

## **PREFACE**

With its grounding in the “guiding pillars of Access, Equity, Equality, Affordability and Accountability,” the New Education Policy (NEP 2020) envisions flexible curricular structures and creative combinations for studies across disciplines. Accordingly, the UGC has revised the CBCS with a new Curriculum and Credit Framework for Undergraduate Programmes (CCFUP) to further empower the flexible choice based credit system with a multidisciplinary approach and multiple/ lateral entry-exit options. It is held that this entire exercise shall leverage the potential of higher education in three-fold ways – learner’s personal enlightenment; her/his constructive public engagement; productive social contribution. Cumulatively therefore, all academic endeavours taken up under the NEP 2020 framework are aimed at synergising individual attainments towards the enhancement of our national goals.

In this epochal moment of a paradigmatic transformation in the higher education scenario, the role of an Open University is crucial, not just in terms of improving the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) but also in upholding the qualitative parameters. It is time to acknowledge that the implementation of the National Higher Education Qualifications Framework (NHEQF), National Credit Framework (NCrF) and its syncing with the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) are best optimised in the arena of Open and Distance Learning that is truly seamless in its horizons. As one of the largest Open Universities in Eastern India that has been accredited with ‘A’ grade by NAAC in 2021, has ranked second among Open Universities in the NIRF in 2024, and attained the much required UGC 12B status, Netaji Subhas Open University is committed to both quantity and quality in its mission to spread higher education. It was therefore imperative upon us to embrace NEP 2020, bring in dynamic revisions to our Undergraduate syllabi, and formulate these Self Learning Materials anew. Our new offering is synchronised with the CCFUP in integrating domain specific knowledge with multidisciplinary fields, honing of skills that are relevant to each domain, enhancement of abilities, and of course deep-diving into Indian Knowledge Systems.

Self Learning Materials (SLM’s) are the mainstay of Student Support Services (SSS) of an Open University. It is with a futuristic thought that we now offer our learners the choice of print or e-slm’s. From our mandate of offering quality higher education in the mother tongue, and from the logistic viewpoint of balancing scholastic needs, we strive to bring out learning materials in Bengali and English. All our faculty members are constantly engaged in this academic exercise that combines subject specific academic research with educational pedagogy. We are privileged in that the expertise of academics across institutions on a national level also comes together to augment our own faculty strength in developing these learning materials. We look forward to proactive feedback from all stakeholders whose participatory zeal in the teaching-learning process based on these study materials will enable us to only get better. On the whole it has been a very challenging task, and I congratulate everyone in the preparation of these SLM’s.

I wish the venture all success.

**Professor Indrajit Lahiri**  
Vice-Chancellor

# NETAJI SUBHAS OPEN UNIVERSITY

Four Year Undergraduate Degree Programme Under National Higher  
Education Qualifications Framework (NHEQF) & Curriculum and Credit  
Framework for Undergraduate Programmes

Bachelor of Arts (Honours): History

Programme Code: NHI

Course Type: Discipline Specific Core (DSC)

Course Title: HISTORY OF INDIA II

Course Code: 6CC-HI-03

First Print: March, 2025

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Printed in accordance with the regulations of the University Grant Commission –  
Distance Education Bureau

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**Course Code: 6CC-HI-03**  
**: Board of Studies :**

**Barnana Guha Thakurta (Banerjee)**  
*Director, School of Social Science, NSOU*

**Ritu Mathur Mitra**  
*Professor of History, NSOU*

**Sabyasachi Chatterjee**  
*Professor of History,  
University of Kalyani*

**Manosanta Biswas**  
*Professor of History  
Purulia*

**Chandan Basu**  
*Professor of History and Chairperson,  
BoS, NSOU*

**Amal Das**  
*Professor of History (Former),  
University of Kalyani*

**Mahua Sarkar**  
*Professor of History (Former),  
Jadavpur University*

**Rup Kumar Barman**  
*Vice-Chancellor, Bankura University*

**Biswajit Brahmachari**  
*Associate Professor of History  
Shyamsundar College*

**: Course Writer :**

**: Course Editor :**

**Unit 1-3 :** **Nilanjana Mukherjee**  
*Research Fellow (Former)  
The Asiatic Society*

**Unit 4-5 :** **Soumita Mallick**  
*Assistant Professor of History  
Hingalganj Mahavidyalaya*

**Unit 6-11 :** **Souvik Dasgupta**  
*Research Fellow, Department of History  
The Presidency University*

**Unit 12-20 :** **Nilanjana Mukherjee**  
*Research Fellow (Former)  
The Asiatic Society*

**Ritu Mathur Mitra**  
*Professor of History  
NSOU*

**: Format Editing :**

**Ritu Mathur Mitra**

*Professor of History, NSOU*

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*Registrar (Additional Charge)*



# Netaji Subhas Open University

## Under Graduate Degree Programme

### Course : History of India - II

### Course Code : 6CC-HI-03

<b>Block I : Changing Political Formations (circa 300 BCE to CE 300)</b>	<b>7-40</b>
<b>Unit 01</b> □ The Mauryan Empire	7-22
<b>Unit 02</b> □ Post-Mauryan polities with special reference to Kushanas and Satavahana; Gana-Sanghas	23-40
<b>Block II : Towards Early Medieval India (circa 4th century CE - 750CE)</b>	<b>41-128</b>
<b>Unit 03</b> □ Agrarian expansion : land grants and changing production relation	41-52
<b>Unit 04</b> □ Graded land rights and peasantry	53-63
<b>Unit 05</b> □ The problem of urban decline : patterns of trade, currency and urban settlements.	64-79
<b>Unit 06</b> □ Varna and proliferation of jatis.	80-91
<b>Unit 07</b> □ The Nature of Polities : The Gupta Empire (275-500 CE.)	92-112
<b>Unit 08</b> □ Post Gupta polities - Pallavas, Chalukyas, Bardhanas and Pushyabhutis.	113-128

<b>Block III : Religion, Philosophy and society</b> <b>(c. 300 BCE -750CE)</b>	<b>129-159</b>
<b>Unit 09</b> □ Consolidation of the Brahmanical tradition : Dharma, Varnasrama, Purusharthas, Samskaras.	129-140
<b>Unit 10</b> □ Theistic cults (from circa second century B. C.) : Mahayana; the Puranic tradition.	141-150
<b>Unit 11</b> □ The beginnings of Tantricism.	151-159
<b>Block IV : Cultural Developments</b> <b>(c. 300 BCE - 750CE)</b>	<b>160-209</b>
<b>Unit 12</b> □ A brief survey of Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit and Tamil Literature.	160-168
<b>Unit 13</b> □ Scientific and technical treatises	169-177
<b>Unit 14</b> □ Art and architecture and forms and patronage : Maurya period.	178-185
<b>Unit 15</b> □ Art and architecture and forms and patronage : Post- Mauryan Period	186-193
<b>Unit 16</b> □ Art and architecture and forms and patronage : Gupta Period	194-201
<b>Unit 17</b> □ Art and architecture and forms and patronage : Post-Gupta Period	202-209

## **Block I : Changing political formations (C. 300 BCE to CE 300)**

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### **Unit 1 □ The Mauryan Empire**

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#### **Structure**

- 1.0 Objective**
- 1.1 Introduction**
- 1.2 Sources**
- 1.3 Kautilya's Arthashastra**
- 1.4 Megasthenes' Indica**
- 1.5 Buddhist text**
- 1.6 Ashokan Edict**
- 1.7 Art and Architecture**
- 1.8 Origin of The Mauryas**
- 1.9 Foundation**
- 1.10 Chandragupta Maurya**
- 1.11 Bindusara**
- 1.12 King Ashoka**
- 1.13 Early Life of The King**
- 1.14 Accession**
- 1.15 Kalinga War**
- 1.16 Dhamma of Ashoka**
- 1.17 Successors of Ashoka**
- 1.18 The causes for the decline of the Mauryan Empire**
- 1.19 The Maurya Administration**
  - 1.19.1 Central Administration**
    - 1.19.1.2 The King**
    - 1.19.1.3 Ministers**
    - 1.19.1.4 Military Organisation**

**1.19.1.5 Secret Agent****1.19.1.6 Revenue System****1.19.1.7 Important Officials Of The Central Government****1.20 Conclusion : Provincial Administration****1.21 Model Questions****1.22 Suggested Readings**

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**1.0 Objective**

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- The objective of this unit is to give an overall conception about the Maurya empire among the learners.
- The historical source of the Maurya empire will be elaborated here.
- Learners are able to understand the nature's and speciality of Ashok's Dhamma from this present unit.
- The brief account the administrative system of Maurya empire will be discussed here.
- The factors behind the fall of this empire also will be elaborated in this unit

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**1.1 Introduction**

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More than 2500 years ago, what is now known as India was not a single entity, it consisted of several small kingdoms, mainly in north India. It is then that a dynasty rose to power from the Ganga valley (actually Magadha, now in South Bihar) and expanded the kingdom into an Empire conquering land right from Afghanistan to Karnataka and Kathiawar to Odisha. This is the Maurya Empire (c. 323-185 BCE), which had a short life as a political power controlling so large a territory.

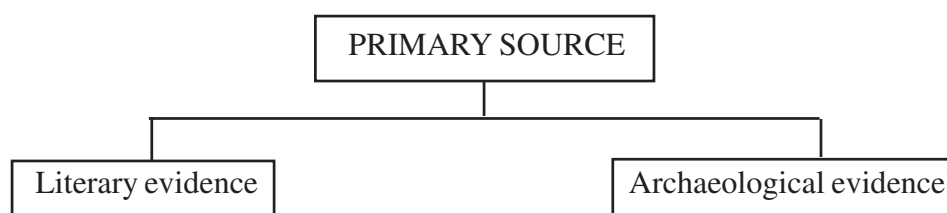
The Nanda dynasty was overthrown by Chandragupta Maurya at Magadha in 321 BC and with this, Mauryan Empire came to power. There were three great rulers in this dynasty. Chandragupta Maurya (c. 325-300 BCE), Bindusara (300-275 BCE) and Ashoka (273-231 BCE). Greater parts of the subcontinent came under the domination of a single paramount power, for the first time in the history of India.

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**1.2 Sources**

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Our major factor enabling historians to probe into the history of this period is the availability of greater number and more diverse type of primary sources than those from the previous ages. The discovery of some new source materials and enquiries into the known evidence has led to fresh assessments of the period, resulting in a rich historiography of the Maurya Empire. There are various sources through which we came to know about this Empire. For our better understanding we can divide our major sources in a diagram.



- |                                  |                                      |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Kautilya's Arthashastra       | 1) Ashokan Edict                     |
| 2. Megasthenes' Indica           | 2) Inscription of Mauryan period     |
| 3. Vishakhadatta's Mudrarakshasa | 3) Coins and archaeological findings |
| 4. Buddhist and Jain Literature  | 4) Visual art of this period         |
| 5. Purana                        | (art and architecture, sculpture)    |
| 6. Greek and Roman work          |                                      |

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### 1.3 Kautilya's Arthashastra

It is a treatise on statecraft and ascribed to Kautilya, also known by the name of Chanakya and Vishnugupta. This text is recognized for its content on diplomacy approach towards statecraft and efficient financial matters. Kautilya's work consists of 15 books (Adhikaranas). The first five deals with internal administration (tantra), the next eight with inter-state relations (avapa), and the last two with miscellaneous topics. The dating of the Arthashastra is a controversial topic and its dating to fourth-third century BC has been debated. A statistical enquiry into this by Trautmann and he establishes that the text took its present shape not earlier than AD first or second century and that it was perhaps not the product of a single author. Hence, it entirely could not be accepted as a source material for the Mauryan period but the earliest portion of the text, namely the Adhyakshaprachara section has been assigned by Trautmann to third century BC. Thus, at least this portion is contemporary to the Maurya times and can be used as a primary material for the study of the period.

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### 1.4 Megasthenes' Indica

The Maurya period saw a steady expansion of trade with the western world and the exchange of emissaries between Maurya and Hellenistic kings. It is hence not surprising that Graeco-Roman accounts mention kings Sandrocottus (Chandragupta) and Amitrochates (Amitraghata, Bindusara), and their capital Palimbothra (Paraliputra). Megasthenes was the representative of Seleucus Nikator at the court of Sibyrtios, governor of Arachosia (Kandahar). Megasthenes wrote a book called the Indica based on his travels and experience in India. The book has not survived, but fragments are preserved in later Greek and Latin works, the earliest and most

important of which are those Diodorus(second half of the 1st century BCE, name of his book-Bibliotheca Historica), Strabo(about 63BCE, name of his work-Geography),Flavius Arrianus(96-180 CE, he wrote- Anabasis)and Pliny(23-79 CE,his book-Naturalis Historia).However, the summaries and quotation from Indica by later weiters are not uniform.But for the reconstruction of the history of mauryan society such quotes and summaeies od Megasthenes' Indica have been used by scholars, so it is very important literary source of Mauryan Empire.

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### **1.5 Buddhist text**

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Divyavadana and the ashokavadana and Sri Lankans Buddhist chronicles, the Mahavamsa and the Dipavamsa, speak of the Maurya rulers, especially Ashoka. These texts tend to portray the transformation of the cruel Ashoka (chandashoka) to the righteous Ashoka (dharmashoka) after he had embraced Buddhism.

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### **1.6 Ashokan Edict**

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There are various archaeological sources belonging to the Maurya period, among these the most significant are undoubtedly inscription of Ashoka. Most of these Ashokan records called 'EDICT', thereby differentiated from ordinary inscriptions. Most of his record are promulgations, something analogous to an ordinance, and therefore are labelled as edicts. Asokan edicts are unique in Indian epigraphy tradition because Asoka issued his instructions therein first person, directly addressing his subjects. Ashoka mostly used Prakrit language and Brahmi script to record his messages. However, he used Kharoshti script for inscribing records in what is the north-western frontiers of the subcontinent. He also employed Greek and Aramaic , both non-Indian language,for inscribing his record in some parts of Afghanistan. A bilingual Greek-Aramaic inscription was found at Shar-i-Kuna near Kandahar. As and when one places the findspots of Ashokan inscriptions on a map of the subcontinent, it becomes clear that his Empire embraced a vast land. It spread from Afghanistan in the north-west to Kalinga in the east; in the north it extended from the present Hazara district of Pakistan to Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh in the south.He issued different types of inscriptions: in his words,long,short and medium size. His inscriptions are engraved on rocks and stone pillars. There is a distinct pattern of issuing these records. On the borders of his empire he decided to engrave the Maior Rock Edicts. Ashoka decided to engrave Pillar edicts in the Ganga basin forming the heartland of his Empire. In contrast to these two patterns, the Minor Rock Edicts were not meant for any specific area; therefore, they were engraved throughout the imperial domain.

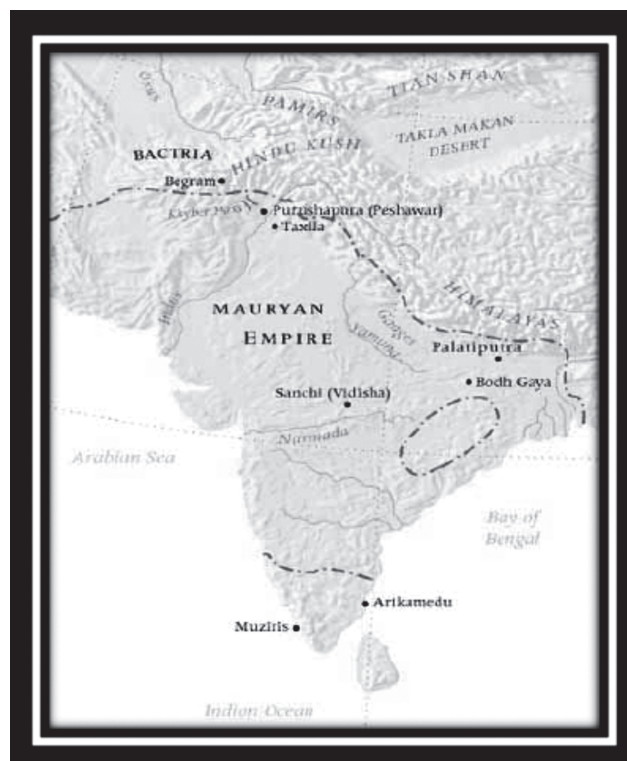
### Major Categories of Edict

- 1) Major rock edict (14 in number)
- 2) Minor rock edict (two patterns are available and till Now as many as 17 sites have yielded Ashoka's Minor edicts)
- 3) Pillar edicts (7 in number)

### LIST OF THE NAME OF SOME IMPORTANT PLACES FROM WHERE WE GET ASHOKAN EDICT

North	North-West	South	South	East West
Kalsi(u.p)	Taxila Maski	Erragudi	Dhauli Girnar	Jaugada
Delhi-Topra	Kandahar	Gavimath	Amaravati	Sopara
Delhi-Meerut	Mansehra	Rupnath	Siddapura	
Allahabad	Shahbazgari	Brahmagiri	Udegolam	
Lauria-Araraj		Jatinga-Rameshwar	Palkigundu	
Lauria-Nandangarh		Nittur	Sannathi	

### MAP OF THE MAURYAN EMPIRE



### MINOR-ROCK EDICT AT MASKI



#### 1.7 Art and Architecture

The Mauryas made a remarkable contribution to art and architecture. And these are very important source for reconstructing the history of Maurya. The discovery at the site of Dholavira indicates that the origins of monumental stone sculpture and architecture in the Indian subcontinent go back to the Harappan civilization. However, after the decline of that civilization, there is a long gap, and it is only in the Maurya period that monumental stone sculpture and architecture appear on the scene again. This can be linked to higher levels of political complexity in the form of the emergence of an empire, the concentration of wealth on the wealth in the hands of urban elites, and increased institutionalization of religious activity. The art of the Maurya period is not 'art for art's sake, but art linked to political ideology and religious practice. This is evident both in the form and patronage of artistic activity.

The magnificence of architecture can be seen in the excavated remains of the Mauryan royal palace at Kumrahar near Patna. Megasthenes describes about a palace at Palibothra (Pataliputra). According to him the splendour and magnificence of the palace was better than the palaces of Susa and Ekbatana. During Ashoka , stupas became an emblem of the Buddha's Dhamma and an important part of Monasteries. It was a hemispherical structure made out of either brick or stone. Stone railing was put around the base and sometimes had elaborate gateways of toranas. Ashoka has been credited with the construction of 84,000 stupas. The famous stupas of the time are at Bharhut. Sanchi and Amaravati.

Mauryan period was the beginning for the cave architecture. There are six rock-cut caves of this time which are mainly in the Barabar and Nagarjuni hills to the north of Bodh Gaya. The three caves of Barabar hills have been dedicated to Ajivika sect for their shelter during rainy season.

Ashokan pillars are majestic and free-standing. These pillars are monolithic, carved out of single piece of stone and inscribed as well as uninscribed. These are made of sandstone from Chunar and are highly polished.

The most of the human sculptures during the Mauryan period is of the Didarganj yakshi. This is a sculpture of an enhancing female figure found from Patna. Rock-cut elephant at Dhauli is artistically beautiful as it seems that the elephant is walking with his right front leg little tilted and left one slightly bent while the heavy trunk curls inwards.

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### **1.8 Origin Of The Mauryas**

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The ancestry of the first Maurya Emperor, Chandragupta, is shrouded in mystery. Because, Different literary sources give different account of the origin of Mauryas. The earliest accounts of the Mauryas is derived from the ancient Buddhist text, Mahaparinirvana sutta. In Buddhist text such as the Digha Nikaya, Mahavamsa and Divyavadana, the Mauryas are Described as belonging to a Kshatriya clan called the Moriyas, who ruled at Pippalivana. he Parishishtaparvan, on the other hand describes Chandragupta as the son of the daughter of a chief of a village of peacock tamers ( mayura-poshaka). The Mudrarakshasa refers to Chandragupta as being of low social origin .The early medieval writers Kshemendra and Somadeva call him Purva-Nanda-suta(son of genuine Nanda). Dhundiraja , a commentator of the Vishnu Purana , states that Chandragupta was the eldest son of Maurya, by Mura, daughter of a vishala (hunter).

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### **1.9 Foundation**

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The Mauryan empire was built on the foundation laid by the Nandas. The first three rulers of the dynasty were Chandragupta(324/321-297), Bindusara(297-273) and Ashoka(268-232 BCE). The rule of the Mauryas continued till 187 BCE.

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### **1.10 Chandragupta Maurya**

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Chandragupta Maurya , known as Sandrakottos to the greek was the founder of the Maurya dynasty, and is credited with the setting up of the first pan-indian empire. Aided by his mentor and later minister Chanakya or Kaitilya. He expanded the territories of his empire. The territories west of the Indus were ruled by

the Greek king Seleucos. He wanted to recover the Greek conquest in India. He crossed the Indus in 305 BCE and hoped to march victoriously through the Punjab. Chandragupta obtained the territories of Arachosia (Kandahar area of south-east of Afghanistan), Gedrosia (south Baluchistan), and Paropamisadae (area between Afghanistan and the Indian subcontinent) and handed over 500 elephants in return. It is not certain whether a matrimonial alliance was concluded or whether the treaty recognized more general right of inter-marriage between the Greek and the Indians.

The only definite inscriptional reference to Chandragupta is in 2nd century CE Junagarh inscription of Rudradaman, which attributes the beginning of the construction of a water reservoir known as the Sudarshana lake to Chandragupta's reign. Inscriptions and Jain texts suggest a connection between Chandragupta, Jainism and Karnataka. Jain tradition speaks about the relationship between king Chandragupta and Jain saint Bhadrabahu. The King is also described as having committed Sallekhana (ritual death by starvation). These connections suggested Chandragupta's presence in Trans-Vindhya region. By the time Ashoka, the Maurya empire had extended into the Karnataka region; it is very likely that the major conquest had been made by Chandragupta. So it seems that Chandragupta was the chief architect of the huge Maurya empire.

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### 1.11 Bindusara

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Chandragupta was succeeded by his son Bindusara. Who ruled between 297 and 273 BCE. Very little is known of him from sources. According to Jain tradition, Chandragupta abdicated the throne in favour of his son Simhasena. The Mahabhasya refers to Chandragupta's successor as Amitraghata, while the Greek accounts call him Antiochus or Allitrochates. Buddhist accounts are silent about Bindusara. Greek sources refer to his diplomatic relations with western kings. According to Strabo, Antiochus, King of Syria, sent an ambassador named Deimachus to Bindusara's court. Bindusara requested Antiochus to buy and send him some sweet wine, dried figs, and a sophist (a philosopher who specialized in philosophical debate and argumentation). Antiochus replied that he would certainly send it. Bindusara died at 273 BCE.

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### 1.12 King Ashoka

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The reign of Ashoka constitutes one of the brightest chapters in the history of mankind. After serving as Viceroy in Ujjain and Taxila, Ashoka succeeded Bindusara to the Mauryan throne. Ashoka's reign spans for nearly four decades (273-232 BCE). The most important evidence of his reign comes in the form of his own lithic record. In the Puranas Ashoka is referred to as Ashokavardhana,

but in edicts, Ashoka is systematically styled Devanampiya and Priyaddarshi. Even few years' back scholars did not know, king Ashoka and Devanampiya is the same person. The problem was resolved when the Minor Rock Edict discovered from Maski in Karnataka) clearly bore the name of Ashoka along with the usual epithets Devanampiya Piyadasi Raja. Besides the MRE from Maski, the MREs from Gujra (in M.P), Nittur and Udegolam, discovered in recent decades, also mention the personal name Ashoka.

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### **1.13 Early Life Of The King**

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We get a number of stories about Ashoka's early life from Buddhist text. The Ashokavadana states that Ashoka's mother was a queen named Subhadrangi, daughter of a Brahmana of Champa. The Divyavadana tells a similar story, but in one version, gives the name of the queen as Janapadakalyani. The Dipavamsa and Mahavamsa tell the love story of Ashoka and Devi, daughter of merchant of Vidisha who was the mother of Ashoka's celebrated children, Mahinda and Sanghamitta.

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### **1.14 Accession**

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The first problem with the accession of Ashoka is the year of his coronation. This problem is linked to an interval of four years between the death of Bindusara and the accession of Ashoka. On the basis of Sri Lankan chronicles some scholars have explained this interval on account of a war of succession between Ashoka and his 100 brothers. The Sri Lankan chronicle Mahavamsa says that he seized the throne by killing 99 of his brothers and sparing only the youngest namely Tishya. We cannot draw a conclusion from various legends, but it is true that definitely there was some internal problems that is why Buddhist legends speak of his accession to the throne in 273 BCE, but his formal coronation took place four years later, in 269 BCE.

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### **1.15 Kalinga War**

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The four-decade long reign of Ashoka witnessed only one military campaign and conquest, that of Kalinga. The Rock Edict XIII tells us about Ashoka's victory over Kalinga. He defeated and conquest Kalinga when eight years had passed since his coronation. The conquest therefore took place in his thirteenth regnal year, 261 BCE. Ashoka himself admits that Kalinga conquest was associated with terrible bloodbath and violence. The massacre perpetrated during the Kalinga war left deep impressions on him. And he is said to have embraced Buddhism soon after the Kalinga war and his was followed by his promulgation of the Law of Piety (Dhamma). Inscription indicates that he embraced Buddhism after perpetrating the violence in the Kalinga but Buddhist texts of later times connect

his conversion to Buddhism on account of his killing many brothers. There is clear divergence between two sets of sources. But the most significant changes in Mauryan polity since the victories Kalinga war was the official replacement of the sound of the war-drum(bherighosha) with the sound of Dhamma(Dhammaghosha). Right from the days of Bimbisara in the late sixth century BC till the Kalinga conquest in 261 BCE Mahadha's rise to political paramountcy in the subcontinent was largely the outcome of pursuing the policy of military conquest and annexation of vanquished areas. The Kalinga conquest by Ashoka saw the culmination of this process.

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### **1.16 Dhamma of Ashoka**

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Ashoka was possibly the first ruler to have realized the need of an ideology for ensuring coalescence in the empire. This is evident in his idea and propagation of what he called Dhamma. This is a subject which has received sustained attention of historians commenting on the nature and dissemination of Dhamma. Dhamma was indeed the central theme of the edicts issued by Ashoka. The Prakrit term Dhamma is the same as Sanskrit 'Dharma' which is popularly, but not accurately, translated as religion. Though, the term Dhamma is popularly considered as the religious convictions of the Mauryan king Ashoka which developed after the Kalinga war. It is often equated with Buddhism by the scholars like R.C.Majumdar, Haraprasad Shastri and others. But recent scholarship however examines the nature of Ashokan Dhamma primarily in the light of his edicts as contemporary records dealing with his understanding of Dhamma. He did not clearly define what Dhamma was but spoke of several features of Dhamma in his edicts. The major themes are-

- 1) The theme of Ahimsa
- 2) The good conduct and social responsibilities
- 3) The generation of mutual respect and concord among people belonging to different sects or religious communities.
- 4) Welfare of his people

These themes are obviously important parts of Buddhism but question is that, here dhamma of Ashoka and personal religious faith of Ashoka that is Buddhism, both are same or not. New research on Aramaic and Greek edicts of Ashoka give us a clear answer of this question. Dhamma in his Prakrit edicts is called Eusebia in Greek, meaning Piety. The Aramaic edicts mention Data and Qsyth (as synonyms of Dhamma), denoting Law and Truth respectively. In the retranslation of the term Dhamma in Aramaic and Greek, no association with Buddhism is indicated. B.N.Mukherjee's studies in these edicts demonstrate that Ashoka had no intention

of equating Dhamma with Buddhism, his personal faith. In fact Ashoka does not attach any sectarian approach to Dhamma. That why he lays down on his subjects to show honour and seemly behaviour to Brahmanas and Shramanas alike. Ashoka donated cave-dwelling to Ajivikas monks.

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### **1.17 Successors of Ashoka**

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An impenetrable obscurity settles on the Mauryan Empire after the reign of Ashoka. The certainty is that the great empire founded by Chandragupta and extended and maintained in all its splendour by his son and grandson did not long survive in its integrity. Perhaps after the death of Ashoka in 233-32 B.C., the empire was divided into eastern and western parts. The Puranas state that altogether nine Mauryan rulers ruled for 37 (B.C.324-185) years. Dasaratha is mentioned in the Purana list but is ignored by Jaina and Buddhist accounts. Dasaratha is, however the only name borne out by epigraphy. Three inscriptions relate his bestowing on the Ajivikas caves in the Nagarjuni Hills (near Barabar) immediately after his coronation. The Buddhist tradition mention Samprati and According to Puranas, Salisuka succeeded Samprati. But most the account has mentioned Brihadratha as a last king of Maurya dynasty and Brihadratha was overthrown and killed by the Maurya Commander-in-Chief Pusyamitra Sunga. The fall of Brihadratha must be taken to mark the end of the Mauryan Empire in 185-184 B.C.

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### **1.18 The causes for the decline of the mauryan empire**

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Since the Maurya Empire was the first subcontinent empire, all its aspects have attracted scholarly attention, including its decline. The decline was completed within half a century after the death of Ashoka. The reasons given by historians for such a rapid decline are as conflicting as they are confusing. Some of the very obvious and other controversial causes for the decline of the Mauryan Empire are discussed as follows

- 1) The Partition of the Mauryan Empire**
- 2) Weak later- Mauryan Rulers**
- 3) Ashoka's Responsibility for the Decline-** Many scholars has accused Ashoka as being directly responsible for the decline of the Mauryan Empire.H.C.Raychaudhuri maintains that Ashoka's pacifist policies were responsible for undermining the strength of the empire.  
Haraprasad Sastri suggested that Pushyamitra Shunga's coup represented a Brahmanical revolution, instigated by the anti-Brahmanas policies of Ashoka the patronage extended to the heterodox sects by the Mauryas.

- 4) Pressure on Mauryan Economy-** D.D.Kosambi has expressed the opinion that there was considerable pressure on Mauryan economy under the later Mauryas. This view is based on the increase of taxes and debasement of later Mauryan punch-marked coins.

