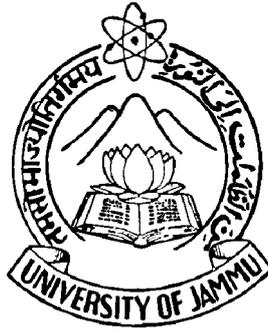


Directorate of Distance Education

UNIVERSITY OF JAMMU
JAMMU



**SELF LEARNING MATERIAL
B. A. SEMESTER - I**

SUBJECT : HISTORY

Units I-IV

COURSE No. : HT-101

Lesson No. 1-19

Stazin Shakya

Course Co-ordinator

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ANCIENT INDIA

COURSE No. : HT - 101

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SYLLABUS
B.A. Semester - I
Course No. : HT - 101
TITLE : ANCIENT INDIA

Unit-I

- i. Survey of literature - Vedas to Upanishads.
- ii. Social Life in Early & Later Vedic Age.
- iii. Economic Life in Early & Later Vedic Age.
- iv. Religious Life in Early & Later Vedic Age.

Unit-II

- i. Life and Teachings of Mahavira.
- ii. Development of Jainism after Mahavira.
- iii. Life and Teachings of Buddha.
- iv. Development of Buddhism : Four Buddhist Councils and Mahayana Sect.

Unit-III

- i. Origin and Sources of Mauryas.
- ii. Administration of Mauryas.
- iii. Kalinga War and Policy of Dhamma Vijaya of Ashoka.
- iv. Causes of Downfall of the Mauryas.
- v. Pushyamitra Sunga.
- vi. Kushans : Conquests and Cultural Contribution with special reference to Kanishka.

Unit-IV

- i. Origin and Sources of Guptas.
- ii. Expansion of Guptas under Samudra Gupta and Chandra Gupta.
- iii. Causes of downfall of Guptas.
- iv. Harshavardhan's Administration.

Note for Paper Setting :

The question paper will contain two questions from each Unit (Total Eight

questions) and the candidates will be required to answer one question from each Unit (Total questions to be attempted, will be four) i.e., there will be internal choice within the Unit.

Internal Assessment (Total Marks : 20)

BIBLIOGRAPHY :

1. Romila Thappar : *Early India from the origins to A.D. 1300*, Penguin Books.
2. D. N. Jha : *Ancient India in Historical Outline*, Manohar Publisher
3. Bhartiya Vidhya Bhavan Series :
Vol. - I : *The Vedic Age*.
Vol. - II : *The Age of Imperial Unity*.
Vol.- III : *The Classical Age*.
4. Majumdar : *The Ancient India*, Motilal Banarsidass.
5. D. Devahuti : *Harsha-A Political Study*, Oxford Press.
6. Dr. Baijanath Sharma : *Harsha and His Times*, Sushma Prakashan Varanasi.
7. Irfan Habib and V. K. Thakur - *The Vedic Age*.
8. Irfan Habib and V.Jha - *The Mauryan India*.
9. A. L. Bashan - *Wonder that was India*.

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SURVEY OF LITERATURE - VEDAS TO UPANISHAD

Dr. Hina S. Abrol

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Objectives
- 1.3 The four Samhitas
 - 1.3.1 The Rig Veda
 - 1.3.2 The Sama Veda
 - 1.3.3 The Yajur Veda
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1.1 Introduction

The Vedic Age occupies a very prominent place in ancient Indian history. It is that

age during which the Vedas, i.e. texts related to early Indo-Aryan religion were composed. Chronologically, its early phase overlaps with the late Harappan period and its late phase with the rise of the Mahajanapadas. The associated culture, sometimes referred to as Vedic civilization was centered in the northern and north western parts of the Indian subcontinent. The Vedic age laid the foundation of the Hindu religious philosophy, the related spiritual speculations, societal norms, customs and traditions.

1.2 Objectives

The objective of the lesson is to enable you to understand the Vedic age through the survey of literature of both of its early and late phases. You should know the content of the four Vedas, the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas and the Upanishads.

1.3 The four Samhitas

The chief constituents of Vedic literature are the four collections of sacred hymns called the samhitas or the Vedas. They are the **Rigveda**, the **Samaveda**, **Yajurveda** and the **Atharaveda**. These Vedas were composed by the Indo-Aryans who had migrated from the north west to the area called Sapta Sindhava, the land of seven rivers. The generally accepted view is that the seven rivers are the Indus, its five tributaries and the Saraswati (Sursuti in modern Haryana, which has now disappeared).

1.3.1 The Rigveda

The **Rigveda** is an ancient Indian sacred collection of Vedic Sanskrit hymns. It is the earliest among the four canonical sacred texts (**shruti**) of Hinduism known as Vedas. Philological and linguistic evidence indicate that the Rigveda was composed in the north western region of the Indian subcontinent, roughly between 1700 – 1100 B.C. The major Rigveda **shakha**, branch i.e. recension, that has survived is that of Shakalya. Another **Shakha** that may have survived is the Baskala, although this is uncertain. The surviving padapatha version of Rigveda text is ascribed to Shakalya. The Shakala recension has 1,017 regular hymns and an appendix of 11 Valakhilya hymns which are now customarily included in the eighth **mandala**, for a total of 1028 hymns.

The **Rigveda** is organized in 10 books, known as **Mandalas**, of varying age and length. The “family books” **mandalas** 2 to 7 are the oldest part of the Rigveda and the shortest books. The eighth and ninth **mandalas** comprise hymns of mixed age. The first

and the tenth **mandalas** are the youngest as well as the longest books. Each mandala consists of hymns called **sukta** which are intended for various sacrificial rituals. The **suktas** in turn consists of individual stanzas called **rcas**, which are further analyzed into units of verse called **pada**.

The **Rigvedic** hymns are dedicated to various deities, chief of whom are Indra, a heroic god praised for having slain his enemy Vrtra, Agni, the sacrificial fire and Soma, the sacred potion or the plant it is made from. Equally prominent gods are the Adityas or Asura gods Mitra, Varuna and Ushas, the dawn. Also invoked are Savitr, Vishnu, Rudra, Pushan, Brihaspati as well as deified natural phenomena such as Dyaus Pita, the Shining Sky, Father Heaven, Prithivi, the Mother Earth, Surya, the Sun god, Vayu, the Wind, Apas, the Waters, Parjanya, the thunder and rain, Vac, the Word, many rivers, notably the Sapta Sindhu and the Saraswati Rivers. The Adityas, Vasus, Rudras, Sadhyas, Ashvins, Maruts, Rbhus and the Vishvadevas, all gods as well as “the thirty three gods” are the groups of deities mentioned.

The Rigvedic hymn's mention various further minor gods, persons, phenomena and items and also contain fragmentary references to possible historical events, such as the struggle between the Vedic Aryans and their enemies, the Dasa or Dasyu.

The hymns of the **Rigveda** give us a valuable deep insight into the political, socio-economic and religious life of the people of the early Vedic age. The tenth mandala of this text contains the **Purusha sukta hymn**, which for the first time describes the **chatur varna** system prevalent at that time. Here, varna indicated the Aryan colour.

1.3.2 The Sama Veda

The literal meaning of **Sama Veda** is ‘wisdom of the chants.’ It is second of the four Vedas. Its earliest parts are believed to date from 1000 B.C and it ranks next in sanctity to the Rigveda. The **Sama Veda** is a collection of melodies ‘**saman**’ and is better known for the intricacy and metre of its poetry than for its literary content. Almost all but seventy five are taken from the Rigveda. These hymns are to be sung, using specifically indicated melodies called Samagana, by udgatar priests at sacrifices in which the juice of the soma plant, clarified and mixed with milk and other ingredients, is offered in libation to various deities. The **Sama Veda** gives precise instructions on how its verses should be sung. This is perhaps because great emphasis was put upon sounds of the words of the

mantras and the effect they could have on the environment and the person who pronounced them.

The **Samaveda samhita** available to us consists of 1,875 **mantras**. These **mantras** are divided into two broad groups – puravachika and uttarachika.

1.3.3 The Yajur Veda

The **Yajur Veda** or the wisdom of sacrifices lays down various sacred invocations (yajurs) which were chanted by a particular sect of priests called adhvaryu. They performed the sacrificial rites. This is very much a ritual based Veda for although there are a few hymns to various gods, the main stress is on the theory of ritual. The Veda also outlines various chants which should be sung to pray and pay respects to the various instruments which are involved in the sacrifice. There are two major groups of recensions of this veda, known as Black (**Krishna**) and White (**Shukla**) respectively. While white Yajurveda separates the samhita from its Brahmana (the shatapatha Brahmana), the Black Yajurveda intersperses the samhita with Brahmana commentary. The Black or Krishna Yajur veda is divided into four parts. They are Taittiriya Samhita, Maitrayani Samhita, Charak Katha Samhita and Kapisthala Katha Samhita.

1.3.4 The Atharva Veda

The **Atharva Veda** is often called the fourth veda. A different spirit pervades this veda. According to tradition, the Atharva Veda was mainly composed by two groups of rishis known as the Atharvanas and the Angirasa, hence its oldest name is Atharvangirasa. The two expressions Atharvan and Angiras designate two different species of magic formulas : **atharvan** is “holy magic bringing happiness,” while **Angiras** means “hostile magic, black magic.” Among the Atharvans for example, are the formulae for the healing of diseases, while among the Angiras are the curses against enemies, rivals, evil magicians etc. The first is medicine and the second is witchcraft and the two are mixed up in the concept of Atharva Veda. In the late Vedic Gopatha Brahmana, it is attributed to Brihgu and Angirasa. Additionally tradition ascribes parts to other rishis, such as Kausika, Vasistha and Kasyapa. There are two surviving recessions, known as Saunakiya and Paippalada.

The Atharva Veda contains many hymns from the Rig Veda but also has some more popular magic spells which are outside the strictly ritual knowledge orientation of the

other Vedas. Like the Rig Veda it is a collection of hymns but of a more diverse character, some very exalted like the Rig Veda, other of more common nature. As such it gives us a better idea of the life of common people in vedic times. The deities of the Atharva Veda are also the same as the Rig Veda although Rudra – Shiva assumes a more visible role. The language is a little simpler and less variable in its forms.

1.4 The Brahmanas

Although the four principle Vedas include the concept of spiritual perfection or liberation, it is not so thoroughly developed or presented. Therefore to help one understand what the goal of Vedic philosophy is, there are also other compositions along with the four Vedas, namely, the Brahmanas, Aranyakas and the Upanishads. The **Brahmanas** are ritual texts. The objective of their authors was to speculate on and mystify the minute details of Brahmanical sacrifices. They can also be described as compositions that accompany different portions of the Veda Samhitas with additional directions and details that the brahmana priests would use, when performing the sacrificial rituals, along with some of their histories. They include the Aitareya, the Shankhayan or Kausitaki and the Shatapatha and the Taittiriya Brahmana that are connected to Rigveda. These contain such instructions as what to meditate on and how to chant the mantras while conducting the sacrifice etc. The Brahmanas also hold cosmological legends and stories that explain the reasons for performing the vedic rituals, along with the estoteric significance of the mantras and sacrificial rituals. They also describe the verses in the main Samhitas. Furthermore they provide the seeds of the systematic knowledge of the Sutras and can be used by the village house holders.

The Panchvinsha, Shadvinsha and Tandya Brahmanas belong to the Sama veda, while the Jaiminiya and Gopatha Brahmana belong to the Atharva veda. The Shatapatha Brahmana, a large volume of 100 chapters, authored by Yajnavalkya is said to belong to the Shukla Yajur Veda.

In the Brahmanas, Prajapati as “Lord of creatures” is the main subject of theosophical speculation, but he is not a god of the people as Rudra is. Next to Rudra comes Vishnu, constantly identified with the all – important sacrifice and therefore rising to a high position. Gandharvas, Apsarases, Nagas etc. are raised to a semi – divine rank. Snake – worship and the mechanical motif of the “Devasura” battles make their appearance

now. Monotheism is being advocated.

There are many creation – legends in the Brahmanas. It is also given that life is a duty and a responsibility and that man is born with certain **rinās** or debts which he must discharge in his life. He has a debt to pay to the gods, to the Rishis, to the manes, to men and to the lower creatures. And these have to be paid by him. Selflessness must characterize all our actions. The **Brahmanas** mention a remarkable sacrifice – the **Sarvamedha**, where in everything is to be sacrificed to attain the freedom of the spirit. Truthfulness in utterance and action is the foundation of moral life. There are hints in the Brahmanas that excessive ritualism was bringing on a reaction.

1.5 The Aranyakas

The **Aranyakas** or “forest – texts” are the concluding portions or appendices to the Brahmanas. They are so called because their contents are of so secret and uncanny a nature that they would spell danger if taught to the uninitiated and had therefore to be learnt in the forest and not in the village. The Aranyakas are concerned neither with the performance nor with any explanation of the sacrifice, but with its mysticism and symbolism. They form a natural transition to the Upanishads. The Aranyakas and the Upanishads were originally called “Vedānta” or the concluding portion of the Veda.

As we have mentioned earlier, the excessive ritualism of the Brahmanas was bringing on a natural reaction. The composition of the Aranyakas were the outcome of that reaction. These forest texts are not concerned with the performance of the sacrifices but are mainly devoted to an exposition of the mysticism and symbolism of the sacrifice and priestly philosophy. Meditation, rather than performance, is the spirit of their teaching, and they naturally substitute a simpler ceremonial for the complicated one of the Brahmanas. While the students and the house holders could do justice to the cult of the Vedic sacrifices, set forth in the Brahmanas, the study of the Aranyakas was absolutely suited and convenient to the ascetics, the forest – hermits, who could dedicate the rest of their lives in the contemplation of the Brahman or the Absolute. The Aranyakas rendered important service when they stressed more on the efficacy of the inner or mental sacrifice, as distinguished from the outer or formal sacrifice, consisting of oblations of rice, barley or milk: They thus helped to bridge the gulf between the “way of works” or **Karmamarga**, which was the sole concern of the Brahmanas and the “way of knowledge” or **Jnana – marga** which the

Upanishads advocated.

1.6 The Upanishads

The term '**Upanishad**' literally means "sitting down near" or "sitting close to" and implies listening closely to the mystic doctrine of a guru on a spiritual teacher, who has cognized the fundamental truths of the universe. In other sense of the term, Upanishad means "brahma – knowledge," by which ignorance is annihilated. Historians and Indologists have put the date of composition of the Upanishad from around 800 – 400 B.C. though many of the verse versions may have been written much later. Infact, they were written over a very long period of time and do not represent a coherent body of information or one particular system of belief. However, there is a commonality of thought and approach. Although there are more than 200 Upanishads, only 13 have been identified out as presenting the core teachings. They are Chandogya, Kena, Aitareya, Kaushitaki, Katha, Mundaka, Taittiriya, Brihadaranyaka, svetasvatara, Isa, Prasna, Mandukya and the Maitri Upanishads. The authors of the Upanishads were many, but they were not solely from the priestly class. The main figure in the Upanishads is Yajnavalkya, the great sage who propounded the doctrine of 'neti – neti,' the view that "truth can be found only through the negation of all thoughts about it." Other important Upanishadic sages are Uddalaka Aruni, Shweta Ketu, Shandilya, Aitareya, Pippalada and Sanat Kumara. Many early Vedic teachers like Manu, Brihaspati, Ayasya and Narada are also found in the Upanishads.

The principal contents of the Upanishads are philosophical speculations. They are the bedrock on which all the later philosophical development rests. The philosophers of the Upanishads are actively interested in an earnest enquiry into the ultimate truth that lies behind the world of creation. They have variously expressed their findings in the identity of Brahman that highest principle which manifests itself in the motley of creation and which receives all things back at the time of dissolution – and **Atman** which is the individual self. This has been pointedly recorded in the famous dictum of identity "**Tat tvam asi,**" where "**tat,**" meaning "that," stands for Brahman, and through it the universe, and "**tvam,**" meaning "thou" for **Atman** or the individual self. The Upanishads believe in the transmigration of souls. There is an effort to be released from the chain of reincarnations.

1.7 Let us sum up

The first lesson deals with the survey of literature – from the Vedas to the

Upanishads. As mentioned earlier, the Vedic Age occupies a very important place in ancient Indian history. We can understand its early and later phases better by reviewing the four samhitas – the Rig, Sama, Yajur and the Atharva veda. Hence, the time of their composition, the content and purpose of these samhitas has to be kept in mind. The goal of the vedic philosophy is more elaborately developed in the Brahmanas, Aranyakas and the Upanishads. Of these, the Brahmanas are largely ritual texts and the objective of their authors was to speculate on the minute details of Brahmanical sacrifices. The Aranyakas or the “Forest texts” are the appendices to the Brahmanas and were meant only for the ascetics and the forest hermits. The Aranyakas are mainly concerned with the exposition of the mysticism and symbolism of the sacrifice and priestly philosophy. The Upanishads are the bedrock, the basis on which all the later philosophical development rests.

1.8 Glossary

Ascetics -	Strictly self disciplined hermit/sage
Chatur Varna -	Four fold varna system
Chronological -	Starting with the earliest and following the order in which they occurred.
Libation -	Water poured out as an offering to God.
Mantras -	Meaningful sacred word; words or sounds repeated to aid concentration or to offer worship to a deity.
Monotheism -	The belief that there is a single God.
Mysticism -	The belief that knowledge of God can be gained by contemplation.
Rinas -	Debts
Speculation -	To meditate, ponder or reflect
Sukta -	Hymn
Varna -	Aryan colour

1.9 Self Assessment Questions

Q1. Give a brief survey of the contents of the four samhitas.

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Q2. What do you know about the Brahmanas? What was the purpose of its composition?

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Q3. Why were the Aranyakas called the “Forest texts”? Comment

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Q4. What is the meaning of the word ‘Upanishad’? What do they deal with?

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1.10 Suggested Readings

1. Romila Thapar : **Early India from the origin to A.D 1300**, Penguin Books, 2002
2. D.N Jha : **Ancient India in Historical outline**, Manohar Publishers.
3. Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan Series Vol - I - **The Vedic Age**
4. P.L Bhargava : **India in the Vedic age**, The Upper India Publishing House, Lucknow,1971

SOCIAL LIFE IN EARLY AND LATER VEDIC AGE

Dr. Hina S. Abrol

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Objectives
- 2.3 **Social life in early vedic age**
 - 2.3.1 Family life
 - 2.3.2 **Varna System**
 - 2.3.3 Marriage and Position of women
 - 2.3.4 Education
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 - 2.3.7 Dress and Decoration
- 2.4 **Later Vedic developments**
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2.4.7 Dress and Decoration

2.5 Let us sum up

2.6 Glossary

2.7 Self Assessment Questions

2.8 Suggested Readings

2.1 Introduction

The study of the social life of the vedic age — early as well as later, is essential for understanding the values, traditions and customs which were followed at that time . The study of several components such as family life, position of women, caste system, education, food and drinks besides others of the early vedic age enables us to have a glimpse of the kind of life people of that age under reference lived. And when this is contrasted with the later developments in these spheres, we get an idea of the gradual evolution of society of the vedic age. The social life, societal norms and traditions of the vedic age forms the basis of social life of the Hindus of the later times.

2.2 Objectives

The study of this lesson will enable you to understand and imbibe the chief features of the social life and society of the early vedic age as well as the later vedic developments.

2.3 Social life in early vedic age

The only source which gives us the details about the various components of social life in early vedic age is the Rig Veda.

2.3.1 Family life

The foundation of social life was the patriarchal family. The father was the head of the family and in case of his death, the eldest son took charge. Parents had absolute control over their children. However, the relation between the parents and children was one of warm affection. The Rigveda suggests that joint family system was in vogue. A notable feature of the etiquette of the Rigvedic age was the great stress on hospitality. A guest was showered with respect, affection and attention.

2.3.2 Varna System

The Aryans were fair complexioned people and were divided into three social classes — the priests, the warriors and the common people. At that time professions were not hereditary. There was also no prohibition of inter-dining and inter marriage. However, when these Aryans came into contact with non-Aryans and also assimilated them in their society, the necessity to maintain class distinctions arose. They divided the society into **Dvija** or twice born and **Advija**. All Aryans were called **Dvija** while non-Aryans and those of mixed blood were called **Advija**. This distinction was primarily on the basis of **Varna** or the color of the skin. During the later Rig Vedic period, the society began to be divided into four **varnas**. As per the **Purusha Sukta hymn** of the tenth **mandala** of the Rigveda, the Brahmanas, Rajanyas or Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Sudras were created from the head, arms, thighs and the feet of the Creator. However, birth of a child in a particular **varna** did not pre-determine his occupation. Occupations were not hereditary and neither was inter-dining and inter-marriage prohibited among the upper three **varnas**.

2.3.3 Marriage and Position of women

During the early vedic times, the girls were married long after they had reached puberty. Marriage was regarded as a sacred tie between husband and wife. Young persons had considerable freedom in the selection of a wife or husband. Girls did not always remain indoors, but moved about freely. They publicly attended feasts and there are references to “fair ladies flocking to festive gatherings.” Marriages were banned among the Aryans and the Dasyu varna. Incest marriages were also banned. In some cases, a bride price was paid by a not very desirable son-in-law. Similarly, when girls had some physical defect, dowries had to be given. The primary aim of marriage was to fulfill the desire for children. Male child was preferred. Monogamy was the prevalent form of marriage although there was no restriction on polygamy. Polyandry did not exist.

In the early vedic age, although the women had to be under the protection of one guardian or the other, they still enjoyed considerable freedom. They commanded respect as wife and mother. Sati system was not prevalent and neither was **pardah** system in vogue. Remarriage of widows was permitted in certain circumstances. A childless widow was required to co-habit with her brother-in-law until the birth of a son. There was no restriction on their education, although, in practice, it was limited to upper strata of society.

2.3.4 Education

In the **Rigveda**, there is no clear reference to the ceremony of **Upanayana** or Initiation of studies of a child by producing him before a teacher. The frog hymn of the Rigveda gives us a glimpse of the educational system of the Rigvedic age. We get an idea of the earliest vedic school where a comparison has been drawn between the croaking of the frogs to the chorus of voices heard when a teacher recites the veda and the pupils repeat his words after him. The entire instruction was given orally. Debates are also referred to. The word '**Brahmacharin**' in the technical sense of a religious student is also found. The chief aim of imparting education was development of character, imbibing moral values and achieving the highest knowledge. Women received similar education as men and also participated in philosophical debates. The Rigveda mentions names of learned women like Lopamudra, Nivavasi, Apala, Ghosha and Vishwavara who composed hymns and attained the status of '**rishis**' or seers.

2.3.5 Food and Drink

Milk and its products, particularly **ghrita** or **ghi** formed the principal ingredient of food. Vegetables and fruits as well as **yava** (barley) were largely consumed. Meat also formed a part of the dietary. The flesh of the ox, the sheep and the goat was normally eaten after being roasted or cooked in pots. Horse flesh was eaten at the horse sacrifice to acquire the strength and swiftness of the horse. The cow receives the epithet **aghnya** (not to be killed) in the Rigveda and is a valued possession. It is difficult to reconcile this with the eating of beef but it was the flesh of the ox rather than of the cow that was eaten. We learn that only **Vasas** or barren cows were sacrificed.

Milk was a favourite drink. The Soma juice was very popular with the Aryans. Sura was also consumed and was extremely intoxicating. Honey or **madhu** was also used.

2.3.6 Amusements and Entertainments

Music, both vocal and instrumental was well known to the people of the early vedic age. Singing is often mentioned as adapted to different ends, such as chanting, reciting, hymning etc. Among instruments, we find references to the **vina**, lute, **vana**, flute and the drum. The dancing of maidens is mentioned. Dramatics, which were religious in character were known in the Rigvedic age. The chariot race and races in general were a favourite

sport and source of entertainment. We have references to gambling and also to the ruin caused by addiction to it.

2.3.7 Dress and Decoration

As per Rigvedic evidence, the **Vastra** consisted of two garments. The **vasas** was the lower garment and the **adhivasa** was an over or upper garment. **Nivi**, an under garment was used in addition. The garments worn were woven and well fitting. Woolen clothing was in vogue. Female dancers used embroidered garments. Brides wore a special garment at the marriage ceremony and this was later given to the brahmana. There was a general fashion for dressing well.

Several ornaments were worn by the people of that age. They adorned themselves with ear-rings, rings, a head ornament, necklaces, armlets etc. Men wore garlands on festive occasions.

The hair was kept oiled and combed. Women wore plaits. Men also wore their hair plaited or braided and the vasishtas were noted for wearing their hair in a plait or coil on the right. The beard and moustache are mentioned but shaving is also referred to.

2.4 Later Vedic development

During the later vedic period, several significant changes took place in the Aryan society. These changes clearly distinguishes them from the norms followed during the early vedic age.

2.4.1 Family life

In the age of the later **Samhitas** we come across the term **kula**, which suggests a system of individual families, each consisting of several members, living under the headship of the father or elder brother to whom belongs the **kula**. As distinguished from **gotra**, it seems to mean the undivided family living under one roof.

The relationship between father and son was of great affection. There are references which indicate that it was considered improper for younger brothers and sisters to marry before their elders. The brother and his wife played the part of guardians of the sister in the absence of the father. Great emphasis was paid on adequate hospitality for a guest.

2.4.2 Caste System

During the later vedic age, the term **varna** is definitely used in the sense of caste without reference to colour of the skin. The system of caste, whose beginnings may be traced in the broad four-fold classification of society in the Rigvedic age, developed during this period in various directions. The **Brahmanas** emerged as the most prominent caste. Among their special duties and privileges are the study and the teaching of the veda, sacrificing for themselves and others and the receiving of gifts. The **Rajanya** or **Kshatriyas** came closest to the Brahmanas, in power as well as prestige. They fought for the protection of the country and maintained peace. The cultural and social position of the **vaishyas**, who by virtue of their occupations came into the closest touch with the **Shudras**, was gradually deteriorating in this age. The vaishyas were engaged in agriculture, pastoral pursuits, industry and trade and paid tribute to the king and the nobles, in return for the protection given to them. The position of the Shudras had definitely deteriorated. He could not perform the sanctifying sacraments. Nonetheless, the doctrine of untouchability had not yet made an appearance. During the later vedic age, the contact of the three Aryans castes with the Shudras, through intermarriage led to a tremendous rise in mixed castes.

2.4.3 Marriage and Position of Women

There are evidences that marriage normally did not take place before puberty. They were banned within the circle of agnates and cognates. The aim of marriage was to have a male progeny. Birth of a daughter was not welcome and this reflects gradually declining position of women in society. This deterioration of her status and dignity went so far as to result in women being classed with dice and wine, as one of the three chief evils. Polygamy was a common practice in the later vedic age. The remarriage of widows was allowed in certain circumstances. Sati was not prevalent. On the whole, the Dharma Sutras take a more lenient attitude towards women than the Smritis of the later age.

2.4.4 Education

The education of a child started with the **upanayana** or initiation ceremony. Moral training and development of character were the basis of the educational system. The student received instructions from his teacher in the **ashrama**. His daily routine included begging alms, collecting fuel, taking care of the sacrificial fire, learning and practicing austerities. Maintenance of chastity was obligatory. The period of studentship was generally fixed at twelve years. The physical training was an integral part of the educational scheme. Besides

this, the student acquired knowledge about subjects like arithmetic, logic, astrology, grammar, medicine and language. Women too were given education and we have reference to women teachers also. When the formal education of the student was completed he had to offer **guru-dakshina** to his teacher.

2.4.5 Food and Drink

Milk and its products such as butter, curd, ghee etc. was still a favourite of the people. Barley, beans and sesame were also eaten by them. Wheat was probably not eaten daily, as it is rarely mentioned. Fruits and vegetables were consumed. Meat eating seems to be fairly common, as in the Rigvedic age. An ox or a goat was killed in honour of a guest. It seems that the killing of cows gradually came into disfavour. The normal non-vegetarian diet consisted of the flesh of the sheep, the goat and the ox, the usual sacrificial victims. The culinary art was fairly well developed. Milk, **masara**, **Soma** and **Sura** were consumed, although **Sura**, an intoxicating spirituous liquor was often condemned.

2.4.6 Amusements and Entertainments

Music and dancing continued as amusements of this age. Several, professional musicians are referred such as lute players, flute players, conch blowers and drummers. Chariot and horse racing as well as dicing were among the well known amusements. We also have a reference to a pole dancer or an acrobat in the Yajur veda.

2.4.7 Dress and Decoration

The dress in this period seems to have consisted of three garments **nivi**, **vasas** and **adhivasas**. Besides these, a set of sacrificial garments are also mentioned. They included silk undergarments called **tarpya**, a garment of undyed wool, an over garment and a turban called **ushnisha**. The turban was worn by men as well as women. Skins were also used as clothing.

The toilet and make up of the ancient Indians consisted of collyrium, an eye salve, body salve, bath powder and ground sandalwood, the latter two to be used for the bath ceremony. Ornaments of gold, gems and flowers were worn by both males and females.

2.5 Let us sum up

The detailed study of the various components which comprises social life in the foregoing pages enable us to not only to understand the important constituents such as family life, position of women, education, caste system, food and drinks etc. of the early

vedic times but also helps us to contrast it with the later vedic developments in the same spheres. From the simple to the complex is the rule that is observed as far as societal development is concerned. Evolution is a gradual, non ending process and the study of social life of the vedic age helps us to understand the basis, the foundation of our contemporary society.

2.6 Glossary

<u>aghnya</u>	—	not to be killed
<u>ashrama</u>	—	abode of the teacher wherein education was imparted.
chorus	—	something said at the same time by many people.
culinary	—	having to do with cooking.
etiquette	—	the code of polite behaviour in a society, decorum.
ghrta	—	ghi or clarified butter
<u>guru-dakshina</u>	—	gift given by a student to his teacher on the culmination of his formal education.
<u>kula</u>	—	family
<u>Madhu</u>	—	honey
monogamy	—	having only one wife at any one time.
norms	—	a standard that is required or acceptable.
patriarchy	—	a form of social organization in which the father or elder male is the head of the family.
polygamy	—	having more than one wife at the same time.
polyandry	—	the practice of having more than one husband at the same time.
<u>upanayana ceremony</u>	—	initiation ceremony performed before the beginning of formal education.
vasas	—	barren cows
vastra	—	attire, dress
yava	—	barley

2.7 Self Assessment Questions

Q1 What do you know about education of the later vedic age? How is it different from the early vedic times?

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Q2 Define the term **varna**. How was it different from the caste system as was prevalent in the later vedic times?

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Q3 Discuss the changing position of women in the early and the later vedic age.

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2.8 Suggested Readings

1. Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan Series, Vol. I — **The Vedic Age**.
2. Romila Thapar, **The Penguin History of Early India. From the origins to AD 1300** , Penguin Books, New Delhi, 2002.
3. P.L Bhargava, **India in the Vedic age**, The Upper India Publishing House, Lucknow.
4. L.P. Sharma, **History of ancient India** (pre-historic age to 1200 A.D), Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd., Delhi, Reprint, 2003.
5. R.S. Tripathi, **History of Ancient India**, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi, 1999.

ECONOMIC LIFE IN EARLY AND LATER VEDIC AGE**Dr. Hina S. Abrol**

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Objectives
- 3.3 **Economic life in early vedic age**
 - 3.3.1 Agriculture and Pastoralism
 - 3.3.2 Trade and Commerce
 - 3.3.3 Occupations
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- 3.5 Let us sum up
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3.1 Introduction

In this lesson, the economic life of the people of the early vedic age and the later developments will be discussed. The study of several components which comprises economic life such as the position of agriculture and cattle, the occupations which were followed by the people, their knowledge about house building, the kinds of means of transport available at that time equips us with the required details in order to understand the economic life of that age. The further study of later vedic developments in the same arenas helps us to understand the developments which occurred over a period of time.

3.2 Objectives

The objective of this lesson is to enable you to understand and appreciate the economic life of the early vedic age. The later vedic developments would help you to understand the gradual evolution of economic life in the subsequent times.

3.3 Economic life in early vedic age

The hymns of the **Rig Veda** give us extensive literary evidences as regard the economy in the early vedic age. The economy was largely pastoral, cattle rearing being the dominant occupational activity. References to agricultural activities are relatively few. Iron technology was not known to the people of this age.

3.3.1 Agriculture and Pastoralism

The Aryans followed a mixed economy-agricultural and pastoral, in which cattle played a predominant part. Cows and bullocks were their most valued possession. These constituted the chief form of wealth. One of the words for 'fight' was **gavishthi**, a search for cows. **Gavyuti** was used as a measure of distance and **Godhuli** as a measure of time. Cattle were in fact a sort of currency and values were reckoned in heads of cattle. However, they were not held sacred at this time. Cow was regarded as a standard unit of exchange. At the same time, coins were also there. We have references to gold coins such as **Nishk**, **Krishnal** and **Satmana**. The ears of cattle were marked, probably to indicate ownership. Bulls and Oxen were regularly used for ploughing as well as drawing carts.

The people of the early vedic age were aware of several agricultural operations such as-tilling the soil, cutting of furrows in the field with the wooden ploughshare drawn

by bulls, sowing of seeds, cutting of the corn with a sickle, laying of the bundles of corn on the threshing floor, threshing and finally sifting and winnowing. Irrigation was known and this helped cultivation. The grain grown was called **Yava** and may have been barley. Rice was not cultivated until a later period. The early vedic people did not use iron technology. Copper, with which they were familiar, did not have as much utility value in agricultural operations, as iron. Stone tools were used and these are mentioned in the Rig Veda. Fire was used to burn down the forest cover and shifting agriculture was practiced.

3.3.2 Trade and Commerce

There existed an extensive inland trade. However, there exists a difference in opinion among scholars as regard the existence of sea trade with countries in Western Asia. The hymns of the Rigveda inform us about men who go to the ocean eager for gain. A ship with a hundred oars is also mentioned. A ship of this kind could be needed only for a sea voyage.

During the early vedic age, the exchange of commodities on the principle of barter seems to have been in vogue. However, as already mentioned, the cow had come to be regarded as a unit of value. Another such unit was the **nishka**.

One of the sources of wealth to the state was booty in battle. It consisted of flocks and herds of cattle. In individual economy, dowry and bride price played an important part. Movable property could change hands by gift or sale which amounted to barter. Land was not an article of commerce.

3.3.3 Occupations

Several occupations were followed by the people of the early Vedic age. The **Brahmana** class officiated at the sacrifices and also conducted vedic classes. The **Rajanya** class had taken to the fighting profession. Members of the **Vaisya** class took to agriculture, cattle breeding and other pastoral pursuits. They also knew certain arts and crafts. The **Sudra** class was engaged in service of all kinds. However, these classes were not irrevocably bound up with specific occupations.

The Rigveda refers to carpenters, metal workers who made household utensils of copper and bronze, tanners, weavers, barbers, dancers, musicians, vintners etc. Hunting as a sport and occupation was known and largely practiced by men of the Rajanya class. The butchers profession was also known. There is no distinct reference to the specific occupation of slaves.

