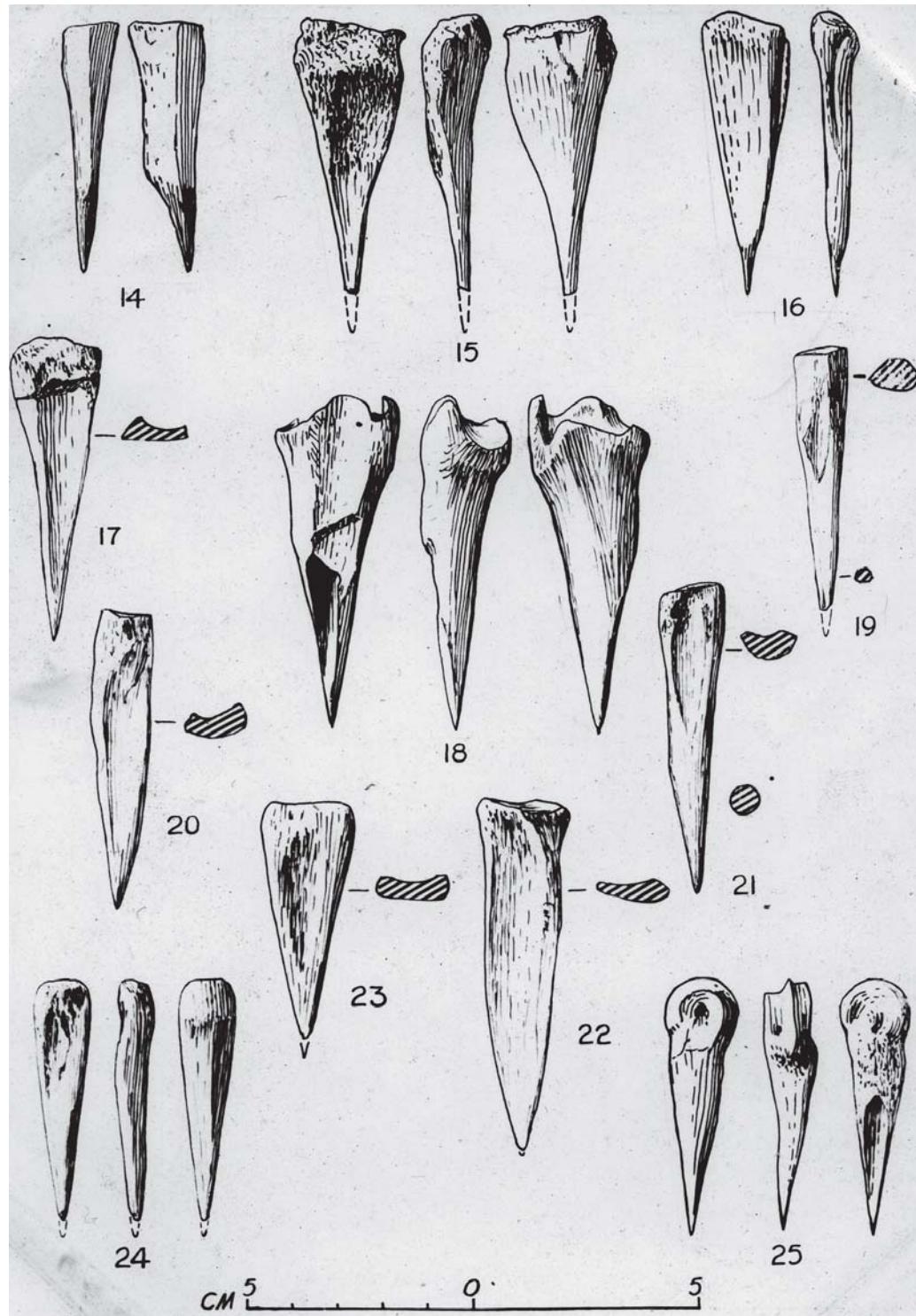
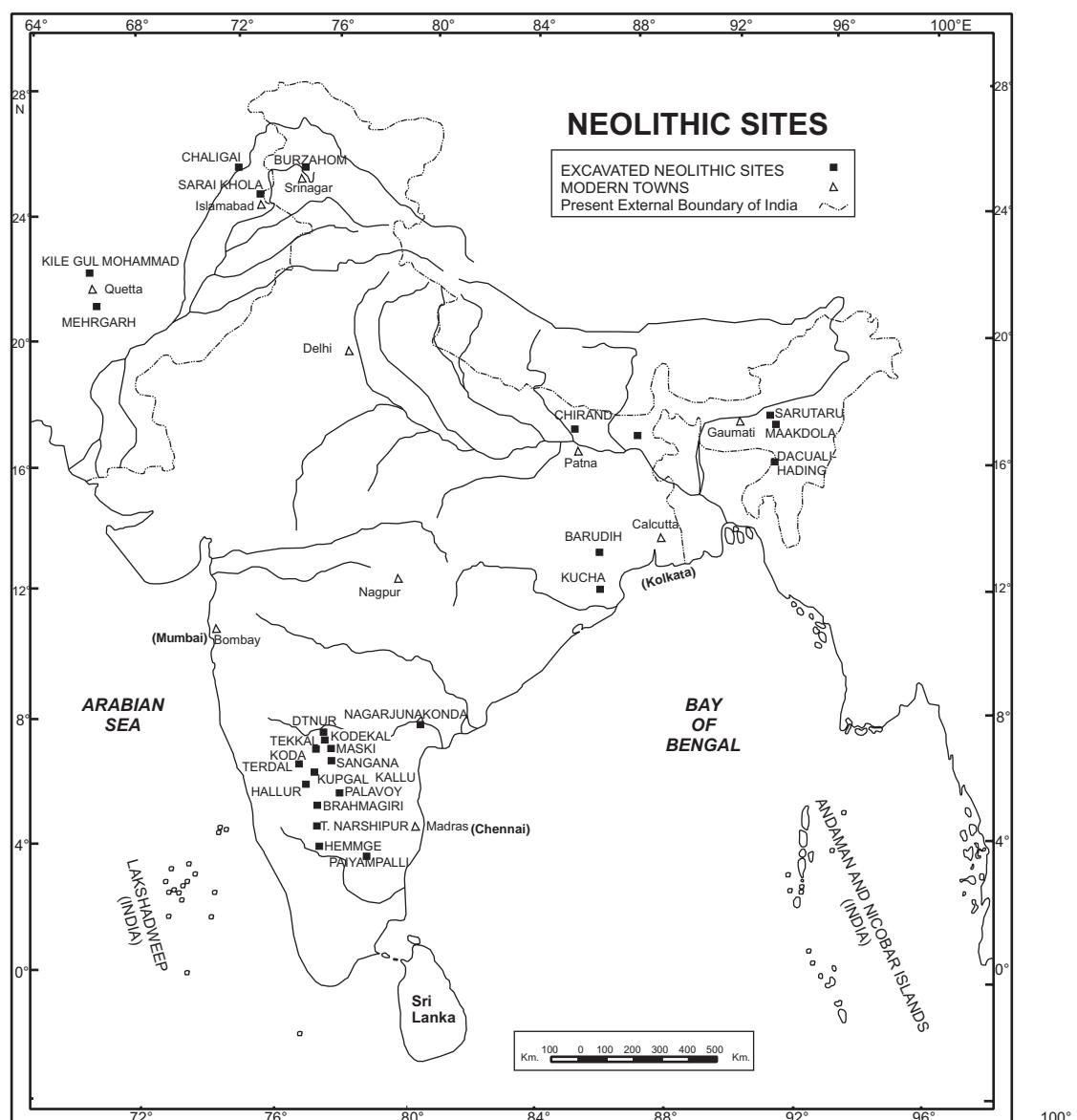


Fig 2.6 Neolithic Bone tools from Burzahom



Burzahom and Gufkral. The dwelling pits, either circular or rectangular, at these sites form an important feature of Neolithic culture. The Belan Valley along the edge of Vindhyan plateau near Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh also has many Neolithic sites such as Koldihwa and Mahagara. The Neolithic tools (both stone and bone), pottery, other artefacts, floral and faunal remains have been found from these sites. In Bihar and mid-Gangetic Valley region Chirand is the most popular Neolithic site. Several Neolithic sites are present covering the hills of Assam, Meghalaya and Nagaland. The tools like Neolithic celts, small ground axes alongwith the remains of pottery have been found from this area. In South India the Neolithic settlements were discovered along the rivers Bhima, Krishna, Tungabhadra and Kaveri. Some important sites are Sanganakallu, Brahmagiri, Maski, Piklihal, Hallur in Karnataka; Utnur, Nagarjunakonda, Budihal in Andhra Pradesh; and Paitiyampalli in Tamil Nadu. These sites have yielded dwelling pits alongwith the evidence of cultivation of cereals and domestication of

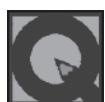


Map 2.4 Neolithic Sites

animals. Millet (Ragi) was one of the earliest crops cultivated by the villagers of South India.

(d) Subsistence Pattern

The advent of agriculture marked a significant change in Neolithic phase. The people cultivated various kinds of crops such as wheat, barley, rice, millet, lentils, etc., depending on the geographical conditions. Agriculture gave impetus to animal domestication. Hunting still remained an important occupation. The people domesticated animals which included sheep, goat, cattle, etc. and also hunted wild animals such as boar, nilgai, gazells, etc. Different kinds of stone tools were made by Neolithic people, which has already been discussed. The Neolithic people also manufactured pottery, which was initially hand made and later turned on wheel and fired in large kilns. These were the major means of storage for grains. In nutshell, we can say that the Neolithic cultures were characterised by change from hunting and gathering to cultivation of plants and domestication of animals. The new polished tools made it easier for humans to cultivate, hunt and perform other activities in a better manner. It led to greater availability of food resources as well as to an increase in population, which in turn resulted in the increase in the number of village settlements. The Neolithic cultures created the conditions which helped in the growth of towns in the later period.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 2.5

1. Who coined the term 'Neolithic'?
 2. Mention the chief characteristics of Neolithic cultures.
 - (a) _____
 - (b) _____
 - (c) _____
 - (d) _____
 3. Name an important Neolithic site of northwestern region.
-

2.9 THE PREHISTORIC ART

The rock paintings were an important and distinct feature of the Mesolithic people though their beginning may be traced to the upper Palaeolithic period. These paintings are made on the walls of rock shelters, maximum of which have been found at Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh. These throw light on the social and economic life on Mesolithic people. The main subjects of paintings are hunting, fishing and food gathering. Animals like boar, buffalo, monkey and nilgai are often depicted in these paintings. (Fig. 2.7) The social activities like the child birth, rearing of a child and burial ceremony are also shown in the rock paintings. The scenes of hunting in a group suggest that Mesolithic people lived in small groups. Thus, we can say that the

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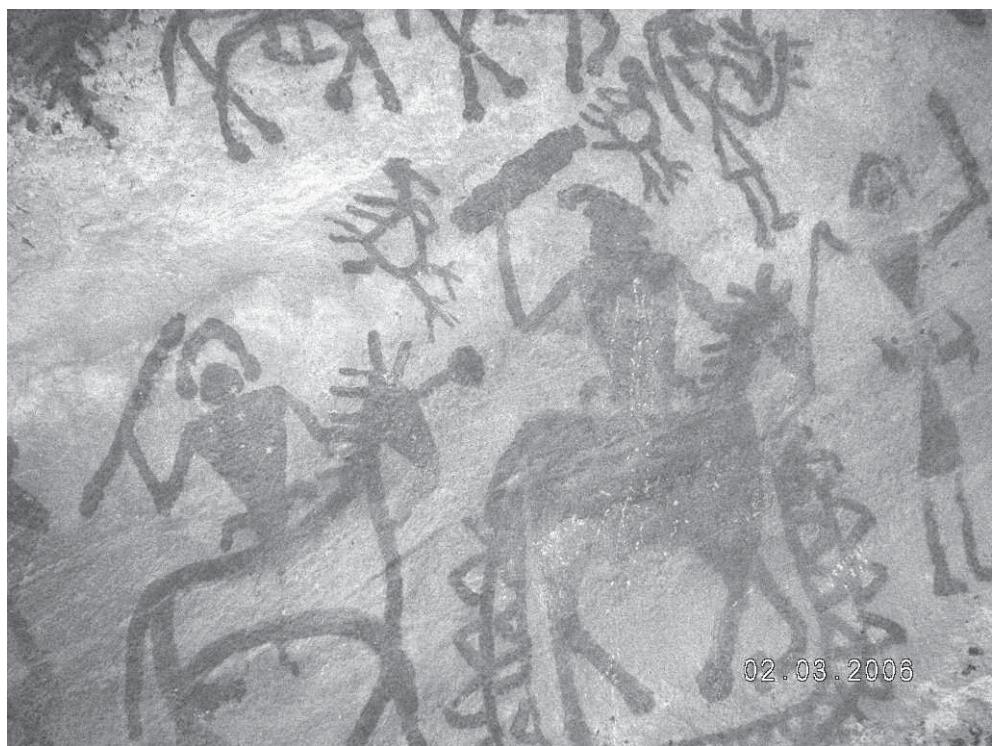


Fig 2.7 Prehistoric Art

Mesolithic society was more stable than the one in Palaeolithic age, though hunting-gathering still remained its main preoccupation.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 2.6

1. Rock Painting or Rock Art was a distinct feature of which period?

2. Name the site in Madhya Pradesh which has the maximum number of rock paintings in India.

3. Point out the main subjects highlighted in prehistoric rock art.



WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

The history of India has been greatly influenced by its geographical features and environmental conditions. Different regions are characterized by their distinct topographical features which determine the historical changes in those regions. The Himalayas have protected us both from the invaders and harsh cold winds. The mountain passes have provided the ways for political, social, economic and cultural interaction. The fertile River Plains of North India have helped in rich agricultural production

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leading to the emergence of powerful states in the 6th century BC. The Plateau region, the Coastal Plains and the hilly terrains of Peninsular India have encouraged the agricultural settlements and foreign contacts since ancient times. Different environmental conditions and varying availability of resources have resulted in distinct socio-economic and cultural formations in different regions.

Since his appearance in Prehistoric period, the humans have passed through many stages of cultural growth. Archaeological sources show his existence and subsistence pattern at various sites in different parts of the subcontinent. He was a hunter-gatherer in the Paleolithic and Mesolithic periods. By the Neolithic period he learnt cultivation of crops and domestication of animals. He could also manufacture pottery by then. These developments led to the establishment of village settlements. The stone tools used in different periods also underwent change. The crude and blunt tools of the Palaeolithic period were developed into sharper and polished ones in the Neolithic period. The Mesolithic period was characterized by very small stone tools called the microliths. In other words, the hunter-gatherer of the Paleolithic period evolved into the food producer of the Neolithic period.



TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. On a map of India, mark out the following:
 - (i) The Himalayan ranges
 - (ii) The Eastern and the Western Ghats
 - (iii) Rivers -the Ganges, the Narmada and the Kaveri
 - (iv) Arikamedu (Pondicherry), Tamluk (Tamralipti) and Bharuch (Broach)
 - (v) Pataliputra (Patna) and Palghat
 - (vi) Adamgarh, Bhimbetka and Koldihwa
 2. Assess the influence of the geographical features of India on its history with special reference to the Himalayas and the Peninsular India.
 3. How does the environmental conditions of a region determine the resource potential? Give examples.
 4. What were the chief features and uses of the tools used during the Palaeolithic period?
 5. How did the climatic changes during the Mesolithic period result in the shift in the pattern of hunting?
 6. Describe the geographical distribution of Neolithic sites.
 7. Give an account of the life of the Neolithic people.
 8. Why do some scholars use the term ‘Neolithic Revolution’ for this period?



ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

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4. Tamil Nadu
5. rice
6. Kushanas and Huns
7. Punjab and Sind in the Indus plains

2.2

1. The Ganges, Son and Gandak
2. Chhotanagpur
3. Black
4. Palghat pass

2.3

1. hunting, gathering
2. hunting, cutting, digging and other purposes.
3. (a) handaxes (b) cleavers (c) choppers

2.4

1. microliths
2. triangles, lunates and trapazes
3. Bhimbetka and Chopani Mando

2.5

1. John Lubbock
2. (a) Beginning of agricultural activities
(b) Domestication of animals
(c) Grinding and polishing of stone tools
(d) Use of pottery
3. Mehrgarh

2.6

1. Mesolithic
2. Bhimbetka
3. Hunting, Fishing, Food gathering, Child birth, Rearing of a child and Burial ceremony.

HINTS TO TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. See Maps 2.1 and 2.2
2. Refer to the sections 2.1 and 2.3
3. Refer to the section 2.4
4. Refer to the section 2.6(a)

5. Refer to the section 2.7(c)
6. Refer to the section 2.8(c)
7. Refer to the section 2.8(d)
8. Refer to the section 2.8(a)

Notes**GLOSSARY**

Aryans	-	the nomadic groups of people who came from Central Asia.
Butt end	-	the portion of the tool, which is generally broad and is used for holding it.
Celt	-	a type of stone axe made during the Neolithic period.
Fauna	-	the animal life of any region.
Flora	-	the plant life of any region.
<i>Jatakas</i>	-	Buddhist texts with tales related to Buddha's life.
Microliths	-	very small and narrow tools used by man in the Mesolithic period.
Mountain pass	-	the gap between mountains which help in easy access to the other side.
Prehistory	-	that period of our past that does not have written records.



THE HARAPPAN CIVILIZATION

In the previous chapter you learnt that the people in the prehistoric times used tools and weapons made of stone. Later man started using metals. Copper was the first metal to be used by man for making tools. Gradually several cultures developed in Indian subcontinent which were based on the use of stone and copper tools. They also used bronze, a mixture of copper and tin, for this purpose. This phase in history is known as the Chalcolithic (*chalco*-Copper; *lithic*-Stone) period. The brightest chapter in the Chalcolithic period in India is the Harappan civilization which is also referred to as the Indus Valley civilization.

Harappan civilization was discovered in 1920–22 when two of its most important sites were excavated. These were Harappa on the banks of the river Ravi and Mohenjodaro on the banks of the Indus. The first was excavated by D. R. Sahani and the second by R.D. Bannerji. On the basis of the archaeological findings the Harappan civilization has been dated between 2600 B.C–1900 BC and is one of the oldest civilizations of the world. It is also sometimes referred to as the ‘Indus Valley civilization’ because in the beginning majority of its settlements discovered were in and around the plains of the river Indus and its tributaries. But today it is termed as the Harappan civilization because Harappa was the first site, which brought to light the presence of this civilization. Besides, recent archaeological findings indicate that this civilization was spread much beyond the Indus Valley. Therefore, it is better it is called as the Harappan civilization. It is the first urban culture of India and is contemporaneous with other ancient civilizations of the world such as those of Mesopotamia and Egypt. Our knowledge of the life and culture of the Harappan people is based only on the archaeological excavations as the script of that period has not been deciphered so far.

The Harappan civilization did not appear all of a sudden. It developed gradually from earlier Neolithic village cultures. It is believed that the better technology to exploit the fertile plains of river Indus might have resulted in increased agricultural production. This led to the production of larger surplus to feed and maintain non-agricultural people such as artisans, administrators, etc. It also helped in the promotion of exchange or trading contacts with distant regions. It brought prosperity to the Harappan people and they were able to set up cities.

By around 2000 BC several regional cultures developed in different parts of the subcontinent which were also based on the use of stone and copper tools. These Chalcolithic cultures which lay outside the Harappan zone were not so rich and flourishing. These were basically rural in nature. The origin and development of these cultures is placed in the chronological span between *circa* 2000 BC–700 BC. These are found in Western and Central India and are described as non-Harappan Chalcolithic cultures.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- explain the origin and extent of the Harappan civilization;
- describe the Harappan town-planning;
- understand the Harappan social and economic life;
- discuss the Harappan religious beliefs;
- explain how and why did the civilization decline;
- identify the Chalcolithic Communities outside Harappan zone;
- explain economic condition and settlement pattern of these Chalcolithic communities.

3.1 ORIGIN AND EXTENT

The archaeological remains show that before the emergence of Harappan civilization the people lived in small villages. As the time passed, there was the emergence of small towns which ultimately led to full-fledged towns during the Harappan period. The whole period of Harappan civilization is in fact divided into three phases: (i) Early Harappan phase (3500 BC–2600 BC) – it was marked by some town-planning in the form of mud structures, elementary trade, arts and crafts, etc., (ii) Mature Harappan phase (2600 BC–1900 BC) – it was the period in which we notice well-developed towns with burnt brick structures, inland and foreign trade, crafts of various types, etc., and (iii) Late Harappan phase (1900 BC–1400 BC) – it was the phase of decline during which many cities were abandoned and the trade disappeared leading to the gradual decay of the significant urban traits.

Let us first have a glance over the geographical extent of the Harappan civilization.

The archaeological excavations reveal that this culture was spread over a vast area which included not only the present day states of India such as Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Western Uttar Pradesh but also Pakistan and some parts of Afghanistan. Some important sites of this civilization are: Manda in Jammu and Kashmir; Shortughai in Afghanistan; Harappa in Western Punjab (Pakistan); Mohenjodaro and Chanhuaro in Sind; Kalibangan in Rajasthan; Lothal and Dholavira in Gujarat; Banawali and Rakhigarhi in Haryana; Daimabad in Maharashtra while Sutkagendor on the Makran Coast (near Pakistan-Iran border) is the western most site of the Harappan civilization and Alamgirpur in western Uttar Pradesh marks its eastern most limit.

The location of settlements suggests that the Harappa, Kalibangan (On R Ghaggar-Hakra generally associated with the lost river Saraswati), Mohenjodaro axis was the heartland of this civilization and most of the settlements are located in this region. This area had certain uniform features in terms of the soil type, climate and subsistence pattern. The land was flat and depended on the monsoons and the Himalayan rivers for the supply of water. Due to its distinct geographical feature, agro-pastoral economy was the dominant feature in this region.

Besides the urban settlements of the Harappans, there were many sites inhabited by the primitive communities consisting of stone-age hunter-gatherers or pastoral



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The Harappan Civilization

Map 3.1 Spread of Indus Valley Civilization

nomads, which existed side by side. Some sites served as ports or trading out-posts. It may be noted that the important determinants of urbanisation are well-planned cities, specialised arts and crafts, trade, taxation, script, etc. In this respect Harappan culture fulfilled all these criteria for being called as an urban culture.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 3.1

1. Why is the Indus valley civilization called the Harappan civilization?

2. What were the different phases of Harappan culture.

3. Name any two important Harappan sites each in Haryana and Gujarat.

4. Who discovered Mohenjodaro?

5. Harappa is located on the banks of which river?

6. What are the important features of an urban culture?

3.2 TOWN PLANNING

The most interesting urban feature of Harappan civilization is its town-planning. It is marked by considerable uniformity, though one can notice some regional variations as well. The uniformity is noticed in the lay-out of the towns, streets, structures, brick size, drains etc. Almost all the major sites (Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Kalibangan and others), are divided into two parts—a citadel on higher mound on the western side and a lower town on the eastern side of the settlement. The citadel contain large structures which might have functioned as administrative or ritual centres. The residential buildings are built in the lower town. The streets intersect each other at right angles in a criss-cross pattern. It divides the city in several residential blocks. The main street is connected by narrow lanes. The doors of the houses opened in these lanes and not the main streets.

The houses of common people, however, differed in size from a single-room house in Harappa to bigger structures. The houses were largely built of burnt bricks. The bigger houses had many rooms surrounding a square courtyard. These houses were provided with private wells, kitchens and bathing platforms. The difference in the size of the houses suggests that the rich lived in the larger houses whereas the one-room buildings or barracks might have been intended for the poorer section of the society.

The drainage system of the Harappans was elaborate and well laidout. Every house had drains, which opened into the street drains. These drains were covered with manholes bricks or stone slabs (which could be removed for cleaning) were constructed at regular intervals by the side of the streets for cleaning. This shows that the people were well acquainted with the science of sanitation.



Fig 3.1 Great Bath of Mohenjodaro

3.3 SOME MAJOR STRUCTURAL REMAINS OF THE HARAPPAN TOWNS

At Mohenjodaro the ‘Great Bath’ is the most important structure. (Fig 3.1) It is surrounded by corridors on all sides and is approached at either end a by a flights of steps in north and south. A thin layer of bitumen was applied to the bed of the Bath to ensure that water did not seep in. Water was supplied by a large well in an adjacent room. There was a drain for the outlet of the water. The bath was surrounded by sets of rooms on sides for





changing cloth. Scholars believe that the ‘Great Bath’ was used for ritual bathing. Another structure here located to the west of the ‘Great Bath’ is the granary. It consists of several rectangular blocks of brick for storing grains. A granary has also been found at Harappa. It has the rows of circular brick platforms, which were used for threshing grains. This is known from the finding of chaffs of wheat and barley from here.

At Lothal, a brick structure has been identified as a dockyard meant for berthing ships and handling cargo. (Fig 3.2) This suggests that Lothal was an important port and trading centre of the Harappan people.



Fig 3.2 The dockyard of Lothal

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 3.2**

1. The citadel in Harappan towns was normally located in which direction.

2. What kind of bricks were used for building the houses?

3. Where was the ‘Great Bath’ discovered?

4. Name the major structure found at Lothal.

3.4 ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES**(i) Agriculture**

The prosperity of the Harappan civilization was based on its flourishing economic activities such as agriculture, arts and crafts, and trade. The availability of fertile Indus alluvium contributed to the surplus in agricultural production. It helped the Harappan people to indulge in exchange, both internal and external, with others and also develop crafts and industries.

Agriculture alongwith pastoralism (cattle-rearing) was the base of Harappan economy. The granaries discovered at sites like Harappa, Mohenjodaro and Lothal served as

**Notes**

the storehouses for grains. We do not have any clear evidence of the tools used for agriculture. However, the furrows or plough-marks have been observed in a field at Kalibangan. These indicate plough cultivation. A terracotta plough has also been reported from Banawali in Hissar district of Haryana. The irrigation was carried on a small scale by drawing water from wells or by diverting river water into channels.

The chief food crops included wheat, barley, sesasum, mustard, peas, jejube, etc. The evidence for rice has come from Lothal and Rangpur in the form of husks embedded in pottery. Cotton was another important crop. A piece of woven cloth has been found at Mohenjodaro. Apart from cereals, fish and animal meat also formed a part of the Harappan diet.

(ii) Industries and Crafts

The Harappan people were aware of almost all the metals except iron. They manufactured gold and silver objects. The gold objects include beads, armlets, needles and other ornaments. But the use of silver was more common than gold. A large number of silver ornaments, dishes, etc. have been discovered. A number of copper tools and weapons have also been discovered. The common tools included axe, saws, chisels, knives, spearheads and arrowheads. It is important to note that the weapons produced by the Harappans were mostly defensive in nature as there is no evidence of weapons like swords, etc. Stone tools were also commonly used. Copper was brought mainly from Khetri in Rajasthan. Gold might have been obtained from the Himalayan river-beds and South India, and silver from Mesopotamia. We also have the evidence of the use of the bronze though in limited manner. The most famous specimen in this regard is the bronze 'dancing girl' figurine discovered at Mohenjodaro. (Fig 3.3) It is a nude female figure, with right arm on the hip and left arm hanging in a dancing pose. She is wearing a large number of bangles.

Bead-making also was an important craft. Beads were made of precious and semi-precious stones such as agate and carnelian. Steatite was used for making beads. The evidence of beadmakers' shops have been found at Chanhudaro and Lothal. Gold and silver beads have also been found. Ivory carving and inlaying used in beads, bracelets and other decorations were also in practice. The Harappans thus showed their masterly skill in a variety of arts and crafts.

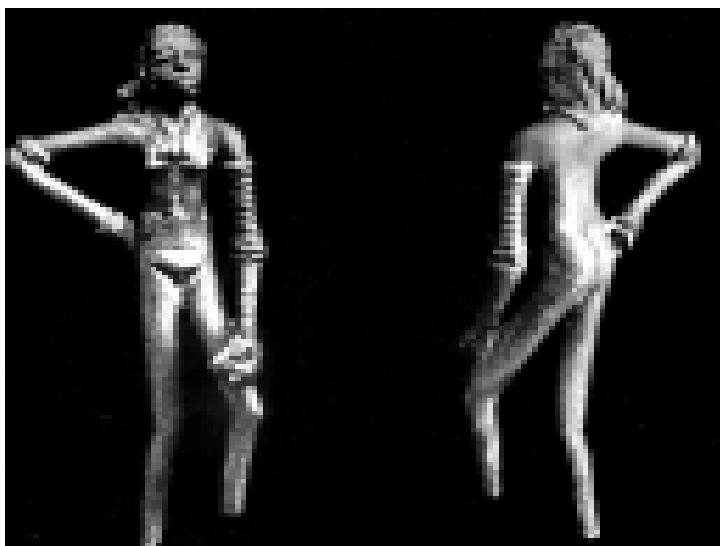


Fig. 3.3 Dancing Girl Mohenjodaro



Notes

The Harappan Civilization

A well-known piece of art of the Harappan period is a stone sculpture of a bearded man discovered at Mohenjodaro. (Fig 3.4) His eyes are half closed indicating a posture of meditation. Across the left shoulder is an embroidered cloak. In the opinion of some scholars it could be a bust of a priest.

A large number of terracotta figurines of males and females have been discovered from various Harappan sites. (Fig 3.5) The female figurines outnumber those of males and are believed to represent the worship of mother goddess. Besides these, a variety of models of birds, monkeys, dogs, sheep, cattle, humped and humpless bulls are found. However, the noteworthy specimen in this regard are various models of terracotta carts.

Pottery-making was also an important industry in the Harappan period. These were chiefly wheel-made and were treated with a red coating and had decorations in black. These are found in various sizes and shapes. The painted designs consist of horizontal lines of varied thickness, leaf patterns, palm and *pipal* trees. Birds, fishes and animals are also depicted on potteries.

The Harappans manufactured seals of various kinds. More than two thousand seals have been discovered from different sites. These were generally square in shape and were made of steatite. It is noteworthy that while the seals depict a number of ani-



Fig 3.4 Stone Sculpture of bearded man



Fig. 3.5 Terracotta Human & Animal figurines

*Fig. 3.6 A Terracotta cart from Kalibangan***Notes**

There is no representation of horse on these. It has led many scholars to argue that horse was not known to the Harappan people though there are others who do not accept this argument. Besides various kinds of animals, the Harappan seals contain some signs in the Harappan script which however has not been deciphered so far. The most famous of the seals is the one with a horned male deity represented on it. He has three heads and is sitting in a yogic posture surrounded by four animals viz elephant, tiger, rhinoceros and a buffalo. He has been identified by many scholars with the ancient form of the god *Pashupati* (Lord of beasts) though there are others who dispute this identification.

*Fig 3.7 Seal of Pashupati*

**(iii) Trade**

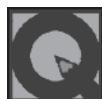
Trading network, both internal (within the country) and external (foreign), was a significant feature of the urban economy of the Harappans. As the urban population had to depend on the surrounding countryside for the supply of food and many other necessary products, there emerged a village-town (rural-urban) interrelationship. Similarly, the urban craftsmen needed markets to sell their goods in other areas. It led to the contact between the towns. The traders also established contacts with foreign lands particularly Mesopotamia where these goods were in demand.