**5) Highly Centralized Administration**

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**1.19 The Maurya Administration**

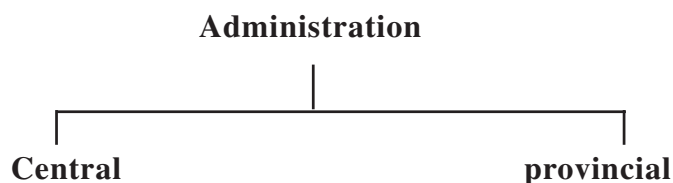
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The Mauryan rulers are famous for carving out a vast empire by military conquests and the annexation of conquered areas. And an efficient administrative system, which helped the political integration of the Maurya empire. The mobilization of resources by an efficient revenue system from dispersed zones is also one of the prerequisites of the making of an imperial administration. The popular view is that the Mauryas established a unitary and highly centralized administrative structure. Recent enquiries into available sources and especially, the discovery of new edicts of Ashoka, have brought in significant shifts in the historiography of the Maurya state. Magadha was projected as the most significant unit of the empire. Romila Thapar therefore cogently perceives Magadha as the metropolitan state in the Mauryan Empire. Thapar further argues that the erstwhile incorporated in the Maurya realm, became the core areas of the empire. And the places far away from the metropolitan state and the Ganga valley were the peripheral areas like the north-western borderland of the subcontinent and the peninsular tracts. The composition of the Maurya Empire in these three zones suggests, according to Thapar, a complex system of administration.

**Three zones- 1) Metropolitan State- Magadha**

**2) Core Area- Apart from Magadha and peripheral areas**

**3) Peripheral Zone- North-western borderland area**




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**1.19.1 Central Administration**

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**1.19.1.2 The King**

The Maurya emperor was of course the pivotal figure in the statecraft. We have already indicated that the Maurya rulers assumed the simple title of Raja; instead

of grand titles like maharajadhiraja, bhopati, chakravarti. The emperor himself stove hard to supervise administration is eloquently described by Megasthenes who wrote about the hectic daily schedule of the ruler. Megasthenes impresses upon us that Chandragupta attended to the affairs of the realm even when he was relaxing. A close parallel to this was also practised by Ashoka. Ashoka clearly instructed that his messengers (pativedakas) must inform him about any important matter irrespective of whether he was in his inner chamber or in the pleasure garden. He stressed on the need of the communication of information to the ruler, as in former times conveying information regarding state-affairs (athakamma) was not duly performed. This constant and energetic exertion by the ruler is referred to as pakama or prakama by Ashoka and as utthana in the Kautiliya Arthashastra. All the high ranking functionaries of the realm were probably appointed by Ashoka. Megasthenes notes that the Maurya king used to go out of his palace every day to supervise the administration of justice. The metropolitan and core areas of the Maurya realm appear to have been brought under the direct control of the ruler.

### **1.19.1.3 Ministers**

The Maurya administration revolved around a number of very high-ranking functionaries, Kautilya considers that the rulers, however powerful, could not run the administration single-handedly; kingship is possible only with assistance, a single wheel does not move a vehicle. The Arthashastra recommends the appointment of amatyas or high-ranking officers for this purpose. The amatyas are to be selected on the basis of a peculiar type of test deception (upadha). The appointment of an amatya and/or a mantrin rests on the candidate's ability to prove his purity (suddha) in the tests of deception (upadha). Megasthenes, classifying the population of India into seven groups, (1. Sophist or the Philosopher, 2. Cultivator, 3. Hunter, 4. Artisans, 5. Army, 6. Spies, 7. Counsellors) speaks of the last and the seventh one as counsellors and assessors who were small in number, but held the highest positions in the administration. The word parisha in Ashokan edicts is often taken to mean the mantriparisad or a council of ministers. In other words, the word pulisa may more cogently be interpreted as rajapurushas or royal functionaries of high, middle and low ranks. Such an interpretation also corresponds to the Arthashastra ideal of classifying the officers into several grades, their gradation being further underlined by the Kautilya scheme of differentiated salary-scales from 48,000 panas down to 720 panas a year. The highest officers under Ashoka are designated as Mahamatras. There were different types of Mahamatras such as Antamahamatras-in charge of the anta or frontier area, Nagalaviyohalakamahamatras- in charge of the judicial department in the city, Dhammamahamatras-in charge of the Law of Piety, specially created for the propagation of Dhamma.

#### **1.19.1.4 Military Organisation**

The Mauryan Rulers had a large, disciplined and well-organised Army. The Greek accounts credit Sandrocottas with the conquest of the whole of India by a huge army of 600,000 soldiers. The Greek authors impress upon us the large number of soldiers employed by the Mauryas, though the number was clearly exaggerated. Ashoka does not speak of the numerical strength of his army but its striking powers are strongly impressed in his accounts of the victory over Kalinga. The Greek texts suggest that the administration of the army was assigned to six boards, each consisting of five members- total of 30 members. These were according to the Arthashastra- a) Concerning the navy (Navadhyaksha b) concerning the supply of provision for the army with the help of bullock carts( Goadhyaksha c) in charge of infantry(comparable with the patyadhayaksha) d) in charge of the cavalry (comparable with the asvadhyaksha) e) in charge of the chariots (comparable with the rathadhyaksha) f) in charge of the elephant corps (comparable with the hastyadhyaksha).The Arthashastra does not prescribe the administration of the army through committees or boards, but places different units of the armed forces under respective heads of the departments(adhyaksha).

The Mauryas were aware of the importance of elephants as offensive/defensive war machinery, according to Trautmann. The efficacy of the elephant force looms large in the Greek accounts of war between Alexander and Porus. The urge for procuring Indian war-elephant by the Greeks is apparent in the treaty between Seleucus and Chandragupta, who gave 500 war-elephants to Seleucus as per this treaty. Kautilya not only recommended the appointment of the head of elephant force (hastyadhaksha), but also underlined the importance of maintaining specific forests for the rearing of elephants (hastivana)

#### **1.19.1.5 Secret Agent**

Closely associated with the organization of the army was that of the secret service, encountered for the first time in the sources of the Maurya period. According to the Classical texts speak of the overseers, inspectors and spies (episkopoi) who are praised as the most reliable people in the realm. The most elaborate description is available in the Arthashastra. According to this there were two types of secret agent, a) The stationary (sangstha) b) The roving (Sanchara).Kautilya advocated an elaborate network of espionage in which information gathered by the roving (sanchara) agents should be routed through the stationary spies (Sangstha) to the head of the secret service. We don't get the term Sanchara or Sangstha

gudhapurusha rather we find the words Pativedakas - the messengers. They had same role as gudhapurusha.

#### **1.19.1.6 Revenue System**

The Arthashastra repeatedly stresses on the significance of a strong treasury- Kosha. According to these treaties, the collection of revenue is entrusted with a high-ranking officer, the samahartta- collector of revenues. The samahartta should supervise the collection of revenue from the following seven heads: a) Durga b) rashtra c) mines d) setu e) vana, f) vraja g) vanikpatha. The most important sources of revenue come from the agrarian sector. From inscriptional records we get the term- Bhago as share of the agricultural produce.

#### **1.19.1.7 Important Officials Of The Central Government**

**SANNIDHATA** : Head of the royal treasury

**SAMAHARTA** : Responsible for the collection of revenue

**SITADHYAKSHA** : Director of Agriculture

**AKARADHYAKSHA** : Superintendent of Mine

**NAVADHYAKSHA** : Superintendent of Ports

**PANYADHYAKSHA** : Controller of Commerce

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### **1.20 Conclusion : Provincial Administration**

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The extensive Maurya Empire could not be effectively administered only from Pataliputra. The Maurya empire had within it administrative centres at regional levels as demonstrated by Ashokan Edicts. Two separate rock edicts at Dhauili and Jaugada clearly record that there were regional headquarters Ujjayini (in western Madhyapradesh, Takshashila (Taxila in north-west Pakistan) and Tosali (Dhauili near Bhuvaneshwar), each under the charge of a Kumara or a prince of the royal blood. At Suvarnagiri, there was an ayaputa or aryaputra. The aryaputra was also a Maurya prince. Suvarnagiri is generally regarded as the fourth and southern regional headquarters of the empire. So Kumara and Aryaputra both were responsible persons for provincial centres.

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### **1.21 Model Questions**

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1. Write a short note on Administrative system of the Mauryan Empire.
2. What were the major causes of the decline of the Mauryan Empire?

3. Write a short note on importance of the Arthashastra for the reconstruction of the Mauryan Empire.
4. What do you think about the Nature of the Ashokan Dhamma?
5. How far Archaeological Evidence is helpful for the Reconstruction of the Mauryan Empire?

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### 1.22 Suggested Readings

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## **Unit 2 □ Post-Mauryan Polities with special reference to Kushanas and Satavahana; Gana-Sanghas**

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### **Structure**

- 2.0 Objective**
- 2.1 Introduction**
- 2.2 Sources**
- 2.3 Archaeological Source**
  - 2.3.1 Inscription**
  - 2.3.2 Coins**
  - 2.3.3 Archaeological Findings**
- 2.4 Political Situation**
- 2.5 Shunga Dynasty**
- 2.6 The Besnagar Pillar inscription of Heliodorus**
- 2.7 The Indo-Greek Rulers**
  - 2.7.1 Indo-Greek King Menander**
  - 2.7.2 Coin of Menander**
- 2.8 The Shakas**
- 2.9 The Parthians**
- 2.10 The Kushanas**
  - 2.10.1 Political History**
    - 2.10.1.0 Early Ruler**
    - 2.10.1.1 Kanishka**
    - 2.10.1.2 Great Patron of Buddhism**
    - 2.10.1.3 Concept of Devaputra**
    - 2.10.1.4 Distinctive feature of the simultaneous rule of two co-rulers**
    - 2.10.1.5 The successor of Kanishka**
- 2.11 The Satavahana**

- 2.11.1 Introduction**
- 2.11.2 Geographical Location**
- 2.12 Political History**
  - 2.12.1 Early Ruler**
  - 2.12.2 Later Ruler**
  - 2.12.3 Administration**
  - 2.12.4 Administrative division**
- 2.13 Post Mauryan Sculpture**
  - 2.13.1 Gandhara school of Art**
  - 2.13.2 Mathura school of Art**
  - 2.13.3 Amaravati school of Art**
- 2.14 The Gana or Sanghas**
- 2.15 Conclusion**
- 2.16 Model Questions**
- 2.17 Suggested Readings**

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## **2.0 Objective**

- The objective of this present unit is to study different types of sources for constructing history of the Post - Mauryan period.
- Learners are able to understand the political history of Sunga, Indo-Greek, Shakas, Kushans & Satavahanas etc from this unit.
- Learners are able to gather some ideas about the administrative structure of Satavahanas.
- The other objective of this unit is to study about the Post - Mauryan art & sculpture
- The democratic features of Sanghas will be also discussed in this unit

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## **2.1 Introduction**

The period c. 200 BCE-300CE was historically significant from several points of view. This period commonly known as Post-Mauryan Period. The post mauryan period is situated between two celebrated empire, respectively of the Mauryan and the Gupta. The political scenario of what is called the post-Mauryan period in Indian history assumes further complexities as some group of West and Central Asian extractions began to play an important role in the sub continental polity. For instance, the Greek, Shaka(Scythian), Pahlava (Indo-Parthian) and Kushana ruler left their

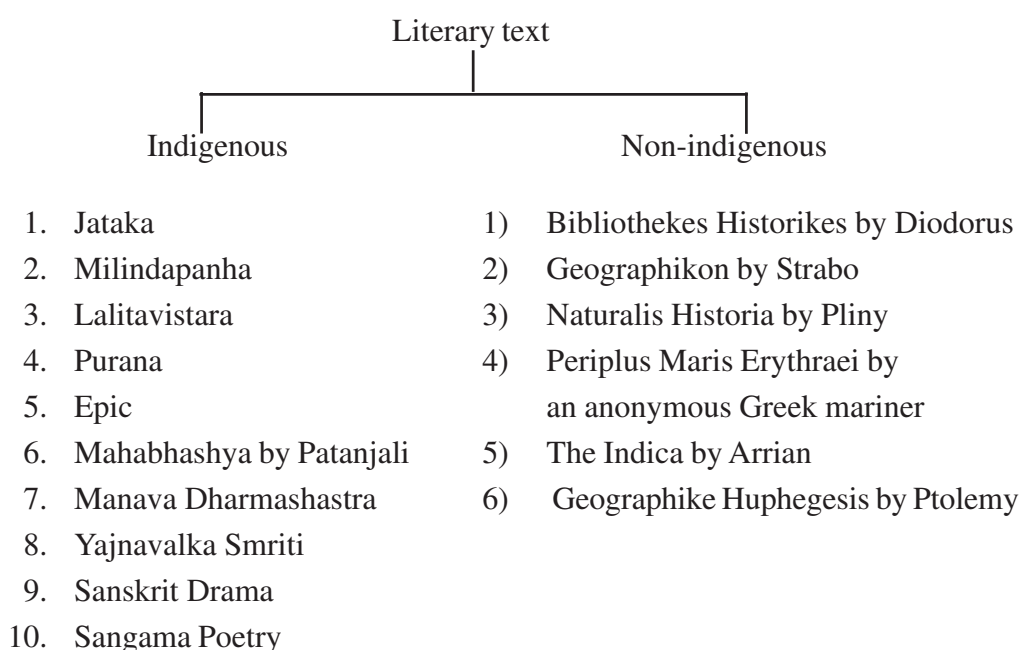
marks in the politics of this phase. In the Deccan, for the first time, monarchical polity emerged and consolidated, due to the rise of the Shatavahana dynasty. The period in the historiography of early India has often been portrayed as a Dark Age or better to say the post-Mauryan phase is presented by many historians as a period of crisis. One possible reason for this gloomy portrayal was the presence of what is perceived as 'foreign' powers on Indian soil. But present scholarly works reveal that this period witnessed unprecedented development in crafts and commerce, and especially experienced far-flung commercial and cultural exchanges. Wide range of sources gives us a picture of development in every aspect of life through interaction. That is why now this period is called **AGE OF INTERACTION AND INNOVATION** instead of DARK AGE.

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## 2.2 Sources

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The sources for the history of these centuries are many and diverse- Inscriptions, Coins,



Field Archaeological Sources and Various type of Literary texts. The last mentioned source includes both indigenous and non-indigenous texts.

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## 2.3 Archaeological Source

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### 2.3.1 Inscription

During the period c.200BCE-300CE, the range, type and number of inscriptions increased dramatically. We get a number of donative inscriptions on a pillar or any parts of stupa in time of post-mauryan phase.

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### 2.3.2 Coins

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The expansion of state politics and the spread of urban centres and trade led to important developments in coinage. The Indo-Greek introduced bilingual and bi-script legends on their coinage. They issued die-struck coins; it is basically a manufacturing technique of coin. Coins of Indo-Greek and Kushana played a significant role in the history of coinage. The Kushana minted large number of gold coins, as well as copper coins of low denomination value.

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### 2.3.3 Archaeological Findings

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The rich range of artefacts, seals, terracotta of fine workmanship, Late NBPW and Post-NBPW levels, Settlement Patterns of this phase reveals a significant expansion of urban centres. In archaeological literature, the cultural levels belonging to these centuries are often labelled 'Shunga-Kushana'.

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## 2.4 Political Situation

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Post-Mauryan period is marked by indigenous and non-indigenous regional power. According to their geographical location we can separate them.

### **NORTH INDIA- SHUNGA**

### **NORTH-WEST- GREEK, SHAKA, PAHLAVAS AND KUSHANA**

### **DECCAN- SATAVAHANA**

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## 2.5 Shunga Dynasty

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According to Bana's Harshacharita, Pushyamitra, the commander-in-chief of the Maurya army, killed the last Maurya king Brihadratha and put an end to the Maurya dynasty in 187 BCE. According to the Puranas, Pushyamitra belonged to the Sunga family. Panini, who is a contemporary writer, traces the Sungas to the Brahman clan of Bharadvaja gotra. Kalidasa in his drama Malavikagnimitra describes Agnimitra, son of Pushyamitra, as a scion of the Baimbika family of the Kashyapa lineage. However, the Sunga origin of Pushyamitra has been generally accepted, Pushyamitra's empire covered only the old Maurya Empire. It included to Buddhist texts Jaladhar and Sakala in the Punjab. Pataliputra was Pushyamitra's capital and all the Sunga Kings ruled from Pataliputra. Malavikagnimitra refers to the conflict between Pushyamitra and Yajnasena, king of Vidarbha (the eastern Maharashtra area) and the victory of the Shungas. The Shungas also clashed with the Bactrian Greek. Grammarian Patanjali refers to the Yavanas coming up to Saketa (in or around Ayodhya in Faizabad district, UP) and Madhyamika (near Chittor in Rajasthan). During this period, Yavana was a general term used in Indian texts for foreigners from the west, including the Greek. Patanjali also mentions sacrifices performed for Pushyamitra. For the reconstruction of history Shunga dynasty our main concern is literary text, but inscription also help us to understand it better. Among those

one of the most important inscriptions is Besnagar Pillar Inscription of Heliodorus. It gives a notion of interaction between greek rulers and shunga dynasty.

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### 2.6 The Besnagar Pillar inscription of Heliodorus

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An inscription of the Shunga period is inscribed on a pillar at Besnagar, the site of ancient Vidisha. The inscription is written in Prakrit language and Brahmi Script. It consists of six lines. According to the matter, the pillar constructed by the Heliodorus, who was ambassador of indo-greek king Antialkidas. (Heliodorus describes himself as a Bhagavata) He came at the court of Kasiputra Bhagabhadra who is identified either as the fifth shunga king Bhadraka or the ninth king Bhagavata. What is interesting is that, Heliodorus, the Greek ambassador, describes himself as a Bhagavata; Worshiper of the god Vasudeva Krishna, and that he set up this pillar in honour of this god. A Besnagar pillar inscription indicates that the Shunga continued the Maurya tradition of entreaining ambassadors from Greek courts.

The Besnagar pillar inscription



## 2.7 The Indo-Greek Rulers

Bactria is the ancient name of the area lying to the south of the Qxus River and north-west of the Hindu Kush mountains, and corresponds to the northern part of modern Afghanistan. Ancient area of Bactria was under Seleucid control. By late third century BC the local Greek satrap Diodotus I overthrew his allegiance to the Seleucid authority and established what is known as the Bactrian Greek kingdom in Bactria with its capital at Bactra (Balk, modern Majr-i-Shariff in Afghanistan). Bactria was ideally in a position to maintain intimate connections- political, commercial and cultural-with Central and West Asia.

During the early years of the second century BC, the Greek rulers of Bactria became ambitious enough to have launched several expeditions who are referred to in the Puranas as Yavana invaders towards the last days of the Maurya rule. Euthydemus or his son Demetrius is generally credited with the beginning of the Yavana incursions into the subcontinent. Presence of Bactrian Greek and Indo-Greek is traced by their own issued coins. Their presence in Indian sub-continent has been proved by using prakrit language and Kharasti script along with greek language and script for legend on their coin. According to B.N. Mukherjee, the coins of the Agathocles, suggest his control over the north-west and Taxila in Gandhara. It is in Agathocles' one type of silver coins, found from the famous excavated site of Ai Khanoum in Afghanistan, that the first iconic representation of Vasudeva Krishna and Sankarshana are seen. The inclusion of the figures of these Indian divinities on the reverse of Greek coins amply demonstrate the occupation of some territories in the north-western part of the subcontinent. But during the power struggle in Bactria (Bactrian king Eucratides rose revolt against Demetrius and he became the master over Bactria) some Greek kings ruled exclusively in the subcontinent, they came to be known as INDO-GREEK.

BACTRIAN GREEK RULER	INDO GREEK RULER
Diodotus	Menander
Antiochus II	Apollodotus
Euthydemus I	Eucratides
Demetrius I	Antialcidas

### 2.7.1 Indo-Greek King Menander

Amongst all the Indo-Greek King Menander was the most illustrious. He ruled for a long time from his capital Sagala, and his coins represent him in all stages of his life. His kingdom, at its peak, covered an area extending from Kabul to Mathura. He is famous in literature from Milindapanho (The Question of Milind) in which he is represented as having held conversation with Buddhist philosopher Nagasena.

### 2.7.2 Coin of Menander



Obverse- In Greek legend-Basileos Soterios Menandrou.

Reverse- In Kharosthi- Maharaja Tratasas Menadrassa

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### 2.8 The Shakas

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The Bactrian or Indo-Greek rule in India was primarily destroyed by the Shakas. Shakas are usually known as Kshatrapas. The earliest Shaka ruler of India was Maues or Mogo who established Shaka power in Gandhara. He ruled around 80 BC-AD 22. He issued a large number of copper coins and a few silver coins. He had the title maharaja mahatma. On the obverse of his coins appear many Greek deities, Shiva and the Buddha. Maues was succeeded by Azes I, who put an end to the remnant of Greek rule by annexing eastern Punjab. Azes I issued some coins jointly with Azilises, and Azilises later jointly issued coins with Azes II. On the obverse of the coins of Azilises appear a typical Indian deity- Abhisheka- Laxmi, Lakshmi standing on a lotus.

The Kshatrapas of western India initially ruled as the vassals of the Kushana kings. In this region there were two kshatrapa families-one in Maharashtra and the other in Ujjaini.

- **Kshatrapas from Maharashtra is belonged from Kshaharata family**
- **Kshatrapas from Ujjaini is belonged from Kardamaka family**

Bhumaka is the first ruler of Kshaharata family, His coin has been found in the coastal regions of Gujarat, Saurashtra, Both Malwa and Ajmer. Both Kharoshthi and Brahmi script were used on his coins. Bhumaka's successor and most illustrious king of the Kshaharata family was Nahapana, known from his silver and copper coins as well as from several inscriptions. He is famous for the Shaka-Satavahana struggle. In the end, Nahapana was defeated by Gautamiputra Sri-Satakarni. The Kshaharata family disappeared after Nahapana.

Kshaharatas were succeeded by the Shaka family of the Kardamakas with its centre at Ujjaini. The first ruler of this line of kings was Chastana. He used three script, viz. Greek, Kharoshthi and Brahmi, in his legends. Chastana is mentioned as Tiastenes and Ujjaini, as Ozene in Ptolemy's Geography. Chastana had been ruling conjointly with his grandson Rudradaman. Rudradaman is famous for his Junagarh Rock inscription. This inscription is one of the three significant inscriptions found on the same rock. One is Ashokan Edict, second one is inscription of Rudradaman and last and third one is inscription of Skandagupta. The inscription of Rudradaman is near the top, above the Ashokan Edict. It is dated around 150 CE. The inscription is significant as a historical record of public works in ancient India. It mentions the construction of a water reservoir named Sudarshana nearby, during the reign of the Chandragupta Maurya by his general Pushyagupta, after that, it was maintained by Tushaspha (Yavana general) in the time of Ashoka and it continued in the time of Rudradaman.



Junagarh Rock Inscription

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## 2.9 The Parthians

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Towards the middle of the first century AD, Shaka rule in parts of Gandhara was supplanted by the Parthian. Gondophernes was the greatest Indo-Parthian ruler. He ruled from AD 19 to AD 45 (based on Takhti-i-Bahi inscription). Soon after Gondophernes, the Pahlava rule in India ended and a new nomadic tribe called Kushana occupied the region.



Coin of Gondophernes

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## 2.10 The Kushanas

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Among the Central Asian nomadic warlike groups that entered Afghanistan and the north-western areas of the subcontinent, the Yueh-zhi people were the most important and left a lasting impression on Indian polity and society. Yueh-chi split into two small sections, which came to be known as the Little Yueh-chi, moved south and settled in north Tibet. The Ta-Yuesh-Chi or Great Yueh-chi moved further west. There were five Great Yueh-chi principalities, one of which was the Kuei-Shang (Kushanas). For the reconstruction of Kushana dynasty coins is a very important source.

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### 2.10.1 Political History

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#### 2.10.1.0 Early Ruler

Kuei-shang ruler named Miaos seems to have extended his rule to the north of the Oxus and established an independent Kushan principality in the second half of the 1st century BCE. In the early 1st century CE, Kujula Kadphises amalgamated the five principalities and laid the foundation of a unified Kushana empire. The fact that his coins have been found south of the Hindu Kush suggests that Kushana movement into the Indian subcontinent began in his time. Kujula Kadphises's son Vima Kadphises started off as a co-ruler with his father and went on to rule independently. He issued gold coins for the first time in Indian sub-continent. During his reign, Kushana pressed further east and established their control over the Indus valley and Mathura region. All his coins, whether in gold or copper, show unmistakable signs (Shiva with trident bull) of his Shaiva affiliation.

### Coin of Vima Kadphises

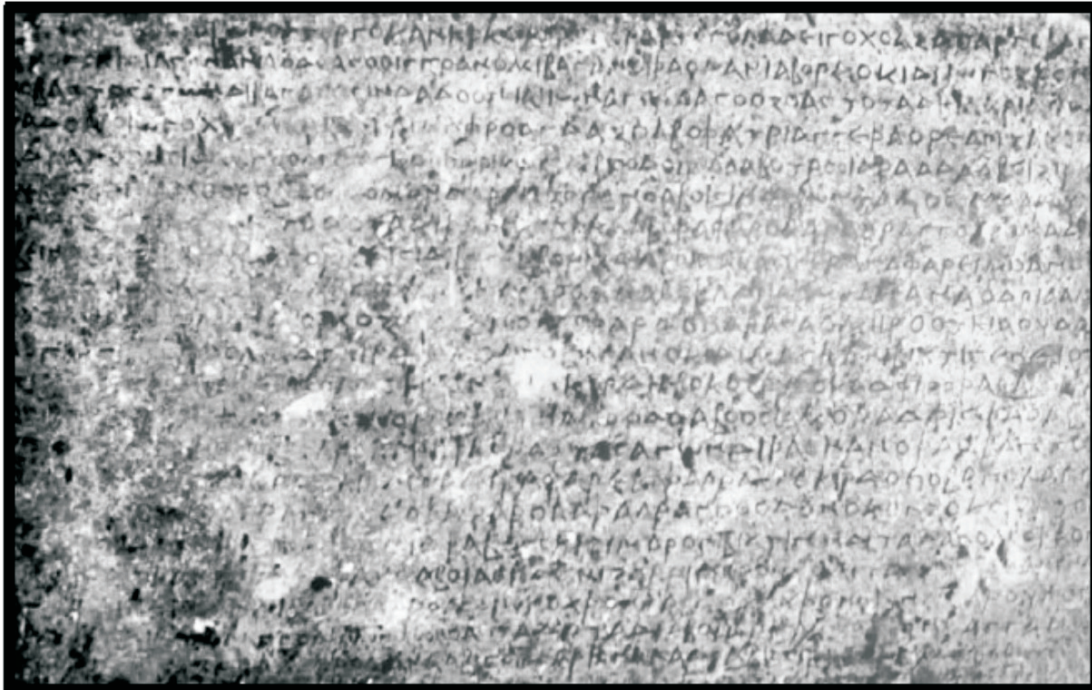


**Obverse of the coin-Vima Kadphises is standing at an altar**  
**Reverse of the coin-Shiva with trident bull**

#### 2.10.1.1 Kanishka

The Kushana empire reached its zenith during the reign of Kanishka. There has been a long-standing debate the date of Kanishka's accession. Today, most scholars accept that his reign began in 78 CE. There was a long-standing idea that the Kushana had two groups of rulers: first, the Kadphises group - consisting of Kujula Kadphises and Vima, then followed by the Kanishka group of rulers. A recent discovery of a Kushana inscription from Rabatak very clearly demonstrates that there was no second group of Kushana rulers; Kanishka and his successors enjoyed an unbroken descent and genealogy from Kujula Kadphises onwards. This very important inscription has been edited and translated first jointly by N.Simswilliams and J.Cribb and later by B.N.Mukherjee.

The inscription is of monumental significant for our understanding of the Kushana territorial expansion. It records that Kanishka's commands were obeyed at Ozono(Ujjayini), Zagido(Saketa),Kozombo(Kausambi),Palibothro(Pataliputra) and Sro-tchompo(Champa near Bhagalpur).Mathura was certainly under his control, which is evident from his record of year 23.



Rabatak Inscription

#### 2.10.1.2 Great Patron of Buddhism

Kanishka is celebrated in Buddhist texts as a great patron of Buddhism. He is supposed to have enshrined the Buddha's relics in a stupa at Purushapura, which became the centre of a major monastery. Kanishka was said to have patronized Buddhist scholars such as Ashvaghosha and Vasumitra. On the other hand, this king's coinage depicts motifs drawn from a great variety of Indian, Greek, and West Asian religious traditions.

#### 2.10.1.3 Concept of Devaputra

The Kushana kings used the title devaputra. Historians have described them as exalting the position of the king to the extent of projecting him as divine, an idea quite common in other ancient empires. The Shrine at Math near Mathura may have been a sanctuary where images of these kings were worshipped.

#### 2.10.1.4 Distinctive feature of the simultaneous rule of two co-rulers

The Kushana realm has a distinctive feature of the simultaneous rule of two co-rulers, one senior and the other- a junior co-ruler. It was a legacy from the practice of the Sakas. can be observed in the cases of Kanishka and Vasishka; Vasishka and Huvishka, especially in the light of inscription.

### **2.10.1.5 The successor of Kanishka**

The immediate successors of Kanishka were Vasishta, Huvishka, Kanishka II, and Vasudeva I. The empire started declining from the time of Vasudeva I, in about the mid-2nd century CE. Vasudeva II was the last Kushana emperor.

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## **2.11 The Satavahana**

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### **2.11.1 Introduction**

In the Deccan, the Mauryan empire was followed by the rule of the Satavahana, which lasted for four and a half centuries from about 230 BC. At its greatest extent far into northern India, perhaps even as far as Magadha. Its collapse followed ultimately upon long wars against the Sakas of Gujarat in the first and second centuries AD. By the beginning of the third century the empire had virtually disappeared, giving place to several minor independent dynasties. Inscriptions, coins and the Puranas furnish principal information about the Satavahana realm.