3.3.4 House building

The Aryans of the early vedic period lived in fortified mud settlements. The village was a group of houses, built close to each other for purpose of safety. These were surrounded by some kind of a protective barrier to guard against enemies and wild beasts. The houses were made of wood and their beams were made of bamboo. City life is not much in evidence.

3.3.5 Means of transport

Carts and chariots, the latter drawn by horses, were the chief means of transport on land. The chariots of the rich were drawn by two and sometimes even four horses. Riding on horseback was also in vogue. The Rigveda mentions various parts of a chariot. Travelling was fairly common. A solemn prayer to Indra for the safety of the journey gives many interesting details of a cart driven by oxen in which the journey was made. Boats and ships were used as a means of water transport. There is a reference to a ship with a hundred oars. This might have been used for carrying on trade activities.

3.4 Economic life in later Vedic age

The later vedic period extends roughly from 1000 B.C. to 600 B.C. By this period, some of the vedic tribes had moved from the Sapta sindhava region to the upper Ganga valley and other adjacent regions. During the period of this shift a number of changes took place in the economic structure. These changes are clearly reflected in the later vedic literature.

3.4.1 Agriculture and Cattle

The evidence of the later vedic period suggests a transition from a pastoral economy to a sedentary agrarian economy. The growth of agriculture in the later vedic period was made possible by the availability of the vast tracts of fertile alluvial lands of the Ganga-Yamuna Doab and the middle Ganga valley. Besides, wheat and barley, references are found to the cultivation of rice, various pulses, vegetables as well as cotton. Cultivation suffered from usual pests and to prevent these and similar evils, the cultivators used charms at the time of both sowing seed and gathering corn. There are references to domestic rites synchronizing with each stage in the agricultural life of the people.

It is understood that iron tipped plough shares and hoes increased the efficiency of the agricultural implements which furthered agricultural activities. Thus scholars believe

that the knowledge of iron technology was an important factor for the development of agrarian economy.

The rise in agricultural activities was accompanied by a corresponding decline in the significance of cattle rearing. In the later vedic times, pastoralism was no longer the main subsistence activity of the people. Mixed farming, which included cultivation and herding was the occupational norm of this period.

The later vedic literature informs us that all the three higher classes were engaged in cattle-keeping in their own way. Cattle served as a standard of value and as a medium of exchange. Several rites were prescribed for obtaining prosperity in cattle and their good health. But the cows were not prized merely as property. A feeling of reverence for them was rapidly growing. The rule for sacrificing a cow was often relaxed by the admissibility of an alternative or substitute ritual whereby the cow was saved.

3.4.2 Trade and Commerce

Trade and commerce had developed considerably during the later vedic period. We have references to rich **shreshthins** who had acquired wealth in trade or agriculture and were head of guilds. Money lending was a flourishing business although the rate of interest is not specified. In the period under reference, we do not have any information about a regular system of currency or coinage. The Aryans used **satamana**, a piece of gold equivalent in weight to a 100 **krishnalas** as currency. Besides this, the **nishka** was also used.

The profession of the merchant was hereditary. Haggling or clever bargaining had become a prominent feature in the markets. Garments, coverlets and goat skins are among the articles of commerce mentioned in the Atharva veda.

Sea borne trade was well known during this period. The **Aitareya Brahmana** speaks of the 'inexhaustible sea' and "the sea as encircling the earth." The **Shatapatha Brahmana** mentions the eastern and western oceans and these are probably references to the Indian ocean and the Arabian sea.

3.4.3 Occupations

In the age of the later Vedas, the caste system had taken root in the vedic society and was being elaborated and complicated by the rise of mixed castes. The Brahmanas officiated as priests in the sacrifices and also took to teaching. The fighting profession had

become the monopoly of the **Rajanya** or **Kshatriya** caste. The **Vaishyas** took to agricultural and pastoral pursuits. They also took to trading . The **shudras** performed service to the upper three castes. The divisions however, were not absolutely rigid and the members of one caste did follow the occupation of another on certain occasions. The professions followed by the people of this period include that of a smith, a ploughman, a door keeper, an astrologer, a physician, a carpenter, a gatherer of wood, a butcher, an embroiderer, a jeweller, the maker of sura, potter, washer man, a menial, a ferryman, a usurer, a blower, a drummer, barber, cook and messenger etc.

The knowledge and use of different metals had increased in this age. Implements and vessels of copper, iron, stone and earthenware are mentioned. Silver was also known. Baskets were made of leaves and mats of grass. The varieties of cloth worn were cotton, linen, woolen, silken and hempen. Spinning and weaving was a daily occupation. A flourishing dyeing industry also existed.

3.4.4 House Building

The later vedic literature gives us the information as regards building of houses in the said age. Houses now were large and could accommodate a large family. A separate room was made for the **grahapatya** fire, which was kept continuously burning. The door had a fastener. The houses were made of wood. Bamboo cane, bamboo ribs and bundles of grass were used to give it a complete shape. Separate sheds and pens for cattle and sheep were attached to the houses . The position of the main door is carefully specified. The setting up of the water barrel evidently an arrangement for water supply is part of the house construction. The repairs and renovation of the house were carried out every year with ceremony. A seat with a cushion, a bed and a couch are among the articles of furniture mentioned.

3.4.5 Means of Transport

In the later vedic times, the draft wagon is distinguished from the chariot used for war and sport . The axle-box of a vehicle is mentioned. The wagon was drawn by oxen generally but riding of horses and elephants was in use. The **Atharva Veda** mentions **vi-patha**, a rough vehicle used for bad tracks. From this, it can be inferred that there were some well made roads also. Ships and boats were used by the people on seas and rivers as a means of water transport.

3.5 Let us sum up

The details discussed above of the various components which constitute the economic life enables us to have a fairly good idea of the nature of the Rigvedic economy. The dominance of cattle rearing indicates a largely pastoral economy wherein agriculture held a secondary place. The study of the occupations followed by the people of that age, their trade activities, their knowledge of house building, the means of transport known to them clarifies the nature of the contemporary economy. Further, the study of the same components in the later vedic times helps us to understand the developments made in these fields by the people of later vedic age. Agriculture became a pre-dominant economic activity. The knowledge of iron technology, the shift of the vedic tribes to the upper Ganga valley and adjacent regions where fertile land was available in abundance was largely responsible for this change. Consequently, Cattle rearing was pushed to a secondary place. Progress can be clearly seen in all the other economic activities as well. This way, the different stages of evolution of economic life can be studied and imbibed.

3.6 Glossary

irrevocably	-	not able to be changed or reversed.
pastoral	-	relating to the farming or grazing of cattle.
sedentary	-	immobile
shreshthins	-	merchants
transition	-	the process of changing from one state or condition to another.
usurer	-	the person who lends money on interest.

3.7 Self Assessment Questions

Q.1 Compare and contrast agriculture and cattle rearing as known and practiced in early and later vedic age.

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Q.2 Discuss economic life of early vedic age with special reference to trade and commerce..

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Q.3 Discuss economic life of later vedic age. Was it a development over the early vedic times?

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3.8 Suggested Readings

1. Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan Series, Vol. I — **The Vedic Age**
2. P.L Bhargava, **India in the Vedic age**, The Upper India Publishing House, Lucknow, 1971
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5. R.S. Tripathi, **History of Ancient India**, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi, 1999

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RELIGIOUS LIFE IN EARLY AND LATER VEDIC AGE

Dr. Hina S. Abrol

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Objectives
- 4.3 **Religion in early Vedic age**
 - 4.3.1 Classification of gods
 - 4.3.2 Terrestrial gods
 - 4.3.3 Atmospheric or aerial gods
 - 4.3.4 Celestial gods
- 4.4 **Religion in later Vedic age**
 - 4.4.1 Emergence of Brahma Prajapati, Vishnu and Rudra Shiva as important gods
 - 4.4.2 Rise in importance of **Yajnas**
 - 4.4.3 Rise in importance of Upanishadic doctrines
- 4.5 Let us sum up
- 4.6 Glossary
- 4.7 Self Assessment Questions
- 4.8 Suggested Readings

4.1 Introduction

The study of religion is very important to understand the Vedic age. The basic characteristic features of the early vedic period differ from the later vedic period. In this lesson, the evolution of religious phenomenons in the early vedic age and the development in the later vedic age have to be studied. The hymns of the Rig Veda give us a clear insight into the religious practices followed in the early vedic period. While the later three Vedas, the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas and the Upanishads provide us the information as regards the developments in religion and philosophy in the later Vedic period.

4.2 Objectives

The objective of this lesson is to enable you to understand the importance of study of religion in order to understand the vedic age. The main feature of religion and philosophy in the early vedic age and the later developments have to be clearly understood.

4.3 Religion in early vedic age

The hymns of the Rig Veda clearly depict the primitive attitude of mind of people of that age who looked upon nature as a living presence. They felt awed by the various forces and phenomenas of nature. And when they could not find any answer to the occurrence of these natural phenomenons, they started the process of personification, by which natural phenomena developed into gods. The process of personification made gradual progress and the personified phenomenon got deified. The end result was the emergence of concrete figures of Ushas, Surya and Agni. However, the same cannot be said about Varuna and Indra who are the greatest figures of the Rigvedic pantheon. No certain conclusions have yet been arrived at regarding their physical basis. But we must say that in the case of a large number of Rigvedic gods, we are able to trace the original forces or events in nature. The number of gods gradually started increasing. The numerous gods and goddesses were personifications of whatever that was noble, splendid and striking in nature. The common man started seeking refuge under these powers, these deities and started worshipping them with simple ceremonials known as **yajna** or sacrifices. Agni or Fire was the messenger who carried the offerings of the **yajamana** to the gods. This was done amidst the chanting of hymns of praise.

The gods in the early Vedic age are usually stated to be thirty-three in number.

They are described as born and yet they are immortal. In appearance they are human, the parts of their bodies, such as their arms or tongue being identified poetically with the phenomena of nature, such as rays or flames. The food of men, such as milk, grain and flesh become the food of the gods when offered in the sacrifice. The exhilarating juice of Soma plant constituted the favourite drink of the gods. On the whole, the gods are benevolent. The only god with malevolent traits is Rudra. The common attributes of the gods are splendour, strength, knowledge, possession and truth. The gods subjugate the forces of evil and regulate the order of nature, which they themselves follow and enforce on mortals. They reward the righteous and punish the sinful.

The people of the early vedic age considered worship of gods as their foremost duty. They offered their prayers fervently, performed **yajnas**, sacrificed various articles, food and animals and thereby tried to please the gods. In return they expected to be blessed with honour, wealth, power and comforts of life. The people of this age were optimistic. The joys and pleasures of this life held greater attraction for them rather than life after death in heaven. The **Grahapati**, master of the house, himself performed the rites and rituals and a predominant priestly class was yet to emerge. Image or idol worship was unknown.

4.3.1 Classification of gods

The gods of the early Vedic age are usually stated to be thirty-three in number. The male gods occupied a predominant position. There is no fixed order of seniority among the gods. Several functions, powers and offices are held in common by two or more deities. The particular deity that the poet happens to be invoking monopolizes, for the time being, all the attributes. The god is addressed for the moment as he were the greatest and even the only god. But in very next hymn, this mighty god is described as dependent on others.

As per the traditional classification hinted at in the **Rig Veda I.139.11** and followed by Yaska, the Rigvedic gods have been classified into three orders, namely, terrestrial (**Prithivisthana**), aerial or intermediate (**antarikshasthana or madhyamasthana**) and celestial (**dyusthana**).

4.3.2 Terrestrial gods

Prithvi, Agni, Soma, Brihaspati and the rivers are the terrestrial gods. Prithvi is very closely associated with Dyaus. They are usually celebrated conjointly and Prithvi alone is invoked only in one short hymn of three stanzas. Agni is the personification of the sacrificial fire. He is butter backed and flame-haired. He eats the oblations with his tongue. He is nourished three times a day. His splendour is his most prominent quality. He is called “smoke bannered” (**dhuma-ketu**) and is said to be supporting the sky with his smoke as with a post. He is said to be the son of heaven (Dyaus) and also of heaven and earth. Indra is called his twin brother. Brihaspati is also called Brahamanaspati (lord of prayer). Like, Agni, he is both a domestic priest and a brahman priest and the generator of all prayers. The terrestrial god Soma has a distinct importance. The entire ninth book is devoted to Soma, the deity as well as the plant. Instructions are given with regard to preparation of Soma juice. It is described as a divine drink conferring immortality on gods and men. It is called **amrita**, the draught of immortality. Certain rivers are also praised and personified. The Sarasvati is the most prominent followed by Sindhu (Indus), Vipas (Beas) and Sutudri (Sutlej).

4.3.3 Atmospheric or aerial gods

Indra, Rudra, Marut, Vayu and Parjanya are the Atmospheric or the aerial gods. About one-fourth of the total number of hymns in the Rig Veda are addressed to Indra. He has stupendous physical powers. His arms bear the Vajra, which is his exclusive weapon. He also carries a hook and wields the bow and arrow. He is extremely fond of drinking Soma. The Vritra myth is attributed to him. He is very generous to his worshippers. Rudra is a subordinate deity in the Rig Veda but gradually assumes an important place in the later Vedic Period. He has braided hair and a brown complexion. He wears golden ornaments. He is the father of the Maruts and is regarded as mightiest of the mighty. He is easily invoked and auspicious (Siva) but in many passages is looked upon as malevolent. It is believed that the storm in its destructive aspect explains the malevolent side of his nature while the fertilizing and purifying function of thunderstorm is the basis of his healing and beneficent powers. The Maruts are the storm gods and form an important group of deities. Their chief function is to shed rain. They produce light and make a path for the sun. Like Rudra, they are invoked to avert lightning, the arrow and the bolt from the worshipper and

also to bring healing remedies. Vayu and Vata are interchangeable terms. When distinguished, the former is chiefly the god and the latter, the element. The name “Parjanya” literally means the “rain-cloud”.

4.3.4 Celestial gods

Dyaus, Surya, Usha, Savitri, Vishnu, Varuna are the important celestial gods. Dyaus is a personification of the sky. The image of the beautiful star studded sky of the night is referred to when Dyaus is compared with a black steed bedecked with pearls. Dyaus is often paired with Prithivi, the earth, in the compound **Dyavaprihivi**, The Universal Parents and are worshipped in six hymns. Varuna is the upholder of the physical and moral order. He is a king and a universal monarch having a golden abode in heaven. He wears glistening garments. He has efficient spies. He is predominantly called the Asura who ruled by means of his maya. He is invoked as a bestower of rain. He regulates the seasons. He is a regulator of the waters and causes the rivers to flow. In every hymn to Varuna, there is a prayer for forgiveness of sin. Surya is the most concrete of the solar deities. The name Surya designates the orb of the sun as well as the god. Savitri is pre-eminently a golden deity. He diffuses golden splendour. He removes evil dream and drives away demons and sorcerers. In the famous **Gayatri mantra**, he is invoked to confer his splendour on, and stimulate the thought of, the worshipper. Vishnu is a minor deity in the Rig Veda. The main characteristic of the nature of Vishnu is his three steps which give him the exclusive epithets **uru-gaya** (wide going) and **uru-krama** (wide stepping). Vishnu is a personification of the activity of the sun, whose passage through the three divisions of the universe, namely earth, air and heaven is referred to in his three steps. Usha is the goddess of Dawn. She is gaily attired like a dancer and rises in the east and exhibits her graces. She is ever youthful, being born again and again, though ancient. The Dawn-hymns are among the most poetic in the Rig-veda.

4.4 Religion in the later vedic age

The later three Samhitas, the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas and the Upanishads gives us the details as regards the developments in religion and philosophy in the later vedic period. Chronologically we come down to about 600 B.C. During this age, we also notice a definite but gradual shift in the centre of culture of the Aryans. The north-western parts of India, which were the home of the Rigvedic tribes gradually fade away. The Aryan civilization

gradually extends toward the east and the south. Kurukshetra, Madhyadesa and the land of the Yamuna and the Ganga comes into prominence. The advance of Aryans into the heartland of India brought them into contact with several non-Aryan tribes who worshipped snakes, serpents, stones etc. However, the Aryans did not destroy them. They also did not let themselves be overwhelmed. Rather, they accepted them within their society, but as **Dasas**. The Aryans were also free to marry the females of the non-Aryans which led to mixing of blood between the two and helped in bringing about synthesis of ideas and concepts in the field of religion.

4.4.1 Emergence of Brahma Prajapati, Vishnu and Rudra Shiva as important gods

In the later vedic period, several important Rigvedic gods such as Indra, Varuna and Agni lost their prominence while other such as Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra rose in popularity. Brahma Prajapati was now regarded as the Creator. This phenomenon represents the importance of sedentism since creation myths are important in the agrarian groups. Vishnu, a minor solar deity in the Rigveda gradually became important and started being regarded as the Preserver of mankind, the Protector of the Universe. Rudra, who was hitherto a minor deity in the Rigveda became important in the later vedic period as Rudra Siva. Pushan, who protected cattle in the former period now became a god of the Sudras. The changing status of the deities are an indication of the change in the character of the tribes from pastoral groups to sedentary agriculturist groups. Besides, origin of different female gods, their acceptance as wives of different gods and their worship in different forms is a clear evidence of the influence of non-Aryans on the religion of the Aryans. It is well known that the Aryan society was predominantly patriarchal, while the non-Aryan society had matriarchal features. The amalgamation of the two is definitely a development of the later vedic age.

4.4.2 Rise in importance of Yajnas

A tremendous increase and elaboration in the performance of sacrifices and rituals in the later vedic age led to a growth of priesthood, which now expanded from the Rigvedic seven to seventeen priests. The simple religious ceremonies which were hitherto performed by **Grahapati** gave place to complicated rituals which could be performed only by priests. The main spirit behind the prayer was lost. Instead, great emphasis was laid on correct

performance of rituals and the right pronunciation of verses. Sacrifices were now endowed with mystical symbolism and every ritual act was endowed by mysterious power. So complex were the sacrifices that different sets of priests performed different stages of the same sacrificial ritual. The **Vratya stoma yajna, Rajsuya yajna, Asvamedha yajna and Purushamedha yajna** can be cited as examples in this regard.

Apart from the yajnas, the people of the later vedic age were also expected to perform different **samskaras** during their life time. These **samskaras** or sacraments numbered forty and were supposed to be performed right from his conception in the mother's womb upto his death. Each **samskara** was special and an occasion for a yajna and family festival.

The tremendous increase and elaboration of sacrifices resulted in the supremacy of the Brahmanas and the Kshatriyas in the society. The common man was bound to get exasperated and this resulted in a reaction against the above practices.

4.4.3 Rise in importance of upanishadic doctrines

The intricate and elaborate yajnas brought about a reaction and led to the emergence of the philosophy of tapas or penance emphasized by the Aranyakas. This was resorted to by the forest-hermits and ascetics in their quest to attain **Nirvana**. The Aranyakas stressed upon the importance of meditation and the efficacy of the inner or mental sacrifice as distinguished from the outer and formal one. They thereby helped to bridge the gulf between **karmamarga** or 'way of works,' which was the sole concern of the Brahmanas and the **jnana-marga** or 'way of knowledge' which was advocated by the Upanishads.

Apart from the ascetics, there existed a section of people who had immense faith in the belief that **jnana** or knowledge alone can lead one to attain **nirvana** from worldly bondage. The doctrine, "The Universe is Brahman, but the Brahman is the Atman" represents the quintessence of Upanishadic philosophy. The Upanishads held that there is no doubt that good deeds, **yajnas** etc. could provide a good life to the individual in future but it could not help one in the attainment of **Nirvana** or salvation which is possible only if a person acquires **jnana** or knowledge. Further the concepts of hell and heaven, of **karma**, i.e. every person gets the results of one's **karma's** or deeds of one's present life in his next life, of transmigration of the soul, i.e. the soul does not perish with the death of a body but keeps on acquiring

different forms until it attains salvation; were perfected during the later vedic age

4.5 Let us sum up

In the fourth lesson, the student gets to know about the religion in the vedic age. The characteristic features of religion in the early vedic period such as the personification of the natural phenomenon, their deification, classification of gods etc. has been discussed in detail. The later vedic developments such as the rise in importance of the triad, Brahma Prajapati, Vishnu and Rudra Shiva, the increasing importance of sacrifices is mentioned. The rise in importance of Upanishadic doctrines is also mentioned. The student should be able to appreciate the importance of religion of the vedic age in its entirety.

4.6 Glossary

amrita -	The drink which makes one immortal
benevolent -	Well meaning and kindly
deified -	Treat as a God, idolize
evolution -	Gradual development
exasperated -	Greatly irritated
exhilarating -	Enlivening, invigorating, uplifting, rejuvenating
glistening -	Shining, sparkling
<u>grhapati</u> -	Master or head of the household
malevolent -	Wishing evil to others
nirvana -	Salvation
personification -	Human likeness, given human shape to
stupendous -	Immense
tapas -	Penance
<u>yajnas</u> -	Sacrifices
<u>yajamana</u> -	The person on whose behalf the yajna is being conducted

4.7 Self Assessment Questions

Q1. Discuss the chief characteristic features of the religion of the early vedic age.

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Q2. Discuss the later developments in the field of religion of the vedic age.

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Q3. What do you know about the classification of gods of the early vedic period. Discuss.

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Q4. Mention the reasons responsible for the rise of upanishadic doctrines in the later vedic period.

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4.8 Suggested Readings

1. Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan Series
Vol I – **The Vedic Age**
2. P.L. Bhargava: **India in the Vedic Age**
The upper India Publishing House, Lucknow, 1971
3. L.P. Sharma: **History of Ancient India**
(Pre-historic Age to 1200 AD), Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd, Delhi, Reprint, 2003

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LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF MAHAVIRA

Mr. Kamal Kishore

- 5.1 Objectives
- 5.2 Introduction
- 5.3 Rise of New Religious Ideas
- 5.4 Origin of Jainism
 - 5.4.1 Parshvanatha
- 5.5 Life of Mahavira
 - 5.5.1 Renunciation
 - 5.5.2 Enlightenment
- 5.6 Teachings of Mahavira
 - 5.6.1 Five Vows
 - 5.6.2 **Tri Ratnas**
- 5.7 Philosophy
 - 5.7.1 **Nyayavada**
 - 5.7.2 **Syadavada**
- 5.8 Summary
- 5.9 Glossary
- 5.10 Check your progress
- 5.11 Suggested Readings

5.1 OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson you should be able to know about:

- the background of the rise of new religious ideas during the sixth century B.C.
- the emergence of Jainism
- the life of Mahavira, the founder of Jainism and
- the teachings and philosophy of Jainism

5.2 INTRODUCTION

The sixth century B.C. was an important stage in Indian History as far as the development of new religions is concerned. In this period, we notice a growing opposition to the ritualistic orthodox ideas of Brahmanas. This ultimately led to the emergence of many heterodox religious movements. Among them Buddhism and Jainism developed into well organised popular religions. This lesson attempts to analyse the emergence of these heterodox sects. Firstly it deals with the factors that were responsible for the emergence and growth of heterodox sects. Then it goes on to explain how Mahavira tried to find a solution in his own way to end human suffering and the ways he taught to end these sufferings.

5.3 RISE OF NEW RELIGIOUS IDEAS

The sixth century B.C. was the century of religious fermentation, not only in India but in the world also. It was the time when Confucism in China, Zoroasterism in Persia and Buddhism and Jainism in India emerged. The prevailing social, economic and religious conditions were responsible for the rise of Buddhism, Jainism and other religious sects in India. Lets examine the factors responsible for their rise:

- i) The growing importance of sacrifices and rituals established the domination of the Brahmanas in the society. They acted both as priests and teachers and through their monopoly of performing sacred religious rites, they claimed the highest position in the society which was now divided into four **varnas**.
- ii) The Vedic practices had become cumbersome and in the context of the new society had become in many cases meaningless ceremonies. Sacrifices and rituals increased and became more elaborate and expensive. Due to

this reason they became restricted and as such limited to the upper classes of the society and irrelevant to most of the sections of the society.

- iii) The emergence of **Kshatriyas**, who were wielding more power, is another important factor for the rise of heterodox sects. The Kshatriyas were opposed to the social position defined for them by the Brahmanas. It is worth remembering that both Buddha and Mahavira came from Kshatriya class.
- iv) Both Buddhism and Jainism did not give much importance to the notion of birth for social status, and therefore they attracted the **Vaishya** class. The case of Vaishya was similar to that of Kshatriyas, both being opposed to the dominance of Brahmanas. Therefore, the economic conditions prevalent in sixth century B.C. were up to a great extent responsible for the rise of new sects.

5.4 ORIGIN OF JAINISM

The Jain religion traces its history to the Vedic period. According to Jain tradition, twenty four *tirthankars* were responsible for the origin and development of the Jain philosophy. The first *tirthankara* was Rishabhathatha or Adinatha who is also mentioned in Vedic literature. Parshvanatha was the twenty third *tirthankara* and Mahavira the twenty fourth and last. However, the historicity of first twenty two is doubtful and only last two *tirthankaras* are historical.

5.4.1 Parshvanatha

The twenty third *tirthankara* Parshvanatha is also mentioned in Buddhist sources. He was the son of king Ashvasena of Kashi. He abandoned the throne at the age of thirty and became an ascetic. He received enlightenment after the penance of eighty four days and died at the age of 100 years. Parshvanatha believed in the eternity of matter. He advocated the following principles:

- truth (*Satya*)
- non-violence (*Ahimsa*)
- non-possession (*Aparigraha*)
- non-stealing (*Asteya*)

Parshavanatha left behind him a good number of followers. They were known as *Nirgranthas* (free from fetters) and used to wear white garment. This shows that even before Mahavira some kind of Jaina faith existed. Mahavira gave the same teachings as that of Parshavanatha and added Celibacy to it.

5.5 LIFE OF MAHAVIRA

Mahavira, the twenty-fourth *tirthankara* of Jainism was born in the year 540 BC at Kundagrama (Muzaffarpur district, Bihar). His father Siddhartha was the chief of *Jnatrikas*, a Kshatriya clan. His mother Trishala was a Lichchavi princess. As the son of a king, he had many worldly pleasures, comforts, and services at his command. According to Jain tradition, in boyhood once while playing he brought under control a terrific serpent, consequently and symbolic of this feat of bravery, he got the title Mahavira and Viranatha.

5.5.1 Renunciation

At the age of thirty Mahavira left his family and the royal household, gave up his worldly possessions, and became a monk in search of a solution to eliminate pain, sorrow, and suffering from life of all beings. Mahavira left home, retired to the park, Jnatrakhandavana and relinquished his ornaments and clothes. He shaved his head, observed fast for three days, and then plunged himself into meditation. After some time, he started touring various parts of the country.

Lord Mahavira spent majority of the following twelve and one half years in deep silence and meditation to conquer his desires, feelings, and attachments. He carefully avoided harming other living beings including animals, birds, insects, and plants. He also went without food for long periods of time. He remained calm and peaceful against all unbearable hardships.

5.5.2 Enlightenment

In the thirtieth year of his asceticism, at the age of 42, he attained the 'supreme knowledge' at Jimbhikagrama on the bank of river Rijupalika (both river and the place have not been identified). He thus became 'Mahavira' (the supreme hero) or 'Jina' (the conquerer).

After attaining enlightenment, Lord Mahavira came to Rajgriha, the capital of Magadha. Here he propounded to the people the basic principles of *anuvrata* for the

laity and *mahavarta* for the monks whereby the blissful ideal of life can be reached. Lord Mahavira spent the next thirty years travelling barefoot throughout India preaching the eternal truth he had realized. The ultimate objective of his teaching is how one can attain total freedom from the cycle of birth, life, pain, misery, and death, and achieve the permanent blissful state of one's self. He wandered for eight months in a year and spent the four months of rainy season in some town. He often visited the courts of Bimbisara and Ajatshatru. At the age of 72, he died at Pawa, near Rajgriha in Patna district.

5.6 TEACHINGS OF MAHAVIRA

Lord Mahavira made religion simple and natural, free from elaborate rituals. Mahavira's teachings reflect the internal beauty and harmony of the soul. He taught the idea of supremacy of human life and stressed the importance of a positive attitude towards life.

Mahavira said that a living body is not merely an integration of limbs and flesh but it is the abode of the soul which potentially has infinite perception (*Anantdarshana*), infinite knowledge (*Anantjnana*), infinite power (*Anantvirya*), and infinite bliss (*Anantsukha*). Mahavira's message reflects freedom and spiritual joy of the living being.

5.6.1 Five Vows

According to Mahavira to attain enlightenment and ultimately liberation, one must practice the following *Panch mahavratas* (major vows) in thought, speech and action. The degree to which these principles are practiced is different for householders and monks. They are :

- Non-violence (**Ahimsa**) – to cause no harm to living beings. This is the fundamental vow from which all other vows stem. It involves minimizing intentional and unintentional harm to any other living creature. “Non-violence”, is sometimes interpreted as not killing, but the concept goes far beyond that. It includes not harming or insulting other living beings, either directly or indirectly through others. There can be even no room for thought to injure others, and no speech that influences others to inflict harm. It also includes respecting the views of others.
- Truthfulness (**Satya**) – to always speak the truth in a harmless manner. A person who speaks the truth becomes trustworthy like a mother, venerable

like a preceptor and dear to everyone like a kinsman. Given that non-violence has priority, all other principles yield to it, whenever there is a conflict. For example, if speaking truth will lead to violence, it is perfectly ethical to be silent.

- Non-stealing (**Asteya**) – to not take anything that is not willingly given. Asteya, “non-stealing”, is the strict adherence to one’s own possessions, without desire to take another’s. One should remain satisfied by whatever is earned through honest labour. Any attempt to squeeze material wealth from others and/or exploit the weak is considered theft. Some of the guidelines for this principle are:
 1. Always give people fair value for labour or product.
 2. Never take things which are not offered.
 3. Never take things that are placed, dropped or forgotten by others.
 4. Never purchase cheaper things if the price is the result of improper method.
- Non-possession or Non-hoarding (**Aparigraha**) – to detach from people, places, and material things. Ownership of an object itself is not possessiveness; however attachment to an object is possessiveness. For householders, non-possession is owning without attachment, because the notion of possession is illusory. The reality of life is that change is constant; thus, objects owned by someone today will be property of someone else in future. The householder is encouraged to discharge his or her duties to related people and objects as a trustee, without excessive attachment or aversion. For monks and nuns, non-possession is complete renunciation of property and relations including home and family.
- Celibacy (**Brahmacharya**) – to control the senses including mind from indulgence. The basic intent of this vow is to conquer passion and to prevent the waste of energy. In this vow, the house holder must not have a sensual relationship with anybody other than one’s own spouse. Jain monks and nuns should practice complete abstinence from sex.

5.6.2 Tri Ratnas

According to Jainism, man is the creator of his own destiny and he could attain enlightenment by pursuing a life of purity, virtue and renunciation. Enlightenment or **Nirvana**

can be attained by observing the following three principles:

- 1) Right belief,
- 2) Right knowledge, and
- 3) Right action.

In addition to the above he also asserted that

- Every soul is independent. None depends on another.
- All souls are alike. None is superior or inferior.
- Every soul is in itself absolutely omniscient and blissful. The bliss does not come from outside.
- All human beings are miserable due to their own faults, and they themselves can be happy by correcting these faults.
- The greatest mistake of a soul is non-recognition of its real self and can only be corrected by recognizing itself.
- There is no separate existence of God. Everybody can attain Godhood by making supreme efforts in the right direction.
- God is neither the creator nor the destructor of the universe. He is merely a silent observer and omniscient.
- Know thyself, recognize thyself, be immersed by thyself you will attain Godhood.
- Fight with yourself and not with external foes. He who conquer himself through himself, will obtain happiness.
- All beings hate pain, therefore one should not hurt or kill them. **Ahimsa** (non-violence) is the highest religion.

5.7 Philosophy

The basic and most important aspect of Jain philosophy is the theory of *Anekantavada*.

This philosophy allows the Jainas to accept the truth in other philosophies from their perspective and thus inculcating a tolerance for other viewpoints. Jaina scholars have devised methods to view both physical objects and abstract ideas from different perspectives systematically. This is the application of non-violence in the sphere of thought. This search

to view things from different angles, leads to understanding and toleration of different and even conflicting views.

5.7.1 Nyayavada

One of the most important aspects of the philosophy of *Anekantavada* is *Nyayavada*. According to which reality can be approached from different viewpoints and hence knowledge cannot be absolute. This is the highest achievement of Jain philosophy which implies that even Jainas own knowledge is not absolute.

5.7.2 Syadvada

Another important aspect of *Anekantavada* is the theory of *Syadvada*. The theory of *Syadvada* is based on the premise of *Nayavada* that every proposition is only relatively true. It all depends on the particular aspect from which we approach that proposition. Jainas therefore developed logic that encompasses sevenfold predication so as to assist in the construction of proper judgment about any proposition.

Syadvada provides Jainas with a systematic methodology to explore the real nature of reality and consider a problem from different perspectives. This process ensures that each statement is expressed from seven different conditional and relative viewpoints or propositions, and thus it is known as theory of conditioned predication. These seven propositions are described as follows:

1. *Syad-asti* — may be it is
2. *Syad-nasti* — may be it is not
3. *Syad-asti-nasti* — may be it is and it is not
4. *Syad-avaktavya* — may be it is indescribable
5. *Syad-asti-avaktavya* — may be it is and it is indescribable
6. *Syad-nasti-avaktavya* — may be it is not and it is indescribable
7. *Syad-asti-nasti-avaktavya* — may be it is, it is not and it is indescribable

For example, it may be raining for a person outside and at the same time it may not be raining for a person sitting in a room. Similarly, a tree could be stationary with respect to an observer on earth; however it will be viewed as moving along with planet Earth for an observer in space.

5.8 SUMMARY

In this lesson you have seen the emergence and establishment of new religious ideas in the sixth century B.C. in North India. The contemporary socio-economic setup largely contributed to the emergence of these new religious ideas. Among these Jainism and Buddhism became the most popular among the people. The Jainism, in the beginning originated as a result of the teachings of Parshavanatha whereas it was Mahavira who gave it a philosophical and ideological base. Mahavira questioned the age long supremacy of the Brahmanism and hence utilised the growing discontent among the different sections of society against the existing Brahmanical religion.

5.9 GLOSSARY

Ahimsa : Non-killing or non-violence

Heterodox : Non-orthodox

Sect : Group of people united by belief or opinions

Tirthankara : Jain preachers who acquired supreme knowledge

5.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What are the basic principles of Jainism? Answer in 100 words.

2. Who was Parshavanatha? Upto what extent are Mahavira's teachings influenced by Parshavanatha?

3. Mark which of the statement is right (✓) or wrong (×)

- i) Mahavira added the idea of celibacy to the four principles of Parshavanatha.
- ii) Mahavira did not believe in the supreme creator.

- iii) Mahavira believed in the authority of Vedas.
- iv) The Vedic literature makes reference of Parshavanatha.