It is important to note that various kinds of metals and precious stones were needed by craftsmen to make goods, but as these were not available locally they had to be brought from outside. The presence of such raw material found at sites away from the place of its origin naturally indicates it must have reached there through an exchange activity. Thus Rajasthan region is rich in copper deposits and the Harappans acquired copper mainly from the Khetri mines located here. Kolar gold fields of Karnataka and the river-beds of the Himalayan rivers might have supplied the gold. The source of silver may have been Jwar mines of Rajasthan. It is believed that it must have also come from Mesopotamia in exchange for the Harappan goods.

Among the precious stones used for making beads, the source of lapis-lazuli was located in Badakshan mines in northeast Afghanistan. Turquoise and Jade might have been brought from Central Asia. Western India supplied agate, chalcedony and carnelian. The seashells must have come from Gujarat and neighbouring coastal areas. Timber of good quality and other forest products were perhaps obtained from the northern regions such as Jammu.

The Harappans were engaged in external trade with Mesopotamia. It was largely through Oman and Bahrain in the Persian Gulf. It is confirmed by the presence of Harappan artefacts such as beads, seals, dice etc. in these regions. Though the artefacts from those regions are rarely found at the Harappan sites, a seal of West Asian or Persian origin has been discovered at Lothal which confirms this contact. Mesopotamian cities like Susa, Ur, etc. have yielded about two dozen of Harappan seals. Besides seals, other artefacts of Harappan origin which have been discovered include potteries, etched carnelian beads and dices with Harappan features.

The inscriptional evidence from Mesopotamia also provides us with valuable information on Harappan contact with Mesopotamia. These inscriptions refer to trade with Dilmun, Magan and Meluhha. Scholars have identified Meluhha with Harappan region, Magan with the Makran coast, and Dilmun with Bahrain. They indicate that Mesopotamia imported copper, carnelian, ivory, shell, lapis-lazuli, pearls and ebony from Meluhha. The export from Mesopotamia to Harappans included items such as garments, wool, perfumes, leather products and silver. Except silver all these products are perishable. This may be one important reason why we do not find the remains of these goods at Harappan sites.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 3.3**

1. Besides agriculture which economic activity was practiced by Harappan people?

2. Name the chief food crops consumed by the Harappans.

3. Which are the two places from where we get evidence of rice as a food crop during the Harappan period?

4. Where was the bronze dancing girl found?

5. Name any two important crafts practised in the Harappan period.

6. Which place was the chief source of copper for the Harappan people?

Notes



3.5 SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION

The Harappan society appears to have been matriarchal in nature. This view is based on the popularity of the mother goddess as indicated by the finding of a large number of terracotta female figurines in Punjab and Sind region. As Harappan script has not been deciphered till now, we have to satisfy ourselves with this limited information on this issue.

The Harappan Society comprised of people following diverse professions. These included the priests, the warriors, peasants, traders and artisans (masons, weavers, goldsmith, potters, etc.) The structural remains at sites such as Harappa and Lothal show that different types of buildings that were used as residence by different classes. The presence of a class of workmen is proved by workmen quarters near the granary at Harappa. Similarly, the workshops and houses meant for coppersmiths and beadmakers have been discovered at Lothal. Infact, we can say that those who lived in larger houses belonged to the rich class whereas those living in the barracks like workmen quarters were from the class of labourers.

Our limited knowledge about their dress styles comes from the terracotta figurines and stone sculptures of the period. Men are mostly shown wearing a dress wrapped round the lower half of the body with one end worn over the left shoulder and under the right arm. The other garment was a skirt like dress to cover the lower portion. They used cotton and woollen clothes. A piece of woven cloth has been found at Mohenjodaro. Spindles and needles discovered at many sites attest to the practice of spinning and weaving.

Harappan people loved to decorate themselves. Hair dressing by both, men and women, is evident from figurines found at different sites. The men as well as women arranged their hair in different styles. The people were also fond of ornaments. These mainly included necklaces, armlets, earrings, beads, bangles, etc., used by both the sexes. Rich people appear to have used the ornaments of gold, silver and semi-precious stones while the poor satisfied themselves with those of terracotta.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 3.4

1. Harappan society is believed to be a _____ society.
2. Where were the workmen's quarters discovered?

3. The Harappans used clothes made of which material?



3.6 RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

Our knowledge on the religious beliefs and practices of the Harappans is largely based on the Harappan seals and terracotta figurines available to us. The Harappan religion is normally termed as animism i.e., worship of trees, stones etc. (Fig 3.8) A large number of terracotta figurines discovered at the Harappan sites have been associated with the worship of mother goddess. (Fig 3.9) Many of these represent females adorned with a wide girdle, loin cloth and necklaces. They wear a fan-shaped head dress. In some cases the female is shown with an infant while there is one that shows a plant growing out of the uterus of a woman. The latter type probably symbolizes the goddess of earth. There are many scholars who refer to the worshiping of *linga* (phallus) and *yoni* (female sex organ) by the Harappans but some are doubtful about it.

Harappans' belief in a male deity is evident by the seal depicting a deity with a buffalo-horned head-dress, sitting in a *yogic* posture and surrounded by animals. Many scholars identify him with god Pashupati (Lord of beasts) or 'Proto-Shiva' though some dispute it. In another instance, a deity is shown with horns and flowing hair standing nude between the branches of a *Pipal* tree and a worshipper is kneeling in front. It may represent tree worship. Animal worship also appears to be popular among the Harappans.

The evidence of fire worship has also been found at some sites such as Kalibangan and Lothal. At Kalibangan, a series of raised brick platforms with pits containing ash and animal bones have been discovered. These are identified by many scholars as fire altars.

This also shows that the Harappans living in different areas followed different religious practices as there is no evidence of fire-pits at Harappa or Mohanjodaro.

The burial practices and the rituals related with them have been a very important aspect of religion in any culture. However, in this context Harappan sites have not yielded any monument such as the Pyramids of Egypt or the Royal cemetery at Ur in Mesopotamia. Dead bodies were generally rested in north-south direction with their head



Fig 3.8 Symbolic Pipal Tree from Mohenjodero



Fig 3.9 Mother Goddess from Mohenjodero

towards north and the feet towards south. The dead were buried with a varying number of earthen pots. In some graves the dead were buried along with goods such as bangles, beads, copper mirrors. This may indicate that the Harappans believed in life after death. At Lothal three joint or double burials with male and female bodies together were discovered. Kalibangan has yielded evidence of a symbolic burial along

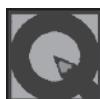


Notes



Fig. 3.10 Humped bull seals from Mohenjodero

i.e., a burial which contains pots but no bones or skeleton. These different practices in different regions of Harappan civilization may reflect diversity in religious beliefs.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 3.5

1. From where has the famous “Pashupati” seal been discovered?

2. Which tree is often represented on the Harappan seals?

3. Is there any evidence of fire worship? If so where has it been found?

4. At which place have joint burials been found?

3.9 THE SCRIPT

The Harappans were literate people. Harappan seals, are engraved with various signs or characters. Recent studies suggest that the Harappan script consists of about 400 signs and that it was written from right to left. However, the script has not been deciphered as yet. It is believed that they used ideograms i.e., a graphic symbol or character to convey the idea directly. We do not know the language they spoke, though scholars believe that they spoke “Brahui”, a dialect used by Baluchi people in Pakistan today. However further research alone can unveil the mystery and enable us to know more about the Harappan script.

3.10 DECLINE OF THE HARAPPAN CIVILIZATION

The Harappan Civilization flourished till 1900 BC. The period following this is marked by the beginning of the post-urban phase or (Late Harappan phase). This phase was **HISTORY**



characterised by a gradual disappearance of the major traits such as town-planning, art of writing, uniformity in weights and measures, homogeneity in pottery designs, etc. The regression covered a period from 1900 BC–1400 BC There was also the shrinkage in the settlement area. For instance, Mohenjodaro was reduced to a small settlement of three hectares from the original eighty five hectares towards the end of the Late phase. The population appears to have shifted to other areas. It is indicated by the large number of new settlements in the outlying areas of Gujarat, east Punjab, Haryana and Upper Doab during the later Harappan period.

You may be wondering how the Harappan Civilization came to an end. Well scholars put forward many theories in this regard.

- (i) It is suggested by some scholars that natural calamities such as floods and earthquakes might have caused the decline of the civilization. It is believed that earthquakes might have raised the level of the flood plains of the lower course of Indus river. It blocked the passage of the river water to the sea and resulted in the floods which might have swallowed the city of Mohenjodaro. However, this only explains the decline of Mohenjodaro and not of the whole civilization.
- (ii) Increased aridity and drying up of the river Ghaggar-Harka on account of the changes in river courses, according to some scholars, might have contributed to the decline. This theory states that there was an increase in arid conditions by around 2000 BC. This might have affected agricultural production, and led to the decline.
- (iii) Aryan invasion theory is also put forward as a cause for the decline. According to this, the Harappan civilization was destroyed by the Aryans who came to India from north-west around 1500 BC. However, on the basis of closer and critical analysis of data, this view is completely negated today.

Thus, there is no single cause that can explain the decline of the civilization in totality. At the maximum these can explain the decay of certain sites or areas only. Hence, each theory has met with criticism. Nevertheless, the archaeological evidence indicates that the Harappan civilization did not collapse all of a sudden but declined gradually and ultimately merged with other local cultures.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 3.6**

1. What is the approximate number of signs found in the Harappan script?

2. Which natural calamities are held responsible for the decline of the Harappan civilization?

3. How was the Harappan script written? (Right to left or left to right)

3.11 CHALCOLITHIC COMMUNITIES OF NON-HARAPPAN INDIA
MAJOR CHALCOLITHIC CULTURES AND THEIR CHIEF SITES

The important non-Harappan chalcolithic cultures lay mainly in western India and Deccan. These include Banas culture (2600BC–1900 BC) in south-east Rajasthan, with Ahar

The Harappan Civilization

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Ancient India

near Udaipur and Gilund as its key-sites; Kayatha culture (2100BC–2000 BC) with Kayatha in Chambal as its chief site in Madhya Pradesh; Malwa Culture (1700BC–1400BC) with Navdatoli in Western Madhya Pradesh as an important site, and Jorwe culture (1400BC–700BC) with Inamgaon and Chandoli near Pune in Maharashtra as its chief centres. The evidence of the chalcolithic cultures also comes from eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Bengal. (Map 3.2) It may be noted that the non-Harappan Chalcolithic cultures though flourished in different regions they were marked by basic uniformity in various aspects such as their mud structures, farming and hunting activities, use of wheel made pottery etc. The pottery of these chalcolithic cultures included ochre coloured pottery (OCP), black-and-red ware (BRW) and has been found in the shape of various kinds of bowls, basins, spouted jars with concave necks, dishes on stand, etc.

Notes



Map 3.2 Chalcolithic sites

**3.12 TOOLS, IMPLEMENTS AND OTHER OBJECTS**

The chalcolithic cultures are characterised by the use of tools made of copper as well as stone. They used chalcedony, chert etc. for making stone tools. The major tools used were long parallel-sided blades, pen knives, lunates, triangles, and trapezes. Some of the blade tools were used in agriculture. Main copper objects used include flat axes, arrowheads, spearheads, chisels, fishhooks, swords, blades, bangles, rings and beads. Beads made of carnelian, jasper, chalcedony, agate, shell, etc. frequently occur in excavations. In this context, the findings from Daimabad hoard are noteworthy. The discovery includes bronze rhinoceros, elephant, two-wheeled chariot with a rider and a buffalo. These are massive and weigh over sixty kilograms. From Kayatha (Chambal valley) also copper objects with sharp cutting edges have been recovered. These reflect the skills of the craftsmen of the period.

3.13 SUBSISTENCE ECONOMY

The people of these settlements subsisted on agriculture and cattle rearing. However, they also practised hunting and fishing. The main crops of the period include, rice, barley, lentils, wheat, jawar, coarse gram, pea, green gram, etc. It is to be noted that the major parts of this culture flourished in the zone of black soil, useful mainly for growing cotton.

Skeletal remains from the sites suggest the presence of domesticated and wild animals in these cultures. The important domesticated animals were cattle, sheep, goat, dog, pig, horse, etc. The wild animals included black buck, antelope, nilgai, barasinga, sambar, cheetah, wild buffalo and one-horn rhino. The bones of fish, water fowl, turtle and rodents were also discovered.

3.14 HOUSES AND HABITATIONS

The Chalcolithic cultures were characterised by rural settlements. The people lived in rectangular and circular houses with mud walls and thatched roofs. Most of the houses were single roomed but some had two or three rooms. The floors were made of burnt clay or clay mixed with river gravels. More than 200 sites of Jorwe culture (Maharashtra) have been found. The settlements at Inamgaon (Jorwe culture) suggests that some kind of planning was adopted in laying of the settlement.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 3.7**

1. Name one chalcolithic site each in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

2. What material was used in the Chalcolithic period to manufacture tools?

3. Houses of the Chalcolithic people were made of which material?

4. The chalcolithic cultures were _____ in character. (rural/urban)

5. Name any two Non-Harappan chalcolithic cultures.



WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

The Harappan civilization was the first urban civilization of the Indian subcontinent. Archaeological discoveries show that this culture evolved from the earlier rural communities. Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Chanhudaro, Kalibangan, Lothal, Banawali, Rakhigarhi and Dholavira were some of the important sites of the Harappan civilization. Well-planned towns can be observed at some Harappan centres. These towns were characterised by two broad divisions—a citadel on a higher mound and the lower town. Burnt bricks were used for building houses. The towns had good drainage system. Some major buildings at the Harappan towns were the Great Bath at Mohenjodaro, a granary at Harappa, and a dockyard at Lothal. The Harappans practised agriculture alongwith pastoralism. Though there were skilled craftsmen who worked in copper and other metals, the stone tools were still in common use. They produced beads, terracotta figurines, potteries and seals of various kinds. The Harappans carried out trade, both internal and external. They had commercial links with Mesopotamian cities through Oman and Bahrain in the Persian Gulf. The merchants traded in various commodities of import and export. The Harappan society seems to have been matriarchal in nature. The people followed different professions such as those of priests, physicians, warriors, peasants, traders and artisans. Though the Harappans wore simple clothes made of cotton and wool, they were fond of decorating themselves with various kinds of ornaments. The Harappans worshipped the mother goddess, Pashupati (Proto-Shiva), trees and animals. They also followed different kinds of burial practices and rituals associated with them. The Harappans were literate and their script is in the form of ideograms. However, the script has not been deciphered so far. Once it is deciphered, we will be able to know more about the Harappan culture. Scholars have suggested various factors such as natural calamities, increased aridity, and the Aryan invasion for the decline of the culture. The archaeological evidence suggests that this civilization did not face a sudden collapse but had a gradual decline.

The archaeological sources reflect that the non-Harappan Chalcolithic cultures were characterized by regional variations. The use of stone and copper (Chalcolithic) tools was the distinct feature of these cultures. The distribution pattern of the sites suggests hierarchy of settlements. Some settlements were large in size with elaborate structures, indicating that these were important centres. The Chalcolithic cultures outside the orbit of the Harappan culture did not possess Harappan traits of urbanity and prosperity. These were non-urban cultures with certain elements of their own such as the housing pattern, pottery types, tool types, religious practices, etc. They still subsisted on agriculture and hunting-gathering economy combined with pastoralism.



TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Describe the important features of the Harappan town planning.
2. Give an account of industries and crafts in the Harappan period.
3. Give a brief account of the Harappan trade with Mesopotamia.
4. Describe some important features of the Harappan religious life.
5. Account for the decline of the Harappan civilization.
6. Give an account of the life of the non-Harappan Chalcolithic people.



Notes

**ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****3.1**

1. The Indus Valley civilization is called the Harappan civilization because Harappa was the first site where the traces of the civilization were discovered.
2. (i) Early Harappan phase (3500 BC–2600 BC)
(ii) Mature Harappan phase (2600 BC– 1900 BC)
(iii) Late Harappan phase (1900 BC–1400 BC)
3. Banawali and Rakhigarhi in Haryana, and Lothal and Dholavira in Gujarat.
4. R.D. Bannerji
5. Ravi
6. The important features of an urban culture are the well-planned cities, specialized arts and crafts, trade, taxation, script, etc.

3.2

1. Western
2. burnt bricks
3. Mohenjodaro
4. The dockyard

3.3

1. pastoralism (cattle-rearing)
2. wheat, barley, sesamum, mustard, peas, jejube etc.
3. Lothal and Rangpur
4. Mohenjodaro
5. Bead-making, Pottery-making
6. Khetri mines in Rajasthan

3.4

1. matriarchal
2. Harappa
3. cotton, wool

3.5

1. Mohenjodaro
2. Pipal
3. Yes, Kalibangan and Lothal
4. Lothal

3.6

1. 400

2. floods, earthquakes
3. right to left

3.7

1. Navdatoli in Madhya Pradesh and Inamgaon in Maharashtra
2. stone, copper
3. mud
4. rural
5. Kayatha culture in Madhya Pradesh, and Jorwe culture in Maharashtra

HINTS TO TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Refer to the section 3.2
2. Refer to the section 3.4(ii)
3. Refer to the section 3.4(iii)
4. Refer to the section 3.8
5. Refer to the section 3.10
6. Refer to the sections 3.13 and 3.14

GLOSSARY

Animism	—	worshipping of plants, stones and natural phenomena with belief that these too have life and thus have spiritual importance.
BRW	—	black-and-red ware, a kind of pottery found at the Chalcolithic sites.
Citadel	—	Citadel was the higher portion of the Harappan towns and was located on the western side.
Ideograms	—	characters or a symbol conveying ideas.
Lapislazuli	—	a bright blue rock from which lazurite used in jewellery is obtained. During the Harappan period this was found in Afghanistan region.
Mesopotamia	—	the land between two rivers Euphrates and Tigris in Iraq.
OCP	—	Ochre coloured pottery.
Pastoralism	—	dependence on domestication of cattle for subsistence.
Proto-Siva	—	a primitive or preliminary form of Siva from which other forms developed in later periods.
Steatite	—	a mineral occurring in the form of soapstone, used for making seals during Harappan period.
Surplus	—	an excess of production over the requirements.
Unicorn	—	an animal with one horn found on Harappan seals.
Urbanisation	—	town life signifying surplus agriculture, specialised arts and craft, trade, writing, big structures and stratified society.


Notes



THE VEDIC AGE (1500BC–600BC)

In the previous lesson, you read about the Harappan Civilization. The Harappans lived in cities and had a well organized trade and craft activities. They also had a script which we have been so far not able to decipher. However around 1900 BC these cities began to decline. A number of rural settlements appeared afterwards. These rural settlements show continuity of certain Harappan elements. Around the same time we find archaeological evidence of the arrival of new people known as Aryans or Indo-Aryans on the outskirts of the Harappan region. In the present lesson, we shall study the circumstances under which these new people arrived and also learn about the main features of their culture as depicted in the literature called the Vedas.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

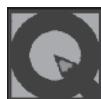
- learn about the Vedic texts and the nature of their contents;
- know about the Aryans and identify the region from where they migrated;
- locate the regions inhabited by the Early Vedic (1500BC–1000BC) and the Later Vedic people (1000BC–600BC);
- explain the importance and impact of the use of iron implements which began in Later Vedic period, and
- identify the changes which appeared in the economic, social, religious and political structures and institutions of the Vedic people over a period extending from 1000 BC to 600 BC.

4.1 THE VEDIC TEXTS

What is *veda*? The word *veda* is derived from the root *vid* which means ‘to know’. The word *veda* means the sacred knowledge contained in the texts known as Vedic text. Two categories of texts are included in the corpus of the Vedic literature. These are *Mantra* and *Brahmana*. The *Mantra* category forms the core of the Vedic texts and has four separate collections. These are the *Rigveda*, the *Samaveda*, the *Yajurveda*, and the *Atharvaveda*. The *Brahmanas* not to be confused with Brahminical class are prose texts containing the explanations of the *mantras* as well as the sacrificial rituals. The four Vedas together with their *Brahmanas* are also known as *shruti* or ‘hearing’, that which was directly heard by the sages. The *Aranyakas* (literally forest treatises) and the *Upanishads* (sitting down beside) are mainly appendices to the *Brahmanas*. These are also known as the *Vedanta* (end of the *Veda*) and contain philosophical discussions.

The *Rigveda* is a collection of 1,028 hymns divided into 10 *mandalas*. They are the earliest compositions and hence depict the life of the early Vedic people in India. The *Samaveda* is a collection of verses mostly taken from the *Rigveda* but arranged in a poetic form to facilitate singing. The *Yajurveda* is found in two recensions, Black and White, and are full of rituals to be performed publicly or individually. The *Atharvaveda* is a collection of magic spells and charms to ward off the evil spirits and diseases.

Careful studies have shown that the Vedic texts reflect two stages of development in terms of literature as well as social and cultural evolution. The *Rigveda* which is the oldest Vedic text reflects one stage of social and cultural development whereas the other three *Vedas* reflect another stage. The first stage is known as the Rigvedic period or Early Vedic period and the later stage is known as the Later Vedic period. The age of the Early Vedic period corresponds with the date of the composition of the Rigvedic hymns. This date has been fixed between 1500 BC and 1000 BC. The later Vedic period is placed between 1000 BC and 600 BC. Recently, the *Rigveda* has been included by the UNESCO in the list of literature signifying World Human Heritage.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 4.1

1. What do you understand by the term *Veda*?

2. Which texts are included in the *Mantra* category of the Vedic texts? Mention them.

3. What kind of texts are included in the category known as *shruti*? Mention them.

4. Explain the contents of the *Brahmana* category of texts.

5. Explain the term *vedanta*.

4.2 MIGRATION OF THE ARYANS

The authors of the Vedic hymns were the Aryans. But who were the Aryans? In the 19th century, Aryans were considered a race. Now it is thought of as a linguistic group of people who spoke Indo-European language from which later emerged Sanskrit, Latin, and Greek etc. This is reflected from the words in these languages which are similar in sound and meaning. Thus the Sanskrit words *matri* and *pitri* are similar to the Latin *mater* and *pater*. Similarly, Inar of the Hittite (Turkey) language is similar to Indra of the Vedas. Suryyas and Maruttash of the Kassite (Mesopotamia) inscriptions are equivalent of the Vedic Surya and Marut.

Originally the Aryans seem to have lived somewhere in the Steppes stretching from southern Russia to Central Asia. From here, a group of them migrated to northwest India and came to be called Indo-Aryans or just Aryans. The archaeological evidence of migrations comes from what is known as Andronovo Culture situated in southern Siberia. This Culture flourished in the second millennium BC. From here people moved to north of Hindukush (the area known as Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex) and from here they entered India. During the period between 1900 BC

Notes



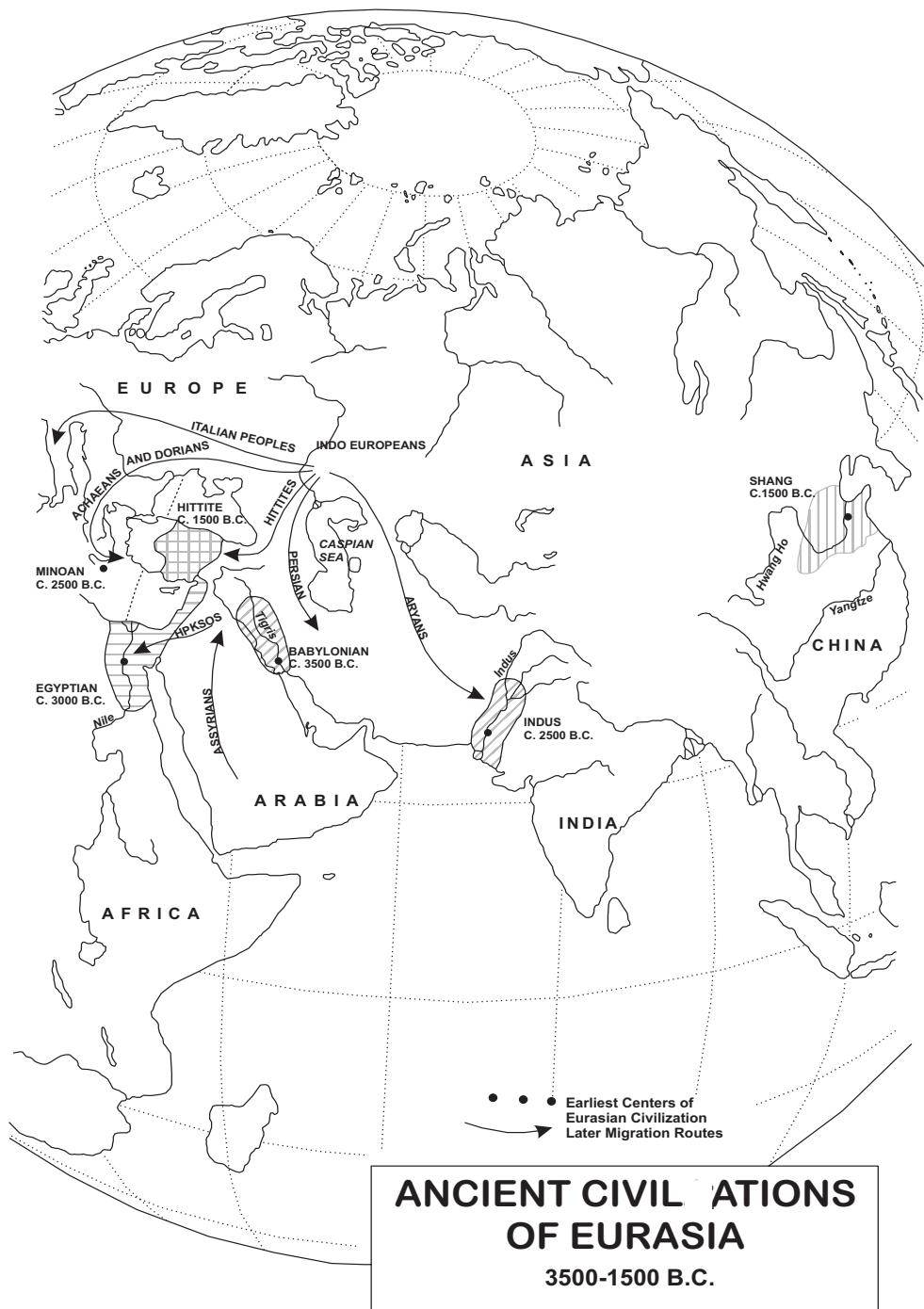
MODULE - 1

Ancient India

The Vedic Age (1500BC–600BC)



Notes



Map 4.1 Ancient Civilization of Eurasia

and 1500 BC we get, in these regions, evidence of horses, spoked wheels, fire cult and cremation which formed important parts of Aryan life in India. Apart from these, the artifacts and ceramics also suggest movement of people from Central Asian region to South Asian region. However it may be noted that some scholars still argue that the Aryans were the indigenous people of India and that they did not come from outside.

The new people came in several batches spanning several hundred years. All this while interaction between the indigenous inhabitants and the newcomers continued. One of



INTEXT QUESTIONS 4.2

1. How do we know that Sanskrit, Latin, Greek, Hittite and Kassite languages belong to one group?

2. From where do we find the archaeological evidence of Aryan migrations?

3. Which are the places which can be identified as the bearers of Aryan cultural traits?

4. Mention the prominent markers of the Aryan culture.

Notes



4.3 GEOGRAPHICAL HORIZON OF THE VEDIC ARYANS

The early Vedic Aryans lived in the area known as *sapta-sindhu* meaning area of seven rivers. This area largely covers the northwestern part of South Asia up to river Yamuna. The seven rivers included Sindhu, Vitasta (Jhelum), Asikni (Chenab), Parushni (Ravi), Vipash (Beas), Shutudri (Sutlej) and the Sarasvati. In this area the Rigvedic people lived, fought battles, grazed their herds of cattle and other domesticated animals. Gradually moving eastward, they came to occupy eastern U.P. (Kosala) and north Bihar (Videha) during the Later Vedic period. Here they came into contact with the people who spoke languages different from their own and were living in this area for long.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 4.3

1. List the rivers included in the collective term *sapta-sindhu*.

2. With which regions did the Aryans come into contact in the Later Vedic period?

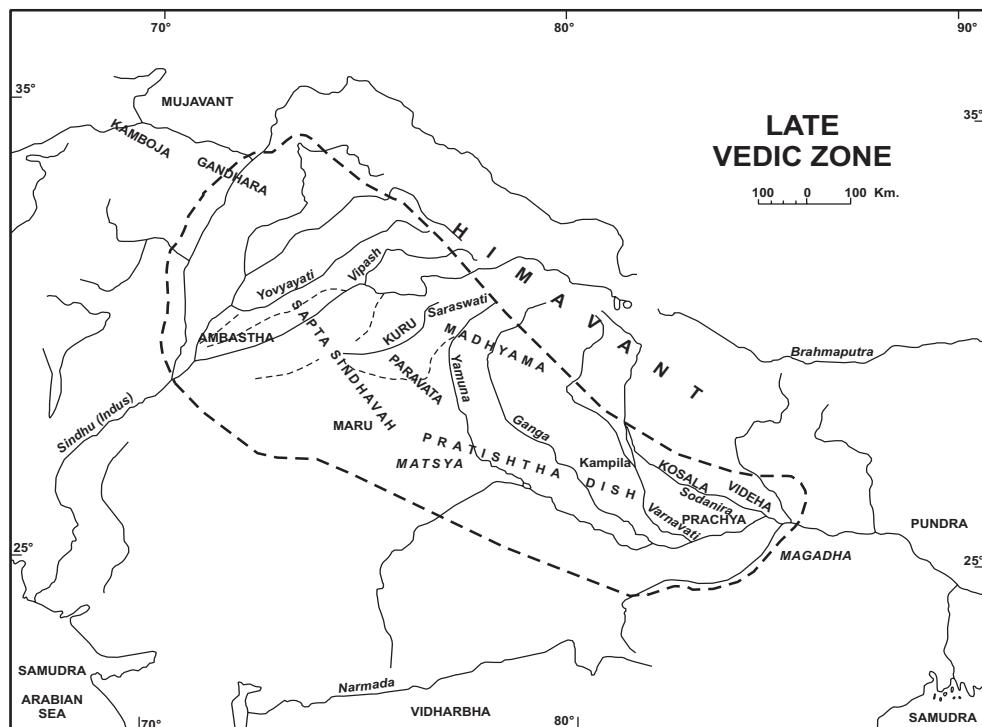
4.4 EARLY VEDIC ECONOMY

The early Vedic Aryans were **pastoralists**. Cattle rearing was their main occupation. They reared cattle, sheep, goats, and horses for purposes of milk, meat and hides. We arrive at this conclusion after analyzing the literary evidence in the *Rigveda*. A large number of words are derived from the word *go* meaning cow. A wealthy person was known as *gomat* and the daughter called *duhitri* which means one who milks the cow. The word *gaveshana* literally means search for cows, but it also means battle since many battles were fought over cattle. The cows were thought of as providers of everything. Prayers are offered for increase in the number of cattle. All the above and many more references show that cattle breeding was the most important economic activity of the Rigvedic Aryans.

However, this is not to suggest that the early Vedic people had no knowledge of agriculture. The evidence for agriculture in comparison with pastoral activities in the early



Notes



Map 4.2 Later Vedic Zone

portions is meager and mostly late insertions. A few references show that they had knowledge of agriculture and practiced it to supplement their food requirements. They produced *yava* (modern *jau* or barley), which was rather a generic word for cereals.