### **2.11.2 Geographical Location**

The dynasty of the Satavahana is doubtless identical with the Andhra or Andhrabhritas in the puranic lists of the kings. Many scholars believe that Andhra being a region in the eastern part of the Deccan, the Satavahana homeland should be located in that region. But most of the inscriptions and coins are available from Nasik and Nashik in the western Deccan. And Satavahana capital was situated at Pratishthana also in central Deccan- is evident from the Puranas and also the Geography of Ptolemy. It will be therefore logical to locate the earliest stronghold of the Satavahanas in western and central Deccan, or better to say The Satavahana rose to power in the western Deccan, in the region about Paithan traditionally associated with them, and thence spread their in all direction.

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## **2.12 Political History**

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### **2.12.1 Early Ruler**

The Puranas list thirty kings of the dynasty ruling altogether over 460 years. The exact date of the foundation of Satavahana power cannot be determined, but the puranic lists suggest that the first king, Simuka, probably began to rule around 230BC. He seems to have held sway over the region around Pratishthana and Nashik. Next ruler Krishna I is mentioned in his inscription from Nasik, which therefore should have come under the Satavahana authority. The third king was Sri Satakarni I, whose figure was sculpted in relief at Nashik along with the figures of his Simuka. He conquered western Malwa. Satakarni I proclaimed his suzerainty by performing the horse-sacrifice, and the victory thus celebrated must have been at the expense of the Sungas. Satakarni II, the sixth king, enjoyed the

longest reign, fifty-six years. Hala the seventeenth king is famous in literature as the compiler of Saptasati, a collection of 700 erotic gathas in the Arya metre in Maharashtri Prakrit. The four immediate successors of Hala had short reigns totaling less than a dozen years altogether, an indication troubled time.



**Coin of satavahana king Satakarni I**

#### **The royal portrait gallery of Satavahana in the Naneghat cave**

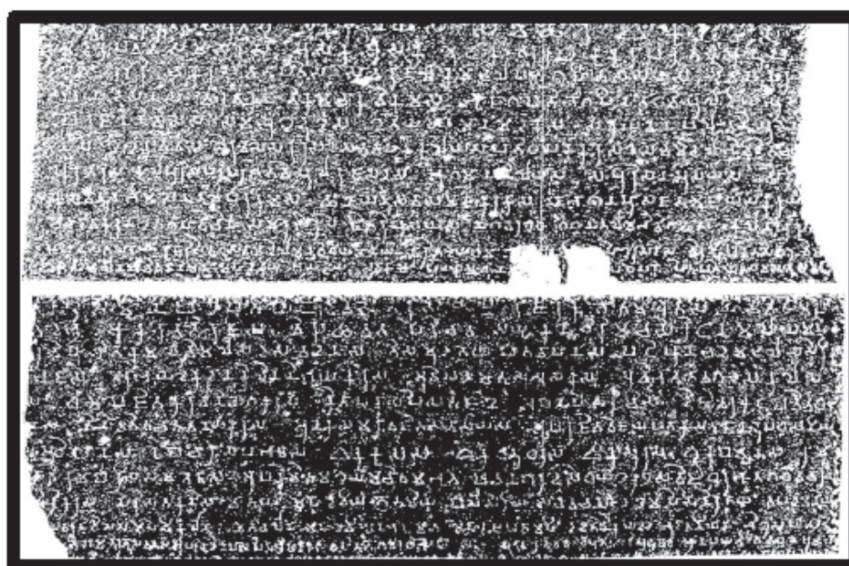
In the back wall of a cave at Naneghat in Pune district, Maharashtra, has relief sculptures of eight life-size figure. The name of the figure are carved in large Brahmi letters over their head. The label inscription indicate that the portraits of the wall.

1. Simuka Satavahana
2. Queen Nayanika
3. King rano satakarni
4. Prince Bhayala
5. Lost
6. Maharathi Tranakayira
7. Kumar Haku-shri
8. Kumara Satavahana

#### **2.12.2 Later Ruler**

The Satavahana power revived under the Gautamiputra Satakarni. He is described as the destroyer of the Sakas, Pahlavas and Yavanas. He overthrew Nahapana and

restruck large numbers of his silver coins. From the Sakas he recovered northern Maharashtra and the Konkan, the Narmada valley and Saurashtra. His empire extended to Vidarbha (Berar) and to Banavasi in the south. His achievements are available in Nasik Prasasti, which was caused to be engraved by his mother Gautami Balashri. The end of Gautamiputra's reign of 24 years came in AD 130, when the throne passed on to his son and successor, Vasisthiputra Pulumavi who also ruled for 24 years. Perhaps the best-known Satavahana ruler is Sri Yajna Satakarni (c. AD 170-99). He must have renewed the struggle with the Sakas and recovered some of the provinces lost by his predecessors.



**Nasik cave : Inscription of Goutami Balashri**

### **2.12.3 Administration**

Despite the vast extent of the Satavahana empire its polity was simple and local administration was left to feudatories subject to the general control of royal officials. Kingship was hereditary in the male line through matronymic were freely prefixed to the names of the kings and nobles.

#### **Feudatories were of three grades**

- 1) **Rajas** : Who struck coins in their own names
- 2) **Mahabhojas and Maharathis** : Who confined to a few families in the western Deccan and latter being connected with the Satavahana by marriage.
- 3) **Mahasenapatis** : They were in charge of outlying provinces.

### **2.12.4 Administrative division**

The state was divided into *aharas*, each under a minister (*amatya*), Below these

came the villages, each with its own headman(gramika). Other officials named in the inscriptions are treasurers, goldsmith,record keeper ext.

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### **2.13 Post Mauryan Sculpture**

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The post Mauryan period is an age of great sculptural achievements. The artistic movement in this phase spread throughout the country. Main activity is recognized in the Bharhut, Sanchi, Mathura Bodh Gaya, Sanghal, Amaravati. The art of this period consists mostly of Buddhist and Jain sculpture and image carved on the railings, gateways and pillar of the stupa. Here we get the depiction of the Jataka story and glimpses of everyday life.

During the post-Mauryan period three schools of sculpture art developed.

- Gandhara
- Mathura
- Amaravati

#### **2.13.1 Gandhara school of Art**

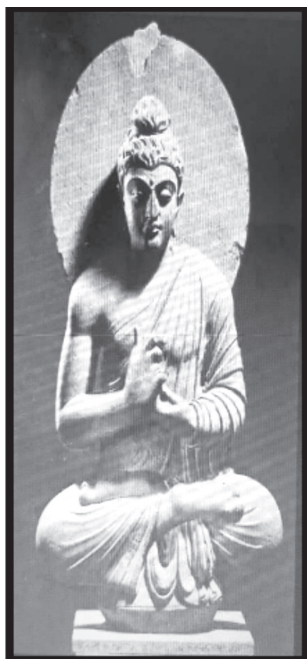
The sculpture of the Gandhara region, embracing the north-west provinces and part of Afghanistan. This region was under the ruling authority of the Greek, the Shakas, the Parthians and the Kushana for a long time. And the result was the birth of a hybrid culture, predominance of Hellenistic culture (Greek). The Buddha of the Gandhara artists resembles the Greek god Apollo. Here we can see portrait of Buddha rather than jataka story as result of uprising of Mahayan Buddhism. The main centres where the evidence of art pieces belonging to Gandhara school have been found are- The Swat Valley, Taxila, Takhti-Bahi, Begram etc.

#### **2.13.2 Mathura school of Art**

The site of Mathura is famous for its artistic remains and miscellaneous religious activity. The city is situated in the Ganga-Yamuna doab and the converging point of many trade routes. The sculptures of Mathura style and workmanship have been found in widely separated regions like Sanghol, Bharhut. Most of the sculptures made by red sandstone. The image of Yakshas and Yakshis predominantly have been depicted in a panel of stupa complex. Indigenous nature of the sculpture is the main marker of the Mathura art.

#### **2.13.3 Amaravati school of Art**

Amaravati is situated in the eastern Deccan. A different type of art form evolved and flourished by the patronization of Satavahana and later by Ikshvakus. Most of the sculptures were depicted by scenes of jatakas and event of the buddha's life. Main center of the Amaravati school of art is Nagarjunikonda.



GANDHARA SCHOOL OF ART



MATHURA SCHOOL OF ART

Post Mauryan Art

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### 2.14 The Gana or Sanghas

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Ancient Indian texts recognize the difference between the political structure and functioning of the rajya and the gana or sangha. Two of the mahajanapadas, the Vajji and Malla, were sanghas. Buddhist texts mention others as well- the Sakyas of Kapilavastu, Koliyas of Devadaha and Ramagrama, Bulis of Alakappa, Kalamas of Kesaputta etc. Paninis Ashtadhyayi mentions several ganas such as the Kshudrakas, Malavas, Ambashthas, Vasatis, Shibis. Most of the ganas were located in near the Himalayan foothills in eastern India. We get a number of coins of Gana like Yaudheyas, Malavas and Arjunayanas. Last footstep of Gana, we get from Allahabad Inscription of Samudragupta, after the Gupta, Gana or Sangha gradually disappeared.

Nationalist historians mainly K.P.Jayaswal (in his Hindu Polity) tried to focus on democratic features of Gana(Comparisons were made with the republics of Greece and Rome) to demolish the idea of Indian Culture, which had been portrait by western scholars. They said that Indians had never known anything other than despotic rule.Still there is a controversy about the political feature of Gana or Sangha. Though most of the historians think that Political structure of Gana or Sangha is close to aristocracy not democracy.

**Basic Feature of the gana or sangha in Ancient India**

1. The ganas had greater vestiges of tribal organization than the monarchies
2. There were two kinds of ganas :
  - a) those that consisted of all or a section of one clan, like Sakya and Koliyas,
  - b) those who comprised a confederation of several clans, like the Vajjis and Yadavas. Like Vajjian confederacy consisted of eight clans of which the Videhas. The Lichchhavis and Janatrikas were the most important one. Samudragupta was a grandson of the Lichchhavis as mentioned in Allahabad inscription (Lichchavi-dauhitra).
3. There was no single monarch. Instead, there was a chief known as ganapati, ganaraja, and an aristocratic council which met in a hall called the Santhagara.
4. Effective executive power and day-to-day political management must have been in the hands of a smaller group.
5. The political system of the ganas seems to have been a comprise between government by assembly, like Lichchhavi gana rajya had a large assembly, consistingg of the heads of Kshatriyas families who called themselves 'raja'. They usually met once a year during the spring festival to transact important publuc business and elect their leader, who had a fixed tenure. The uparaja may have been the son of the raja. The assembly did not include women.
6. Meetings at the santhagara of the ganas were probably announced by the beating of a drum.
7. Voting was done with pieces of wood known as salakas. The collector of votes was the salaka-gahapaka, chosen for this job on account of his reputation for honesty and impartiality.
8. In the ganas, Brahmanas and purohitas may not have enjoyed the prestige they did in the rajyas.
9. The ganas were closely associated with the Kshatriyas.
10. The ancient Indian ganas were not, however, democracies. Power was vested in the hands of an aristocracy comprising the hands of leading Kshatriya families.

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**2.15 Conclusion**

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After the discussion about all of the important aspects of Post Mauryan phase, we can say that from several points of view this phase is a different in nature. Apart from Satavahan and Sunga dynasty, all of them are so called out sider. But they successfully ruled in different parts of our Indian sub-continent. And left their

signature and remarkable contribution in our culture. We know, at that time external and internal trade also flourished in a very significant way. Trading center, town, urban city is a place of interaction with others. As a result of these activities not only new form of art and architecture evolved but also created a truly liberal urban culture. Social rigidity took a back seat. So, Post Mauryan age played a very significant role in economic, social and cultural history of Early India. It is really an Age of Interaction and Innovation.

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### 2.16 Model Questions

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- 1) Do you think Gana or Sangha of Early India had democratic features?
- 2) Write a short note on Post Mauryan Art.
- 3) Who are the Indo-Greeks? Write a short note on any of the Indo-Greek ruler.
- 4) Write on importance of Rabatak Inscription for the reconstruction of political history of Kushana empire.
- 5) Give some idea about Administrative structure of Satavahana.
- 6) Do you think Post Mauryan phase is an age of interaction instead of Dark Age?

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### 2.17 Suggested Readings

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Mukhopadhyay, Subodh, Kumar. *The Past in Ancient India from the Earliest times to C.E.*, Kolkata, Mitram, 2012.

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## **Block II : Towards Early Medieval India (circa 4th century CE - 750 CE)**

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### **Unit 3 □ Agrarian Expansion : Land grants and changing production relation**

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#### **Structure**

#### **3.0 Objective**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

#### **3.2 The beginning of the Land grants & the indiscriminate rights enjoyed by the beneficiaries**

#### **3.3 Types of Land Grants**

#### **3.4 Salient features related to Land Grants**

#### **3.5 The Immediate small scale socio-cultural impact of land grants**

#### **3.6 Agrarian Expansion : The larger long-scale impact and the hidden objective**

#### **3.7 Growth of Agrarian population and settlements**

#### **3.8 A Steep growth in Agricultural production**

#### **3.9 Conclusion**

#### **3.10 Model Questions**

#### **3.11 Suggested Readings**

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#### **3.0 Objective**

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- The objective of this present unit is to study the different types of land grants practiced in Early Medieval India.
  - The salient features related land grants during this period will be also described in this unit.
  - A quick over view of small scale impacts of the land grants will be also discussed.
  - The other objective of this unit is to depict the growth of population & settlements during this period.
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#### **3.1 Introduction**

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The term “Early Medieval” by its definition denotes an intermediate period between the “Ancient” & “Medieval” eras. In the context of Indian History it roughly denotes a period from 600 C.E. i.e. from the fall of the Imperial Gupta Empire to the rise of Delhi Sultanate.

One of the typical feature of this age is the increase of Royal Land grants particularly that donated to Brahmins & Temples during 600-1200 C.E. Throughout the Early Medieval Period we find instances where Kings & Feudal lords were donating lands to Brahmins or to Temples. These lands are called Brahmadaya lands. In this settlement created by the Royal decree, the Brahmin beneficiary holds absolute right over the donated lands including its maintenance & also over the peasants/tribes residing there. They are also exempted from paying any tax to the royal Treasury for these donated lands, whatever output it provides.

Historians of the Feudalism hypothesis like R.S. Sharma, B.N.S. Yadav, etc held these Land grants responsible for the political fragmentation & decentralization in this period. Thus, they marked them as the agents of "Renewal of Feudalism" in South Asia, quite similar to the corresponding Medieval European context. Thus it brought about an age of overall "decay & disintegration".

However revivalist Historians like Upinder Singh, B.D. Chattopadhyay, etc refused to view these land grants as any agent of Feudal decay & disintegration. Rather according to them, they are the agents of agrarian expansion in the regional level in Early medieval India. Historian B.D. Chattopadhyay thus argued that the major historical process of EMA, facilitated by the granting of lands, is the very expansion of the Agricultural state society.

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### **3.2 The beginning of the Land grants and the indiscriminate rights enjoyed by the beneficiaries**

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The concept of granting lands is something new in Indian socio-politics. It is not at all mentioned in Ashokan edicts. We first came to know about the practice only from the Satvahana Age, when certain Land Grants were made by Satavahana ruler Gautamiputra Satakarni. But in this case, the king at least beheld the administrative & military rights over the granted lands & they were very few in numbers.

But from the Gupta & post-Gupta period large scale land grants were began to be made to Brahmin & Political beneficiaries. These lands are called Brahmadaya lands. In this settlement created by the Royal decree, the Brahmin beneficiary holds absolute right over the donated lands. Here the lands were not only made tax-free, but more importantly the entire administrative & governing rights were also transferred to the hands of the beneficiaries. The beneficiaries obtained total rights to enjoy all the productions levied from the donated lands including realization of taxes from the peasants & artisans residing there. Thus along with the land the people living in it were also transferred from the former jurisdiction of the King to the granted beneficiaries. It is upto them to deal with the residents on their own terms, turning them to land lords. Even the Government forces would be forbidden to disturb these donated lands, without permission. Eg. In the

Nalanda Land grant Inscription, or in the Madhya-Pradesh Inscription of Samudra Gupta or in the Khalimpur Copper Plate of Pala King Dharmapala, residents were asked by their king not only to pay the customary tax to the beneficiaries but also to obey their commands.

Thus this lands became semi independent enough to rise as new source of local authority. This is a completely new situation. As to R.S. Sharma, not only it accelerated the unprecedented fragmentation of the political authority, but it also resulted in the transformation of the peasants & artisans into bonded labor - two of the typical features of Feudalism in Early Medieval Age.

The Pal Land grant Inscriptions suggest that the land was exempted from all dues & taxes ("samasta bhaga-bhoga-kara-hirany adi prataya sameta"). Inscriptions suggests that even the soldiers & officials of the state were forbidden to enter these Brahmadaya lands. In Chola administration the Brahmadays had "Taniyur" status. i.e. they were exempted from the jurisdiction of the "Nadus". Thus Upinder Sing termed the "autonomous islands in the rural landscape".

**Jurisdiction power :** Although it is debited but it's quiet certain that some Brahmadaya lands enjoyed complete self-jurisdiction powers free of Royal hindrance. The term "Sa-dash-aparadha" in some of the Royal Charters suggests that the donees were given rights to impose fines on people who were found guilty of criminal offences

**Right of Inheritance :** In certain inscription it is written that the gift was to last as long as the Sun, Moon & the Stars were there, i.e. forever. It is interpreted by the historians (as stated explicitly in some inscriptions) that after the death of the donees, the land would be inherited by his immediate successors.

**The Rights not enjoyed by the beneficiaries :** Last but not the least are the rights which were not enjoyed by the Donated Brahmin beneficiaries. In most of the cases the donees didn't have an important right - the right to transfer, sell or dispose the land in any way. The lands were granted according to the "nivi-dharma" & "Aparadha-dharma". Similarly several Orissa Inscription contain the term "A-lekhani praveshataya" i.e. it could not be made a subject of another document or that it could not be sold. In such case the rights of the Brahman donees were that of a "Landlord but not of Landowner".

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### 3.3 Types of Land Grants

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Coming to the classification, there were mainly 3 types of Land Grants :

- i) Land Grants to Individual Brahmins
- ii) Land Grants to Establishments (like Temples or Mathas)
- iii) Secular Land Grants

Let us discuss & analyze this in a broader context in our perspective.

### **i) Land Grants to Individual Brahmins**

The earliest literal mention of Land grant to Brahmins is from Mahabharata. While the first epigraphical reference comes only from the Satavahana Age when Emperor Gautamiputra Satakarni granted certain villages to Buddhist bhikkus. But as we have mentioned earlier these grants are only made tax free the king at least behold the administrative & military rights over the granted lands & they were very few in numbers. But from the post Gupta age there was an increase in indiscriminate land grants. Here the granted beneficiaries not only enjoyed the tax free tenure on the land, but they started Enjoying administrative rights & also rights over each & every resources of the granted lands including the agricultural levies & it's human & mineral resources.

In **Eastern & Northern India** the Pala Kings used to patronize these land grants to Brahmins. Of the Khalimpur & Munger Land grants of King Devpala (810-850 CE) is the most notable ones. The tradition continued in the post-Pala Age also. The 13th century Calcutta Sahitya Parishad Copper-plate inscription denotes, the Sena ruler Vishwarupsena granting 11 plots of land to a Brahmin named Halayudh. The Partihara kings in **Western India** followed a similar footstep. However their donations were mostly confined to scholarly Brahmins who were associated with the profession of teaching.

However, the largest number of Land donations were made by the Rashtrakutas of **Central India**. Several of theirs Land grant inscriptions were been found in Maharashtra region dated 794, 806, 871, 892, etc C.E. In 915 CE the Rashtrakuta King Indra III donated about 415 villages to Brahman beneficiaries

In **North-Eastern India** this system was introduced by the Barman Kings of Kamrupa, particularly under Mahabhuti Barman (6th cen.), Bhaskarvarman (7th cen), Balavarman III (9th century) & Ratnapal (11th century). The main of these land grants is to legitimize the rule of the barman dynasty by associating them with Kshatriya heritage. The Brahman beneficiaries would only act as an agent of these legitimization.

### **ii) Land grants to Religious Establishments (Temples & Mathas)**

Apart from Land grants to individual Brahmin beneficiaries, the practice of granting Lands for the maintenance of Religious establishments like Hindu Temples & Buddhist Mathas were also common.

In **Northern India** Land grants to Temples were common in regions of Bengal, Bihar & Central India. The practice was followed by different ruling dynasties like the Kalchuris, Gahadhavals, Pratiharas, Chalukyas, etc with the frontal stage always led by the Rashtrakutas. Rashtrakuta King Govinda IV, granted some 600 villages

for the maintenance of Temples. However, unfortunately very few of these Temples establishments could survive the destruction & pillage during the Islamic invasion.

In **Southern India**, the land grants to Temple were quite more in number. Inscriptions indicate the Cholas, Pandyas & Chalukyan Kings were pioneer in granting Temple Lands. Since these lands were granted to a religious establishment & not to any individuals, these lands/villages were governed by a council of residing Brahmins called 'Sabha'. These land grants to Temples led to the rise of a distinct Temple based secretarian village life in Early Medieval South India. The Brahmana settlement in Kerala seem to have been Temple centered right from early 6th century. It also encouraged the rise of distinct Brahman intermediary classes & professions in Village administration. While some of them achieved prestigious post of Temple managers, some others became Temple priest. In Tamil Nadu & Karnataka region we find the emergence of a distinct class of Shiva-Brahman - a Brahmana sub-caste associated with Shiva Temple.

**Land grants to Buddhist Mathas :** Apart from Hindu Temples, the practice of granting lands for Buddhist Monasteries & Universities was also not meager in EMA. The pioneers of this were the Buddhist Pala kings of Bengal. The famous story of the donation of land for the construction of Nalanda Mahavihara by Pal King Devpal (820-50 CE) to Shailendra King Balaputradeva of Sumatra, is known to all. Chinese traveler Hien Tsang (7th cen CE) records 200 villages for the maintenance of Nalanda Mahavihara. Apart from this, the Universities of Vikramshila, Odantapuri, etc were also patronized by the Pal kings. Similar Land grant Inscription is recorded from Ashrapur Copper plate inscription (7th cen CE) also.

#### **List of some Important Temples & their donors of Early Medieval Age**

No.	Name of the Temple	Place	Built by / Land granted by	Rulling Dynasty
1	Lakshman Temple	Khajuraho	King Yasovarman	Chandela
2	Vishwanath Temple	Khajuraho	King Vijayaditya	Chandela
3	Virupakhshya Temple	Pattadakal	Queen Lokmahadevi	Badmi Chalukya
4	Virupakhshya Temple	Vijaynagara	Devraya II	Sangamas
5	Huchimalli Temple	Aihole	King Vijayditya	Chalukyas
6	Brihadeshwara Temple	Thanjavur	King Raja Raja I	Cholas
7	Sun Temple of Modhera	Mahsena, Gujarat	King Bhima I	Solanki Chalukyas
8	Shore Temple	Mahabalipuram Narashingavarman II	King	Pallavas

### iii) Secular Land grants

Apart from granting lands to Brahmins & religious establishments, there was also the practise of granting lands by the Kings to their Royal officials in lieu of their military & civil services. E.g. In Orissa the Imperial Gangas granted lands to their military chiefs called Nayaks in return of their military services to the sate. Similar instances were followed by the Kings of Karnataka & latter by the Rayals of Vijaynagara. In 993 CE, Pal King Mahipal I granted lands to the Kaibarats (a traditional Fisherman community) in lieu of their naval services. The donees enjoyed huge power & prestige in administering these granted lands which according to the historians further accelerated the feudal disintegration process. This system can be taken as the precursor of the latter Iqtadari system of the Sultanate period.

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### 3.4 Salient features related to Land Grants

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Let us now have quick overview of some of the salient features of these Land grants ...

Which particular Brahmins were donated ? : It is obvious that not all Brahmins could be donated lands by the Kings. Ordinary sense, suggest that those Brahmins who were closely associated with the Royal courts were the first preference. Early Medieval Bengal Inscriptions suggest the donees to be Shantivarikas or shantyagarikas, i.e. priests who were associated with performing religious rites for Kings. In Orissa, only those Brahmins who were connected with the Royal courts as priests (Purohitas), astrologers (Jyotish) & administrators were the received land grants. For the Pratiharas it is the Brahman teachers who were associated in training the Royal princes (gurudevas). However, a vast majority of inscription do not reveal a court connection of the Brahman donees at all.

The theory of Brahmana migration & it's relation with Land grants : Some of the inscripitional reference of Land grants in EMA suggest that many of the Brahman donees were newly settled migrant of that place, suggesting a flow of Brahman migration during this age. As evident from the Vedic Reference the Eastward migration of the Brahmins started from as early as 800 C.E. But since the 5th cen CE, the process re intensifies as several inscription suggest an influx of learned Brahman immigrants from the heartland of Madhydesha (Middle Ganga Valley) into areas like Maharashtra, Bengal, Deccan, MP & Orissa. The late Medieval Kulaji texts of Bengal trace the ancestry of 5 'Kulin Brahmanas' from Kanyakubja who were invited to settle in Bengal by King Adisura in order to train the Bengal Brahmins the correct performance of Vedic rites.

But why were they migrating ? Historians like Upinder Singh suggests that during this period due to different factors there was a decline in sacrificial religious practices in North India. This led to the migration of the Brahman community,,

residing there to migrate in search of better occupation. This migration incidentally coincided with the rise of the numerous Feudal kingdoms of EMA. This new political elites required some agent of legitimization & administrative infrastructure. This situation suited both of the groups & the migrating Brahmins, who were well versed in Vedas, quickly got employment opportunities in these new Royal courts. The Feudal kings in turn made them settle in their kingdoms by granting them Lands.

The magnitude of the Land grants made to Brahmins : Brahmadaya lands could vary from a small plot to a single village or sometimes even several villages. The number of donees similarly varied from a single family to several hundreds. The Rashtrakutas were known for their enormous areas of land grants to Brahmins. The largest example was however recorded from the 10th century Paschimbhag Copper Plate of King Srichandra of Bengal, who granted a huge land to about 6000 Brahmins, associated with a monastery of Lord Brahma & a Temple of Lord Vishnu.

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### 3.5 The Immediate small scale socio-cultural impact of land grants

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Let's have a quick overview of the small scale impact of the land grants.

**Rise of Social status for the Brahmins :** One thing is certain - that the Royal charters raised the status & strengthened the political & economic power of a certain section of the Brahman community. In Brahmadaya villages they became the dominant class. However to historians like Upinder Singh the Brahmins could not be viewed as "Feudal intermediaries" since they didn't paid any regular taxes or material resources to the King like the other Feudal lords.

**A drastic change in Agrarian power structure :** The Land grant brought about a new element of 'dominance' in Agrarian power structure, eroding the older one. While Burto Stein speaks of a Brahman-peasant alliance, R Gurukul argued about the decline of old kingship production. The villagers now had to pay taxes not to the royal officials but to the Brahman donees. The fact that the donees also got the rights over the vital village resources like water, forest, minerals, habitation & agricultural land made them the new masters. Again previously most of the village disputes were solved by local level village councils. But now all the judicial power were transferred to the donees by the Royal charters. Thus a superior relation of dominance grew between the new Brahman masters & the inhabitants of the village.

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### 3.6 Agrarian Expansion : The larger long-scale impact & the hidden objective :

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While discussing the context of these land grants, the first & foremost question that arises is that why at all these practice originated. The historians of the Feudalism school always viewed this system as the agent of Feudal

disintegration & oppression of rural groups during the Early Medieval Age. But why at all the Feudal chiefs would themselves tend to diverge their power ? And How exactly this land grants effect the agrarian social relation of various rural communities be it large-small peasants, tenants, sharecroppers, artisans, etc ? Let us discuss this.

**An agent of Legitimization ?** Firstly, as discussed earlier from the point of local political struggle, all the newly rising local kingdoms of this age were always struggling to establish their power & legitimacy over their territories. These small local powers were new in politics & don't have any powerful genealogical background that can provide sufficient right of legitimacy to their rule, like the Imperial Guptas or Vakatakas. Hence, they need an alternative. Now from time immemorial the Brahmins enjoyed a prestigious positions among various social groups. They emerged as the legitimizers of political power by performing rituals & sacrifices & crafting Royal Genealogies, like Ravikirti of Pulakeshwan II. Thus granting Lands to Brahmins is just a token for providing such Legitimacy to the Royal power. In fact, in certain instances, we find Land grants were associated with Genealogical inscription of the donor, where the Royal lineages were tried to be linked with Puranic Characters of Rama, Laxmana, Pandavas, etc. This was another way of gaining legitimacy.

**An agent of Agrarian Expansion :** Again, as to Historians like Upinder Sing, D.C. Sircar, etc. granting lands not necessarily always meant inordinate loss of Revenue or political power for the monarchs. Because in most cases the granted lands were uncultivated fallow lands or lands which were not in a position to realize revenue (particularly forests). It is now the task of the Brahmins/grantees to make it productive. Hence it gradually led them to venture for the greater tribal diasporas of the interior. Thus, in this age we find many of the tribes were settling down as cultivators & plough agriculture was introduced in greater parts of the interior. That's why Historian B.D. Chattopadhyay argued that the major historical process of EMA is the expansion of the Agricultural state society.

Thus, the Agrarian expansion, in turn led to greater interaction of the Brahminical & tribal cultures & transformation of the tribes into peasants & their introduction to Brahminical caste system. The period witnessed the expansion of the peripheries of the sedentarized states of both North & South India. This obviously led them to a conflict with adjacent tribal societies. These conflicts ultimately led to the displacement & integration/absorption of the tribal societies into the sedentarized Hindu societies. However it also led to greater interaction between tribal & Brahminical cultures. It was not that only the tribal societies got "Hindusized", but also several tribal elements also penetrated into the

Brahminical culture. Eg. Sanskrit inscriptions from Assam suggests greater incorporation of Khasi & Gado words. Again the penetration of the tribal cultures in Orissa is best reflected in the rise of worship of the Jagannath cult, which clearly has tribal origins.