5.11 SUGGESTED READINGS

1. **A wonder that was India** by A.L. Basham
2. **Early India, A concise history** by D.N. Jha
3. **India's Ancient Past** by R.S. Sharma
4. **The Penguin History of Early India** by Romila Thapar

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DEVELOPMENT OF JAINISM AFTER MAHAVIRA**Mr. Kamal Kishore**

- 6.1 Objectives
- 6.2 Introduction
- 6.3 Schism in Jainism
 - 6.3.1 Background
 - 6.3.2 First Jain Council and Major Schism in Jainism
 - 6.3.3 Shvetambaras and Digambaras
- 6.4 Spread of Jainism
 - 6.4.1 Spread of Jainism in North India
 - 6.4.2 South India and Rashtrakutas
 - 6.4.3 Second Jain Council and Gujarat
- 6.5 Jain Literature
- 6.6 Summary
- 6.7 Glossary
- 6.8 Check your progress
- 6.9 Suggested Readings

6.1 OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson you will be able to know that:

- how Jainism developed after the death of Mahavira
- how it got divided into two sects
- in what way these two sects differ from each other
- how it spread to different parts of India

6.2 INTRODUCTION

After the death of Mahavira Jainism didn't undergo much changes but a major schism took place which divided it into two sects Shvetambara and Digambara. In this lesson you will see how Jainism got divided into these two sects and how it got patronage of different rulers. Moreover the differences between these two sects will also be explored.

6.3 SCHISM IN JAINISM

6.3.1 Background

The history of Jaina religion is full of references to the various schisms that had taken place from time to time, and some of these schisms contributed to the rise of sects and sub-sects in Jaina religion. There is, however, no unity of opinion on the manner and nature of such schisms. It is maintained that there were eight schisms, of which the first was caused by Jamali, the son-in-law of Mahavira. Similarly, Makkhali Goshala, a friend of Mahavira who practiced asceticism with him for six years also broke away from Mahavira. He went to the extent of founding a new sect known as *Ajivika* sect. The *Ajivikas* believe in the doctrine of pre-destination (*Niyativada*) i.e. everything is predestined and ones actions cannot change one's life. In spite of the decline and extinction of *Ajivika* sect, its doctrine which gives supreme importance to the fate still captures the minds of the followers of almost all the religious sects.

6.3.2 First Jain Council and Major Schism in Jainism

Mahavira had eleven chief disciples known as ganadharas. Only one ganadhara named Arya Sudharman survived him and became the *thera* of the Jaina church after the death of Mahavira. After Arya Sudharman the important *thera* of Jain church was Sambhutavijaya

Around 300 B.C. the leadership of Jaina church was in the hands of two persons Sthulabhadra and Bhadrabahu. The ruler at that time was Chandragupta Maurya. It was during this time that a famine occurred in Magadha. Due to the famine various Jain followers migrated to South India. Chandragupta Maurya accompanied by Bhadrabahu also moved to South India and got converted to the Jaina faith. He went to Shravana Belagola in Mysore and died there in a traditional Jaina fashion by voluntarily giving up food and water.

In the meantime, the monks of North India had changed their lifestyle and were

wearing white garments. Moreover the 14 *Purvas*, which contained the original teachings of Jainism, were also lost. The leadership of Jain church was captured by Sthulabhadra who convened the first Jain council at Pataliputra and compiled the 12 *Angas* replacing the lost *Purvas*. When Bhadrabahu returned to North India he found that the changed situation was not acceptable. He refused to accept the 12 *Angas* as pure teachings of Jainism as also the leadership of Sthulabhadra. Thus the Jaina church got divided into two main sects Shvetambara (White clad) and Digambara (Sky clad), the followers of former wearing white garments while those of latter remained naked.

6.3.3 Shvetambaras and Digambaras

The teachings of Mahavira were an extension of those of Parshavanatha, the 23rd *tirthankara* of Jains. The followers of Parshavanatha known as *Niganthas* used to wear white garments and even during the time of Mahavira some of the Jain monks used to wear white clothes. Therefore, the differences between the two groups were existing from the very beginning which ultimately resulted in the major schism in Jainism. Therefore, the division of Jain church was not a sudden event but a process which took its final shape around 300 B.C.

However, these two sects of Jainism do not differ like those of Buddhism and their major issue of disagreement is 'nudity'. Nevertheless, there are some points of differences between the two though not of philosophical nature. In addition to the practice of remaining nude, the Digambaras differ from Shvetambaras on some ideas and beliefs. They maintain that

- Mahavira himself remained nude so a Jain monk should also practice nudity,
- Mahavira never married and hence practiced *Brahmacharya* throughout his life,
- *tirthankaras* should not be represented as wearing clothes and ornaments,
- after attaining enlightenment a person should be able to live without food and water.

6.4 SPREAD OF JAINISM

The use of common dialects such as Ardhamagadhi by Mahavira and his monks was the chief reason for the popularity of Jainism. The followers of Mahavira gradually spread over the whole country and places like Shravana Belagola, Vallabhi and Ujjain emerged as the principle centres of Jainism. Jainism also got the patronage of rulers like

Chandragupta Maurya, Kharavela and Amoghavarsha who adopted it and played an important role in its spread and development.

6.4.1 Spread of Jainism in North India

According to Jain tradition, Udayin, the successor of Ajatashatru and ruler of Magadha, was a devoted Jaina. In the first century B.C. Ujjain became a great centre of Jainism where great Jain saints like Kalakacharya and Gardhabhilla flourished.

Chandragupta Maurya patronised Jainism as already mentioned and at Shravana Belagola a cave is dedicated to him. The hill on which this cave exists is known as Chandragiri hill.

During the second century B.C. king Kharavela of Kalinga adopted Jainism and became its renowned patron by setting up various Jaina images.

Jainism flourished well during the Kushana period and an important centre emerged in the form of Mathura. Thus, during the early centuries of Christian era, Mathura in the north and Shravana Belagola in the south were the two principle centres of Jainism.

6.4.2 South India and Rashtrakutas

When Bhadrabahu along with Jain monks migrated to South India, Jainism spread there and Shravana Belagola became an important centre of Jainism.

In the fifth century A.D. many royal dynasties of south, such as the Gangas, the Kadambas, the Chalukyas and the Rashtrakutas patronised Jainism. Many celebrated Jain poets flourished under Rashtrakutas. Among them the names of Jinasena and Gunabhadra deserve special mention. They composed *Mahapurana* under the patronage of Amoghavarsha, who is said to have become Jaina during the latter part of his life. Amoghavarsha himself compiled the famous Jain work *Ratnamalika*. One of his successors Indra IV died in the traditional Jaina fashion, i.e. by committing Sallekhana or fasting to death.

6.4.3 Second Jaina council and Gujarat

In Western India also, Jainism flourished well where Vallabhi in Gujarat emerged as an important centre. It was Vallabhi where second Jaina council was held in fifth century A.D. This council was organised by Shvetambaras under the leadership of Devardhi Kshamashramana. It resulted in the final compilation of 12 *Angas* and 12 *Upangas*.

About the year 1100 A.D. Jainism gained great ascendancy in Gujarat. It got patronage from the Chalukyan rulers of Gujarat such as Jayasimha and his son Kumarapala. They openly professed Jainism and encouraged literary and building activities of Jainas in Gujarat. The famous Jaina scholar Hemachandra flourished in the court of Kumarapala. He composed the famous poetic work *Trisastisalaka Purushacharitam* (Deeds of sixty three eminent men), an enormous work dealing with the stories of twenty four tirthankaras and other eminent figures in Jaina mythology.

6.5 JAIN LITERATURE

The Jainas used the prevailing spoken languages such as Ardha-Magadhi, Magadhi, Suraseni etc. for the compilation of their texts. The core of the Jaina literature comprises of 12 *Angas*, 12 *Upangas*, *Prakirnas*, *Cheddasutras*, *Mulasutras*, *Nadisutra* and *Anuyogadvara*. All these works were written in Ardha-Magadhi.

The *Angas*, literally meaning 'limbs', were codified in the first Jain council as stated earlier. However, the whole Jaina canon did not receive its definitive form until the fifth century A.D., when it was finally established at the second Jaina council held at Vallabhi. It was this council in which all of these texts were finally compiled.

The two most important texts of the *Anga* literature are *Acharangasutra* and *Bhagavatisutra*. The former deals with the rules of conduct which a Jaina monk was to follow whereas, the latter contains the detailed analysis of Jaina philosophy. *Bhagavatisutra* also contains some legends about the life of tirthankaras.

6.6 SUMMARY

In this lesson you have seen the development of Jainism after the death of Mahavira, how it spread to different parts and got the patronage of different rulers. The Jainism always remained within the boundaries of India and survived unlike Buddhism. The reason for this is that it underwent less change than Buddhism and remained largely conservative. Hence it was able to maintain its original simplicity and philosophical stability and survived within the boundaries of India whereas Buddhism had to take refuge in other countries for its survival.

6.7 GLOSSARY

Jain canon: the core of Jaina literature, sacred literature

Sallekhana : it is the traditional Jaina way of fasting to death

Schism: breakup or division

Thera: head or pontiff

6.8 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Write a short note on the division of Jainism in two main sects.

2. Explain briefly the patronage received by Jainism from different rulers.

3. Mark which of the statement is right (✓) or wrong (×)

- i) Shvetambaras practice nudity.
- ii) The first Jaina council was held at Pataliputra.
- iii) Jinasena and Gunabhadra composed *Bhagvatisutra*.
- iv) The final compilation of Angas took place in the second Jain council.
- v) Mahavira was a contemporary of Makkhali Goshala.

6.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

- 1. **A wonder that was India** by A.L. Basham
- 2. **Early India, A concise history** by D.N. Jha
- 3. **India's Ancient Past** by R.S. Sharma
- 4. **The Penguin History of Early India** by Romila Thapar

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LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF BUDDHA

Mr. Kamal Kishore

- 7.1 Objectives
- 7.2 Introduction
- 7.3 Life of Buddha
 - 7.3.1 Birth
 - 7.3.2 Renunciation
 - 7.3.3 Enlightenment
 - 7.3.4 Preaching and Death
- 7.4 Teachings
 - 7.4.1 Noble Truths
 - 7.4.2 Eight Fold Path
 - 7.4.3 Other Teachings
- 7.5 Buddhist Literature
- 7.6 Summary
- 7.7 Glossary
- 7.8 Check your progress
- 7.9 Suggested Readings

7.1 OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson you will be able to know about:

- the life of Gautama Buddha
- how he renunciated the world and attained enlightenment

- the teachings of Buddha

7.2 INTRODUCTION

The emergence of Buddhism lies in the contemporary social, economic and political conditions. It is one of the most important sect which emerged during sixth century B.C. as a reaction against the orthodox Brahmanism. This lesson attempts to study the life of Gautama Buddha and how he tried to find answers to the existing problems. Further, it attempts to analyse the response of Buddha to the existing social, economic and philosophical problems.

7.3 LIFE OF BUDDHA

7.3.1 Birth

Siddhartha Gautama was born in 563 B.C at Lumbini (a Himalayan town situated in modern Nepal near the Indian border) on a full moon day. His father Suddhodhana was a chief of the Sakya republic. Her mother Maya died after giving him birth and he was brought up by his foster mother Mahaprajapati Gautami. During the birth celebrations, a seer announced that this baby would either become a great king or a great holy man. His father, wishing for Gautama to be a great king, shielded his son from the knowledge of human suffering. As the boy came to marrying age, his father married him to a young woman, Yashodhara, and she gave birth to a son, Rahula. Although Gautama had everything he could want, he was dissatisfied.

7.3.2 Renunciation

At the age 29, Gautama was escorted by his attendant Channa on one of his rare visits outside of the palace. There, he saw the “four sights”: an old crippled man, a diseased man, a decaying corpse, and finally an ascetic. Gautama realized then the harsh truth of life that death, disease, age, and pain were inescapable. Thus Gautama left his home and his family to live the life of an ascetic. He abandoned his belongings and dedicated his life to learning how to overcome suffering. His first teacher was Alara Kalama and second Udraka Ramaputra. He however was not satisfied with his teachers though he learnt meditation and the teachings of Upanishads from them.

7.3.3 Enlightenment

Then he started meditating alongwith five Brahamans. They practised rigid

austerities and resorted to different kinds of self torture to find the truth. After 6 years, and at the brink of death, Gautama found that the severe ascetic practices did not lead to greater understanding. He started taking a small amount of food to keep himself alive. On this issue the five ascetics left him. Thus concentrating on meditation, he discovered the middle way, a path of moderation away from the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification. Ultimately he went to Uruvela (near, modern Bodhi Gaya on the bank of river Niranjana river) and sat under a pipal tree (Bodhi tree). Here he attained the supreme knowledge (Enlightenment), at the age of 35 on the 49th day of continuous meditation. Since then he was called the Buddha (the Enlightened one).

7.3.4 Preaching and Death

From Uruvela he went to Deer park at Sarnath near Varanasi and gave his first sermon to the five Brahmanas who had earlier accompanied him. This event is known as *Dharmachakra Pravartanam* (setting in motion the wheel of *Dharma*). These five ascetics were his first disciples. Buddha laid foundations of the Buddhist Sangha. He preached most of his sermons at Shravasti. Anathapindaka, the rich merchant of Shravasti became his follower and made liberal donations to the Buddhist order. He also visited many places to propagate his sermons. He visited Sarnath, Mathura, Rajgir, Gaya and Pataliputra. Kings like Bimbisara and Ajatashatru of Magadha, Prasenjit of Koshala, Udayana of Kausambi accepted his doctrines and became his disciples. He also visited Kapilavastu and converted his family to his faith. At the age of 80 (483 B.C) he died at Kusinagara (Kasia in Deora district in Uttar Pradesh), the capital of Malla republic. The Buddha's final words were, "All things must pass away. Strive for your own salvation with diligence".

7.4 TEACHINGS

The basic teachings of Buddha are contained in Four Noble Truths and Eight Fold Path.

7.4.1 Noble Truths (*Arya Satyas*)

The following are the Four Noble Truths:

1. The world is full of suffering.
2. All the sufferings have a cause: desire, attachment and ignorance are the causes of sufferings.

3. The suffering could be removed by destroying its cause.
4. In order to end the sufferings one must know the right path. This path is Eight Fold Path.

7.4.2 Eight Fold Path (*Ashtangikamarga*)

The Eight Fold Path consists of the following principles:

1. **Right View:** The right way to think about life is to see the world through the eyes of the Buddha—with wisdom and compassion.
2. **Right Thought:** We are what we think. Clear and kind thoughts build good, strong characters.
3. **Right Speech:** By speaking kind and helpful words, we are respected and trusted by everyone.
4. **Right Conduct:** No matter what we say, others know us from the way we behave. Before we criticize others, we should first see what we do ourselves.
5. **Right Livelihood:** This means choosing a job that does not hurt others. The Buddha said, “Do not earn your living by harming others. Do not seek happiness by making others unhappy.”
6. **Right Effort:** A worthwhile life means doing our best at all times and having good will toward others. This also means not wasting effort on things that harm ourselves and others.
7. **Right Mindfulness:** This means being aware of our thoughts, words, and deeds.
8. **Right Concentration:** Focus on one thought or object at a time. By doing this, we can be quiet and attain true peace of mind.

7.4.3 Other teachings

In addition to the above Buddha also stressed on following:

- Buddhism laid great stress on the law of *Karma*. According to this law present is determined by the past actions. The condition of man in this life and the next depends upon his own actions.
- Every individual is the maker of his own destiny. We are born again and again to

reap the fruits of our Karma. If an individual has no sins, he is not born again. Thus the doctrine of *Karma* is essential part of the teaching of Buddha.

- According to Buddha *Nirvana* should be the ultimate aim of life. It means the shedding of all desires and ending of suffering, which finally leads to freedom from rebirth.

- He rejected the authority of Vedas as well as the sacrifices and rituals. He laid more stress on the moral life of an individual to end all the sufferings rather than on prayers and sacrifices.

- Buddha neither accepted nor rejected the existence of God. He was more concerned about the individual and his actions. Buddhism also does not believe in the existence of soul.

- Love towards all living beings is important. To express it one should follow the path of *Ahimsa* (Non-killing). But the concept of *Ahimsa* in Buddhism was not emphasised as much as in Jainism.

The teachings of Buddha put forward a serious challenge to the existing Brahmanical ideas. His liberal and democratic principles attracted the people of all sections. His attack on caste system and the supremacy of Brahmanas was welcomed by the lower classes. His rejection of sacrifices and rituals, which were expensive was also welcomed by lower orders who were also without any discrimination admitted into the buddhist sangha.

7.5 BUDDHIST LITERATURE

The Buddha instructed countless people, but he, himself, wrote nothing down. His disciples remembered his talks and recited them regularly. These talks were collected into books called *Suttas* (pali version of word *Sutra*). The first *Suttas* were written on palm leaves in Pali and were gathered together in a collection called the *Tripitaka*. They are called *Pitakas* because the original texts written on palm leaves were kept in baskets (*Pitakas*). The three *Pitakas* are:

- *Sutta Pitaka* : It contains teachings of Buddha which he delivered from time to time. It is further divided into five *Nikayas*.

- *Vinaya Pitaka*: It is a collection of rules for monks and nuns.

- *Abhidhamma Pitaka*: It contains the philosophical ideas of teachings of Buddha. It is written in the form of questions and answers.

7.6 SUMMARY

In this lesson you have seen how Buddha came to realise the existing sufferings in the society and how he renounced the world in search of the answers to all the problems. Buddha preached the Middle Path as against the extreme austerities and penances. He taught the world about the futility of ceremonies and rituals and instead stressed on the individual actions. His teachings became popular among different sections of society.

7.7 GLOSSARY

Nirvana : realization of the ultimate truth.

Renunciation: leaving all worldly possessions in search of truth.

Sangha: the Buddhist monastic order.

7.8 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Explain the Buddhist Philosophy of *Nirvana* and *Karma*.

2. Write a short note on the Four *Arya Satyas* propounded by Budha.

3. Mark which of the statement is right (✓) or wrong (×)

- i) Buddha rejected the authority of Vedas.
- ii) Buddha was born at Kusinagara.
- iii) Buddha neither accepted nor rejected the existence of a Universal creator.
- iv) Buddha gave his first sermon at Sarnath.
- v) Buddhism rejected the concept of Ahimsa.

7.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

1. **A wonder that was India** by A.L. Basham
2. **Early India, A concise history'** by D.N. Jha
3. **India's Ancient Past** by R.S. Sharma
4. **The Penguin History of Early India** by Romila Thapar

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**DEVELOPMENT OF BUDDHISM :
FOUR BUDDHIST COUNCILS AND MAHAYANA SECT**

Mr. Kamal Kishore

- 8.1 Objectives
- 8.2 Introduction
- 8.3 Buddhist Councils
 - 8.3.1 First Buddhist Council
 - 8.3.2 Second Buddhist Council
 - 8.3.3 Third Buddhist Council
 - 8.3.4 Fourth Buddhist Council
- 8.4 Mahayana Sect
 - 8.4.1 Hinayana and Mahayana
 - 8.4.2 Vajrayana
- 8.5 Summary
- 8.6 Glossary
- 8.7 Check your progress
- 8.8 Suggested Readings
- 8.9 Model Test Paper

8.1 OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson you will be able to know about:

- how different Buddhist councils took place
- how Buddhism got divided into two major sects, Hinyana and Mahayana

- the difference between Hinayana and Mahayana sects.

8.2 INTRODUCTION

The history of Buddhism after Buddha involves four councils held from time to time. These councils were held either to codify the teachings of Buddha or to settle the disputes among the monks. This lesson attempts to analyse how different Buddhist councils took place and how different Buddhist scriptures were compiled. Further it attempts to study how Buddhism got divided into two major sects, Hinayana and Mahayana.

8.3 BUDDHIST COUNCILS

During the life of the Buddha himself, the Sangha (monastic order) came into existence. After the death of Buddha, it undertook the responsibility of maintaining the purity of Buddhism. Accordingly, from time to time different councils were held. These councils were held either to settle some dispute among the monks or to codify the teachings of the Buddha in their pure form. Therefore, the four Buddhist councils deserve special mention as it was in these councils that Buddhism underwent various changes and developed in its present form.

8.3.1 First Buddhist Council

The first Buddhist Council was held immediately after the death of the Buddha. It was held in **483 B.C at Rajgriha (now Rajgir)**. This council took place under the patronage of king Ajatasatru and was presided over by Mahakasyapa. The objective of this council was to maintain the purity of the teachings of Buddha and to preserve the Buddha's sayings (*Suttas*) as well as the monastic discipline or rules (*Vinaya*).

In this council the *Suttas* were recited by Ananda, the favourite disciple of Buddha and the *Vinaya* was recited by Upali. Thus two texts were compiled *Sutta Pitaka* and *Vinaya Pitaka*. The former contains the Buddha's teachings whereas the later deals with the monastic code to be followed by the monks.

8.3.2 Second Buddhist Council

About 100 years after the Buddha's *mahaparinirvana* (death), the second Buddhist council took place in **383 B.C**. This council was held at **Vaishali**. Its main purpose was to settle a dispute between the monks of *Vaishali* and that of *Kaushambi*. The dispute arose over issues such as acceptance of gifts, afternoon meals etc., the practices

which the monks of Vaishali had started to follow. The orthodox group of *Kaushambi* was against such practices and hence to settle this dispute second Buddhist council was held at *Vaishali*. It was presided by Sabbakami and was held under the patronage of Kalasoka, the then ruler of Magadha.

However, unfortunately it failed to arrive at an agreement, leading to the first schism in the Buddhism. Those monks who had become unorthodox and changed their lifestyle came to be known as *Mahasanghikas* whereas those who remained orthodox were known as *Sthaviravadins* or *Theravadins*.

8.3.3 Third Buddhist Council

The third Buddhist council was held in **250 B.C. at Pataliputra** under the patronage of king Ashoka. This council was presided by Mogaliputta Tissa and it had three main purposes:

- i) To establish the *Sthaviravadins* as the true followers and expell the others from Buddhism,
- ii) to compile the Buddhist scriptures in a final way and
- iii) to send missionaries to different parts of world to preach the message of Buddha.

Therefore, the result was that the *Sthaviravadin* school established itself as the school representing the true teachings of Buddha. The scriptures were given a final shape and a new scripture *Abhidhamma Pitaka* was added to the existing two *Pitakas*. Further, Ashoka sent missionaries to different parts of world including Srilanka, Burma, South-East Asia, Tibbet, Kashmir etc.

8.3.4 Fourth Buddhist Council

With the passage of time Buddhism had got divided into 18 small sects each differing from other on minor teachings and practices. The fourth Buddhist council's purpose was to settle the differences among these 18 sects of Buddhism. It was convened in **1st century A.D. in Kashmir** under the patronage of the Kushana king Kanishka. This council was presided by Vasumitra, whereas Ashvaghosha acted as its vice-president. Its results were:

- i) Buddhism got divided into two major sects *Hinayana* and *Mahayana*.
- ii) Missionaries were sent to different countries such as China, Japan, Central Asia etc.

8.4 MAHAYANA SECT

The *Mahayana* as a new sect of Buddhism emerged in the fourth Buddhist council, as stated above. The followers of this new sect called themselves *Mahayanists* (followers of the Greater Vehicle) and called the followers of existing 18 sects as *Hinayanists* (followers of the Lesser Vehicle). This division of Buddhism was more important than the earlier schisms as the differences between *Mahayana* and *Hinayana* are not minor.

8.4.1 Hinayana and Mahayana

The main characteristic features of *Mahayana*, which make it different from *Hinayana* are :

- The most important characteristic feature of *Mahayana* is the concept of *Bodhisattva*. According to them a person who is on the verge of attaining *nirvana* should not go further but should help others to attain it by showing them the path. They consider it a great merit to abandon own *nirvana* in order to help others to achieve it. Such a person is known as *Bodhisattva*. While for the *Hinayanists* the *Bodhisattvas* are the previous births of Buddha.

It is for this reason that they call their sect as Greater Vehicle, whose aim is not merely 'personal nirvana' but 'nirvana for all'.

- The *Mahayanists* regard Buddha as God unlike the *Hinayanists* who regard Buddha only as a teacher.

- The concept that Buddha is God led to the worship of his idols. Earlier he was not worshiped and no idols were constructed.

- The *Mahayana* adopted Sanskrit language in place of pali for the compilation of texts. In the fourth Buddhist council the *tripitakas* were rewritten in Sanskrit language.

The important scholars associated with the *Mahayana* school are Ashvaghosha (author of *Buddhacharita*), Vasumitra, Nagarjuna (the propounder of the philosophy of *Madhyamika* or *Shunyavada*), Asanga, Vasubandhu etc.

8.4.2 Vajrayana

Another important sect of Buddhism is *Vajrayana* or 'Thunderbolt Vehicle' (*Vajra*-thunderbolt, *Yana*-Vehicle). It came into existence in 8th century in eastern India under the patronage of the Pala rulers of Bengal. This sect was based on the primitive cult and rituals and full of magical formulae. The chief features of this sect are:

- The chief divinities of this sect are *Taras* (wives of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas).
- Use of mystical syllables and phrases (*mantras*).
- Practice of Yoga and meditation.
- Adoption of questionable practices after a degree of spiritual attainment such as meat eating, drunkenness etc.

8.5 SUMMARY

In this lesson you have seen the development of Buddhism after the death of Buddha. The four Buddhist councils took place at various places from time to time leading to the changes and development of Buddhism. The major change took place in the form of Mahayana sect which emerged in fourth Buddhist council. The division in Buddhism is quite different than that in Jainism for there are considerable philosophical differences between Hinayana and Mahayana whereas the two sects of Jainism do not differ much on philosophical grounds.

8.6 GLOSSARY

Bodhisattva: one who is destined to become Buddha

Schism: breakup

Monastic code: rules to be followed by monks

Mystical: spiritual, supernatural, magical

8.7 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Explain the main characteristic features of Mahayana Buddhism.

2. What was the nature and purpose of Buddhist councils? Where and when were they held?

3. Mark which of the statement is right or wrong

- i) The third Buddhist council was convened by Mahayanists.
- ii) Ashoka sent missionaries to China and Japan.
- iii) Boddhisattvas are worshiped in Hinayana.
- iv) Mahayana believes in Tantric practices.

8.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

- 1. **A wonder that was India** by A.L. Basham
- 2. **Early India, A concise history** by D.N. Jha
- 3. **India's Ancient Past** by R.S. Sharma
- 4. **The Penguin History of Early India** by Romila Thapar

8.9 MODEL TEST PAPER

- 1. (a) Under what circumstances Mahavira renunciated the world? What were the basic teachings that he preached?
(b) Write a short note on Parshavanatha. In what way was he the predecessor of Mahavira?
- 2. (a) Give a critical analysis of the schism in Jainism. What are the major differences between Shvetambara and Digambara sects?
(b) How Jainism spread to different parts of India after the death of Mahavira?
- 3. (a) Give an account of early life of Gautama Buddha. What was his response to the existing social problems?
(b) Explain briefly the major teachings of Buddhism.
- 4. (a) Examine critically the rise of Mahayana. How is it different from Hinayana?
(b) What changes Buddhism underwent after the death of Buddha?
- 5. (a) What were the causes for the rise of heterodox sects? In what way was the Buddhism and Jainism a response to the existing social problems?
(b) Critically analyse the similarities and differences between Buddhism and Jainism?

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ORIGIN* AND SOURCES OF THE MAURYAS

- 9.1 Introduction *** Dr. Hina S. Abrol**
- 9.2 Objectives **Ms. Jagmeet Kour**
- 9.3 Origin of the Mauryas
- 9.4 Sources of the Mauryan period
- 9.4.1 Literary Sources – indigenous and foreign
- 9.4.2 Archaeological Sources – inscriptions, numismatic evidences, archaeological remains, pottery and sculptures.
- 9.5 Conclusion
- 9.6 Glossary
- 9.7 Self assessment questions
- 9.8 Suggested Readings
- 9.9 Model Test Paper

9.1 Introduction

The political condition of India when Alexander left India in 325 B.C was not at all satisfactory. At this point of time, the advent of the Mauryan dynasty in India after the overthrow of the Nanda King was a very significant event. The Mauryas unified the scattered fragments of India, thereby laying the foundation of a formidable empire. There are several opinions as regards the origin of the Mauryas. Were they shudras or were they Kshatriyas? As far as the sources of Mauryan history are concerned, we have both the literary and archaeological sources at our disposal. These help us in understanding the contemporary polity, society, economy etc. of the period under discussion.

9.2 Objectives

- To learn about the origin of the Mauryas. Also, to learn about the sources and their importance for the historian in writing history of the Mauryan period.
- To know about the different categories of sources of the said period.
- To understand how the literary and archaeological sources / evidences help in providing authenticity to an event, person, place etc.
- To understand the society, polity, economy and administration etc of the given period from the contemporary sources.

9.3 Origin of the Mauryas

The origin of the Mauryas has been a subject of controversy among historians. There are two main opinions about the origin of the Mauryas and they are –

- a) The Mauryas were Shudras
- b) The Mauryas were Kshatriyas
- a) Were the Mauryas of Shudra origin?

The **Puranas** are one of the sources of Mauryan history. As per the **Puranas**, it is clearly given that after this, the country will be ruled by Shudras. But this sentence has been mentioned with reference to the destruction of the Shishunaga dynasty and the establishment of Nanda dynasty. The mentioned statement seems to be applicable to Nanda kings only because it is well known that there were many Brahmin dynasties which rose in India after the destruction of Shishunaga dynasty. Hence, it can be said that Mauryas were not of Shudra origin.

The Sanskrit drama **Mudrarakshasa**, written by **Vishakhadatta** contains a word, '**Vrishala**' for Chandragupta Maurya. According to one opinion the word '**Vrishala**' has been used for Shudra and hence it points to the Shudra origin of the Mauryas. But the second opinion which is based on further researches indicate that this word is used for those persons whose social status is inferior and who condemn the caste system. Thus, it is evident that Vishakhadutta did not use this word to convey that Chandragupta Maurya was of Shudra origin but rather that Chandragupta had an inferior status in society. The author of **Mudrarakshasa** also uses the word '**Kulahina**' for Chandragupta Maurya. But according to R.K Mookerjee '**Kulahina**' does not mean shudra but is used in order to

convey a sense of inferiority. Chandragupta Maurya, evidently was a man of humble and inferior status in the contemporary society.

As per another account, Chandragupta Maurya was the son of the last Nanda king and his shudra concubine, Mura. From this was derived the surname Maurya. However, this is not correct. The derivative from Mura would be Maureya and not Maurya.

The **Arthashastra of Kautilya** does not say anything about the origin of the Mauryas. However, it is well known that Kautilya or Chanakya was a staunch Brahmin who had immense faith in the **Varnashrama** system. He crowned Chandra gupta Maurya after destroying the Nanda dynasty. He possibly could not have crowned a Shudra as a king in place of the Nanda ruler (who was a shudra.) Dr. R.K Mookerji also is of the same opinion. Hence, it would be incorrect to say that the Mauryas were shudras or had a shudra origin.

b) Were the Mauryas of Kshatriya origin?

i) Several texts which are part of **Buddhist literature** describe the Mauryas as Kshatriyas.

Mahavamsa mentions clearly that Chandragupta Maurya was a Kshatriya and was born in the Maurya family, Chanakya established him as the king of Magadha.

Mahabodhivamsa, another Buddhist text refers to Chandragupta Maurya as a prince of the dynasty of Moriyaganara.

The **Mahaparinirvana** mentions that at the time of the attainment of salvation by lord Buddha, the Mauryas of Pippalivana sent a message to the Malavas – you and we are Kshatriyas and so we also enjoy a right to have a share in the remains of Lord Buddha. This reference confirms that Mauryas were Kshatriyas.

ii) Several evidences furnished by **Jain literature** also point to the Kshatriya origin of the Mauryas. The author of **Parishisthaparvan**, Hem Chandra mentions that Chandragupta Mauryas was born in the family of the chief of a village community which reared royal peacocks. Similar reference is found in another Jain text, **Haribhadra Tikay**. The **Punyashrava Katha Kosh** mentions clearly that Chandragupta Mauryas was a Kshatriya. Thus, we infer that the Jain literature connects the Mauryas with Mayurya or peacock.

iii) The **archaeological evidence** available with us confirms the opinion of Jain

literature. We have with us an emblem of peacock which has been found at the pillar of Ashoka at Nandan Garh. The figure is also available in several sculptures on the stupa at Sanchi. According to Sir John Marshall, the finds convey that the Mauryas belonged to a Kshatriya dynasty and the peacock was their dynastic symbol.

When we consider the above mentioned literary and archaeological evidences, we may safely conclude that the Mauryas did not have a shudra origin. Chandragupta Maurya belonged to a Kshatriya community, i.e. the Maurya clan.

9.4. Sources of the Mauryan period: Broad categorization

About the Mauryan period we have various sources like the epigraphical sources, literary sources, foreign sources, the materials obtained from archaeological excavations like pottery, numismatic evidence and the evidence from Art and Architecture. Any material be it literary or archaeological which helps us in constructing the history can be called as a source. Broadly we can characterize sources into literary and archaeological with further sub-categories in them as discussed below:

9.4.1. Literary Sources- These are the sources which are in the written form.

9.4.2. Archaeological Sources- These are the sources which are in the form of remains or archaeological findings.

(1) Literary Sources are further categorized as-

A. Indigenous sources : These are the sources belonging to one's own country. They can further be divided as

(a) Secular sources, like Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, Vishakha Dutta's *Mudrakshasa* etc.

(b) Religious sources, like *Puranas*, *Jatakas*, *Divyavadana*, *Dipavamsa* and *Mahavamsa*, *Mahaparinibbanasutta*, *Manjusrimulakalpa*, Jain text-*Parisisthaparvan*.

B. Foreign Sources : are the sources written by foreigners like Megasthenes *Indica* and the accounts by other foreigners like:-

- Deimachus
- Strabo
- Diodorus
- Pliny

- Justin etc.

(2) Archaeological Sources : are the sources which have been explored or excavated by digging the earth or are in the form of material remains. The archaeological sources belonging to the Mauryan period are in the form of:-

A. Inscriptions

- 14 Major Rock Edicts
- Minor Rock Edicts
- 7 Pillar Edicts

B. Numismatics (coins)

C. Archaeological Remains (palaces, sculptures, art and architectural remains etc.)

D. Pottery – NBPW (Northern Black Polished Ware)

Literary Sources :-

1. Kautilya's *Arthashastra*:-

The most valuable source of information of the Mauryan period is the Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, a text in Sanskrit. The text was discovered in 1905 by R. Shamashastry, a librarian in the Mysore Government Oriental library. The text consists of 15 books divided into several sections. It was written in a verse (using few words), aphoristic style (short remark which contains general truths) and was difficult to understand. The authorship of *Arthashastra* is ascribed to Kautilya (also known as Chanakya and Vishnugupta). Since its discovery in the early 20th century, there has been controversy about the age and authorship of *Arthashastra*. Some scholars consider it as a work of the Mauryan period written by Kautilya who played a key role in Chandragupta Maurya's successive bid for power; while others assign it a much later date. Some scholars are of the opinion that the text was originally written by Kautilya, the minister of Chandragupta, and was commented upon and edited by other writers during subsequent periods.