Apart from cattle-rearing and small-scale cultivation, people were engaged in many other economic activities. Hunting, carpentry, tanning, weaving, chariot-making, metal smelting etc. were some such activities. The products of these activities were exchanged through barter. However, cows were the most favoured medium of exchange. The priests received cows, horses and gold ornaments as fees for performing sacrifices.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 4.4

1. Describe the main occupation of the Early Vedic Aryans.

2. Mention a few examples which underscore the importance of the cattle.

3. How important was agriculture in the life of the Early Vedic Aryans? Explain.

4. What economic activities were the Early Vedic Aryans engaged in? Make a list.

5. Explain the system of exchange during the Early Vedic period.



Notes

4.5 CHANGES IN THE LATER VEDIC PHASE

During later Vedic phase, agriculture became the mainstay of the Vedic people. Many rituals were introduced to initiate the process of agriculture. It also speaks of ploughing with yokes of six and eight oxen. The buffalo had been domesticated for the agricultural purposes. This animal was extremely useful in ploughing the swampy land. The god Indra acquires a new epithet ‘Lord of the Plough’ in this period. The number and varieties of plant food increased. Apart from barley, people now cultivated wheat, rice, pulses, lentils, millet, sugarcane etc. The items of *dana* and *dakshina* included cooked rice. Thus with the beginning of food production agricultural produce began to be offered in the rituals. *Tila*, from which the first widely used vegetable food-oil was derived increasingly, came to be used in rituals.

The main factor in the expansion of the Aryan culture during the later Vedic period was the beginning of the use of iron around 1000 BC. The Rigvedic people knew of a metal called *ayas* which was either copper or bronze. In the later Vedic literature *ayas* was qualified with *shyama* or *krishna* meaning black to denote iron. Archaeology has shown that iron began to be used around 1000 BC which is also the period of later Vedic literature. The northern and eastern parts of India to which the Aryans later migrated receive more rainfall than the north-western part of India. As a result this region is covered with thick rain forests which could not be cleared by copper or stone tools used by Rigvedic people. The use of iron tools now helped people clear the dense rain forests particularly the huge stumps left after burning, in a more effective manner. Large tracts of forestland could be converted into cultivable pieces in relatively lesser time. The iron plough could turn the soil from deeper portions making it more fertile. This process seems to have begun during the later part of the Rigvedic period but the effect of iron tools and implements become evident only towards the end of the Later Vedic period.

There has been a continuous increase in the population during the later Vedic period due to the expansion of the economy based on agriculture. The increasing number and size of Painted Grey Ware (PGW) settlements in the *doab* area shows this. With the passage of time the Vedic people also acquired better knowledge of seasons, manuring and irrigation. All these developments resulted in the substantial enlargement of certain settlements such as Hastinapur and Kaushambi towards the end of the Later Vedic period. These settlements slowly began to acquire characteristics of towns. Such rudimentary towns inhabited mainly by the chiefs, princes, priests and artisans were supported by the peasants who could spare for them some part of their produce voluntarily or involuntarily.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 4.5

1. What was the main economic activity during the Later Vedic period?

2. What changes do we notice in the life of the Aryans with the increased importance of agriculture?

3. Who is known as the ‘lord of the plough’?

4. Why is the *tila* ritually considered very important?



5. How did the use of iron implements help agriculture during the Later Vedic period?

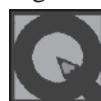
6. What were the reasons behind the growing sizes of some Painted Grey Ware sites?

4.6 THE EARLY VEDIC SOCIETY

The family was the basic unit of the Rigvedic society. It was **patriarchal** in nature. **Monogamy** was the usual norm of marriage but the chiefs at times practiced **polygamy**. Marriages took place after attaining maturity. After marriage the wife went to her husband's house. The family was part of a larger grouping called *vis* or **clan**. One or more than one clans made *jana* or **tribe**. The *jana* was the largest social unit. All the members of a clan were related to each other by blood relation. The membership of a tribe was based on birth and not on residence in a certain area. Thus the members of the Bharata tribe were known as the Bharatas. It did not imply any territory. The Rigvedic society was a simple and largely an **egalitarian** society. There was no caste division. Occupation was not based on birth. Members of a family could adopt different occupations. However certain differences did exist during the period. *Varna* or colour was the basis of initial differentiation between the Vedic and non-Vedic people. The Vedic people were fair whereas the non-Vedic indigenous people were dark in complexion and spoke a different language. Thus the *Rigveda* mentions *arya varna* and *dasa varna*. Here *dasa* has been used in the sense of a group different from the Rigvedic people. Later, *dasa* came to mean a slave. Besides, certain practices during this period, such as concentration of larger share of the war booty in the hands of the chiefs and priests resulted in the creation of some inequalities within a tribe during the later part of this Vedic phase.

The warriors, priests and the ordinary people were the three sections of the Rigvedic tribe. The *sudra* category came into existence only towards the end of the Rigvedic period. This means that the division of society in the early Vedic period was not sharp. This is indicated by the following verse in the *Rigveda*: “I am a poet, my father is a physician and my mother grinds grain upon the stone. Striving for wealth, with varied plans, we follow our desires like cattle.”

The women in society enjoyed respectable position. She was married at a proper age and could choose a husband of her own choice. She could take part in the proceedings of the tribal assemblies called *sabha* and *samiti*.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 4.6

1. Describe the forms of marriages during the Early Vedic period.

2. Was the Early Vedic society egalitarian in nature? Give reasons for your answer.

3. On what basis was the Early Vedic society divided?

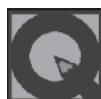
4. How did inequalities appear in the Early Vedic society?
-

4.7 SOCIAL CHANGES IN THE LATER VEDIC PHASE

The family remains the basic unit of the Vedic society. However, its composition underwent a change. The later Vedic family became large enough to be called a joint-family with three or four generations living together. The rows of hearths discovered at Atranjikhera and at Ahichchhtra (both in western Uttar Pradesh) show that these were meant for communal feeding or for cooking the food of large families. The institution of *gotra* developed in this period. This means that people having common *gotra* descended from a common ancestor and no marriage between the members of the same *gotra* could take place. Monogamous marriages were preferred even though polygamy was frequent. Some restrictions on women appeared during this period. In a text women have been counted as a vice along with dice and wine. In another text a daughter has been said to be the source of all sorrows. Women had to stay with her husband at his place after marriage. The participation of women in public meetings was restricted.

However, the most important change was the rise and growth of social differentiation in the form of *varna* system. The four *varnas* in which society came to be divided were the brahmanas, kshatriyas, vaishyas and shudras. The growing number of sacrifices and rituals during the period made the brahmanas very powerful. They conducted various rituals including those related to different stages of agricultural operations. This made them all the more important. The kshatriyas, next in the social hierarchy, were the rulers. They along with brahmanas controlled all aspects of life. The vaishyas, the most numerous *varna* were engaged in agriculture as well as in trade and artisanal activities. The brahmanas and the kshatriyas were dependent on the tributes (gifts and taxes) paid to them by the vaishyas. The shudras, the fourth *varna* were at the bottom of the social hierarchy. They were ordained to be in the service of the three upper *varnas*. They were not entitled to the ritual of *upanayana samskara* (investiture with sacred thread necessary to acquire education). The other three varnas were entitled to such a ceremony and hence they were known as *dvijas*. This can be construed as the beginning of the imposition of disabilities on the shudras as well as the beginning of the concept of ritual pollution.

Another important institution that began to take shape was *ashrama* or different stages of life. *Brahmacharya* (student life), *grihastha* (householder), and *vanaprastha* (hermitage) stages are mentioned in the texts. Later, *sanyasa*, the fourth stage also came to be added. Together with *varna*, it came to be known as *varna-ashrama dharma*.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 4.7

1. What was the nature of the Later Vedic family?

2. What do you understand by the term *gotra*?

3. Which term signifies the beginning of the imposition of disabilities on the shudras?

Notes



4. Explain the composite term *varnashrama dharma*?
-

4.8 THE EARLY VEDIC RELIGION

The prayers to propitiate gods for physical protection and for material gains were the main concerns of the Rigvedic people. The Rigvedic gods were generally personifications of different aspects of natural forces such as rains, storm, sun etc. The attributes of these gods also reflect the tribal and patriarchal nature of the society as we do not find many goddesses mentioned in the text. Indra, Agni, Varuna, Mitra, Dyaus, Pushana, Yama, Soma, etc. are all male gods. In comparison, we have only a few goddesses such as Ushas, Sarasvati, Prithvi, etc which occupy secondary positions in the pantheon.

The functions of different gods reflect their needs in the society. Thus, since the Rigvedic people were engaged in wars with each other they worshipped Indra as a god. He is the most frequently mentioned god in the *Rigveda*. He carried the thunder-bolt and was also respected as a weather god who brought rains. Maruts the god of storm aided Indra in the wars in the way tribesmen aided their leader in the tribal wars. Agni, the fire god was the god of the home and was considered an intermediary between gods and men. Soma was associated with plants and herbs. Soma was also a plant from which an intoxicating juice was extracted. This juice was drunk at sacrifices. Varuna, another important deity, was the keeper of the cosmic order known as *rita*. This *rita* was an important aspect of tribal set-up. Pushan was the god of the roads, herdsmen and cattle. In the life of the pastoral nomads, this god must have been very important. Other gods were similarly associated with other aspects of nature and life.

All these gods were invoked and propitiated at *yajnas* or sacrifices. These sacrifices were organized by the chiefs of the tribes and performed by priests. Gods thus invoked in the sacrifices supposedly rewarded the sacrificers with success in wars, progeny, increase in cattle and long life. It also brought large number of gifts in the form of *dana* and *dakshina* to the priests.

It is important here to note that during the entire Vedic phase people did not construct temples nor did they worship any statue. These features of Indian religion developed much later.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 4.8

1. On what basis do we say that the attributes of the Rigvedic gods reflect the tribal and patriarchal nature of the society?

2. Describe the main features of the Rigvedic god Indra.

3. Why did the tribal chiefs organize *yajnas*?

4. Why was the god Pushan important for the Rigvedic people?

5. What was the main function of the fire god Agni?



Notes

4.9 CHANGES IN THE LATER VEDIC PHASE

We have already noted that in the later Vedic period agriculture had become an important activity of the people. Changes in the material life naturally resulted in a change in their attitude towards gods and goddesses too. Continuous interactions with the local non-Aryan population also contributed to these changes. Thus, Vishnu and Rudra which were smaller deities in the Rigveda became extremely important. However, we do not have any reference to different incarnations or avatars of Vishnu, we are so familiar with, in any of the Later Vedic texts.

Another important feature was the increase in the frequency and number of the *yajna* which generally ended with the sacrifices of a large number of animals. This was probably the result of the growing importance of a class of brahmanas and their efforts to maintain their supremacy in the changing society. These *yajnas* brought to them a large amount of wealth in form of *dana* and *dakshina*. Some of the important *yajnas* were - *ashvamedha*, *vajapeya*, *rajasuya* etc. You must have heard about these *yajnas* in the stories of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. In these *yajnas* which continued for many days a large part of gifts went to the brahmanas. The purpose of these *yajnas* was twofold. Firstly, it established the authority of the chiefs over the people, and secondly, it reinforced the territorial aspect of the polity since people from all over the kingdom were invited to these sacrifices.

You will find it interesting to know that people began to oppose these sacrifices during the later Vedic period itself. A large number of cattle and other animals which were sacrificed at the end of each *yajna* must have hampered the growth of economy. Therefore, a path of good conduct and self-sacrifice was recommended for happiness and welfare in the last sections of the Vedas, called the *Upnishads*. The *Upnishads* contain two basic principles of Indian philosophy viz., *karma* and the transmigration of soul, i.e., rebirth based on past deeds. According to these texts real happiness lies in getting *moksha* i.e. freedom from this cycle of birth and re-birth.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 4.9

1. Why did the performance of the *yajnas* increase in number during the Later Vedic period?

2. What were the purposes of the *yajnas*?

3. Explain the significance of the *yajnas* ?

4. Why did people begin to oppose the performance of the *yajnas*?

4.10 THE EARLY VEDIC POLITY

We have mentioned above that the chief social unit of the Aryans was known as *jana*. The chief of this unit was the political leader called *rajan*. The main function of the chief was to protect the *jana* and cattle from the enemies. He was helped in his task by the tribal assemblies called *sabha*, *samiti*, *vidatha*, *gana* and *parishad*.



Out of these *sabha* and *samiti* were the most important assemblies. All aspects of life were discussed in these assemblies. These may include wars, distribution of the spoils of wars, judicial and religious activities etc. Thus these assemblies in a way limited the powers of the chiefs. Interestingly, women were also allowed to participate in the deliberations of the *sabha* and *samiti*.

The post of the chief was not hereditary. The tribe generally elected him. Though the succession in one family was known but that was not based on the rule of primogeniture (i.e., the eldest son acquiring the position). The *purohita* assisted and advised the chief on various matters. Other than the *purohita*, there were a limited number of other officials who assisted the chief in the day-to-day tribal affairs. *Senani*, *kulapa*, *gramani*, etc. are some of the functionaries which find mention in the *Rigveda*. The *sena* or army was not a permanent fighting group and consisted of able bodied tribesmen who were mobilized at the time of the wars. *Takshan*, the carpenter and *rathakara*, the chariot maker were responsible for making chariots. There is no official mentioned as a collector of taxes. The people offered to the chief what is called *bali*. It was just a voluntary contribution made by the ordinary tribesmen on special occasions. All this shows that the early Vedic polity was an uncomplicated system based on the support and active participation of all the tribesmen. This situation, however, changed during the later Vedic phase.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 4.10

1. Explain the functions of *sabha* and *samiti*.

2. What was the main function of the *rajan*?

3. What was the nature of *bali* during the Early Vedic period?

4. Make a list of the main functionaries who helped the chief in various matters.

4.11 CHANGES IN THE LATER VEDIC PHASE

The changes in the material and social life during the later Vedic period led to changes in the political sphere as well. The nature of chiefship changed in this period. The territorial idea gained ground. The people started to lose their control over the chief and the popular assemblies gradually disappeared.

The chiefship had become hereditary. The idea of the divine nature of kingship gets a mention in the literature of this period. The brahmanas helped the chiefs in this process. The elaborate coronation rituals such as *vajapeya* and *rajasuya* established the chief authority. As the chiefs became more powerful, the authority of the popular assemblies started waning. The officers were appointed to help the chief in administration and they acquired the functions of the popular assemblies as main advisors.

A rudimentary army too emerged as an important element of the political structure during this period. All these lived on the taxes called *bali*, the *shulka*, and the *bhaga* offered by the people.

The chiefs of this period belonged to the kshatriya varna and they in league with the brahmanas tried to establish complete control over the people in the name of *dharma*.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 4.11

1. Describe the nature of the chiefship during the Later Vedic period.
2. Why did the powers of the popular assemblies decline during the Later Vedic period?
3. What were the functions of the coronation rituals?



WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

After the decline of the Harappan urbanism, we witness the coming of a new kind of people on the northwestern horizon of India. These people were animal herders and spread out in groups from the Southern Russia to different parts of the world. Many such groups reached India through Afghanistan at different periods. Their language, known as Indo-Aryan or Sanskrit became predominant with borrowings from the local languages. Their earliest compositions are known as the *Rigveda* and many more compositions followed subsequently. We get to know about the culture of these people from these collections known as the *Vedas*.

The Aryans initially lived in the region drained by seven rivers Septa Sindhu roughly covering the modern states of Punjab, and Harayana. Subsequently they also occupied the region drained by Ganga, Yamuna, Sarayu, Ghaghra, and Gandaka roughly covering the modern states of eastern Uttar Pradesh and western Bihar.

The Aryans, who were mainly cattle herders, became agriculturists later, and assisted by the knowledge of iron technology they were able to establish larger settlements in the Ganga- Yamuna *doab* region. This is shown by the PGW archaeology and the contents of the Later Vedic literature. This change precipitated a series of changes in the other spheres of life. From an egalitarian, tribal socio-political set up during the Early Vedic period it was transformed into a varna divided territorially based set up by the end of the Vedic period. The position of the tribal chiefs became hereditary and the emerging officials usurped the role of the popular assemblies. The growing number of *yajnas* shows the importance of the king as well as of the brahmanas. Similarly, the gods who were important earlier lost their significance and gave way to new deities. All these changes ultimately resulted in the rise of *janapadas* and *mahajanapadas* i.e. bigger territorial states in the sixth century BC.



TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Who were the Aryans? Where did they spread out from?
2. Indicate the geographical location of the Early Vedic people.
3. Describe the main cultural traits of the Aryans.





4. Explain the changes in the economic pattern of the Aryans during the Later Vedic period.
5. How did the knowledge of iron technology help in the expansion of agriculture?
6. What kind of disabilities were imposed on women in the Later Vedic period?
7. How did the brahmanas become important in the Later Vedic period?
8. Describe the functions of the popular assemblies during the Early Vedic period.

**ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****4.1**

1. Sacred knowledge
2. Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajur Veda, Atharaveda
3. Aranyakas & Upanishads
4. Prose texts containing explanations of mantras and sacrificial rituals
5. philosophical discussions

4.2

1. Words in these languages are similar in sound & meaning
2. Andronovo culture situated in southern Siberia
3. Bactria – Margiana
4. Evidence of Horses, spoked wheels, fire cult, cremation

4.3

1. Sindhu, Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas, Sutlej, Sarasvati
2. U.P. (Kosala) & North Bihar (Videha)

4.4

1. Pastoralists
2. Refer 4.4 para 1
3. Refer 4.4 para 2
4. Hunting, carpentry, training, weaving, gambling, chariot making, metal smeltry.
5. Barter through medium of cow.

4.5

1. Agriculture
2. Refer 4.5 para 2
3. god Indra
4. It was first widely used vegetable food oil.
5. to clear dense forests; Iron plough could turn soil to make it fertile
6. Due to expansion of economy based on agriculture & continuous increase in population.

4.6

1. Monogamy & polygamy
2. Yes, No caste division, occupation not based on birth, No occupation as taboo.

**Notes**

3. On the basis of Varna or colour
4. Concentration of larger share of war booty in the hands of chiefs & priests

4.7

1. Joint family
2. Descendent from a common ancestor, no marriage between members of the same *gotra*.
3. Not entitled to the ritual of upanayana Samakara, (ritual pollution)
4. Last para of 4.7

4.8

1. Refer 4.8, para 1
2. Weather god, carried thunderbolt
3. To invoke and propitiate gods
4. As he was god of roads, herdmen & cattle.
5. Being an intermediary between gods and men.

4.9

1. Due to growing importance of a class of brahmans & their effort to maintain supremacy.
2. To establish authority of chiefs over people and to reinforce territorial aspect of polity.
3. A large amount of wealth in forms of dana & dakshina went to Brahmans.
4. It was affecting their economic life.

4.10

1. All aspects of life to be discussed such as distribution of spoils of wars, judicial & religious activites.
2. To protect jana & cattle from enemies.
3. A voluntary contribution made by ordinary tribesmen on special occasions.
4. Purohita, Senami, Kulapa, Gramani

4.11

1. It become hereditary
2. As chiefs became more powerful, officers to help chief in administration acquired the functions of popular assemblies.
3. To establish the chief authority.

HINTS TO TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Refer 4.2 para 1 & 2
2. Refer 4.3
3. Refer 4.2 para 2
4. Refer 4.5
5. Refer 4.5 para 2
6. Refer 4.7 para 1



7. Refer 4.11
8. Refer 4.10

GLOSSARY

Pastoralism	—	A life pattern based primarily on cattle rearing with limited agricultural activity.
Patriarchal	—	A social system based on the supremacy of the male members of the family/society.
Monogamy	—	A social practice of having only one wife at any given time.
Polygamy	—	A social practice of having more than one wife at one time.
Clan	—	A group of families claiming descent from one common ancestor having certain obligations towards each other.
Tribe	—	It refers to the groups whose unity is based on extended kinship ties, i.e. family relationships rather than on territorial organization.
Egalitarian	—	A society in which all people are considered equal.
PGW	—	Painted Grey ware; It is associated with the iron using people of the Later Vedic period and was used by the affluent section of the society.

**5****Notes**

FROM JANAPADAS TO EMPIRE

In the last chapter we studied how later Vedic people started agriculture in the Ganga basin and settled down in permanent villages. In this chapter, we will discuss how increased agricultural activity and settled life led to the rise of sixteen *Mahajanapadas* (large territorial states) in north India in sixth century BC. We will also examine the factors, which enabled Magadh one of these states to defeat all others to rise to the status of an empire later under the Mauryas. The Mauryan period was one of great economic and cultural progress. However, the Mauryan Empire collapsed within fifty years of the death of Ashoka. We will analyse the factors responsible for this decline. This period (6th century BC) is also known for the rise of many new religions like Buddhism and Jainism. We will be looking at the factors responsible for the emergence of these religions and also inform you about their main doctrines.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to

- explain the material and social factors (e.g. growth of agriculture and new social classes), which became the basis for the rise of *Mahajanapada* and the new religions in the sixth century BC;
- analyse the doctrine, patronage, spread and impact of Buddhism and Jainism;
- trace the growth of Indian polity from smaller states to empires and list the sixteen *Mahajanapadas*;
- examine the role of Ashoka in the consolidation of the empire through his policy of *Dhamma*;
- recognise the main features— administration, economy, society and art under the Mauryas and
- Identify the causes of the decline of the Mauryan empire.

5.1 THE EMERGENCE OF NEW RELIGIONS

In this period, the centre of economic and political activity shifted from Haryana and western UP to Eastern UP and Bihar, which had more rainfall and better fertility of land. As it was now easier to exploit the iron ore resources of Bihar and adjoining regions, people started using more and more iron tools and ploughshare to clear thick forest cover and cultivate the hard soil of this area.



The evidence of the growth of agriculture comes from the archaeological and literary sources of this period. In fact, a ploughshare dated to around 500 BC has been found from Jakhera in Etah district in western U.P. Many other important pieces of evidence of the use of iron in this period come from Rajghat, Kaushambi, Vaishali and Sonpur. The Buddhist texts tell us how cultivation of paddy, sugarcane and mustard required utmost care and several rounds of ploughing. Expansion of agriculture resulted in improved food supply and helped in the development of craft production, trade and urban centres.

The sixth century BC is known as an era of ‘Second Urbanisation’ in the Indian Subcontinent. After the decline of the Harappan Towns urban centres now emerge again after a gap of more than a thousand years. However, this time towns developed in the middle Ganga basin and not in the Indus plain. It is said that more than sixty towns and cities such as Pataliputra, Rajagriha, Sravasti, Varanasi, Vaishali, Champa, Kaushambi and Ujjaini developed between 600 and 300 BC. These cities became centre of craft production and trade, and were inhabited by a large number of artisans and merchants. The goods produced by artisans like textile, silk, jewellery, pottery etc, were carried by merchants to other towns. Varanasi was a major centre of trade connected with Sravasti and Kaushambi. Sravasti was also connected with Vaishali through Kapilavastu and Kusinara. *Jataka* stories tell us that traders travelled from Magadh and Kosala via Mathura to Taxila. Mathura was the transit point for travel to Ujjain and coastal areas of Gujarat also.

Development of trade is reflected in the discovery of thousands of coins known as punch marked coins (PMC). Various kind of marks such as crescent, fish, trees, hill etc. are punched on these coins, they are therefore called Punched Marked Coins. Numismatists have identified nearly 550 types of such coins, made mainly of silver and sometimes copper.

The improvement in agriculture and development of trade, money and urbanisation had an impact on the society as well. Indeed, due to these changes traditional equality and brotherhood gave way to inequality and social conflict. People wanted some kind of reprieve from new social problems like violence, cruelty, theft, hatred, and falsehood. Therefore, when new religions such as Jainism and Buddhism preached the concept of peace and social equality, people welcomed it. These religions emphasised that true happiness does not lie in material prosperity or performance of rituals but in charity, frugality, non-violence, and good social conduct. Besides, the general economic progress had led to the rise of vaisyas and other mercantile groups, who wanted better social position than what brahmanas gave them. Therefore, they preferred to patronise non-vedic religions like Buddhism and Jainism through substantial donations.

Buddhism and Jainism were not the only religions, which challenged brahmanical dominance. According to the Buddhist sources, more than 62 sects and philosophies flourished in this period. One of these sects was known as Ajivika, which was founded by Makkhali Goshal. Ajivakas were very popular in Magadh in the third century BC and Mauryan kings donated several caves in the honour of Ajivaka monks.

**INTEXT QUESTION 5.1**

1. Name those places where the evidence of iron tools during 6th BC has been found.

2. Describe some important trade routes and trade centres of this period.

3. Why were early coins called punch marked coins?

4. Who was the founder of the Ajivika sect?

Notes**5.2 DOCTRINES OF JAINISM AND BUDDHISM****Jainism**

Vardhaman Mahavira, is regarded as the founder of Jainism. He was born in 599 BC near Vaishali in Bihar. He was twenty-fourth and the last *tirthankara* of Jainism. Jainism believed that the main goal of human life is the purification of soul and attainment of *nirvana*, which means freedom from birth and death. This can be achieved not through rituals and sacrifices but by pursuance of *triratna* and *panchamahavrata*. *Triratna* or three jewels are right faith, right knowledge, and right conduct, which can lead to liberation. Right conduct means observance of five great vows: *ahimsa* (do not commit violence) *satya vachana* (do not speak a lie), *asteya* (do not steal), *brahmacharya* (do not indulge in sexual act) and *aprighraha* (do not acquire property). Householders were expected to observe milder form of the practice of these virtues called *anuvrata* (small vows) in comparison to the monks. So, one can notice that while the Brahmanism was a ritual oriented religion this new faith was conduct-oriented.

The most distinguishing feature of Jainism was the concept of *anekantavada* or *syadvadava*. It means that the truth can be viewed from *aneka* or various angles. Another important feature of Jainism was its emphasis on extreme form of penance, austerity, and strict non-violence. Perhaps emphasis on strict discipline was one of the reasons why it could not attract the masses in large number. Mahavira used Prakrit language to spread his message. However, just like other religions, Jainism also could not remain united for very long and later divided into two sects called the Digambara (who remain naked) and Svetambara (who wear white clothes).

Buddhism

The founder of Buddhism was Gautama Buddha, who was born in 566 BC at Lumbini, located in the foothills of Nepal. One night he left his palace in search of truth and ultimately attained the true knowledge at Bodhgaya. He then began to be called Buddha or the enlightened one. He delivered his first sermon at Sarnatha near Varanasi. This event is known as *dharma-chakra-pravartana* (turning of the wheel of law). He also established his *samgha* here. He died at the age of 80 in 486 B.C. at Kusinara or Kusinagar near Gorakhpur in eastern UP.

Buddha asked his followers to avoid the two extremes of indulgence in worldly pleasure and the practice of strict abstinence and asceticism. This philosophy of *madhyama marga* or the Middle Path is reflected in all the issues related to Buddhism. The main



teachings of Buddhism are encapsulated in the basic concept of four noble truths or *arya satya* and eightfold path or *astangika marga*. The first noble truth, Buddha said that suffering (*dukkha*) is the essence of the world and is like an ocean of miseries. Second noble truth is *dukkha samudya* i.e. every suffering has a cause. Third noble truth is *dukkha nirodha* i.e. suffering could be extinguished and fourth *dukkha nirodha gamini pratipada* i.e. there is a path leading to the extinction of *dukkha*. He said that every thing in this world like birth, old age and death leads to suffering. If one wants to get rid of suffering one has to conquer the desire. This removal of desire can be achieved through eight fold path, these are: right faith, right resolve, right speech, right action, right living, right effort, right thought, right self concentration.

Buddha used Pali language spoken by masses to propagate his teachings. Buddha allowed lower varnas and women to join the *sangha*. Four Buddhist councils organised over different periods played a significant role in the propagation of Buddhism. In the fourth council during the reign of Kanishka, Buddhism split into two major sects called Hinayana and Mahayana. Mahayana adopted Sanskrit as its language and started worshipping Buddha in the form of an idol, while Hinayana continued to follow Pali and treated Buddha as a guide.

Buddhism became weak by seventh century AD but the impact of Buddhism can be seen in all spheres of life in Indian history. Buddhist scholars created many literary texts like *Tripitaka*, *Milindapanho*, *Buddhacharita* etc. Buddhism became an inspiration for the promotion of art and architecture, in the form of stupas, rock cut caves and paintings. These can be noticed at Sanchi, Bharhut, Amravati, Ajanta etc. Buddhism inspired Gandhara and Mathura schools of art. Buddhism by opening its door to all the classes challenged the superiority of Brahmanism and gave better social position to lower castes.

**INTEXT QUESTION 5.2**

1. What are the three elements of the Jaina doctrine of *triratna*?

2. What are the two sects of Jainism called?

3. Where did Buddha deliver his first sermon?

4. What are the four noble truths and eightfold path in Buddhism?

5. What did Buddha say about *dukkha*?

6. Buddha used which language to preach his words?

7. How are Mahayana and Hinayana different?

8. What are the contributions of Buddhism in field of literature and art?

5.3 THE SIXTEEN MAHAJANPADAS

The sixth century BC was not only a period of socio-economic and religious development but it also witnessed new political developments. In the later Vedic period, as we have seen earlier, people had started agriculture, which made them settle down at a particular place. These permanent settlements led to foundation of *janapadas* or territorial states under the control of the king. In the sixth century BC the main area of political activity gradually shifted from Western UP to Eastern UP and Bihar. This region was not only fertile on account of better rainfall and river systems but was also closer to iron production centres. The use of better iron tools and weapons enabled some territorial states to become very large and they came to be called *mahajanapadas*. Most of them were situated north of Vindhya, between Bihar in the east to the northwest frontier of the subcontinent. The list of these sixteen *mahajanapadas* is given below.