Even Marxist historians like R.S. Sharma also couldn't deny the fact that there was an increasing importance over agriculture in this phase. According to Sharma, it is most evident from the **provisions of strict laws for agricultural offences**, prevalent in those days. The Shritis & Dharmasashttras of this age prescribed a direct death penalty even for minor agricultural offences be it minor theft or damage to crops, irrigation works, etc. Whereas, the law books of earlier ages like Arthasashtra had only prescribed certain fines for similar offences.

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### 3.7 Growth of Agrarian population & settlements

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**Rise of agrarian population :** One of the primary need for increasing the agricultural output is to sustain the rising population in the rural sector. In fact, it is like one of the age old vicious cycle where more food leads to better life which leads to more reproduction. More reproduction in turn generate the need for more agricultural production. Although we don't have any specific census data for this age, but from indirect references it's evident that there was indeed a major boom in rural population of this age.

In South India, there was a steady increase of the members in the Brahman Sabhas or Assemblies. Eg. In Gautam Agrahar in Shikarpur Taluk the Brahmin population rose from 1000 in 890 CE to about 32,000 in 1027 CE ! Along with the Brahmin population the non-Brahmin population particularly that of the peasants, artisans & landed peasants called 'Vellals' also increased perhaps in faster rate. It is also evident from the proliferation of more profession within the rural community, R.S. Sharma showed hoe the rural Kaystha community rose up in this age. Again certain inscriptions mentions new dwelling classes of the village. E.g. Irda copper plate of Nayapal mentions village clerks & traders while Ramganj plate of Iswarghosh mentions a large settlement of 'Karmakaras'.

However, one thing is certain the rise of population provided necessary additional supply of labor for agriculture & also generated the need for more agricultural output. All this ultimately led to Agrarian Expansion.

**Growth of Agrarian settlements :** Rise of population in turn encouraged the growth & foundation of more & more new settlements. Particularly the land grants to Hindu Temples were among the foremost. Centering this new Temples

new settlements of Brahmins & other classes grew up rapidly. This is most evident from the sudden rise of Brahmin settlements surrounding a Temple granted by the Barman Kings of Assam like Mahabhuti Barman, Bhaskar barman, etc. The river Valley of Brahmanputra particularly the Guwahati & Tezpur region became concentrated with agrarian settlements in Assam. In the 10th cen the Temple settlements emerged as new township & commercial centers.

**Rise of peasant protests :** As to R.S. Sharma, the increasing complexity of the village socio-economy & administration & domination by the land lords, led to increasing peasant protest in this age. Earlier the peasant took up various means of protest ranging from mere litigation & complain to the travelling King to violent suicide & self immolation. But later it took the form of armed peasant struggle particularly in Andhra, Karnataka & in the territories of Cholas & Pallavas. Several hero stones were thus found in this age, particularly in Karnataka, called 'virakllu', in memory of those who laid their lives in these protests.

A 9th century Hero-stone from Karnataka



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### 3.8 A Stiff growth in Agricultural production

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The agrarian expansion is farther evident from the steady increase of agricultural production across the country. Since 6th century CE, owing to diverse geo-climatic nature of the subcontinent, different varieties of crops started to be cultivated in huge proportions in different parts of the country.

Let us have a quick glance over them.

**Paddy concentration in Eastern India :** Eastern India since the Ancient times was a hotspot of Rice cultivation. Many of The Ancient literary sources like Raghubanshan of Kalidasha, Khana, Krishi Parasara, etc described the extent & magnitude of Rice cultivation here. The region included modern day Easter Bihar, Orissa, Bengal up to Brahmaputra Valley & Kamrup. Chinese travelers like Ma Luan or Fa Hien mentions the export of Rice from Bengal to Makaysia & S.E. Asia. During the reign of Ahom Kings particularly Damodar Dev, Shankar Dev, etc. better irrigation & farming technology was introduced in Assam & rice cultivation flourished more. However mention of Rice export from Andhra is obtained since the days of Arab traveler, Ibn Khurdabaleh (9th century). The Krishi-parashar of Bengal written between 950-1100 CE. mentions the different advanced techniques for Rice cultivation.

**Wheat & Jowar cultivation in Western India & Deccan :** While Rice dominated Eastern Indian agriculture, cultivation of Wheat was mainly practiced in Western India, particularly in Punjab & Rajasthan. Jowar & Ragi cultivation was similarly common in Western India & in Deccan, like Gujarat, Maharashtra, & some places in South India.

**Sugarcane cultivation :** The earliest reference of Sugarcane cultivation came from the Tamil Sangama poem Purunaru, where we came to know about the introduction of Sugarcane cultivation in Malabar region (of modern Kerala) by one Adigaman Neruman. Slowly Sugarcane became one of the largest agricultural crop al over India be it North, East South or West. Somewhere it became attached with "Bagicha" farming. The Early Medieval text "Gathsaptasati" mentions different products obtained from the extraction of sugarcane.

**Coconut & Palm cultivation :** The importance of Coconut & palm in religious rituals & day to day lifestyle of people is still felt in modern days. Early Medieval Indians were no exception. However the cultivation of Coconut & Pal was mostly concentrated in the coastal regions due to climatic & soil characteristic. The Raghubangshan of Kalidas mentions Orissa as a centre for high qualities of coconut cultivation.

**Rise of commercial Agriculture in South India :** The expansion of the agrarian economy was most vividly felt in South India. Here large scale donation of Agrahara & Brahmadaya lands resulted in large scale forest clearance & transformation of wasteland into agricultural fields. As early as in a 6th century land inscription by Kadamba kings of Goa area, gave the Brahman donee the right to engage it's laborers in forest clearance & bring it under cultivation.

Added to it is the irrigation technologies under the Cholas like Tank, canals, etc. This gave a big boost to agricultural expansion in South. Apart from Rice there was an increasing emphasis on millets like ragi, jowar & bajra. Also during this time we find the steady increase in production of high grade cash crops like spices, pepper, ginger, cinnamon, cardamom, etc. These cash crops became the future melting endeavors for the trans-oceanic European trade in Modern Ages.

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### 3.9 Conclusion

Thus from our above discussion we find that the system of Land grants indeed brought about a massive expansion of the Agrarian domain in South Asia in the Early Medieval Age (5th - 13th century). It brought about an Agricultural boom & flourishing in rural level. It also brought about greater interaction with the tribal societies thereby bringing them into the folds of sedentized agrarian civilization. So, we can conclude that the land grants might be an agent of “socio-economic change” but not that of a “socio-economic decline”.

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### 3.10 Model Questions

1. What were the different types of land grants practiced in Early Medieval India ? Describe in details.
2. What were the peculiar rights enjoyed by the granted beneficiaries ?
3. How did the land grants bring about a complete Agrarian expansion in the rural domain in India from circa 5th-9th century CE ?
4. Mention the immediate socio-cultural impact of the land grants ?
5. Why were the lands being indiscriminately donated by the owners & the contemporary political elites ? Was it just a ritual or something else ?

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### 3.11 Suggested Readings

Chattopadhyaya, Braja Dulal, *The Making of Early Medieval India*, (Delhi, OUP : 1997)  
Kosambi, D.D., *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, (Bombay, Popular Prakashan : 1956)  
Maity, S.K., *Economic Life in Northern India in the Gupta Period* [c. AD 300-500], (Delhi, Dass pub : 1970)  
Sharma, R.S., *Material Culture and Social Formations in Ancient India*, (Delhi, Macmillan India : 1983)  
Singh, Upinder, *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India : From the stone age to the 12th century*, (New Delhi, Pearson Pub. : 2009)

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## **Unit 4 □ Graded Land Rights and Peasantry**

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### **Structure**

#### **4.0 Objective**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

#### **4.2 Collective Ownership : The role of village community**

#### **4.3 Royal Ownership**

#### **4.4 Private Ownership**

#### **4.5 Rights enjoyed by the beneficiaries in the donated lands**

#### **4.6 A hierarchical Land ownership ? The views of contemporary Dharmasashtras**

#### **4.7 Obtaining Natural Ownership**

#### **4.8 The expansion of the Agrarian Diaspora**

#### **4.9 Conclusion**

#### **4.10 Model Questions**

#### **4.11 Suggested Readings**

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### **4.0 Objective**

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- The objective of this present unit is to study that how many types of land ownership practiced in Early Medieval India.
  - Which types of peculiar rights enjoyed by granted beneficiaries will be discussed here.
  - Learners are able to understand the generalised views on the land grants of the contemporary Dharma Sashttras from this unit.
  - The expansion of peasant society since the 4th C.E in India will be elaborated in this unit.
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### **4.1 Introduction**

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The issue related to the ownership of Land in Ancient & Early Mediaeval India is a well debated topic. To address this issue one has to focus on the evidences related to land ownership during this period. These are primarily the numerous Land related copper plate inscriptions and certain other Literary documents like Dharmasashtra texts, Shrmiti shashtras, royal Farmans, etc. of this period. Although these texts have a great deal to discuss about property, but their opinions on land rights vary considerably. Basically on the basis of various primary & secondary evidences, historians argued about the existences of primarily three types of Land ownership during this period. These are —

- i) Communal / Collective ownership i.e. Land owned by the village community
- ii) Royal Ownership
- iii) Private ownership.

Let us discuss this in detail in the following sections.

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#### **4.2 Collective Ownership : The role of village community**

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Although there is not much evidence about full-fledged community ownership, like that of the Republican Ganrajyas of Mahajanapada days, but it is evident that the village community do had an important say in various land related matters.

For instance, in certain cases the village community was assigned to demarcate the boundaries of disputed lands. They also intervened when such lands were leased, sold out or donated. The Royal authorities were supposed to inform & discuss with the village communities & village elders when any land was donated or gifted away. In fact, demarcation of boundaries was one of the important task of the village community. The Brihaspati & Narada Shriti specifically emphasizes why & how the boundaries of landed property should be clearly demarcated. No doubt, this was done to prevent future property dispute. But an overall formal supervisory power of the village community can't also be denied in this case. As to Brihaspati Shriti, boundaries are demarcated using trenches or pillars or sometimes with reference to natural identification marks like trees, water bodies, ant hills, etc. These boundary markers should be pointed out to each and every villagers & to young ones, who in turn would educate their own children about the same when they grew old. In this way, knowledge of the boundaries would be transmitted from one generation to the next like Bhokastuti system of the Vedic mantras.

While in the other hand, the Vishnu Shriti specifically identifies the pasture land as a joint property of the village community. As such it's not any individual's property & hence neither it could be partitioned nor could it be dealt individually. Similar such references was made in Manu Shriti, which identifies the water resources of a village like ponds, reservoirs, etc as Community ownership.

Certain Dharmasashtra texts directly tells about the indivisibility of landed property, that they could not be divided individually. E.g. The Mimansha Shutra of Jaimini written in about 4th-5th century C.E. states that "the Earth is common to all and even the Emperor cannot give away all his land, solely relying on his personal decision". Several centuries latter, Shabaraswamin too in his commentary of same Mimansha shutra opined that even King had no right to decide at his will the ownership of land. Clearly as to this sources land is considered as a collective property of the village community.

Along with North India, such collective ownership of land by village community

was also widely visible in contemporary South India too. Here the village land is jointly owned & governed by some of the powerful village assemblies. Eg. The Ur is such an assembly which looked after the pastoral & agricultural land along with natural resources of non-Brahmadaya Vellanbhagai villages in South India. These assemblies performed like today's Parliament & is guided by a few selected powerful representatives & elders from the village. In case of any land related matters, the Royal authorities directly came in touch with these village level assemblies & Sabhas.

However, as historians like Upinder Singh or R.S. Sharma had rightly argued that although the village community might have a say in land related transactions, but that doesn't mean they have full rights over land or that absolute communal ownership was practiced in the villages.

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### 4.3 Royal Ownership

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The intimate connection between the King and the Earth (Land) is invoked in the Ancient Indian society since the days of Upanishad. Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador of Selucas Nikator to the court of Emperor Chandragupta Maurya, in his book 'Indica' had quoted that all lands in India was owned by the Emperor, while Kautilya in his 'Arthasashtra' also refer to lands called "Sita" owned directly by the Royal authority. As time passed the grip of the Royal authority over land tightens more. For instance the law books of the Gupta period reveals the growth of the royal authority and hence there was sharp increase of it's hold over the ownership of land.

The Dharmasashttras of this period legitimizes the king's ownership over land within his jurisdictional territory and thus justifies the right of the king to levy taxes on the same. For example, the Manu Shriti invoked King as the "Master of the whole land" that comes under his jurisdiction and hence entitles him with half share of the total mineral ores dug out from a mine. Similarly, the Katyani Shriti entitles the king with 1/4th of the total agricultural production in farmlands. Apart from collecting taxes, the king also enjoyed certain other discretionary powers over the lands. For instance, the Narad Shriti, gave the monarchs right to evict peasants from their land and houses on his wish. However, at the same time, the same Shriti clearly advises the king not to resort to such "drastic measures" until the last hour of calamity.

A major source of information and evidence of such royal ownership of land, comes from numerous land grant inscriptions of Early Medieval age. The Royal Land grants to Individuals (like Brahmins) & establishments (like Temples & Mathas), is one of the most important characteristic feature & also the major source for the History of Early Medieval India (5th - 13th century C.E.), that vehemently shaped the entire Agrarian structure of the Sub continent. Throughout

the Early Medieval Period we find instances where Kings & Feudal lords were donating lands to Brahmins or to Temples. These lands are called Brahmadaya lands. In this settlements created by the Royal decree, the Brahmin beneficiary holds absolute right over the donated lands including tax-exemption & administrative rights in some places. Now in order to acquaint the lay citizens of that region and in order to spread the message of philanthropy & greatness of the monerch, all the details of the land grants, along with royal geneology and titles were generally written down in a separate Copper plate inscription, which are called land grant inscription. Eg. The Khalimpur & Munger Copper plate inscriptions of King Devpala (810-50 CE).

On the contrary, during the same age, there were simultaneously certain school of thoughts that rejected the concept of Royal ownership of land. Dharmasashtra philosophers like Jaimini & Shabara were some of the strongest proponent of this view. According to them, King was not any absolute owner of land. While the taxes levied by him was merely his wages in lieu of which he ensures the proper protection of the people residing in the particular land.

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#### **4.4 Private Ownership**

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The concept of private ownership of land had emerged in India as early as 6th century BCE. By 400 CE the system was well developed and the Dharnasashtra texts of the Gupta and post Gupta Era discussed about the legal rights, titles and laws regarding partition, mortgage, inheritance, selling, buying etc. of the privately owned land. Several literary evidences of private land transactions are obtained from this age. These literary references were supplemented by Inscriptional evidences. As we have stated earlier the availability of numerous land grant inscriptions during this time, several such inscriptions records the purchase of land by an individual elite for the purpose of donations to Brahmins or religious institution. eg. the famous story of land donation for the construction of Nalanda Mahavihara by Shailendra King Balaputradeva of Sumatra, is known to all. It is worthy to mention that King Balaputradeva has to first purchase the same land from King Devpala, under whose jurisdiction the donated land actually was. Chinese traveler Hiuen Tsang (7th cen CE) records 200 villages were donated for the maintenance of Nalanda Mahavihara.

Again certain inscriptions record the grant of lands for Brahmana beneficiaries by individual land holding state officials, of their own. Eg. The Dhanaidaha Copper Plate Inscription of the Gupta period (433 CE) describes a royal officer Ayktaka gifting away a portion of land from his private possessions to a Brahmin named Varashwamin. Again the famous Tippera Copper Plate Inscription of Bengal mentions one Mahasamanta named Lokenath granting

away a huge amount of land from his individual possessions to 100 Chaturvedi Brahmins. Both of these prove the existence of private ownership of land among the elite circles.

However it's a matter of fact that direct evidences of community ownership was very minimal in Early Medieval Age. And thus by 600 CE most of the land either came under Royal jurisdiction or was owned by private individuals.

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#### **4.5 Rights enjoyed by the beneficiaries in the donated lands**

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The earliest literal mention of Land grant to Brahmins is in Mahabharata. On contrary, the first epigraphical reference of land grant comes only from the Satavahana Age, when Emperor Gautamiputra Satakarni granted certain villages to Buddhist bhikkus. But these granted lands were made tax free. Only the administrative & military rights over the granted lands remained preserved in the hands of king and of course they were very few in numbers.

But from the latter & post Gupta age there was an increase in indiscriminate land grants. Now, these land grants were quite different from those of the pre-Gupta periods. Here the lands were not only made tax-free, but more important that the entire administrative & governing rights were also transferred from the jurisdiction of the King to the hands of the beneficiaries. The beneficiaries obtained total rights to enjoy all the productions levied from the donated lands including its mineral resources, salt, natural & forest resources. Beside this, most important they also got the power to realize taxes from the peasants & artisans residing there. Thus along with the land the people living in it were also transferred from the former jurisdiction of the King to the granted beneficiaries. It is now up to them to deal with the residents on their own terms, turning them to almost pseudo land lords. Eg. In the Nalanda Land grant Inscription, or in the Madhya-Pradesh Inscription of Samudra Gupta or in the Khalimpur Copper Plate of Pala King Dharmapala, residents were asked by their king not only to pay the customary tax to the beneficiaries but also to obey their commands. Thus, these lands became semi independent power blocks to rise as new sources of local authority.

For instance, The Pal Land grant Inscriptions of King Devpala & Dharmapala suggest that the land was exempted from all dues & taxes (“samasta bhaga-bhoga-kara-hirany adi prataya sameta”). Even the soldiers & officials of the state were forbidden to enter these Brahmadaya lands. For instance, the Basim Copper plate inscription of Vkataka King Vindiyashakti II forbids all the district police officials from entering the donated lands. In Chola administration the Brahmadays had “Taniyur” status. i.e. they were exempted from the jurisdiction of the “Nadus”. Thus Upinder Singh termed these ne granted lands as “autonomous islands in the rural landscape”.

Sl. No	Land grants to the institutions	Total
1	Agrahara	37
2	Brahmadeya	06
3	Temple	173
4	Matha or Satra	11
5	Jainalaya	02
6	Others	26
	Total	255

The intensity of Land grants in Early Medieval India, can be shown just by a rough estimate of the same during the reigns of Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi (7th - 11th century). During the Vengi Chalukyan period nearly 263 stone and copper plate inscriptions record the gift of land to various institutions.

It is evident from the above table that out of the 255 land grants 37 grants were made to the brahmanas as agrahara, 06 grants were made as brahmadeyas, 173 grants were donated to the temples as devagrahara, 11 grants were donated to the Mathas or Sattras (not attached with temple), 2 grants were given to the Jainalayas and 26 grants were to others. In the category of others land grants were donated to the village

Sl. No.	Donors	No. of grants
1	Kings	42
2	Viceroy	02
3	Royal family members (Princes-2)	03
4	Chiefs	92
5	Ministers	16
6	Generals	11
7	Nobles	02
8	Officers	30
9	Merchants	04
10	Mahajanas	03
11	Village chief	01
12	Private individuals	34
13	Women	13
14	Miscellaneous	08
	Total	263

workmen, Yuvaraja, ministers, generals, musicians, dancers, gardeners, mahajanans, sculptors, carpenters, potters etc.

To get a clear idea about the donors of these land grants the epigraphical data is arranged in the following table.

It is evident from the above table that out of the 263 grants, the king and the Royal family members had donated only 42 of them. While most of the remaining land grants were made by private land holders like nobles, state officials and even commoners like Merchants & Mahajans. Thus, this very estimate proves the importance of private ownership in Early Medieval India.

Let us focus on some of the chief Land holding rights enjoyed by the beneficiaries in these donated lands.

**Jurisdiction power :** Although it is debated but quite certain that some Brahmadaya lands enjoyed complete self-jurisdiction powers free of Royal hindrance. The term “Sa-dash-aparadha” in some of the Royal Charters suggests that the donees were given rights to impose fines on people who were found guilty of criminal offences.

**Right of Inheritance :** In certain inscription it is written that the gift was to last as long as the Sun, Moon & the Stars were there, i.e. forever. Eg. The Vakataka Land grant inscription of King Vindyaashaakti II in Basim, records a grant of a village to certain Atharva Veda Brahmins. Here the donees can enjoy the land upto ‘A-chanda-adichcha-kala’ i.e. to last as long as the Moon & the Sun is there. Thus, it is interpreted by the historians (as stated explicitly in some inscriptions) that after the death of the donees, the land would be inherited by his immediate successors.

**The Rights not enjoyed by the beneficiaries :** Last but not the least are the rights which were not enjoyed by the Donated Brahmin beneficiaries. In most of the cases the donees didn’t have an important right - the right to transfer, sell or dispose the land in any way. The lands were granted according to the “nivi-dharma” & “Aparadha-dharma” which forbids the owner to sell away or hand over their lands. Similarly, several Inscriptions from Orissa contain the term. “A-lekhani praveshataya” i.e. it could not be made a subject of another document or that it could not be sold out. In such cases the rights of the Brahman donees can be compared with that of a “Landlord but not of a Landowner”.

**A compulsion of loyalty ? :** In some cases there seem to be certain compulsory obligations for the donees. For in most cases the granted beneficiaries can enjoy

their gifted land as long as they remain loyal to the state. E.g. In the Chammak copper plate Inscription of Vaktaka King Pravarsena II, it is particularly mentioned that the Brahmana donees can only enjoy their granted land as long as they didn't commit any treason against the state and as long as they were not found guilty of murder, theft, adultery or conspiring against the ruling government. In such cases, the king had absolute power to revoke back the granted lands.

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#### **4.6 A hierarchical Land ownership? The views of contemporary Dharmasashtras**

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It should be remembered that the concept of land ownership practiced in Ancient and Early Medieval India was very peculiar to the subcontinent and as such cannot be compared with Western standards. Thus Historians like S.K. Maity and D.C. Sircar had suggested that rather than the Western norms of exclusive / absolute ownership of land, in India a system of hierarchical ownership was practiced instead. For example, the Ashrafpur copper plate inscriptions of Bangladesh (7th century CE) mentions a plot of land originally being donated to a Buddhist bhikku called Sanghamitra. But now it is resided by a person named Sharvantra & cultivated by Shikara. Hence all the three were mentioned to enjoy a hierarchical ownership over the particular land.

However, historians like S.K. Maity pointed out the concept of absolute ownership were indeed practiced to some extent for individual private ownership. For both Gautama Dharmasasahtra & Manu Shriti permitted the owner to do “whatever he wanted” with the land be it the rights to sale, gift, buy or even to keep mortgage. The Dharmasasahtras list down the following lawful ways to acquire a property :

- i) By inheritance
- ii) By donations
- iii) By purchase
- iv) By conquest
- v) By lending
- vi) By separation & divisions among heirs.

The Narada Shriti on its part include a gift of land brought by the wife during marriage as dowry, into the list.

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#### **4.7 Obtaining Natural Ownership**

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But question arises as how could one gain the ownership of a fallow land ? Or what happens to the ownership of an unclaimed land ? Is there any provisions for natural ownership ? The Dharmasashtra texts of the period however mention specific regulations and criterias for natural ownership of Land. For instance the Manusmriti in its Section IX part 44, specifically mentions that an unclaimed fallow land automatically goes into the possession of the one who removes the weed, clean it and make it usable (cultivable). On the other hand, Narada Shmriti on it's part, states that if the owner of a piece of land is unavailable, has died (without heirs), on unconditionally absent or is unable to cultivate his land, then a stranger who tills the same land without being opposed by the owner, should be allowed to keep the produce for himself—a type of Bhagchasi or Projasatta system practiced these days. Again, it might be that some humble peasant was investing his time & energy over a fallow land to make it cultivable, but then all of a sudden, it's real owners appeared and could snatch away his entire hard earned fruits simply by claiming their age old ownership. This could not be done. Since, as a matter of fact, both the Narada and Brihaspati Shritis had specifically mentioned that 'a person can claim his ownership over a land only if he can show his uninterrupted long possession over his claimed property.' It's particularly mentioned in the Brihaspati Shmriti also (Section VII, part 27-28), that if a person had enjoyed unopposed and uninterrupted possession over a land for 30 years, it couldnot be taken away from him all of a sudden, and the ownership rights of the original owner(s) stand null and void.

However this rule of natural ownership does not apply if the person who is enjoying the property is a friend or relative of the original owner. Or if the original owner had given him formal consent to use the land on a temporary basis for a particular period of time. Again, a land left fallow doesn't generally means that it falls under the natural ownership of the ruler or the ruling government of the place. For the Brihaspati Shmriti (7.44-46) mentions that a King, minister or a learned Brahmin does not necessarily became the legal owner simply due to the long term absence of it's original owner. According to the Narada Shmriti, if property had been enjoyed by three generations and has passed into the fourth one successively, then legal titles become unnecessary and it cannot be taken away.

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#### **4.8 The expansion of the Agrarian Diaspora**

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One of the primary need for increasing the agricultural output is to sustain the rising population in the rural sector. In fact, it is like one of the age old vicious cycle where

more food leads to better life which leads to more reproduction. More reproduction in turn generate the need for more agricultural production. Although we don't have any specific census data for this age, but from indirect references it's evident that there was indeed a major boom in rural population of this age.

In South India, for instance, there was a steady increase of the members in the Brahman Sabhas or Assemblies. Eg. In Gautam Agrahar in Shikarpur Taluk the Brahmin population rose sharply from 1000 in 890 CE to about 32,000 in 1027 CE ! Along with the Brahmin population the non-Brahmin population particularly that of the peasants, artisans & landed peasants called 'Vellals' also increased, perhaps in a more faster rate. It is also evident from the proliferation of more profession within the rural community. As, R.S. Sharma showed how the rural Kayastha community rose up in this age. Again certain inscriptions mentions new dwelling classes of the village. E.g. Irda copper plate of Nayapal mentions village clerks & traders while Ramganj plate of Iswarghosh mentions a large settlement of 'Karmakaras'.

However, one thing is certain, that the rise of population provided necessary additional supply of labour for agriculture & also generated the need for more agricultural output. All this ultimately led to Agrarian Expansion.

**Growth of Agrarian settlements :** Rise of population in turn encouraged the growth & foundation of more & more new settlements. The land grants to Hindu Temples were among the foremost. Centering this new Temples new settlements of Brahmins & other classes grew up rapidly. This is most evident from the sudden rise of agricultural settlements and the population surrounding a Temple granted by the Barman Kings of Assam like Mahabhuti Barman, Bhaskar barman, etc. The river Valley of Brahmanputra particularly the Guwahati & Tezpur region became concentrated with agrarian settlements in Assam. In the 10th century the Temple settlements emerged as new township & commercial centers.

**Rise of Peasant rebellions :** As to R.S. Sharma, the increasing complexity of the village socio-economy & administration & domination by the land lords, led to increasing peasant protest in this age. Earlier the peasant took up various means of protest ranging from mere litigation & complain to the travelling King to violent suicide & self immolation. But latter it took the form of armed peasant struggle particularly in Andhra, Karnataka & in the territories of Cholas & Pallavas. Several hero stones were thus found in this age, particularly in Karnataka, called 'virakllu', in memory of those who laid their lives in these protests.

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## 4.9 Conclusion

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So from our above discussion it is clear that since the 4th century CE complex concepts of land ownership and land rights were emerging. Different types of ownership rights like collective / tribal control, Royal ownership and also private ownership were practiced in different places. The specific rules and regulations of land rights for every scenario and categories are specifically addressed in the Dharmasashtra law books of the time. Every rights have their specific obligations and needed to fulfilled some specific criterias. Among them, the land holding rights enjoyed by the emerging class of beneficiaries in the donated lands, apparently seem to be the most lucrative. But they too were bounded by specific sets of regulations and compulsions. While on the part of peasant society, we find that with growing societal complexity, there was a sharp expansion of the peasant diaspora which ultimately formed one of the primary reason behind the agrarian expansion in Early Medieval India.

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## 4.10 Model Questions

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1. What were the different categories of land ownership practiced in Early Medieval India ? Explain them
2. What were the rights and regulations enjoyed by the landed beneficiaries of the newly emerging donated lands ? Were they bounded by any compulsion ?
3. What was the generalized views on land rights of the contemporary Dharmasashtras ?
4. What were the ways to acquire a property ?
5. Describe the system of obtaining natural ownership over a piece of Land ?
6. Explain the expansion of the peasant society since the 4th century C.E. in India.

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## 4.11 Suggested Readings

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Chattopadhyaya, Braja Dulal, *The Making of Early Medieval India*, (Delhi, OUP : 1997)

Maity, S.K., *Economic Life in Northern India in the Gupta Period* [c. AD 300-500], (Delhi, Dass pub : 1970)

Sharma, R.S., *Material Culture and Social Formations in Ancient India*, (Delhi, Macmillan India : 1983)

Singh, Upinder, *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India : From the Stone Age to the 12th century*, (New Delhi, Pearson Pub. : 2009)

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## **Unit 5 □ The Problem of Urban Decline : patterns of trade, currency and urban settlements**

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### **Structure**

- 5.0 Objective**
- 5.1 Introduction**
- 5.2 Defining what is urbanization**
- 5.3 Distribution of Urban centers in Early India ( circa 4th - 8th century CE)**
- 5.4 The Theory of Decline in Urbanization**
  - 5.4.1 Decline of Trade & Commerce**
  - 5.4.2 Fall of Monetary Economy**
  - 5.4.3 Socio-cultural & Internal factors**
- 5.5 Countering the De-urbanization Theory**
- 5.6 Factors that influences the rising trade & commerce during this period (circa 4th - 9th century CE)**
- 5.7 The Inland Trade (Different contemporary routes & some features)**
- 5.8 The External Trans-oceanic Continental Trade**
- 5.9 Rise of Byzantine Trade**
- 5.10 Rise of South-East Asian Trade**
- 5.11 Conclusion**
- 5.12 Model Questions**
- 5.13 Suggested Readings**

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### **5.0 Objective**

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- The objective of this present unit is to study the definition of Urbanisation and geographical distribution of Urban centres.
- The theory of decline urbanisation will be also elaborated here.
- The learners are able to gather some ideas about decline of Indo-Roman trade and commerce from this unit.
- The reasons behind the fall of monetary economy will be discussed .
- How did the historians like B.D Chattopadhyay countered the theory De-Urbanisation will be also described here.

- On the other hand the possible factors behind the rise of trade & commerce in India during 4th - 9th century C.E.
- The inland trade, Byzantine trade and South East Asian trade—will be focused in this unit.