The *Arthashastra* gives detailed information about the administrative system of the Mauryan Empire. It is the most comprehensive treatise of state-craft. The text is mainly instructive in character. It lays down four principles of diplomacy that the rulers should observe. These are *Sam* (conciliation), *Dam* (paying money or price), *Danda* (enemy may be compelled to surrender), *Bheda* (sowing dissension in the enemy camp). The king who is the head of the state machinery should have high ideals for the welfare of

the people. The king should keep away from anger, greed, vanity and love of pleasure. King should have council of ministers to assist him in the efficient governance of the state. Fear, wealth, virtue and law were the four tests that were employed to find out the fitness of the ministers. According to Kautilya there were 18 departments of administrations, some of which were revenue, agriculture, mines, armour etc.

Arthashastra is the branch of learning that deals with the means of acquisition and protection of the earth which is the source of people's livelihood i.e. (*Artha*). As one of the Purusharthas (the legitimate goals of human existence), the *Artha* stands for material well-being and is superior to *dharma* (spiritual) and *kama* (sensual pleasure) because the latter are dependent on its well-being).

In short, *Arthashastra* is in effect the science of state craft. It is an exhaustive treatise on king, his qualifications, inter-state relations, diplomacy, administration of justice, taxation etc. The text gives us detailed information about the Mauryan period.

2. Megasthenes'-Indica :

Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador from the court of Selucus Nikator to that of Chandragupta Maurya, wrote an account of India and Indian people in his book called *Indica*. The book *Indica* is lost but some fragments of it are known to us in the form of quotations in the works of later Greek writers like Strabo and Diodorus of first-century B.C. and Arrian of the second century A.D. (Though available only in fragments the book shows correspondence with the Kautilyan text at many places).

Indica is based on Megasthenes' experiences and travels in India. This report of Megasthenes is accessible to us in the form of *Indica*. It is the first foreign account of Indian life and institutions. The account mentions about the king Sandrocottus (Chandragupta) and Amitrochates (Amitraghata i.e. Bindusara) and their capital Palimbhotra (Patliputra). According to Megasthenes the capital city was administered by officers called Astyanomous and the rural areas were administered by Agronomois.

Megasthenes tells us that the city of Palibothra (Patliputra) was administered by a city council comprising thirty members. The thirty member council was divided into six sub-councils or committees or boards and each committee had five members. Each of these boards had specific responsibilities towards the administration of the city. Megasthenes speaks of Mauryan society as comprising of seven castes instead of actual four castes (i.e. The Chaturvarna system). Megasthenes could not properly comprehend the Indian society

and failed to distinguish between *jati*, *Varna* and the occupation. Megasthenes idealized India and Indian society when he mentioned in his account that there was no slavery and that theft was rare in India.

In spite of its limitations the account of Megasthenes serves an important purpose for the construction of Indian History. The work seems to tell us more about the ancient Greek perspective on India, but, no doubt it is an important source of Mauryan period.

3. Vishakhadatt's *Mudrarakshasa* :

This is a play written by Vishakhadatta during the post Mauryan Period. It refers to Chandragupta as being of low social origin. He uses the terms like *Vrishala* and *Kulahina* for Chandragupta which means a person of humble origin. The work also gives detail regarding the revolution by which Chandragupta overthrew the Nanda ruler and himself occupied the throne. The machinations of Chanakya against Chandragupta's enemies are described in detail in the *Mudrarakshasa*. The plot of the text revolves around clever machinations of Chanakya, a minister of Chandragupta against Rakshasa, a minister of the Nanda ruler.

4. *Mahavamsa* and *Dipavamsa* (the Ceylonese/ Srilankan chronicles) :

These Buddhist sources describe Chandragupta Maurya as a scion of the Kshatriya clan of the Moriyas branch of the Sakyas who lived in Pippalivana, in eastern Uttar Pradesh. The reference of *Piyadasi* in the inscription of Ashoka is corroborated from these works which help us to establish that Ashoka is the only Mauryan monarch who is referred to as *Davanampiya Piyadassi* in the inscriptions. These works describe in detail the part played by Ashoka in the spread of Buddhism to Sri Lanka. These texts also state that the coronation of Ashoka took place four years after he had won for him the undivided sovereignty.

5. *Mahaparinibbanasutta* :

It is one of the authentic and ancient canonical texts of the Buddhists that ascribe Moriyas as the ruling clan of Pippalivana. According to this text the Moriyas, the ruling clan of Pippalivana sent a messenger to the Mallas, claiming a portion of the relics of the Buddha, saying, "The Blessed one belonged to the Kshatriya caste, and we, too, are of the Kshatriya caste." This shows that the Mauryas were Kshatriyas. The text describes Mauryas as Kshatriyas.

6. The *Jatak* texts :

The *Jatakas* while describing the stories of the previous births of Gautama Buddha, tell us about the prevalent social order, existence of guilds, popular customs and a general picture of social and economic conditions of the Buddhist period, which continued broadly till the Maurya Age. In short the *Jataka* stories help us to know the society that existed during the Mauryan period.

7. *Ashokavadana* and *Divyavadana* :

These two texts contain collection of the legends built around the personality of Ashoka and preserved outside India mainly in Tibetan and Chinese Buddhist sources.

These two avadanas contain information about Bindusara, Ashoka's expedition to Taxila as a viceroy to suppress the rebellion and about his conversion to Buddhism. *Divyavadana* makes mention of Susima and Vigatashoka as brothers of Ashoka, whom the Ceylonese chronicles name Sumana and Tishya. These texts also speak in the context of spread of Buddhism outside India by the efforts of Ashoka.

8. The *Milinda-panha* :

It gives an exaggerated account of the slaughter during besiege of Patliputra. The death of Nanda king Dhannanda and the destruction of the army of Magadha is also described in this work.

9. Jain Traditions :

The Jain traditions mention that Chandragupta in his last days, renounced the world and followed the Jain migration led by Bhadrabahu to a place in Mysore, known as Sravana Belgola. It is said that Chandragupta, in true Jain fashion fasted unto death at this place. The hill where he lived is still known as Chandragiri, and a temple erected by him is called as Chandraguptabasti.

The Jain traditions represent Chandragupta Maurya as a son of a village headman's daughter, and add that the village was inhabited by peacock-tamers. According to the text, Chandragupta Maurya was born to the daughter of peacock (maur) tamers therefore the dynasty established by the scion of peacock tamers came to be known as Mauryas.

10 Foreign Sources :

Besides the *Indica* by Megasthenes discussed above, there are several other

Greek sources which refer to Mauryan period in their writings. They are:-

1. Strabo : The work of this writer is primarily a geographical account, but it also gives some information regarding the Mauryan period. Strabo refers to the matrimonial alliance between Selucus and Chandragupta Maurya. He also refers to the women bodyguards of Chandragupta Maurya. Strabo also mentions about the two ambassadors sent to Palimbathora (Patliputra), the capital of the Mauryan Empire. The two were, Megasthenes in the court of Sandrocottus (Chandragupta Maurya) and Deimachus in the court of Amitrochades (Bindusara).

2. Arrian : He narrated the best available account of Alexander's expedition and geography of India. He also discussed the social life of Indians based on the writings of preceding authors like Nearchus, Megasthenes and Erasthenes.

3. Pliny : He has authored 'natural History'. His work gives the account of India based on Greek sources and reports of western merchants.

4. Justin : Justin gives an account of Alexander's campaign in India and Chandragupta Maurya's rise to power. While discussing the role of Chandragupta in overthrowing the Greek rule from the North-West of India, Justin writes that, "India after the death of Alexander had shaken as it were, the yoke of servitude from its neck, had put his governors to death. The architect of this liberation was Sandrocottus (Chandragupta).

5. J. W. Mc. Crindle compiled the Greek and Latin sources of his predecessors in his three famous books-

- (i) Ancient India as described by Megasthenes and Arrian.
- (ii) Ancient India as described by Ptolemy.
- (iii) Ancient India as described in classical literature.

The Greek and Latin sources are immensely helpful for the study of the Mauryas.

6. Fa-Hien & Huen Tsang: Both these Chinese pilgrims visited India during the Gupta period. They give some references about the Mauryas and a number of Mauryan monuments in their account which are important in the study of the Mauryas. Fa-Hein & Huen Tsang mention seeing pillars at palaces, where today there are none. (may be extinct or damaged).

9.4.2 Archaeological Sources:

The utilization of archaeological sources in reconstructing India's past is only

about two centuries old. They not only supplement our knowledge about our past but have also yielded materials which we could not have got otherwise. Epigraphy (the study of inscriptions), archaeological remains, Numismatics (the study of coins) have all benefited us without which our knowledge about India's past would have been limited. Ashoka's views on *Dhamma*, his conquests, and other information about them would have remained unknown without these Epigraphs. Some of the archaeological sources of the period are:-

1. Inscription :

Inscriptions are the most reliable and important sources of history writing. An inscription being a contemporary document is free from later interpretations. It comes in the form it was composed in and engraved for the first time. It is almost impossible to add something to it at later stage. However, in the works written on soft materials like birch, bark, palm leaf, paper etc., this cannot be said to be true because they were frequently required to be copied, since the old manuscripts became fragile in course of time. Also, at the time of copying, some errors tend to creep in or sometimes even additions are made which make the authenticity of the document doubtful. This is not possible with inscriptions.

The Ashokan inscriptions are said to be the earliest. These are found written in four scripts. In his empire in Afghanistan he used Aramaic and Greek scripts for his edicts. In the Pakistan region Kharoshthi script was used. The Brahmi script was used for the rest of his empire from Kalsi in the north in Uttaranchal up to Mysore in the south.

The mystery of these epigraphs was unveiled by James Prinsep in 1837 A.D, when he deciphered the Brahmi script of these edicts and identified king '*Piyadassi*' of the edicts with Ashoka. This identification by James Prinsep was authenticated by the Sri Lankan chronicles, Dipavamsa and Mahavamsa in which the title of '*Piyadassi*' was given to Ashoka.

The inscriptions of Ashoka were recorded in different years of his reign and are called edicts because they are in the form of king's order or desire. These edicts also give a glimpse of Ashoka's image and personality as a benevolent king concerned with the welfare of not only his subjects but also of the whole humanity.

Ashoka's inscriptions are divided into various categories. The main categories are the:

- (i) 14 major rock edicts.
- (ii) 7 pillar edicts.

- (iii) Minor rock edicts, minor pillar edicts, and cave inscriptions.

The minor rock edicts are considered among the earliest inscriptions, the major rock edicts later than them and the pillar edicts still later. Some inscriptions refer to events with reference to the number of years that had expired since Ashoka's abhisheka (consecration ceremony).

Ashoka's inscriptions are unique in the sense that royal inscriptions of later times follow a conventional pattern and phraseology, but, Ashoka's inscriptions reveal voice and ideas of the King.

1. (a) Location :

The extant major rock edicts are mostly located along the borders of the empire. The major pillar edicts are located in north India (with the exception of Amravati fragment). The minor rock edicts have the widest distribution with a noticeable clustering in the Andhra-Karnataka area. The inscriptions were located along ancient trade and pilgrimage routes. Some of them, such as the one at Sanchi, were located at important Buddhist monastic sites.

Ashoka's inscriptions mostly contain explanations of *Dhamma* (the content and the nature of *Dhamma* will be discussed later in chapter-11), the King's efforts to propagate it and his own assessment of his success in doing so. Some of them directly indicate his allegiance to Buddha's teachings and his close relationship with the Buddhist Sangha.

1. (b) The Different categories of Ashokan Inscriptions and their location:

The inscriptions are found on the pillars and rocks (and, in two or three cases, on slabs) at over forty places in an area extending from central Afghanistan to Karnataka. They are fourteen major rock edicts, seven pillar edicts and several minor rock edicts.

A. Fourteen Major Rock Edicts-The set of 14 major rock edicts (or positions thereof) occur at :-

- i. Kandhar (in Kandhar district, south Afghanistan).
- ii. Shahbazgarhi (Peshawar district, south Afghanistan).
- iii. Manshara (Hazare district, NWFP, Pakistan)
- iv. Kalsi (Dehradun district, Uttarakhand)
- v. Girnar (Junagadh district, Gujarat)

- vi. Bombay- Sopara (Maharashtra)
- vii. Dhauli (Puri district, Orissa)
- viii. Jaugada (Ganjam District, Orissa)
- ix. Erragudi (Kurnool District, AP)
- x. Sannati (Gulbarga, Karnataka)
- xi. Rock edicts 11-13 are found at Orissa
- xii. Portions of Rock edict 12 and 14 are found at Karnataka
- xiii. Portions of rock edict 12 & 13 are found from Kandahar

B. Seven pillar edicts- The set of seven Pillar edicts are found at:-

- i. Kandhar (Afghanistan)
- ii. Delhi (The Delhi-Meerut pillar originally stood at Meerut, U.P)
- iii. Delhi (The Delhi-Topra pillar originally was at Topra in Haryana)
- iv. Allahabad (The Allahabad-Kosam pillar was originally at Kosam, Kausambi, (U.P)
- v. Lauriya-Araraj (Champaran, Bihar)
- vi. Lauriya-Nandangarh (Champaran, Bihar)
- vii. Rampurva (Champaran, Bihar)

C. The minor rock edicts are found from:-

- i. Bahapur, New Delhi
- ii. Bairat, Rajasthan
- iii. Ahraura, U.P
- iv. Shasram, Bihar
- v. Gujjare, M.P
- vi. Rupnath, M.P
- vii. Panguraria, M.P
- viii. Maski, Karnataka
- ix. Gavimath, Karnataka
- x. Palkigundu, Karnataka

- xi. Nittur ,Karnataka
- xii. Udegolam, Karnataka
- xiii. Rajula-Mandegiri, Andhra Pradesh
- xiv. Erragudi, Andhra Pradesh
- xv. Brahmagiri, Karnataka
- xvi. Siddapura, Karnataka
- xvii. Jatiya-Rameshvara, Karnataka

2. Numismatic Evidences :

Punch-Marked coins, mostly of silver, continued to be issued and used in the Maurya period. Certain symbols such as the crescent-on-arches, tree-in-railing, and the peacock-on-arches have been associated with the Mauryan Kings. The use of the symbol on coins issued by the state would certainly have endowed it with a political significance; we may note that *Arthashastra* refers to different denominations of silver coins called *Panas* and copper coins called *Mashaka*.

3. Archaeological Remains :

Archaeological remains from Kumrahar and Bulandibagh are associated with Patliputra, the Maurya capital, from where structures like palace and palisade have been discovered. Megasthenes in his work mentions about wooden structures at the Mauryan capital, Pataliputra. At Kumrahar (modern Patna) excavations also revealed some structures which have been identified as a pillared hall of the Mauryas. One of the most important finds of this period is a large numbers of ringwells that were probably used to supply water for domestic purposes. The hallmark of the structural development during this period was the extensive use of burnt bricks and ringwells.

4. Pottery :

The NBPW (Northern Black Polished Ware) was the common type of pottery used throughout the Maurya period with the exception of southernmost areas. NBPW pottery has been found from several parts of Mauryan Empire. It became a specialised kind of pottery-making craft and its availability outside the Ganges valley is limited. This indicates that it was a technique developed in this part of country and was dependent on a particular type of clay available here.

5. Sculptures :

Before the reign of Ashoka there is practically no evidence of stone sculptures, unless we go back to Indus valley civilization. With Ashoka came a new tradition of making stone sculptures with great taste and exquisite skill. The major achievements in this field are seen in the capitals of Ashokan pillars modeled in three dimensions like Lion (single) found at Lauriya Nandangarh, Rampurva, Beswa; Lion (set of four) at Sanchi, Sarnath; Bull at Rampurva, Crocodile at Besnagar etc. The shafts of the Ashokan pillars are superbly polished to smooth glossiness. The animals in relief on the abacus rings include lion, elephant, horse, Bactrian camel, bull & wild geese.

It is noteworthy that not a single human form is modelled or shown in relief, on any of the Ashokan sculpture. The striking sculpture of *Yakshi* (semi-divine guardian) from Didarganj (Patna), with its Mauryan polish and the display of the standard Greek proportions of the torso datable to the first century B.C. probably illustrate the extent the Mauryan art could have achieved had not convention prevented it from sculpturing the human form.

Terracotta figurines found in considerable numbers at Mauryan sites are products of a widespread folk art. Female deities, animals and toys were made, often perhaps by professional potters, but also possibly by women in their homes. Many figurines were undoubtedly manually shaped, but some were cast from terracotta matrixes, as is illustrated from the many copies of a plaque bearing the figures of a man and a woman standing side by side, found along with the matrix from Bhir Mound in Taxila.

9.5. Conclusion

We can conclude that sources, be it literary or archaeological are important to know about the historical events and also to construct the history of the contemporary period. They help us to know about the society, economy, polity, life of the people, etc. They also help us to study the changes and development in the society over a period of time. They enable us to differentiate a particular period from the preceding or succeeding period. The study of history and historical events is incomplete without the study of sources.

9.6. Glossary

Archaeology - It is the study of ancient history by examining objects obtained after digging the earth or the archaeological remains found during excavations and

explorations.

Arthashastra - The theory of polity, also a title of treatise on the subject by Kautilya belonging to the Mauryan period.

Classical Sources – It refers to the Greek sources for example, the *Indica* of Megasthenes.

Edicts – The inscriptions of Ashoka are called edicts because they are in the form of the King's order or desire.

Epigraphy – The study of inscriptions is called epigraphy.

Inscriptions – It is a form of contemporary document inscribed or engraved on stone, pillar, rock, seals, birch-bark, palm-leaf, paper, etc.

9.7. Self Assessment Questions

State whether the following statement is true or false

- i. Sources help us to know about the contemporary period.
- ii. The *Jataka* stories are related to previous births of Buddha.
- iii. Ashoka succeeded Chandragupta Maurya.
- iv. N.B.P.W. stands for Northern Black Polished Ware.

9.8. Suggested Readings

1. D.N Jha, *Ancient India in historical outline*, Manohar publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 2004.
2. IGNOU- study material for B.A, Block-5, EHI-02, *India: Earliest to 800 A.D., Polity, society and economy: 320 B.C to 200 B.C.*
3. Irfan Habib, Vivekananda jha, *Mauryan India*. Tulika books, New Delhi, 2007.
4. R.C.Majumdar (ed.), *The Age of Imperial Unity*, Bhartiya Vidyabhavan series.
5. Romila Thapar, *Asoka and the decline of the Mauryas*, Oxford Publications, Delhi, 1960.
6. V.A.Smith, *Asoka The Buddhist Emperor*, Low Price Publication, Delhi, 2008.

9.9 Model Test Paper.

- a. Objective type Questions:-

- i. The text *Arthashastra* was discovered by _____ .
 - ii. The book *Indica* was written by _____ .
 - iii. *Arthashastra* is authored by
 - a) Megasthenes
 - b) Ashoka
 - c) Chanakya
 - d) Arrian
 - iv. Numismatics is study of
 - a) Literary Sources
 - b) Pottery
 - c) Sculptures
 - d) Coins
 - v. Ashokan inscriptions comprise of
 - a) Major Rock Edicts
 - b) Minor Rock Edicts
 - c) Pillar Edicts
 - d) All the above
- b. Short Answers.
- i. What is a source?
 - ii. What do you mean by *Jataka* Stories?
 - iii. Write a short note on NBPW.
- c. Long Answers.
- i. Write a detailed note on Kautilya's *Arthashastra*
 - ii. Discuss the archaeological sources of the Mauryan period.

ADMINISTRATION OF MAURYAS**Dr. Hina S. Abrol**

- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 Objectives
- 10.3 The Mauryan Administration & Central Administration
- 10.4 Provincial Administration
- 10.5 District Administration
- 10.6 Village Administration
- 10.7 Conclusion
- 10.8 Glossary
- 10.9 Self Assessment Questions
- 10.10 Suggested Readings
- 10.11 Model Test Paper

10.1 Introduction

The establishment of the Mauryan empire with its centre at Magadha by Chandragupta Maurya by the third century B.C is regarded as a significant event in ancient Indian history. The Mauryan Empire was one of the largest Empire in the entire ancient world. The Mauryan Empire was a centralized one, with the king as the head of the state. Besides sustaining the King's authority and order, the Mauryan administration took into its fold a wide range of activities concerning army, espionage, revenue collection, justice etc. The information regarding Mauryan administration is available to us from the **Arthashastra** of Kautilya, the **Indika** of Megasthenese, account of Greek writers besides the inscriptions of Ashoka.

10.2 Objectives

- To have an in depth understanding of the Administration of the Mauryas.
- To learn about the Mauryan Administration at different levels viz, Central, Provincial and village level.
- To know about the various administrative departments under the Mauryas and also their functions.

10.3 The Mauryan Administration

The Mauryan Empire had separate administrative units like the Central, Provincial and Village administration. The overall administration of the empire was under the central authority i.e. the King whereas the Provincial and Village administration formed an integral part of regional or local administration, but these were under the supervision of the Mauryan Emperor. The sources inform us that all these units had their own administrative set up but they worked in coherence, thereby forming a highly centralised administration.

The Central Administration

The Central Administration under the Mauryas can be divided under the following heads:

- (i) The King
 - (ii) The Council of Ministers
 - (iii) Army
 - (iv) Secret Service or Espionage
 - (v) Administration of Pataliputra
 - (vi) Law and Justice
 - (vii) Public Welfare
 - (viii) Revenue Administration
- (i) **The King** – The Mauryan King was the supreme and sovereign authority. He had the supreme executive, legislative and judicial powers and functions in the government. The Mauryan King did not claim any divine origin yet they attempted to emphasize the connection between kingship and divine power. The King was supposed to observe the **Dharma**, the traditions and customs. In the execution of his works, he was assisted in administration by a Council of Ministers. The king

himself selected his ministers, appointed high officials, kept a check on their activities and also removed them from office, if he so desired. The king took personal interest in administration and attended to the welfare of his subjects. His aim was to keep his people happy. The Mauryan centralized monarchy became a paternal despotism under Ashoka. According to Kautilya, the Mauryan Emperor must be a man of high character. He should be intelligent and brave. He should possess truth, courage and religious disposition. He should always be concerned about the welfare and happiness of his subjects. He should be the upholder of **Dharma** and an ideal ruler. He had to be accessible to his officials and to his subjects.

- (ii) **The Council of Ministers** – The King was advised by the **Mantriparishad** or the Council of ministers in the discharge of his day to day duties. It was headed by the **Mantriparishadadhyaksa**. The members of this **parishad** were appointed by the king and were also responsible to him. Three qualities of a minister that the **Arthashastra** stresses are those of birth, integrity and intelligence. The Chief among them were the **Mantrin, Purohita, Senapati, Yuvaraja, the Dauvarika** etc.

The second grade of officials were the **Adhyakshas, Amatyas and Mahamatras**. While the **Adhyakshas** were the Heads of Department, the **Amatyas** were civil servants who filled the highest administrative and judicial appointments. Their pay scales, service rules and method of payment were clearly laid down. Their role and functions were very important, for all governmental work proceeded from them. Ashoka instituted the order of **Dharma Mahamatras** who, according to Rock Edict V, proclaimed the **Dharma** to the people.

Three other classes of civil servants are mentioned in the Rock Edict III – viz the **Pradesikas**, who attended to revenue collection and police duty, the **Rajukas**, who performed the revenue and judicial functions and the **Yuktas**, who were related with the revenue collection.

The power of the Council of Ministers might have varied from time to time, yet its primary and basic role remained that of an advisory body. Kautilya has mentioned the issues on which the king should consult his ministers and these include,

- Consultations on how to start the works which the state want to undertake.

- To determine the manpower and finances involved in carrying out these works.
 - To determine the areas where the works have to be carried out and
 - Finding solutions in dealing with calamities etc.
- (iii) **Army** – The Mauryan army was often led by the King himself. For instance, Chandragupta Maurya led his army in his war against Selucus Nikator and Ashoka led his army against the ruler of Kalinga. It was large, well disciplined and well organized. The army of Chandragupta, according to Pliny, included 6,00,000 foot soldiers, 30,000 cavalry and 9,000 elephants besides a multitude of chariots. Megasthenes informs us that the Mauryan army consisted of the infantry, cavalry, elephants, chariots, transport and admiral of fleet. Kautilya refers to the **Chaturangabala**, viz infantry, cavalry, elephants and chariots as the main components of Mauryan army. Each wing was under a commander. Kautilya further classifies the troops into the hereditary ones, the hired ones, troops supplied by forest tribes and those furnished by the allies. The first kind were of primary importance and constituted the standing army of the king. Kautilya also mentions the salaries of the different ranks of military commanders. For example, the **Senapati** received a salary of 48,000 **panas** per annum. The **Arthashastra** mentions elaborate rules for the training of the soldiers, their duties, salary etc. The Mauryan king himself supervised all the activities of the defence forces. He himself appointed the **Senapati** or the commander in chief to supervise and keep a check on the entire army with the help of various officials.
- (iv) **Secret Service or Espionage** – The secret service or the Espionage department of the Mauryas was efficient and well organized. It was manned by **guddhapurushas** (secret agents) under the control of **mahamatyapasarpa**, who were both stationary (**samsthan**) and wandering (**sanchari**) officials formed the personnel of this cadre. According to details furnished by the **Arthashastra**, different types of agents, from ascetics, students, snake charmers, women, merchants to householders were employed. They correspond to the ‘overseers’ of Megasthenes and the **Pativedakas** or special reporters and **Pulisanis** or king’s agent of Ashoka’s edicts. They kept the government informed of day to day development within the empire. They were trained properly. The Mauryan Secret Service included spies, detectives and news writers as well as trained carrier pigeons.

The secret agents were stationed at all places.

- (v) **Administration of Pataliputra** – Megasthenese provides us details with regard to the municipal administration of metropolis Pataliputra. It may be presumed that the other important towns were governed in a similar manner. We are informed that the city council was divided into six sub-councils or committees. Each committee had five members.
1. The first committee was incharge of industrial arts. The interest of the artisans was taken care of, fixed proper wages etc.
 2. The second committee looked after the foreign affairs. The requirements of travellers, pilgrims and foreigners was looked after by them.
 3. The third committee maintained a register of births and deaths for purposes of taxation and other works of the government.
 4. The fourth committee regulated trade and commerce. It fixed the prices, toll taxes, control the markets, inspected weights and measures etc. Its incharge was known as **Panyadhyaksha**.
 5. The fifth committee supervised the manufactured goods. It also checked and punished the adulteration of goods.
 6. The sixth committee enforced the payment and collection of taxes on the goods sold. The committee was headed by **Sulkadhyaksha**.

Besides this, the police was responsible for giving security to the people. The city administration took care of the sanitation, water sources, checked adulteration, kept a vigil over inns and took precautions against fire. Law was supreme and none was above the law.

- (vi) **Law and Justice** – Kautilya has provided us with a lot of information regarding judicial Administration in the **Arthashastra**. The King was the fountain head of justice but the law was regarded as superior to him. In order to maintain social order and smooth functioning of the administrative system, an orderly legal system was established under the Mauryas. The **Arthashastra** mentions different kinds of courts to try the offenders of law or settle the disputes among the people. Two kinds of courts find mention-

- i) **Dharmasthiya Courts** – These were civil courts.
- ii) **Kantakasodhana Courts** – These were criminal courts.

Besides these, there were special courts in the cities and villages presided over by **pradesika**, **mahamatras** and **rajukas**. Kautilya mentions four sources of law, viz. **dharma** (sacred law), **vyavahara** (usage), **Charitam** (customs and precedents) and **rajasasana** (royal proclamations). The Mauryan penal code was very severe. It sanctioned torture, trial by ordeal and mutilation of limbs. Capital punishment was also in vogue. Jails were probably under the management of the Department of Justice. There used to be jail deliveries every year on the occasion of the anniversary of the royal coronation.

- (vii) **Public Welfare** – The Mauryan kings were greatly concerned regarding the welfare of its subjects. Ashoka popularised the paternal theory of the government and regarded his subjects as his children. They undertook several public welfare measures.
 - a) **Health and Hygiene** – There existed in the Mauryan empire, hospitals for both men and animals where service of efficient physicians were provided to the people. Adequate measures were taken against outbreak of epidemics.
 - b) **Roads** – It was the responsibility of the state to construct and maintain highways. Trees were planted on both sides of the roads. Milestones were erected, wells were dug and rest houses constructed for the convenience of the travellers.
 - c) **Irrigation** – The Mauryan rulers constructed a large number of canals and undertook several irrigation projects as the latter could fetch much revenue. The inscription of Rudradaman mentions the construction of a water reservoir called Sudershana during the reign of Chandragupta Maurya. This was obviously built to facilitate the supply of water.
 - d) **Care of the destitute** – The state recognised its responsibility towards the orphans, elderly ill people, old destitute women and ascetics. Shelters were provided along with monetary help.
 - e) **Relief during Calamities** – The state came forward to provide relief to the people during natural calamities such as floods, famines, droughts etc. Farmers were given loans during such trying times. Sometime taxes were also remitted. Thus, it can be said that the Mauryan state did a lot for the welfare of the people.

(viii) **Revenue Administration** – The **Arthashastra** repeatedly stresses on the significance of a strong treasury (**Kosha**). The collection of revenue was entrusted with a high ranking officer, the **samahartta**. Kautilya tells us that the samahartta should supervise the collection of revenue from the following seven heads, viz.

- 1) Fortified urban area (**durga**)
- 2) The countryside (**rashtra**)
- 3) Mines (**khani**)
- 4) Irrigation projects (**setu**)
- 5) Forests (**Vana**)
- 6) Pasture grounds (**vraja**)
- 7) Trade route (**vanikpatha**)

The most important source of taxes must have come from agriculture and this was one – sixth to one fourth of the produce. When Ashoka paid a visit to Lumbinigrama, the birth place of Buddha, he reduced the rate of the share of the agricultural produce to one – eighth and totally exempted the village from **bali**. The Mauryan state collected the taxes both in cash and kind. A majority of the revenue collected by the state was utilized to meet the expenditure on administration, army, upkeep of the king, the royal Palace, the royal household etc. Several works of public welfare were undertaken by the state such as construction of roads, canals, wells, rest houses, hospitals, shelters for the destitute etc. The revenue was used to carry out such works.

10.4 Provincial Administration –

The entire Mauryan empire was governed by the King. Yet, the empire was divided into four provinces, each under a prince or member of the royal family (**Kumara and Aryaputra**). Under Ashoka, there were four provinces: the Northern Province (**Uttarapatha**) with the capital at Taxila, Western province (**Avantipatha**) with the headquarters at Ujjain, eastern province (**Prachyapatha**) with the center at Tosali and the southern province (**Dakshinapatha**) with its capital at Suvarnagiri. The fifth province of Kalinga was added to the empire of Ashoka. The central province, with its capital at Pataliputra was also the headquarters of the entire kingdom. The viceroys had the power to appoint some of his officials such as the Mahamattas, who went on tour every five years. The most important provinces such as Taxila and Ujjain were directly under the

command of the princes. Provinces were subdivided into districts for the purpose of administration and group of officials were in charge of a district.

10.5 District Administration –

The Provinces were divided into districts. The officers like the **Pradesika**, the **Rajuka** and the **Yukta** looked after the administration at the district level. While the **Pradesika** was incharge of the overall administration of a district the **Rajuka** was responsible for surveying and assessing land. The **Yuktas** appear to have been subordinate officials whose duties were largely secretarial and accounting.

10.6 Village Administration –

The village (**grama**) was the smallest unit of administration. The **Gramika** was the officer in charge of the village Administration. Generally, he was elected by the villagers and he was assisted by the village elders or the **Grama Vriddhas**. The **Gopa** and the **Sthanika** were officers who were intermediaries between the district and the village level administrative units. The **Gopa** worked as an accountant and his duties included the setting up of village boundaries, keeping a census of the population of each village according to their tax paying capacity, keeping a record of livestock of each village etc The tax was collected by the **Sthanika** who worked directly under the **Pradesika**. The villages enjoyed autonomy to a great extent.

10.7 Conclusion

To conclude, it can be said that the Mauryas had a well organized administration at the different levels of government viz at the Central, the Provincial, the District and at the village level. The Mauryan administration is characterised by a combination of centralization and decentralization at the appropriate levels, a well organized military, an efficient secret service, a good municipal organization etc. The administrative system of Chandragupta Maurya was so good and efficient that it continued even during the reigns of later Maurya rulers with minor changes.

10.8 Glossary

Cavalry	-	horse regiment
Chaturangabala	-	four wings of the army
Guddapurushas	-	spies or secret agent
Infantry	-	foot soldiers

Mantriparishad	-	council of Ministers
Purohit	-	person incharge of religious matters
Senapati	-	commander of the army

10.9 Self Assessment Questions –

State whether True or False

- i) The overall administration of the Mauryan empire was under the king.
- ii) The four Vedas inform us about the administration of the Mauryans.
- iii) The Mauryan administration was assisted by a fine secret service.
- iv) The administration of Chandragupta Maurya was so good and efficient that it continued for several years, with minor changes.

10.10 Suggested Readings

1. R.C Majumdar (ed.) **The Age of Imperial Unity**, Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan series, Bombay, sixth edition, 1990.
2. R.C Majumdar, **Ancient India**, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private limited, Delhi, Reprint 1998.
3. Upinder Singh, **A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India**, Pearson Longman, New Delhi, Second Impression, 2012
4. Ranabir Chakravarti, **Exploring Early India upto C.AD 1300**, Mac Millan Publishers India Ltd. New Delhi, 2010
5. Vijay Kachroo; **Ancient India**; Har Anand Publications Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, 2000.

10.11 Model Test Paper

I) Fill in the Blanks

- i) The _____ of Kautilya and the _____ of Megasthenese provide us information regarding administration of the Mauryas.
- ii) The capital of the Mauryan was at _____
- iii) King _____ popularized the paternal theory of government.
- iv) The _____ headed the Provincial Administration

II) Short Answers

- i) Write a short note on the espionage system of the Mauryas.
- ii) Briefly discuss the public welfare activities undertaken by the Mauryan State.
- iii) Write briefly about the Village Administration under the Mauryas.

III) Long Answers

- i) Discuss the Central Administration under the Mauryas.
- ii) What do you know about the Provincial and the local units of administration? Elaborate.