Table 5.1
The Mahajanpadas

Most of these states were monarchical in nature but some of them, called *ganasangha*, had an oligarchical system of governance. In this system unlike monarchies, where a hereditary king rules, administration was run by an elected king with the help of a large council or assemblies comprising heads of all important clans and families. This system was certainly more democratic than monarchy, though the common man had no participation in the administration. The most important of these



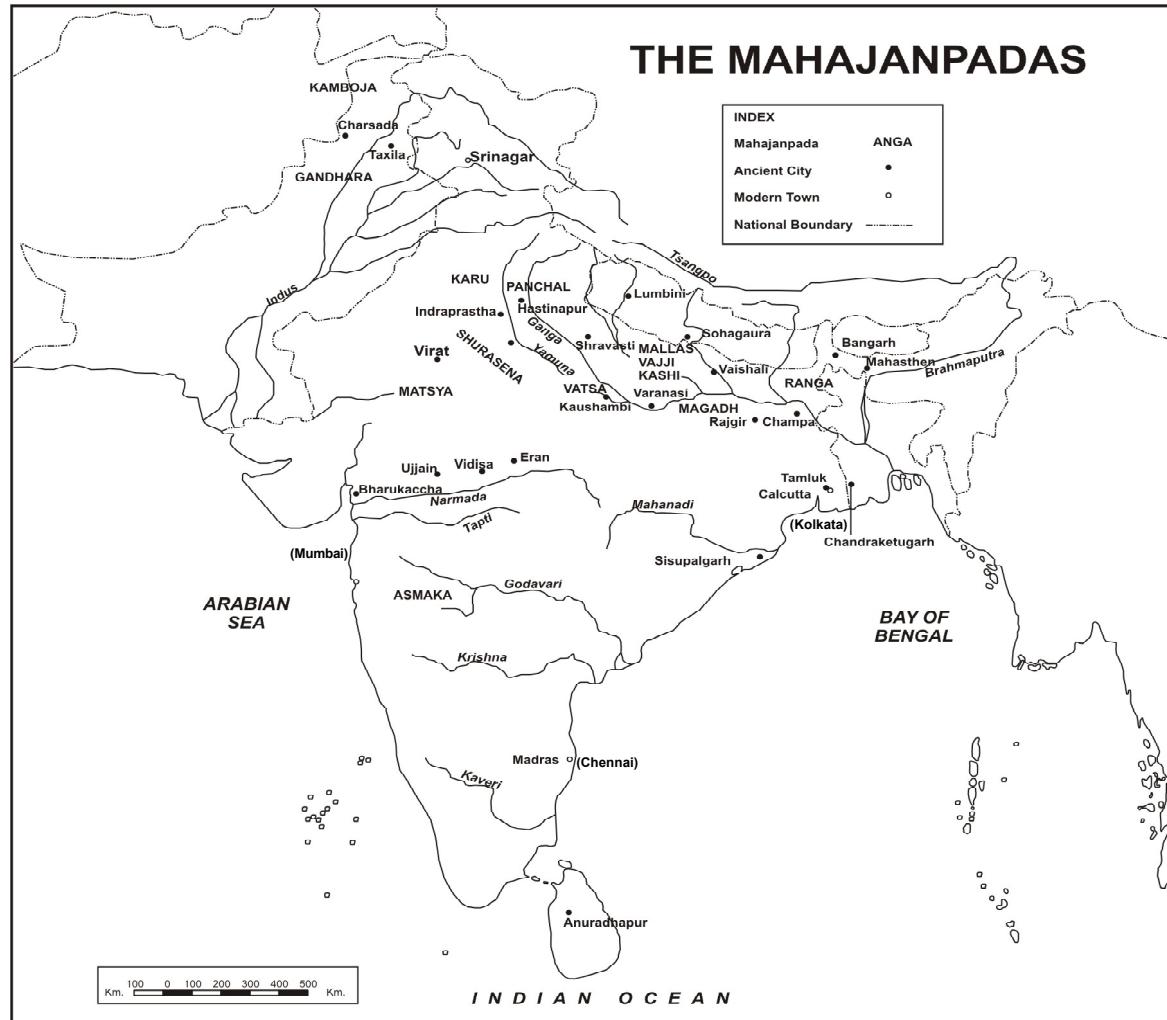
Notes

Sl. No.	Mahajanapadas	Capital	Modern location
1	Anga	Champa	Munger and Bhagalpur
2	Magadh	Girivraja / Rajagir	Gaya and Patna
3	Kasi	Kasi	Banaras
4	Vatsa	Kausambi	Allahabad
5	Kosala	Sravasti	Eastern Uttar Pradesh
6	Surasena	Mathura	Mathura
7	Panchala	Ahichchatra and Kampilya	Western Uttar Pradesh
8	Kuru	Indraprastha	Merrut and S.E. Haryana
9	Matsya	Viratnagar	Jaipur
10	Chedi	Sothivati / Banda	Bundelkhand
11	Avanti	Ujjain / Mahismati	Madhya Pradesh & Malwa
12	Gandhar	Taxila	Rawalpindi
13	Kamboj	Pooncha	Rajori & Hajra (Kashmir)
14	Asmaka	Pratisthan / Paithan	Bank of Godavari
15	Vajji	Vaishali	Vaishali
16	Malla	Kusinara	Deoria & U.P.



Notes

states was that of Vajjis with their capital at Vaishali, which was ruled by the Lichchhavis. These oligarchies mainly existed in the foothills of the Himalayas. They were gradually defeated and conquered by the Magadhan Empire.



Map 5.1 The Mahajanapadas



INTEXT QUESTION 5.3

1. Name any four mahajanapadas of the sixth century BC.

2. How *Ganasangha* different from monarchies?

3. Which was the most important ganasangha state in the 6th century BC?

5.4 THE RISE OF MAGADH

The political fight among these *mahajanapadas* led ultimately to one of them namely Magadh to emerge as the most powerful state and the centre of a vast empire. The earliest important ruler of Magadh was the king Bimbisara, who ruled for 52 years from 544 BC to 492 BC. He pursued a three-pronged policy, namely, matrimonial alliances, friendship with strong rulers and conquest of weak neighbours to expand the empire. Under the policy of matrimonial alliances, he married the sister of Prasenjit, the king of Kosala. She brought in dowry the territory of Kashi, which yielded a revenue of 1,00,000 coins. The control over Kasi and friendship with Prasenajit allowed Magadh to concentrate on other areas. His other wives were daughters of the chiefs of Lichchavi and Madra (middle Punjab) respectively. He also conquered Anga by defeating its ruler Brahmadatta. Anga and specially its capital Champa were important for the inland and maritime trade. Thus, Kashi and conquest of Anga became the launching pad for the expansion of Magadh. He was a contemporary of both Buddha and Mahavira and paid equal respect to them. It seems that he was either killed or forced to commit suicide by his son Ajatasatru, who was eager to take over the throne himself.

Ajatasatru was an aggressive person and first came into conflict with his maternal uncle Prasenajit, who was aggrieved by the treatment meted out to Bimbisara. He asked Ajatasatru to return the territory of Kasi, which was given to his mother in dowry. Ajatasatru refused and it was only after a fierce battle Prasenajit agreed to leave Kasi with Magadh. Similarly he fought with his maternal grandfather Chetak, the chief of Vaishali and after 16 long years of war Ajatasatru succeeded in breaking the might of Vaishali. Therefore, he not only retained Kasi, but also added Vaishali to Magadh.

Ajatasatru was succeeded by Udayin and his main contribution was building a fort on the confluence of river Ganga and river Son at Pataliputra or Patna. It was strategically a significant step as this site was not only centrally located but also allowed easy movement of merchant and soldiers.

Udayin was succeeded by the dynasty of Shishunaga. The most important achievement of Shishunaga was to defeat Avanti(Malwa) and make it a part of Magadh. The successor of Sisunaga was his son Kalashoka. It was during his rule the second Buddhist council was held.

The Shisunaga dynasty was succeeded by the kings of the Nanda dynasty. Mahapadma Nanda was its most important ruler. According to the Brahmanical texts he belonged to a low caste or at least a non-kshatriya caste. He possessed a large army and added Kalinga to his empire. The last Nanda king was Dhannanand. He is believed to be an arrogant and oppressive ruler who imposed heavy taxes on the common man. It made them quite unpopular among the masses and ultimately Chandragupta took advantage of this public resentment and uprooted the Nanda rule and set up the Mauryan Empire.

The question is how Magadh could establish gradually its dominance over all other states of the period. Magadh certainly benefited from numerous able and ambitious rulers, but its strength was based primarily on certain geographical factors. Its earlier capital Girivraja or Rajagir was surrounded by five hills, which helped it to provide natural fortification. Secondly, its fertile river plain provided a vast amount of agricultural surplus, which was essential for raising a vast standing army. Forests in southern areas gave it timber and elephants. Magadh had another advantage in its control over iron deposits found very near south Bihar. Such access to iron made Magadhan weapons far superior and agriculture tools more productive. It was this material background which helped Magadh to become more powerful than other *mahajanapadas*.

Notes



**INTEXT QUESTION 5.4**

1. What policies were adopted by Bimbisara for the expansion of his kingdom?

2. How did geographical factors play an important role in the rise of Magadh?

3. What was the name of the old capital of Magadh?

4. Name two rulers with whom Ajatsatru fought battles?

5. Who was the most important ruler of the Nanda dynasty?

6. In whose rule was the second Buddhist council held?

5.4 RISE OF THE MAURYAN EMPIRE***Mauryan Sources***

The establishment of Mauryan dynasty by Chandragupta Maurya in 321 B.C. marks a turning point in the history of early India. For the first time now, we have at our disposal a number of sources which throw better light on the history of this period. The edicts issued by Ashoka are the most important source of information and there are at least 44 such edicts which have been found inscribed on rocks and pillars. These are composed mostly in *Prakrit* language and are written in *Brahmi* script in most of the areas. These inscriptions are also the first evidence of writing in ancient India. As far as archaeological sources are concerned, punch-marked coins, remains of the palace of Ashoka at Kumharar and several pieces of sculptures are important.

The most important literary sources are *Arthashastra* of Kautilya and *Indica* of Megasthenes. *Arthashastra* is a text on statecraft, which gives advice to kings as to how to rule his land and discharge his duties. *Indica* is an account left by a Greek ambassador Megasthenes sent by Seleucus to the court of Chandragupta Maurya. Two Ceylonese

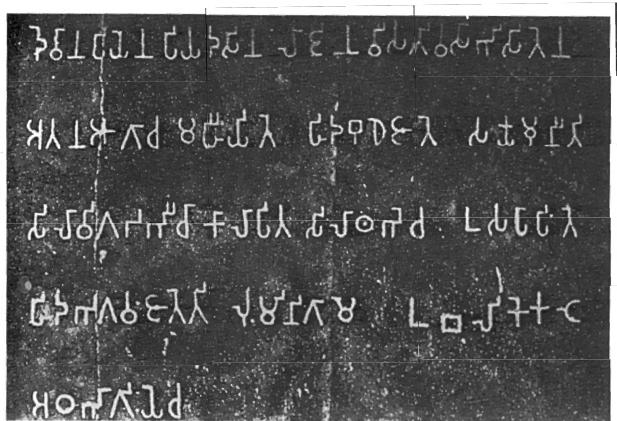


Fig. 5.1 Rummimdei Edict

Buddhist texts called *Dipavamsa* and *Mahavamsa* and a play called *Mudrarakshas* written by Visakhadatta are other valuable source books.

Mauryan Dynasty

The founder of the Mauryan dynasty, Chandragupta Maurya (321–297 BC) inherited a large army of the Nandas, which he used to conquer almost whole of north, the north-west, and a large part of the peninsular India. His son Bindusara (297–269BC) succeeded him. He promoted trade and cultural interaction with Greeks, but not much is known about him. Ashoka (269–232BC) succeeded his father Bindusara. According to Buddhist traditions he came to throne after killing his 99 brothers, but such stories cannot be trusted without confirmation from other sources. Ashoka fought a major war with Kalinga around 261 BC in which large number of people were killed or imprisoned. Perhaps this bloodshed moved his heart and he decided to abandon the

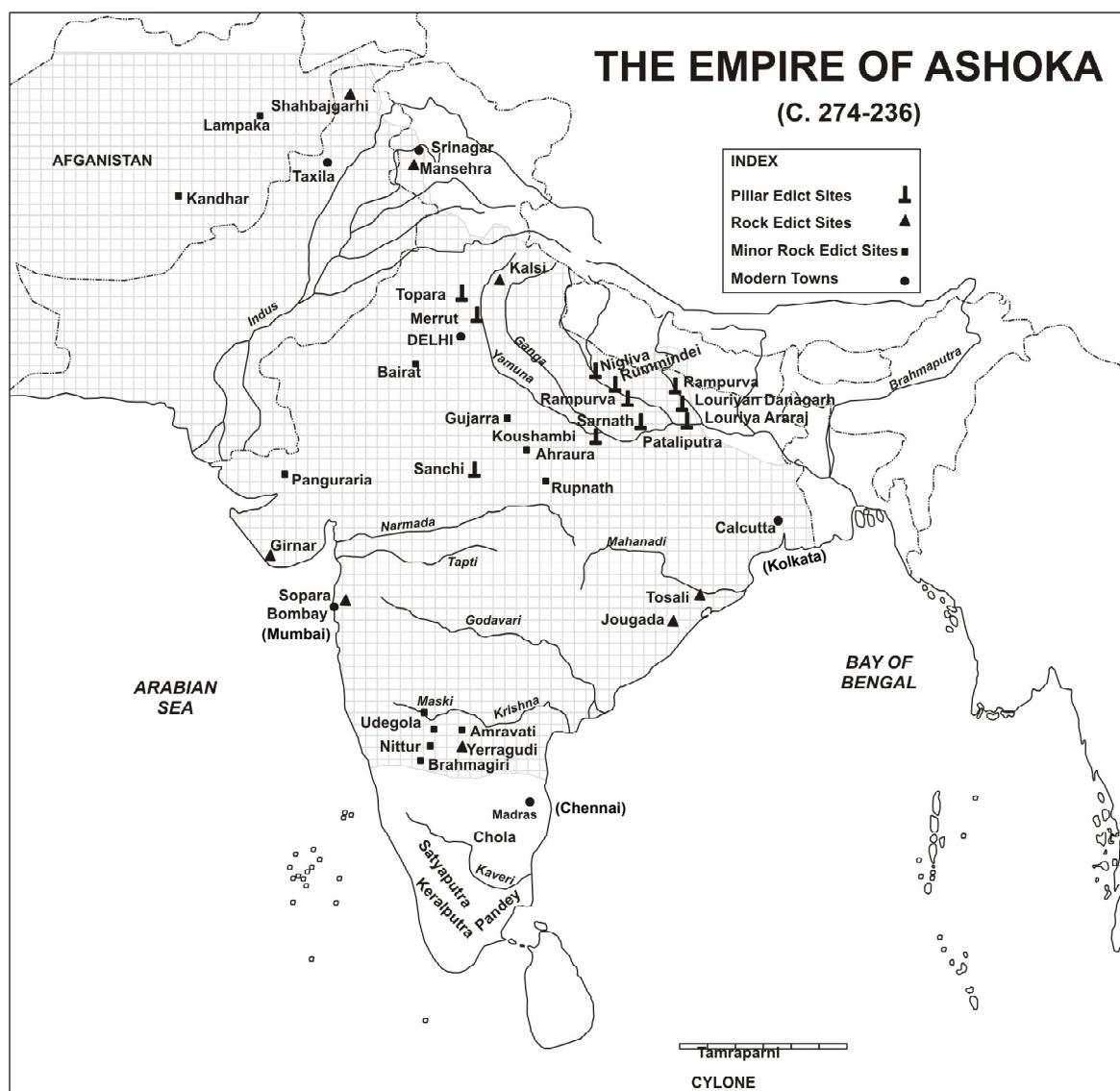
Notes



THE EMPIRE OF ASHOKA

(C. 274-236)

INDEX
Pillar Edict Sites
Rock Edict Sites
Minor Rock Edict Sites
Modern Towns



INDIAN OCEAN

Map 5.2 The Empire of Ashoka



policy of military expansion and declared that he would in future favour *dhammaghosha* (drum of *dharma*) than *bherighosha* (war drum). He spent the rest of his life in promoting and spreading the policy of *Dharma*. However, his successors could not keep the empire integrated and it completely disappeared after the last king Brihadaratha was assassinated by his military chief Pushyamitra Sunga around 187 BC.

**INTEXT QUESTION 5.5**

1. What are the important sources for the writing of Mauryan history?

2. Most of Ashokan Edicts are written in which language and script?

3. Who is the author of *Indica*?

4. Who was the last Mauryan king?

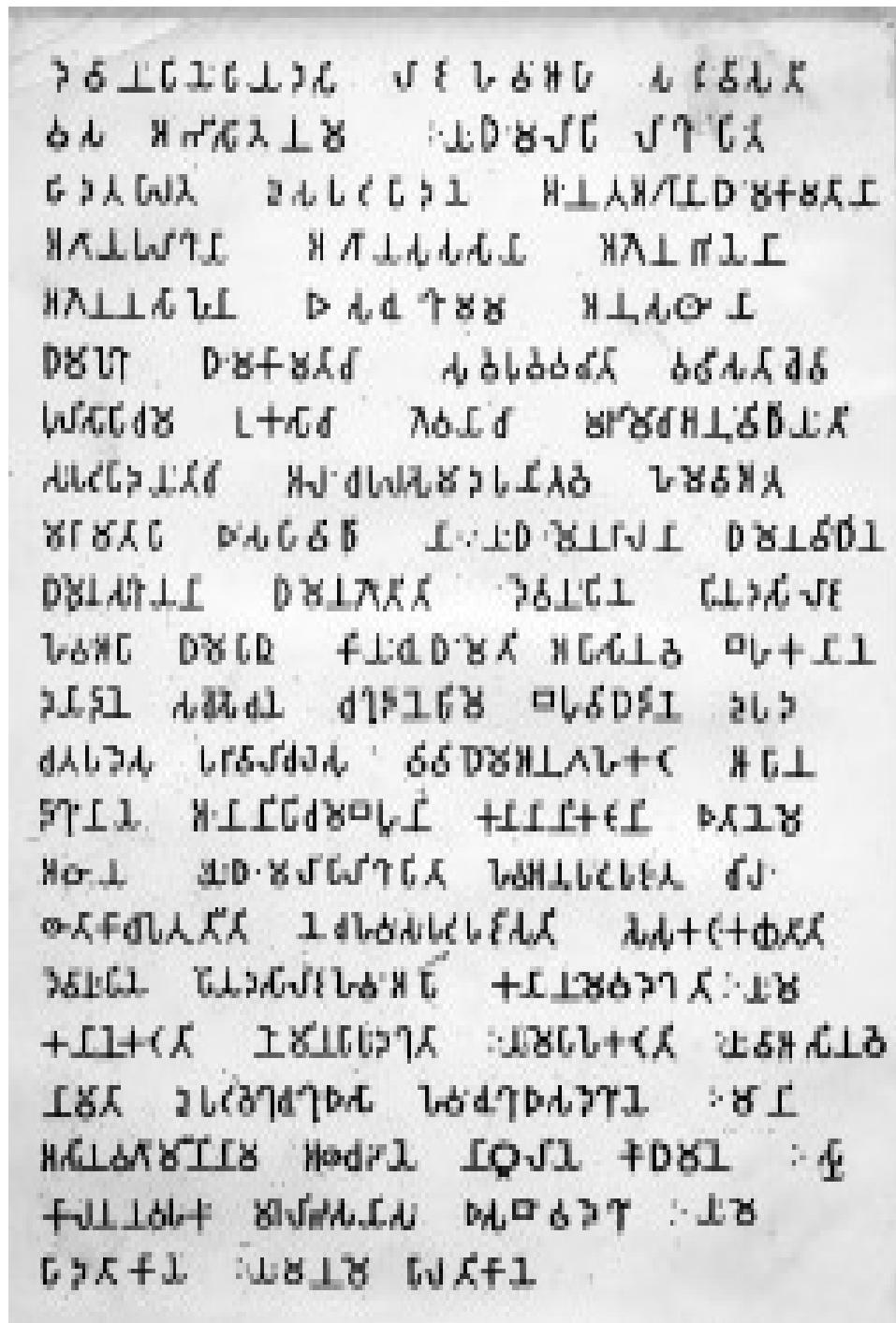
5.4 ASHOKA AND HIS DHAMMA

Ashoka is considered as one of the greatest kings in Indian history. He is praised not so much for his militaristic activity as for his policy of *Dharma*. According to some of scholars Ashoka was a follower of Buddhism and through Dharma he tried to propagate the principles of Buddhism. But this does not seem to be true as Dharma had nothing to do with the propagation of Buddhism. It was a code of conduct or ideal social behaviour common to all religions of the world, which he appealed to his subjects to follow. Although Ashoka himself believed in Buddhism, he never discriminated against other faiths or religions.

A closer look at Asokan edicts illustrates that basic attributes of Dharma included compassion (*daya*), charity (*dana*), truthfulness, purity and gentleness. Pillar Edict III asks subjects to control violence, cruelty, anger and envy. Rock Edict I call for a ban on animal sacrifice and social gatherings like *samaj*. The Rock Edict II declares measures to be taken for the construction of hospitals, roads, inns, wells and planting of shade giving trees. Third, Fourth and Twelfth rock edicts ask people to respect parents, relatives, brahmanas and *shramanas* (monks). He also appointed a special type of officials called dharma mahamatras. Their main function was to oversee and supervise the peaceful function of the principles of Dharma. Twelfth rock edict is specially important since it says “the king Piyadassi, the beloved of the gods, respected all sects whether ascetics or householders, and he honours them with gifts and honours of various kinds...let an alien sect also be respected on every occasion.” It shows clearly that neither Dharma was Buddhism nor Ashoka was trying to convert people to Buddhism. However, the question is why did he give so much attention to this policy?

Historians believe that by the later half of Ashoka's rule, expansion of the empire was almost complete. It was an empire having different cultural, social and religious groups. In order to save the empire from political tensions arising out of these differences there were two ways. He could either increase the size of armed forces to seek military solutions to these conflicts, which might have needed increased taxes and in turn could lead to more resistance. Another alternative was peaceful resolution of

various conflicts by cementing and welding of divergent groups. Ashoka chose the second alternative in order to promote harmony and peace in his kingdom. Ashoka



Notes



Fig. 5.2 Ashoka's Pillar edict

thus has an important place in Indian history because he was the first king to initiate policies of peace rather than of war and aggression.

**INTEXT QUESTION 5.6**

1. What do Ashokan inscriptions tell us about *Dhamma*?

2. What was the attitude of Ashoka towards other religions?

3. What was the function of the *dhammamahamatras*?

5.7 DECLINE OF THE MAURYAS

Mauryas maintained a huge army, a vast bureaucracy and ruled over a large part of the Indian subcontinent. But soon after the death of Ashoka the empire got divided into two parts. While king Dasaratha controlled the eastern part of the empire, the western part was under Samprati. Why did such a large empire decline so early?

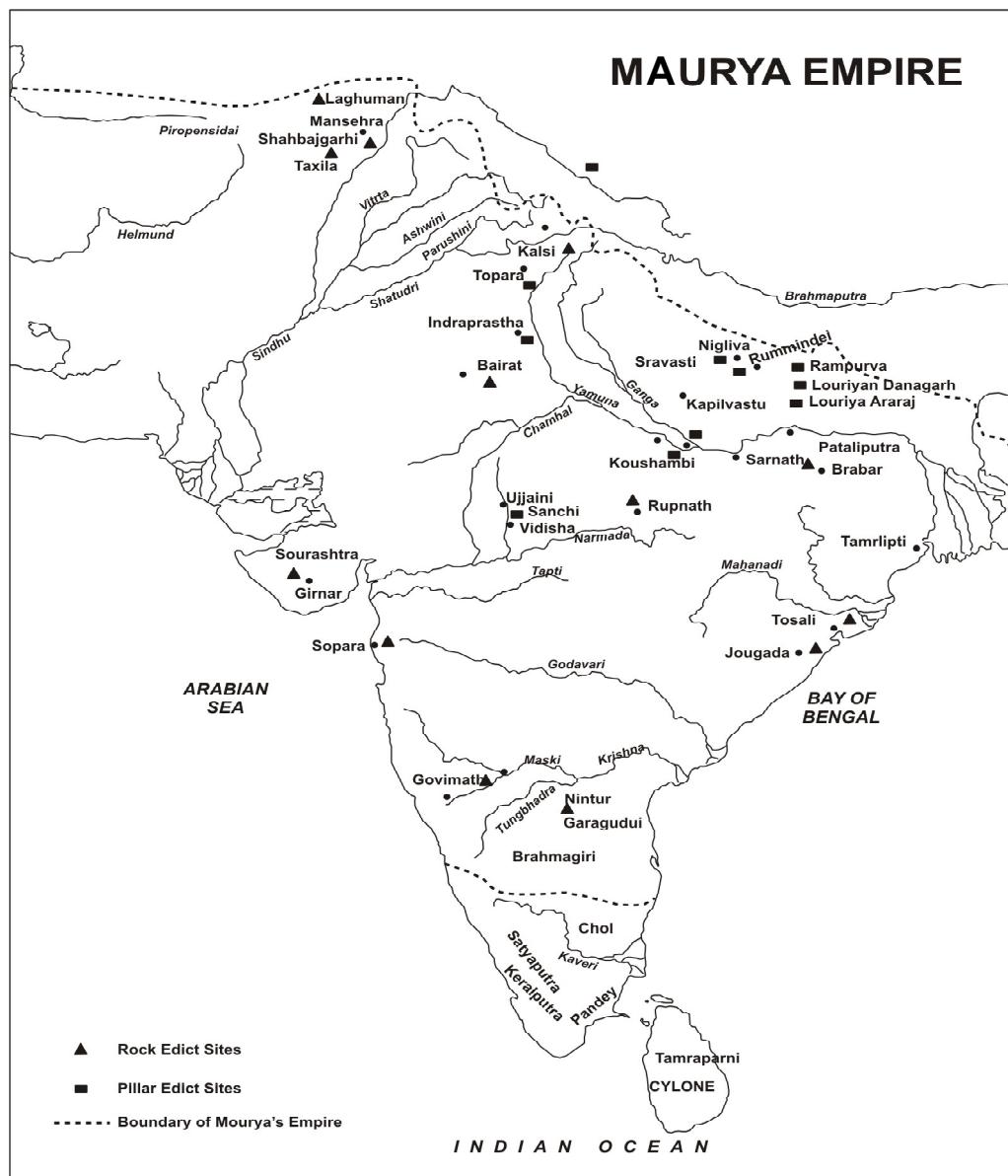
Some historians believe that Ashoka under the influence of Buddhism became a pacifist and weakened his army. It is also said that the religious policy of Ashoka antagonised the brahmanas as he banned the animal sacrifice, which affected the economic and religious activities of the brahmanas. Therefore, Pusyamitra, the brahmana chief of the army, killed the last Mauryan king. But this does not seem to be correct as the study of Ashokan inscriptions reveals that Ashoka paid full respect to brahmanas. Moreover it is true that Ashoka followed a policy of peace and harmony, but he did not disband his army and was always prepared to face any eventuality.

One of the main reasons for decline could be the succession of weak rulers. Who could not keep under check those, ministers and officials of far-flung regions, who had become oppressive and acted against the interest of the centre. It is also possible that Mauryan rule may have suffered some kind of economic crisis. It is reflected in the debasement of some coins of that period. This crisis might have developed either due to massive donations and charity or overspending on the imperial administrative system. In fact, the reason of decline was inherent in the structure of the vast centralized empire itself. The successors of Ashoka could not maintain the balance between the centre and the various provincial governors of the empire, and at the first possible opportunity, they made an effort to separate themselves from the centre. However, Mauryan empire though declined had a positive effect of spreading agriculture and iron technology in the different parts of the subcontinent. It facilitated the rise of several regional kingdoms in the post-Mauryan period.

**INTEXT QUESTION 5.7**

1. Highlight the important reasons for the decline of the Mauryan empire.

2. Who ruled two parts of empire after the death of Ashoka?



Notes

3. What was the impact of Mauryan rule on the subsequent history of India.

5.8 INDIA UNDER THE MAURYAS

Administration

The Mauryas established an elaborate system of administration in which king played the chief role. He was assisted by a council of ministers but the king himself took all final decisions regarding revenue, law and order, war or any other matter related to administration. He was expected to be agile and accessible to his officials at all times. In the one of his rock edicts Ashoka declared that even common people could meet



him any time. He also declared that all his subjects were like his children and he desired their happiness in this and the other world.

The king appointed a council of ministers called *mantriparishad*. There were various other officials, who helped him perform his duties. These officials were known as *amatyas*, *mahamatras* and *adhyakshas*. *Arthashastra* gives a list of 27 *adhyakshas* or superintendents who were responsible for running various economic departments like agriculture, mining, weaving, trade, etc.

Among all the executive officials *samaharta* was the most important. His responsibility was to supervise collection of taxes from all types of sources. Most of the superintendents mentioned above, functioned on his orders. The Mauryas also employed a large number of spies.

The Mauryans maintained a huge army and according to Greek writer Justin, Chandragupta had 6,00,000 infantry, 30,000 cavalry, 9,000 elephants, 8,000 chariots. Although, it seems to be an exaggerated figure but possession of a large army by the Mauryas cannot be doubted. Megasthenes reports that administration of different branches of army was carried out through six committees of five members each. An officer called *antahpala* was responsible for the security of frontier forts.

As far as judicial administration is concerned, the king was the supreme authority, but various civil as well as criminal courts functioned at the local level right from village to province. It seems most of the cases were disposed off at the village level by village elders.

Apart from Magadh with its capital at Patliputra, the Mauryan Empire was divided into four other provinces with capitals at Taxila (northwestern India), Suvarnagiri (southern India), Tosali (eastern India) and Ujjain (western India). These were put under the control of royal princes called *kumara*.

The city administration of Patliputra, according to Megasthenes, was conducted by six committees of five members each. Each committee was assigned different subjects such as industry, foreigners, birth and death registration, trade and market regulations and tax collection to look after. However, we are not sure whether the entire Indian subcontinent had similar type of city administration. It seems that while central province of Magadh was under strict supervision of the king, other far-flung areas might have witnessed varied degree of administrative control.

Economy, Society and Art

The Mauryas as mentioned above maintained a huge standing army and employed a large number of state officials. These soldiers and officials were paid in cash. As the normal taxes were not considered sufficient to meet all the needs of the state and hence the state undertook and regulated numerous economic activities to generate more and more resources.

The mainstay of economy in this period was agriculture. The Mauryan state founded new agricultural settlements to bring virgin land under cultivation. People from overpopulated areas and prisoners of war were brought to these new settlements to work on the fields. These villages belonged to king and were looked after by government official called *sitadhyaksha* or superintendent of agriculture. Besides state farms there were individual land holders who paid a variety of taxes to the state. The importance of irrigation was fully realised and peasants had to pay more tax on irrigated land. The *bali* or land tax was the main item of revenue, levied at the rate of one sixth of the produce. Peasants had to pay many other taxes like *pindakara*, *hiranya*, *bhaga*, *bhoga* etc. The exact nature of which is not clear. Principal crops were various varieties of rice, barley, millet, wheat, sugarcane and most of the pulses, peas and oilseeds, which we know today.



Notes

Trade and urban economy received great impetus under the Mauryas and influenced almost all parts of the empire. The main centres of textile manufacturing were Varanasi, Mathura, Bengal, Gandhara and Ujjain. Mining and metallurgy was another important economic activity. Trade was conducted through land and river routes. Patliputra was also connected through various trade routes with all parts of the subcontinent. The main centre of trade in the northwest was Taxila, which was further connected with central Asian markets. Tamralipti (Tamluk in west Bengal) in the east and Broach in the west were important seaports.

Craft activities were also a major source of revenue to the state. Artisans living in towns had to pay taxes either in cash or kind or work free for the king. Traders and artisans were organised in associations called *srenis* or guilds. The Mauryas were responsible for introduction of iron on a large scale in different parts of the subcontinent. They maintained a monopoly over production of iron, which was in great demand by the army, industry and agriculture. It was done through the official called *loha-adyaksha*.

As far as society is concerned, despite the challenge posed by Buddhism and Jainism the *varna* system continued to exist and brahmanas and kshatriyas dominated the social hierarchy. However, as a result of greater trade and commerce, there was improvement in the social status of vaisyas or trading communities and shudras. Now shudras could be involved in the agricultural and artisanal activities. This period also saw increase in the number of untouchables.

The Mauryan period provides the earliest examples of ancient Indian art and architecture. Megasthenes has described the grandeur of the Mauryan palace at Pataliputra. Some remains of this palace have been found at Kumrhar near Patna. Ashokan pillars at Rampurva, Lauriya Nandangarh and Sarnath present excellent examples of stone sculptures which developed in this period. Our national emblem comes from the Asokan pillar at Sarnath near Benaras. All these pillars are circular and monolithic, and are made of sand stone found at Chunar, near Mirzapur in U.P. We also find some rock cut architecture like Lomasa Risi cave in the Barabara hills near Gaya belonging to the Mauryan period. Among several stone and terracotta sculptures of this period, polished stone sculpture of a *chauri*-bearing female known as Didarganj Yakshini is most famous.