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## 5.1 Introduction

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In the context of Ancient India, Urbanization is supposed to be occurred in two phases viz. - 1st in the Harappan Age & the second since the Age of Mahajanapadas. According to different archaeological & literary sources, it is generally argued by the historians that the cities / urban centers of the second phase, like the famous cities of Pataliputra, Kashi, Koushambi, etc managed to survive up to the Gupta Age, owing to political stability, economic flourishing & viable trans-national trade & commerce.

But since the fall of the Guptas, from the 5th-6th century CE, there seemed to be a decline in urbanization in India owing to the adverse politico-economic condition. Although certain new urban centers sprang up, but most of the earlier cities declined. However it's still a debatable issue among the historians.

Now, one of the primary driving force of Urbanization is trade and commerce which controls the economic condition of the region at large. It's worthy to mention that, trade & commerce is a part & parcel of South Asia since the birth of the Indian Civilization in the Indus valley, 5000 years ago. In fact, Trade is indispensable for the very growth of urban development too. The Post Mauryan Era, starting from the end of Mauryans to the beginning of the Guptas (roughly from 200 BCE to 300 CE), was called the Golden era in the history of Indian commerce both external & internal. But, since the 5th century CE from the latter half of the Gupta Empire, this flourishing picture of trade & commerce in the subcontinent seemed to disappear gradually.

Historians, in this regard however vary in their opinions. Some say that the Early Medieval Period in India is an age of “decay & disintegration” and as a matter of fact, it witnessed a limited commercial progress with a declining trade & economic exchanges, since the 5th century. However, in contrast to this opinion, certain others tried to counter by highlighting, how EMA in India continued to offer a relinquish history of trade & commercial flourishing.

In our following section let us quickly go through the history of urbanization, economy, trade and commerce from circa 4th century to circa 8th century & discuss the possible factors that influenced the process of urbanization or deurbanization in this age.

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## 5.2 Defining what is urbanization

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Before we can proceed in to the history of urban process in India, let us first clear about the concept of urbanization. The process of growing up of a civilization & culture centering round a city, town or urban centre is defined as urbanization.

**Difference between cities & villages :** Human settlements can be broadly divided into two categories -

- i) City &
- ii) Village

Cities are generally larger than village in terms of area & population. However this is not their only difference. The main difference however lies in the occupation & lifestyle of its dwellers. Whereas the people of villages are mainly primary producers who deals in agriculture & livestock rearing, the people of cities mainly deals with non-agricultural industrial works like craftsmanship, trade & commerce, administration, etc. Thus, while village forms the key of agricultural economy, cities form the backbone of industrial & commercial economy. Combining both of these grows a civilization.

**Characteristics to identify an urban centre :** But how to distinguish a city from Historical background ? Historian **R.S. Sharma** laid stress over archaeological data for the same. The remains of a city can be identified from samples like mound, artisanal instruments like axe, simplets, furnaces, luxurious urban items & lastly urban residential complex & remains of forts & palaces. **Gordon Childe** on the other hand emphasized on the accounts of scientific & industrial activity of a settlement. Whereas, historians like **Mc Adams** laid stress on amount of population & population density.

However, Ancient Indian scholar Panini opined to identify a settlement as a city only if it is fortified or barricaded properly within what different classes of people from merchants to administrators reside.

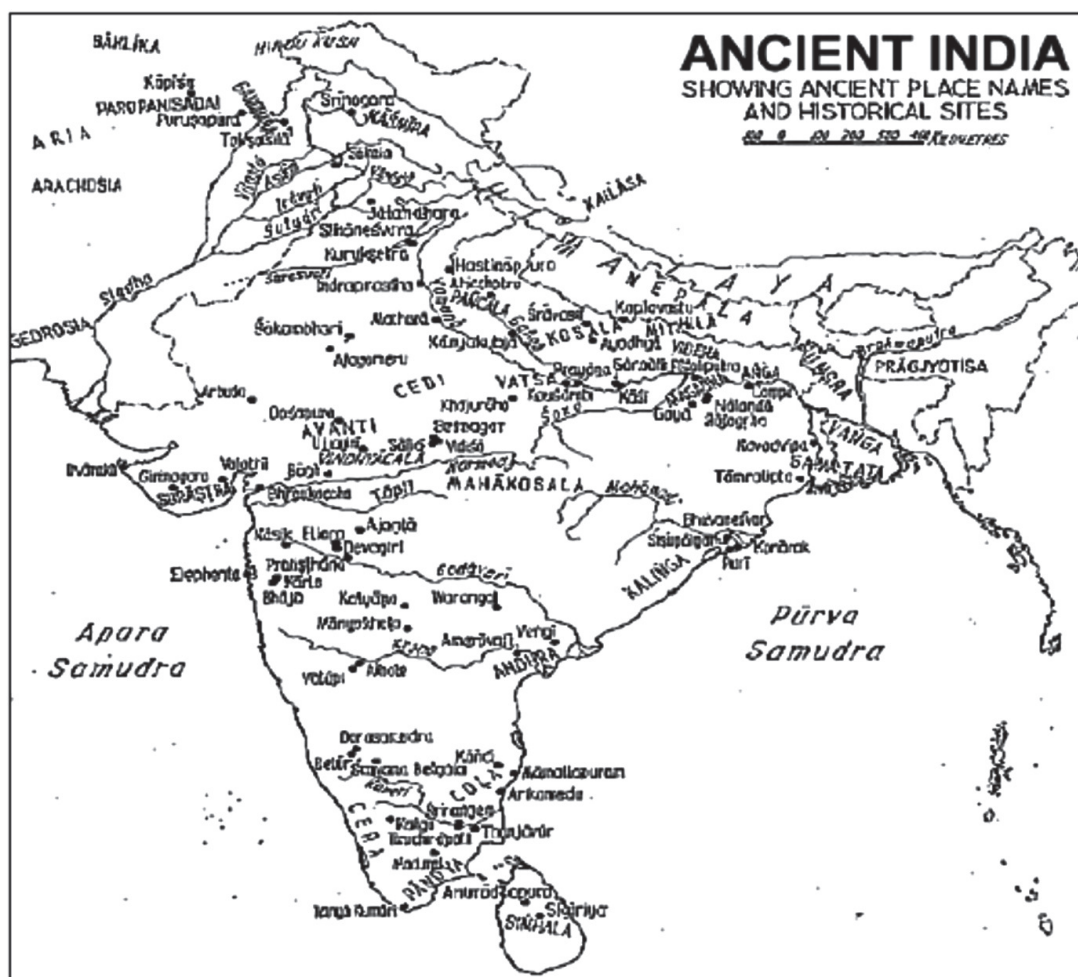
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## 5.3 Distribution of Urban centres in Early India ( circa 4th - 8th century CE)

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Historian R.S Sharma had studied in detail about the rise & fall of different urban centers in contemporary India. On the basis of their material culture, Sharma had divided the geographical distribution of the urban centers of the country into 4 distinct regions :

- i) Northern India
- ii) Middle Gangetic plain & Eastern India
- iii) Western & Central India
- iv) Southern India



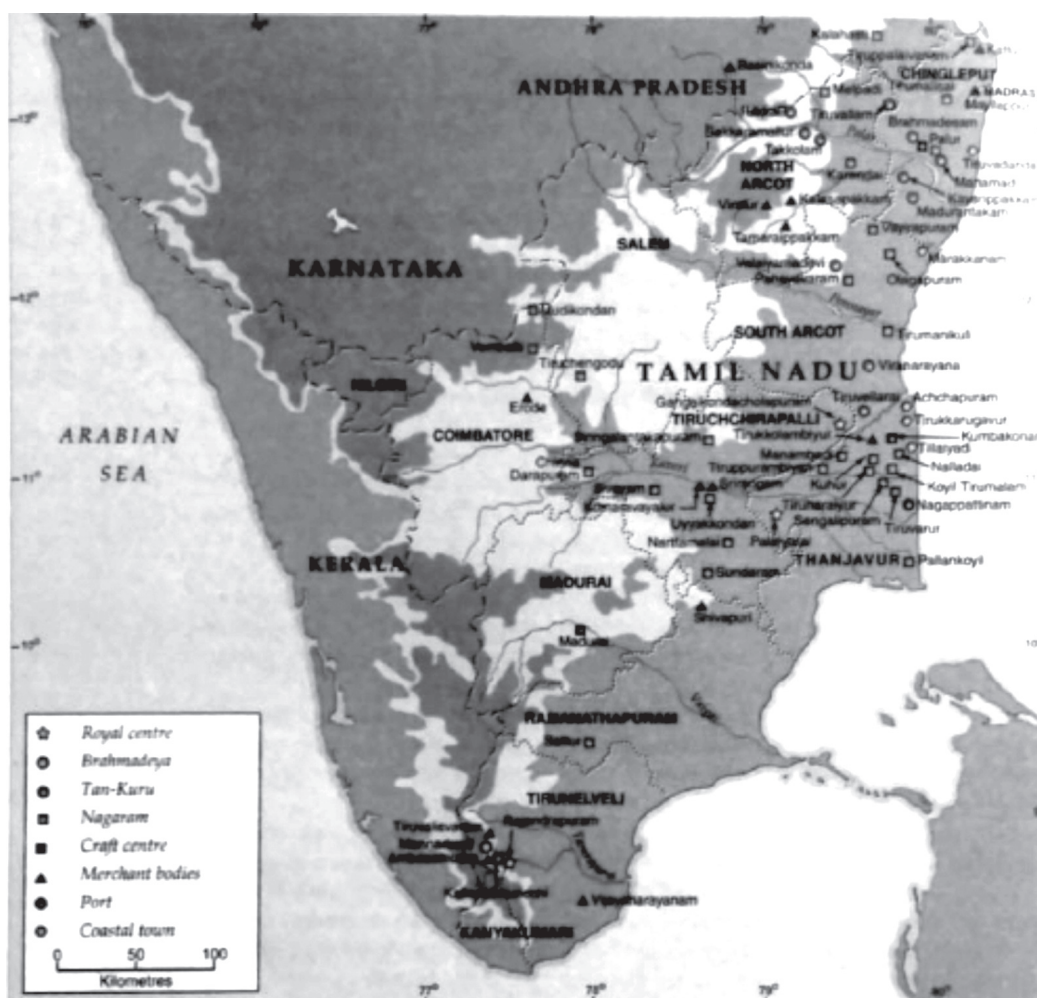
A map of major urban centers in India (circa 5th century CE)

**i) Northern India :** The region mainly includes the cities of Indus-Gangetic divide including the regions of Punjab, Haryana & Delhi like Taxila, Bhagavanpur, Sirkap, Hastinapur, Purana Quila, Atranjikhhera, Ahichatra, etc. These urban centers emerged since the Mauryan & pre-Mauryan age. The period from 1st cen BCE - 3rd cen CE was the golden era for them. But since the Gupta age in 5th century these urban centers tended to decline as evident from archaeological remains. While cities like Hastinapur & Atranjikhhera started decline before the arrival of Guptas, educational centers like Taxila, as to John Marshal was destroyed by the Hunas.

**ii) Middle Gangetic plain & Eastern India :** This region includes the provinces of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Kamrup, Bengal & Orissa. Koshambi, Kashi, Kanauj, Sravasti, Ayodhya, Mathura, Pataliputra, Champa, Sishupalgar (Puri district), Chandraketugar (N 24 Pargana), Dihar ( Bankura district), Tamralipta, etc were the chief cities of this area. Like the cities of Northern India, they too survived till the

early years of Gupta Age, but declined during the EMA as eminent from Archaeological & Chinese sources.

**iii) Western & Central India :** This includes the regions of Rajasthan, MP, Gujarat & Maharashtra. The important urban centers of this region were Viratanagar (Bairat), Suratgarh (Bikaner), Tripuri, Ujjain, Eran (Sagar, MP), Mandasor, Sanchi, Vidisha, Mahismati, Brighukacha, Ballavi (Kathiwar, Gujarat), Prabhaspatan (near Dwarka), Pratisthan, Nevasa (modern Ahmednagar), Nasik, etc. The cities rose to their apex mainly during the time of Kushanas & Satvahanas & decline during Gupta & post-Gupta age.



Some major urban centers of South India (Reff. Upinder Singh)

**iv) South India :** The urban centers of South India mainly comprises of the commercial & merchant towns like Arikamedu, Mausalipattanam, Kaveripattanam, Amravati, etc. This centers mainly sustained on the viability of Trans-Oceanic trade & commerce.

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## 5.4 The Theory of Decline in Urbanization

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From 5th - 6th century CE, the urban centres of Ancient India started showing signs of rapid decline. The "Brihatsamhita" of Varahamihir depicts a gloomy presence of urban centers around this time. As a matter of concern, it also prophesied that towns & cities were going to be destroyed in the coming "days of evil". Contemporary authors like Kalidasa too depict a picture of the desolation of Ayodhya city in his "Raghuvansh".

R.S. Sharma in his famous book "Urban decay in India", describes how the archaeological evidences of Post-Gupta Period suggest the decay of several former towns & commercial centers like Purana Quila (Delhi), Mathura, Hastinapur, Sravasti, Koushambi, Pataliputra, etc. In Vaishali, the last archaeological construction was in Period IV (300-500 C.E.), that too of reused bricks.

When Chinese pilgrim Hsien Tsang came to India he visited many of the sacred Buddhist sites. He too found most of those like Kapilavastu, Sravasti, Rajghat, Vaishali, etc. either in deserted or in dilapidated condition.

Historian R.S. Sharma proposed for a 2 phase decline of Urban centers - one beginning during the 3rd - 4th century CE. Another phase of decline took place after 6th century CE, i.e. during the Early Medieval Age. For constructing his theory of urban decline he mainly relied on literary sources & epigraphical references and the accounts of foreigners like Hsien Tsang, Arab travelers, etc. Sharma's view was supported by historian Krishnamohan Srinivasi, who found out a decline in urban material culture & commercial economic decline in the towns & cities of the erstwhile Satavahana & latter Vakataka Empire in Western India. He found out an expansion of rural settlements & onset of Early Medieval Feudalism.

As to Sharma, urban decline is associated with some of the usual features like -

- i) Decline of trade & commerce
- ii) Decline of monetary economy
- iii) Decline of Merchants & artisans along with decrease in their reference in Inscriptions
- iv) Artisans & traders were forced to migrate to villages
- v) Distinction between towns & villages became blurred
- vi) Urban contraction led to an agrarian expansion

Let us discuss the factors & impact behind the decline of urbanization one by one.

### 5.4.1 Decline of Trade & Commerce

Up to the beginning of the Gupta Period India witnessed a flourishing prospect in Trade & Commerce. There developed several vibrant commercial routes including that with the Roman Empire. The abundant inscriptions & Copper Plate mentions the rise of several affluent merchant guilds.

But since the last half of the 5th century C.E., this long distance trade began to decline.

Various factors were responsible behind the decline of this affluent commercial exchange. These are -

- i) A gradual disinterest from the Romans, mostly due to one-sided profit gains
  - ii) The rise of the Arab Intermediaries & the development of Islam in the Middle East
  - iii) Gradual decline of the Roman Empire with repeated Barbarian & Hunic attacks.
- Ultimately with the fall of Rome in 476 CE, the Western Roman Empire came to an

### Early historic Indian Ocean exchanges



#### The Indo-Roman Trade

With this the Indo-Roman trade also declined. The remaining silk-trade with Byzantium & Iran also came to an halt in the middle of the 6th century C.E. (Reff.- R.S. Sharma), due to continuous interference by the Arab traders in between. In fact, within the 8th century the entire Western Trade practically became monopolized by the Arab traders. The decline in trade & commerce also led to the decay of the formal urban commercial centers. Thus most of the Western ports of India along the Arabian Sea coast, like Muziris, Arikamedu, Sopara, etc. lost their formal importance.. Simultaneously the inland commercial centers that thrived on this trade, like Pataliputra, Ujjain, Prathhistan, etc also lost their importance.

#### 5.4.2 Fall of Monetary Economy

For Marxist scholars like R.S. Sharma, the decline of trade & commerce is best demonstrated by the debasement of coins/currency during this time. To him “Monetization presupposes a measure of centralization.”

During the Pre-Gupta times like that of the Mauryans, Kushanas or the Satavahanas, all the salaries of the state officials, from bureaucrats to soldiers were paid in cash. This is proved by the discovery of a large number of Gold, Copper & Bronze coins in this age.

It is needless to say that 99% of these metals required for the minting of coins is obtained from the flourishing Indo-Roman Trade.



Left : Gold Coins of the Gupta Right : Copper coins of the Mauryans

This process continued up to the early Guptas. But after Samudra Gupta we find there developed a scarcity of coins. The discovery of Gupta Gold coins proves that high ranking officials might be paid in cash, but the unavailability of any copper or bronze coins of the Guptas testifies on the other hand that beyond the level of high officials cash transaction was not possible. Gradually, it was replaced by the system of rewarding of services with land grants - A typical feature of Feudal Decentralization. After the 5th cen. C.E. cash transaction almost came to an halt.

#### 5.4.3 Socio-cultural & Internal factors

However, according to R.S. Sharma the decay of trade & commerce was not only due to International factors. It was accelerated by the rise of a typical anti-commercial feeling in the socio-cultural mood of the EMA.

The Shritis of this age recommended imposition of higher taxes on traders which was much more than that of Arthasashtra. Simultaneously the kings of this age also in dearth of sufficient revenue income from the land , tried to impose more tax burden on the traders. In addition of the custom duties the merchants also has to pay a separate tax called “Kara” & the artisans “Shilpapratikara”. Day by day these oppressions over the traders increased.

Migration of traders & workers : Due to all these factors many of the traders & merchants tried to escape from their profession either by taking other incomes or by migration. EG. The Mandasore Inscription refers to the migration of a guild of silk traders migrating from the Western coast. While many other traders joined hands with the disgruntled peasants & artisans leading to frequent rebellions, a feature of EMA.

Rise of self-sufficient village economy : Urban contraction however led to Agrarian Expansion. In fact, a restricted market forced the artisans & merchants to migrate from their towns & instead took up cultivation in the countryside. While on the other hand, on account of the unavailability of artisanal goods from outside through long distant trade, the villagers had to take the responsibility to acquire their necessary non-agricultural items like Iron implements, Salt, Cotton, etc. by their own. It resulted in the

development of self sufficient subsistent Village economy - what Karl Marx called “Asiatic modes of Production”.

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### 5.5 Countering the De-urbanization Theory

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The theory of Urban Decline seems to be very sketchy. For scholars like B.D. Chattopadhyay or Upinder Singh showed us that although the Early Medieval Age witnessed the decline of certain Urban centers but it also saw the emergence & flourishing of some others. In fact, the same Hieuen Tsang himself mentioned the rise of certain prosperous towns & cities like Thaneshwar, Vranasi, Kanyakubja (Kanauj), etc.

**Refusal of Monetary crisis :** With regard to monetary history, Historian John S. Deyell, showed that money was not in scarce in EMI, nor is here any financial crisis. There might be a reduction of the quality of coins, but not in the volume of its circulation. He also argued that debasement of coins doesn't necessarily means a monetary crisis. It might be due to shortage of metal. Eg, sine 700 CE India was facing a shortage in supply of Silver (Ag) from Afghanistan. This led the local ruler dilute the silver content of their coins.

**Rise of Important cities :** From Archaeological remains, Historian B.D. Chattopadhyay list down some of the important cities that rose during this age. Eg. In the Indo-Gangetic divide new cities like Pehoa (Prithudak) in Haryana emerged as the main centre of North-Western horse trade. While another well laid-out large city of Tattanandapur rose up near Bulandsahar. In Malwa, large scale archaeological remains proves the existence of a well established civic-mercantile city in Siyandoni in Jhansi district. The city emerged during the time of Gurjara Pratiharas from 907-968 CE. In Central India, the inscriptions of Kalachuris proved their patronage behind the rise of several cities. In South India, the vivid descriptions of City & city life in the Tamil epics proved the process of urbanization still working in South India. The Shilapaddikaram describe the busy & bustling mercantile cities of Puhar & Madurai.

**Flourishment of trans-oceanic trade :** It is proved by historians like Upinder Singh, K N Chaudhury, that in the EMA although the former glorious Indo-Roman trade declined , but it was soon compensated by the rising Byzantium trade via the hands of Arab intermediaries, and the vibrant South East Asian & East Asian trade particularly the silk & spice trade of the East.

The Indian ports like Tamralipta, Puhar, Quilon, etc became important interjection of East West trade, i.e. where the Arab & European merchants from the West & the Chinese & SE Asian merchants from the East meet & exchange their commodities.

Let us discuss the rising commercial exchange of India from 4th-9th century CE in separate sections. It chiefly comprised the period that is called the Early Medieval Age (EMA) in India.

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### 5.6 Factors that influences the rising trade & commerce during this period (circa 4th - 9th century CE)

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There were certain factors that were responsible behind the growth of trade & commerce in this period:

**i) Availability of resources :** The Northern Ganga-Yamuna Doab was a very fertile land. As such it offered a surplus agricultural production which is vital resource for trade & commercial economy. Efficient irrigation, rainfall & climatic conditions boost the process. Again there were ample mineral resources particularly iron ores in the Chotonagpur & Deccan plateau. It not only eases agriculture but it also provided a vital commodity for commercial exchange.

**ii) The Agrahara land grants** in the Gupta & post Gupta Age led to a farther agricultural expansion according to scholars like B.D. Chattopadhyay. Because in most cases the granted lands were uncultivated fallow lands or lands which were not in a position to realize revenue (particularly forests). It is now the task of the Brahmins/grantees to make it productive. Thus in this age we many of the tribes were settling as cultivators & plough agriculture was introduced in greater parts of the interior.

**iii) Spread of Commercial agriculture :** This trend is particularly noticed in South India. Owing to the growing trans-oceanic commerce in this region, it became a hub of commercial crops like cinnamon, cardamom, cotton, pepper, etc. Growth of commercial agriculture is a vital factor for the growth of trade & commerce.

**iv) Good communication :** In the EMA communication & connectivity developed. Apart from internal land routes, different riverine water routes also sprang up that eases the path of trade. Throughout 5th-12th century, we find traders travelled to far flung countries following these routes.

**v) Political consolidation :** Although EMA witnessed the breakdown of political unity & rise of regional proliferation, nevertheless, the new regional regimes are mostly friendly to commerce. This not only provided peace & stability vital for trade & commerce, but this new monarchs, particularly those of Southern India like Chola, Chalukyas & Pandyas, used to send their ambassadors to far flung countries & established diplomatic political relations with various foreign kingdoms like the Srivijyas of Indonesia. This farther boosted trade.

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### 5.7 The Inland Trade (Different contemporary routes & some features)

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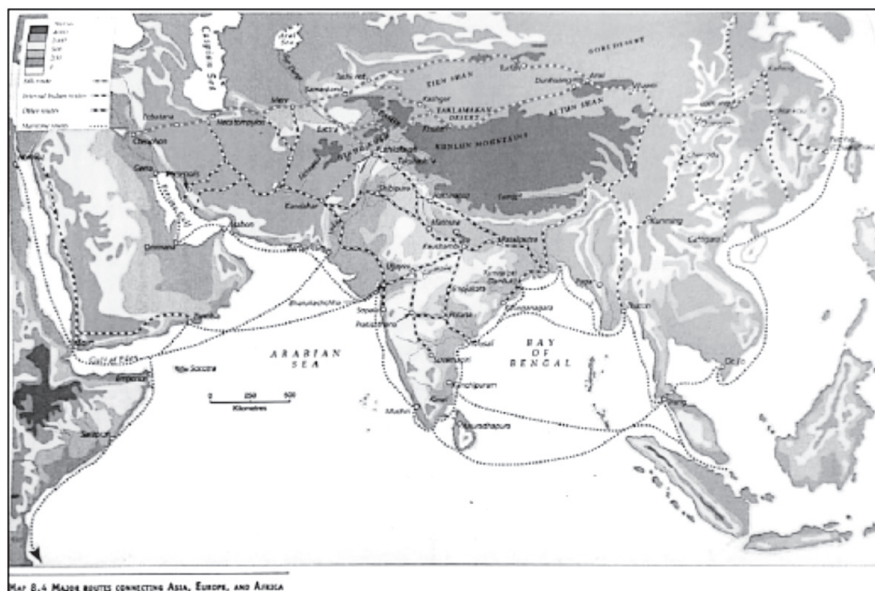
The Indian trade system can be divided into two broad paths :

- i) Internal trade
- ii) External / trans-continental naval trade.

In this section, let us focus on the contemporary Internal trade. Now, to construct the history of Internal trade, Inscriptions & Literary evidences forms the principle sources.

**Different Routes :** The establishment of different inland roads for communication manipulated the development of internal trade & commerce. From literary sources like Jatakas we find the existence of following principle thoroughfares of the period :

- i) According to Atindra Nath Basu, the main east-west route extends from Tamralipta & Sonargaon in the East to Aparanta (Gandahar) in the West.
- ii) Another route originates from the Satvahana capital of Pratisthan in the Deccan & meet th Norther plains near Kanauj via Nasik - Ujjaini & Vidisha, cutting across the Vindyas.
- iii) Another route originates from Paithan & goes East cutting across the Western Ghats, then divides into two - one goes to Brighukacha port & another to Surat.
- iv) Another route originates from Brigukacha goes north to Kabul following the coarse of Indus via Pushkalavati & erstwhile Taxila.
- v) Kanauj was one of the meeting point/ inter-junction of various trade routes.
- vi) There was South Eastern coast route from Kanauj to South India via Prayag - Munger & Orissa.
- vii) There was regular thoroughfare between Kanauj & Kamrup (Assam) in the East which extended to China & Tibet. This route was followed by many of the Chinese adventurers including Hieuen Tsang.
- viii) Apart from all of these there were two direct routes originating from the port of Tamralipta - one directly goes to Ayodhya in the North-west, another went to Assam via South Bengal. The second route was said to be followed by Bhakti saint Chaitanyadev during his journey from Bengal to Orissa.



Major trade routes of Early Medieval India (Reff. Upinder Singh)

**Inland toll tax :** There were provisions of various inland toll tax for merchants & traders. Eg. The Jatakas mentions a type of toll tax named “Skandhak” & “Margnak”. The word “Skandha” refers to shoulder & perhaps Skandhak tax was levied over goods carried on shoulders. Sometimes powerful corporate organizations of merchants played a vital roll in fixing custom duties. E.g. In the port town of Quilon in the Western coast, there was an evidence of an agreement between the local guild & the Chera kings over the payment of revenue, upon which the merchants would enjoy special protection.

**Street shops :** From the epics of Kalidas we got the evidence of regular street shops in different cities. Kalidasa mentions a road named "Apanmarg" whose two sides were used to be studded with markets & shops.

**River Routes :** Apart from Land routes Chinese travelers like Hieuen Tsang also mentioned the importance of River Routes, particularly in the River valleys of South India & the Riverine Bengal region. Thus, in the inscriptions of Bengal, we find the ample references of such terms like “Nabotakhoni” (manufacturing centers of River boats), “Noudandak”, “Noubandhak”, etc. Ganga, Yamuna, Ghargara, Chambal, Mahanadi, Krishna, Godavari, etc. were some of the busiest rivers of those times.

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### 5.8 The External Trans-oceanic Continental Trade

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As we discussed earlier, up to the 4th century CE, India witnessed a flourishing prospect in Trade & Commerce with the Roman Empire. But since the last half of the 5th century C.E., this glorious long distance Indo-Roman trade began to decline. The fall of Indo Roman trade led to a drastic decline of trans-oceanic commerce for India in the Gupta & post-Gupta era.

However, it was temporary. The apparent loss procured due to the disappearance of the Indo-Roman trade was soon fulfilled with the establishment of new International trade routes across the continents and Oceans.

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### 5.9 Rise of Byzantine Trade

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According Ranabir Chakrovarty, the temporary vacuum of Indo Roman trade is partially filled up with renewed trade contact with the newly rising Byzantine Empire / Eastern Roman Empire centering from Constantinople (modern Istanbul), after it's establishment in 473 CE.



### The Indo-Byzantine Trade

The new Byzantine Emperors were keenly interested in trade with India. However unlike the former Red Sea route, this new trade with Byzantine Empire followed the route along the Persian Gulf.

This brought into fray the role of intermediaries particularly the Arab merchants & the Sassanid Persian Empire, who were interested in this trade. According to Cosmos Indikoploeists “Christian topography”, this trade in turn renewed the importance of some of the new Western ports of India like Chaul, Kalyan, Kozhikode, etc. However Sri Lanka was the major target for the Western merchants.

### 5.10 Rise of South-East Asian Trade

The gap in the Western trade was slowly compensated by the new commercial contacts developing rapidly with South East Asia.

The earliest references were obtained from Pali & Sanskrit texts like Arthashastra & Milinda-Panho, who refers India's contact with the lands of Suvarndweepa / Suvarnbhumi i.e land of Gold. The earliest archaeological evidence of India's contact was from 500-400 BCE. However from 1st century CE there was an increase in the overseas trade contact due to emergence of mainland South-East Asian kingdoms like Sailendra Empire, Srivijaya Empire, etc. & kingdoms in Malay Peninsula.

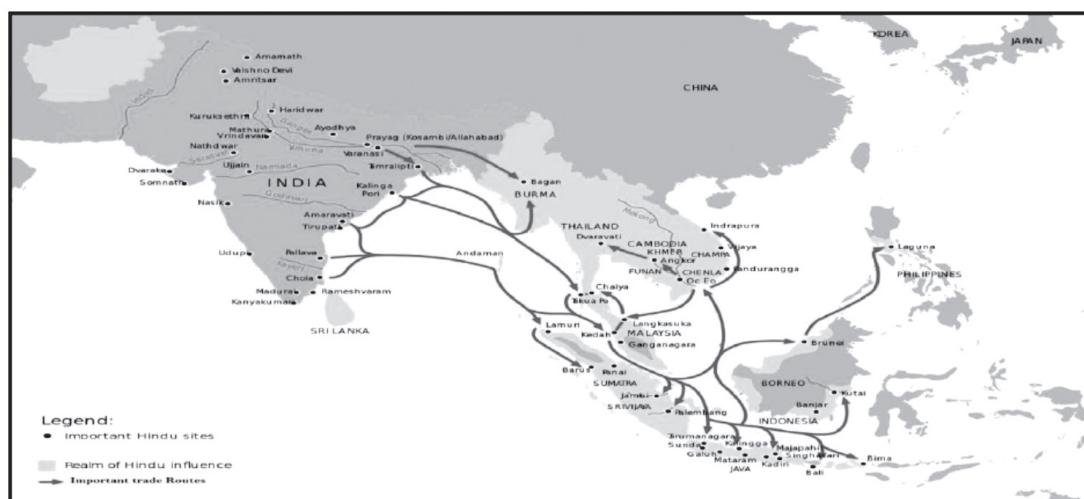
The following items of Export & Import can be listed from SE Asia to India according to literary & archaeological evidences. Some of the items of export were sent to Western markets also.