KALINGA WAR AND POLICY OF DHAMMA VIJAY OF ASHOKA***Ms. Jagmeet Kour***** Dr. Hina S. Abrol**

- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 Objectives
- 11.3 Ashoka : Kalinga war
 - 11.3.1 Kalinga War
- 11.4 Policy of Dhamma Vijay of Ashoka
 - 11.4.1 Ashoka's Dhamma – The Law of Piety
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11.1 Introduction

Ashoka was not a very well-known King until 1837 A.D. It was in this year that James Princep deciphered a Brahmi inscription referring to a king called *Devanampiya* (Beloved of the Gods). This was compared with the Sri Lankan chronicle *Mahavamsa* and only after that it could be established that the king of the inscription was indeed Ashoka Maurya. The fame of Ashoka is due to the fact that he turned away from war and tried to establish a system of rule based on the principle of *Dhamma*. The conquest of Kalinga by

Ashoka is said to have occurred around 260 B.C. eight years after his consecration as described in rock edict XIII. The war of Kalinga was a turning point in the life and policy of Ashoka. In this war, the Kalingans were completely routed. Though on the battle field Ashoka was victorious but the inscription goes on to describe his remorse which then ultimately turned him towards *Dhamma*. A policy of conquest through war (*Berighosha*) was given up and replaced by a policy of conquest by *Dhamma* (*Dhammaghosha*). In order to implement his new policy, Ashoka recruited a new cadre of officers called *Dhammamahamatras*. The propagation of *Dhamma* included many measures for people's welfare without any kind of distinction.

11.2 Objectives

- To know about Ashoka Maurya and the importance of Kalinga war.
- To understand how Kalinga war transformed Ashoka and made him adopt the policy of *Dhamma*.
- To learn about *Dhamma* policy of Ashoka.
- To study various efforts made by Ashoka to propagate policy of *Dhamma* and the role of *Dhammamahamatras*.
- To understand Dhamma as an integrating force.

11.3. Ashoka : Kalinga war

Chandragupta Maurya was succeeded by his son Bindusara. We know very little about this king. After the death of Bindusara, Ashoka, succeeded the throne of the Mauryan dynasty. His mother's name was Janpadkalyani or Subhadra. As a prince, Ashoka had served as a viceroy, first at Ujjain and then at Taxila. According to the Buddhist tradition Ashoka was very cruel in his early life and he had captured the throne after killing his ninety-nine brothers and was therefore called '*Chanda-ashoka*' (cruel Ashoka). But, this does not appear to be correct. Not only, because of the fact that the figure has been exaggerated, but also, because Ashoka himself speaks affectionately about his brothers, sisters, relatives, subjects (people) in his edicts. He has shown paternal concern towards his subjects which is clear from the phrase "all men are my children". In 260 B.C. Ashoka is said to have annexed Kalinga to his empire. The conquest of Kalinga transformed the personality of Ashoka as he was shocked by the brutality of the war. After this, Ashoka decided to renounce war and adopted the policy of *Dhamma* as inferred from his

inscriptions. Ashoka is the first king in the Indian history who has left his records engraved on stones. The inscriptions on rocks are called rock edicts and those on pillar are pillar edicts. The inscriptions of Ashoka give us information regarding his policy of *Dhamma*, Kalinga war, his administrative reforms etc.

11.3.1. Kalinga war:

The earliest event of Ashoka's reign recorded in his inscriptions is his conquest of Kalinga (modern Orissa and probably some adjoining areas) in the eighth year of his reign, which proved to be the turning point in his life. The rock edict XIII describes vividly the horror and miseries of this war and its impact on Ashoka. According to this edict, one lakh (1,00,000) people were killed in this war, several lakh perished and a lakh and a half (1,50,000) were taken prisoners. These numbers may be exaggerated but the war had a devastating effect on the people of Kalinga. The Kalinga war had a profound effect on the policies and personality of Ashoka. After this war he decided never to wage any other war and also instructed his sons and grandsons never to wage such war. Though Ashoka's predecessors had intruded into the Deccan and the south and perhaps conquered parts of it but, Kalinga i.e. the present day state of Orissa, still had to be brought under Mauryan Control. The conquest of Kalinga was of importance to the Mauryan Empire both from economic and strategic point of view. It stood in the way of southern routes from Ganges valley and it was also a powerful maritime area, which if included could become a convenient source of income to the Mauryan empire. After the conquest of Kalinga further conquest was almost unnecessary for Ashoka. Though on the battlefield Ashoka was victorious, the inscription describes his remorse which then ultimately turned him towards *Dhamma*. A policy of conquest through war was given up and replaced by a policy of conquest through *Dhammavijaya*. This was meant to work both at the state and personal levels and totally transformed the attitude of the king and his officials towards the subjects.

In the VIIIth rock edict Ashoka declares that true conquest is not that by means of arms but a conquest of piety and virtue (*Dhammavijay*). The violence of war seen in all his madness made Ashoka adopt non-violence and peace as the creed of his life. He came to change his personal religion and adopted Buddhism. The Kalinga war was the last political event of his reign. During the reign of Ashoka's predecessors there were four provinces in the Mauryan Empire, the fifth province namely; Kalinga was added to the empire by Ashoka.

11.4 Policy of Dhamma Vijay of Ashoka

After the Kalinga war, Ashoka renounced the policy of conquest by arms or Digvijay and adopted the policy of conquest by love and piety or Dhamma Vijay. **Dhamma** is a Pali word and its Sanskrit equivalent is **Dharma**. The word Dhamma has been translated as 'Law of Piety' or moral life, righteousness and so on. We can understand Dhamma better by reading Ashoka's own interpretation of it in his different Edicts.

The Dhamma, in Ashokan Edicts is explained as not a separate religion or religious order but as the essence, the **sara** of all religions. It is a 'moral law', 'a common code of conduct and an ethical order'. Ashoka explains that the two basic features of Dhamma are – less evil and many good deeds. He says that evils such as anger, jealousy, envy must be avoided and good deeds such as kindness, magnanimity, liberalism, truthfulness etc must be practiced. Ashoka emphasised the fundamentals of good conduct and social ethics and enumerated these in several Edicts. In the Rock Edict II and VII, Ashoka laid emphasis on **Dana** (charity), **Daya** (compassion), **Satyam** (truthfulness), **Saucam** (purity), **Sadhuta** (saintliness), **Samyam** (self control), **Kritajnata** (gratitude) as the virtues to be imbibed. Dhamma or Dharma, as mentioned above, was not a separate religious order. It is rather all that what religiousness should be to man and to the society. The Dhamma laid great emphasis on **ahimsa** or non violence. Several welfare measures were adopted and followed in earnest throughout the empire.

11.4.1 Ashoka's Dhamma – The Law of Piety

The word for **Dhamma** in Ashoka's greek inscriptions is eusebeia (piety), while the Aramaic inscriptions use **qsyt** (truth) and **data** (law). The Greek and Aramaic inscriptions are not literal translations of the Ashokan edicts. B.N Mukherjee points out that although there is a basic conformity in the elements of Dhamma like non injury to living beings, restraint, truthfulness, liberality, compassion, respect toward parents etc. the Greek and Aramaic inscriptions display some interesting differences. For instance, the Kandahar Greek inscription refers to the subjects' devotions to the king's interest as being an important part of dhamma.

Romila Thapar has underlined the political rationale behind the propagation of dhamma. She minimizes the Buddhist element in Ashoka's dhamma and asserts that there need be no connection between the personal beliefs of a statesman and his public procla-

mations. Dhamma was an ideological tool used by Ashoka to weld and consolidate his far-flung empire. Due to lack of support in the early years of his reign, he sought the support of non – orthodox elements and saw the practical advantages of adopting and propagating dhamma, which was basically an ethical concept that focused on the relationship between the individual and society.

By adopting and propagation of Dhamma, Ashoka thus tried to bring about some measure of cohesion within the empire in the midst of much diversity. The principles of dhamma were the answer to his quest for a common pattern of behaviour and a common approach to the problems of society.

11.4.2 Fundamental Principles of Dhamma – Ashoka’s Dhamma contains a set of fundamental principles which were to be followed by the people

- Non – injury to all living creatures.
- Respect to elders including parents, teachers and other respectable people.
- Obedience to all elders.
- Proper treatment towards ascetics, relatives, dependents, servants and slaves.
- Kindness and liberality towards ascetics, friends, relatives and the elderly.
- Purity of thought.
- Truthfulness .
- Spending little and accumulating little wealth.
- Having a sense of gratitude.
- Having mastery over ones senses / passions .
- To be tolerant toward others religion.
- To be charitable to all.

Thus we see that Emperor Ashoka tried to instil Dhamma as the governing principle in the lives of the people. Dhamma thus emerges as a code of morality rather than a system of religion.

Ashoka not only preached these truths but also practised them himself. R.C Majumdar informs us that he gave up hunting and also taking non – vegetarian diet. He established hospitals for men as well as animals. He made liberal donations to the Brahmanas as well as followers of other religions. He got rest houses erected on road sides, got wells

to be dug and trees to be planted for the use of men as well as beasts. He issued regulations to prevent the slaughter of animals.

The intention of Ashoka's Dhamma was to cement the bonds of mutual love and respect between parents and their children or between elders and youngsters or between different ideological sects. It was intended as an ethical concept related to the individual in the context of his society.

11.4.3 The Propagation of Dhamma

Emperor Ashoka was emotionally attached to Dhamma. He propagated it with an earnest zeal, not only within the country but also outside it. His personal goodness, his sense of toleration for other religions and his piety influenced his subjects profoundly. He took several steps to propagate Dhamma –

- The principles of Dhamma were got engraved on rocks and pillars at numerous places, so that people could read it, understand it and imbibe it.
- He decided not to undertake any military expedition. He gave up the practice of going on pleasure tours, the **Vihara Yatras** and instead, started going on the **Dharmayatras**.
- Ashoka utilized the **Sangha** in order to propagate dhamma. A large number of monasteries were set up and a number of monks were imparted education and training for monastic work. Young and enthusiastic monks carried the message of Dhamma to the four corners of the country
- Ashoka sent special missions to different parts of the country with the objects of spreading the message of Dhamma. For instance, Majjhantika was sent to Kashmir and Gandhara, Majjhima to the Himalaya country etc.
- A special class of officers was created by Ashoka in the administration in order to propagate Dhamma. They were called **Dhamma Mahamatras**. Other officers like the **Yuktas, Rajukas, Purushas** and **Pradeshikas** were required to preach the Law of Piety apart from performing their official duties.
- Ashoka's zeal to propagate Dhamma made him send missions to several neighbouring countries to preach the Dhamma and perform humanitarian work. He sent Maharakshita to Yavana country. He sent Mahendra and others to Lanka

(Sri Lanka) and Sona and Uttara to Suvarnabhumi (Far East or Burma).

- For the welfare of humanity, he established hospitals for men and for animals. For the benefits of travellers, trees were planted along the roads, mango groves were laid out, wells were dug and inns were built.

Thus we see that Ashoka dedicated himself and the official machinery entirely for the propagation of dhamma.

11.5 Conclusion

The war of Kalinga which was waged by Ashoka around 260 B.C became a turning point in his life. It also completely changed the policies of Ashoka. Ashoka was victorious but the blood shed, death and destruction made him wince with pain. This eventually made him turn towards Dhamma. The Rock Edict XIII, on Dhamma is a moving document which could have been written only by a person as noble, humane and as great as Ashoka. Through his Dhamma, he tried to bring about a cohesion in the contemporary society. He intended to strengthen social solidarity so that his vast empire could be held together.

11.6 Glossary

Dhamma – As in Ashokan inscriptions, it means piety.

Dharma Mahamatras – A class of officers appointed by Ashoka to propagate Dhamma

Dharma Yatras – tours in order to propagate the policies of the Dhamma.

Quest – search.

Remorse – deep regret or a feeling of guilt for one's own wrong doings.

Vihara Yatras – pleasure tours

11.7 Self Assessment Questions

I. State whether the following are true or false

- i. Ashoka was victorious in his war against Kalinga
- ii. The horrors of Kalinga war are described in Rock Edict II.
- iii. The war of Kalinga was responsible for bringing about a change in Ashoka's imperial policy – from Digvijay to Dhammavijay.

- iv. The post of the **Dharma Mahamatras** was created for the first time by Emperor Ashoka.

11.8 Suggested Reading

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4. R.C Majundar, **Ancient India**, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private limited Delhi, 1998
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11.9 Model Test Paper

I. Objective type questions

- i) Rock Edict _____ tells us about the horrors of Kalinga war.
- ii) Ashoka appointed the _____ for the propogation of Dhamma
- i) He sent _____ to Lanka in order to preach Dhamma
- ii) _____ means conquest by piety and virtue.

II. Short Answers

- i) What made Ashoka adopt the policy of Dhammavijay?
- ii) Mention the fundamental principles of Dhamma.

III. Long Answer

- i) What were the measures adopted by Ashoka in order to propogate the policy of Dhamma?
- ii) What do you understand about the Policy of Dhamma Vijay of Emperpor Ashoka?

CAUSES OF THE DOWNFALL OF THE MAURYAS

Ms. Jagmeet Kour

- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 Objectives
- 12.3 Causes of the Downfall of the Mauryas
 - 12.3.1 Division of Empire
 - 12.3.2 Weak Successors
 - 12.3.3 Ashoka's Pacifist Policies
 - 12.3.4 Centralized Administration
 - 12.3.5 Economic Problem
 - 12.3.6 Ashoka's Dhamma and Brahmanical Reaction
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12.1. Introduction

The Mauryan rule was the first imperial government in India. However, the imperial authority of the Mauryas began to weaken with the death of Ashoka (232 B.C) and finally collapsed in 180 B.C. What brought the disintegration of the Mauryan Empire is a very complicated question and it cannot be explained by any single factor.

There are numerous factors that led to the disintegration of the Mauryan Empire. In this lesson I have first discussed the division of empire, then the weak successors of Asoka, Ashoka's pacifist policies, centralized administration of the Mauryas, the economic crisis, Ashoka's Dhamma and Brahmanical reaction as the causes behind the downfall of the Mauryas. Finally the growth of the local polities has also been taken into consideration in explaining the process of disintegration of the Mauryan Empire. All these factors contributed to the disintegration of the empire in their own way. Some had major role in the disintegration and others were marginally responsible for that, but, together all these factors led to the decline of the Mauryas.

12.2. Objectives

After reading the lesson you should be able to explain

- Different factors responsible for the decline of the Mauryas.
- To what extent the division of the empire and weak successors of Ashoka were responsible for the disintegration of the empire.
- How Ashoka's pacifist policy and policy of Dhamma are considered responsible for the decline of the empire.
- Was centralized administration the reason behind administrative deterioration and downfall of the empire?
- Did economic crisis play any role in the decline?
- How decline paved way for local kingdoms.

12.3. Causes of the Downfall of the Mauryas

The Mauryan Empire founded by Chandragupta Maurya reached the zenith of its glory in the reign of his grandson Ashoka, but collapsed fifty years after the death of Ashoka. Ashoka ruled for over forty years and met with his death in 232 B.C., the decline set in and soon after the empire broke up. Seven kings followed Ashoka in succession in a period of about 50 years. The last ruler of this dynasty was Brihadratha, who was killed by his commander-in-chief Pushyamitra Sunga, who laid the foundation of the Sunga dynasty.

What brought the disintegration of the Mauryan Empire is a very complicated question and it cannot be explained by any single factor. There are more than one factor which led to the disintegration of the Mauryan Empire. Scholars have expressed different opinions regarding the downfall of the Mauryas and some of them have put blame on Ashoka. Let

us discuss the reasons behind the decline of such a mighty empire.

12.3.1. Division of Empire

After the death of Ashoka in 232 B.C, the empire was divided into an eastern and western part. Most of the scholars believe that Ashoka's successor was Kunala, who governed the western part along with Samprati and others. The eastern part along with southern India with its capital Patliputra was governed by six later Maurya kings from Dasarath to Brihadratha. Due to the division of the Empire, the western half was threatened by the Greeks from the North-west and there were revolts of Andhras in the South. These raids gave a blow to the power and prestige of the Mauryan Empire, which could have been checked if the empire remained united. If the partition had not taken place, the Greek invasion of north-west would have been held back for a while. The partition of the empire disrupted various services as well.

The empire that was built by Chandragupta Maurya and taken to the zenith of development under Ashoka saw its demise due to partition at the hands of the successors of Ashoka.

12.3.2. Weak Successors

After the death of Ashoka several kings followed him in succession in a period of about fifty years. It is suggested that after his death the empire was divided among his surviving sons. Some of the successors of Ashoka were Kunala, Dasarath, Samprati, Salishuka, Devavarman, Satadhanvan and Brihadratha. However it is difficult to ascertain their exact period. But it appears that after Ashoka the empire got fragmented and that there was quick succession of rulers. The quick succession of the rulers weakened the imperial control over administration and made it difficult for them to rule as none of the rulers could actually settle down and control things. Chandragupta, Bindusura and Ashoka had organized the administration in such a way that it needed strict supervision. Besides, the dynastic empires depend much on the ability of its rulers, but the successors of Ashoka failed in this respect. The weakness of these rulers can be imagined from the fact that as many as six rulers could rule only for about fifty years over the eastern part of the empire and finally the last Mauryan king was assassinated by his own commander-in-chief Pushyamitra Sunga. It can be generally said that weak successors politically weakened the empire and gradually lost administrative, economic and military control over it. None of the successors of Ashoka were able to maintain the progress and development that was

achieved during the rule of Chandragupta Maurya and Ashoka. Unfortunately, the successors of Ashoka could not even exercise proper control over the central administration as a result some of the provincial rulers declared themselves independent and refused to recognize the power of the later Mauryan rulers. These weak later Mauryan rulers could also not continue the traditional policies of the Mauryas and thus became one of the causes for the decline of the Empire.

12.3.3. Ashoka's Pacifist Policies

Ashoka's pacifist policies weakened the empire in terms of war and military strength. Ashoka's policy of *ahimsa* or non-violence reduced the martial spirit of the soldiers and the fighting strength of the army. The martial ardor of imperial Magadha was bound to vanish when Ashoka gave up the aggressive militarism of his forefathers and disbanded the army. Ultimately the pacifist policy made it difficult for the army to fight against the Greek invaders or suppress the revolts of the provincial governors. The harmful effect of this policy was on the provinces that had become oppressive and needed to be controlled. The lack of control over the provinces resulted in revolts at various places.

Some of the scholars are of the opinion that Ashoka's policy of non-violence must have adversely affected the morale of the Mauryan army and, therefore, partly contributed to the downfall of the empire. But, it was not the primary cause as we do not find any evidence to justify that Ashoka had reduced the strength of the army or had reduced the fear of law and punishments among his subjects. Further, had Ashoka been such a pacifist he should have reinstated Kalinga as an independent kingdom, but, as a practical ruler, he maintained the supremacy of Magadha over it.

Therefore the policy of *ahimsa* of Ashoka cannot be regarded as primarily responsible for the downfall of the Mauryas even though it contributed to it partly.

12.3.4. Centralized Administration

The disorder that emerged in the administrative machinery after the death of Ashoka is regarded as one of the important cause for the decline of the Mauryan Empire. The administrative system of the Mauryas was highly centralized, but after the death of Ashoka the empire was divided. The centralized administrative system that existed under Ashoka and his predecessors could no more continue efficiently under the weak successors. During the reign of Chandragupta Maurya and Ashoka everything pertaining to administration

depended on the power and capacity of the emperor which was not possible for the weak successors of Ashoka to perform. Under the first three Maurya rulers, extremely complex system of spies was employed for filtering in information on erring officials, but, it collapsed under later Mauryas. Now, the administration lay in the hands of few top officials and there was lack of national consciousness among them. The nature of Mauryan state necessitated a king of strong abilities. But, once the king became weak, the whole administration naturally weakened. There was no means through which the King could either gauge the public opinion in the empire or check on the corruption which had inevitably set in once the weak rulers were there in power at center. After the death of Ashoka, the social basis of the Mauryan bureaucracy was under stress and strain resulting in an inefficient administration unable to maintain social order in general. The centralized monarchy became weak and with it the administrative machinery deteriorated. The machinery of the Mauryan administrative system was so centralized that only an able administrator could use it both to his own advantage and that to the advantage of his subjects, but, at the same time it could be equally harmful if not governed by an efficient ruler. As the later weak rulers of the Ashoka were not able to control the centralized administration therefore the system itself became one of the causes of the decline of the Mauryas.

12.3.5. Economic problem

Some scholars are of the view that the primary cause of the downfall of the Mauryan Empire was its financial weakness. The Mauryas had a vast empire and it was maintained with the help of a large army and bureaucracy which meant huge expenditure by the state. The expansion in cultivation, extensive use of forest wood and deforestation in general may have led to flood and famines which further brought down drastically the amount of the state revenue. This view of economic crisis is based on the increase of taxes and debasement of later-Mauryan punch-marked coins. To enhance the revenue the taxes were imposed even on actors, prostitutes and anything that could be taxed and so on. This tendency to tax everything that could be taxed emerged out of the necessity of the treasury needing more funds or, the currency having become debased due to inflation.

Besides this, Ashoka spent huge amount of money on public welfare schemes as well, thus adding more burden to the state treasury without increasing the resources of the state. Ashoka dispensed charity to the poor with an open heart. As a result of his policy of excessive charity, the government coffers were emptied which had put a considerable

pressure on Mauryan economy under the later Mauryas. He also spent the accumulated resources of the state on grants to the Buddhist monks and on the construction of the Viharas. Also, the expansion of habitation in the newly cleared areas caused a good deal of drain on the treasury. Many scholars are of the opinion that the decline of the Mauryan Empire was attributed to the economic consequences of Ashoka's policy. But contrary to the above, the foreign accounts and the material remains of the period give a picture of an expanding economy.

12.3.6. Ashoka's Dhamma and Brahmanical Reaction

After Kalinga war, Ashoka left the policy of *Digvijay* and replaced it with the policy of *Dhammavijaya*. This new policy changed the attitude of the king towards life, his subjects (people) and the system and the basis of government. Thereafter, Ashoka preached non-violence, tolerance and social responsibility through his policy of *Dhamma*. He denounced war and the killing of animals. But, Ashoka's policy cannot be equated with Buddhism as it was a set of principles gleaned from various religious traditions and was implemented to hold the empire together. After the death of Ashoka the policy of *Dhamma* was not implemented in the way as it was aimed by Ashoka.

In the opinion of some scholars Ashoka's *Dhamma* was misunderstood as a new religion. Ashoka's patronage of Buddhism, his disregard of ritualism and sacrifice, his appointment of Dhamma-Mahamatras was considered as a direct attack on the rights and privileges of the Brahmanas. These factors led to strong reaction among the Brahmanas which was carried to success by the Brahmana commander-in-chief of Mauryas, Pushyamitra Sunga.

But, this view that the interests of the brahmanas were harmed by Ashoka's policy and that Pushyamitra, a Brahman general engineered a revolt cannot be accepted for the simple reason that if Ashoka's policies were so harmful, then this should have happened immediately after his death. In fact, Pushyamitra Sunga's action should be at best be understood as an act of coup d'etat made at an opportune time, having assessed the weak nature of the king's power, rather than looking for any deliberate anti-Brahman policy of either Ashoka or his successors.

Pushyamitra acted neither as the leader of the Brahmanas nor that of the general public. He was the commander-in-chief of the army and he utilized his position to seize the throne from his weak king. There is no evidence of popular revolt because of any reaction

of the Brahmanas. As Pushyamitra Sunga was a Brahmin and he had killed last Maurya King therefore some people are of the opinion that Brahmanical reaction towards non-violent policies of Ashoka can be the cause of the decline of the Mauryas.

12.3.7. Growth of Local Kingdoms

After the death of Ashoka, the Mauryan kingdom was partitioned. About half a dozen kings that had succeeded Ashoka had made no basic change in the policy of governance adopted by the first three Mauryas. As discussed earlier, the Mauryan administration was a highly centralized administration and the governance of the provinces was under the provincial governors or viceroys who were answerable to king and the common people had check on these governors. The Mauryans, in fact, had directly governed only the major and vital areas of the empire and the centre of which was Magadha. The adjoining areas or other provinces were governed by governors. The political loyalty of these officials was crucial for the imperial structure to continue and a change of king meant a re-alignment of these loyalties. As we know that in the post-Ashokan period there was quick change in the kings and therefore change in official loyalties that had weakened the administrative set-up. This ultimately led to the disintegration of the Mauryan Empire followed by the rise of a number of kingdoms in different parts of India. This is indicated by segmentation of the empire under the Mauryas. The Sunga Family (and the neighbouring areas of Eastern and western Malwa) had held the viceroyship of Ujjain. They under the Mauryas mustered enough strength to kill the last Mauryan ruler Brihadrath and usurp the Mauryan throne under their first king Pushyamitra Sunga who was also commander in chief of the Mauryan army. The Mauryan dynasty was followed by Sungas. In the Ganga valley, Rajasthan, Eastern India and the Deccan many ruling families came to power.

Many local rulers started ruling in regions like Vidharbha, Eastern Deccan, Karnataka and western Maharashtra. Gradually, the family of the Satavahanas built up an empire in the Deccan by bringing together many local centres. In the Kalinga, Kharevalas established themselves as rulers.

In the extreme south, the Cholas, the Cheras and the Pandyas continued to be prominent from the Mauryan period itself in the regions like Kaveri valley, Malabar area and the area around the tip of the Peninsula. Thus, we see that after the downfall of the Mauryas the entire Kingdom was divided into smaller units ruled by local rulers.

12.4. Conclusion

We can conclude that besides the above mentioned opinions internal factions, foreign invasion, oppression by the officials, lack of national unity and representative institutions, and vastness of the empire were also responsible for the decline of the Mauryan Empire. None of the above mentioned factors was solely responsible for the disintegration of the Mauryas. The partition of the empire after Ashoka and quick succession of rulers no doubt weakened the basis of the empire. The highly centralized bureaucracy with its loyalty to the king and not to the state made the administration completely individual based. The policy of non-violence and *Dhamma* of Ashoka are also not solely acceptable for the decline of the Mauryas in the light of contemporary evidence. The disintegration of the empire due to economic crisis is also doubtful to be accepted in general as the economic prosperity still prevailed besides the political decline of the Mauryan Empire. So, the decline of the Mauryas cannot be explained by any one factor. All these factors discussed above contributed to the decline. Each of these causes were linked to one another and started cracking up the Mauryan Empire leading to its decline.

12.5. Glossary

Bureaucracy- system of government by official responsible to an authority.

Coup d'état- a violent or unconstitutional change in government.

Local- pertaining to a particular place to area.

Pacifist- opposed to war or one who believes that all war is wrong.

Regional- characterized in a particular way referring to a tract of country or area or district.

Vihara- a Buddhist monastery.

12.6. Self Assessment Questions

Mark whether the following statements are true or false.

1. The quick successions of rulers led to the weakening of the empire.
2. Ashoka was successful in providing conditions for a Brahmanical revolt.
3. Pushyamitra Sunga was a governor of Ujjain under the Mauryas.
4. The Satavahanas succeeded the Mauryas in the extreme south.

12.7. Suggested Readings

1. D.N Jha, *Ancient India in historical outline*, Manohar publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 2004.
2. IGNOU- booklets for B.A- Block-5, EHI-02 *India: Earliest to 800 A.D.; Polity, society and economy: 320 B.C to 200 B.C.*
3. Irfan Habib, Vivekananda jha, *Mauryan India*. Tulika books, New Delhi, 2007.
4. Romila thapar, *Asoka and the decline of the Mauryas*, Oxford Publications, Delhi, 1960.

12.8. Model Test Paper

I. Objective type questions.

- i. The downfall of the Mauryas was due to
 - a) vastness of the empire.
 - b) Ashokas pacifist policies.
 - c) Division of the empire.
 - d) All the above.
- ii. The last Mauryan ruler was
 - a) Kunal
 - b) Bindusura
 - c) Samprati
 - d) Brihadratha
- iii. Ashoka died in
 - a) 320 B.C.
 - b) 260 B.C.
 - c) 232 B.C.
 - d) 180 B.C.
- iv. Brihadratha was killed by
 - a) Pushyamitra Sunga

- b) Ashoka
- c) Selucus Nikator
- d) Alexander

II. Short Answers

- a) Was economic crisis responsible for the decline of the Mauryas?
- b) Write in short about the role of the centralised bureaucracy in the downfall of the Mauryan dynasty.

III. Long Answer

Enumerate all the factors responsible for the decline of the Mauryas and discuss any four of them.

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PUSHYAMITRA SUNGA (184 B. C.-148 B.C.)**Prof. Neelu Gupta**

- 13.1 Objectives
- 13.2 Introduction
- 13.3 Sources
- 13.4 Origin of the Sungas
- 13.5 Achievements of Pushyamitra Sunga
 - 13.5.1 Consolidation of the Empire
 - 13.5.2 The Yavana Wars
 - 13.5.3 War with Vidarbha
 - 13.5.4 War with Kalinga
 - 13.5.5 The Ashamedha Sacrifice
- 13.6 Extent of the Empire
- 13.7 Patronage to literature, Art and Architecture
- 13.8 Conclusion
- 13.9 Suggested Readings
- 13.10 Possible Questions

13.1 Objectives :

The main objective of this lesson is to enable you to understand:

- (a) The end of the Mauryan rule by a successful coup d' e tat and establishment of a

new dynasty known as the Sunga dynasty.

- (b) The role of Pushyamitra in repulsing the foreign invaders and maintaining the political unity of the country.
- (c) How a new era of peace and prosperity started in ancient India.

13.2 Introduction :

The Mauryan dynasty was the first historical dynasty of India. The people of India felt, for the first time, the importance of political and cultural unity under the Mauryas. The Mauryan period was the age of political unity, material prosperity, social harmony, religious toleration, cultural development, peace and order. Ashoka was succeeded by a progeny of pigmies whose “shoulders werenot fit to bear the weight of his mighty monarchy.” Consequently, the Maurya empire began to decline rapidly. The Mauryas were succeeded by the Sargas.

It is stated in the Puranas that the later Mauryas will enjoy the earth for full 137 years. After then, it will go to the Sargas who shall rule for 112 years. Pushyamitra, the commander in chief, will uproot Brihadratha and rule the Kingdom for 36 years.

How PushyamitraSurga became the ruler :

We owe it to Bana’s Harshacharita some details of the story of the overthrow of the Maurya power by Pushyamitra. Bana who flourished eight centuries after the event, relates how Pushyamitra, the Senapati or Commander-in-Chief, assembled the entire Maurya imperial army, evidently on the pretext that he should see for himself with his own eyes what a fine fighting force he could put into the field of battle, and there assassinated him at the military parade. This incident shows that already Pushyamitra was carefully preparing the ground for his coup d’etat by seducing his army from its loyalty to Maurya King. It is pointed out that there was a general feeling of dissatisfaction against the weak mauryan ruler who had failed to protect the people against the Greek invaders who had succeeded in penetrating even upto Pataliputra. There was a complete breakdown of the administration. Brihadratha was a very weak ruler (Prajnadurbalam) and Pushyamitra had the full support of the forces, otherwise he could not have struck down his master on the parade ground itself.

13.3 Sources :

Our chief sources of information for the history of the Sungas are the **Puranas**, the **Harshcharita of Bana** and **Mahabhashya of Patanjali**. We also get information from the **Theravali of Merutunga**, a Jain writer who flourished during the 14th century A.D. The **Malvikagnimitram of Kalidasa** also gives us a lot of information about the horse sacrifice of Pushyamitra and the fight of Agnimitra with the ruler of Vidarbha. The **Ayodhya inscription of Dhandeva** makes a reference to two horse sacrifices performed by Pushyamitra. The **Divyavadana** refers to the policy of religious persecution followed by the Sunga ruler. **Taranath, the Tibetan historian**, also refers to the policy of religious persecution followed by the Sunga rulers.

13.4 Origin of the Sungas:

There are various theories with regard to the origin of the Sungas:

- (i) According to Divyavadana, Pushyamitra was lineally descended from the Brahmins. There are other authentic sources which emphasize that there was no relation between the Mauryas and the Sungas.
- (ii) According to the **Puranas**, Pushyamitra belonged to the Sunga family. The celebrated grammarian, Panini, traces the Sungas to the Brahman clan of Bharadvaja Gotra and there seems to be nothing strange in this. We have many instances of Brahmins as generals, e.g., Dronacharya, Kripacharya, Ashvatthama, Parshurama and many others.
- (iii) This view is also accepted by Dr. K. P. Jayaswal. According to him, the Sungas were Brahmins and they occupied a high position in the theological world. Pushyamitra belonged to the family of the royal chaplain or Purohita of the Mauryas. The later Mauryas were degenerate and politically weak and Pushyamitra was forced to kill Brihadratha in the interest of the empire which was threatened by the foreign invaders.
- (iv) Kalidasa in Malvikagnimitram states that Agnimitra the son of Pushyamitra, was a scion of **Baimbika** family. In the **Katha-Sarit-Sagar**- 'Ocean of stories', we find reference to a ruler named Bimbika. **H.A. Shah** states that Baimbikas belonged to the family of Bimbisara. The opinion of **H.C. Raychoudhary** is that there is a word '**Bimbika**' used in the Sanskrit language as the name of a tree. He adds that **Harivamsa** refers to the first

ruler of the Sunga dynasty as Oudhijja (plant born) and belonging to the Kashyapagotra. According to Roychoudhary, if we put all this information together, it can be concluded that Pushyamitra belonged to the family of Baimbika and was of Kashyapagotra.

In the **Bharhut Inscription**, there is a reference to the Bimbikariver. **Bharua Inscription** mentions that the family of Sungas lived on the banks of river Bimbika. In that Boudhayan Srant Sutr, Baimbika Brahmans are mentioned as belonging to the Kashayapa gotra.

- (v) It is also suggested that Sungas whose names ended in Mitra were Iranians. They were the worshippers of Mithra or the Sun.
- (vi) **Keith and Macdoriell** tells us that the Sungas are known as teachers in the **AsvalayanaSrauta Sutra**. Saungiputra is the name of a teacher mentioned in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. Likewise, in the **Vamsa Brahman**, the name of Saungayani occurs as a teacher.
- (vii) The Puranas and Harshacharita refer that the successor of Pushyamitra is called as Sunga . The Sunga origin of Pushyamitra is a general accepted fact.

Nowhere in any record, Pushyamitra was addressed as the king or prince. But he was addressed as a **senani or Senapati** (commander-in-chief). After staging a Successful **coup-d'etat**, he occupied the throne of Magadha and the Mauryas were replaced by the Sungas.

13.5 Achievements of Pushyamitra Sunga:

The rulers of the Sunga dynasty reigned for about 122 years. This dynasty comprised ten kings, but Pushyamitra was the most important king of this dynasty. He ruled for about 36 years and he must have been an old man at the time of his death. His various achievements may be discussed as follows:

13.5.1 Consolidation of the Empire:

Although Pushyanitra had ascended the throne with the support of the army, he had to face many problems. The kingdom of Magadha was in a condition of political disintegration. The neighbouring states of Kalinga, Andhra and Maharashtra, and the frontier provinces had declared their independence. Consequently, Magadha empire had become weak. In fact, Pushyamitra's dominion covered only the central portion of the old Mauryan

empire.