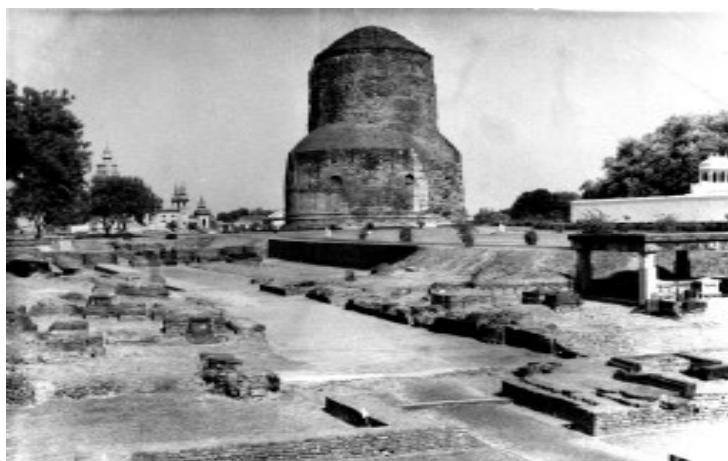
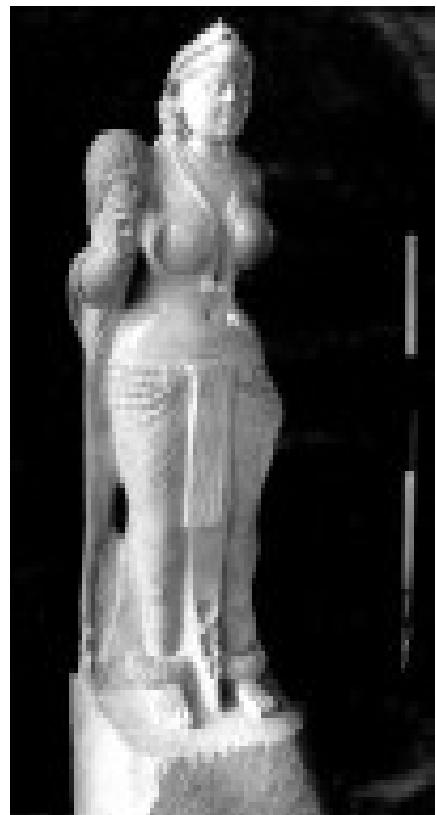


Fig. 5.3 Sarnath Pillar

**Notes***Fig. 5.4 Cave in the Barabar Hills**Fig. 5.5 Didarganj Yakshini***INTEXT QUESTION 5.8**

1. Which Mauryan officer was responsible for the assessment and collection of taxes?

2. Which officer looked after the cultivation of the land owned by the king?

3. What is the name of rock cut cave in the Barabar hills near Gaya?

**WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT**

The use of iron tools and cattle-power in the fertile middle Ganga plain led to the increase of agricultural productivity and the food supply in the sixth century BC. This development of agriculture resulted in growth of towns, trade and money economy. That is why the sixth century B.C. is also known as a period of ‘second urbanisation’. In this period, some non-vedic religions like Buddhism and Jainism responded to the new social realities and argued for a ban on cattle sacrifice, money-lending and urban lifestyle. They advocated better social status for trading communities, who in turn

patronised these new religions. The main teachings of Jainism are *triratna* and *panchamahavrata*, while Gautam Buddha asked people to follow four noble truths and eight-fold path. The *Janapadas* of earlier times consolidated in this period and resulted in the rise of sixteen *mahanapadas*. Some *janapadas* followed the non-monarchical system of governance. Ultimately, the utilisation of favourable geographical condition by the ambitious rulers of Magadh resulted in its rise as an empire. Later on Mauryas uprooted the Nanda dynasty and established their rule. They maintained a highly centralised bureaucracy along with a vast army, and administered a large part of the Indian Subcontinent. One of the greatest Indian rulers Ashoka adopted the policy of Dhamma, which was aimed at consolidation of the empire and resolving internal conflicts through peaceful means. After the death of Ashoka the Mauryan Empire declined due to inefficiencies of later rulers and unstable relationship between core and peripheries of the empire.

Notes**TERMINAL QUESTIONS**

1. Why did vaisyas patronise Buddhism and Jainism?
2. What are the main teachings of Jainism and Buddhism?
3. What are the main attributes of Ashoka's policy of Dhamma?
4. Why did Ashoka adopt the policy of Dhamma?
5. What efforts were made by the Mauryans to collect more taxes?
6. Describe the contribution of the Mauryan rule in the field of art.

**ANSWER TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****5.1**

1. Jakhera, Rajghat, Kaushambi, Vaishali and Sonpur
2. See 5.1 para 3
3. See 5.1 para 4
4. Makhali Goshal

5.2

1. Right faith, right knowledge, and right conduct
2. Digambar and Svetambar
3. Saranath
4. See 5.2 para 4
5. See 5.2 para 4
6. Pali
7. See 5.2 para 7
8. See 5.2 para 6

5.3

1. See chart in 5.3
2. See 5.3 para 2

MODULE - 1

Ancient India



Notes

From Janapadas to Empire

3. Vaishali

5.4

1. See 5.4 para 1
2. See 5.4 para 6
3. Girivraja or Rajgir
4. Prasenajit and Chetak
5. Mahapadmanand
6. Kalashoka

5.5

1. See 5.5 para 1
2. Prakrit and Brahmi
3. Megasthenes
4. Brihadaratha

5.6

1. See para 1
2. See para 2
3. To take care of Brahamans & all other kinds of monks.

5.7

1. See 5.7
2. Dasaratha and Samprati
3. It led to the spread of iron technology and agriculture, which facilitated the rise of several regional kingdoms in India.

5.8

1. Samaharta
2. Sitadhyaksha
3. Lomasa Risi cave, near Gaya

HINTS TO TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. See 5.1 para 5
2. See 5.2 para 1 and para 4
3. See 5.6 para 1
4. Rock edict I See 5.6 para 2

5. See 5.8 para 2 & 3 (Under Economy, Society & Art)
6. See 5.8 last para

GLOSSARY

Jataka	-	Collections of Buddhist stories about the previous births of the Buddha
Tirthankara	-	A tradition of prophets in Jainism; literally “ford-maker”
Nirvana	-	Extinction of human desire
Digambara	-	Sky-clad, a sect of Jainism which remains naked
Svetambara	-	A sect of Jainism whose members are dressed in white cloths
Mahayana	-	A sect of Buddhism which believe in idol worship of Buddha
Hinayana	-	A sect of Buddhism which advocated the adherence to original teachings of Buddha
Samaj	-	Religious and merrymaking congregation of common people
Dhammadhammamatta-	-	Officer appointed by Ashoka to look after his principles of Dhamma in society.
Chauri	-	A hairy fan waved to and fro around a king or a religious object.


Notes



POST MAURYAN DEVELOPMENTS

In the last chapter you read about the Mauryan Empire which was spread over a large part of the Indian sub-continent and also included Kandahar in modern Afghanistan. In around 187 BC, the Mauryan Empire met its end. In the present section we shall study about the political and cultural developments in the Indian subcontinent from the end of the Mauryas to the rise of the Guptas, i.e., from BC 200 and 300 AD. In these five hundred years we see not only the rise of multiple political powers in different parts of the subcontinent but also the introduction of new features in art, architecture and religion.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to learn about

- the different political regions which came into focus after the decline of the Mauryan Empire
- the groups of foreigners who came from Central Asia and got settled here;
- the growth of trade between the Roman world and India and its impact.
- important features of various schools of art and sculptures which emerged during 200 BC–300 AD and
- the early history of south India and the significance of the Sangam literature.

6.1 POLITICAL HISTORY OF NORTH INDIA

The disintegration of the Mauryan empire led to the rise of many regional kingdoms in different parts of the country. At the same time, we witness invasions by various groups of people based in Central Asia and western China. These were Indo-Greeks, the Scythians or the Shakas, the Parthians or the Pahlavas and the Kushanas. It was through such political processes that India came in closer contact with the central Asian politics and culture.

(i) The Shungas

The last Mauryan king was killed by his Commander-in-Chief, Pushyamitra Shunga, who then established his own dynasty in north India. It came to be known as Shunga dynasty. While the Shungas were ruling in north India, the Indo-Greeks also known as Yavanas, about whom we shall study in some details later, emerged in Bactria (Balkh) as an independent power and soon started extending their rule in the north-western and northern parts of India. There are indications that Pushyamitra Shunga

came in conflict with Demetrius, a Bactrian Greek ruler without suffering much political damage. An inscription engraved on a pillar at Besnagar (present day Vidisha) refers to one Heliodorus, native of Taxila near Rawalpindi in Pakistan, as an envoy of an Indo-Greek ruler Antialkidas in the court of Bhagabhadra, who has been identified with one of the later Shunga rulers. According to the inscription he was devotee of Lord Krishna.

In around the second quarter of the first century BC, the last of the Shunga rulers was killed treacherously by his minister Vasudeva, who then laid down the foundations of the Kanva dynasty. We know virtually nothing about the Kanvas except for the rather cursory references to them in later texts.

(ii) *The Bactrians or the Indo-Greeks*

After the death of Alexander in 323 BC, many Greeks came to settle on the northern western borders of India with Bactria (area to the north-west of the Hindukush mountains in the present day north Afghanistan) as an important centre. The rulers of Bactria came to be called the Bactrian-Greeks because of their Hellenistic (Greek) ancestry. One of the rulers of the line named Demetrius as mentioned above came into conflict with Pushyamitra.

However, the most celebrated Indo-Greek ruler was Menander. His empire appears to have included southern Afghanistan and Gandhara, the region west of the R. Indus. He has been identified with king Milinda mentioned in the famous Buddhist text *Milindapanho* which contains philosophical questions that Milinda asked Nagasena (the Buddhist author of the text) and informs us that impressed by the answers, the king accepted Buddhism as his religion. Menander is believed to have ruled between c. 155 BC and 130 BC.

(iii) *The Shakas*

Shaka is the Indian term used for the people called Scythians, who originally belonged to central Asia. Defeated by their neighbours the Yueh-chis (the tribal stock to which the Kushanas belonged) they gradually came to settle in northwestern India around Taxila in the first century B.C Under the successive Shaka rulers their territories extended up to Mathura and Gujarat.

The most famous of all the Shaka rulers was Rudradaman who ruled in the middle of second century AD. His empire was spread over almost whole of western India. His achievements are known through the only inscription that he got engraved on a boulder at Girnar or Junagarh. This inscription happens to be the first royal inscription of early India composed in chaste Sanskrit.

(iv) *The Parthians*

The Parthians were of Iranian origin and because of strong cultural connection with the Shakas, these groups were referred to in the Indian sources as Shaka-Pahlava. The important inscription indicating the Parthian rule in northwestern area of Pakistan is the famous Takht-i-Bahi inscription recovered from Mardan near Peshawar. The inscription, dated in 45 AD, refers to Gondophernes or Gondophares as a Parthian ruler. Some literary sources associate him with St. Thomas, who is said to have converted both, the king and his brother, to Christianity.

Notes



**INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.1**

1. Who was the last Mauryan King

2. Who was Heliodorus?

3. Which Indo-Greek king has been identified with king Milinda of the famous Buddhist text *Milindapanho*?

4. Which inscription happens to be the first royal inscription of early India composed in chaste Sanskrit?

5. The Shakas were the natives of which region?

6.2 THE KUSHANAS

The Kushanas, originally belonged to western China. They are also called Yueh-chis. The Kushanas after defeating Shakas and Pahlavas created a big empire in Pakistan. The first prominent ruler of the Kushana dynasty was Kujula Kadphises. He was succeeded by his son Wema Kadphises. Next ruler was Kanishka. He was the most famous of the Kushanas. He probably ascended the throne in AD 78, and started a new era, now known as the Shaka era. It was under Kanishka that the Kushana empire reached its maximum territorial limits. His empire extended from Central Asia to north India and included Varanasi, Kaushambi and Sravasti in Uttar Pradesh. The political significance of Kanishka's rule lies in the fact that he integrated central Asia with north India as part of a single empire. It resulted in the intermingling of different cultures and increase in inter regional trading activities.

Kanishka is famous in history as a great patron of Buddhism. He convened the fourth Buddhist Council at Kundalavana (present day Harwan near Srinagar in Jammu and Kashmir) in which a large number of Buddhist scholars took part. It was in this council that Buddhism got split into two schools – Hinayana and Mahayana. Kanishka also patronized the Gandhara and Mathura schools of sculptural art about which you will learn later in this chapter. He built in the city of Purushpura (present day Peshawar), his capital, a giant *stupa* to house the Buddha's relics. The building was still intact with all its magnificence when the Chinese pilgrim Fa-hsien visited the area later in the early fifth century AD. The Kushana power gradually declined from the early third century AD.

(i) Kushana Polity and Administration

Nothing much is known about the administrative machinery of the Kushanas. Perhaps the whole empire was divided into provinces, each ruled by a *mahakshatrapa* (a military governor), who was assisted by a *kshatrapa*; but how many provinces were there in the empire, is not known. Sources indicate that Kushana horsemen wore trousers while riding. A headless statue of Kanishka found at Mathura reflects the same. A prominent feature of Kushana polity was the title of *devaputra*, i.e., son of God, used by the Kushana kings. It indicates the claim to divinity by the Kushana kings.

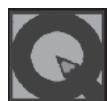


Notes

(ii) Contribution of the Kushanas

The Kushanas occupy a special place in the ancient Indian history because of their contribution to various aspects of life. Their vast empire helped in the growth of internal and external trade. It resulted in the rise of new urban centres. The rich state of economy under the Kushanas is also evidenced by the large number of gold and copper coins that they struck.

Even in literature and medicine, India made progress. Charaka, known as father of Ayurveda, wrote a book on medicine called *Charaksamhita* whereas Asvaghosha, a Buddhist scholar, wrote *Buddhacharita*, a full length biography of the Buddha. Both these scholars were believed to be the contemporaries of king Kanishka. The Kushanas patronized the Gandhara and the Mathura schools of sculptural art which are known for producing the earliest images of Buddha and Buddhisattvas.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.2

1. Who was the most prominent Kushana ruler?

2. Who started the Shaka era and when?

3. Where and under whose patronage did the fourth Buddhist council took place?

4. Who was Charaka?

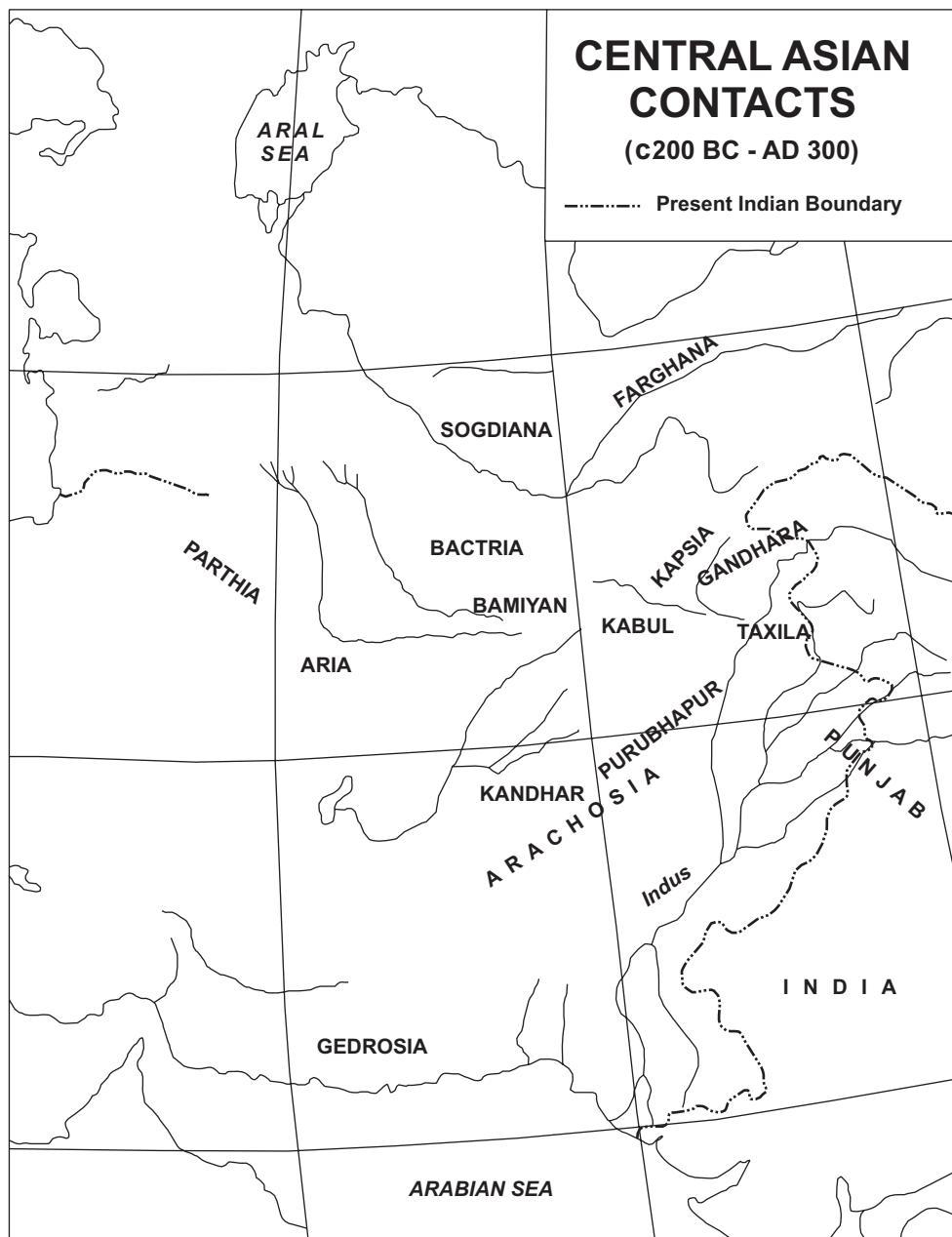
6.3 CONTACTS WITH CENTRAL ASIA

Invasions of the Bactrian Greeks and Saka-Pahlavas on India and its subsequent political contact with Central Asia under the Kushanas resulted in immense cultural intermingling between the two regions. These foreign groups gradually lost their foreign identity and were incorporated in the Brahmanical society lower grade as *kshatriyas*. Many of them adopted Buddhism. We have already referred to the Indo-Bactrian ruler Menander who was converted to Buddhism by a monk named Nagasena.

Central Asian contacts also brought to India new methods of making coins. The crude punch-marked coins which were used earlier gradually gave way to refined Greek style coins containing legends and the bust of the ruler. This new format became the model for the subsequent coinage in India. Besides, Indians also borrowed from central Asians, particularly the Greeks, knowledge of astronomy. Early Indian literary works on astronomy frequently quote the Greek astronomers who are referred to as *yavanacharya*. Indians also learned the art of making horoscopes from the Greeks. Central Asian contacts brought a fresh wave in the art of sculpture making. Buddhist sculptures of the Gandhara school, as explained here below, evolved as a result of the amalgamation of the Indian and the Greek styles.



Notes



Map 6.1 Central Asian Contacts

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.3**

1. What were the main features of the Greek style coins?

2. Which term was used for Greek astronomers in early Indian Literature?

6.4 EMERGENCE OF EARLY STATES IN ORISSA AND THE DECCAN

We know that the Deccan as well as eastern India were parts of Ashoka's empire. He had conquered Kalinga through a violent battle in which loss of men and property was enormous. It was as a result of the Mauryan rule in these regions that after its decline we notice the emergence of kingdoms in Kalinga and the Deccan for the first time in the Indian history.

Kalinga

After Ashoka, Kalinga (present day Orissa) became prominent under the kings of Chedi dynasty. Unfortunately we have no information about the kings of the dynasty except Kharavela. His achievements are recorded on an inscription, known a Hathigumpha inscription, situated in the Udayagiri hills near Bhuvaneshvar in Orissa. The inscription is so named because the image of an elephant is carved out of stone next to the boulder carrying the inscription. The inscription tells us that he was a follower of Jainism and had fought many successful battles against his neighbours. He probably lived in the first century BC.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.4

1. Who was Kharavela?

2. Where is the Hathigumpha Inscription?

6.5 THE SATAVAHANAS

Satavahanas became prominent in the Indian political scene sometime in the middle of the first century BC. Gautamiputra Satakarni (first century AD) is considered to be the greatest of the Satavahana rulers. He is credited with the extension of Satavahana dominions by defeating Nahapana, the Shaka ruler of Western India. His kingdom is said to have extended from river Krishna in south to river Godavari in north. The Satavahanas had their capital at Pratishthana (modern Paithan) near Aurangabad in Maharashtra.

The Satavahana kingdom was wiped out in the first quarter of the third century AD and the Satavahanas kings were succeeded by the Kings of Ikshvaku dynasty.

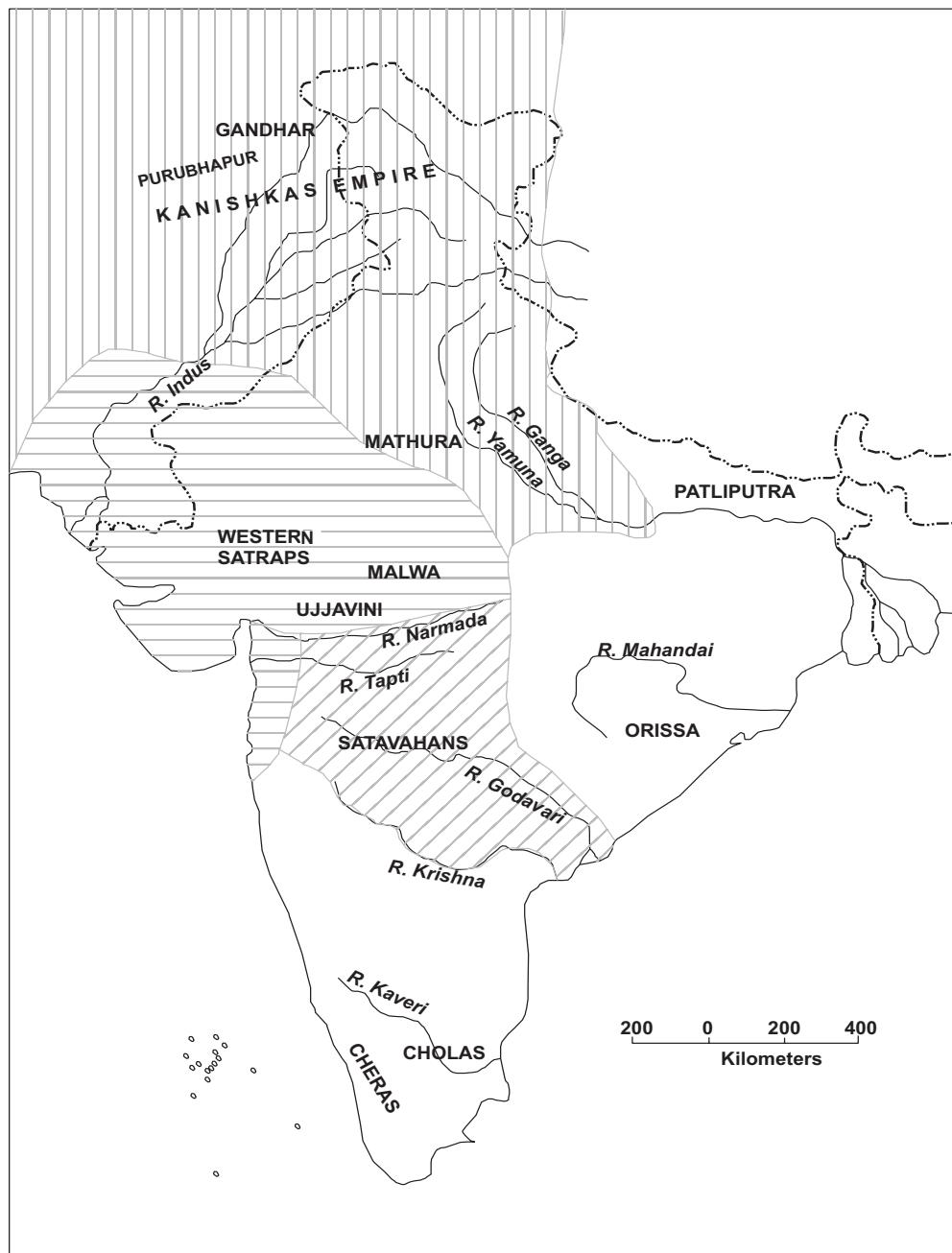
Satavahana Polity and Administration

Satavahana kingdom was divided into subdivisions called *aharas* or *rashtras*, meaning districts. The lowest level of administration was a *grama* which was under the charge of a *Gramika*. There were also officers called *amatyas* who were perhaps ministers or advisors of the king. Revenue was collected both in cash and kind. Satavahanas kings were the first in Indian history to make tax free land grants to Buddhists and Brahmanas to gain religious merit. This practice became more prominent in succeeding periods. The Satavahana kings claimed to be Brahmanas and considered it their primary duty to uphold varna system i.e. the four fold division of social structure.

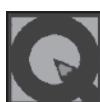




Notes



Map 6.2 Satavahana & Kushana Empires



INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.5

1. Who is considered to be the greatest of the Satavahana rulers?

2. Name the capital of the Satavahanas.

3. What was the lowest administrative unit under the Satavahanas?

4. Rulers of which dynasty started the practice of giving tax free religious grants in India?

5. The Satavahanas claimed to have belonged to which *varna*?

Notes

6.6 TRADE AND COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES

(i) Internal and External Trade Routes

The most important feature of the post-Mauryan period was the growth of trade and commerce, both internally as well as externally. There were two major internal land routes in ancient India. First, known as Uttarapatha, connected northern and eastern parts of India with the northwestern fringes, i.e., present day Pakistan and further beyond, and the second, known as Dakshinapatha, connected the peninsular India with the western and northern parts of India.

The Dakshinapatha was the major route that connected north and south India. It started from Kaushambi near Allahabad and running through Ujjaiyini (modern Ujjain) extended further up to Bhrigukaccha or Broach, an important port on western coast. The Dakshinapatha was further connected with Pratishthana (modern Paithan), the capital of the Satavahanas.

As regards external trade routes, after the discovery of monsoons by Hippatus a Greek navigator in 45 AD, more and more sea voyages were used for trading purposes. Important ports of India on the western coast were (from north to south direction) Bharukachchha Sopara, Kalyana, Muziris, etc. Ships from these ports sailed to the Roman Empire through the Red Sea.

Trade with southeast Asia was conducted through the sea. Prominent ports on the eastern coast of India were Tamralipti (West Bengal), Arikamedu (Tamil Nadu Coast) etc. Sea trade was also conducted between Bharukachchha and the ports of Southeast Asia.

(ii) Trade with West and Central Asia

An important feature of the commercial activities in the post-Mauryan period was the thriving trade between India and the West, where the Roman empire was at its height. Initially this trade was carried out through land, but owing to frequent obstructions created by the Persians, who ruled the areas through which these trade routes passed, the focus was shifted to sea routes. Now ships could move directly from Indian ports to the ports on Red Sea and Persian Gulf.

The best account of Indo-Roman trade is given in the book called *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* which was written in the first century AD by an anonymous author. Main requirements of the Romans were the Indian products such as spices, perfumes, jewels, ivory and fine textiles, i.e. muslin. Spices exported from India to the Roman empire included pepper, also called *yavanapriya* (perhaps because of its popularity among Romans). The spice trade with the Roman empire was largely based in south India. Romans also imported several precious and semiprecious stones like diamond, carnelian, turquoise, agate, sapphire etc, besides pearls, indigo, sandalwood and steel etc.



Against this import Romans exported gold and silver to India. It is proved by a large number of Roman coins of the first century AD found in the subcontinent. This indicates an enormous drain of gold from the Roman empire towards India. Other important items of export from the Roman empire included wine which is indicated by wine-amphorae and sherds of Roman ware found in significant numbers at Arikamedu in south India. Besides, the western traders also brought tin, lead, coral and slave girls.

(iii) Crafts and Industries

Crafts production started growing in this period with tremendous impetus, as trade and commerce, both internal and foreign, was dependent to a great extent on the craft activities. The text called *Milindapanho* mentions 75 occupations of which 60 were associated with crafts. The level of specialization was very high and there were separate artisans working in gold, silver, precious stones etc. Ujjain was a prominent bead making centre. Textile industry was another prominent industry. Mathura and Vanga (east Bengal) were famous for variety of cotton and silk textiles. The discovery of some dying vats at some sites in south India indicates that dying was a thriving craft in the area during this period. The artisans in this period touched new heights of prosperity and there are numerous inscriptions which refer to the donations made by artisans to monasteries.

(iv) Guilds

The communities of merchants were organised in groups known as Shreni or guilds under the head called *sreshthi*. Another type of mercantile group was called *sartha* which signified mobile or caravan trading corporation of interregional traders. The leader of such a guild was called *sarthavaha*. Like merchants almost all craft vocations were also organised into guilds, each under a headman called *Jyestha*. These included weavers, corn dealers, bamboo workers, oil manufacturers, potters etc. The guilds were basically associations of merchants and craftsmen following the same profession or dealing in the same commodity. They elected their head and framed their own rules regarding prices and quality etc., to regulate their business on the basis of mutual goodwill. They also served as banks and received deposits from the public on a fixed rate of interest.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.6

1. What was Uttarapatha?

2. What was Dakshinapatha?

3. What was the impact of the discovery of Monsoons on Indian History?

4. Which book gives the best account of Indo-Roman trade?

5. What were guilds?

6.7 ART AND ARCHITECTURE

Art in the post-Mauryan period was predominantly religious. Two most important features concerning art and architecture of this period are the construction of *stupas*

and development of regional schools of sculpture. Idols of the Buddha were carved out for the first time in this period. On account of contact with the foreigners from northwest, a specific school of art called Gandhara School of art developed in this period. It was influenced, to a great extent, by the Greek style or art forms.

(i) Stupas

A *stupa* was a large hemispherical dome with a central chamber in which relics of the Buddha or some Buddhist monk were kept in a small casket. The base was surrounded by a path for clockwise circumambulation (*pradakshina*), enclosed by wooden railings which were later made in stone. Three prominent *stupas* of this period are at Bharhut and Sanchi (both in M.P), which were originally built by Ashoka but enlarged later, and Amravati and Nagarjunkonda (both in Andhra Pradesh).

The Bharhut *stupa* in its present form dates to the middle of the second century BC. It is important for its sculptures. Its railings are made of red stone. Three big *stupas* were constructed at Sanchi in this period. The biggest of the three, which was built originally by emperor Ashoka, was enlarged to twice its size sometime in the second century BC. A number of *stupas* were also constructed in south India during this period but none has survived in its entirety. The Amravati *stupa*, situated at Amravati in Andhra Pradesh took its final shape sometime in the second century AD. The sculptures on stupas are drawn on the themes based on Jataka and other Buddhist stories.