Export	Import
Gold, spices such as Cinnamon & cloves, aromatic, sandalwood & camphor	Cotton cloath, sugar, beads, certain potteries, etc.

In this connection, the **Chola Political power promoted the South East Asian trade** in various ways. Sometimes they established protected mercantile towns called "Erivirapattanas". While the Chola naval military expeditions of Sri Lanka (1080 CE) & to Malaya peninsula & Indonesia under Rajendra Chola I in 1025 CE, helped to establish direct India control over the maritime South East Asian trade. It also established Indian control over key maritime junctions like Mannar of Sri Lanka.

**Cultural Exchange :** The expanding trade contacts with SE Asia are reflected in the cultural interaction. Hindu images/sculptures of Chola period, dating from the 4th cen CE, are found in SE Asia in various places like Vieng Sra, Angkor Vat or in the Surya images in Temples of Java. While the Sri Vijaya & Kadaram dynasties of SE Asia patronized the building of the Buddhist monastery at Nagapattnam, Tamil Nadu, taking permission from the Cholas. While there were regular exchange of ambassadors between the two political powers The Khemer king sent gifts to Rajendra Chola.

**Mercahnt Associations /Guilds :** There were existance of large corporate organization of the merchants controlling the SE Asian trade. One such is the Ayyavole (group of 500s), established in Aihole, Karnataka.



The Indo-South-East Asian Trade

**Role of Bengal & Tamralipta as an interjunction :** Chinese traveler like Hieun Tsang & Fa Hien, who came to India via the Trans-oceanic route from SE Asia, talked about the rising importance of Bengal coastline as an interjunction of this trade. Particularly they praised the port of Tamralipta, which situated in a natural protection. Due to its ideal geographical location, many Arab & Chinese ships made this at their meeting point & anchored at Tamralipta avoiding the deep sea.

Indian ports prospered immensely after acting as an interjunction of the greater East-West trade between China & SE Asia on one hand & Arabia & Europe on the other.

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### 5.11 Conclusion

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Thus, from our above discussion, we can argue that by 4th - 5th century CE, there were signs of declining urban centers across the Indian Sub-continent. We have also discussed the possible factors behind this deurbanization process like fall of Western Roman trade, decline of monetary economy, etc. Several Marxist historians like R.S. Sharma, B.N.S. Yadav, etc. tried to relate this phenomenon of “second deurbanization” with the regular symptom of introduction of Medieval Feudalism in Ancient India.

However, this view is elaborately countered by many other historians like B.D. Chattopadhyay, Upinder Singh, etc. Thus we find that there might be decline of urban centers but there were rise of many others at the same time. In fact, there were hardly any such conditions prevailing that might led to a generalized deurbanization all through the country. Hence we can call it a period of urban change but not that of a colossal urban decline.

It can be best expressed in terms of trade & commerce in that period. From our above discussion it can be said that circa 4th - 9th century in India cannot be identified as a dark age of Decay & disintegration for trade & commerce. Rather trans-continental commercial exchanges developed afresh. Sometimes renewed commercial relations were established with new countries. Thus although there might be some occasional disturbance like falling Indo-Roman trade, but it was slowly compensated by the establishment of new commercial contacts & trade routes with new regions like that of Byzantine or SE Asia.

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### 5.12 Model Questions

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- 1) What is Urbanization ? What were the characteristics to define an urban centre in Ancient India?
- 2) Give a brief description of the Geographical distribution of various urban centers in Ancient India (c. 4th - 9th century CE).

- 3) Do you think that Ancient India experienced a general decline in urbanization since 4th-5th century CE ? If so, then what were the possible factors behind that ? Explain
- 4) How did the fall of Western Roman trade led to a decline of Urbanization in 4th-5th century CE ?
- 5) What is “Asiatic mode of production” ?
- 6) How did historians like B.D. Chattopadhyay countered the theory of De-urbanization?
- 7) What were the possible factors behind the rise of trade & commerce in India during circa. 4th - 9th century CE?
- 8) What were the different inland trade routes of contemporary period in India ? Describe any two of it's features?
- 9) Describe the rise of transcontinental oceanic trade during the same period ?
- 10) What was the role of Chola administration behind the establishment of India's flourishing trading contact with South-East Asia ?

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### 5.13 Suggested Readings

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## **Unit 6 □ Varna and Proliferation of Jatis.**

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### **Structure**

#### **6.0 Objective**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

#### **6.2 The Expansion of Brahmanism and the absorption of tribes**

#### **6.3 The Socio-economic background**

##### **6.3.1 Indiscriminate Land grants and sub-infeudation**

##### **6.3.2 The Decline of trade and commerce**

##### **6.3.3 Increasing attachment to the land and development of a closed economy**

#### **6.4 The decline of Vaishyas and the rise of Shudras**

#### **6.5 The Emergence of Kayastha Community**

#### **6.6 Proliferation of the Brahmana community**

#### **6.7 Proliferation of the Kshatryia caste**

#### **6.8 Conclusion**

#### **6.9 Model Questions**

#### **6.10 Suggested Readings**

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#### **6.0 Objective**

- The objective of this present unit is to study that how did the Brahminical religion expanded over the tribal periphery in Post - Guptas age.
  - The decline of Vaishyas on the other hand was compensated by the gradual rise & expansion of the Shudra community will be elaborated here.
  - The other objective of this unit is to know how did the emergence of Kayastha community in Post - Guptas age.
  - Proliferation of Brahmins community & expansion of Kshatriya community -- will be also focused in this unit.
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#### **6.1 Introduction**

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The Early Medieval period was one of proliferation & fragmentation. In this post-Gupta era, the existing Varnas broke up into many castes & sects and numerous new tribes & communities were incorporated within them. Several socio-economic upheavals particularly Land grants, sub-infudation & decentralization of political power led to an unequal distribution of land & power. This in turn led to the emergence of new social groups & ranks, which didn't quite fit into the existing four fold Varna system. Thus, we find the entire caste system & hierarchies in Early Medieval India undergoes various

alterations & adjustments, which not only led proliferation of castes but also changes the relative social positions of the existing ones.

Let us discuss this in our following sections.

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## **6.2 The Expansion of Brahmanism & the absorption of tribes**

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The period witnessed the expansion of the peripheries of the sedentarized states of both North & South India. This obviously led them to a conflict with adjacent tribal societies. This advancement of Brahmanism mainly took place during the Gupta & post-Gupta period. Eg. Since its formation, the Guhilla Rajput dynasty of SE Rajasthan was involved in serious conflict with the adjacent Bhill tribes. In fact, the foundation of this dynasty lies in the defeat of the Bhill chief Mandalika in the hands of king Guhadtta. Later many of the Bhills converted from hunter-gatherers to tax-paying farmers. Again, Inscriptions of Ganga king of Orissa, Anantavarman Chodaganga suggests how his ancestors defeated the Shabara tribes. These conflicts ultimately led to the displacement & integration/absorption of the tribal societies into the sedentarized Hindu societies. However, it also led to greater interaction between tribal & Brahminical cultures. It was not that only the tribal societies got "Hinduized", but also several tribal elements also penetrated into the Brahminical culture. Eg. Sanskrit inscriptions from Assam suggest greater incorporation of Khasi & Gado words. Again the penetration of the tribal cultures in Orissa is best reflected in the rise of worship of the Jagannath cult, which clearly has tribal origins.

Thus, the expansion of Brahmanism in disguise of Sanatan Hinduism was not in the form of mass migration of Vedic Aryans like the Rig Vedic ages. Rather the expansion was in terms of the spread of the system over tribal & non-Hindu population of the peripheral regions. Their autonomous areas might have been politically conquered earlier by the Kshatriyas or the ancient sedentarized political powers like Satavahanas, Vakataks or Guptas but their real adaptation was carried by the Brahmans during this period. As a result, the Varna system was also extended over them. Accordingly, a large number of these peripheral tribal peoples in Bengal & South India was absorbed under the Sudra caste. Thus, according to the anthropogenic study of P.C. Mahalanobis, the Sudras of Bengal appeared to be of indigenous breed resembling their lower caste neighbors of adjacent Bihar, while the Brahmanas of Bengal resembles more to their counterparts of North India.

However not all of these peripheral & neo-Hindu people were adapted to Sudra castes only. Many of them were incorporated to other castes & sub-castes also. For example, during this time a large number of foreign invaders & immigrants like Sakas, Kushanas, etc were adapted to the Kshatriya folds. Similarly, most of the ruling tribal chiefs of Bengal along with many of their kinsmen were also incorporated among the Kshatriya folds & Mahissya sub-caste.

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### **6.3 The Socio-economic background**

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Certain economic developments accelerated the social changes of this post-Gupta period.

#### **6.3.1 Indiscriminate Land grants & sub-infeudation**

One of the central factors that finally transformed the Ancient Indian Society to Early Medieval Society is the indiscriminate practice of land grants. The concept of granting lands is something new in Indian socio-politics. It is not at all mentioned in Ashokan edicts. We first came to know about the practice only from the Satavahana Age, when certain Land Grants were made by Satavahana ruler Gautamiputra Satakarni. But in this case, the king at least beheld the administrative & military rights over the granted lands & they were very few in numbers.

But from the Gupta & post-Gupta period large scale land grants were begun to be made to Brahmins & Political beneficiaries. Here the lands were not only made tax-free, but more importantly the entire administrative & governing rights were also transferred to the hands of the beneficiaries. The beneficiaries obtained total rights to enjoy all the productions levied from the donated lands including realization of taxes from the peasants & artisans residing there. Thus along with the land the people living in it were also transferred from the former jurisdiction of the King to the granted beneficiaries. It is up to them to deal with the residents on their own terms, turning them to land lords. Even the Government forces would be forbidden to disturb these donated lands, without permission. Eg. In the Nalanda Land grant Inscription, or in the Madhya-Pradesh Inscription of Samudragupta or in the Khalimpur Copper Plate of Pala King Dharmapala, residents were asked by their king not only to pay the customary tax to the beneficiaries but also to obey their commands.

Thus, this lands became semi independent enough to rise as new source of local authority. This is a completely new situation. Not only it accelerated the unprecedented rise of small feudal kingdoms, but it also resulted in the transformation of the peasants & artisans into bonded labor - two of the typical features of Feudalism in Early Medieval Age.

But why did this practice originated ?

Firstly, as we discussed in our previous unit, from the point of local political struggle, all the local kingdoms of this age were always struggling to establish their power & legitimacy over their territories. These small local powers were new in politics. They are the rising powers & don't have any powerful genealogical background that can provide sufficient right of legitimacy to their rule, like the Imperial Guptas or Vakatakas. Hence, they thrived for the other way round. Now from time immemorial the Brahmins enjoyed a prestigious position among various social groups. They emerged as the legitimizers of political power by performing rituals & sacrifices & crafting Royal Genealogies, like Ravikirti of Pulakeshwan II. Thus granting Lands to Brahmins is just a token for providing such Legitimacy to the Royal power. In fact, in certain instances, we find Land grants were associated with Genealogical inscription related to the Royal

donor, where the Royal lineages were tried to be linked with Puranic Characters of Rama, Laxmana, Pandavas, etc. This was another way of gaining legitimacy.

Apart from this reason, R.S. Sharama also pointed out the importance of "Varna crisis"/ "Kali Crisis" during this age. Now, due to continuous oppression of taxes the lower status of the society, particularly the Vaishyas & the Shudras resorted to unrest & rebellion. They refused to pay taxes or render labour service to the state. Several warning attempts to the Shudras & Vaishyas, by the contemporary law books like Manu, failed in vein. Therefore, a more coercive way to tackle the situation needs to be taken. In this context the Rulers found that it would be more helpful for them, to grant these disturbed lands to state officials/ Brahman beneficiaries in lieu of their salaries. Let them handle the situation. Let them took the burden of tax collection & law keeping in those areas. Let them to deal with the peasants on their own terms.

The practice moreover could bring new lands into cultivation. Because in many cases the granted lands were uncultivated fallow lands or lands which were not in a position to realize revenue. It is now the task of the Brahmins/grantees to make it productive. Hence it gradually led to the greater interaction of the Tribes with the Brahminical cultures. Thus in this age we find many of the tribes were settling down as cultivators & plough agriculture was introduced in greater parts of the interior. This in turn led to agrarian expansion as to B.D.Chattopadhyay.

As to R.S. Sharma, sub-infeudation further reduced the size of these economic units created conditions for the development of a kind of social hierarchy, based on the unequal distribution of the land or land revenue.

### **6.3.2 The Decline of trade & commerce**

Up to the Gupta Period India witnessed a flourishing prospect in Trade & Commerce. There developed several vibrant commercial routes including that with the Roman Empire. The abundant inscriptions & Copper Plate mentions the rise of several affluent merchant guilds.

But since the last half of the 5th century C.E., this long distance trade began to decline. Now, with the Huna & German Barbarian Invasions the Western Roman Empire came to an end in 476 C.E. With this the Indo-Roman trade also declined. The remaining silk-trade with Byzantium & Iran also came to an halt in the middle of the 6th cen C.E. (Reff.- R.S. Sharma), due to continuous interference by the Arab traders in between. Infact within the 8th century the entire Western Trade practically became monopolized by the Arab traders.

The decline in trade & commerce also led to the decay of the formal urban commercial centers. Thus most of the Western ports of India along the Arabian Sea coast, like Muziris, Arikamedu, etc. lost their formal importance.. Simultaneously the inland commercial centers that thrived on this trade, like Pataliputra, Ujjain, etc also lost their importance. However scholars like U. Singh refused to accept that the whole trade & commerce came to an end in India. For even if the Western trade declined, it was soon replaced by

a flourishing Eastern trade with S.E. Asia, China & East Asia. In fact the Eastern ports of the Chola Kingdom hugely prospered during this time.

But for Marxist scholars like R.S. Sharma, the decline of trade & commerce was undeniable. It is best demonstrated by the **debasement of coins/currency** during this time. To him "Monetization presupposes a measure of centralization". During the Pre-Gupta times like that of the Mauryas, Kushanas or the Satavahanas, all the salaries of the state officials, from bureaucrats to soldiers were paid in cash. This is proved by the discovery of a large number of Gold, Copper & Bronze coins in this age. It is needless to say that 99% of these metals required for the minting of coins is obtained from the flourishing Indo-Roman Trade.

This process continued up to the early Guptas. But after Samudra Gupta we find there developed a scarcity of coins. The discovery of Gupta Gold coins proves that high ranking officials might be paid in cash, but the unavailability of any copper or bronze coins of the Guptas testifies on the other hand that beyond the level of high officials cash transaction was not possible. Gradually, it was replaced by the system of rewarding of services with land grants - A typical feature of Feudal Decentralization. After the 5th cen. C.E. cash transaction

However, according to R.S. Sharma the decay of trade & commerce was not only due to International factors. It was accelerated by the rise of a typical anti-commercial feeling in the socio-cultural mood of the EMA. In fact, the scriptures of this age like the Aranyaka Parva of the Mahabharata viewed the traders & merchants as "evil men" indulging in tricks & tactics & adapting fraudulent weights & measurements to sell their commodities.

The Shritis of this age recommended imposition of higher taxes on traders which was much more than that of Arthasashtra. Simultaneously the kings of this age also in dearth of sufficient revenue income from the land, tried to impose more tax burden on the traders. In addition of the custom duties the merchants also has to pay a separate tax called "Kara" & the artisans "Shilpapatikara". Day by day these oppressions over the traders increases.

**Restrictions on distant travelling :** As time passes the restrictions regarding distant travelling becomes more & more severe. The sea voyages particularly came under the most objections. Eg. The Ausansa Smriti states that those who undertook sea voyages have fallen from the caste & were not fit to be invited to any social ceremonies or funeral feasts (Sraddha). The 10th century Arab traveler Al Beruni on the other hand informs us that a Hindu was not generally permitted to visit the lands of the Turks or of the Karnatas by the society. Even Pilgrimage to distant lands beyond the sea or beyond the borders of Bharatvarsha was also prohibited. The end result of all these is a steady decline in economic & cultural exchange between different regions within the country & in turn enhances "feudal localism".

Again political fragmentation further accelerated the decline of trade & commerce. The presence of too many kingdoms meant payment of custom duties at numerous checkpoints, which further undermined trade. The Kathasaritasagara speaks of traders who moved through forests to escape the payment of extra duties (sulka).

**Fall of urban centres :** The decline in trade & commerce led to the decline of Towns & Cities. R.S. Sharma in his famous book "Urban decay in India", describes how the archaeological evidences of Post-Gupta Period suggest the decay of several former towns & commercial centers like Purana Quila (Delhi), Mathura, Hastinapur, Sravasti, Koushambi, Pataliputra, etc. In Vaishali, the last archaeological construction was in Period IV (300-500 C.E.), that too of reused bricks. The archaeological findings of Historian Krishna Mohan Srimali reveals a similar story for the Commercial & urban centers of the Vakataka Kingdom in the Deccan too. When Chinese pilgrim Hieuen Tsang came to India he visited many of the sacred Buddhist sites. He too found most of those like Kapilavastu, Sravasti, Rajghat, Vaishali, etc. either in deserted or in dilapidated condition.

Due to all these factors many of the traders & merchants tried to escape from their profession either by taking other incomes or by migration. E.g. The Mandasore Inscription refers to the migration of a guild of silk traders migrating from the Western coast. While many other traders joined hands with the disgruntled peasants & artisans leading to frequent rebellions, a feature of EMA. Again certain other wealthy traders in order to regain trust of the society, took to religious donations & land grants to Brahmanas, which in turn increases the feudal decentralization. Eg. The Indore Copper plate of Pravarsena II mentions a wealthy merchant Chandra, buying & donating  $\frac{1}{2}$  of a village to the Brahmins to gain ritualistic favor.

### 6.3.3 Increasing attachment to the land & development of closed economy

Urban contraction however led to Agrarian Expansion. In fact, a restricted market forced the artisans & merchants to migrate from their towns & instead took up cultivation in the countryside. While on the other hand, on account of the unavailability of artisamal goods from outside through long distant trade, the villagers had to take the responsibility to acquire their necessary non-agricultural items like Iron implements, Salt, Cotton, etc. by their own. It resulted in the development of self sufficient subsistent Village economy - what Karl Marx called "Asiatic modes of Production".

The decline in trade & commerce practically stopped the movements of traders & artisans. Also the formal urban centres which demanded the service of artisans also disappears & the new feudal courts as to R.S. Sharma dsisn't have muchuse for trade & commerce. These led the traeder & artisans to be tied down in the villages. Most of them changed their profession & became cultivators while some other became tied down in the service of their local clients & masters like the Temples. These are confirmed by the land grant inscriptions of this age which demanded the reidents of the donated lands to be tied with he same. In fact, the Nanada Land grant Inscription of Smaudra Gupta specifically asked the tax-paying artisans not to leave the village to settle in a tax free land. Rather they should now on start serving their new masters.

Thus as the peasants, artisans & merchants became attached to their habitation, this fostered a closed economy & the relative social status of these classes became stationary.

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#### **6.4 The decline of Vaishyas & the rise of Shudras**

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The above discussed socio-economic factors led a profound impact on the prevailing Varna system & relative class status of the society. Its effects were not only limited to the traditional four fold Varna system, but in turn it led to the emergence of all together new sets of Castes & sub-castes in this post-Gupta society. One such impact was the change in the relative position of the Vaishyas & Shudras in this period.

By the 6th century CE, with the rapid decline of trade & commerce, the Vaishyas practically lost their identity as a prominent higher caste of the society, the bulk majority of whom were mostly traders & merchants. The Skandapurana depicts how the traders declined in the Kali age (Early Medieval period). Most of them left their earlier profession & took to cultivation, while some others became mere oilmen of Temples or winnowers of grain. However, until 5th century CE, the Vaishya traders seemed to retain their wealthy position. It was reflected from sources like that of Chinese traveler Fa-Hien, who mentions the rich charities made by those merchants & traders. But from 5th century onwards in the post Gupta period they started suffering rapid decline in relation with the declining trade & economy. By 11th century as per the records of Arab travelers they were reduced to the status of Shudras both legally & ritually. All the contemporary Vaishya sub-castes like savarnakars, suvarnavaniks, tailakaras, sutradhars, taksanas, kaivartas, karmakaras, etc. lost their former position & were even denied the “sat-shudra” status. Ultimately, the disappearance of gold coinage by 650 CE on the other hand explains the decline of the last sustaining Vaishya community of Gold smiths & gold dealers.

The decline of Vaishyas on the other hand was compensated by the gradual rise & expansion of the Shudra community. The Shudras no longer appears as mere slaves or bonded agricultural laborers, but they took the place of the Vaishyas as cultivators. In the mid 7th century CE, Chinese traveler Hiuen Tsang clearly refers Shudras as agriculturalists & cultivators. While, Al Beruni in 10th century CE informs us about the absence of any significant difference between the Shudras & Vaishyas. He notes that both of them lived in the same towns & villages & even mixed freely in the same houses. The relative change of the social status of the Shudras is also reflected in the indigenous literary documents of this period. E.g. The Skandapurana mentions Shudras as a giver of grain & a stable householder (grahastha).

**Further Expansion of the Shudra community :** The Shudras came to have the largest number of sub-castes in post Gupta Period. The Law book of Manu mentions about 61 mixed sub-castes of Shudras while the Brahmapurana exceeds the number to more than a hundred sub-castes for the same. This huge increase in the number of Shudra castes might be as a result of huge influx from Vaishya community as neo-shudra cultivators. In fact, the 8th century Vishnudharmottara Purana, states that thousands of new mixed

castes of Shudras developed as a result of marriage of Vaishya women with men of lower castes (Shudras).

Again, as we have discussed earlier, the huge absorption of tribal & forest people of the peripheral regions into Brahminical folds also added enormously to the number & varieties of Shudras. By 8th century various tribal communities like Sabaras, Bhills, Pulindas, etc. were absorbed into the Shudra castes. In Deccan at the same time almost all the ruling powers were in conflict with the Abhira tribes. This interaction made most of the Abhiras to settle down as Shudras by 9th century CE. A 12th century Kalchuri Inscription of King Jaajalladeva II mentions the induction of the Thiru tribal people into their cultural folds. As a matter of fact, most of these tribes were admitted into Brahminical society as Shudras. As a result, New Language, rituals & plough cultivation was extended over them. However not all of their admission was limited to only one caste / Varna. Since quite curiously we also got references like that of Abhira Brahmins, Abhira Kshatriyas or Abhira Vaishyas.

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### 6.5 The Emergence of Kayastha Community

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In the Early Medieval times, the constant transfer of Land & vis a vis land revenues by Kings, priests, aristocrats & Temples, led to the rise of a new specialized group of scribe recorders known as the Kayastha Community. The earliest reference of Kayastha although comes from the 4th century CE in the law book of Yajñabalka Smṛiti.

In Early Medieval Period due to rapid fragmentation of lands & gradual increase in the items of revenue given in the grant, a large number of writers & record keepers had to be employed to draft the documents of land assignments & keep in track the fiscal records of these lands. Again boundary dispute is another important feature of the contemporary law books which can't be settled without the help of records. Sometimes on account of sub-infeudation, as many as five to six parties might lay claim on a same plot of land. Such disputes can't be settled without keeping detail records of heritance & transaction. This in turn makes the recruitment of more literate record keepers an utmost necessity.

The record keepers came from a class of writers who were known by various names such as Kayastha, Karanika, karana, adhikrta, pustapala, chitragupta, lekhaka, divira, dharmalekhin, aksarapatalika, etc. The title Akhauri derived from Aksara is still prevalent among the Kayastha of Bihar. The titles of Karana, Karanik, etc. were found among the Kayasthas of Bengal & Orissa. In course of time, all of them came to be known as Kayasthas.

But where does they come from ? Now, In the initial stages, literate members from all the higher Varnas including Brahmins were recruited as Kayasthas or scribes / record keepers to meet the administrative demand. Thus Kalhana in his Rajtarangini refers a Brahmana named Srivārtha appointed as a Kayastha official while Lokenath another Brahman was recruited as a Karanika. However, gradually as the demand increases the scribes / Kayasthas were began to be recruited from all the other Varnas. In course of

time, they cut off their marital & social relations with their parent Varnas & emerged as a totally new community.

The Lawgivers were confronted of demarcating class position of this newly emerged community of Kayasthas. They faced a dilemma & connected the Kayasthas with both Shudras & dvijas (upper caste Brahmins). Even this it's uncertain in which class should the Kayasthas belong. Thus in recent verdicts the Calcutta High Court called them Shudras whereas the Allahabad high court called the Kayasthas Brahmins.

From 7th century onwards Kayastha ministers began appearing in the courts of Kalchuri & Chandela Rajputs of Madhya Pradesh. While, by 11th century CE the Kayasthas occupied high positions in the Ganga administration of Kalinga / Orissa. They were called "Rajjyabidyadhar" & "Gangavidyadhar" (proficient in Ganga Family affairs). Naturally, the rise of Kayasthas as a professional literate caste undermined the monopoly of the Brahmanas in the fiscal & administrative sectors. As a result, they soon came under stiff resistance from the Brahman community.

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## 6.6 Proliferation of the Brahmana community

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The process of proliferation was most striking among the Brahmana community in the post Gupta Early Medieval period. The most significant factor that promoted the proliferation was growth of localism among the Brahmins. In the Land charters of that time they were mentioned by their Gotras & Mulas (i.e. the village from where they originated). In 5th - 8th century, we got about 194 references of Brahmana Gotras.

Denoting the Brahman donees : The Brahman beneficiaries were identified in the inscription by their ancestral address like Gotras, pravara, charan, sakhas & native place. Beside this certain respectable titles like Acharya, Upadhyay, Pundit, etc were also used.

Gotra	refers to exogamous clan
Pravars	" ancestry to the Rishis
Charana	" to school of Vedic learning

However, it is difficult to ascertain the purity & continuity of the Gotras. For instance in Deccan & South India, many local Dravidian tribes were given Aryan Gotra & were thus absorbed as Brahmanas.

**The theory of Brahmana migration & it's relation with Land grants :** Some of the inscriptional reference of Land grants in EMA suggest that many of the Brahman donees were newly settled migrant of that place, suggesting a flow of Brahman migration during this age. As evident from the Vedic Reference, the Eastward migration of the Brahmins started from as early as 800 C.E. But since the 5th century CE, the process re intensifies as several inscription suggest an influx of learned Brahman immigrants from the heartland of Madhydesha (Middle Ganga Valley) into areas like Maharashtra, Bengal, Deccan, MP & Orissa. The late Medieval Kulaji texts of Bengal trace the ancestry of 5 'Kulin

Brahmanas' from Kanyakubja who were invited to settle in Bengal by King Adisura in order to train the Bengal Brahmins the correct performance of Vedic rites. In most land charters, the original home of the Brahmanas were proudly mentioned & from the post-Gupta period onwards a Brahmana is recognized by the villages from which he belong.



The Routes of Brahman Migration in Early Medieval Age

**But why were they migrating ?** : Historians like Upinder Singh suggests that during this period due to different factors there was a decline in sacrificial religious practices in North India. This led to the migration of the Brahman community,, residing there to migrate in search of better occupation. This migration incidentally coincided with the rise of the numerous Feudal kingdoms of EMA. This new political elites required some agent of legitimization & administrative infrastructure. This situation suited both of the groups & the migrating Brahmins, who were well versed in Vedas, quickly got employment opportunities in these new Royal courts. The Feudal kings in turn made them settle in their kingdoms by granting them Lands.

**Rise of Social status for the Brahmans** : One thing is certain - that the Royal charters raised the status & strengthened the political & economic power of a certain section of the Brahman community. In Brahmadaya villages, they became the dominant class. However to historians like Upinder Singh the Brahmanas could not be viewed as "Feudal intermediaries" since they didn't paid any regular taxes or material resources to the King like the other Feudal lords.

**Expansion of the Brahmin Community** : One of the primary need for increasing the agricultural output is to sustain the rising population in the rural sector. In fact, it is like one of the age old vicious cycle where more food leads to better life which leads to

more reproduction. More reproduction in turn generates the need for more agricultural production. Although we don't have any specific census data for this age, but from indirect references it's evident that there was indeed a major boom in Brahman population of this age. For instance, in South India, there was a steady increase of the members in the Brahman Sabhas or Assemblies. Eg. In Gautam Agrahar in Shikarpur Taluk the Brahmin population rose from 1000 in 890 CE to about 32,000 in 1027 CE ! Not just in South India, Brahman population also increased in Eastern India too. The 10th century Paschimbhag Copper Plate depicts King Srichandra of Bengal granting a huge land to about 6000 Brahmins, associated with a monastery of Lord Brahma & a Temple of Lord Vishnu. Rise of Brahmana population in turn encouraged the growth & foundation of more & more new settlements. Particularly the land grants to Hindu Temples were among the foremost. Centering these new Temples new settlements of Brahmins & other classes grew up rapidly. This is most evident from the sudden rise of Brahmin settlements surrounding a granted Temple land by the Barman Kings of Assam like Mahabhati Barman, Bhaskar Barman, etc. The river Valley of Brahmanputra particularly the Guwahati & Tezpur region became concentrated with agrarian settlements in Assam. In the 10th century, the Temple settlements emerged as new township & commercial centers. By the late medieval times the Brahmins of Radha in Bengal were divided into 56 sub-castes. While in the 14th century contemporary scholar Harisimhadeva counted about 180 original homes (mulas) for the local Maithili Brahmins. He estimated about 1000 sub-castes for the Maithili Brahmins whose total population at current times had risen up to about 15 lakhs.