Under these circumstances, the first priority of Pushyamitra was to consolidate his empire. He adopted some important measures to make his kingdom strong and united. First of all, he consolidated those provinces which were under Magadha. The provinces of Prachi, Akara, Vatsa, Avanti and Kosala, which were consolidated by Pushyamitra, were prominent. After this, he paid his attention towards the maintenance of peace and order in the empire. The state of Avanti was far away from the capital, Pataliputra. It was difficult to exercise control over this province. So, Pushyamitra declared Vidisha, the chief city of Akara state, as the second capital of the empire. Agnimitra, the son of Pushyamitra, was appointed the ruler of Vidisha. Afterwards, he was appointed the governor of the Avanti state. In this way, Pushyamitra strengthened his empire.

13.5.2 The Yavana Wars :

Pushyamitra had to face difficulties from various quarters. It is contended that there were two Greek Wars which he had to fight. This is revealed by the grammarian **Patanjali** in the following passages in his **Mahabhashya**. The first **Iha Pushyamitra Yajayamah**, "Here we perform the sacrifices for Pushyamitra," shows by the use of present tense that the sacrifice was begun but not yet finished, and that Patanjali was, therefore, a contemporary of Pushyamitra. The use of the past tense in the other passage: "arunad Yavanah Saketa: arunad Yavano Madhyamikam" shows that Saketa or Ayodhya and the other town called Madhyamika (near Chittor) were besieged by a Yavana or greek invader within living memory. This invasion might have taken place while Pushyamitra was yet a general of the Maurayas, and it is not unlikely that his success against the Yavanas gave him a position, status and power which enabled him to make successful bid for the throne. The Yavana leader was either defeated beyond the walls of Pataliputra or he retired without any fighting. There is nothing to show that Pushyamitra lost his capital to the foreign invaders. It is suggested that Demetrius was the leader of the foreign invaders who reached as far as Pataliputra and about whom there is a mention in the **GargiSamhita**. It is pointed out that Demetrius had to retire from India on account of troubles at home. **Eucratides** had revolted in Bactria and Demetrius had to go back to fight against his enemy.

There is a reference to the second conflict with the Yavanas in the **Malvikagnimitram of Kalidasa**. At this time, Pushyamitra must have been an old man. Vasumitra, the grandson of Pushyamitra, fought against the Yavana invaders. The battle was fought on the river

Sindhu. There is a difference of opinion on the identification of the river Sindhu mentioned in the *Malvikagnimitram*.

According to **Dr. Rapson**, “The choice seems to be between Kali Sindhu, a tributary of the Charmanvati (Chambal) flowing with 100 miles of Madhyamika (near Chittor) which was besieged by the Yavanas and the Sindh, a tributary of the Jumna.” However, Dr. Majumdar has put forward very strong arguments in favour of the proposition that the river Sindhu was the Indus. Menander was the person who came after Demetrius. Coins also show that his territory extended upto Mathura. The Buddhist writers and his court at Sialkot became a refuge of Buddhist monks. **Dr. V. A. Smith** assigns the invasion of Menander to the years between 155 and 153 B. C. and this date coincides with the last few years of the reign of Pushyamitra. According to Kalidasa, this conflict took place in connection with the horse sacrifice of Pushyamitra when his troops, exerting the horse under Vasumitra, were stopped by the Yavanas on the south bank of Sindhu. The Greeks were defeated and the horse was brought back safely home.

13.5.3 War with Vidarbha :

We have the details of the war between Agnimitra, son of Pushyamitra and viceroy of Vidisha against Vidarbha in the *Malvikagnimitram* of Kalidasa. It is stated that the kingdom of Vidarbha or Berar a newly established one and like a newly planted tree hadnot taken firm roots. Yajnasena, the king of Vidarbha, is stated to have been a relation (sister’s husband) of the sachiv (minister) of Mauryan emperor, and thus a natural rival of Pushyamitra. It is possible that Yajnasena might have been the Governor of Vidarbha in the time of Brihadratha and declared himself independent after Pushyamitra enthroned himself by assassinating Brihadratha. As such, the relations between Vidarbha and Vidisha became strained. The poet relates how Agnimitra’s friend, Madhavsena, who was a cousin of Yajnasena was arrested by an Antapala (governor of the frontier) of Yajnasena, on his way to Vidisha. Agnimitra at once called upon Yajnasena for his release. The latter agreed to do so on the condition that his relation, the Maurya minister, be released first. That led to war and Agnimitra deputed Virasena to march against Vidarbha. Yajnasena was defeated and Madhavsena was released. Vidarbha was divided between the two cousins with the river Varada forming the boundary line between the two kingdoms. Pushyamitra was their suzerain.

13.5.4 War with Kalinga :

Dr. V. A. Smith has opined that Pushyamitra had suffered a defeat at the hands of Kharvella, the King of Kalinga. According to him, Kharvella invaded Magadha twice during the reign of Pushyamitra. However, he achieved success in the second attempt which was made in 161 B.C. Kharvella compelled Pushyamitra to surrender before him. Not only this, he also pillaged the royal treasury and carried away the entire money with him.

The opinion of Dr. V. A. Smith is, however not accepted by many historians of modern times. Dr. H.C. Raychoudhary argues that Pushyamitra was not a contemporary of Kharvella. Hence, there is no possibility of a war between the two. In addition to this, there is a statement in the **Hathi Gumphra Inscription** that **Bahastimita** was defeated by Kharvella. Dr. R. P. Chandra and Allen affirm that Pushyamitra cannot be identified with Bahastimita. It is maintained that such a suggestion is untenable on epigraphical and philological grounds.

13.5.5 The Ashvamedha Sacrifice :

In order to commemorate his victories against the Greeks and the state of Vidarbha, Pushyamitra performed the 'Ashvamedha Yajna.' We came to know, from the **Ayodhya Inscription of Dhanadeva** that two 'Ashvamedha Yajnas' were performed by Pushyamitra.

Malvikagnimitram of Kalidasa and **Mahabhashya** of Patanjali also mention about the horse sacrifice in which Patanjali officiated as priest. The performance of Ashvamedha sacrifice indicates that Pushyamitra assumed the title of **Chakravarti** and he succeeded in bringing about peace, harmony and prosperity in the empire. According to **Harivansa Purana**, it was Pushyamitra who performed 'Ashvamedha' after Janmejaya.

13.6 Extent of the Empire:

The empire of Pushyamitra was smaller than that of the Mauryas. His empire extended from the river Sutlej in the north to the river. Narmada in the South. The western boundary of his empire was upto the river Indus. Pushyamitra's jurisdiction extended to Jalandhar and Sialkot in the Punjab, if we accept the testimony of the Tibetan historian **Taranatha** and the **Divyavadana**. The latter also indicates that Pataliputra continued to be the royal residence. His sway over Ayodhya is proved by an inscription found there,

whereas according to the *Malvikagnimitram*, his dominions comprised Vidisha also. Pushyamitra appears to have made virtually a feudal division of his extensive territories, for one version of the **Vayu Purana** states: “all the eight sons of Pushyamitra will rule simultaneously.”

Religious Policy of Pushyamitra:

Pushyamitra Sunga tried his best to invigorate the old Brahmin religion which had declined during the Mauryan period. The religious policy of the Mauryan rulers had changed during the reign of Ashoka after the Kalinga War. Ashoka adopted and gave royal patronage to Buddhism. As a result, Buddhism made great progress and from it spread to Ceylon and China as well. This also gave a great setback to the Brahminical religion.

Buddhist tradition as given in the **Divyavadana** and the work of **Taranath**, the Tibetan historian, describes Pushyamitra as a great persecutor of Buddhism. It is stated in the *Divyavadana* that acting on the advice of his Brahmin Chaplain, Pushyamitra made up his mind to destroy the teachings of the Buddha. *Divyavadana* also mentions that he had declared a reward of one hundred dinars to the person who would bring the head of one bhikshu. It is also said that Pushyamitra destroyed many stupas, burnt innumerable monasteries and chopped off the hands of the monks. In short, Buddhist traditions have tried to prove that Pushyamitra was a cruel King and he tried to persecute the followers of Buddhism.

However, most of the historians do not agree with the views expressed in the Buddhist text against Pushyamitra. They express their opinion that he was not so cruel as he has been depicted in the Buddhist texts. There is no doubt that Pushyamitra was a staunch follower of the Brahminical religion and thus the Buddhist monks could not receive the royal patronage. Perhaps, the story of the persecution is the invention of these disgruntled monks. Many existing stupas and inscriptions are sufficient proof that Pushyamitra was not the persecutor of Buddhism. To quote **Dr. Raychoudhari** “But the Buddhist remains at Bharhut erected during the supremacy of the Sungas do not bear out the theory which represents Pushyamitra and his descendants as the leader of militant Brahmanism.” A similar view is upheld by **Dr. R. S. Tripathi**. To quote him: “Pushyamitra was no doubt a zealous champion of Brahmanism but the Buddhist stupas and railings at Bharhut during the sovereignty of the Sungas would hardly corroborate the literary evidence regarding its ebullitions of sectarian rancour.”

Prof. Jagan Nath is of the opinion that the Buddhist population may not have reconciled itself to the overthrow of the Mauryan dynasty which was looked upon by it as the bulwark of Buddhism. It is not even unlikely that the hardships of the Buddhists were in many cases due to political reasons. The fact that some of the noblest Buddhist monuments were not only spared but continued to receive both private and royal support, contradicts the claim of the Buddhist texts.

13.7 Patronage to literature, art and architecture:

Pushyamitra also made his contribution in the domain of art and culture. He was a great patron of literature and learning. It was under his patronage that the great Sanskrit scholar Patanjali composed his celebrated work the 'Mahabhashya' and thus provided a fresh stimulus to the study of the Sanskrit literature. Similarly remarkable progress was made in each and every aspect of art, viz., architecture, sculpture, painting etc. The stupa of Bharhut built by Ashoka, was modified by Pushyamitra. The railings with a height of 2.13 meters were constructed by him. He also got constructed four beautiful gates in the wall of this stupa. In the same way, the stone was used in place of bricks and wood. A beautiful railing was built around the stupa. The railing was based on a fine platform. Many pillars were also built in the railing having a height of 2.75 metres and at a distance of 61 centimeters. Four gateways were also built on all the four sides. The pictures of trees, birds and animals painted on the gateways of the stupas prove that the artists not only loved the living creatures but also had love and regard for the entire humanity and nature. To conclude with the words of **H.C. Raychoudhary**: "There was an outburst of activity in the domain of religion, literature and art comparable to that of the glorious epoch of the Guptas."

13.8 Conclusion :

Pushyamitra ruled for about 36 years and was succeeded by his son Agnimitra. Although we know very little of the history of the Sunga dynasty, it played an important part in history. Pushyamitra stemmed the tide of foreign invasion and maintained his authority over a large part of the empire. He, thus arrested for the time being, the disintegration of the Magadha empire which, throughout the century of Sunga rule, extended as far as Bhilsa. Greeks maintained friendly relations with him. The Sunga period saw the revival of the Brahmanical influence and the growing importance of the Bhagavata religion which counted even the cultured Greeks among its votaries. It also witnessed a revival in art and

literature specially in Central India. The great grammarian Patanjali, born at Gonarda in Central India, was most probably a contemporary of Pushyamitra, as noted above. The Bharhut stupa is the most famous monument of this period. There was also an important school of art in Vidisha which, according to some scholars, was the capital of later Sungas.

13.9 Suggested Readings :

1. The History and Culture of the Indian People, Vol. II The Age of Imperial Unity.
2. H.C. Raychoudhary: Political History of Ancient India.
3. R. S. Tripathi: History of ancient India.

13.10 Possible Questions :

1. Write a note on the reign of Pushyamitra Sunga.
2. Discuss origin of the Sungas and military exploits of Pushyamitra.
3. Discuss achievements of Pushyamitra as a ruler.
4. Describe the military campaigns of Pushyamitra Sunga.
5. Discuss critically the religious policy of Pushyamitra Sunga.

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KUSHANAS : KANISHKA'S - CONQUESTS

Dr. Hina S. Abrol

- 14.1 Introduction
- 14.2 Objectives
- 14.3 Background
- 14.4 Conquests made by Kanishka
 - 14.4.1 Kashmir
 - 14.4.2 Magadha
 - 14.4.3 Saka kshatrapas
 - 14.4.4 War against China
- 14.5 Extent of his empire
- 14.6 Let us sum up
- 14.7 Glossary
- 14.8 Self Assessment questions
- 14.9 Suggested Readings

14.1 Introduction

The years falling between the decline of the mighty Mauryas to the rise of the imperial Guptas was a period of political disruption. The absence of a strong central authority and proper defence arrangements in the north-west made the incursions of the Yavanas, the Sakas, the Parthians and of the Kushanas easy in this region. Of these, the Kushanas played a significant role since they acquired political authority of some significance in the

areas of their occupation and settlements. They also made a significant contribution to the religion and art of this country.

14.2 Objective

The objective of this lesson is to enable you to have a clear understanding of the conquests made by Kanishka, the most important ruler of the Kushans. The lesson discusses at length the places and regions conquered by him and assimilated in his dominions. The extent of his vast empire is also discussed.

14.3 Background

The Kushanas belonged to the nomadic race of the Yueh-chis and lived in the north-western China. In about 165 BC they were ousted from this region by another nomadic tribe, the Hiung-nu. The Yueh-chis advanced to the west and settled in the basin of the river Ili. Here, they came into conflict with the Wu-Sun and thereby got divided into two branches. The first branch moved southwards and settled down on the Tibetan border. The second and the main branch moved further and came into conflict with the Sakas. After a great deal of struggle, they subjugated the Bactrians. They were now, further subdivided into five branches, one of which was known as the Kushanas. The Kushanas overcame the other four branches and established their rule in India about the first century AD.

Kujula Kadphises or Kadphises I was the first well known ruler of the Kushanas. He was succeeded by his son Kadphises II or Vema Kadphises, who extended his authority to the interiors of India. Amongst the Kushana rulers, who occupied a prominent place among Indian rulers, the greatest one was Emperor Kanishka.

14.4 Conquests made by Kanishka

There is a difference of opinion with regard to the date of accession of Kanishka. Avoiding the raging controversy, we can say that a majority of scholars have accepted that his regime began in the year 78 AD. He started the Saka era which commenced from the first year of his regime, i.e. 78 AD.

The sources which help us to reconstruct history as regards the conquests of Kanishka are epigraphic and numismatic evidences and literary records. From the spots where his inscriptions and coins were discovered, much information can be gathered on the extent of the conquests of Kanishka. The Peshawar Casket inscription “Sui-Bihar”

and “Jeda inscription” clearly indicate his dominion over North West India, Punjab, Northern Sindh and Gandhara. The Sarnath and Mathura inscription confirmed his mastery over the regions of U.P. Kanishka’s inscriptions are also found in parts of Benaras. The inscription of Kanishka’s immediate successor was found in Sanchi of Malwa, which indicate that Malwa was under the influence of Kanishka.

The account left by Al-beruni refers to Kanishka’s rule over Afghanistan and the adjacent parts of Central Asia. Hiuen Tsiang mentions the inclusion of Gandhara, Purushpura (Peshawar) and the country to the east of the Tsung-ling mountain in Kanishka’s Kingdom. Chinese and Tibetan historians have suggested that Kanishka conquered eastern India. The Rajatarangini of Kalhana as well as certain Buddhist traditions clearly refer to the inclusion of Kashmir within his territory. As per the Chinese annals, Kanishka defeated the king of Parthia in the west. Kingdoms of Kashgar, Khotan and Yarkand were parts of the vast empire of Kanishka.

14.4.1 Kashmir

The Rajatarangini of Kalhana Book I, verses 168 to 173 clearly tell us that three Turuska Kings, Huska, Juska and Kaniska built three towns named after themselves. These were Huskapura, Juskapura and Kanishkapura. The third ruler mentioned is evidently the Kushana King, Kanishka. He built the town called Kaniskapura and the remains of this town still survive in a village named Kanispor and is situated near Varahamula in Kashmir. Kalhana also informs us that these kings who were evidently followers of Buddhism built several Mathas and Chaityas for the followers of Buddhism. The mentioned details clearly point that Kanishka had subjugated Kashmir and made it a part of his dominions.

14.4.2 Magadha

Buddhist texts and Chinese and Tibetan traditions indicate that Kanishka waged a war against Magadha. After his victory, in Pataliputra, he brought the famous Buddhist scholar, Asvagosha along with him. Besides literary evidences, the discovery of his coins from the regions of Ghazipur and Gorakhpur also attest his conquest of Magadha.

14.4.3 Saka Kshatrapas

Kanishka is said to have defeated the Saka Kshatrapas of Ujjain. The ruler at this

time was Chashtan, Consequently, the Sakas not only acknowledged the supremacy of Kanishka but also surrendered a portion of Malwa to him.

14.4.4 War against China

In the last quarter of the first century AD, the Chinese, under the leadership of General Pan Chao tried to re-assert their influence which had diminished considerably. General Pan Chao's military campaigns threatened the eastern frontier of the Kushana empire which extended to the Oxus. Kanishka felt alarmed. Consequently, he assumed the title Devaputra, the son of Heaven, claimed equality with the Chinese Emperor and sent an envoy to the general demanding the hand of the Chinese princess in marriage. Pan Chao took this as an insult and arrested the envoy. After this incident, Kanishka sent a formidable army, of 70,000 cavalry under his general to confront the Chinese forces. However, the army of Kanishka was badly defeated. Kanishka had to agree to pay a tribute to China. After the death of general Pan Chao, Kanishka sent another expedition to China. The Chinese were led by the son of late Pan Chao, general Pan-Chi-Yang. This time, the forces of Kanishka defeated the Chinese army. As a result of this victory, three Chinese provinces, Kashgar, Khotan and Yarkand became a part of the dominion of Kanishka.

14.5 Extent of his Empire

Kanishka headed a vast empire. His coins and inscriptions help us to determine the extent of his empire. It comprised of Kashmir, Punjab, Upper and Lower Sindh, U.P, Bihar and further east and down to Vindhya in the South. Beyond India, he definitely held sway over Afghanistan, Bactria, Kashgar, Yarkand and Khotan.

In order to exercise effective control over such an extensive empire, Kanishka made Peshawar his capital.

14.6 Let us sum up

The Kushana King Kanishka occupies an important place in the ancient Indian history. He was the most significant ruler of the Kushanas. He had inherited a vast empire but was not satisfied. He was an ambitious general and wanted to expand the frontiers of his empire. Literary, numismatic and epigraphic evidences clearly indicate that he had conquered Kashmir and Magadha, subdued the Saka Kshatrapas and attacked the Chinese empire on two occasions. The defeat in the first attempt did not dishearten him but

encouraged him to try with renewed vigour and resources. His firm resolve bore fruit and he not only defeated the Chinese general Pan-Chi-Yang but also took control of Kashgar, Yarkand and Khotan.

14.7 Glossary

accession	-	the gaining of an important position
assimilated	-	absorb and incorporate.
dominion	-	the territory of a sovereign
epigraphic	-	inscriptions engraved on rocks, pillars, birch barks etc.
literary	-	having to do with literature.
numismatic	-	having to do with coins.
tribute	-	payment made periodically by a state to a more powerful one.

14.8 Self Assessment questions

Q1. Who were the Kushanas? Give a brief background of the Kushan ruler Kanishka.

Q2. What do you know about the conquests made by Kanishka? Elaborate.

Q3. Discuss the conquests of Kanishka while citing the sources which tell us about them. What was the extent of his empire?

14.9 Suggested Readings

1. Romila Thapar : **Early India from the origins to A.D. 1300**, Penguin Books, 2002.
2. Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan series, Vol II – **The age of imperial unity**, 5th edition, 1980.
3. H.C. Ray Chaudhuri : **Political history of ancient India**, Oxford University Press, 1996.
4. R.S. Tripathi.: **History of ancient India**, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi, 1999.

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**CULTURAL CONTRIBUTION OF KUSHANAS
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KANISHKA**

Dr. Hina S. Abrol

- 15.1 Introduction
- 15.2 Objectives
- 15.3 Cultural Contribution of the Kushanas with special reference to Kanishka
 - 15.3.1 Progress of trade and commerce
 - 15.3.2 Progress of literature
 - 15.3.3 Development of Art and Architecture
 - 15.3.4 The Gandhara School of Art
 - 15.3.5 Patronage to Buddhism
 - 15.3.6 The Mahayana Buddhism
- 15.4 Conclusion
- 15.5 Glossary
- 15.6 Self Assessment Questions
- 15.7 Suggested Readings
- 15.8 Model Test Paper

15.1 Introduction

The emergence of the Kushanas in the post Mauryan era is regarded as a significant event in ancient Indian history. This was the time when political disruptions were at the zenith owing to the absence of a strong central authority and proper defence arrangements in the north western region. The Kushana rulers were successful in setting up a fairly vast empire. They also made a significant contribution to the religion, culture, architecture of this country.

15.2 Objectives

- to enable you to learn about the contributions of the Kushanas to Indian Culture and especially of Emperor Kanishka.
- to learn about the initiatives of the Kushanas to develop trade and commerce, their patronage to art architecture, literature, to religion, to the development of Mahayana Buddhism and the Gandhara school of art.

15.3 Cultural Contribution of the Kushanas with special reference to Kanishka

The Kushanas occupy an important place in the cultural history of ancient India. Within a period of about two centuries, i.e. from the beginning of the first century A.D to the end of the second century A.D, progress was made in different fields such as art, architecture literature, religion, trade and commerce. These activities resulted in growing economic prosperity. And as the Kushana empire had spread to Central Asia, it opened the path for the Indian civilization to make its presence felt in the foreign countries.

15.3.1 Progress of trade and commerce

The Kushanas had raised an extensive empire. It comprised the whole of North Afghanistan and the territories beyond. It touched, in the north and north east the Chinese and in the west, the Roman empire. The geo-political situation of the Kushana empire made the north – western region of the country, the meeting place of the three civilizations. The commercial relations with the Central Asian, western and the northern countries now gained fresh stimulus due to the proximity of the three empires and the peace that prevailed in the region. As a result of the discovery of the Monsoon winds in 45 A.D, trade with the west increased in volume as well as variety. Several goods such as silk, spices, grain etc. were exported to the Roman empire and in return, it paid in gold. The Roman historian Pliny laments the drain of gold that was caused to Rome. The abundant gold that thus flowed into the country enabled the Kushana King Kadphises II to issue the first Kushana gold coins. This practice of issuing gold coins remained in practice even during the reign of his successors. During this period, sea borne trade of India was also carried on through the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. The entire gamut of activities discussed above ushered in a lot of economic prosperity of the people at large.

15.3.2 Progress of literature

The rulers of the Kushana dynasty were patrons of literature. They patronized

several scholars of Sanskrit. They even made Sanskrit the state language. Kanishka is stated to have given liberal patronage to eminent Sanskrit scholars like Ashvaghosha, Nagarjuna, Vasumitra and Charak. Ashvaghosha authored many books, such as **Buddhacharita**, **Saundaranand**, **Sariputra Prakarna** etc. The great luminary Nagarjuna wrote texts like **Prajan – Pramitsutra – Shastra** and the **Mahavibhasa Shastra**. Charaka, the well known physician wrote the text called **Susruta**, on medicine. All the works were written in elegant Sanskrit.

15.3.3 Development of Art and Architecture

A distinct progress was made in art and architecture during the period of the Kushana rulers. We are informed that Kanishka not only established towns but also beautified them with several works of art. These were built by him at Peshawar, Kanishkapura, Taxila and Mathura. Mathura emerged as a great centre of art wherein several monasteries were established. Several beautiful images of Buddha were made. A headless statue of Kanishka has also been reported.

15.3.4 The Gandhara School of Art

It is believed by scholars that the Gandhara school of art or of sculpture originated in the first century B.C and reached its zenith during the Kushana period. In **Mahayanism**, Buddha began to be represented as the God. This was in clear contrast to his representation earlier in the form of symbols such as the footprints, the Bodhi tree, a vacant seat or the umbrella. The sculptors belonged to the general region of Gandhara while the subject, i.e. Buddha, was Indian. As a result the images of the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas which were sculpted there, betray traces of an amalgamation of Graeco– Buddhist art. Greek forms and techniques were applied to subjects drawn from the newer Buddhism. The look on Buddha's face and the arrangements of his drapery appear to be more Greek than Indian. Nevertheless, they are not devoid of grace and charm. Kanishka's patronage to the Gandhara school of art went a long way in popularizing the newer form of Buddhism in the regions of Central and Eastern Asia.

15.3.5 Patronage to Buddhism

Although not much is known about the religion of Kadphises II but his coins indicate that he was a worshipper of Siva. His successor was Kanishka. The numismatic evidence available with us points to Kaniska's eclecticism. The gold coins carry legends in the Greek language and figures of Greek, Mithraic, Zoroastrian and Hindu gods are de-

picted on them. Few copper coins depict him offering sacrifice to a goddess. This may be taken to mean that Kanishka honoured all these different gods and it is only a little later in his reign that he became a Buddhist. It is important to remember that even after his conversion to Buddhism, Kanishka remained tolerant in his religious beliefs. No state religion was enforced.

As a Buddhist, Kanishka took keen interest in renovating old monasteries and building new ones. Several **stupas** were also built. He laid the foundation of a town named Kanishkapur in Kashmir, the remains of which are still seen in a village called Kanispore. He built another town near Purushpur. He also founded a city near Taxila. He got erected in his capital Purushpur or Peshawar, a huge wooden tower which was 400 feet high in order to enshrine the relics of the Buddha. Besides, he donated liberally for the maintenance of the Buddhist monks.

Kanishka is remembered in the history of the Buddhist church, since he convened the fourth Buddhist council. Five hundred monks belonging to the **Sarvastivadin** school were called to settle the disputed doctrines. The council was held at Kundalvana in the valley of Kashmir. Vasumitra was the President and he was assisted by Ashvaghosha. The hard work of the monks culminated in the compilation of the **Vibhasha Shastras**, which were engraved on copper plates and then sealed and deposited in a **Stupa**. Kanishka gave his patronage to the new form of Buddhism which came to be known as **Mahayanism**.

15.3.6 The Mahayana Buddhism – The schism in Buddhist doctrines had resulted in its split into two schools – **Hinayana**, ‘the little vehicle’ and **Mahayana**, ‘the great vehicle’ Kanishka patronized the latter.

The **Mahayana** system or **Mahayanism** regards the Buddha to be the god and not merely the master or the Enlightened one. Faith in him and devotion to him is regarded as the way to salvation. With it developed the concept of Boddhisattvas. The Boodhisattvas are the ones in the process of attaining the Buddhahood. Thus Gautam was said to have been born many times as a Bodhisattva, before he became the Buddha, at Gaya. It gave rise to ritualistic worship of the Buddha image and of the Boddhisattvas. Great emphasis was laid on the **bhakti** principle of the traditional Hindu philosophy. It was believed that implicit **bhakti** to the Buddha would lead to **Nirvana**. Kanishka made untiring efforts in order to propagate Mahayanism. He sent missionaries to distant lands and as a result of his efforts, the **Mahayana** form of Buddhism spread to Central Asia, Burma Tibet, China

and Japan.

15.4 Conclusion

The age of the Kushanas occupies an important place in the history of ancient India. The contribution of the Kushana rulers to the Indian culture is immense. We gather that particularly during the reign period of Kanishka, India was brought into close contact with the western world. This accelerated economic, commercial as well as cultural development in India. Kanishka's liberal patronage to trade and commerce, art, architecture, literature, to Buddhism, especially **Mahayana** Buddhism and to the Gandhara school of art led to tremendous progress in these fields. Beautiful images of the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas were made. These impressive, enchanting and capitulating works of art enkindled faith and belief among the people. The missionary activities during this period opened the way for Indian civilization to Central and Eastern Asia.

15.5 Glossary

amalgamation – mixture

drapery – clothes (in this case loose flowing robes)

eclecticism – in religion, having belief in or using elements from multiple religions

laments – complains

nirvana – salvation

numismatic evidence – pertaining to coins

relics – a part of a holy person's body or belongings kept and treated as holy, after his death

schism – a deep disagreement between two groups.

15.6 Self Assessment Questions

State whether the following is true or false

- i) Kadphises II issued the first Kushana gold coins.
- ii) Ashvagosha is the author of **Buddhacharita**.
- iii) Kanishka patronized, the '**Hinayana form**' or 'the little vehicle' school of Buddhism.
- iv) The Gandhara school of art originated in the first century A.D

15.7 Suggested Readings

1. R.C. Majumdar (ed.) **The age of Imperial Unity**, Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan series, Bombay, 1990.
2. Romila Thapar, **Early India – from the origin to AD 1300**, Penguin Books, 2003
3. R.S. Tripathi, **History of Ancient India**, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt Ltd, Delhi, 1999.
4. H.C. Ray Chaudhuri, **Political History of Ancient India**, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1996.
5. Vijay Kachroo, **Ancient India**, Har Anand Publications Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, 2000.

15.8 Model Test Paper

I Fill in the blanks

- i) _____ convened the fourth Buddhist Council at Kundalavan in Kashmir.
- ii) The town of Kanishkapura was founded by Kanishka in _____
- i) The _____ school of Buddhism regards Buddha as a God.
- ii) Charak, the well known physician wrote _____

II Short Answers

- i) Evaluate briefly the progress of trade and commerce under the Kushanas.
- ii) Write a short note on Mahayana Buddhism.

III Long Answers

- i) Discuss the cultural contributions of the Kushanas with special reference to the Gandhara school of Art.

ORIGIN* AND SOURCES OF THE GUPTAS*** Dr. Hina S. Abrol****Prof. Neelu Gupta**

- 16.1 Introduction
- 16.2 Objectives
- 16.3 Origin of the Guptas
- 16.4 Sources for the study of the Gupta Period – Literary Sources
- 16.5 Inscriptions
- 16.6 Coins
- 16.7 Seals and Sealings
- 16.8 Monuments
- 16.9 Conclusion
- 16.10 Suggested Readings
- 16.11 Possible Questions

16.1 Introduction

The interval between the fall of the Mauryan empire in the second century B.C and the rise of the Gupta Empire in the fourth century A.D was one of the political disturbances, conflict and turmoil. There was no paramount power in India. New tribes were continuously pouring into India. The Indo – Greek were followed by the Parthians, the Sakas and the Kushanas. After the break up of the Kushana empire, there was again political unrest in the region. This period of turmoil and political disorder came to an end with the establishment of the Gupta Empire.

16.2 Objectives

- To learn about the origin of the Gupta dynasty
- To learn about the abundant sources which give us authentic information about the imperial Guptas viz. the literary sources, inscriptions, seals and sealings, numismatic evidences, remains of monuments etc.
- To learn about and understand the Gupta age in its various dimensions, viz political, socio-economic, religious, cultural and art and architecture through the in-depth study of the sources or the evidences of history.

16.3 Origin of the Guptas

There is no unanimity of opinion among historians as regards the origin of the Guptas. While some scholars, on a consideration of the termination of their names in 'Gupta' contend that they belonged to the Vaishya Caste, others like Dr. Jayaswal suggest that the Guptas were Karaskara Jats, hailing from Punjab. But this opinion is not corroborated by any evidence and hence cannot be taken as true. Dr. H.C Raychaudhuri is of the opinion that the Guptas were Brahmins. He says that the Guptas belonged to the Dharana **gotra** and might have some relation with Queen Dharini, the chief Queen of King Agnimitra, the son of Pusyhyamitra. On the other hand, the Panchobh copper plate mentions some kings bearing the surname Gupta and claiming to have relation with the Gupta dynasty as Kshatriyas. Citing this evidence, Dr. Chattopadhyaya believes that the Guptas were of Kshatriya origin.

The above discussion indicates that the origin of the guptas is obscure. Nothing can be said with certainty regarding their caste and early history. However, a large number of historians believe that the Guptas were of Kshatriya origin.

Like the origin, the original home of the Guptas is also a matter of debate. While Dr. Jayaswal holds the opinion that Kausambi was the original home of the Guptas, Dr. R.C Majumdar and Dr. D.C Ganguli believe that the Guptas originally lived in Bengal. However, a large number of historians are of the view that the original home of the Guptas was either eastern Uttar Pradesh or Western Magadha. The **Puranas** also mention that the provinces of Uttar Pradesh and Magadha were included in the Gupta empire.

16.4 LITERARY SOURCES :

(A) The Puranas :

Among the literary sources, **the Puranas** occupy a very important place. A critical examination of the dynastic lists as given in the Puranas by scholars like **Pargiter, K.P. Jayaswal** and others have brought them to the definite conclusion that the account of the Puranas regarding the political history of the Guptas are trustworthy. The Puranas are eighteen in number but for our purpose the **Vayu Purana, Brahmanda Purana, Matsya Purana, Vishnu Purana, and Bhagvat Purana** are valuable. The **Puranas** give a full account of the Gupta Empire, its various provinces and their boundaries. A distinction is made between those territories which formed an integral part of the Empire and those which were outside its direct jurisdiction. The **Puranas** help us in locating the names of kings and minor dynasties as well as in identifying them. They help us in fixing up the period of the rise of some of the small states either as independent ones or within the Empire. The **Puranas** tell us that Chandragupta I ruled over Prayaga, Saketa (Ayodhya) and Magadha. They give us a full account of the contemporaries of **Samudragupta** in the first half of his reign such as the history of the **Nagas and Vakatakas, the Saka sin Sindh and West Punjab**.

(B) The Dharmashastras:

They also give us a lot of useful information. According to **Jayaswal**, Narad belonged to the early Gupta period. **Brihaspati** also probably belonged to the early Gupta period. The Smritis of **Vyas, Harita, Pitamaha, and Pulastya** were probably written during the Gupta period- These works divulge a lot of useful information.

(C) The Kamandaka Nitisara :

The **Kamandaka Nitisara** was probably written in the time of Chandragupta II by Shikhara, the Prime Minister of Chandragupta II. The object of the book was to give instructions to the king. The author defends the murder of the Saka King by his sovereign. The author stresses that morality is not offended by a murder of an enemy through disguise.

(D) The Kavya - Nataka Literature:

The Kavya Nataka literature also is very useful for reconstructing the history of the Guptas. To this category belong the **Setubandh kavya or Setukavya. Kaumudi Mahotsava, Devi Chandraguptan, and Mudrarakshas**.