Notes

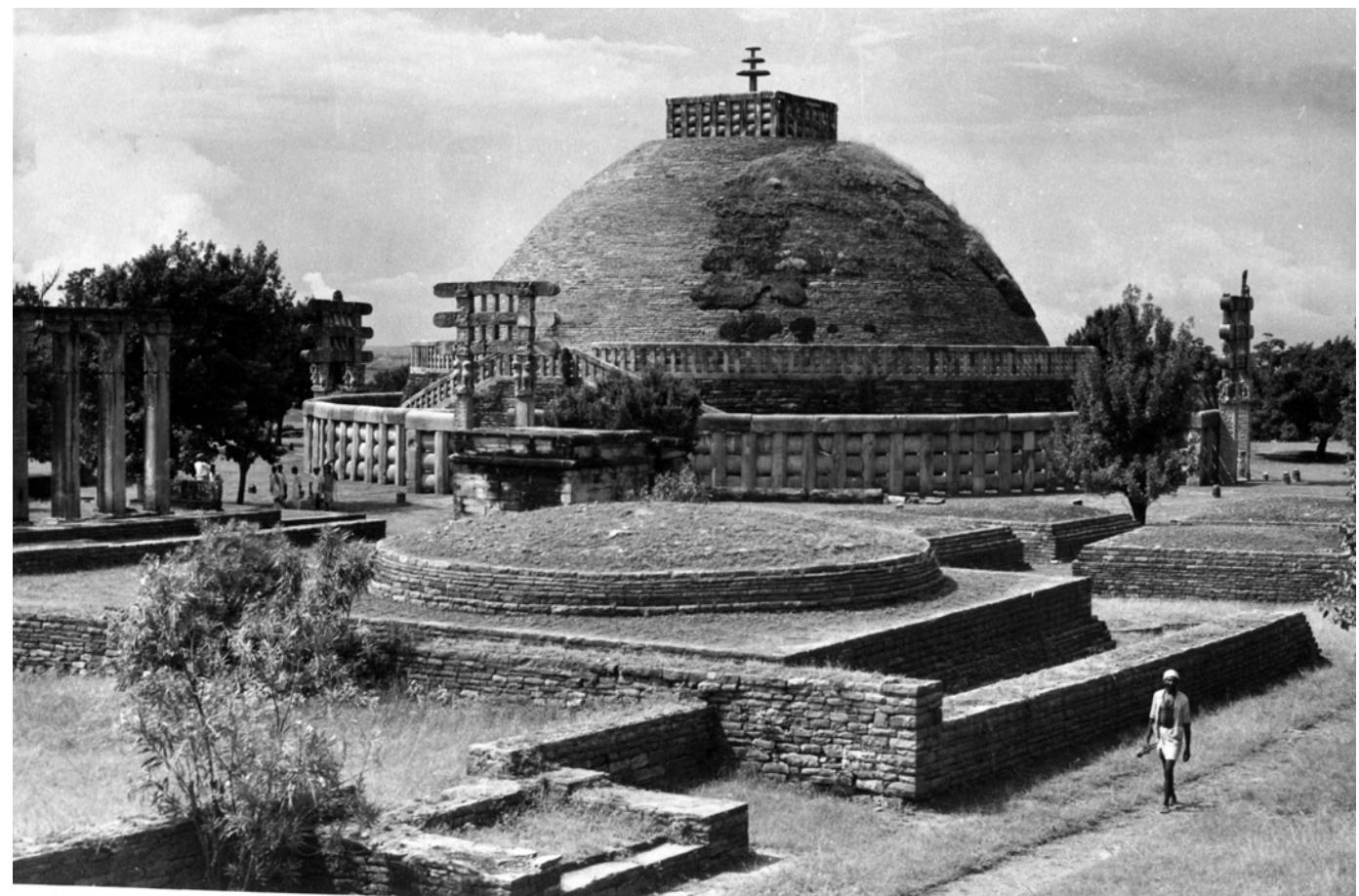


Fig. 6.1 Sanchi Stupa



(ii) Rock Cut Architecture

Apart from the *stupas*, this period also marks a progress in rock cut architecture. A large number of temples, halls and places of residence for monks were cut out of the solid rocks near Pune and Nasik in Maharashtra under the Satavahanas. The place of worship generally had a shrine cell with a votive *stupa* placed in the centre. This place was known as a *chaitya* and the rock cut structure used as the residence for monks was called a *vihara*.

(iii) Schools of Sculptural Art

The first century witnessed the division of Buddhism in two parts, Hinayana and Mahayana. Mahayana Buddhism encouraged Buddha's worship as a god in human form. As a result a large number of Buddha images were built in different regions. There were three major schools of sculptural art which developed in this period. These were: Mathura school of art, Gandhara School of art and Amravati school of art.

The Mathura School: The most prominent contribution of the Mathura school to the contemporary art was the images of Buddha which were carved for the first time perhaps in this art form. The Mathura artists used local red stone with black spots to make the images. Mathura has also yielded large numbers of sculptures of Jaina deities besides the *ayagapatas* or stone slabs to place objects of worship. The Brahmanical influence on the art school of Mathura is also evident. During the Kushana period a number of sculptures of brahmanical deities were carved, which included Kartikeya, Vishnu, Kubera.



Fig. 6.2 Gandhara Art - Bodhisattva

The Gandhara School of Art: The Gandhara region was situated in the northwestern part of the Indian Subcontinent. This region was successively ruled by the Greeks, Mauryas, Sungas, Shakas, and Kushanas for many centuries. The school of art which developed here around the beginning of the Christian era has been called variously as Graeco-Roman, Indo Greek or Graeco-Buddhist. This is perhaps because this school has all the influences-Roman, Greek and Indian. The theme of sculptures in predominantly Buddhist but their style is Greek. The chief patrons of Gandhara art were the Shakas and Kushanas.

The stone used for making idols of Buddha and Bodhisattava was predominantly blue-grey schist. Chief characteristics of Gandhara school of art lies in its beautiful portrayal of human figures with distinguished muscles of the body. Buddha is depicted with a garment draped in Graeco-Roman fashion, and with very curly hair. These beautiful images of the Buddha are ranked among the best pieces of sculptures.

The Amravati School of Art: The Amravati school of art flourished in the region of Andhra Pradesh between the lower valleys of rivers Krishna and Godavari. The main patrons of this art form were the Satavahans but it carried on even later, patronized by their successor Ikshavaku rulers. This art is said to have flourished between 150 BC and 350 AD. Sculptures of this school are mainly found on the railings, plinths and other parts of *stupas*. The thematic representations include the stories from the life of the Buddha.

An important characteristic of the Amravati school is the ‘narrative art’. The medallions were carved in such a manner that they depict an incident in a natural way. For example one medallion depicts a whole story of ‘taming of an elephant by the Buddha’. Another important feature of Amravati art is the use of white marble like stone to carve out the figures. There is prominence of human figures rather than of nature.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.7

1. What are the two most important features of the post-Mauryan architecture?

2. What was a stupa?

3. Which were the prominent stupas of the post-Mauryan period?

4. Differentiate between a chaitya and a vihara.

5. Name the schools of sculptural art that developed in the post-Mauryan period.

6. What kind of stone was used in the Mathura school?

7. Who were the chief patrons of Gandhara school of art?



6.8 EARLY HISTORY OF SOUTH INDIA

(i) *The Megalithic Cultures of South India*

The neolithic phase of south India, which was highlighted by the use of polished stone axe and blade tools, was succeeded by the Megalithic cultures (1200 BC–300 BC). Megaliths were tomb spots consisting of burials or graves covered with huge (mega) stones. They were, in most cases, located outside the settlement area. These Megalith burials have yielded the first iron objects from south India. Besides these the use of Black and Red ware pottery was also a distinctive feature of the Megalithic people. These Megaliths have been found in large numbers from the Nagpur area in Maharashtra in north to the southern tip of the Indian Peninsula. Prominent sites that have yielded Megalith graves include Brahmagiri, Maski, (Karnataka). Adichallanur (Tamilnadu) and Junapani near Nagpur (Maharastra).

Identical iron tools have been found universally from all the Megalith graves. These tools which indicate their craft activities and include arrowheads, daggers, swords, spearheads, tridents, battle axe, hoes, ploughshares, sickles etc. These artifacts, alongwith the food grains such as wheat, rice etc., found at various megalithic sites indicate that the megalithic people followed for their livelihood agro-pastoral and hunting activities. The megalithic period in south India was followed by the Sangam age.

(iii) *The Sangam Age*

The Sangam age refers to that period in the early history of south India when large numbers of poems in Tamil were composed by a number of authors. The term Sangam refers to an assembly or “meeting together” of Tamil poets. Traditionally, three Sangams

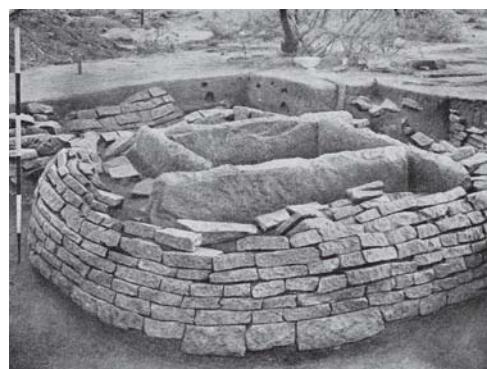
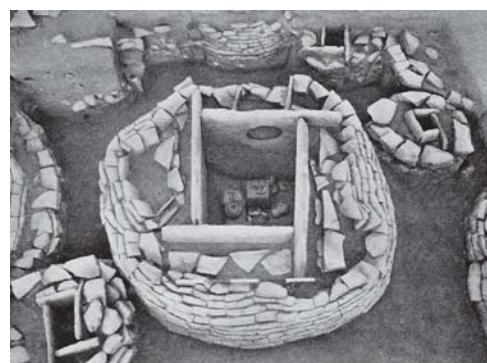
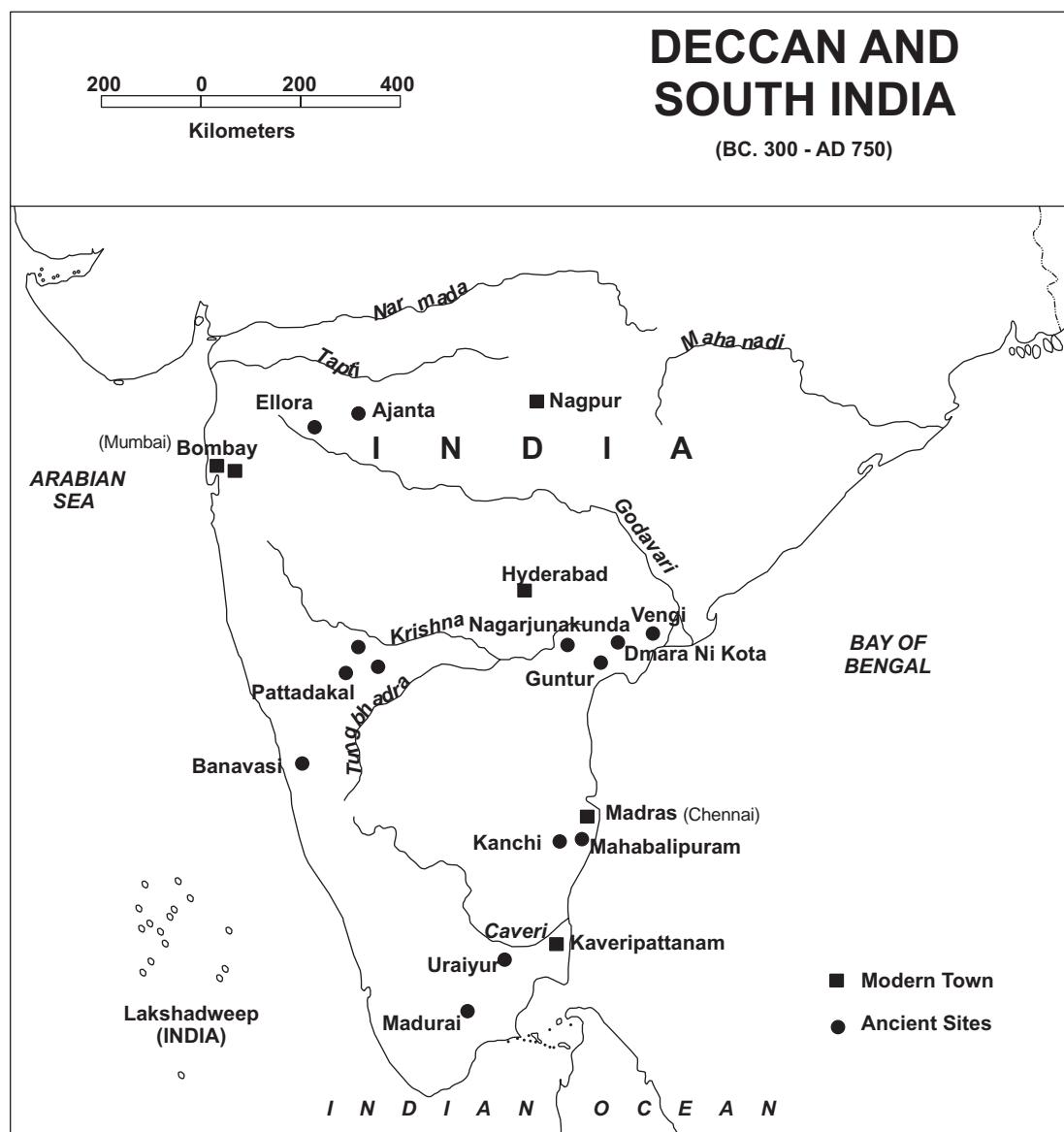


Fig 6.3 Megalithic Graves

Notes

or assemblies are believed to have been convened one after the other. All the three Sangams took place at different places under the patronage of the Pandya kings of Madurai. Poems within the Sangam literature were composed on two broader themes of love and war. It was later put together in eight collections called *Ettutogai*. This literature is believed to have been composed between 300 BC and 300 AD. A remarkable feature of the Sangam literature is its vivid portrayal of the contemporary society and culture of Tamilaham, or Tamil region and its peaceful and harmonious interaction with the northern (Aryan) culture.

Tamilaham stretches between the hills of Tirupati and the tip of Kanyakumari. It was divided amongst large number of chieftains and the chieftainship was hereditary. The important chieftains who dominated Tamil region during Sangam Age were the Cholas, with their capital at Uraiyur, the Cheras with their capital at Vanji, (near Karur) and Pandyas with their capital at Madurai. The Cholas, Pandyas and Cheras had several



Map 6.3 India: Tamilnadu and Northern Culture



subordinate chiefs. Tribute from subordinate chiefs along with plunder, were the main sources of revenue. There was frequent conflicts between the Cheras, Cholas and Pandiyas. It gave large scope to the Sangam poets to compose poems on war.

The whole Tamilaham in this period was divided into five *tinais* or eco-zones, i.e., zones based on their economic resources. These were: *kurinji* (hilly region); *palai* (arid zone); *mullai* (pastoral tracts); *marudam* (wet lands); and *neital* (seacoast). These zones were not clearly demarcated, and were scattered all around the region. Because of their different geographical contexts and ecological specialties people in different *tinais* had their own modes of subsistence. For example, in *kurinji*, it was hunting and gathering; in *palai*, where people could not produce anything they took to raiding and plundering; in *mullai* people practiced animal husbandry; in *marudam* it was plough agriculture; and in *neital* people took to fishing and salt making.

Though the concept of varna was known, social classes in the Sangam period were not marked by higher or lower rankings as in north India. For example, Brahmins were present in the society and they performed vedic ceremonies and sacrifices and also acted as advisers to the chief but they enjoyed no special privileges. People were known on the basis of their occupation they followed, such as artisans, salt merchants, textile merchants, etc. The rich lived in well decorated brick houses and wore costly clothes whereas the poor lived in mud huts and had scanty clothes to wear.

War heroes occupied a special position in society, and memorial stones called *nadukal* or *virukkal* were raised in honour of those who died in fighting, and they were worshipped as godlings. Women in the Sangam period appear to have been educated. This is testified by many poems contributed by women poets to the Sangam literature. Women are also described as engaged in various economic activities such as paddy plantation, cattle rearing, basket-making, spinning, etc. However, the cruel practice of Sati was also prevalent in Tamil society, and it was known as *tippayadal*. But it was not obligatory as there are references to widows present in society. However their position was miserable as they were prohibited to decorate themselves or participate in any form of amusement.

The people were engaged in various economic activities such as agriculture, crafts and trade. Paddy was the most important crop. It formed the main part of peoples' diet and also served as a medium of barter exchange for inland trade. Since Tamil region does not have perennial rivers, the chief, wherever possible, encouraged agricultural activities by making tanks and dams. The Chola king Karikala of the Sangam age is credited with constructing a dam on the river Kaveri. It is considered to be the earliest dam in the country. Among the crafts, the most important was of spinning and weaving of textiles cotton as well as silk. Salt manufacture was another important activity.

The most important feature of the Sangam economy was flourishing trade with the Roman world. It is confirmed by the recovery of a large number of Roman gold coins in south India. The discovery of monsoons and the use of direct sea route between Indian coasts and the western world, as mentioned earlier, was the main reason for the growth of this trade. It led to rise of important towns and craft centres in the Tamil region. Vanji, identified with the present day Karur in Tamil Nadu, was the capital of the Cheras and also an important centre of trade and craft. Muzris, i.e., Cranganore on the south-west coast, was the foremost port of the Cheras. We are told that the Roman ships laden with gold used to come here to take back large amounts of pepper. Madurai, the capital of the Pandiyas, is described in the Sangam poems as a large city

enclosed by a wall. It was an important centre of fine textile and ivory working. Korkai, in the Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu, was an important Pandya port. It was famous for its pearls. Uraiur (Tiruchirapalli in Tamil Nadu), the capital of the Cholas, was a grand city with magnificent buildings. Kaveripattinam or Puhar was the main Chola port. The Sangam poems refer to the busy markets guarded by soldiers.

In the field of religion, Sangam period witnessed a close and peaceful interaction between north Indian and south Indian traditions. The Brahmanas who performed religious ceremonies popularized the worship of Indra, Visnu, Siva etc., in south India. There are also references to the presence of Buddhists and Jainas in Tamil region. The local people, particularly those of the hills, worshipped a deity called Murugan, which in northern India come to be identified with Kartikeya, a war god.

In short, the Sangam literature through its poems on love and emotion (*aham*) and warfare and social behaviour (*puram*) on the whole present a picture of political conflict, social inequality and economic prosperity of early Tamil region during 300 BC–300 AD.



INTEXT QUESTION 6.8

1. What are the Megaliths?

2. What does the term Sangam refer to?

3. What are the themes of Sangam literature?

4. Which are the important chieftains mentioned in the Sangam literature?

5. Which are the five tinai or eco-zones noted in the Sangam poems?

6. Which Chola chief built a dam on river Kaveri?



WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT

In the post – Mauryan Period, Shungas succeeded the Mauryas in north India. After them the Kushans created a big empire extending from central Asia to Varanasi after defeating the Shakas and the Pahlavas. Kanishka was the most famous of the Kushan rulers. He was a great patron of Buddhism. He convened the fourth Buddhist Council and patronized Gandhara and Mathura Schools of Art. Internal and external trade grew as a result of his vast empire.

In the Deccan, the Satavahanas established a kingdom between the river Krishna and Godavari with their capital at Pratishthana, near Aurangabad. Trade and Commerce

Notes





reached its heights in peninsular India because of the profitable Indo-Roman trade. The Amravati School of Art flourished in the region of Andhra Pradesh under them.

The Neolithic phase in south India was followed by the Megalithic cultures dated between 1200 BC–300 BC. The Megalithic graves have yielded iron objects and black and red pottery. Megalithic people followed agro-pastoral activities for their livelihood. The Sangam literature belonging to the period from 300 BC to 300 AD throws light on early history of south India. It deals with the activities of three important chieftains of south India viz the Cholas, the Cheras and the Pandiyas. It presents a vivid description of the contemporary society, economy and culture of the Tamil region.



TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the major political developments in north India after the Mauryas.
2. Who were the Kushanas? How would you assess their contribution to India?
3. Briefly discuss India's contact with central Asia during the early centuries of the Christian era.
4. Write a short note on the achievements of Gautamiputra Satakarni.
5. Discuss the salient features of India's overseas trade.
6. Write an essay on the various schools of sculptural art that emerged after the Mauryan empire.
7. What does the Sangam literature tell us about the political and social structure of Tamilaham during the early centuries of the Christian era?



ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

6.1

1. Brihadratha
2. Heliodorus was an envoy of the Indo-Greek ruler Antialkidas in the court of Kashiputra Bhagabhadra, a Shunga ruler
3. Menander
4. Rudradaman's Junagarh or Girnar rock inscription
5. Central Asia

6.2

1. Kanishka
2. Kanishka; in 78 AD
3. Kundalavana (present day Harwan near Srinagar in Jammu and Kashmir); under Kanishka's patronage
4. Considered as the father of Ayurveda who wrote a book on medicine called the *Charaksamhita*



Notes

6.3

1. They contained legends and the bust of the ruler
2. Yavanacharya

6.4

1. Kharavela was the ruler of the Chedi dynasty which ruled over Kalinga from around the second century BC.
2. Near Bhuvaneshvar, Orissa

6.5

1. Gautamiputra Satakarni (late first century AD)
2. Pratishthana (modern Paithan near Aurangabad in Maharashtra)
3. Grama
4. The Satavahanas
5. Brahmana

6.6

1. Uttarapatha was a land route which connected northern and eastern parts of India with the northwestern fringes, i.e., present day Pakistan and further beyond.
2. Dakshinapatha was a land route which connected peninsular India with western and northern parts of India.
3. It encouraged sea trade between Rome and the Indian coasts.
4. *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* written in the first century AD by an anonymous author
5. Communities of merchants and artisans

6.7

1. Construction of *stupas* and development of regional schools of art.
2. Stupa was the Buddhist place of worship, as it has reliefs of Buddha or some Buddhist monk.
3. The Sanchi, the Bharhut, and the Amaravati and the Nagajunikonda stupas
4. Within the Buddhist architecture both *chaitya* and *vihara* were rock-cut structures. *Chaitya* was used as a shrine and *vihara*, as residence for monks.
5. The Mathura, the Amaravati and the Gandhara schools of art.
6. Red sandstone with black spots
7. The Shamas and the Kushanas

6.8

1. Megaliths were tomb spots consisting of burials or graves.



2. It refers to an assembly or “meeting together” of Tamil poets.
3. Love and War
4. The Cholas, Pandyas and Cheras
5. *Kurinji* (hilly area); *palai* (arid zone); *mullai* (pastoral tracts); *marudam* (wet lands); and *neital* (seacoast)
6. Chola chief Karikala of the Sangam age.

HINTS TO TERMINAL QUESTIONS :

1. Refer 6.2
2. Refer 6.2 .2
3. Refer 6.3
4. Refer 6.5
5. Refer 6.6.2
6. Refer 6.7.3
7. Refer 6.8.2



Notes

7

THE GUPTAS AND THEIR SUCCESSORS (A.D.300–750)

After the decline of the Kushanas, north India witnessed the rise of the Gupta dynasty. The rulers of this dynasty were able to establish a vast empire that included almost the entire north India. The Guptas had certain material advantages that helped them to carve an empire. They operated from eastern U.P. and Bihar which was very fertile. They could also exploit the iron ores of central India and Bihar to their advantage. Their period was marked by great progress in art, architecture and literature. They ruled up to circa A.D.550. After their collapse there emerged various regional kingdoms in north India. South India too witnessed the rise of two important kingdoms under the Chalukyas and the Pallavas respectively during AD 550–750.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- explain the rise of the Gupta empire and the political achievements of its rulers;
- describe the emergence of regional kingdoms after the decline of the Guptas;
- analyse the nature of the Gupta and post-Gupta political structure;
- notify social and economic changes from c. A.D. 300–750;
- identify cultural developments with special reference to art and literature;
- learn about the consolidation of Brahmanical tradition and the emergence of *Pauranic* religion;
- list the developments in science and technology;

7.1 POLITICAL HISTORY

The Gupta dynasty was established by Shrigupta, who probably belonged to the vaishya caste. He hailed from either Magadha (Bihar) or Prayaga (eastern U.P.). His son Ghatotkacha, who carried the title of *maharaja*, appears to be some small king about whom nothing much is known.

(a) Chandragupta I

The real founder of the Gupta empire was Chandragupta I (AD 319–334). The year of his accession in A.D. 319 marks the beginning of the Gupta era. It was henceforth used in all their records, and also those of their feudatories. He took the title of *maharajadhiraja* (*king of kings*). He married a Lichchhavi princess Kumaradevi. This event is recorded in a series of gold coins issued by Chandragupta. It appears



that this matrimonial alliance gave legitimacy, prestige and strength to the Gupta king. Chandragupta, was ruling over Magadha (Bihar) Saket (modern Ayodhya) and Prayaga (modern Allahabad) with his capital at Pataliputra (Modern Patna).



INTEXT QUESTIONS 7.1

1. Who was the real founder of the Gupta dynasty?

2. Give two material advantages that helped the Guptas to establish an empire?

3. How did the marriage alliance with the Lichchhavi's help Chandragupta?

(b) Samudragupta

Chandragupta was succeeded by his son Samudragupta (A.D. 335–375). Samudragupta followed a policy of conquest and enormously enlarged his kingdom. His achievements are recorded in a long inscription (prashasti), written in pure Sanskrit by his court poet Harisena. The inscription is engraved on a Pillar at Allahabad. It enumerates the people and the regions conquered by Samudragupta. He adopted a different policy for different area conquered by him.

In the Ganga-Yamuna doab, he followed a policy of annexation. He defeated nine naga rulers and incorporated their kingdoms in the Gupta empire. He then proceeded to conquer the forest kingdoms of central India, mentioned as atavirajyas. The rulers of these tribal areas were defeated and forced into servitude. This area had a strategic value as it contained a route to south India. It enabled Samudragupta to proceed to South along the eastern coast conquering twelve kings on the way and reached as far as Kanchi near Chennai. Samudragupta, instead of annexing their kingdoms, liberated and reinstated these kings on their thrones. This policy of political conciliation for south India was adopted because he knew that it was difficult to keep them under control and subservience once he returned to his capital in north. So it was enough for him that these states recognized his suzerainty and paid him tributes and presents.

According to the Allahabad inscription, neighbouring five frontier kingdoms and nine republican states of Punjab and western India were overawed by the conquests of Samudragupta. They agreed to pay tribute and taxes to Samudragupta and obey his orders without any fight. The inscription adds that Samudragupta also received tributes from many kings of south - east Asia.

It is generally believed that though he had spread his influence over a vast area, Samudragupta exercised direct administrative control mainly over Indo-Gangetic basin. He celebrated his conquests by performing a horse sacrifice (ashvamedha) and by issuing ashvamedha type of coins (the coins portraying the scene of sacrifice) on the occasion. Samudragupta was not only a conqueror but also a poet, a musician and a patron of learning. His love for music is attested by his coins that represent him as playing on a vina (lute).

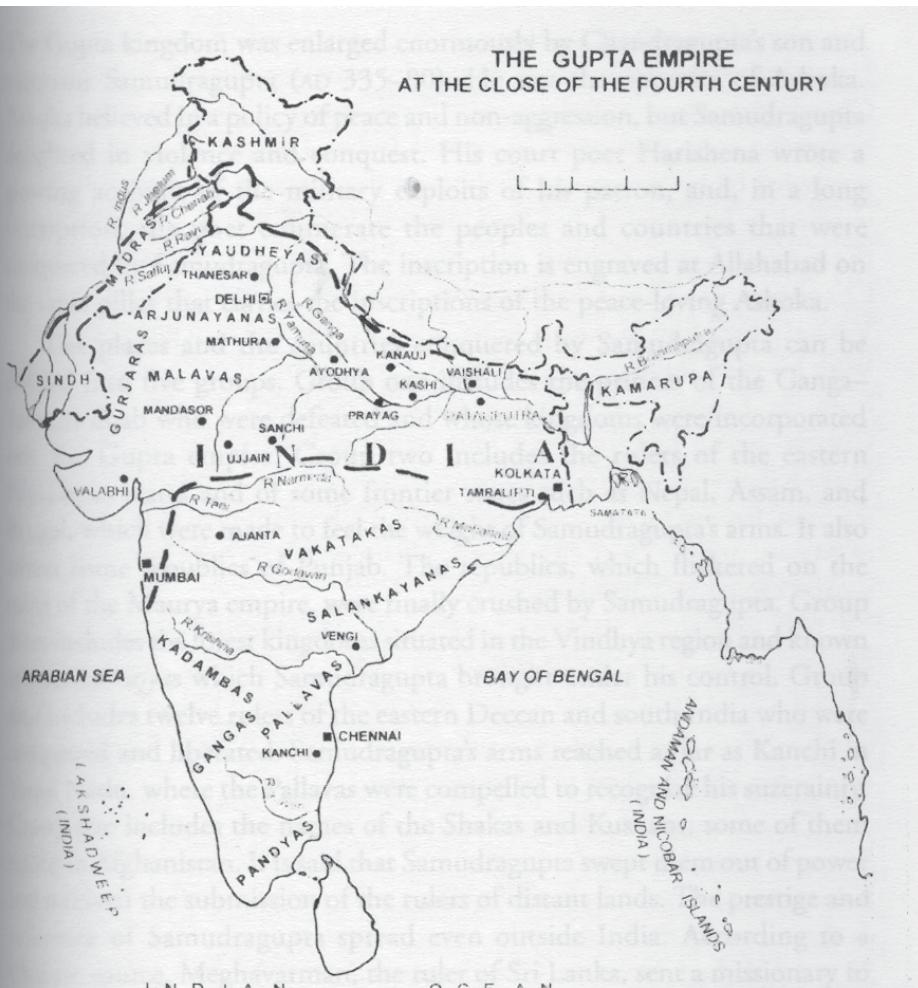


INTEXT QUESTIONS 7.2

- What is the importance of the Allahabad Pillar inscription in the history of Samudragupta?

Notes

- What do we know about Samudragupta's personality from his coins?
-



MAP 10 The Gupta Empire at the Close of the Fourth Century.

Courtesy ASI





(c) Chandragupta II

Samudragupta was succeeded by his son Chandragupta II (AD 375–414) also known as Chandragupta Vikramaditya, he not only extended his father's empire but also consolidated his position through matrimonial alliances with other royal dynasties of the period. He married Kuvernaga, the Naga princess and had a daughter Prabhavati from her. Prabhavati was given in marriage to Rudrasena II of the Vakataka dynasty ruling in Deccan. After the death of her husband, Prabhavati ruled the territory as regent to her minor son with the help of her father. The control of Vakataka territory proved very beneficial to Chandragupta II, as he was now able to target his other enemies better.

His greatest military achievement was his victory over the Shaka kings who were ruling in western India for the last three hundred years. This conquest made Gupta empire reach up to the western coast.

An iron pillar inscription at Mehrauli in Delhi indicates that his empire included even north-western India and Bengal. He took the title of *Vikramaditya* i.e. the one who is as powerful as the sun. Chandragupta II is remembered for his patronage of art and literature. He is credited with maintaining nine luminaries (navaratna) in his court. The great Sanskrit poet and playwright Kalidasa was the most notable of them all. The Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Fa Hien (AD 404–411) visited India during his reign. He has left an account of the life of people in India in the fifth century AD.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 7.3

1. Chandragupta II married his daughter into which dynasty?

2. How did this alliance help Chandragupta II?

3. Name the Chinese pilgrim who visited India in the reign of Chandragupta II?

4. Name the great Sanskrit poet and playwright who adorned the court of Chandragupta II?

(d) Decline

Chandragupta II was succeeded by his son Kumaragupta (AD 415–455). He was able to maintain the empire built up by his father but during the later part of his reign there was a threat from the Hunas of Central Asia. After occupying Bactria the Hunas crossed the Hindu Kush Mountains and entered India. Their first attack during his reign was repulsed by prince Skandagupta. The Guptas however could not protect their empire for long and the successive waves of Huna invasion made the Gupta's very weak. This was one of the main factors which accelerated the disintegration of the Gupta empire.