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### 6.7 Proliferation of the Kshatriya caste

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In the Kshatriya community the proliferation was mainly due to the emergence of new sub-castes particularly the Rajputs. As to R.S. Sharma, no other castes developed so much racial & familial pride in Pre-Islamic India, as the Rajputs did.

The practice of ascribing solar & lunar origins to their ruling dynasties was a common tradition among the Rajputs that began around 7th century CE. Eg. The Sishodiyas (Chittor), Chauhanas (Ajmer), Gawahadhawalas (Kanauj), Tomars (Delhi), Kachawads (Amer), etc. branch of Rajputs practiced this tradition. However, as to R.S. Sharma some Kshatriya warrior dynasties like the Palas, Chandelas & the Chalukyas were probably local tribes, who were latter given Kshatriya lineages by Brahmana genealogies. Some of the new sub-castes might have descended from the original ruling Kshatriya dynasties, while others like the Rajputs might have foreign descends. In this context, the term 'Sanshkarvarjit' (deprived of rituals) can be mentioned, that was probably used to refer neo-Kshatriyas who were admitted to Brahminical social order from foreign warrior stocks. It is worthy to mention that in this period a number of erstwhile foreign invaders & Central Asian migrators like Bactrian Greeks, Sakas, Huns & Parthians in absence of any strong religion or culture of their own, were rigorously admitted to the

Brahminical folds as neo-Kshatryias. According to scholars like R.S. Sharma, most of the Rajputs along with the Solanki Chalukyas, Paramaras, Tomaras, Gurjaras & Jats had been descended from Central Asian origin particularly from Huns & Sakas, who came to India during 3rd to 5th century CE. With the rigorous absorption of these foreign tribes, the Kshatryia community under-grows rapid multiplication & expansion since the 5th & 6th centuries.

However, it would be incorrect to state that all the foreign migrants were admitted to Kshatryia community only. For we also got references of Gurjara & Jat Brahmans, Banias, porters, goldsmiths & even Shudra herdsmen & cultivators.

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### 6.8 Conclusion

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Thus from our above discussion it can be inferred that in the post-Gupta period the pre Muslim Hindu Varna society underwent certain major changes & alteration. The fragmentation of Land, fall of trade & monetary economy, etc. were some of the major socio-economic factors that led to these Varna proliferation & alteration in this period. In the course of time, we find that while certain Varna lost their earlier higher status, some others other gained it. Again, while most of the pre-existing Varnas underwent massive proliferation & expansion, in the other hand we also witnessed the emergence of some completely new castes & communities.

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### 6.9 Model Questions

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1. How did the Brahminical religion expanded over the tribal periphery in Post-Gupta age ?
2. What were the major socio-economic factors that led to the Varna debacle in Early Medieval India ?
3. Describe the relative rise & fall of the Shudra & Vaishya community.
4. How & in which context did the emergence of the new caste of Kayasthas took place ?
5. Describe the Proliferation of the Brahman community during this period, in brief.
6. How did the Kshatryia community expanded during this period ? Explain.

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### 6.10 Suggested Readings

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Majumder, R.C., *A Comprehensive History of Ancient India*, (Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass Pub. : 1981)

Raychaudhuri, H.C., *Political History of Ancient India*, (Delhi, OUP : 1996)

Singh, Upinder, *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India : From the Stone Age to the 12th century*, (New Delhi, Pearson Pub. : 2009)

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## **Unit 7 □ The Nature of Politics : The Gupta Empire (275-500 CE.)**

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### **Structure**

#### **7.0 Objective**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

#### **7.2 A brief historiography**

#### **7.3 Sources**

#### **7.4 The origin of the Guptas**

#### **7.5 Debate on the Gupta Capital**

#### **7.6 Foundation of the Gupta Empire & the early Guptas (Late 3rd century CE)**

#### **7.7 Dynastic history of the Imperial Guptas**

#### **7.8 Chandragupta I (319-350 CE)**

#### **7.9 Samudragupta (350-76 CE)**

#### **7.10 Chandragupta II [Vikramaditya] (376-412 CE)**

#### **7.11 Kumargupta I (415-55 CE)**

#### **7.12 Skandagupta (455-76 CE)**

#### **7.13 Buddhagupta (476-500 CE)**

#### **7.14 Causes for the disintegration of the Gupta Empire**

#### **7.15 Conclusion**

#### **7.16 Model Questions**

#### **7.17 Suggested Readings**

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### **7.0 Objective**

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- The objective of this present unit is to study a brief Histography about the Gupta regime.
- The other objective of this present unit is to study different types of sources for constructing history of this period.
- Learners are able to understand the relationship between Brahminical revivalism and rise of the Guptas from this unit.
- A brief dynastic history of the imperial Guptas will be discussed in this unit.
- Achievements of Chandragupta I, Samudragupta, Chandragupta II, Skandagupta, Kumargupta—will be described here.
- Why did Skandagupta called “Savior of India” - will be elaborated.
- Major causes for the downfall of mighty Gupta empire -will be also focused.

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## 7.1 Introduction

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The uncertainties that engulfed India after the disintegration of the Mauryan Empire in 2nd century BCE, were partially removed by the establishment of the Kushana power in the North & Satavahana Empire in the Deccan. The Kushanas united the North, while Satavahanas did likewise for South of the Vindhya. However, since the 3rd century CE the Kushana political power began to decline owing to several internal & external factors. Once again, a temporary political vacuum began to appear. The political hold of North India was fractioned into several newly emerging small independent kingdoms like Nagas, Malavas, Yaudheyas, etc. While in Deccan, the Satavahana power was similarly parceled out between the kingdoms of Vakatakas & Ikshvakus.

Thus, under such situation the necessity for the establishment of a new unifying paramount power became inevitable. Thus, as to scholars like S.R. Goyal, "the political situation of India towards the close of the 3rd & beginning of the 4th century CE, was quiet similar to that of 6th century BCE, which was then exploited by the Magadhans". In this case, the Empire that followed was one of the greatest & one of the last trans-regional Ancient Indian Empire, namely the Gupta Empire.

In our succeeding unit let us discuss the rise & fall of the Gupta state & polity.

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## 7.2 A brief historiography

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For almost a period of 180 years the Gupta Empire brought about a political Unification over almost whole of Northern & Central India including Gujarat & Punjab, under a single political umbrella.

The **Nationalist historians** of the Colonial age during the early 20th & late 19th century tried to portray the Gupta regime as a "Classical period" & as "A Golden Age" of Indian history. For clarifying their points, they not only highlighted the political unification under the Guptas but also focused on several other optimistic features of the Gupta rule like development of art & architecture, production of exceptionally fine literary works, flourishing of trade & commerce, economic prosperity, social harmony, etc. However, this glorification of the Gupta Empire should be viewed in the contemporary context of writing history. It was used by the then Nationalist historians to counter the British Imperialist Historiography. The British tried to portray India with a typical image of an Orientalist underdeveloped nation before the arrival of the Europeans. The Nationalist historians in turn used to cite these Golden past of Ancient Indian history in order to counter the same.

The traditional understanding of the Gupta period underwent a radical revision since the 1960s with the emergence of **Marxist historiography**. The Marxist historians like D.D. Kosambi, R.S. Sharma, etc. reanalyzed the Gupta period and tried to rectify the inherent biasness of the Nationalist Historiography. They argued that the Gupta Empire wasn't a centralized unified Empire & that typical features of feudal decentralization

were already present in the Gupta administration, right from its origin. E.g. according to R.S. Sharma, it is doubtful whether effective Gupta control extended beyond the Gangetic Valley. Apart from this, unlike the previous regimes, the Gupta administrative set-up itself was quite semi-feudal in character. The Bhukti provincial governors, called Uparikas, were much more powerful than their Mauryan counterparts. Not only they were paid in terms of donated lands in place of cash, but they also enjoyed the right to keep their own standing army & appoint their own subordinates without the nominal interference of the central authority. From these perspectives the Marxist historians tried to mark the Gupta period as an age of “political fragmentation & collapse of urban economy”.

However, since the 1970s & 1980s, the **Revivalist historiography** under scholars like B.D. Chattopadhyay, Herman Kulke, etc. tried to put forward an alternative historical paradigm. They argued that far from being a period of political decline & breakdown, the Gupta period was marked by beginning of an “intensive process of state formation at the regional level”. That it might be a period of social, cultural or urban “change” but not that of a “decline”. Rather, unlike the previous regime the upliftment was not restricted to the political core, but it brought about an immense flourishing all across its territory at the provincial level.

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### 7.3 Sources

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Before going to the specific political history of the Gupta Empire, let us first quickly go through the major sources that help us to construct the history of this period. The sources of this period can be divided into following major categories :

**1) Inscriptional evidences :** this period witnessed a considerable rise in Inscriptions & Epigraphs, constructed particularly to commemorate the Royal Land grants to Brahmin & Religious institutions or to sub-ordinate feudal beneficiaries. The assessment of this epigraphical data of Royal land grant is an important topic for debate concerning the Feudal nature of this period. These mainly comprised the Royal Prasasti Inscriptions of the time. Here the inscriptions serve as a platform of glorification of the patron king/elite. As a result, these inscriptions are engulfed with glorifying deeds of the King along with his royal genealogy. Eg. The Allahabad Pillar Inscription sponsored by Emperor Samudragupta & composed by his court poet Harishen.

**2) Numismatic evidences :** Coins & seals not only served as the major medium of exchange in the Gupta Age but they also form an important part of the sources for constructing the history of this period. The Guptas issued a large number of Gold coins called 'Dinaras'. Silver coins are pretty rare for the Guptas. The Gupta coins bore the names & epithets of the kings including metrical legends. The obverse side of the coins generally represents the King while the reverse generally bears the impression of the Royal deity or sometimes the Royal emblem/motif. E.g. The reverse side of the coins of Gupta Emperor Chandragupta II, Kumargupta I and Skandagupta bears an image of

Garuda or Peacock as the royal emblem. Sometimes they were accompanied by dates. The coins of Emperor Samudragupta playing a liar deserve special mention in this connection.

**3) Literary sources :** The development Sanskrit literature received a major boost during the period of 300-600 CE. Various Puranas & Shristisashtras were composed during this age. Among them the Naradashriti, the Vishnushriti, Brihaspatishriti, Katyanashriti, Harivamsha Purana, etc. deserves special mention. Buddhist Mahayana texts like Manjushri-mulakalapa which has a separate chapter on the history of Gauda & Magadha were also composed during this age. Apart from these several non canonical secular works were also composed during this time. Eg. The Nitisastra of Kamandaka, which was chiefly a work of polity, was composed in the 4th century CE. It is in this age that Vishakadatta composed his famous drama of “Devi Chandragupta”. However, most of this marvel is lost & only some fragments of it had survived to this day. Along with all these several treatises on scientific, environmental, astronomical and other technical fields were composed by the versatile scholars present in the Gupta court namely Varahamihir, Kalidasa, Amarghosa, etc.

**4) Foreign accounts :** India was called the “Land of Buddha : the road to heaven”. Between 3rd to 7th century CE several Chinese & East Asian monks came to India in order to collect Buddhist texts, visit important pilgrim sites linked with Gautam Buddha & visit various emerging Buddhist centers of Education. Among them three famous Chinese travelers catches most of the limelight viz. - Fa Hien, Hieuen Tsang & I-Tsing. Fa Hien (337-422 CE) came to India during the rule of Gupta Emperor Chandragupta II. As they travelled around in the country they tried to note down all their observations be it the socio-economic conditions or be it the simple day-to-day lifestyle of the people. When they were finished up they returned to their countries with this information & composed books. Fa Hien himself wrote the book “Fa Kuo King”.

Apart from Chinese & East Asian sources there were certain Western sources also. The Gupta period was an era flourishing trade & economy. India had a viable commercial relation with these Western nations particularly Greece & Byzantium. As a result, several European sailors & businessmen came to India during that time. Cosmos Indicopleustes’ “Christian Topography” is worth mentioning in this connection.

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#### 7.4 The origin of the Guptas

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We have altogether five principal theories regarding the original homeland of the Guptas. Now, according to the documents of Chinese traveler I-Tsing, when he came to India around 673-95 CE, he subsequently came across the dilapidated remains of an Ancient Chinese Temple at a place called Mrigasikhavan. As to I-Tsing this “Temple of China” was built by Maharaja Sri Gupta, the legendary founder of the Gupta dynasty some 500 years before his visit, solely for the use of Chinese travelers & monks. The first three theories of origin was based on identification of this Mrigasikhavan where the Temple was located. The theories are :

**1) Bengal Origin :** Historian D.C. Sarkar calculated the distance & identified that the Temple must be located somewhere in Murshidabad district of Bengal. So according to him, Bengal must be the original homeland of the Guptas. However, as to R.C. Majumder it might be that Sri Gupta ruled over Bengal & had built the Temple accordingly. But for that it does not necessarily mean that Bengal was their original home.

**2) Eastern UP origin :** Historian Jaggannath Agarwal & B.P. Sinha similarly argued that the original homeland of the Guptas was in Sarnath in Eastern Uttar Pradesh.

**3) Magadha origin :** V.A. Smith & A.S. Altekar in a similar way tried to identify the location of the Temple somewhere in core areas of Magadha & hence argued Magadha as the original homeland of the Guptas. However, this theory was similarly challenged on several logical grounds.

**4) Punjab origin :** This view was represented by Historian K.P. Jaysawal. By carefully examining the genealogical records, he suggested that Guptas were descendents of Karasakara Jats (modern Kakkar Jats) who were originally an inhabitant tribe of Punjab region. Hence, he argued Punjab as the original homeland of the Guptas.

**5) The Upper Ganga basin origin :** The most acceptable view was put forward by historian S.R. Goyal. He argued that most of the inscriptions & numismatic evidences of the Early Guptas have been found in upper Ganga Basin. Most of the coins of the early Guptas including the Chandragupta-Kumardevi types of coins have been found here. Out of the 15 Gupta inscriptions, eight of them belonged to this region including the famous Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta. In fact, the content of those Inscriptions itself identified the Upper Ganga basin as the “Pratishta Sashana” of the Guptas while the rest other territories were called “Digvijay Sashana”.

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### 7.5 Debate on the Gupta Capital

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There are various factors that determine the location of a capital for any North Indian Empires, be it their political core, the region that provides it the main support base, Geographically protected by natural barriers, economic affluence, etc.

Now we have mentioned that during the Gupta period the political gravity had shifted towards Eastern part of the Upper Ganga Basin. The region around Prayag, the confluence of Ganga & Yamuna River had now become the political nucleus for the Guptas.

Thus from various literary including Puranic sources it is demarcated that for at least the early years of the regime, Prayag served as the capital for the Guptas. However, latter on, the capital was shifted to Ayodhya, where the new Royal residential complex was built. Paramartha, a Buddhist scholar of the Gupta Age, specifically referred it as the capital of Vikramaditya, i.e. Emperor Skandagupta. It is believed that his great Grandfather Emperor Chandragupta II shifted the capital to Ayodhya.

In this connection, it is worthy to mention that Pataliputra was an important metropolis under the Guptas but not the capital. For Fa Hien, who visited the city during the reign of Chandragupta II, specifically mentions that the city did not held the same position that it used to be in the times of Mauryans.

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### **7.6 Foundation of the Gupta Empire & the early Guptas (Late 3rd century CE)**

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As we have discussed in the preceding sections, the origin of the Gupta Dynasty is very mysterious & doubtful. Interestingly, we have earlier got the reference of the “Gupta” title among various officials & subordinates of the Satavahanas, Saka Kshatrapas & even the Kushana Rulers. E.g. Shiva Gupta of the Nasik Inscription or Shiva-Skanda Gupta of the Karle inscription. But they were all mere local governors & any of their formal connections with the latter Imperial Guptas cannot yet be proved.

In the 3rd century CE post Kushana period, the political Diaspora of Northern & Western India was fragmented among various regional kingdoms like the Nagas of Mathura, Malavas of Punjab, Lichchavis of Magadha, Saka Kshatrapas in the West, etc. Under such circumstances, as historian SR Goyal argues, there was a revival of Brahmanism as an unifying nationalist force. With the revival of Brahmanism, the forces of disintegration weakened & the idea of an united Empire “Chakravatikshetra” became popular. Vedic sacrifices & Puranic ideologies once again became popular & Manusmriti of this age thus firmly declares “A Brahman who knows the Veda, deserves to be King or the commander-in-chief”. As to SR Goyal, this opportunity was utilized by the Guptas who emerged as the new agents of Brahminical revival & unity.

Again, quite interestingly the regions of Magadha & north-western parts were already dominated by Buddhism & Jainism respectively. Whereas, it is the Upper Gangetic valley, that emerged as the base-point of Brahminical revival. Quite coincidentally this region is also said to be where the Guptas had originated.

According to the genealogical record of the Allahabad Pillar Inscription (API) of Samudragupta, the founder of the dynasty was Maharaja Sri Gupta ( 275-300 CE). In his inscription, Samudragupta had mentioned himself as the great grandson of Sri Gupta. He is known for building a Chinese Temple in Mrigasikahaban as noted by traveler I-Tsing. From the same account of I-Tsing we can roughly calculate & place the timeline of his reign approximately from 275 to 300 CE.

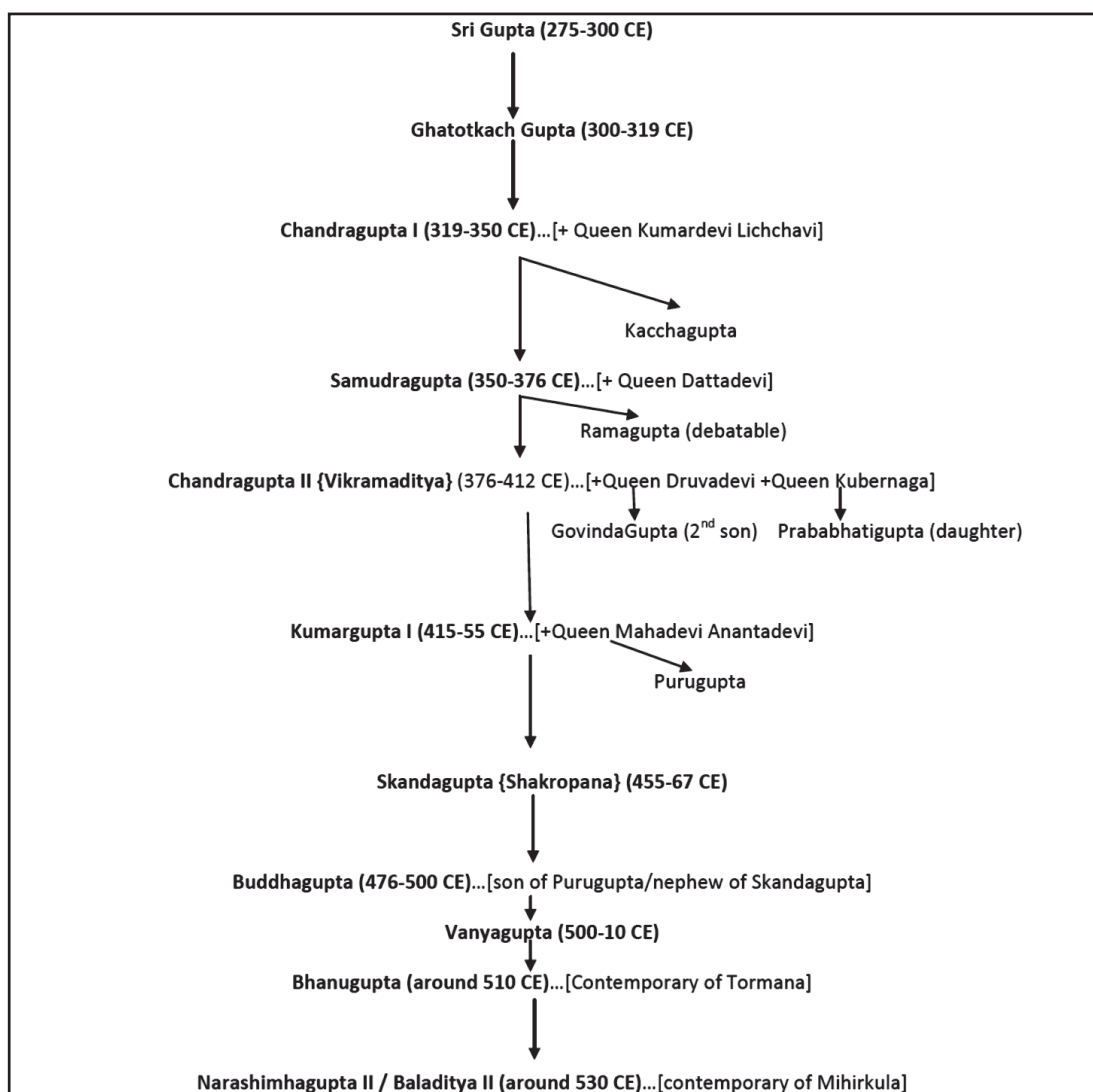
His son Ghatotkachagupta (300-319 CE) succeeded Sri Gupta. His name too appears in the Royal genealogy of API. Nothing much is known about his reign except that he concluded a matrimonial alliance with the neighboring Lichchavis.

However, both of them were most probably regional chieftains. Neither they made any territorial expansion nor they bore any illustrious titles. In the Allahabad Pillar inscription,

Gupta and his successor Ghatotkacha are described as Maharaja (“great king”), while the next king Chandragupta I is called a Maharajadhiraja (“king of great kings”). In the later period, the title Maharaja was used by feudatory rulers, which has led to suggestions that Sri Gupta and Ghatotkacha held a lower status and were less powerful than Chandragupta I.

It was only from the reign of the next king in line Chandragupta I, that the Gupta dynasty enters into its Imperial Age.

### 7.7 Dynastic history of the Imperial Guptas



The Dynastic Chronology of the Gupta Family  
(The name of the Emperors are written in bold Letters)

The Gupta Imperial regime is said to begin with the accession of Chandragupta I. For about 180 years since 319 CE, much of the culture & politics of the subcontinent is controlled by the Imperial Gupta regime. At its Zenith, the Gupta Empire covered a vast area from Kashmir in the North to Vindhyas in the South & from Gujarat & Punjab in the West to Bay of Bengal in the South. The 5th-century CE Sanskrit poet Kalidasa credits the Guptas with having conquered about twenty-one kingdoms, both in and outside India, including the kingdoms of Parasikas, the Hunas, the Kambojas, tribes located in the west and east Oxus valleys, the Kinnaras, Kiratas, and others.

The high points of this period are the great cultural developments which took place primarily during the reigns of Samudragupta, Chandragupta II and Kumaragupta I. Many of the literary sources, such as Mahabharata and Ramayana, were canonized during this period.

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### 7.8 Chandragupta I (319-350 CE)

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ChandraGupta I is considered to be the real founder of the Gupta Empire. It is not only because of that he was the first to assume the illustrious title of “Mahadhiraja”, but it is also because he issued a large number of Gold coins in his name.

Chandragupta I married Lichchavi princess Kumaradevi and thus cemented a powerful matrimonial alliance with the Ancient tribe of Lichchavis. As to V.A. Smith, it gave the Guptas almost a paramount position in the whole Magadha region. In fact, since the father of Kumaradevi didn't have a male issue, Chandragupta I soon became the de-jury sovereign of the entire Magadha & Lichchavi countries. This alliance was also a response against a similar matrimonial alliance between the contending Vakataka-Bharshiva Naga powers in the Deccan.



Gold coin of Chandragupta I with his Queen (left) & gold coin of Samudragupta playing Veena (right)

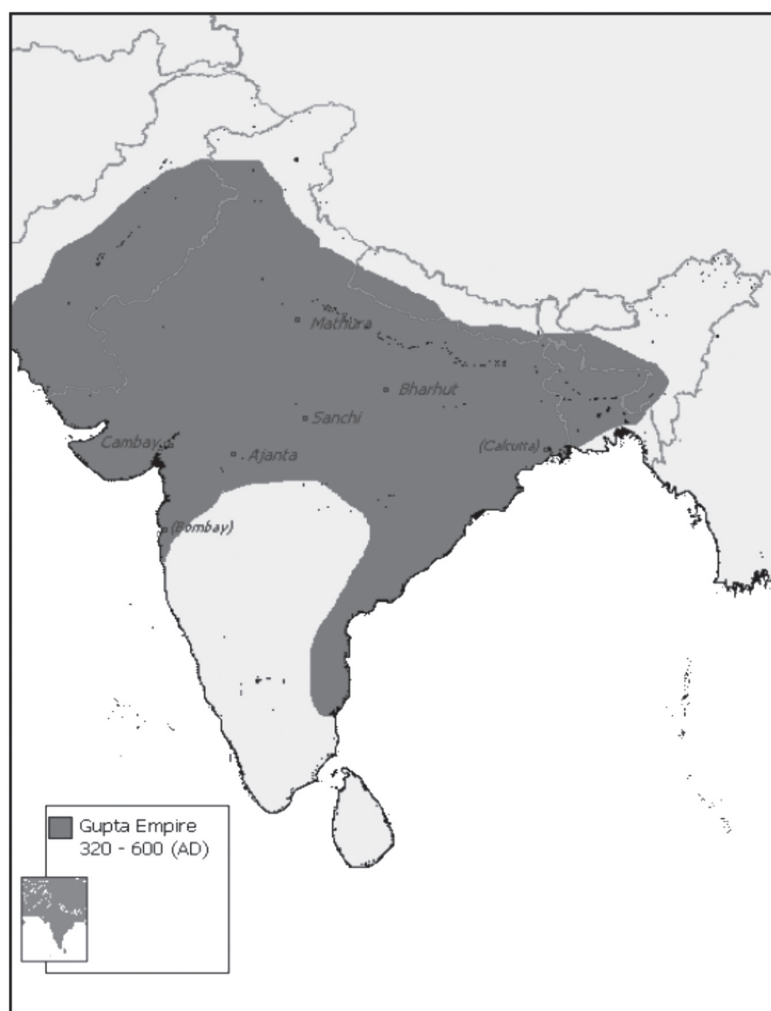
However, Chandragupta I wasn't content only with this. According to Vishnu Purana he farther annexed Saketa (modern Sravasti) to his kingdom. Thus, according to Goyal, when Chandragupta I died, the Guptas were the masters over whole of Central Ganga Basin, including modern Bihar.

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### 7.9 Samudragupta (350-76 CE)

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Samudragupta son & successor of Chandragupta I, was the greatest ruler of the Gupta Empire. As to Arya Manjushri Mulakalpa, Samudragupta had to first deal with the rival claimant to the throne, his brother Kacchagupta. Kacchagupta, well known as a persecutor of Buddhists represented the orthox Brahminical section, while Samudragupta represented the liberal aspect of Brahminical revival. Kaccha was finally defeated by Samudragupta.



The Gupta Empire at it's Zenith

The Allahabad Pillar inscription (API), composed by his courtier Harishena, credits him with extensive conquests. The inscription asserts that Samudragupta uprooted 8 kings of Aryavarta, the northern region, including the Nagas. It further claims that he subjugated all the kings of the forest region, which was most probably located in central India. It also credits him with defeating 12 rulers of Dakshinapatha, the southern region: the exact identification of several of these kings is debated among modern scholars, but it is clear that these kings ruled areas located on the eastern coast of India.

The inscription suggests that Samudragupta advanced as far as the Pallava kingdom in the south, and defeated Vishnugopa, the Pallava regent of Kanchi. During this southern campaign, Samudragupta most probably passed through the forest tract of central India, reached the eastern coast in present-day Odisha, and then marched south along the coast of Bay of Bengal.

The Allahabad Pillar inscription mentions that rulers of several frontier kingdoms and tribal oligarchies paid Samudragupta tributes, obeyed his orders, and performed obeisance before him. The frontier kingdoms included Daivaputra Sahasahunsahi (Indo-Kushanas of North West), Shaka Kshatrapas, Kamarupa, Nepala, and Karttripura. The tribal oligarchies included Malavas, Arjunayanas, Yaudheyas, Madrakas, and Abhiras, among others. These tributary chiefs became a ring of encirclement, the first line of defence for the safety & security of its inner hinterland.

Finally, the inscription mentions that several foreign kings tried to please Samudragupta by personal attendance; offered him their daughters in marriage (or according to another interpretation, gifted him maidens); and sought the use of the Garuda-depicting Gupta seal for administering their own territories. This is an exaggeration: for example, the inscription lists the king of Simhala (Sri Lanka) among these kings. It is known that from Chinese sources that the Simhala king Meghavarna sent rich presents to the Gupta king requesting his permission to build a Buddhist monastery at Bodh Gaya. Samudragupta's panegyrist appears to have described this act of diplomacy as an act of subservience.

The belligerent Naga-Vakataka alliance was a constant threat to the Gupta Sovereignty. Thus by the API, Samudragupta first of all completely annihilated the Nagas of Mathura, Padmavati & Ahichatra in Aryabharata. Next he plunged into conflict with Rudrasena I / Rudradeva of Vakataka kingdom. Samudragupta managed to inflict certain gains in this conflict & annexed some parts North of Vindhyas particularly Bundelkhand & Eran. To commemorate this victory Samudragupta perhaps build the Vishnu Temple at Eran. The Eran Inscription credits him of "overthrowing the whole tribe of kings upon the Earth."

After becoming the master of North India & Central India, Samudragupta turned towards Bengal which would give him access both to the sea & to the flourishing International trade through the port of Tamralipata. Thus, Samudragupta defeated Nagadutta who was the ruler of North Bengal.

The most remarkable feature of his Southern campaign was the policy of capture & then liberation & re-installment of the conquered kings. As to R.D. Banerjee & Goyal Samudragupta was wise enough to realize that it would be difficult to rule over those distant kingdom whose socio-linguistic set up was quite different with the Gupta heartland. Hence, in this case his prime focus was to acquire wealth & build up a powerful encirclement of vassal kingdoms. In this connection, it is worthy to mention that Samudragupta also invaded Kalinga (Orissa). As to Sri Lankan chronicle Mahavamsa, this prompted Kalinga princess Hemamala, to fly to Sinhala with the tooth relic of Buddha, which is still believed to be there in the island.