- (i) **The Setubandham** is a Prakrit poem dealing with the invasion of Ceylon by Ram and the killing of Ravana. The book was written by **Pravarsena, a Vakataka king**.
- (ii) **The Kaumudi Mahotsava** is a drama of five acts. Some schools believe that the author of this book was Kishorika while others attribute the book to **Vijjika**. **K.P. Jayswal** was definitely of the opinion that this was written in 340 A.D. and it gives a picture of the political condition of **Magadha** at that time. According to **Dr. Dikshitar**, this drama throws considerable light on the origin and rise of the Gupta dynasty.
- (iii) **The Devi Chandraguptam** is a political drama attributed to **Vishakhadatta**, the author of **Mudrarakshas**. The drama refers to the war between Ramagupta, the son and successor of Samudragupta and the Saka ruler in which Ramagupta is defeated and agrees to surrender his queen **Dhruvswamini** to buy peace. Prince **Chandragupta**, the younger brother of **Ramagupta** decides to save the family honour and disguising as **Dhruvadevi** killed the saka ruler in the latter's camp. When **Ramgupta** decided to kill Chandragupta out of jealousy, Chandragupta killed him to save his life. Then he became the emperor of Gupta Empire and also married Dhruvdevi.
- (iv) **The Mudrarakshas of Vishakhadatta** gives us a lot of useful information. Although the main story is concerned with the establishment of Mauryan dynasty by Chandragupta Maurya and Kautilya, Vishakhadatta also refers to the contemporary events of establishing the Gupta dynasty. The drama is full of diplomacy and politics. It throws sidelights on the religion of the king and the religious condition of the people in the Gupta period. We are told that **Lord Vishnu** was worshipped in the form of the Boar Incarnation. It also refers to the religious toleration at that time.

(E) Works of Kalidasa :

Although, Kalidasa's date has been a subject of long drawn controversy, in all likelihood, he lived during the classical age of the Guptas. While his works are a rich mine of information for the cultural history of this period, they also throw considerable and very

welcome light on the political history of the Imperial Gupta family. His **Raghuvamsa** contains a good number of verses which particularly illumine the reigns of Samudragupta and Chandragupta II. In the **Raghuvamsa** we also find some clear references to the Gupta coinage.

The repeated mention of Mahendra in the **Vikramorvashi** clearly looks like a reference to Kumaragupta I whose birud was Mahendraditya.

(F) Harshacharita :

In the **Harshacharita** of **Banabhatta**, there is a reference to the incident which has been dramatized by Vishakhadatta in his play Devichandraguptam. Bana states that Chandragupta disguised as a fair lady, killed the lord of the Sakas, who was coveting the wife of another person. Obviously Bana is referring to the Saka King demanding the surrender of the queen **Dhruvaswamini**, the wife of Ramgupta. Bana's reference is important in as much as it supports the story of the Devichandraguptam and points to its historicity.

(G) Foreign Accounts :

Besides Indian writings, we have the accounts of some foreign visitors.

- (i) **Fa-hien** : First of all we have to note the record of Fa-hien, a Chinese Pilgrim who travelled in India during A.D. 399-414. Fa-hien's work known as **Fu-Kuo-Ki** (Record of Buddhist Kingdoms) is written in Chinese. This has been translated into English by **Beal, Legge and Giles**. Although the main object of Fahien was to search out Buddhist books and legends, he has also given us many details of the social and religious condition of the country at that time. Fahien noted the wealth and prosperity of the towns and their citizens. He refers to the free hospitals maintained by the state and other charitable institutions.
- (ii) **Hiuen-Tsang** : Another Chinese pilgrim, Hiuen-Tsang who came to India in A.D. 629 wrote a more detailed account of contemporary India in his work **Si-yu-ki**. But so far as the Gupta dynasty is concerned, we have only a single reference to a late Gupta King Baladitya who is said to have defeated the Huna ruler, Mihirkula.
- (iii) **Itsing** : Another Chinese traveller, **Itsing**, travelled in India after the death

of Harsha. He refers to Maharaja **Srigupta** who got constructed a shrine for the use of Chinese pilgrims near **Mrigshikhavana** known as the **Temple of China**. He saw the ruins of that temple.

- (iv) **Alberuni** : A muslim scholar **Alberuni** came to India with the invader, **Mahmud of Ghazni**. He studied Sanskrit language and has written in detail about ancient India in his book **Kitab-ul-Hind**. Speaking of various eras used in India, he mentions the Gupta era, the epoch of which he places 241 years after that of the Saka era. This reference has helped the modern scholars in arriving at the epoch of the Gupta era.
- (v) **Mujmal-ut-Tawarikh**: It was translated into Persian from an Arabic work, by **Abul Hasan Ali**. The original Arabic work is generally considered to be a translation of some original Sanskrit text. Its story seems to have been based on the Ramagupta episode and the two characters, **Rawaal and Barakmari** sare identified with Ramagupta and Vikramaditya, i.e., Chandragupta II, respectively.

16.5 INSCRIPTIONS :

Inscriptions form the most important source material for the reconstruction of the political history of ancient India and more particularly of the Gupta period. **Dr. Fleet** has rendered a great service by publishing in 1888 the third volume of **Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum** or Inscriptions of the Early Gupta Kings and their successors. In **Dr. Fleet's** work for the first time, we come across all the historical material available at that time, collected at one place and presented in a very critical and methodical manner. The Gupta inscriptions are found on stone slabs, stone pillars, pedestals of statues, copper plate grants, and also on iron pillars.

- (i) **Prashastis** : These are eulogistic accounts of Kings composed by the court poets highlighting their achievements. They are particularly valuable being the official records prepared with great precision by the court officials who had first hand knowledge of all the events.

The Allahabad stone pillar inscription of Samudragupta, the Mehrauli iron pillar inscription of King Chandra, the Bhitari Pillar inscription and the Junagadh rock inscriptions of Skandagupta are good examples of royal eulogies. Here we get details not only of the conquests of the territories of

the kings dethroned or subdued, but also information about the personal accomplishments and character of the monarch, who is the hero of the document. In the Allahabad inscription, for instance, after describing the conquests in the Deccan and in north India by Samudragupta, its author **Harisena** goes on to mention in detail the personal accomplishments of the king such as his sharp and mature intellect and proficiency in the fine arts of music and poetry. The Mehrauli Pillar inscription narrates the exploits of King Chandra who won fame in battle against the confederacy of foes in South Bengal and conquered distant Bactria after crossing the seven mouths of the river Indus; and also performed deeds of equal valour in the South. The Bhitari inscription enlightens us about Skandagupta's achievements on the battlefield against such formidable foes as the Hunas and Pushyamitra and supplies a vivid picture of his personality.

- (ii) **Inscriptions in Religious Monuments** : To this category belong the inscriptions which record the construction of religious monuments such as temples, stupas as well as the construction of works of public utility for religious merit. Apart from giving us a peep into the religious life of those times, they supply other valuable historical information.
- (a) **The Mandasar** inscription which records the construction of a stupa throws light on the achievements of Chandragupta II and his son Govindagupta.
 - (b) **The Mathura** Pillar inscription of the year 61 supplies us with the earliest known date for Chandragupta II.
 - (c) **Udayagiri** cave inscription of Sanakanika Maharaja dated 82 records the excavation of a cave temple by a Sanakanika, feudatory of Chandragupta II.
 - (d) **The Sanchi Stone Inscription** and **the Gadhwa Stone** Inscription of Chandragupta II give us a lot of information regarding the attitude of the state towards religion.
 - (e) **The Bilsad Stone Pillar Inscription** and **the Mankuwar Stone Image Inscription** refer to Kumargupta I.

- (f) **The Bihar Stone Pillar Inscription** in two parts, **the Bhitari Stone Pillar Inscription, the Junagadh Rock Inscription, the Kahaum Stone Pillar Inscription** and **the Indore Copper Plate Inscription** refer to Skandagupta.
 - (g) **The Rajghat (Varanasi) Stone Pillar Inscription** dated 159 proves that Varanasi region was a part of Budhagupta's empire.
 - (h) **Eran Stone Pillar Inscription** of Budhagupta dated 165 is the oldest epigraph in the Indian history in which the name of a week day along with the date G.S. 165 has been recorded.
- (iii) **Inscriptions on pedestals of Images** : A good number of epigraph recording the installation of images of deities are found on pedestals of these status and supply us very interesting and important historical information. For instance **the Sarnath Buddha Images** dated 154 and 157 discovered during the excavations of 1914-15 at Sarnath throw new light on the Gupta history and chronology. **Udayagiri Cave Inscription** of the G.S. 106 records the engraving of an image of the Jain Tirthankara **Parshva**. **Mathura Pedestal Inscription** of the reign of Kumargupta I dated 125 records the installation of the image of standing **Buddha**. **Mathura Inscription** of the reign of **Budhagupta** dated 161 records the installation of four images of the **Buddha**.

16.6 COINS :

Numismatic evidence is an important and indispensable source of the Gupta history next only to the inscriptions. The first hoard of the Gupta gold coins was found in 1783 A.D. from Kalighat near Calcutta. In course of time more hoards of the Gupta gold coins came to light in the later half of the 19th century and first half of 20th century. Important amongst these are Bharsar (1851), Jessore (1852), Allahabad (1864), Hugali (1883), Tanda (1885), Kotwa (1886), Basti (1887), Hajipur (1893) and Teksi Debra (1912). In 1884 the **Catalogue of the coins of Gupta Dynasty** was published by **V.A. Smith** for the first time. It was followed by the **Catalogue of the Coins of Gupta Dynasties, in the British Museum** by **John Allan**, published in 1914. The discoveries continued even after the publication of Allan's Catalogue like Kasarva (1912), Sakori (1914), Bamnala (1940), Bayana (1946), Kusumbhi (1947) and Kumarkham (1952).

In some cases the coins constitute the primary evidence. The importance of coins for the study of economic conditions is too obvious. The vast number and varieties of the Gupta gold coins by themselves indicate the high state of economic prosperity under the Imperial Guptas. The coins also throw a flood of light on the political, cultural and the religious history of the time. The legends on the coins are a sort of written sources material, though often too small to give details. Then metrical legends on the Gupta coins show high literary taste of the rulers who issued them and eloquently speak of their many deeds of religious merit and of valour on the battlefield.

The internal evidence contained in the different coin types of each ruler has its own importance. They supply many unknown facts of history. For example, **Chandragupta I – Kumardevi type of gold coins** throw light on the rise of the Guptas to imperial position. Similarly the **Ashvamedha** type of coins of Samudragupta and Kumargupta I reveal the performance by these rulers of the horse sacrifices which were not mentioned in their inscriptions. The copper coins of Ramagupta from Malwa help in proving the historicity of this ruler first known from Devichandraguptam. The large variety in the types of coins of one ruler is an index of the comparative prosperity of the reign.

The figures and other symbols on the coins reveal the religious leanings of the rulers. They also throw light on various aspects of culture such as costume, furniture, weapons of war etc. the style and fabric, metallurgy and metrology of the coins also indirectly furnish useful historical evidence. The early Gupta Kings followed the Kushana and Roman standard of 121 grains for their gold coins. Gradually the weight standard of the gold coins was increased from the time of Chandragupta II till it came to 144 grains, the Indian standard of **suvarana** in the time of Skandagupta. His successors continued to issue the coins in **suvarna** standard only.

The Gupta emperors issued coins in all the three metals from the very beginning and that the gold coins being precious have survived in large numbers. Samudragupta issued seven different varieties of gold coins, Chandragupta II issued eight types, Kumargupta I issued fifteen types, Skandagupta issued five types of coins while the later rulers of the dynasty were content with one or two types each only.

Coin Types : The following coin types of the Gupta rulers in gold, silver and copper are known so far:

- (a) **Chandragupta I : The King and Queen Type :** On the obverse of these

coins Chandragupta and Kumardevi are shown standing facing each other. Their names are written below. The reverse shows goddess sitting on the lion. The legend on this side is **Lichchhavayah**, .e., 'The Lichchhavis'. Chandragupta I seems to have issued coins of this type only.

- (b) **Samudragupta:Archer type** : This became the most popular type with all the Imperial Gupta rulers down to Vishnugupta. On the obverse is **Garuda** emblem and on the reverse is shown a goddess sitting on throne holding cornucopiae. The legend is **Apratirathah**, i.e., Matchless Warrior. Samudragupta also issued standard type having the legend **Parakramah**, **battle-axe type**, **tiger slayer type** with legend 'Valiant like a tiger', **lyrist type**, **ashvamedha type** and **Kacha type**.
- (c) **Chandragupta II** : Chandragupta issued archer type, lion slayer type (to commemorate his victory of Gujrat which is the home of lions in India), the horseman type, the chhatra type, couch type, king and queen on couch type, Chakravikrama type and standard type.
- (d) **Kumargupta I** : He issued the largest varieties and some of them are superb artistic productions. He issued archer type, horseman type, swordsman type, lion-slayer type, tiger-slayer type, elephant rider type, elephant rider lion - slayer type, Khadgatrata type, Ashvamedha type, Kartikeya type, Chhatra type, Apratigha type, lyrist type and King and Queen Type.
- (e) **Skandagupta** : He issued archer type, Chhatra type, King and Queen Type and horseman type of coins.

Later Gupta rulers also issued coins though mainly of the archer type. All the Gupta monarchs also issued silver and copper coins as well.

16.7 SEALS & SEALINGS :

Just like the inscriptions, seals and sealings too form an important source of historical information for the Gupta history. Sometimes, they constitute the solitary source of information. A large number of seals have been found from Vaishali in the Muzaffarpur District. We have the seal of Mahadevi Dhruvswamini. She was the queen of Chandragupta

II and mother of Govindagupta. Nalanda has yielded a number of sealings of Gupta emperors like Budhagupta, Narsimhagupta, Kumargupta III and others. Sealings of various administrative officials have also been found in abundance. The discovery of sealings from Nalanda may be taken as an indication of the active association of these rulers with this famous seat of learning and also as a proof of the patronage bestowed by them on this great institution of learning. Besides the seals and sealings of individual rulers and the members of their families, a large number of these discovered from Basrah, Nalanda and Bhita throw welcome light on the administrative set up of the Gupta period. Seals of both high and low ranking officials have been discovered. They give a long list of civil and military administrative officials.

16.8 MONUMENTS :

The monuments of the Gupta period are also a source of history of that period. Those monuments illustrate the different centres of art and architecture viz., Mathura Centre, Benaras School and Nalanda School. The Gupta art was free from foreign influence. The image of the seated Buddha in the Sarnath museum belonging to the Banaras School is a masterpiece of Indian art. Illustrations of the Nalanda School are to be found at Nalanda and at Kurkihar. These have been assembled together at the Patna Museum.

The temples of the Gupta period give us an idea of the architecture of that period. They also give us an idea of the religious beliefs of the people. They represent the religious and deities of the period, viz., Vishnu, Shiva, Durga, Jain Tirathankars, Buddha and Bodhisattvas. The temples at **Udayagiri** and **Pathari** illustrate the worship of Vishnu. The emergence of Ganga and Yamuna as Goddesses is shown on a temple from **Udayagiri**. A temple at **Deogarh** is dedicated to the worship of Shiva and Vishnu. A temple at **Aihole** is dedicated to the worship of **Durga**. The fine sculptures of the **Badami Caves** give us an idea of the religious condition of the people.

16.9 Conclusion

A study of the various sources for the study of the Imperial guptas reflects the rise of a dynasty in India in the first quarter of the 4th century A.D. that gave political stability, peace and prosperity for the centuries to follow. With the coming of the Imperial guptas, India witnessed the rise of a strong feeling of nationalism, establishment and consolidation of the empire. **Dr. L.D. Barnett** comments; “The Gupta age is in the annals of Classical

India what the Periclean age is the history of ancient Greece”.

16.10 Suggested Readings :

1. Agrawal Ashvini - **Rise and fall of the Imperial Guptas.**
2. Raychouchari H.C. - **Ancient India.**
3. Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan Series vol III **the Classical Age.**
4. Smith, V.A. - **Early History of India.**

16.11 Possible Questions :

1. Discuss the origin and the various sources for the study of the history of imperial Guptas.
2. How do literary sources help us in reconstructing the history of Gupta period?
3. Discuss Inscriptions as source of Gupta history.
4. What is the importance of numismatic evidence as source of Gupta period.
5. What are the inscriptions and coins as sources of Gupta history.
6. Critically examine the sources of the Guptas.

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**EXPANSION OF GUPTAS
UNDER SAMUDRAGUPTA AND
CHANDRAGUPTA II**

Prof. Neelu Gupta

- 17.1 Objectives
- 17.2 Samudragupta (335-375 A.D.)
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- 17.3 Chandragupta II (375-413 A.D.)
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17.1 Objectives :

The main objective of this lesson is to enable you to understand the contemporary political condition of India in 4th century A.D. During ancient and medieval times, the greatness of the kings and emperors was judged by their policy of conquests and

annexation. So an attempt has been made to make you understand how Samudragupta successfully carved out a big empire and how his successor Chandragupta II consolidated it and gave political unity to the country under his able leadership. That Gupta arms were carried even upto Bactria speaks of the superior military might of the Guptas. Chandragupta II carried forward the task of military conquests of his great father Samudragupta and brought it to the logical end by securing victories both in Vanga and Vahluka.

17.2 Samudragupta: 335 – 375 A.D.:

17.2.1 Sources :

In addition to a large number of **coins** of various varieties, the **Allahabad Pillar Inscription** is the most important source of information for the reign of Samudragupta.

Date :

Samudragupta, the son of Chandragupta I and Kumaradevi succeeded his father. As the first year of his successor Chandragupta II is stated to be 375 A.D. in his **Mathura Pillar Inscription**, that year is taken to mark the end of Samudragupta's reign. Another date of his reign is fixed by that of embassy sent to him by king Meghavarna of Ceylon (351 – 379 A.D.). Samudragupta's reign is roughly taken to begin from 335 A. D. lest it becomes too long. Its length also depends on his age. The date of his birth may be taken to be 310 A. D. following his father's marriage in 308 A.D. Thus he came to the throne at the age of 25 years, the legal age of kingship in 335 A. D.

17.2.2 Succession :

The selection of Samudragupta as his father's successor is perfectly in accordance with the ancient institution of the **Varnashramadharm**. In accordance with this, Hindu kings did voluntarily renounce the throne. It is stated in the **Allahabad Pillar Inscription** that he was selected for the throne by his father who embraced him as a genuine arya on the ground of his merit in preference to his brothers. The selection was greeted by his council with great enthusiasm, but it made the faces of other claimants pale. Some words of the inscription and some of its gaps are taken to indicate a fight for the throne by the discontented brothers.

It possibly led to trouble, and it is not even unlikely that when Samudragupta ascended the throne he had to face a revolt of his brothers. The name of a King **Kacha** is known

from a few coins which bear a close resemblance to those of Samudragupta. It has been suggested that Kacha was the eldest brother of Samudragupta and headed the rebellion against him. But is by no means certain and some hold that Kacha was only the original name of Samudragupta. But whatever troubles might have arisen, they were quelled by Samudragupta who soon made his position stable and secure.

17.2.3 Conquests and Extent of Empire

The reign of Samudragupta is chiefly remarkable for the series of military campaigns which he led in various parts of India. There was a lot of fighting to be done by Samudragupta both in order to secure his inherited kingdom and to expand it further. We have two main sources regarding his conquests:

- (i) **The Allahabad Pillar Inscription** is the most important source of our information or the reign of Samudragupta. It is a detailed record of his conquests;
- (ii) **The coins** of Samudragupta give us a lot of useful information about his warrior like attitude and his conquests. He had issued several types of coins; he is depicted dressed as a warrior, in one holding an axe and slaying the tiger. In another coin, he is shown as a performer of the horse – sacrifice.

His plan was first to subdue the neighboring state so as to secure his rear before launching upon distant expeditions. He adopted the dual policy of **Digvijay** and **Dharmavijay** towards different states. Digvijay means annexation of the states into the empire whereas **Dharmavijay** means reinstating the ruler after defeating him.

Conquests in the Northern India :

A number of rulers of Northern India, among whom **nine** are specifically mentioned felt the full brunt of Samudragupta's aggressive policy. These kings were defeated and crushed and their kingdoms were annexed to the Gupta Kingdom. Two of them **Nagasena and Ganapati- Naga** were rulers of the **Naga** family who had set up three kingdoms at **Padmavati** (Narwar in old Gwalior State) **Vidisha**(Bhilsa) and **Mathura**. Two other kings **Achyuta** and Chandervarman ruled respectively in **Ahichchhatra** (near Bareilly) and **Western Bengal** (in the Bankura District). The dominions of the remaining five Kings, viz., **Rudradeva, Matila, Nagadatta, Nandin and Balavarman** cannot be located at present. "These conquests", in the words of **R.K. Mookerjee**, "extended Samudragupta's

dominions beyond Prayaga and Saket as upto Mathura and Gwalior.”

1) **Frontier States :**

The might of his dominion was felt by the states – on its frontiers. The frontier states submitted to Samudragupta by “giving all kinds of taxes, obeying his orders and tendering homage. These frontier states existed both in the east and in the west. Among the four eastern kingdoms, **Samalata, Kamrupa, and Nepala** are well known and correspond to South East Bengal, Upper Assam and Nepal respectively. The fourth state **Davaka** was probably situated in the Nowgong district of Assam. The fifth Kartripura has been identified with Kartarpur in the Jalandhar district. The states in the west are not Kingdoms but were republics of peoples called the **Malavas, Arjunayanas, Yaudheyas, Madrakas, Abhiras, Prarjunas, Sankanikas, Kakas, Kharaparikas** and others.

As regards the republican states, **Malavas** occupied a part of the Punjab in the time of Alexander. Their exact location in the time of Samudragupta cannot be determined. According to **Dr. R.C. Majumdar**, **The Malavas** probably occupied Mewar, Tonk and the adjoining regions of the South-East Rajasthan. Their coins are not found after 850 A.D. The **Brihatasamhita** places **Arjunayanas** in the northern division of India. Their coins are found in the Mathura region and **V.A. Smith** assigns them to the Bharatpur and Alwas states. **Panini** refers to the **Yaudheyas** as a military clan who lived by the profession of arms. A large number of their coins have been found all over the area from Saharanpur to Multan. In the time of Samudragupta, they probably occupied northern Rajputana and south east Punjab.

There is a reference to the **Madrakas** in the Mahabharata and in Panini’s grammar. Their capital was **Sakala** or **Sialkot** and their territory was between Ravi and Chenab. In the time of Samudragupta, they were situated to the north of **Yaudheyas**. The **Abhiras** are also mentioned in **Patanjali’s Mahabhashya**. They are located by V.A. Smith in the province of Ahirwada between Jhansi and Bhilsa. The **Prayinas** belong to the Narsimhapur district of Madhya Pradesh. In the Udayagiri cave inscription of Chandragupta II, there is a reference to **Sankanikas**. They might have been located in the Isagarh district near Bhilsa. There is a reference to the **Kakas** in the Mahabharata. **V.A. Smith** connected the **Kakas** with **Kakanada** (Sanchi). According to **Dr. Bhandarkar**, the **Kharaparikas** were the same as the kharparas mentioned in the Batihagadh inscription and may be located the Damon district in Madhya Pradesh.

Regarding the submission of the above mentioned republican states, it is usually held that the careers of the Yaudheya, the Madra, the Arjunayana and the Malava republics mentioned in the **Allahabad Prashasti** came to an end owing to the imperialistic ambition and expansion of the Guptas. There is, however, no definite evidence to support this view. Samudragupta only claims that these republics accepted his over lordship and paid him tribute. That is quite compatible with internal autonomy and it is quite possible that the republics may have continued their existence during the reign of Chandragupta II and Kumargupta I. They may well have continued their semi-independent existence down to the middle of the 5th century A.D. when they appeared to have engulfed in the Huna avalanche.

Extent of the Empire in the North :

On the basis of these conquests, we can form an idea of the territory directly under the administration of Samudragupta. In the east, it included the whole of Bengal excepting its south – eastern extremity. Its **northern** boundary ran along the foothills of the Himalayas. In the **west**, it extended upto the territory of the Madras in the Punjab and probably included its eastern districts between Lahore and Karnal. From Karnal the boundary followed the Yamuna upto its junction with the Chambal and hence along the imaginary line drawn almost due south of Bhilsa. The southern boundary ran from Bhilsa to Jabalpur and thence along the Vindya range of hills.

2) Campaigns in Southern India:

Having asserted his authority in the North, Samudragupta launched upon his plan of unification of India and marched towards the South. His minister of foreign affairs and a military officer of high rank, Harishena mentioned that Samudragupta embarked upon an expedition to the South, of which all the kings he was able subdue. The conquests of Samudragupta's in the south were in the nature of Dharmavijaya. The kings were defeated and enthroned. The aim of the conquest in the south was more economic than political. No doubt, the conquests of the south had political significance as they stood for political glorification.

Rulers defeated by Samudragupta:

He defeated no less than twelve rulers in the Deccan. The defeated chiefs included the following:

- (i) **Mahendra of Kosala**, Kosala area included Durg, Raipur, Bilaspur and Sambhalpur districts.
- (ii) **Vyaghraraja of Mehakantara**, this area probably includes forest regions in Jeypore state (Orissa).
- (iii) **Mehendragiri of Pishtapura**, this area has been identified with Pithapuram in Godavari district.
- (iv) **Hastivarman of Vengi**.
- (v) **Ugrasena of Palakka**(Nellore district).
- (vi) **Vishnugupta**(the Pallava King) of **Kanchi**.
- (vii) **Kings Damana of Erandapalla and Kuvera of Devarashtra** probably ruled in the **Vizagapatam district**.
- (viii) Four other kings **Mantaraja of Kaurela, Svamidatta of Kottura, Nilraja of Avamukta and Dhananjaya of Kusthalapur** cannot be identified with certainty.

Route adopted by Samudragupta :

Although these four southern kingdoms cannot be located, it is clear that Samudragupta proceeded through the eastern coast upto the Pallava Kingdom, probably beyond the modern city of Chennai.

Results :

The rulers of these states were allowed to rule as feudatories to Samudragupta. He was satisfied that he had defeated them all. His campaigns in this region gave him the key to the lines of communication to the Bay of Bengal and this established his hold over the transoceanic trade. With the acquisition of an assured control over the south East Asian commerce through his suzerainty over the parts of eastern coast of India. His purpose of launching the expedition in the South was achieved; he no longer considered it necessary to set his administration there in suppression of the local rule. Samudragupta was not a ruthless annexationist. He was a magnanimous conqueror who was generous to the fallen foe.

3) Relation with Foreign States:

The Allahabad Pillar Inscription refers to the independent foreign countries who

entered into relationship with Samudragupta. His supremacy was acknowledged by the powerful rulers in the western and north – western frontiers of India. The foreign powers mentioned are:

- (i) **Daivaputra–Shahi – Shahanushahi** : These titles were assumed by the Kushana emperors from Kanishka I and were later continued by their successors, the **Little Kushanas**, who were ruling in the Indian borderland and in the Kabul valley in the 3rd and 4th century A.D. According to **Dr. R. K. Mookerjee**, the Kushana King who came into contact with Samudragupta might have been **Grumbates** who ruled in 350 A. D.
- (ii) **The Sakas**: According to **Dr. R. K. Mookerjee**, these might have been the Sakas of Western India under Rudrasimha II in the time of Samudragupta.
- (iii) **Murundas**: According to **Dr. Ray Choudhari**, the **SakaMurundas** must have included the northern chiefs of Scythian nationality who issued the Ardochsho coins. It is suggested that the Murundas of Laghman region entered into some sort of diplomatic relationship with Samudragupta.
- (iv) **Political Relations with Ceylon**: Even the distant **Sinhala** (Ceylon) and all other islands are included in the same category of states to which the Sakas and Hunas belonged. We learn from a Chinese text that king **Meghavarna of Ceylon** (352 – 379 A. D.) sent two monks to Bodh – Gaya to visit the sacred spots, but they were put to great inconvenience for want of suitable accommodation. **Meghavarna** sent a mission to Samudragupta with rich presents and asked for permission to build a monastery and a rest house for Ceylonese Pilgrims. The permission was granted. **Hiuen – Tsang** says that the Ceylonese King’s “gave in tribute to the king of India all the jewels of his country.” It is likely that Samudragupta’s courtiers regarded the rich presents as tributes and construed the Ceylonese King’s prayer for submission to build the monastery as an “application for charter confirming him in the enjoyment of his territories.” Subsequently, the king of Ceylon built a monastery of three storey, six halls and three towers, enclosed within a wall 30’ to 40’ high. A statue of Lord Buddha made of gold and silver and studded with gems of various colours was set up the monastery. That monastery is called by Hiuen – Tsang as Mahabodhi Sangharama.

At that time it was accommodating about one thousand ecclesiastics, all Mahayanists of the Sthavira School.

- (v) **Other Islands:** These islands are not named but must have included the island of Java where Fa – hien about this time found settlement of Brahmins and Buddhists from India. This important epigraphic passage thus makes the first mention of the beginnings of Greater India under Samudragupta.

Ashvamedha Sacrifice :

To celebrate the completion of his conquests, Samudragupta performed the horse sacrifice after a long time. It was marked by the issue of special coinage on which the legend indicates its justification in the following words: “The King of Kings, who performed the Ashvamedha sacrifice, having protected the earth, wins heaven.” The coins portray on the obverse the horse before the sacrificial post and on the reverse the Queen associated with the ceremony.”

4) Extent of Samudragupta’s Empire:

The above discussion enables us to describe the nature and extent of the empire of Samudragupta with an accuracy and fullness of detail rare in ancient Indian history. It comprised nearly the whole of Northern India with the exclusion of Kashmir, Gujrat, Western Punjab, Western Rajputana and Sindh and included the highlands of Chhasttisgarh and Orissa with a long stretch of territory along the eastern coast extending as far south as Chingleput and probably even further. Of these vast territories, a considerable portion of Northern India was directly administered by the emperor through his officials. This was surrounded on all sides except on the south by an almost continuous line of tributary states. Beyond them lay the Saka and Kushana principalities on the west and North West. All of them were under the influence of Gupta Empire. The states along the eastern coast of the Deccan and the Pallava Kingdom in the Tamil country beyond the Krishna were also feudatories, while Ceylon and probably some other islands in the Indian Ocean or the East Indies maintained a submissive and respectful attitude towards the Emperor. Thus to use the words of Allahabad Prashasti, the (whole) world was bound by means of amplitude of the vigour of the arm of Samudragupta.

17.2.4 Conclusion :

Samudragupta may have been inspired by the vision of an all India empire, but he

realized the impracticability of any idea to establish immediately a direct rule over the whole country or even a considerable part of it. He, therefore, created by ruthless suppression of number of independent states, a central block of territory over which he exercised direct sway. He thus established an imperial authority strong enough to ensure the internal peace of India by checking the disruptive tendencies of minor states. But he did not attempt to bring all the outlying kingdoms under his direct rule. This would have not only taxed his strength to the utmost, but might have even led to serious disaster for, as is shown by the history of India at all times, it is hard to conquer the frontier states and still harder to exercise control over them. Instead of permanently antagonizing them by a policy of subjugation such as he had followed in the centre, within a limited sphere, he tried gradually to win over these states by a policy of conciliation. He allowed them internal autonomy without liberty to create discord and disunion within the body politic of India. The frontier states on the west might also have been retained as buffer states in order to increase the defensive strength of the empire against foes.

17.3 Chandragupta II : 375 – 413 A.D.

Chandragupta II was the son of Samudragupta, born of his chief queen Dattadevi. Our knowledge of Chandragupta II is derived from inscriptions, coins and the account of India as given by Fahien.

Family : Chandragupta II had two wives :

(i) **Dhruvadevi** (Inscriptions Nos. 10, 12 and 13 of Fleet) described as the chief Queen (Mahadevi). She gave birth to two sons, **Kumargupta and Govindagupta;**

(ii) **Kuvera-naga**, the mother of princess **Prabhavatigupta** who was married to Vakataka king, Rudrasena II. Thus Chandragupta had two wives, two sons and a daughter as recorded in the inscriptions. The epithet Parmabhadragavata borne by him shows that he was a staunch devotee of the Vaishnava faith. Chandragupta also had a second name Devagupta with the variants Devaraja and Devasri.

Samudragupta is stated to have selected for the throne in his life time Chandragupta II as his fittest son 'out of his many sons' (Mathura Inscription, Bhitari Pillar Inscription and Eran Inscription). Apart from the problematic episode of Rama gupta , there is nothing to indicate any interval between the death of Samudragupta and the accession of Chandragupta II.

An inscription dated A.D. 380 gives the regnal year of Chandragupta II which has been read as prathama (first) by some and Panchama (fifth) by others. The date of his accession would accordingly be either A.D. 380 or 375. **R.C. Majumdar** holds that the latter view appears to be more probable. According to **Dr. D.C. Sircar**, the inscription contains the following words read by him as '**Samvatsare Panchame**' meaning that the year 61 was the fifth year of his reign which accordingly began in 375 A. D. Chandragupta died sometime between A.D. 413 and 415, and thus enjoyed a long reign of more than 33 years.

17.3.1 Contemporary Political Condition of India:

Samudragupta had practically defeated all the kings of India. He had built a federation of autonomous states grouped together in subordinate alliance to the Gupta suzerain. He had also annexed many states into the Gupta Empire. Thus he strung together various states of the subcontinent into a thread of political unity. But after the death of Samudragupta, the political condition of the Gupta Empire had again deteriorated. It is quite natural that the subjugated kings might have entertained the idea of regaining their lost independence at the first opportunity. The power and influence of the Sakas had also increased. It means that the signs of the disintegration of the Gupta Empire were coming to the forefront. Thus Chandragupta II was entrusted with the supreme task of not only consolidating the Gupta Empire but also extending its influence in certain parts India.

17.3.2 Conquests:

1. Conquest of Gujrat and Kathiawar:

The most important event of his reign was the conquest of Western Malwa and the Saka satrapy of Samabhtra. The way was already prepared for it by the conquest of Eastern Malwa by Samudragupta. It was the base of Chandragupta Vikramaditya's operations against Western India. The details of campaign are not known but there are indications that Chandragupta with feudatory chiefs and ministers had to make a prolonged stay at Malwa. This is proved by three inscriptions:

- (i) One of **Virasena**, Chandragupta's minister of 'Peace and War', at Udayagiri hill near Bhilsa;
- (ii) **The second inscription is of a Sankanika Maharaja**, a feudatory chief in the same locality dated year 82 (A.D. 401 – 402); third inscription is of a

military officer named **Amarkardeva**, at Sanchi dated year 93 (A.D. 412 – 413). This expedition was materially helped by the Vakataka matrimonial alliance which was decided by political ambition like the earlier Lichchhavi alliance of Chandragupta I and Kumardevi. By marrying his daughter Prabhavatigupta with Rudrasena II, the Vakataka King, Chandragupta II eliminated the danger of an attack from the rear. The magnitude of this expedition is clearly reflected in the statement of his foreign minister **Virasena** that he had come to Udayagiri in the company of the emperor whose object was the conquest of the entire world.

Chandragupta's success was however, complete. The Saka ruler Rudrasimha III was not only defeated but his kingdom was also annexed. The conquest of this region took place between A.D. 388 and A.D. 409. Thus after more than 300 years rule, the line of the Western Satraps came to an end and the last vestige of foreign rule disappeared from western India. By this brilliant success, the Gupta emperor added the rich provinces of Kathiawar and Gujrat to his empire which now extended to the Arabian Sea. The Gupta Empire also controlled to a large extent the Indian commerce with the western world; and was thus brought into closer contact with the Western Civilization. This conquest is remembered in the 7th century A. D. in the time of **Bana** in his **Harshacharita**.