The inscriptions issued by the Hunas show that by AD 485 they had occupied eastern Malwa and a large part of central India. Punjab and Rajasthan also passed into their hands. The first important ruler of the Hunas in India was Toramana who conquered an area stretching up to Eran near Bhopal in central India. His son Mihirkula suc-

ceeded him in AD 515. He is described in texts as a tyrant and an iconoclast. Both Yashodharman of Malwa and Narasimhagupta Baladitya of the Gupta dynasty finally defeated Mihirkula. But this victory over the Hunas could not revive the Gupta Empire. Besides the Huna invasion there was also a gradual decline in economic prosperity. It is indicated by the gold coins of later Gupta rulers, which have less of gold content and more of alloy. We also notice a gradual disappearance of coins in the post Gupta period. It led the kings to make payments in form of land rather than cash. It is evident by the discovery of large-scale land grant charters donating land to brahmanas and officers.

The practice of giving land for religious and secular purposes in lieu of services rendered to the State is normally termed as feudalism. Under this practice, the donee (the one who receives the grant) was given the right not only to collect the taxes but also to administer the donated land. This created small-small pockets of power trying ceaselessly to expand their sphere of influence at the cost of the ruling authority.

The decline of the Gupta empire resulted in the emergence of numerous ruling dynasties in different parts of northern India. The prominent among them were the Pushyabhutis of Thanesar, Maukharies of Kanauj and the Maitrakas of Valabhi. The political scene in the Peninsular India was no different. The Chalukyas and the Pallavas emerged as strong regional powers in Deccan and northern Tamil Nadu respectively.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 7.4

1. Which group of family did Toramana belong to?

2. Name the Gupta prince who was able to repulse the first raids of the Hunas?

3. Name two dynasties that emerged in north India after the decline of the Guptas?

7.2 MAITRAKAS

The Maitrakas were tributary chiefs of the Guptas, who established an independent kingdom in western India. Dhruvasena II was the most important ruler of the Maitrakas. He was a contemporary of Harshavardhana and was married to his daughter. Hsuan Tsang tells us that Dhruvasena II attended Harsha's assembly at Prayaga (Allahabad). Ruling over Saurashtra in Gujarat, the Maitrakas developed Valabhi as their capital. This city became an important center of learning. Being on the Arabian Sea, it was also a port town having flourishing trade and commerce. Maitrakas continued to rule until the middle of the eighth century when Arab attacks weakened their power.

7.3 MAUKHARIES

The Maukharies ruled over Kanauj, a city in western Uttar Pradesh, which gradually replaced Pataliputra as a political center of north India. Maukharies were also the subordinate rulers of the Guptas and used the title of *samanta*. Harshavardhana's sister Rajyashri was married to Grihavarman. Shashanka, the ruler of Bengal (Gaur), and Devgupta, the Later Gupta ruler jointly attacked Grihavarman and killed him. The kingdom of Kanauj was then merged with that of the Pushyabhutis and Harsha shifted his capital from Thanesar (Kurukshetra) to Kanauj.

Notes





7.3 PUSHYABHUTIS OF THANESAR

An important ruling family to gain prominence after the fall of the Gupta was that of the Pushyabhutis who had their capital at Thanesar (Thanesvara in Kurukshetra). The dynasty became influential with the accession of Prabhakarvardhana, who was able to defeat the Hunas and strengthen his position in the regions of Punjab and Haryana. After his death, his elder son Rajayavardhana came to the throne but he was treacherously killed by Shashanka, the king of Bengal and Bihar. Harshavardhana then ascended the throne in AD 606. He was only sixteen years of age at that time. Still he proved himself to be a great warrior and an able administrator. We have two valuable sources that throw important light on the life and times of Harshavardhana (606–647). These are *Harshacarita* written by his court poet Banabhatta and *Si-Yu-Ki*, the travel account of the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Hsuan Tsang, who visited India during AD 629–644.

After his accession Harshavardhana united his kingdom with that of his widowed sister Rajayashri (see above) and shifted his capital to Kanauj and is described as the lord of the north (sakalauttarapathanatha). He brought Punjab, Uttara Pradesh, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa under his control. Harsha wanted to extend his power in the Deccan. But he was defeated by Pulakesin II, the Chalukya ruler, on the banks of river Narmada. The river thus became the southern boundary of his kingdom.

The death of Harsha in AD 647 was followed by a political confusion that continued up to the eighth century when the Gurjara Pratiharas, the Rajput rulers, emerged as a big force in northern India.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 7.5

1. Who is the author of *Harshacarita*?

2. Hsuan Tsang visited India during the reign of which king?

3. Which ruler defeated Harsha?

PENINSULAR INDIA

7.5 VAKATAKAS

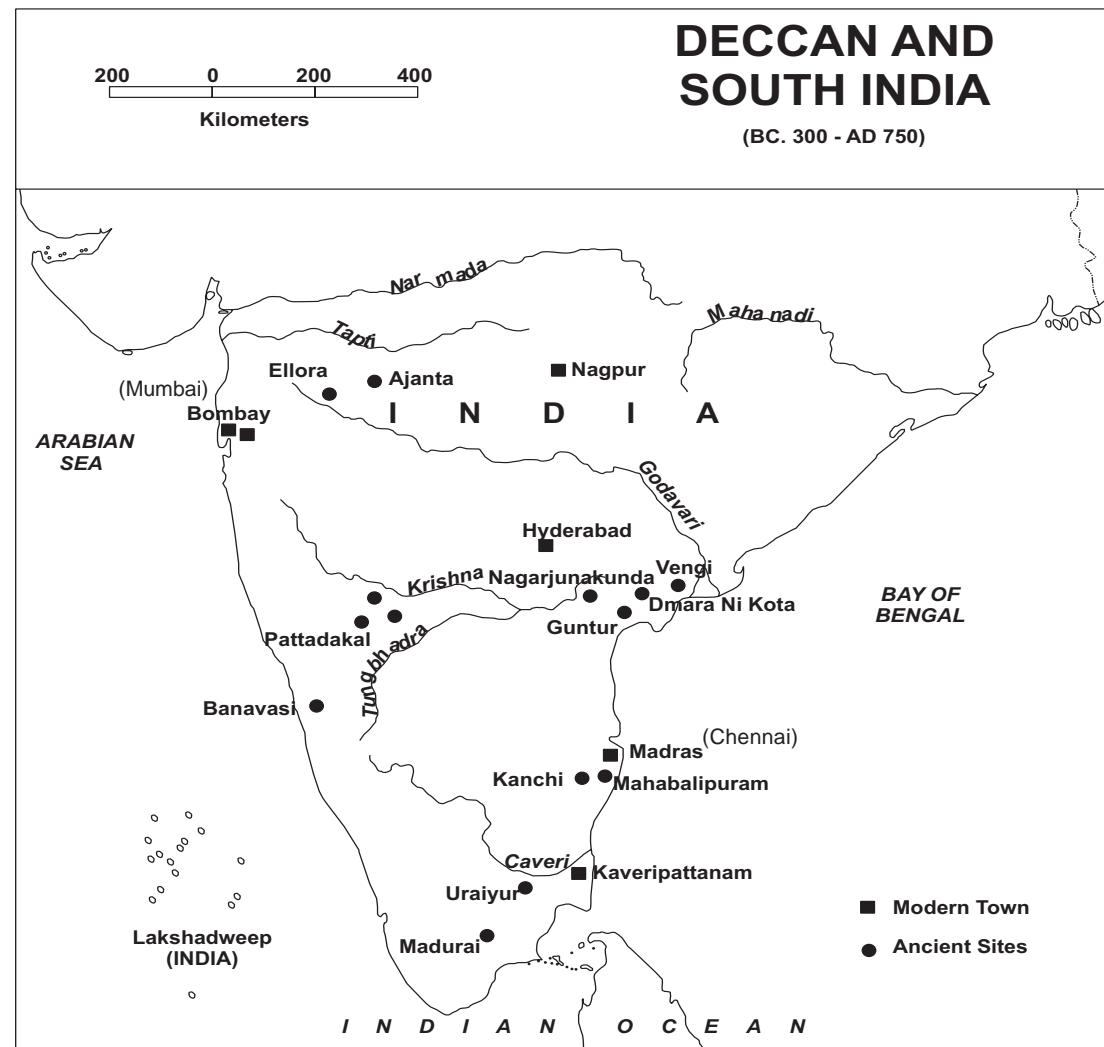
In peninsular India the Vakatakas, were a local power that ruled over northern Maharashtra and Vidarbha. Their history can be reconstructed on the basis of a large number of land grant charters issued to the brahmanas. Rudrasena II of the royal Vakataka family was married to Prabhavatigupta, the daughter of Chandragupta II of the imperial Gupta family. Culturally the Vakataka kingdom is important because it became a channel to spread brahmanical culture to south India.

7.6 CHALUKYAS (SIXTH-EIGHTH CENTURY A.D.)

The Chalukyas played a prominent role in the history of Deccan and south India for about two hundred years from the beginning of sixth century A.D. They set up their kingdom in western Deccan with capital at Vatapi (modern Badami in Karnataka).

The kingdom rapidly rose to prominence during the reign of Pulakesin II (AD 610–642). He was the greatest ruler of the Chalukyas. He consolidated his authority in Maharashtra and conquered large parts of Deccan. He defeated Harshavardhana in circa AD 630 and acquired the title of *dakshinapatheshvara* (lord of the south). However, he himself was defeated and killed by the Pallava king Narasimhavarman in c. AD 642. It marked the beginning of a long drawn political struggle between the Pallavas and Chalukyas that continued with ups and down for more than a hundred years. In about AD 757 their feudatories, the Rashtrakutas, overthrew them. Culturally, their period is important for the growth of art and architecture in Deccan.

Notes



Map 7.2 Deccan & South India

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 7.6**

1. Name the capital of the Chalukyas?

2. What was Pulakesin II known as?

7.7 PALLAVAS

The Pallavas established their authority over south Andhra Pradesh and north Tamil Nadu with capital at Kanchi. Kanchi under them became an important temple town and a center of trade and commerce.

The Pallavas rose to power during the reign of Mahendravarman (AD 600–630) and Narasimhavarman I (AD 630–668). Throughout their reign they were in constant conflict with Chalukyas of Vatapi in the north and the Tamil kingdoms of Cholas and Pandyas in the south. Their rule in south India was replaced by the imperial Cholas. Culturally their reign is important for the growth of Tamil *bhakti* literature and the Dravidian style of art and architecture in south India. It was under them that Mahabalipuram, south of Chennai, emerged as an important centre of temple architecture.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 7.7**

1. Name the capital of the Pallavas?

2. Who were the main enemies of the Pallavas in north?

7.8 ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM (c.A.D.300–750)

In the Mauryan period, the political authority was concentrated in the hands of the king. But, the Gupta **administration** was decentralized in nature. It means that feudatories i.e. local Kings and smaller chiefs ruled a large part of their empire. The pompous titles such as *maharajadhiraja*, *parambhattaraka*, *paramesvara* etc were adopted by the imperial Guptas. These lesser rulers adorned their names with titles like *raja* and *maharaja*.

The kingship was normally hereditary. The king was the focus of administration. Princes, ministers and advisors assisted him. The princes were also made the vice-roys of the provinces. Provinces were known as *desh*, *rashtra* or *bhukti* and their head was called *uparika*. The provinces were divided into a number of districts called *pradesha* or *vishaya*. The administrative head of the *vishaya* was known as *vishayapati*. The *vishayas* were further divided into villages. The village headman called *gramadhyaksha* looked after the affairs of the village with the help of village elders. The artisans and merchants took an active part in the town administration during the Gupta period. The Gupta bureaucracy was less elaborate as compared to that of the Mauryas. The high level central officers under the Guptas were called the *kumaramatyas*. Important functionaries like *mantri*, *senapati* were all recruited from that

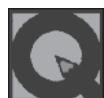
cadre. Administrative posts were not only hereditary but often several offices were combined in the hands of the same persons as in the case of Harisena, the composer of the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta. He has been described as a *mahadandanayaka* (chief judicial officer) as well as a *mahasandhivigrahika* (minister for war and peace). The ruler himself often appointed high-ranking officers but the hereditary nature of the post must have weakened the royal control over the administration.

During the Gupta period land taxes increased considerably. The land tax called *bali* varied from $1/4^{\text{th}}$ to $1/6^{\text{th}}$ of the total produce. Two new agricultural taxes that appear in Gupta inscriptions are *uparikara* and *udranga*. However, their exact nature is not clear. In addition, the peasants had to meet the demands of the feudatories. They also had to feed the royal army when it passed from the villages. The villagers were also subjected to forced labour (*vishti*).

The judicial system was far more developed under the Gupta rulers than in earlier times. For the first time civil and criminal laws were clearly demarcated. Disputes connected with various type of property were considered in civil law. Elaborate laws were laid down about inheritance. Theft and adultery fell under criminal law. The king upheld the law and tried cases with the help of the brahmanas. The guilds of merchants and artisans were governed by their own laws.

Harsha governed his empire on the same lines, as did the Guptas. But during his period the administration became more decentralized and the number of feudatories grew further. In Harsha's time the officers and the religious persons were paid mainly in land. It encouraged the system of feudalism which grew much more in the post-Harsha period.

In the empire of Harsha law and order does not appear to be so well maintained. Hsuan Tsang was twice robbed of all his belongings during his travels in India. On the other hand Fa Hien had to face no such difficulty during Gupta period.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 7.8

1. Give the titles adopted by the Gupta rulers?

2. What were the provinces known as in the Gupta period?

3. Name the lowest unit of administration in the Gupta period?

4. Who were the *kumaramatyas*?

5. Name the two new taxes imposed by the Guptas?

6. How was the law and order situation in Harsha's time?



7.9 SOCIETY

The structure of the **society** was undergoing a change in the Gupta period. The supremacy of the brahmanas was increasing. They were getting large-scale land grants not only from the rulers but from other people also. The land was given along with administrative rights and tax exemptions. Thus, a new class of brahmana landlords was created. Supported by the king, they tended to exploit the peasants.

We also notice a proliferation of castes in this period. With the extension of brahmanical culture in distant and different areas, a large number of tribals were assimilated in the brahmanical social structure of varna system fold, as were some foreigners such as the Hunas. While the foreigners and tribals heads were included as kshatriyas, the ordinary tribals were given the status of shudras.

The position of shudras however improved somewhat during this period. They were allowed to listen to the epics and the *puranas*. They could also perform some domestic rituals that were earlier prohibited for them. In the seventh century Hsuan Tsang calls shudras as agriculturists and the vaishyas as traders. A distinction was also made between shudras and untouchables, the latter being treated lower in status than the shudras.

The untouchables are referred to as chandalas. They lived outside the village and dealt in unclean jobs such as scavenging or butchery. The Chinese traveler Fa-Hien tells us that whenever they entered the towns or market places they would strike a piece of wood to announce their arrival, so that the others might not touch them and get polluted.

References to slaves are found in the contemporary *Dharmashastras* (Law Books). Narada mentions fifteen types of slaves. They were mainly domestic servants employed in cleaning and sweeping. The prisoners of war, debt bondsmen, born of a slave woman were all considered slaves.

The status of women continued to decline in Gupta period. The main reason for the subordination of women was their complete dependence on men for their livelihood. The women were not entitled to inherit property. However, she had full right on her *stridhana* i.e. the presents received by the bride at the time of her marriage. The free representation of females in art suggest that there was no *purdah* system in the society. However, there is evidence of the presence of *sati* system. The first evidence of *sati* (immolation of widow) is found in an inscription (AD 510) at Eran in Madhya Pradesh. In the *Harshacarita* of Bana, the queen performs *sati* on the death of her husband king Prabhakaravardhana. Even Rajyashri, sister of Harsha was about to perform *sati* when Harsha rescued her.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 7.9

1. What are shudras described as by Hsuan Tsang?

2. What is *stridhana*?

3. Where do we find the first epigraphical evidence to 'Sati'?

7.10 ECONOMY

The period from circa fourth century to eighth century was a period of great agricultural expansion. The vast areas of land were brought under cultivation and improvements were made in the existing methods of production to attain higher yield. One of the reasons for it was the practice of granting lands to brahmanas and secular officers in different areas. It helped in bringing virgin land under the plough. The spread of knowledge regarding the use of iron plough share, manure, irrigation and preservation of cattle wealth in backward areas also contributed to rural prosperity. It however brought no relief to peasants who continued to suffer tremendous tax burden.

The Gupta and post-Gupta period witnessed a comparative decline in country's trade and commerce. Till AD 550 India continued to have some trade with the eastern Roman empire to which it exported silk, and spices. Around the sixth century the Romans learnt the art of rearing silk worms. This adversely affected India's foreign trade in this precious commodity. The disruption of north-western route by the Hunas was another factor for this decline. India tried to make up the loss by carrying on trade with south-east Asian countries but it did not help revive the economy substantially. The loss in trade lessened the inflow of gold and silver into the country. It is confirmed by a general scarcity of gold coins after the Guptas.

The Guptas did issue a large number of gold coins called *dinaras*. But we notice that the gold coins of each successive Gupta ruler, after Chandragupta II, contain less of gold and more of alloy. After the Guptas very few coins of Kings of different dynasties have been found. Thus in the absence of coinage we can presume that a self-sufficient economic system with limited trade prevailed after the downfall of the Guptas.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 7.10

1. Name the commodities exported by the Indians to the eastern Roman empire?

2. What were the Gupta gold coins known as?

7.11 LITERATURE

The Gupta period is considered as the Golden Age of art and literature.

A huge body of religious and secular literature was compiled in this period. The two great epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata were finally completed in the fourth century. The stories of both the epics symbolize the victory of good over evil. Both Rama and Krishna came to be considered incarnation of Vishnu.

The Gupta period marks the beginning of the writing of the literature known as *Puranas*. These texts refer to the stories about the Hindu gods and mention the ways to please them through fasts and pilgrimages. The major *Puranas* written in this period are the *Vishnu Purana*, *Vayu Purana* and the *Matsya Purana*. For the worship of Shiva, *Shiv Purana* was written whereas the various incarnations of Vishnu are glorified in *Varaha Purana*, *Vamana Purana*, and *Narasimha Purana*. They were meant for the worship by common man. Some *Smritis* or the law books were also compiled in the Gupta period. One of these, the *Narada Smriti* throws light on the general social and economic rules and regulations of the period.

Notes





The literature in Gupta period was written in Sanskrit. The greatest of all the poets was Kalidasa who lived in the court of Chandragupta II in the fifth century AD. His works are very famous and have been translated in many European languages. Some of the works that he authored are *Meghadutam*, *Abhijnanashakuntalam*, *Raghuvamsha*, *Kumarasambhava* and *Ritusamhara*. The notable feature of his works is that the characters of higher caste speak in Sanskrit while those of lower caste and women speak in Prakrit. The other famous dramatists to have flourished in this period are Shudraka, writer of *Mrichchhkitikam* and Vishakhadatta who authored *Mudrarakshasa*.

In the seventh century Banabhatta, the court poet of Harsha, wrote *Harshacarita* praising his patron. Written in an ornate style, it became a model for later writers. The early history of Harsha is reconstructed on the basis of this text. Another text written by him is *Kadambari*. Harsha too was considered to be a literary monarch. He is said to have authored three plays: *Priyadarshika*, *Nagananda* and *Ratnavali*.

In south India, the period from AD 550–750 witnessed the growth of Bhakti literature in Tamil. Songs were composed by the Vaishnava saints (Alvars) and Saiva saints (Nayannars) in praise of their respective gods. One of the most famous of the *Alvar* saints was a woman called Andal. The Vaisnava devotional songs are later arranged in a text called *Nalayira Prabandham* while those of the Saivites are preserved in the text known as *Devarama*.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 7.11

1. What are the Puranas?

2. Who was Andal?

3. What is the bhakti literature of the Nayannars called?

7.12 ART AND ARCHITECTURE

Ancient Indian art was mainly inspired by religion. As in earlier times, Buddhism gave a great impetus to art in Gupta period also. A life size image of Buddha made in copper is found from Sultanganj in Bihar. Beautiful images of Buddha were also created at Mathura and Sarnath. The finest examples of Buddhist art during Gupta period are the paintings of Ajanta caves. Depicting the life of Buddha and the Jataka stories, these paintings with lustrous colors have not faded even after fourteen centuries. The Ajanta caves are now included in the list of the World Heritage Sites by the UNESCO.

It is for the first time in the Gupta period that the temples in the form of structures were constructed in north India. These temples were made in the architectural style known as **Nagara**. Two of these temples, one made of bricks at Bhitargaon in Kanpur and the other of stone at Deogarh in Jhansi have been found in Uttar Pradesh. Here the images of Vishnu are placed in the center as a chief deity.

The Gupta coins are also pieces of art. They are well designed and meticulously crafted. They carry aesthetically impressive depictions of the activities of the rulers.

The lyrist type of gold coins issued by Samudragupta show him playing a lute. His interest in music can be detected from this representation. He also issued *ashvamedha*



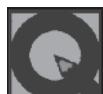
Fig. 7.1 Deogarh Nar-Narayan

Notes

type of coins as mentioned above, In peninsular India also the worship of Vishnu and Shiva was becoming popular.

The Pallava rulers constructed stone temples in seventh and eighth centuries to house the images of these gods. The most famous are the seven *rathas* or temples each made out of a solid, piece of stone constructed by king Narasimhavarman at Mahabalipuram, 65 km from Chennai. The Pallavas also built many structural temples. One of the most important among them is the Kailashnath temple, constructed in the eighth century.

The Chalukyas of Vatapi also erected numerous temples at Aihole, Badami and Pattadakal. Pattadakal has as many as ten temples built in seventh and eighth centuries and Virupaksha temple. The southern style of architecture came to be known as **Dravida**.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 7.12

1. Where in Uttar Pradesh are found Gupta temples?

2. Name the north and south Indian styles of architecture?



3. Why is Mahabalipuram important?
-
-



Fig. 7.2 Rath Mandir - Mahabalipuram

7.13 RELIGION

The Gupta rulers gave patronage to Bhagvatism. But they were tolerant to other religions too. The Chinese pilgrims Fa Hien and Hsuan Tsang, who came to India during the reign of Chandragupta II and Harsha respectively, clearly give the impression that Buddhism was also flourishing. Harsha, though a *Shaiva* in his early life, became a follower of Buddhism and a great patron of the religion. He convened an assembly at Kanauj to publicize Mahayanaism. **Nalanda** developed as a great center of education for Mahayana Buddhism during his time. Students from outside countries also came to study in this university. According to Hsuan Tsang the revenues of one hundred villages supported it.

Bhagvatism centered on the worship of Vishnu and his incarnations. It put emphasis on *bhakti* (loving devotion) and *ahimsa* (non killing of animals) rather than Vedic rituals and sacrifices. The new religion was quite liberal, and assimilated the lower classes in its fold. According to *Bhagavadgita*, the chief text of Bhagvatism, whenever there was a social crisis Vishnu would appear in a human form and save the people. Thus ten incarnations of Vishnu were perceived. *Puranas* were written to popularize the virtues of each one of these incarnations. The idols of gods were housed in the temples constructed in Gupta period.

In south India, from the seventh century onwards the Tamil saints called *Alvars* and *Nayannaras* popularized the concept of *bhakti*. *Alvar* saints popularized the worship of Vishnu and the *Nayannar* saints, the worship of Shiva.

We also notice the spread of Tantrism in India in this period. From the fifth century the brahmanas had started receiving land in the tribal areas of Nepal, Assam, Bengal, Orissa, central India and Deccan. As a consequence, the tribal elements came to be assimilated in the brahmanical society. The brahmanas adopted their rituals, gods and

goddesses. It is this assimilation of brahmanical religion and tribal practices which resulted in the development of Tantrism. It did not believe in any caste or gender bias and admitted both women and shudras in its ranks. It put emphasis on ‘female’ as a source of power and energy. The Tantrik concepts affected, Shaivism and Vaishnavism as well as Buddhism and Jainism. It resulted in the introduction of the worship of female deities in these religions.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 7.13

1. Where did Harsha convene an assembly for Buddhism?

2. Name the centre of education for Mahayana Buddhism during Harsha’s time?

3. How many incarnations of Vishnu were perceived?

4. Name the saints who popularized the worship of Vishnu and Shiva in south India?

7.14 SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

An idea of the progress of science and technology in the Gupta period can be had from the important texts written on these subjects during this period. The most notable among them is an astronomical text called *Aryabhatiyam*, written by Aryabhatta in the fifth century. Aryabhatta was an astronomer and a mathematician. He for the first time suggested that the earth rotates on its axis, and revolves around the sun and causes eclipse. He was the first to invent “zero” and the use of the decimal system. Another scholar Varahamihira (end of sixth century) was a great astronomer who has written a number of books on astronomy. His work *Panchasiddhantika* deals with five astronomical systems. Brahmagupta a well known mathematician also lived in the Gupta period.

Metallurgy also saw technological advancement in Gupta times. The bronze images of Buddha produced on a considerable scale in the period are an example of advanced technology. The twenty-three feet high iron pillar at Mehrauli in Delhi too speaks volumes of the iron technology prevailing in the Gupta period. Standing in the open, this pillar has not gathered rust even after fifteen centuries. The wonderful paintings of Ajanta, still intact, indicate besides other things, the art of making colors during this period.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 7.14

1. Who was Aryabhatta and what theories did he propound?

2. Name the text written by Varahamihira?

3. Which is the most important example of the advancement in metallurgy in Gupta period?



WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT

Let us briefly recapitulate the main points of this lesson: Chandra Gupta I (AD 319–334) was the real founder of Gupta empire. Guptas were able to establish a vast empire as they could exploit the iron ores of central India and Bihar and also this being very fertile land. He was succeeded by Samudragupta (AD 335–375) and Chandra Gupta II (AD 375 – 414). Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Fa Hien (AD 404–411) visited India and has left an vivid account of people of that period. Great Sanskrit poet and playwright Kalidasa was one of the nine luminaries of Chandra Gupta II. Hunas from Central Asia threatened the Gupta empire & its invasion made Gupta's very weak. Subsequently decline in economic prosperity led to gradual decline of Gupta's empire.

Harshavardhana (606–647), a great warrior and able administrator established kingdom in north whose account is available in Harishcharita by his court poet Banabhatta. Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Hsuan Tsang visited India during his time. Harsha was defeated by Pula Kesin II Chalukya ruler of south, so river Namada became Harsha's Southern boundary.

Pallavas rose to power in peninsular India. Tamil bhakti literature and Dravidian style of art and architecture in South India developed during this period.

Society underwent a change during Gupta's period. Brahmaincal culture extended to distant and different areas. A large number of tribals were assimilated in the varna system and some foreigners like Hunas were also stratified into Brahmanical system. The status of women declined further in this period.

Gupta period is Golden age of Art and literature Ramayana and Mahabharata were completed in 4th century. Puranas began to be written. Alvars & Nayannars, The South India saints composed Bhakti literature in Tamil.

Nagara-North Indian temples and southern style Dravida temples came to be established in their respective regions.

Ajanta Caves paintings depicting the life of Buddha were also created during this period. The famous Mahabalipuram rath temples are also a creation of this period.

Aryabhatiyam, a notable astro-nomical text written by Aryabhatta of 5th century stated for the first time that the earth rotates on its axis and revolves around sun. Metallurgy saw technological advancement in Gupta times. Mehrauli's Iron pillar and bronze images of Buddha are few examples of this advancement.



TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the achievements of Samudragupta on the basis of Allahabad Pillar inscription?
2. Account for the decline of the Gupta empire?
3. Give an account of the Gupta administration?
4. Write a note on the proliferation of castes during the period under study?
5. Discuss the position of women and untouchables in the Gupta period?
6. Give reasons for the expansion of agriculture in the period of our study?
7. Why did the trade decline in Gupta period?



8. Why is the Gupta age considered the Golden Age of art and literature?
9. Write a note on the Gupta coins?
10. Discuss the contribution of the Pallavas and the Chalukyas in the field of architecture?
11. Write a paragraph on Bhagvatism?
12. What were the factors that led to the rise of Tantrism in post-Gupta period?
13. Discuss the development of science and technology from c.AD 300–750?



ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

7.1

1. Chandragupta I
2. Fertile area; Rich in iron ore
3. Legitimacy, prestige, strength

7.2

1. It gives a detailed account of Samudragupta's period
2. Poet, musician and patron of learning

7.3

1. Vakataka
2. He was able to target his other enemies better
3. Fa Hien
4. Kalidasa

7.4

1. Huna
2. Skandagupta
3. Pushyabhutis at Thanesar; Maukhari at Kanauj

7.5

1. Banabhatta
2. Harsha
3. Pulakesin II

7.6

1. Vatapi
2. Dakshinapatheshvara

7.7

1. Kanchi
2. Chalukyas

**7.8**

1. maharajadhiraja, parambhattaraka, parameshvara
2. desha, rashtra, bhukti
3. grama
4. High level central officers
5. Uparikara and Udranga
6. It was bad as Hsuan Tsang was robbed of his belongings twice.