Identification of King Chandra of Mehrauli Iron Pillar Inscription with Chanragupta II. The military exploits of a king called Chandra are mentioned in this inscription. Many theories have been put forward with regard to the identification of King Chandra. According to one view, King Chandra was the same king who is mentioned as Chandravarman in an inscription on **Susunia hill** in Bengal. According to another theory, King Chandra should be identified with Chandragupta I. This theory can hold the ground only if it is proved that Chandragupta I conquered Bengal. But this is not possible as we know it for certain that Bengal was conquered by Samudragupta.

Another view is that Bengal was conquered by Chandragupta II and he was the same person as mentioned in the Mehrauli Pillar Inscription. It is contented that the script of Mehrauli Pillar Inscription is similar to that of the Allahabad Pillar Inscription. Again it has been stated that Samudragupta's empire excluded the extremities on the west and the east. King Chandra conquered both the extremities and hence made a positive gain.

If we accept this identity, the record says that he “defeated a confederacy of hostile

chiefs in **Vanga** and having crossed in warfare the seven mouths of the river Sindhu conquered the **Vahlikas**".

2. Conquest of Vanga:

It is stated in the Mehrauli iron Pillar inscription that King Chandra fought against a confederacy of powers in the Vanga countries. According to **Kalidas**, the term '**Vanga**' denoted the region lying between the two streams of the Ganges viz., the Bhagirathi and Padma. It is stated in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription that Sampata which comprises a portion of Vanga, was a Pratyanta state which owed allegiance to Samudragupta. It is possible that some of the rulers refused to acknowledge the authority of Chandragupta II and consequently the latter had to fight against them. It is possible that the conquest of Vanga took place towards the end of reign of Chandragupta II. It was as a result of this campaign that direct Gupta rule was established in this province; for we know definitely that early in the 6th century A. D., a Gupta King was ruling in this region.

3. Conquest of Vahlikas :

After the victory of Malwa and Saurashtra, Chandragupta carried his arms successfully in the Trans – Indus region. According to the Udayagiri cave inscription, he had set out to conquer the whole world. The Mehrauli iron pillar inscription also records his victory over the Vahlikas after crossing the seven mouths of the Indus. Vahluka definitely stands for Bactria, ancient Persian Vaghdhi and modern region of Balkh in north – eastern Afghanistan. The route adopted by Chandragupta II in his military expedition against the Vahlikas lay through Saurashtra to southern Afghanistan via Trans – Indus region and from there he had headed northwards reached Bactria where perhaps he had a battle with the Kushanas ruling over there. Having subdued them with his might, Chandragupta II seems to have brought his victorious march to a halt. He returned home from Bactria proper, crowned with glory and perhaps laden with riches.

4. Conquest of other petty states:

To these achievements of Chandragupta II, may be added, the extension of Gupta rule over **Kosala, Odra, Pundra and Tamralipta** as mentioned in the Puranas. The Gupta suzerainty over Kosala is also indicated by the reference to the **Paramabhattacharaka** in the Kursud copper plate grant to king Narendra. There were other petty republics which were located in the north west of the country from Bhadravana to Kharapatika.

These republics were weak and disunited. Chandragupta II took full advantage of the weakness of these republics and annexed them to the Gupta Empire.

17.3.3 Matrimonial alliances and their political importance:

If the time of Chandragupta Vikramaditya was important for new conquests and consolidation of the Gupta Empire, it was equally important for the matrimonial alliances with the powerful ruling families of the time. The Gupta rulers were well aware of political advantage of the matrimonial alliances which played an important role in their foreign policy. Chandragupta II had married Kuvera–naga of the Naga family and had a daughter by her named Prabhavatigupta. She was married to the Vakataka crown Prince **Rudrasena II**, the son of **Prithvishena I**. the geographical position of Nagas and Vakatakas was such that they might have been of great help to him in his campaigns against the Sakas and the Kushanas and their hostility could easily prove to be a serious embarrassment. It is not, therefore, an unreasonable assumption that both these matrimonial alliances were deliberately made with a political object.

Rudrasena II, the son–in–law of Chandragupta II had a short reign and died in A.D. 390. After his death, the rule of Prabhavatigupta as the regent queen of her minor sons continued for about twenty years. The Guptas exercised great influence on the Vakataka Kingdom during this time by deputing their own civil and military officers to the Vakataka court.

We learn from an inscription of the powerful **Kadamba ruler Kakutsthavarman of Kuntala** that his daughters were married to the Guptas and other kings. Though the name of the Gupta king is not mentioned in the **Talagund Stone Pillar Inscription**, the Gupta King whose son married a daughter of Kakutsthavarman might have been either Chandragupta II or Kumargupta I.

17.3.4 Chandragupta's identification with Vikramaditya:

Chandragupta's exploits naturally recalled those of king Vikramaditya of Ujjaini who is described in the Indian legend as having expelled the first Saka conquerors of India. It is presumably in imitation of this legendary hero that Chandragupta assumed the title Vikramaditya, which was also probably adopted by his father and had come to be regarded as a title of distinction by mighty rulers of India famed for their military exploits.

It is also likely that some of the traditions associated with Vikramaditya, especially his liberality and patronage of learning, owed their origin to this historic king, for there are ample grounds to believe that the famous poet Kalidasa, the chief of the traditional nine gems of the court of Vikramaditya, really lived at court of Chandragupta II. While these traditions undoubtedly prove that Chandragupta's name was held in great esteem by a grateful posterity, it would be too much to assume that he was the historical figure from whom the Vikramaditya's legend was originally evolved. **R. C. Majumdar** believes that "inspite of his undoubted popularity, it is difficult to maintain this claim, although upheld by several scholars."

17.3.5 Extent of the Empire :

Chandragupta II was a great warrior and great conqueror. He adopted the policy of imperialism like his father Samudragupta. He had extended the Gupta Empire by his heroic achievements. His empire extended from the Himalayas in the north to the river Narmada in the South and from Bengal and Assam in the east to Saurashtra in the west. He had extended his empire upto the Hindukush in the North West by defeating the Kushanas and Sakamurandas in Gandhara and Kamboj. This Gujrat, Saurashtra, Malwa, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal and the major part of Punjab formed the Gupta Empire during the reign of Chandragupta II.

17.3.6 Conclusion :

The reign of Chandragupta II saw the consolidation of the Gupta Empire. The brilliant intellectual revival, manifested in arts, sciences and literature distinguished the Gupta age. But this age was largely the creation of Samudragupta and Chandragupta II. Samudragupta had begun the work of conquest. To Chandragupta fell the task of completing it which he did successfully. It, as is generally believed, Chandragupta II lived longer in the memory of grateful posterity which had forgotten his illustrious father, the explanation is not far to seek. People are more impressed by the finished superstructure and give greater credit to its architect than the master builder who conceived the plan and laboriously laid the foundation. Samudragupta, the victor of a hundred fights, is a hero of history; Chandragupta Vikramaditya, who brought to maturity the new era of political greatness and cultural regeneration, won a place in the hearts of his people.

17.3.7 Suggested Readings :

1. Asvini Aggarwal – **Rise and Fall of Imperial Guptas.**

2. The History and Culture of the Indian People Vol III – **The Classical Age.**
3. R. C. Majumdar – **Ancient India.**
4. R. K. Mookerjee – **Ancient India.**

17.3.8 Possible Questions :

1. Discuss the conquests of Samudragupta.
2. Write a detailed note on the campaigns of Samudragupta.
3. How do you rate Samudragupta as a conqueror?
4. Discuss Samudragupta's policy of Digvijay and Dharmavijay.
5. Samudragupta has been described as 'Indian Napoleon' Justify.
6. Describe the various campaigns of Chandragupta II.
7. Discuss conquests and extent of the empire of Chandragupta II.
8. How far Chandragupta II was able to expand and consolidate the Gupta Empire?
9. Describe Chandragupta II as a conqueror.
10. Discuss military achievements of Chandragupta II.

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CAUSES OF DOWNFALL OF THE GUPTAS**Dr. Hina S. Abrol**

- 18.1 Introduction
- 18.2 Objectives
- 18.3 Causes of the downfall of the Guptas
 - 18.3.1 Internal dissensions
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 - 18.3.3 Short reigns of later Guptas
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18.1 Introduction

The Gupta dynasty had the distinction of providing to the country a galaxy of great kings. These kings were able, versatile and strong monarchs, who brought about the consolidation of a large part of Northern India under “one political umbrella” and ushered in an era of orderly government and progress. There was internal peace, material

prosperity, flourishing trade, development of art, literature, religion and science. However, in accordance to the law of nature, what goes up is bound to come down. So did the Guptas. The empire which was extended and strengthened by Samudragupta and Chandragupta Vikramaditya began to disintegrate and decline after the death of Skandagupta. The successors of Skandagupta were weak and were unable to hold the empire together. Gradually, the Gupta empire declined completely in the middle of the sixth century.

18.2 Objectives

- To know about the various causes which were responsible for bringing about the disintegration of the mighty Gupta empire.
- To understand that it was a multiplicity, a combination of several causes discussed here which were responsible for the decline of one of the greatest empires of ancient India.

18.3 Causes of the downfall of the Guptas

The Gupta rulers had the distinction of staying longer at the top. They trained their successors in the art and science of maintaining peace and fighting wars and thus continued to hold sway for a considerable length of time. However, with the passage of time, the dynasty suffered loss of vitality, vigour and authority. Internal problems arose, external pressures increased and this resulted in the squeezing of the empire territorially. The grandeur also started fading away. The following causes were together responsible for the decline of the Guptas.

18.3.1 Internal dissensions

After the death of Skandagupta, there was a rise in the internal dissensions in the reigning family. These differences created factions, generated divided loyalties, weakened the political system and made the central authority weak. The prestige of the Emperor was lowered thus. Infact, the death of Samundragupta completely shook the foundations of the empire.

18.3.2 Confused succession among later Guptas

There was no fixed law of primogeniture to determine succession among the Guptas. It is difficult to determine the order of succession, duration of reigns and the relation with one another of several later Gupta kings. Some had very short reigns. The stress and strain

under which the political system and administration must have operated in imaginable. This must have caused weakness to the system.

18.3.3 Short reigns of later Guptas

The study of the later Guptas presents a spectacle of short reigns and quick successions. At a time when the king's personality influenced the policies and administration, short reigns must have rendered the kings ineffective in the performance of their duties. This must have caused irreparable damage to the entire system.

18.3.4 Revolts of the Provincial Governors

The Gupta empire was a vast empire extending from the Himalayas in the north to the river Narmada in the south and from Bengal in the east to Gujarat and Saurashtra in the west. The empire had been divided into several provinces and each of these provinces was under the control of a governor. Although these governors were responsible for the administration of their respective provinces, the central government also exercised an effective control over the activities of the governors. This system was successful so long the reigning monarchs were strong and effective. After Chandragupta II, the Gupta rulers could not wield effective control over such a vast empire. As a result, the Provincial Governors began to assert themselves. After the death of Skandagupta, they started declaring independence one after the other. Malwa, Vallabhi, Kannauj, Thanesar, Bengal and Assam established their independent existence. Thus, the political disintegration set in and gradually led to the decline of the Gupta Empire.

18.3.5 Inability of later Gupta rulers

It is sad to note that none of the later Gupta Kings had the grit, the courage and the determination to check the disintegration that had set in. They utterly failed to stand up to the challenge and arrest the forces of decline. They remained mute spectators to the events. There was complete lack of political comprehension and mental vigour among the later Gupta king. The King like Budhagupta and Baladitya did not have leadership qualities. They lacked the qualities to sustain their authority as well as the integrity of the empire.

18.3.6 Depradations caused by Toramana and Mihirkula

As the Guptas neglected the defence of the north western region, the mountain passes and the plains of the Punjab, the Hunas came down unhindered. They caused devastations and immense hardships to the people of the area. They were fought back.

Later, the same region was subjected to the deprivations of Toramana and Mihirkula . Wars were fought and they were ultimately thrown out. Yet the wars weakened the resources of the Gupta empire and also humiliated the royalty. The prestige of the Gupta Kings suffered a severe blow with long term consequences.

18.3.7 Economic disruptions

Economic disruption was also an important factor which led to the downfall of the Gupta empire. Political disturbances in the north – west regions must have disrupted economic activities. The scarcity of gold coins of Budhagupta and his debasement of the gold coins indicates that economic prosperity had suffered a severe dent. Things worsened with the passage of time having grave consequences.

18.3.8 Religious Policy of Later Guptas

While the early Gupta kings were the patrons of Hinduism, the later Gupta kings embraced Buddhism. Buddhagupta, Tathagatagupta and Baladitya were followers of Buddhism. This change in religious affiliations had its effect on the fortunes of the Guptas. Their military power was adversely affected. And this was the case when the empire was threatened with foreign invasions. The military weakness of later Gupta Kings is mentioned by the Chinese pilgrims, Fa–hien and Hiuen Tsang in their respective works. The followers of Buddhism, with firm faith in non – violence and magnanimity could not protect the integrity of the country.

18.3.9 Negligence of Frontier Policy

The early Gupta king had extended and strengthened their empire by establishing friendly relations with the kingdoms of the frontiers. For instance, Chandragupta I had entered into a matrimonial relation with the Lichchavis. Chandergupta II also had acted diplomatically and established matrimonial relations with the Nagas, Vakatakas and the Kadambas. However, the later Guptas did not adopt the diplomatic policy of their predecessors. Consequently, they failed to safeguard their empire from foreign invasions. At the time of foreign invasion, these rulers failed to enlist the cooperation of these frontier states.

18.4 Conclusion

It is evident from the above discussion of the multiplicity of causes that the glorious epoch of the Gupta age came to an end due to a combination of all these causes Dr. R.C. Majumdar finds a similarity between the decline and fall of the Gupta empire to the decline

of the Moghul empire after the invasion of Nadir Shah. The only difference being that while the weak later Moguls continued to sit on the throne of Delhi for a century more, we do not hear of any worthwhile Gupta King after Vishnugupta.

18.5 Glossary

1. Depredation – an act of plundering and marauding
2. Disruption – to interrupt or impede the program
3. Dissensions – differences
4. Epoch – era, age
5. Magnanimity – generosity
6. Primogeniture – the right of succession belonging to the first born child
7. Vitality – the state of being strong and active

18.6 Self Assessment Questions

I. State whether the following is true or false

- i) The Gupta empire began to disintegrate after the death of Skandagupta.
- ii) The later Guptas were followers of Hinduism
- i) The Gupta age is regarded as the Classical Age of Ancient India
- ii) The Huna invasions were one of the cause for the decline of the Guptas

II. Answer the questions in detail

- i) What were the causes of the decline of the Gupta empire?
- ii) Rise of Provincial Governors was one of the important causes for the decline of the Guptas. Explain

18.7 Suggested Readings

1. R.C. Majumdar (ed.) **The Classical Age**, Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan , Bombay, Fourth Edition, 1988.
2. R.C. Majumdar, **Ancient India**, Motilal Banarsidas Publishers Pvt. Limited, Delhi, 1998
3. R.S. Tripathi, **History of Ancient India**, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, Delhi, Reprint, 1999.

4. Vijay Kachroo, **Ancient India**, Har Anand Publications Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, 2000.
5. Arun Bhattacharjee, **History of Ancient India**, Sterling Publishers Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, 1982

HARSHAVARDHANA'S ADMINISTRATION

Prof. Neelu Gupta

- 19.1 Objectives
- 19.2 Introduction
- 19.3 The King and his administrative ideals
 - 19.3.1 Three Regal Power of the State
- 19.4 The council of Ministers
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- 19.8 Judicial Administration
- 19.9 Revenue and Finance
- 19.10 Military Administration
- 19.11 Conclusion
- 19.12 Suggested Readings
- 19.13 Possible Questions

19.1 Objectives :

Harshavardhana was a great ruler of the seventh century A.D. The main objectives of this lesson is to enable you to understand:

- (a) powers and responsibilities of the king;
- (b) how he discharged his duties;
- (c) an elaborate administrative set up to assist the king to look after the

interests of the people and to maintain law and order.

(d) importance and role of army.

19.2 Introduction :

Harsha ranks as one of the greatest rulers of India. He combines in him the military genius of Chandragupta Maurya, the benevolence of Ashoka and enlightened character of **Chandragupta Vikramaditya**. He has won for him much glory as a great conqueror and empire builder, a just and efficient administrator, a great patron of art and culture, a man of high and noble ideals and above all, a man of indomitable character and versatile personality.

Harshavardhana enjoyed a long reign of nearly four decades and ruled over a vast empire right from the Himalayas to the Narmada and from Bharoach Saurashtra region to Kamrupa, and we can say that it was largely due to his efficient administrative machinery. The sources at our disposal, literary, epigraphic and numismatic, combined with the Chinese pilgrim's accounts, give us a fine picture of the state as it was governed during the period under review.

19.3 The King and His Administrative Ideals :

Harsha was a benevolent ruler and his administrative ideal was the attainment of happiness for his people. The ideal kingship is well described by Harsha in his **Nagananda**. He puts the following words in the mouth of **Jimutavahana**, the hero of the drama.

“The subjects have been put to the right path; the good people have been well placed; relatives have been equal to me; security in the kingdom is guaranteed; the desire - fulfilling tree (Kalpa – druma) have been given to the needy, i.e., all helps to those who are in need.”

Similarly the king has been described as the protector of his subjects in the **Kadambari** and **Harshcharita**. The king was supposed to have attained divinity and was thought to have combined in himself all the noble qualities of several gods. Bana refers to **Pushpabhuti**, **Prabhakarvardhana** and Harsha in a very magniloquent tone. Regarding **Harshavardhana**, Bana's pen so portrays him that he possessed qualities superior to those possessed by famous heroes and gods. **Bana** not only compares, his patron **Harsha** with Indra, Varuna, Kuvera, Yama etc., but he tries to portray his accomplishment as if he (Harsha) excelled all these gods. This is, no doubt, an exaggerated

account, but it throws enough light on the nature of kingship.

The king was regarded a rare combination of all the noble, supernatural and super-human qualities of several heroes and gods in order to be an ideal king and the history of Harsha proves that he was an ideal ruler who combined in himself piety and compassion, love and fraternity. He certainly punished the enemies but showed charity to the mankind. He entertained all the noble ideals of a true Hindu Sovereign.

His ideals of government, as it was administered by him, are best represented in his dramas. The king **Vatsaraja Udayana**, the hero of **Harsha** in his two dramas, **Priyadarshika** and the **Ratnavali**, says in the **Ratnavali**:

“The kingdom has all its enemies vanquished; the entire burden of administration has been entrusted to a suitable (Prime) minister; the subjects with all disturbances entirely removed, are fondled with proper protection.”

Similarly he tells us in the **Priyadarshika**:

“I am convinced of the constancy of my servitors, I have seen the wisdom of my councilors, I have also proved my friends and know full well the devotion of my people.” These references show that the matters relating to the subjects and the state, the protection of the people, their welfare and good administration mattered the king first, and the personal pleasures and ambitions were of secondary importance to him.

In the **Nagananda** also the king's duties were well defined. On being persuaded and being convinced to leave the forest and to come back to attend the affairs of the State and Government, **Jimutavahana** says that he had done all that was to be done in his capacity as a king. The king must have the strength to defend his subjects from all dangers. Harsha describes his hero **Vatsaraja Udayana** as “One who was able to defend the whole world.”

These various references in the literary sources prove that, first of all, the king was the upholder of Danda and Dharma. Secondly, it was his main task to maintain law and order in the state; to protect the country from internal disorder and external dangers; to protect the people against all dangers, and to do everything within his powers for the material, moral and spiritual uplift of the people. Thirdly, he had to guarantee just and efficient administration and administer justice to all irrespective of status, sex and creed.

19.3.1 Three Regal Powers of the State:

To fulfill these aims and objects, the king depended on three great regal powers of the State. They are:

- (a) The **sovereignty** or the majesty of the king himself (**Prabhu Shakti**);
- (b) **The wise counsel (Mantra Shakti)**;
- (c) The energy, power or strength (**Utsaha Shakti**). These three powers thus correspond to three major limbs of the government. The Sovereign, the Council of Ministers and the Army. These powers are not only essential, but they are indispensable and irresistible powers. Harsha knew fully well the importance of these three constituents or elements of the regal power and he worked out the details of his administrative scheme in such an order that equal emphasis was laid on all these elements. This is clear from his drama, **the Priyadarshika**, wherein he tells us that the king **Drdhavarmana**, the ruler of Anga country, was “the possessor of three irresistible powers” (shaktitryasya).

That these constituents of regal power were regarded very important and indispensable during the age of Harsha, is further proved by their reference in the **Aihole inscription** of Pulakesin II. They were not merely political ideals, but were a living reality acted upon practically in the administration.

Titles of Harshavardhana :

The king assumed several high sounding titles such as Nripa, Maharajadhiraja, Chakravartin, Deva Samrat, Sarvabhaum, Parmeshvara, and Paramabhattacharaka.

Emperor's Visits:

As the king was the central and most important figure in the administration, the accomplishment of his administrative ideals and successful implementation of his State policies and decrees solely depended on his personal supervision. In order to have personal knowledge of the conditions of the state and affairs of the government he travelled the entire empire and made on the spot study.

His inspection tours were not confined to the urban areas alone. Even rural areas received equal attention. The Emperor suspended his inspection work during the rainy season on account of the difficulties of weather and communication. In fair weather he visited as many places as possible. He got prepared temporary buildings for his stay on

tour. When the emperor halted at any place, the people came to him to put before him their grievances.

A lot of pomp and show was associated with the king. When he was on the march, he was accompanied by several hundred drummers who beat a note on golden drums for each step taken. No other king was allowed to use such “music–pace drums.” The royal chamberlain regulated audience to the emperor.

19.4 The Council of Ministers:

The king depended for his day to day administration and vital governmental policies and programme on the advice and assistance of the council of ministers. The importance of ministers, purohits and other advisers has almost remained so throughout the ages that no king could afford to act as an autocrat. The rulers were responsible to their subjects and they had to obey the **Dharma**. They, therefore, never transgressed the laws of the State as prescribed in our law books. No law giver including Kautilya, one of the greatest champions of kingship and centralized administrative set up, allows the king to act according to his sweet will.

We do not possess much information in order to make a thorough study of the nature, composition, powers and functions of the Mantriparishada during the period under review. But the sources at our disposal help us to conclude that the king had his team of advisers and ministers. The word parishada has been used by king Harsha himself in his dramas. The importance attached to the amatyas and their duties may indicate that they held the office of ministers.

The central ministry was called the **Mantri – Parishad. Smritis** and inscriptions of all period refer to ministers as **Mantrins, Schiva, or Amatya**. The strength of the ministry appears to have varied from approximately eight to twenty depending on the needs of the state. It appears that a council composed of members from all the four classes or castes was preferred or perhaps even required. According to the **Mahabhart**, the king should have 37 sachivas: 4 brahmans, 8 Kshatriyas, 21 vaishyas, 3 shudras and 1 suta versed in the Puranas. It is also declared that the king should not have less than three **mantrins** and that he should discuss policies with eight of them. While most members of the central ministry may also have been heads of departments such as army, revenue, public welfare etc., some esteemed for their experience, learning or wisdom, may have acted only **mantrins** or counselors.

19.5 The Secretariat:

There seems to have been a well-organized secretariat at the capital. Bana refers to Avanti as Minister for Foreign Relations and War. He describes **Simhananda** as the commander – in-chief of Harsha. **Kuntala** is described by him as chief cavalry officer. **Skandgupta** is mentioned as the chief commandant of the elephant force. In the **Madhuvana copper Plate**, the name of **Samanta Maharaja Ishvargupta** is given as keeper of Records. **Bhanu** is described as the keeper of Records in the **Banskhera copper plate inscription**. The name of the chief officers of the state were **Mahasamanta, Maharaja, Daussadha-Sadhanika, Paramatara, Rajasthaniya, Kumaramatya, Uparika, Vishayapati** etc.

It is pointed out that the superior civil service was manned by **Kumaramatya**. It is from them that Ministers, Secretariat officers, and district officers were taken. The Centre had its own royal messengers who are described as **Dirghaadhvagas** in **Harshacharita**. There is also a reference to an officer called **Sarvagatah** who was probably a member of the secret service department. It appears that most of the senior officers were not paid in cash. According to **Hiuen-Tsang**, “Ministers of state and common officials, all have their portions of land and are maintained by cities assigned to them.” It appears that the government servants of the lower grade were paid in cash or in land according to their work. It may be contented that the administration of Harsha was a forerunner of feudal system in India.

19.6 Administrative Divisions:

For the administrative purposes, the country was divided into the **bhuktis, visayas, Pathaks and gramas**. While the country was directly governed by the emperor and his council of ministers, the bhuktis were placed under the charge of provincial governors who were directly responsible to the emperor. That Harsha’s empire was divided into several bhuktis is proved by his own inscriptions such as **Ahichchhatra Inscription and Sravasti Inscription**.

The **bhukti** was further divided into **vishayas**. **Dr. Tripathi** appears to have rightly observed that the **Vishaya** may correspond to a district, and it was placed under the administrative control of **Vishyapati**.

The next and the smallest territorial unit was the village. In Indian administrative set up, the village has worked as an autonomous unit and the governments, throughout the

ages, allowed it to settle its own affairs. The State Control was confined to revenue and taxation and other allied matters. But in day – to-day life the village councils had their own functions and responsibilities. The man in village directly responsible to central government was the village chief, generally known as gramika. He was assisted by a number of clerks known as karnikas.

19.7 Police:

The **dandis** (rod-wielders) of the Harshacharita shown as maintaining order among the crowd anxious to see the king in the military procession were obviously carrying out police duties. There is reference to a police officer designated as **Chaur-oddharanika** which literally means the one who is entrusted with the extermination of the thieves. There is also reference to **dauhssadha-Sadhanika** meaning accomplisher of difficult task mentioned in Harsha's inscription. The ordinary members of the police force were called **Chata and Bhata**. Both males and females were appointed in the police. **Bana** throws light on the arrangement Harsha had made for night patrolling by regular police. The police force recruited for night patrolling also consisted of the females. We are told in the **Harshacharita** that "loving pairs were aroused from sleep by the tramp of the women of the watch."

19.8 Judicial Administration:

We have also glimpses of judicial system. **Yuan Chwang** informs us that "as the government is honestly administered and the people live together on good terms, the criminal class is small." Hieun-Tsang further mentions that sometimes the laws were violated and plots made against the sovereign, when the crime was brought to light, the offender was given life imprisonment. Corporal punishment was not in vogue but the offender, alive or dead, was not treated as a member of any community. For offences against social morality and disloyal and unfilial conduct, the punishment was to cut off the nose or an ear or a hand or to banish the offender to another country or into the wilderness. Other offences could be atoned for by a money payment. Harsha is said to have "prohibited the taking of life under severe penalties." Literary and epigraphic evidences also throw some light on the judicial machinery. **Pramatri** is said to be an officer "entrusted with justice." He is also said to be "a spiritual counselor." Other officers who dealt with offenders and acted as judges were known as **mimasakas**.

The court of justice was called **dharmasthana**, and in the days of Guptas and Harsha as **dharmaadhikarana**. Apart from the courts at the capital, which may have been presided

over by the king or the chief judge, judicial assemblies, those furnished with the king's signet ring, must also have existed. Law courts were held in towns and villages and there is also reference to moveable courts which suggest the circuit courts of English law.

The State also maintained jails to lodge the offenders and criminals. Sometimes they were handcuffed. **Bana** informs us that general amnesty was also granted to prisoners on festive occasions. On the birthday of Harsha and later on, at the time of coronation day, when the emperor was marching for digvijaya, the prisoners were said to have been set free.

Referring to the procedure of determining innocence or guilt of an offender, the pilgrim tells us about four ordeals. These four ordeals were by water, by fire, by weighing and by poison.

19.9 Revenue and Finance:

Harsha's liberal patronage to art and culture and his generous distribution of wealth at quinquennial assemblies held at Prayaga amply prove that Harsha followed a sound fiscal policy. This does not mean that he accumulated wealth by heavy taxation. This was largely due to his enlightened government.

There are references to three kinds of taxes, viz., **Bhaga**, **Hiranya** and **Bali**. **Bhaga** was the land tax which was paid in kind. We are informed that "the king's tenants paid one sixth of the produce as rent. This share is the same as prescribed by ancient Indian Law-givers. **Hiranya** refers to those taxes which were paid in cash whether by farmer or by merchants. It is difficult to say which particular taxes were implied by the term **Bali**. It appears that ferry tax was in vogue. Taxes on merchandise were governed by the weights and measures. There was forced labour but was paid for. According to **Hieun-Tsang**, the crown lands were divided into four parts. The first part was for carrying out the affairs for the state. The second part was meant for paying the ministers and officers of the crown. The third part was meant for rewarding man of genius. The fourth part was meant for giving alms to religious communities.

The account of the Chinese pilgrims further supplemented by the inscriptions of the period under review. They enlist several other sources of the state revenue levied during the period. They are tulya, meya, bhoga, kara, uparikara, udranga, bhuta, suvarna, adeya and various types of fines imposed on offenders.

19.10 Military Administration:

All sources at our disposal prove that king was the supreme head of the army and as such he always took personal interest in maintaining the army because army was an indispensable institution of the state.

Referring to the composition of the army the Chinese pilgrim tells us, "The army is composed of Foot, Horse, Chariot and Elephant Soldiers." Apparently the Chinese scholar is reproducing the theoretical list, for chariots were out of use even in the Gupta times. **Bana's** detailed description of royal camps does not make any reference to chariots. When inspecting his army, the king is said to have been riding an elephant. Harsha himself refers to the three limbs of the army in his dramas. They are "the irresistible forces of many elephants, horses and foot soldiers" (anekagajaturagapadaitidurvisahabala). Harsha's forces, however, did include boats, a fact that has surprisingly escaped general notice. Both the **Banskhera** and **Madhu-ban** inscriptions open with a reference to the 'great camp of victory (containing) boats, elephants and horses.'

Hieun – Tsang is our informant on the method of military recruitment. In his general account of India, he states that the men of valour were selected to be warriors. The profession was hereditary so that they had been able to exhaust the art of war. When they were garrisoned, they guarded the palaces, when there was war, they acted as a brave vanguard.

It is apparent that the general practice was to maintain a large standing army. It rendered multiple services during both peace and war. The sentinel at the palace, the royal stables' officer, the member of an armed guard keeping watch over a frontier post, the mace bearer cleaning the way for the king's mount in the military procession, the soldier on horse, foot, or elephant, all were members of the royal army. In addition to soldiers who were recruited to expand the forces in event of war, the feudatories were expected to rally to their suzerain's help with their own armies. There was no conscription. The appropriate number of men was invited to join the army by promise of a reward or a certain salary. Harsha's army appears to have steadily increased with the passage of time.

According to Hieun-Tsang, with '5000 elephant soldiers, 20,000 cavalry and 50,000 foot soldiers,' he subdued the five Indias in six years. 'Having thus enlarged his territory, he increased his forces; he had 60,000 elephant soldiers and 1, 00,000 cavalry.'

The elephants were trained to create havoc in the adversary's camp by ramming, crushing soldiers in their trunks and calculating going amok. It seems that Harsha employed all possible means to acquire elephants. They arrived as presents, as revenue, as booty, as fines, as circus beasts, as new acquisitions from the forests etc. The list of officers employed in the elephant stables is a long one and is yet another indication of the importance attached to the elephant corps in Harsha's time. The chief **mahouts** were known as **mahamatras** and are depicted as training the elephants in various manoeuvres. There is reference to elephant doctors styled as **ibha – bhishag-varna**. Certain officers of the elephant corps were called '**Pilu – Pati**' or elephant masters. Their seniors were known as **mahapilupati Gajasadhanadhikrita** was the 'Commandant of the whole elephant troops.'

Harsha's cavalry received careful attention. Pedigree horse were imported from **Vanayu**(Waziristau), **Aratta** (Punjab), **Kamboja**(Pamir region), **Sindhu – desha** (Sindh – Doab), and **Persia**. **Bana** mentions horses of six different colours in the king's stables. The **tangana** type, famous for their smooth and steady gait, are believed to have been obtained from northern **Gadhwal**. **Brihadasvavara** is introduced to us as 'a chief officer of the cavalry.' It appears that he was also known as **ashvapati or ashvapala**.

The **Kramelaka - Kulaih** or herds of camels, translated by Cowell and Thomas as "troops of camels" are taken by R.S. Tripathi as a possible reference to a fighting wing of the army, but a later mention makes it clear that the animals were used as beasts of burden like oxen and asses.

A description of the infantry is given in the Chinese pilgrim's general account of India. According to him:

They are light and fierce, only the brave are selected for it. They bear a big shield and hold a long spear. Sometimes they carry sabras and swords and dash to the front of the formation. All the weapons are very sharp and pointed. They are expert in the use of spears, shields, bows, arrows, sabras, swords, battle axes, lances, halberds, long javelins and various kinds of slings, having drilled in them for generations (Hsi-Yu-Chi).

Though the king was the supreme Commander of all armed forces but for day to day military administration, he appointed an army chief known as **Senapati**. The latter enjoyed great respect at the royal court and only a man of great military vision and one who was well-versed in the art of war and other allied matters was appointed on this high

military officer of the state. The **Senapati** was not only the head of the armed forces but he led the forces in active military operations.

Under the **Senapati** were several military commanders. Next to the Senapati was the army commander, **mahabaladhikrita** must have been in charge of a particular corp. **Baladhikrita** must have been a commander under **mahabaladhikrita**. **Bana** gives us an impression that he was chief of the **Barrack Superintendents (patipati)**.

19.11 Conclusion :

Harsha was a great conqueror and this is proved by the vast territory brought by him under his control. He was an ideal ruler. **Hieun-Tsang** tells us that “he was indefatigable and forgot sleep and food in his devotion to good works.” Harsha devoted all his time to promote the welfare of his people. He had no equal in generosity and charity.

The view of **Dr. D. Devahuti** is that Harsha was ambitious, industrious and tireless soldier though a benevolent conqueror, a moderately good administrator, but no great innovator of policies and fond of pomp and show. On the whole, he forms a combination of strength from authority, mellowness from his catholic religious beliefs and sensitivity from his love of literature and art, he must have had a poised personality. He further says that Harsha cannot be classed amongst India’s greatest monarchs. He may, however, be regarded as one of the lesser among her great kings.

19.12 Suggested Readings :

- (1) Dr. Bajinath Sharma – **Harsha And His Times.**
- (2) D. Devahuti – **Harsa, a Political Study.**
- (3) R.C. Majumdar – **Ancient India.**
- (4) History and Culture of the Indian People Vol. III **The Classical age.**

19.13 Possible Questions :

- (1) Discuss Harsha as an administrator.
- (2) Write a note on Harsha’s administration.
- (3) Describe Harsha’s administration.
- (4) Discuss various aspects of Harsha’s administration.
- (5) Write a critical note on Harsha’s administration.

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