7.9

1. Agriculturalists
2. presents received by the bride at the time of her marriage
3. Eran in Madhya Pradesh

7.10

1. Silk, spices
2. Dinaras

7.11

1. These texts refer to stories about Hindu gods and mention the way to please them.
2. Alvar women saint of South India.
3. Devarama

7.12

1. Bhitargaon in Kanpur and Deogrh in Jhansi (U.P.)
2. Nagara and Dravida
3. It contains the seven rathas temples built by the Pallava king Narasimhavarman

7.13

1. Kanauj
2. Nalanda
3. Ten
4. Alvars and Nayannars

7.14

1. Astronomer and mathematician [He invented zero and brought forth the importance of decimal system earth rotates on its axis & revolves around Sun.]
2. Panchasiddhantika
3. Iron pillar at Mehrauli in Delhi

HINTS TO TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Refer 7.1 para 3
2. Refer 7.1
3. Refer 7.8
4. Refer 7.9 para 2
5. Refer 7.9 para 4
6. Refer 7.10 para 1
7. Refer 7.10 para 2
8. Refer 7.11 and 7.12
9. Refer 7.10 para 3 and 7.12 para 3
10. Refer 7.12 para 4 & para 5
11. Refer 7.13 para 1
12. Refer 7.13 para 3
13. Refer 7.14


Notes**GLOSSARY**

Donee	—	the beneficiary of land -grants
Eulogy	—	a piece of writing in praise of a person
Feudalism	—	grant of a piece of land by an overlord to a donee with all financial, administrative and judicial rights.
Land Grant	—	Found mainly on copper plates. These refer to land granted to
Charters	—	donee with rights to collect revenue from peasants



INDIA BETWEEN AD 750–1200

The period between AD 750 and AD 1200 is referred to as an early medieval period of Indian History. It was earlier treated by historians as a ‘dark phase’. It was so because during this time the whole country was divided into numerous regional states which were busy fighting with each other. But recent studies have indicated that, though politically divided, India witnessed a growth of new and rich cultural activities in the fields of art, literature and language. In fact, some best specimens of temple architecture and Indian literature belong to this period. Thus, far from being ‘dark’ it may be treated as a bright and vibrant phase of Indian history.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- identify the various regional kingdoms which emerged during AD 750 and AD 1200;
- examine the nature of state;
- highlight the social and economic changes;
- evaluate the cultural activities;
- and assess the significance of India’s contact with Southeast Asia during 8th and 12th centuries;

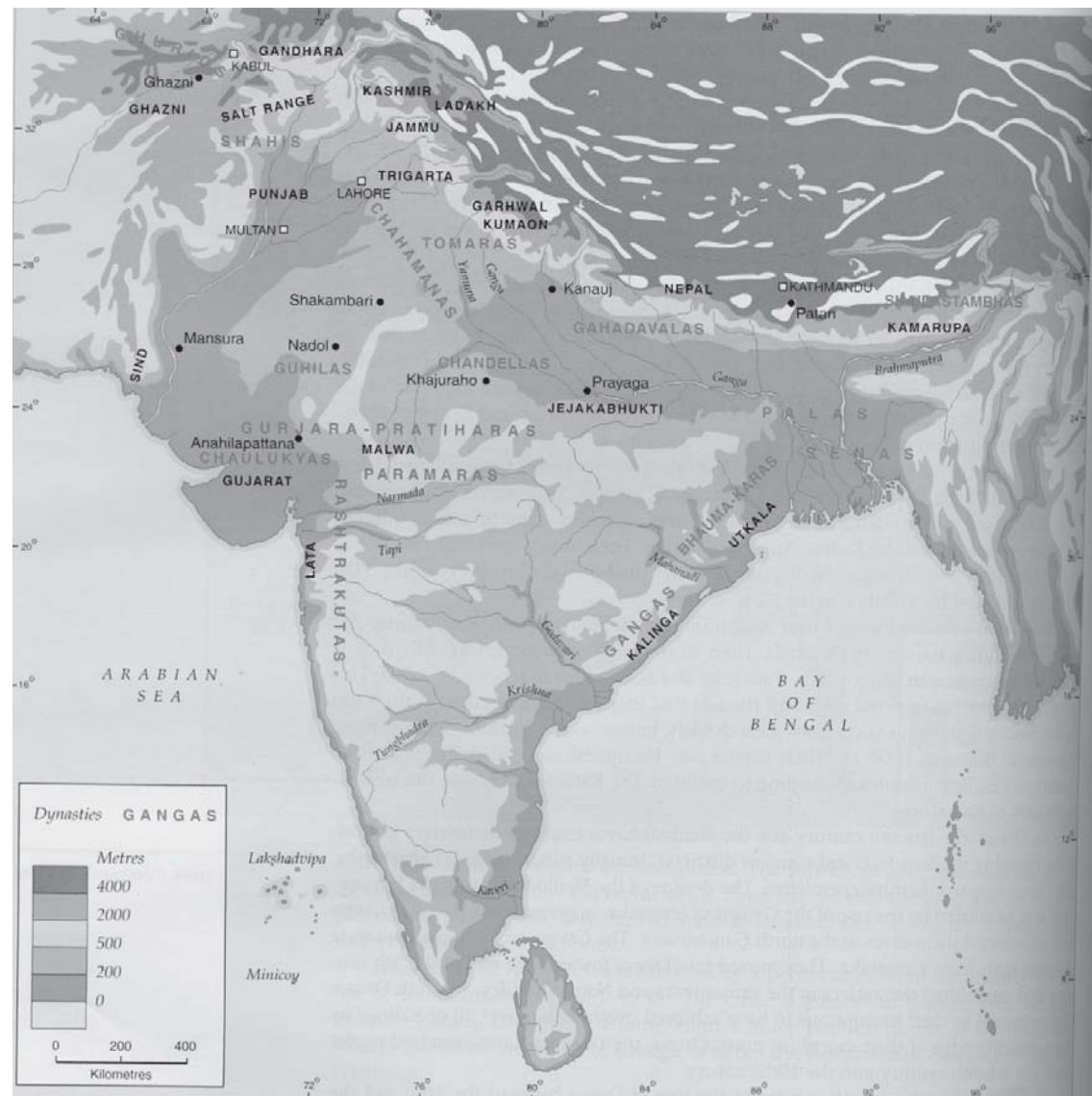
8.1 POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

The political developments after Harshavardhan, about whom you have read in the last chapter, can be best understood if we divide the period from AD 750 to AD 1200 in two parts (a) AD 750–AD 1000; (b) AD 1000–AD 1200. The first phase was marked by the growth of three important political powers in India. These were Gurjara Pratiharas in north India, Palas in eastern India and Rashtrakutas in South India. These powers were constantly fighting with each other with a aim to set up their control on Gangetic region in northern India. This armed conflict among these three powers is known as ‘Tripartite struggle’. In the second phase we notice the break up of these powers. It resulted in the rise of many smaller kingdoms all over the country. For example, in northern India, the disintegration of the Pratihara empire brought to the forefront various Rajput states under the control of different Rajput dynasties such as the Chahmanas (Chauhans), Chandellas, Paramaras, etc. These were the

states which fought and resisted the Turkish attacks from northwest India led by Mahmud Ghaznavi and Mohammad Ghori in the 11th and 12th centuries, but had to yield ultimately as they failed to stand unitedly against the invaders.

Let us now trace briefly the history of the three powers we have mentioned above. The Gurjara Pratihara dynasty was founded by Nagabhatta I in the region of Malwa in the eighth century. He belonged to a Rajput clan. Later one of his successors, Vatsaraja extended his rule over to a large part of North India and made Kannauj in western Uttar Pradesh his capital. Vatsaraja's policy of expansion brought him in conflict with Dharamapala, the Pala King of Bengal and Bihar. Soon, the Rashtrakuta king Dhruba from south India jumped into the fight. And thus began what is known as 'Tripartite Struggle' i.e. struggle among three powers. It continued for about the next hundred and fifty years under various succeeding kings with ups and downs. The Gurjara-Pratiharas, however, could continue to maintain their hold over Kannauj till the last. One of the important kings of this dynasty was Mihira Bhoja (ninth century).

Notes



Map 8.1 Political Map of India (750–1000 AD)



He was highly praised by an Arabian scholar Sulaiman for keeping his empire safe from robbers.

In eastern India, Pala dynasty was founded by Gopala (8th century). As the names of all the succeeding kings ended with ‘Pala’ this dynasty came to be known as the ‘Pala’ dynasty. The son and grandson of Gopala, viz; Dharmapala and Devapala greatly extended the power and prestige of the Pala dynasty. Though their expansion towards west was checked by the Pratiharas, the Palas continued to rule over Bihar and Bengal for nearly four centuries with a small break. The Pala kings were the followers of Buddhism. They greatly promoted this religion by making monasteries (*viharas*) and temples in eastern India. Dharmapala is known to have founded the famous Vikramashila university near Bhagalpur in Bihar. Like Nalanda university, it attracted students from all parts of India and also from Tibet. Many Sanskrit texts were translated into Tibetan at this monastery. The most celebrated name associated with Vikramashila University was that of Atisha Dipankara who was greatly respected in Tibet.

In south, Dantidurga was the founder of the dynasty called, Rashtrakuta dynasty (8th AD). The capital of the Rastrakutas was Manyakheta or Malkhed near Sholapur. It was under the king Dhruva that the Rashtrakutas turned towards north India in a bid to control Kannauj, then the imperial city. And as mentioned above, it led to the beginning of ‘Tripartite struggle’. One of the important kings of the Rashtrakuta dynasty was Krishna I. He built the famous Kailasha temple at Ellora (near Aurangabad, Maharashtra). It is dedicated to Lord Shiva and is monolithic i.e. made of one single piece of rock. The Arab accounts inform us that the Rashtrakutas were quite friendly with the Arab traders who visited their empire. These traders were allowed to build mosques and follow their religion without any hindrance. It testifies to the liberal attitude of the Rashtrakuta kings and also to their desire to draw economic benefit from the growing sea trade conducted by the Arabs at that time.

In South India, the Chola Kings founded a mighty empire during AD 1000–AD 1200. The relationship between these Cholas, called the “Imperial Cholas” with the earlier Cholas mentioned in the Sangam literature is not clear. The Cholas came to power after overthrowing the authority of the Pallavas in South India. The founder of the Chola dynasty was Vijayalaya (9th century AD) but the real architects of the glory of the dynasty were Rajaraja I (AD 985–AD 1014) and his son Rajendra I (AD 1014–AD 1044). During the heyday of the Chola empire, it extended from R.Tungabhadra (a tributary of R.Krishna) in north to Kanya Kumari in south. The Chola Kings made a successful use of their navy and conquered not only Maldives and Lakshadweep Islands but also Sri Lanka. They also defeated the kings of Malaya and Java and Sumatra. One of the greatest contributions of Rajaraja I was the construction of the famous temple known as Rajarajeshwara or Brihadesvara temple, dedicated to Shiva at Tanjore. He also ordered a survey of land for better collection of land revenue in his empire. The rule of his son, Rajendra I was even more dazzling. He carried his arms up to Ganga in Bengal after defeating the Pala King, Mahipala. To commemorate this victory he founded a new capital called ‘Gangaikondacholapuram’ and acquired for himself the title “Gangai-konda” (conqueror of Ganga). He was a great patron of learning and was known as Pandita-chola. The last important Chola king was Kullotunga (AD 1070–1122 AD). Under him the Chola empire started disintegrating and shrunk to much smaller area.

The above account will make you understand that though there were frequent inter-regional clashes, cultural growth was also taking place side by side. In fact, the emer-



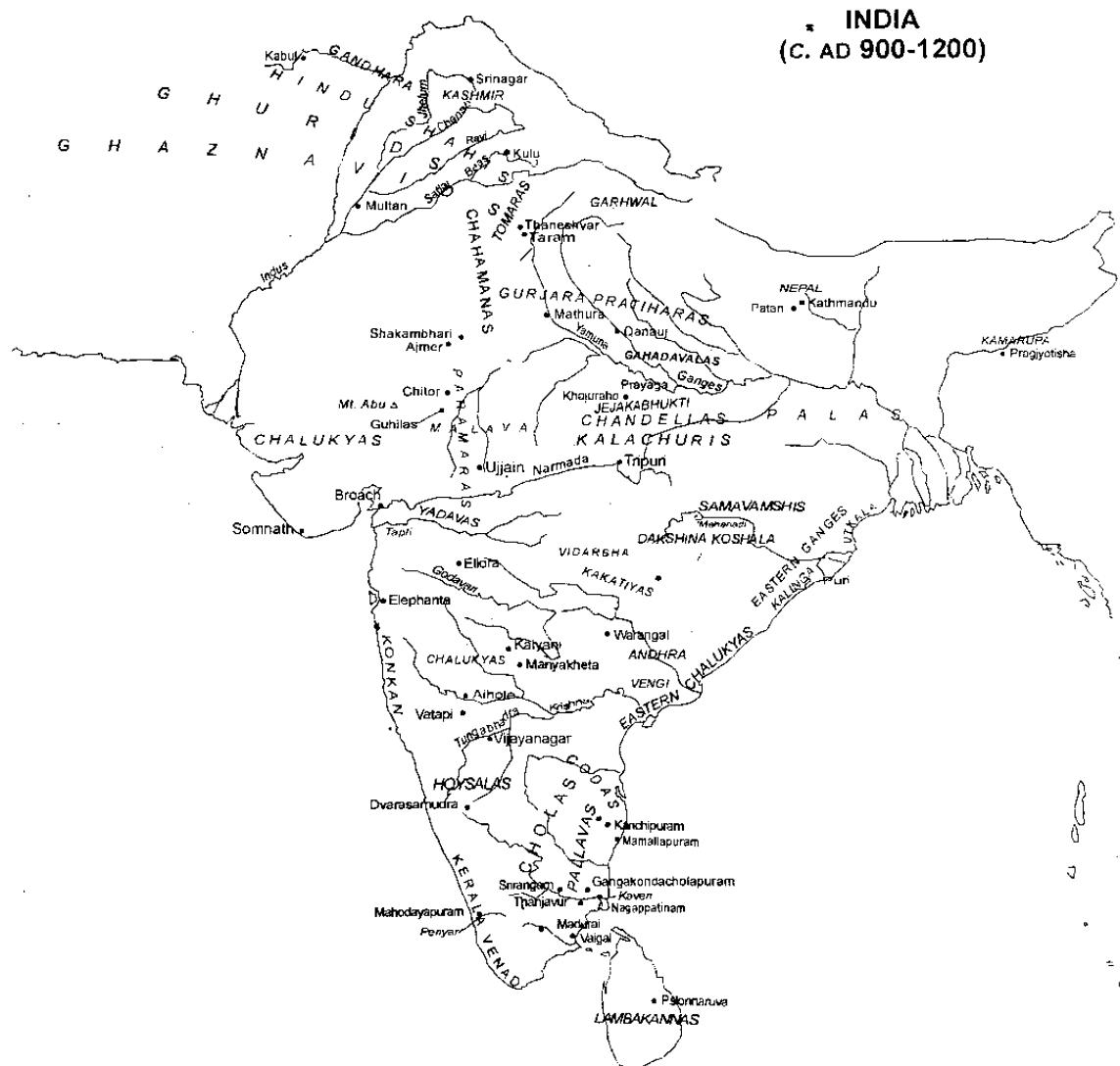
INTEXT QUESTIONS 8.1

1. Name the three dynasties which participated in the Tripartite Struggle'. Give the names of at least one ruler of each of these dynasties?

2. What was the cause of conflict between the three powers during AD 750–1000?

3. Who was the Pratihara ruler who received praise from the Arab scholar?

Notes



Map 8.2 Political Map of India (1000 to 1200 AD)



4. Who founded the Vikramashila University?

5. Which religion was patronized and promoted by the Pala Kings?

6. Which Chola king acquired the title ‘Gangaikonda’ and why ?

8.2 NATURE OF STATE

The state structure in this period has often been described as “decentralized” political system. What is ‘decentralized’ polity? It is a system in which there is of course a king as the main authority at the top, but he shares his rule with other small chiefs called feudatories or the *samantas*. You may wonder who these *samantas* were. Well the term ‘*Samanta*’ basically refers to a king who has been defeated but his kingdom has been restored to him but with the condition that he will continue to accept the over lordship of the conquering king and also pay regular tribute to him in cash or kind. He may also be asked to help with military assistance in times of need. As these chiefs enjoyed freedom of administration over their regions they were quite powerful. Surely you can guess that these chiefs could always be a threat to the overlord, and no wonder whenever there was a weak king at the top, they would assert their independence leading to the break up of the empire. And precisely it was what happened during the last days of Pratihara empire as mentioned above.

Another aspect the decentralized polity was characterized by the practice of making land grants to Brahmanas and others. This practice was initiated by the Satavahanas kings in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, but after the Gupta period it had become a normal practice all over the country. Now land grants came to made not only to religious persons and institutions but to state officials as well. Why did it so happen? It is suggested that one of the reasons for the increase in land grants during this period, was the decline in trade and, therefore the shortage of coined money to pay to the officials and others for their services. The shortage of coined money in the post-Gupta period is indicated by the absence of the presence of coins in the archeological finds. The land granted to the donee (the receiver of grant) was tax free, i.e., the donee did not pay any tax to the state and used the produce and income on it for his personal benefit. The donee was also free from any interference by his king or his officials in managing the land donated to him. Thus, these donees converted the lands granted to them into independent islands of authority with no or little central control.

In the Chola kingdom in South India, the structure of administration was slightly different. Here at the village level, a great amount of autonomy was enjoyed by the local people. They looked after their administration with the help of self elected local bodies. Two types of village assemblies are mentioned in the records. These were known as Sabha and Ur. Sabha was the assembly in the villages which were inhabited predominantly by the brahmanas, whereas Ur was in the non brahmanical settlements. These assemblies looked after the local public works, tax collection, temple management etc., with the help of the members elected through a procedure set by the villagers. It was a unique feature of the Chola administration as it represented a harmonious balance between the central authority and the local self-government.



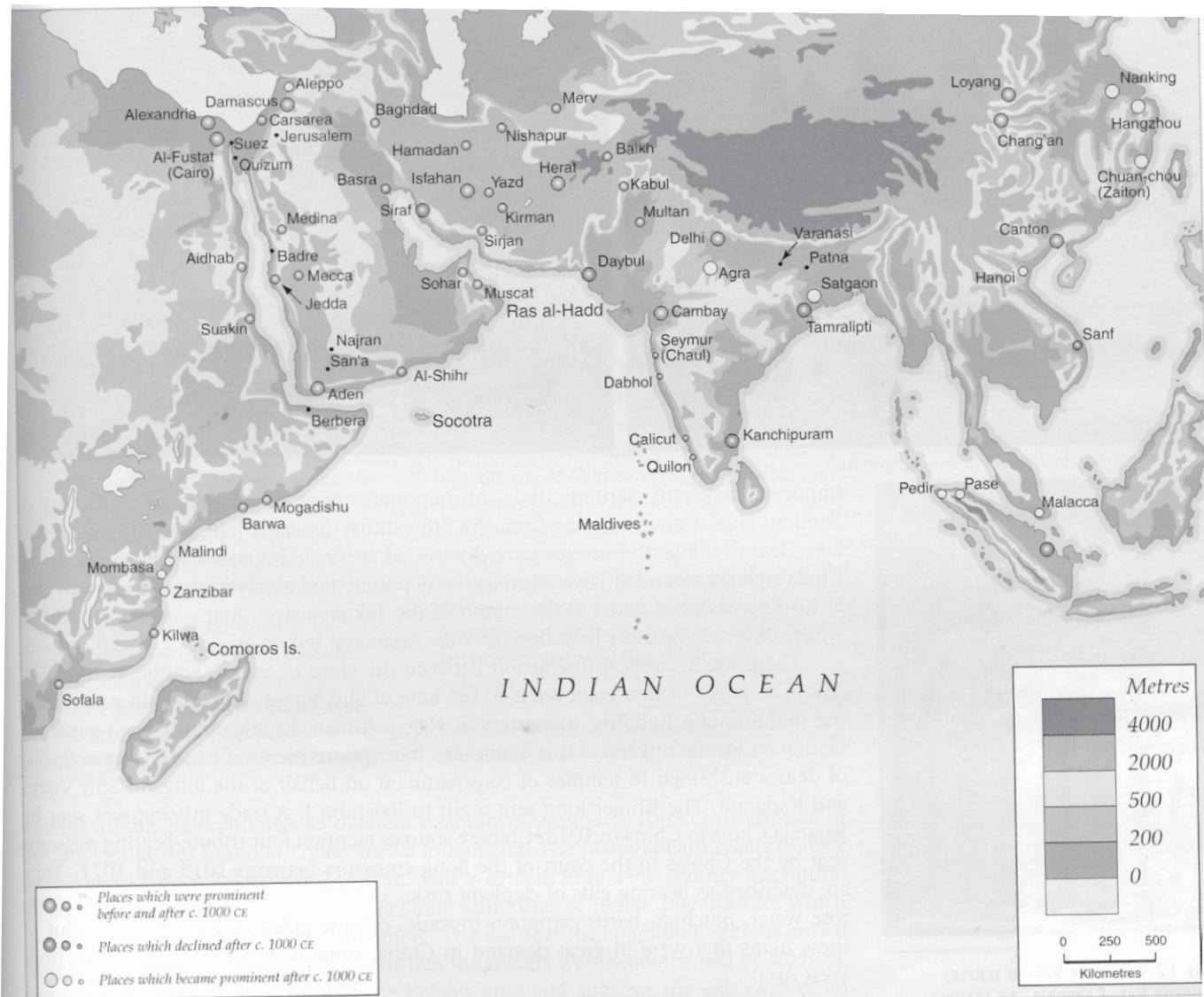
INTEXT QUESTIONS 8.2

- What do you understand by a decentralized political system? How was it harmful for the polity of North India during the early medieval period?
- Which of the kingdom gave importance to village assemblies? What were the village assemblies called?

Notes

8.3 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGES

The early medieval period was also marked by many social and economic changes. Socially, an important phenomenon of this period was the proliferation or increase in



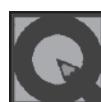
Map 8.3 Map of South East Asia



the number of castes. How did it happen? One of the reason for it was the inclusion of newer groups into brahmanical society. It is suggested that as the number of land grants increased, new areas were brought under cultivation. It made local tribal people leave hunting as their main profession and take up agriculture. They were then transformed into peasants, and assimilated in society as sudras. The land grants in fact resulted in movement and migration of Brahmanas to different internal areas where they were able to introduce and enforce their brahmanical social values. The land grants also led to the increase in the number of Kayastha class. The Kayasthas were basically scribes and they specialized in drafting and writing land grant documents. Naturally, with increase in the number of land grants their importance also increased .

But the most important feature of this period was the rise of a new class of people called the Rajputs, such as Chahmanas, Paramaras, Pratiharas, Chandellas etc. Some historians believe that they were the descendants of various groups of foreign invaders such as Sakas, Kushanas, Hunas etc, who had been coming to India from northwest during different times of history. These people gradually settled down in the region of Rajasthan and, after intermingling with the Indian society, emerged as a warrior class. There are others who treat them as a part of the Kshatriya varna of the brahmanical system. But today many scholars see a connection between the rise of Rajput class and the extension of agriculture activities in Rajasthan. It is pointed out that with the spread of land grants there was an increase in the number of agriculture settlements. As a result, many local chiefs came to acquire enough financial and political power to set up an independent authority. In order to acquire legitimacy and authenticity to their newly acquired position in the eyes of their subjects, they invited brahmanas from Gangetic and other regions to perform for them royal rituals and ceremonies, and in return gave them land and other things as fee, i.e dakshina. They also made brahmanas write about their illustrious ancestry linking them with lord Rama (of the solar race) and lord Krishna (of the lunar race) to claim a dignified position of a warrior class.

Economically, the first phase, i.e, AD 750–AD 1000, is believed to be one of decline. It is evident from the absence of coins for exchange and the decayed condition of towns in northern India. But in the second phase after AD 1000, we notice a revival of trade activities. Not only do we come across new gold coins, there are also numerous references to trade goods and towns. What could be the reason for it? There seem to be two main reasons for it. One, there was increase in agricultural activities on account of land grants in fresh areas. It led to surplus production of goods for exchange. And second, the Arab traders had emerged on the coastal areas of India as important players in international sea trade. The Arabs had acquired a foothold in Sind in AD 712 and later, gradually, they set up their settlements all along the sea from Arabia to China. These settlements served as important channels for the sale and purchase of Indian goods, and thus helped in the growth of Indian external trade. In south India, the Chola kings maintained close commercial contact with southeast Asia (Malaya, Indonesia etc) and China.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 8.3

- What was the main factor for the growth of Rajput class.



Notes

8.4 CULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS

The new regional kingdoms led to the emergence of new regional cultural zones such as Bengal and Orissa in the North Gujarat and Maharashtra in Central India as well as Andhra, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu in the South. The various art forms, languages, literature, etc. that form an important part of our regional cultures today, took their shape around this period. Most of the languages such as Bengali, Assamese Oriya, Marathi, etc. that are spoken in the northern, central and eastern parts of India are some examples. The rich literature produced in these languages began to replace the earlier monopoly of Sanskrit literature. The literary works in the regional languages were often composed under the patronage of the new regional rulers. A famous work composed in the regional language around this time under the Cholas was the Tamil version of the *Ramayana*, composed by Kamban. Similarly in Karnataka, Pampa who is regarded as one of the jewels of Kanada literature composed *Vikramarjuna-vijaya*, known popularly as *Pampa Bharat*, in Kannada. In Andhra region, Nanniah translated some portions of Mahabharata in Telugu. It was later completed by poet Tikkanna in the thirteenth century.

However, Sanskrit still retained a position of importance among the elites as a language of learning. Important works composed in Sanskrit around this period were the *kathasaritasagara* a collection of stories, the *Rajtarangini*, a vivid account of the kings of Kashmir composed by Kalhana and the *Gita Govinda*, a piece of devotional literature



Fig 8.1 Nataraja



composed on the theme of love between Radha and Krishna, by Jayadeva in Bengal under the Pala kings.

Another activity that received royal patronage was that of temple –building. The temples served as representative of the might and glory of the kings who had them built. The loftier the temple, the greater was the might reflected. Indeed there was a definite correlation. The construction of large temples and their regular maintenance required the mobilization of huge amount of resources, both financial and human. This could be possible only when the particular king was wealthy & powerful enough.

The three types of temple architecture which evolved during the period are known as the Nagara, Dravida and Vesara (mixed) styles during this period. The characteristic feature of the Nagara style of temples was the lofty tower or spire called the *Shikhara*. Temples built in this style were spread over large parts of northern India, particularly in Central India, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Orissa. However, even within the general Nagara style, there were distinctive regional characteristics. Some of the outstanding examples of this style, are the Lingaraja temple at Bhuvaneshwar, the Sun temple at Konark and the Kandariya Mahadeva temple, built by the Chandella kings at Khajuraho. The Dravida style of architecture is found in South India. It reached the height of its glory under the rule of the Chola kings. Some of the important characteristics of this style are the *garbhagriha*, the *vimanas*, the *mandapa* and the *gopurams*. The *garbhagriha* was the inner sanctum that housed the chief-deity to whom the temple was dedicated. The *vimanas* were the various storeys built atop the *garbhagriha*. The *mandapa* was a hall with numerous carved pillars, placed before the *garbhagriha*. The *gopurams* were the lofty gates along the high walls that enclosed the entire temple complex. An important example of this style is the Brihadishvara temple built by Chola king Rajaraja at Tanjore. The Vesara temples represented a mixed style. These were mostly built under the patronage of the Chalukyas and are found at Pattadakal near Badami (Karnataka). There was also great improvement in the art of making sculptures in this period. An important contribution of Chola artists in this respect was the bronze images of Nataraja. These images represent Siva in his cosmic dance and are unmatched in their rhythm and balance.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 8.4

- What was the style of architecture followed in Northern India?

- What is the most important contribution of Cholas to the art of Sculpture.

8.5 CONTACT WITH SOUTHEAST ASIA

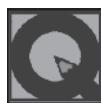
Indians were never such people to stay at home. They have been moving out from ancient time to different parts of the world for trade and other activities. As far as the Indian contact with Southeast Asia is concerned, it appears to be as old as fifth century B.C. Jatakas the Buddhist texts belonging to this period refer to Indians visiting Suvarnadvipa (island of gold), which is identified with Java. Such early contacts with Southeast Asia are confirmed by the recent archeological finds of pearls and ornaments of agate and carnelian, the semi-precious stones of Indian origin, from the coastal sites in Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, etc. These finds belong to as far back as first

century BC. According to the Chinese traditions, the first kingdom in South east Asia was founded at Funan (Cambodia) in the fourth century AD by a brahman known as Kaundinya who had come from India and had married the local princess. However, Indian and South-east Asian contacts became closer from 5th century AD onwards when inscriptions in Sanskrit language start appearing in many areas. It reached its peak during AD 800–AD 1300 when many kings and dynasties with Indian names emerge all over Southeast Asia.

The Southeast contact was largely on account of trade. Southeast Asia is rich in cardamom, sandal wood, camphor, cloves etc. which formed important items of trade between India and the West. Initially, the Indian traders appear to have settled along the coast, but gradually they shifted their network to the interior. Along with the traders came the priests particularly the Buddhist and brahmanas, to meet the ritual requirements of the Indian settlers. It thus created a situation for the spread of Indian social and cultural ideas in South east Asia. But it must be noted that Indian contact did not uproot the local culture. It was rather a case of peaceful intermixing of Indian concepts with local cultural features. Therefore, for example, while Sanskrit was accepted as a language of court and religion in Southeast Asia the regional languages continued to be used side by side , and we find many inscriptions in mixed Sanskrit and local language. Similarly, the concept of varna was known to the south east Asians and brahmanas were respected in society, but social divisions were not rigid as it was in India.

The most important empire which come to be founded in South east Asia in the 8th Century AD was the Shailendra empire. It comprised Java, Sumatra,Malay-Pennisula and other parts of the Southeast Asian region. They were a leading naval power and on account of their geographical position controlled the trade between China and India as well as other countries in the west. The Shailendra kings were followers of Buddhism and had close contact with the Indian rulers. One of the kings of this empire, built a monastery at Nalanda in the ninth century, and at his request the Pala king Devapala of Bengal granted five villages for its upkeep. Similarly in the eleventh century another king was permitted by the Chola king Rajaraja I to build a Buddhist monastery at Nagapattam on the Tamil Coast . The Shailendras also built a beautiful temple dedicated to Buddha at Barabudur in Java. It is situated on the top of a hillock and consists of nine gradually receding terraces.

Besides Buddhism, the worship of Hindu gods such as Vishnu and Siva was also quite popular in southeast Asia. The temples dedicated to them have been found at various places. They show distinct traces of Indian influence and inspiration. One of the most famous temples, dedicated to Vishnu, is Angkorvat temple built in the 12th century by Surya Varman II, the king of Kambuja (Cambodia). It is surrounded by a moat, filled with water. It has a huge gopuram (gateway) and number of galleries, the walls of which are decorated with sculptures based on themes drawn from Mahabharat and Ramayana.

**INTEXT QUESTION 8.5**

1. Which kingdom in South east Asia had close relations with India during 9th–11th century AD?

2. Mention the two important temples in South east Asia? Whom were they dedicated to?

Notes

**WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT**

The period between AD 750–AD 1200 is no more treated as a ‘dark phase’ of Indian history. It was marked by various political, social and cultural activities. Politically, the period between AD 750–AD 1200 is early Medieval period with the rise of numerous regional states. In North India Gurjara- Prathiharas, Palas in east & Rashtrakutes in South India rose to power in early years (750–1000) while in later years (1000–1200) Rajput states in North & Cholas in South fetched power from previous rulers.

The nature of state is a decentralized political system wherein the king at the top is assisted by small chiefs or *Samanthas*. Land grants become very common to religious people & to state officials in lieu of salary. Sabha (Brahman predominant village), Ur (non brahminical settlements) were local administering authorities in South India.

It is a period of economic decline due to diminishing overseas trade. During this period several tribes gave up hunting, start tilling lands, and subsequently included into brahmanical society.

This period is of robust cultural development. Regional languages & Regional literature developed around this time. *Nagara*, *Dravida* & *Vesara* style of temple architecture evolved during this period. Cultural contacts with South east Asia (Java, Sematra, Malay, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia), though developed on settling of Indian traders on these regions.

**TERMINAL QUESTIONS**

1. Name the dynasty that rose to great heights in the history of south India between the 10th and 12th centuries. List some of the important achievements of the rulers of this dynasty.
2. Name any three dynasties which were involved in the Tripartite Struggle.
3. Why did the Rajputs need to seek ways of legitimizing their royal authority in the eyes of the subject population?
4. Trace the process that led to the ‘*samantras*’ becoming an integral feature of the political structures of kingdoms in the early medieval period.
5. Examine the changes that occurred in the society and economy during the early medieval period.
6. Trace the major cultural achievements during the early medieval period.

**ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****8.1**

1. Gurjara –

Pratiharas	–	Nagabhata
Palas	–	Gopala
Rashtrakutas	–	Krishna I


Notes

2. to maintain control over Kannauj
3. Mihira Bhoja
4. Dharmapala
5. Buddhism
6. Rajendra I as he was the conqueror of Ganga

8.2

1. King being main authority at top, shares his rule with other small chiefs (Samanthas). Whenever there was a weak king at the top, they would assert their independence leading to the breakup of the empire.

2. Cholas; Sabha and Ur.

8.3

1. Extension of agricultural activities in Rajasthan.

8.4

1. Nagara

2. Bronze image of Nataraja.

8.5

1. Java, Sumatra, Malay.

2. Angorvat (Cambodia); Barabudur (Java)

HINTS TO TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Refer 8.2 para 3

2. Refer 8.1

3. Refer 8.3 para 2

4. Refer 8.2 para 1

5. Refer 8.3 para 1&3

6. Refer 8.4