Samudragupta appears to have been Vaishnavite, as attested by his Eran inscription, and performed several Brahmanical ceremonies. The Gupta records credit him with making generous donations of cows and gold. He performed the Ashvamedha ritual (horse sacrifice), which was used by the ancient Indian kings to prove their imperial sovereignty, and issued gold coins to mark this performance

**International sphere :** Samudra Gupta's North Western policy was largely shaped by International sphere. Around this time, we got evidences of Sassanid Persians trying to make inroads in North Western India followed by the Jouan-jouan tribe who were the early ancestors of famous White Huns (Indo Hephthalites). On contrary, this Gandhara region at that time was ruled by the last remaining branches of the Kushanas known as the Kidara Kushanas. Although this Kushanas enjoyed high-sounding titles like "Daivaputra Sahasrahenshahi", but they were greatly incompetent in face of this foreign aggression. This prompted the Kushanas to approach Samudragupta for his help. In 359 CE the Kidara Kushanas sent him wealthy presents & a message of allegiance & seek the help of the Imperial Guptas against the Persians. Accordingly, Samudragupta marched towards North West & defeated the Persians in 367-68 CE.

In other sphere, Samudragupta sent an embassy to Rome in 361 CE. During his time trade & commercial relations with Sinhala, South East Asia, Rome, Byzantine, etc flourished. It is known that from Chinese sources that the Sinhala king Meghavarna sent rich presents to the Gupta king requesting his permission to build a Buddhist monastery at Bodh Gaya.

**Cultural Sphere :** The Allahabad Pillar inscription presents Samudragupta as a wise king and strict administrator, who was also compassionate enough to help the poor and the helpless. It also alludes to the king's talents as a musician and a poet, and calls him

the “king of poets”. Such claims are corroborated by Samudragupta’s gold coins, which depict him playing a Veena.

Samudragupta appears to have directly controlled a large part of the Indo-Gangetic Plain in present-day India, as well as a substantial part of central India. Besides, his empire comprised a number of monarchical and tribal tributary states of northern India, and of the south-eastern coastal region of India.

Vincen Smith described him as the “Napoleon of India”.

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### 7.10 Chandragupta II [Vikramaditya] (376-412 CE)

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According to the Gupta records, amongst his sons, Samudragupta nominated prince Chandragupta II, born of queen Dattadevi, as his successor. Chandragupta II Vikramaditya (the Sun of Power) ruled from 375 to 412 CE. He was also mentioned as Devaraja / Devagupta in his epithets. He married a Kadamba princess of Kuntala and of Naga lineage (N?gakulotpannn?), Kuberanaga. His daughter Prabhavatigupta from this Naga queen was married to Rudrasena II, the Vakataka ruler of Deccan & thus for the first time a matrimonial alliance was set up between the two most violent belligerents of contemporary India.

**Conquest of Shakas :** The Shakas or the Indo-Scythians were a foreign tribe who came to India from Central Asia some centuries ago. By then they had become the master of Western India including Gujarat. Chandragupta II expanded his realm westwards, defeating the Saka Western Kshatrapas of Malwa, Gujarat and Saurashtra in a campaign lasting until 409. His main opponent, the powerful Shaka ruler Rudrasimha III was defeated by 395, and due to his victory of the Shakas he was known by the title “Shakari”. This conquest made the Guptas to gain access to the Western coast & thus came in touch with the lucrative Western trade of the Arabian Sea.

The Mehrauli Pillar Edict (MPE) also credits him of crushing an united alliance of the Bengal Chieftoms (Vanga). This extended his control from coast to coast and he established a second capital at Ujjain.

Despite the creation of the empire through war, the reign is remembered for its very influential style of Hindu art, literature, culture and science, especially during the reign of Chandragupta II. Some excellent works of Hindu art such as the panels at the Dashavatara Temple in Deogarh serve to illustrate the magnificence of Gupta art. Above all, it was the synthesis of elements that gave Gupta art its distinctive flavor. During this period, the Guptas were supportive of thriving Buddhist and Jain cultures as well, and for this reason, there is also a long history of non-Hindu Gupta period art. In particular, Gupta period Buddhist art was to be influential in most of East and Southeast Asia.

Many advances were recorded by the Chinese scholar and traveler Faxian (Fa-hien) in his diary which was published afterwards.

**Chandragupta II's campaign against foreign tribes :** The 4th century Sanskrit poet Kalidasa credits Chandragupta Vikramaditya with conquering about twenty-one kingdoms, both in and outside India. The MPE credits Chandragupta II to cross the Sindhu River. After finishing his campaign in East and West India, Vikramaditya (Chandragupta II) proceeded northwards, subjugated the Parasikas (Persians), then the Hunas and the Kambojas tribes located in the west and eastern Oxus valley respectively. Thereafter, the king proceeded into the Himalaya mountains to reduce the mountain tribes of the Kinnaras, Kiratas, as well as India proper.

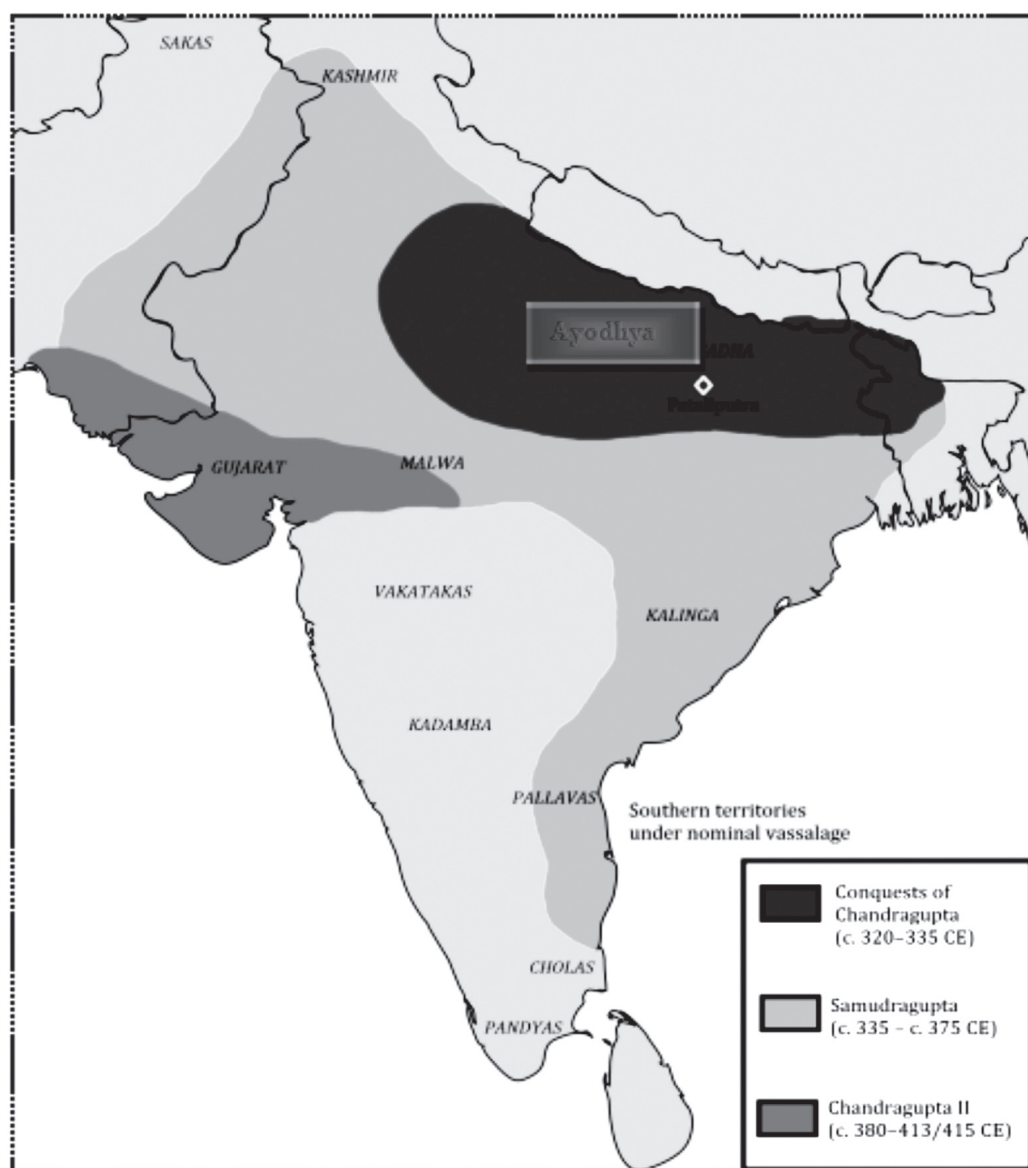
The Brihatkathamajari of the Kashmiri writer Kshemendra states, King Vikramaditya (Chandragupta II) had "unburdened the sacred earth of the Barbarians like the Sakas, Mlecchas, Kambojas, Yavanas, Tusharas, Parasikas, Hunas, and others, by annihilating these sinful Mlecchas completely".

**The Navaratnas :** The court of Chandragupta was made even more illustrious by the fact that the Navaratna (Nine Jewels), a group of nine who excelled in the literary arts, graced it. Amongst these men was Kalidasa, whose works dwarfed the works of many other literary geniuses, not only in his own age but in the years to come. Kalidasa was mainly known for his subtle exploitation of the shringara (romantic) element in his verse. The nine Navaratnas were :

- i) Amarsinha
- ii) Dhanantari
- iii) Harisena
- iv) Kalidas
- v) Kahapanaka
- vi) Shanku
- vii) Vararuchi
- viii) Varahamihir
- ix) Betalbhatta

The other rulers in Indian history who were famous for patronizing such set of Navaratnas in their court were Mughal Emperor Akbar & Maharaja Krishnachandra of Bengal.

Faxian (or Fa Hien), a Chinese Buddhist, was one of the pilgrims who visited India during the reign of the Gupta emperor Chandragupta II. He started his journey from China in 399 and reached India in 405 CE. During his stay in India up to 411, he went on a pilgrimage to Mathura, Kannauj, Kapilavastu, Kushinagar, Vaishali,



The Gupta Empire in 410 CE with Chandragupta II's conquest of the Saka territories at the far West

Pataliputra, Kashi, and Rajagriha, and made careful observations about the empire's conditions. Fa Hien was pleased with the mildness of administration. The Penal Code was mild and offenses were punished by fines only. From his accounts (Bk — “Fa-kuo-king”), we get an impression that the Gupta Empire was a prosperous period in the history of India. And until the Rome-China trade axis was broken with the fall of the Han dynasty, the Guptas did indeed prosper. His writings form one of the most important sources for the history of this period.

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**7.11 Kumargupta I (415-55 CE)**

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Kumaragupta I was the son of the Gupta emperor Chandragupta II and his queen Dhruvadevi. He seems to have maintained control of his inherited territory, which extended from Gujarat in the west to Bengal region in the east.

Kumaragupta performed an Ashvamedha sacrifice, which was usually performed to prove imperial sovereignty, although no concrete information is available about his military achievements. Based on the epigraphic and numismatic evidence, some modern historians have theorized that he may have subdued the Aulikaras of central India and the Traikutakas of western India.

Kumaragupta had inherited a large empire built upon the conquests of his father Chandragupta II and his grandfather Samudragupta. No concrete information is available about his military achievements. The inscriptions issued during his reign have been discovered in Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, and Bangladesh; an inscription of his son has been discovered from Gujarat. In addition, his Garuda-inscribed coins (Garuda was presumably the Royal emblem of the Guptas) have been discovered in western India, and his peacock-inscribed coins have been discovered in the Ganges valley. This suggests that he was able to maintain control over the vast territory that he inherited. Thus, even if his reign was militarily uneventful, he must have been a strong ruler for being able to maintain a stable government in a large empire, as indicated by epigraphic and numismatic evidence. There are some indications that Kumaragupta's reign was not devoid of wars and disturbances. For example, he worshipped the war god Karttikeya, and his gold coins suggest that he performed the Ashvamedha ceremony, which was used by Ancient Indian kings to prove their sovereignty. However, since there is no concrete information available about any military conquest by him, it is not certain if this performance is indicative of any conquests.

**Possible south-western conquests :** Kumaragupta's coins have been found in present-day Maharashtra, which was located to the south-west of the core Gupta territory. These include 13 coins from Achalpur, and a hoard of 1395 silver coins from Samand in Satara district. His coins discovered from south Gujarat resemble the coins issued by the Traikutaka dynasty, which ruled this region. This has led to suggestions that Kumaragupta defeated the Traikutakas.

**Possible annexation of Dashapura :** The 423 CE Mandsore inscription mentions a line of kings whose name ends with -varman, who probably had their capital at Dashapura (modern Mandsaur). The inscription describes one of these kings, Naravarman, as an "Aulikara", which seems to have been the dynasty's name. The inscription describes a guild of silk-weavers who had migrated from the Lata region

of present-day Gujarat to Dashapura. It then abruptly moves away from this topic and mentions "while Kumaragupta was ruling the whole earth". It further states that a sun temple was built in c. 436 CE during the reign of Nara-varman's grandson Bandhu-varman: it was later destroyed or damaged by other kings, and the guild had it repaired in c. 473 CE.

According to one theory, Bandhuvarman ruled Dashapura as a feudatory of Kumaragupta I, the subject of this article. However, historian R. C. Majumdar argues that the "Kumaragupta" referred to in the inscription is the later king Kumaragupta II. According to Majumdar's theory, the temple was built in c. 436 CE when Bandhuvarman ruled as a sovereign, and was repaired in c. 473 CE during the reign of Kumaragupta II. Bandhuvarman's grandfather Naravarman and his father Vishvavarman seem to have been independent rulers, because none of the three inscriptions issued during their reigns refer to a Gupta overlord. Therefore, according to Majumdar, irrespective of who the "Kumaragupta" mentioned in the Mandsaur inscription is, the Dashapura area seems to have been annexed to the Gupta empire sometime after this inscription was issued, that is, during c. 424-473 CE. Majumdar theorizes that the Dashapura region was annexed to the Gupta empire during the reign of Kumaragupta I, either through military conquest or diplomacy.

**Other possible campaigns :** Some coins of Kumaragupta's coins depict him as a rhinoceros-slayer, which some scholars such as Tej Ram Sharma see as possible evidence of his successes against the king of Kamarupa in present-day Assam, where the Indian rhinoceros is abundant. Another category of his coins portray him as a tiger-slayer, which according to historian H. C. Raychaudhuri, may allude to his incursions of the territory to the south of the Narmada River, where tigers are abundant. However, historian S. R. Goyal dismisses both of these coin-based theories as fanciful.

The Bhitari pillar inscription states that his successor Skandagupta restored the fallen fortunes of the Gupta family, which has led to suggestions that during his last years, Kumaragupta suffered reverses, possibly against the Pushyamitras or the Hunas. However, this cannot be said with certainty, and the situation described in the Bhitari inscription may have been the result of events that happened after his death.

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### 7.12 Skandagupta (455-76 CE)

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Skandagupta became the Gupta king in year 136 of the Gupta era (c. 455-456 CE). According to the Bhitari pillar inscription, he restored "the fallen fortunes of his family". The inscription states that when he prepared to do so, he spent a night on the bare earth, and then defeated his enemies, who had grown wealthy and powerful. After defeating his enemies, he visited his widowed mother, just like Krishna had visited his mother Devaki; his mother's eyes were "full of tears from joy".

Many scholars read the name of the enemies mentioned in the Bhitari inscription as "Pushyamitras", who according to the Puranas, were a tribe, and probably ruled an area located on the banks of the Narmada River. However, an alternative interpretation of the inscription reads "Yudhyamitras" (a generic term for enemies) instead of "Pushyamitras". The enemies referred to in the inscription may be rival claimants to the throne. Various historical records suggest that multiple people in the Gupta empire assumed sovereign status after Kumaragupta's death. These people include Kumaragupta's brother Govindagupta, his relative Ghatotkacha-gupta, and Prakashaditya (who is known from some gold coins). These people may have been rivals of Skandagupta.

The Bhitari Pillar Inscription & Junagadh Prasasti refers to for categories of enemy defeated by Skandagupta ~

- i) The Pushyamitras
- ii) The other brothers & rival claimants of the throne
- iii) The hostile rebel kings
- iv) The Hunas & Mlecchas.

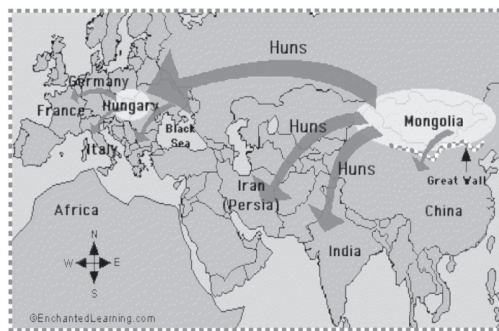
The Pushyamitras in this case were identified by some scholars as the Pundava rulers of Mekala region near Narmada river. They were previously the feudatories of Vakataka rulers of Deccan.

**Resisting the Hun Invasion :** In the mid 5th century C.E., the Te-Thai tribes, commonly known by the Sanskrit denotation "Hunas", became very powerful in Central Asia & Oxus Valley. The Hunas like the Kushanas or the Sakas were nomadic barbaric war tribes who originated from the Mongoloid speaking areas & the Xinongnu tribal region of Northern China. In the mid 5th century due to logistic factors like shortage of food & climatic variations these Hunas became divided into 2 parts & started migrating outwards from Central Asia. One part migrated Westward into Europe through Russian Volga, under the leadership of Attila the Hun. They devastated the whole Northern & Eastern Europe & invaded the mighty Roman Empire. They plundered the Romans & also destabilized the Germanic tribes which resulted into their "Great Migration" & ultimately led to the collapse of the Western Roman Empire.

On the other hand at the same time, the other part of the Hunic tribes in Central Asia, commonly known as "Hephthalites" or the White Huns, started moving towards the South. Around 458 C.E. they crossed the Indus & invaded the mighty Gupta Empire. Although, the date of the Hun invasion is not certain, however, a possible reference to this conflict in the Junagadh inscription suggests that it may have happened at the beginning of the Skandagupta's reign or during the reign of his father Kumaragupta. The Junagadh inscription, dated to the year 138 of the Gupta era (c. 457-458 CE) mentions Skandagupta's success against the Mlecchas (foreigners):

"...whose [Skandagupta's] fame, moreover, even [his] enemies, in the countries of the mlechchhas... having their pride broken down to the very root, announce with the words "verily the victory has been achieved by him."

-?Junagadh inscription.



Migration of the Huns  
to different regions



White Huns Invasion in the  
Gupta Empire (470 C.E.)

Fortunately, Skandagupta proved to be equally formidable. He inflicted such a crushing defeat over the Hunas, that for near about half a century or even more, they never dared to cross the Sindhu & invade India. After being defeated at the hands of Skandagupta, the Hunas turned West & in turn invaded the Sassanian Persian territory ruled by the then Persian Emperor Firoz Shah.

The victory against the Mlechchhas happened in or before the year 136 of the Gupta era (c. 455-456 CE), when Skandagupta ascended the throne and when he appointed Parnadatta as the governor of the Saurashtra region, in which Junagadh is located. That's why Skandagupta is known as the "Savior of India".

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### 7.13 Buddhagupta (476-500 CE)

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After the demise of Skandagupta chaos & confusion grasped North India for about 10 years. The situation gently improved with the accession of Buddhagupta to the Gupta throne in 476 CE. As to Eran Inscription, he was the son of Purugupta and was succeeded by Narasimhagupta. But the Gupta Empire by then is already showing signs of visible decay. Various Feudal lords like the Maitrakas of Vallabhi, the Hastins of Bundelkhand, the Uparika governors of Bengal were already starting to assume their independence.

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### 7.14 Causes for the disintegration of the Gupta Empire

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The Guptas began to rule independently from AD 319-320. Though they ruled until AD 550, the effective period of their rule is not more than a hundred and eighty years, i.e., till the end of Skandagupta. After that, they figure overtly as rulers only in name, but without any effective power structure to back them.

Generally, the reasons for the disintegration of any power structure are explained, as a combination of external factors with internal weaknesses. The salient factors are listed below :

**1) Foreign Invasion :** It is generally agreed upon by almost all historians that the Huna invasions were the main or at least one of the principal causes for the decline of the Gupta power. It is no exaggeration to state that the Huna attacks dealt a severe blow to the Gupta authority particularly in northern and western regions. Further, the internal attacks of the Pushyamitras, who are identified with the Patumitras and Durmitras of the Puranas, also caused notable destabilization to the state power of the Guptas.

**2) Weak Successors :** Another cause for the disintegration was the succession of weak rulers after Skandagupta. All his successors starting from Buddhagupta to Bhanugupta, Vanyagupta, etc. were only titular rulers & incompetent in compare to their Imperial Gupta predecessors.

**3) Inbuilt decentralized administration of the Guptas :** Yet another factor behind the disintegration of the Gupta state power was the administrative weakness. Guptas made no efforts to impose an effective control over their regions. Their control was effective as long as powerful rulers occupied the Gupta throne and exercised their authority effectively. However, crisis of succession or weak monarchs led local chiefs to declare independence. This naturally resulted in constant military preparedness that led to the crippling of the financial resources of the Gupta Empire. Though Skandagupta thwarted the early attacks of the Hunas, the struggle disrupted the international trade of north-western India and eroded one of the most important financial bases of the Guptas.

**4) Rise of regional powers :** By the end of the 5th century AD and beginning of the 6th century AD, taking advantage of the chaotic condition of the Gupta Empire, many regional powers asserted themselves by declaring independence. Further, for some historians, another cause for the disintegration of the Gupta Empire was the beginning of feudalization of the polity, economy and society. They argue that this process of feudalization with the issue of land grants first to religious and later to secular beneficiaries resulted in loss of revenue and diminished administrative control over the kingdom. Further, the growing importance of Samantas weakened the central authority.

**5) Impact of Buddhism :** Another cause for the decline and disintegration of the Guptas is said to be their tilt towards the asceticism of Buddhism during the reign of Kumaragupta and Buddhagupta. It is suggested that the founding of Nalanda

University by Kumaragupta and of Buddhist learning and the patronage extended by Buddhagupta are index of their tilt towards Buddhism that advocates non-violence. It is not true that they patronized Buddhist educational institutions but this does not mean that they renounced violence even for protection of their territories from external and internal disorders, nor is there any conclusive evidence to prove that they disowned their royal duties and spent their lives as ascetics, embracing Buddhist philosophy.

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### 7.15 Conclusion

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Founded by Sri Gupta the Gupta empire covered a large span of about 200 years roughly. It is called by historians as the Golden Period in the history of India. This empire was ruled by some very prominent rulers of the Gupta dynasty such as Chandragupta I, Samudragupta, and Chandragupta II. The rulers of this dynasty provided political integration to a wide part of north India for around two centuries and brought about a political unification over large part of the sub continent. They conducted their rule well and helped in the formation of those conditions which accompanied to the growth of Sanskrit language and writing, extensive discoveries and inventions in science, agriculture, trade and commerce, technology, art, engineering, literature, dialectic, logic, astronomy, religion, mathematics, and philosophy. This made this period as the most remarkable period in the history of Ancient India and gave it a title of the 'Golden Age'.

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### 7.16 Model Questions

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1. Why is Gupta Empire called a Golden Age ? Describe the views of different schools of history regarding thus ?
2. What are the major types of sources for constructing the history of the period ?
3. What are the different theories of origin of the Guptas ?
4. Where was the Gupta capital located ? What are the substantial evidences behind demarcating the Gupta capital ?
5. What was the relation between Brahminical revivalism & rise of the Guptas ?
6. Give a brief dynastic history of the Imperial Guptas ?
7. Why did Chandragupta I called the real founder of the Gupta Empire ?
8. Describe the achievements in internal & external sphere of Samudragupta.
9. Why is Chandragupta II called Vikramaditya ? In this connection, describe his major achievements.
10. Describe the achievements of Kumargupta I.

11. Why is Skandagupta called the “savior of India” ? In this connection mention his major achievements ?
12. What were the major causes for the downfall of the mighty Gupta Empire ?

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**7.17 Suggested Readings**

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Goyal, S.R., *A History of the Imperial Guptas*, (Allahabad, Central Book Depot : 1967)

Majumder, R.C., *A Comprehensive History of Ancient India*, (Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass Pub. : 1981)

Raychaudhuri, H.C., *Political History of Ancient India*, (Delhi, OUP : 1996)

Singh, Upinder, *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India : From the Stone Age to the 12th century*, (New Delhi, Pearson Pub. : 2009)

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## **Unit 8 □ Post Gupta Polities - Pallavas, Chalukyas, Bardhanas and Pushyabhutis.**

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### **Structure**

#### **8.0 Objective**

#### **8.1 Introduction**

#### **8.2 Sources for constructing the history of Post-Gupta polities**

#### **8.3 The Political Narrative**

#### **8.4 North India : The political history of Pushyabhutis & Harshabardhana of Kanauj**

#### **8.5 South India : The Pahlavas/Pallavas of Kanchipuram**

##### **8.5.1 The Origin**

##### **8.5.2 The Early Pahlavas**

##### **8.5.3 The Latter Pallavas**

#### **8.6 Deccan : The Chalukkyas of Badamai**

##### **8.6.1 The Origin**

##### **8.6.2 Dynastic History of the Badami Chalukkyas**

#### **8.7 Conclusion**

#### **8.8 Model Questions**

#### **8.9 Suggested Readings**

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#### **8.0 Objective**

- The objective of this present unit is to study different types of sources for constructing history of the Post - Gupta polities.
- The political history of Pushyabhutis and especially achievement of Harshabardhana in North India will be discussed here.
- Learners are able to gather some ideas about the Origin Phases and dynastic history of Pallavas in the South India from this unit.
- The other objective of this unit is origin, expansion and fall of Chalukkyas of Badami in the Deccan

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#### **8.1 Introduction**

By the end of 5th century CE., South Asia witnessed the fall of the last remaining Centralized united Empires of the Ancient Age that is the Great Gupta Empire. For nearly about the last 180 years, starting from early 3rd century CE., the Gupta Empire had

given India an image of a United pan-Indian state for the sub-continent. There were several factors responsible for the downfall of the Gupta Empire. The devastations caused by the foreign Barbaric invasions of the White Hunas, the collateral damage caused by the fall of the Western Roman trade & commerce, the side-by-side fall of money economy, the economic crisis, rise of local ellits, the administrative incapacibilities of the Latter Gupta Monerchs, etc. were some of them that deserve special mention.

Apart from this, there was an inherent cohesive weakness of the Gupta Administration. The Gupta administrative set-up itself was quiet semi-feudal in character. E.g. The Bhukti provincial governors, called Uparikas, were much more powerful than their Mauryan counterparts. In one hand they were paid in kind (land), instead of cash which literally made them the sole master of their granted land. While in the other, they enjoyed the right to keep their own personal army & appoint the subordinates by their own. As such, they soon became regional satraps. Thus in any rising situation of weakling central government, they possessed enough power to rose as independent regional lords.

Thus, by the 6th century the temporary vacuum created by the fall of united Gupta & Vakataka authorities in India, was soon filled up by the rise of numerous provincial independent kingdoms at the regional level.

Marxist historians like R.S. Sharma, B.N.S. Yadav marked this Post-Gupta period as an Age of administrative decentralization & political anarchy, a noteworthy feature of Medieval Feudalism. However, Revivalist historians like B.D. Chattopadyay, Upinder Singh, etc. refused to view the post-Gupta period as an age of decline. Rather according to them, if we look at the individual regional level, it would be a period of 'improvement & flourishing'. They viewed that the decline of Centralized state actually paved the way for state formation at the regional level.

Let us quickly discuss the political history of four such post-Gupta kingdoms in our following passages, namely the Pallavas, Chalukyas, Bardhanas and the Pushyabhutis.

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## 8.2 Sources for constructing the history of Post-Gupta polities

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Before going to the specific political histories of these kingdoms, let us first quickly go through the major sources that help us to construct the history of this period.

- One of the chief features of the post Gupta polities was the growth of several Vernacular Languages which began to challenge the literary hegemony of Sanskrit in the subcontinent. These new form of Regional Vernacular languages began receiving considerable patronization from the emerging Regional kingdoms & courts of Early Medieval India.
- The growth of Regional polities & vernacular Languages was accompanied by the composition of several Royal biographies written by contemporary court poets in this age. These Royal biographies were used as a tool of self-glorification & self-justification by the Royalties & Kings of this age. Some of the important biographies are mentioned below :

Name	Author	Kings Glorified
Harshacharita	Banabhatta	Harshabardhana
Ramacharita	Sandhyakarnandi	King Rampala was compared with Lord Ram
Navasasankacharita	Padmagupta	Sindhuraja Navasasanka of Malwa
Vikramankadevacharita	Bilhana	Vikramaditya VI, Chalukyan king of Kalyani
Kumarpalacharita	Hemchandra	Kumarpala, king of Anihilwada
Prithviraj Raso	Chand Bardai	Prithviraj Chauhan

- The Puranas of this age reflected the increasing popularity of more theistic & ritualistic elements in social life. The Bhagabatha Purana (10th cen), the Kalika Purana (10th cen), etc are some of them. Sections on Tirthas (Pilgrimage), vratas (vows) and the dharma of women were added to the older Puranic versions. On the other hand, the Upapuranas, more popular in Eastern India enlightens us with the interaction between the Brahminical & non-Brahminical cultures, which latter resulted in the emergence of distinct regional configuration during this age.
- Recent researches by historians like A.D. Mathur shows how several sets of Hindu Laws (vyvohar), on the basis of Dharma (Religion) began to emerge on a popular scale & became crystallized, during this age. These laws dealt mainly with the day-to-day life of the society like marriage laws, laws of inheritance, etc. Dharmasashtra compilations & Jimutvahana's work on procedural laws "Vyvoharmatrika" & that on inheritance "Dayabhag" (mostly popular in Bengal), Vijneshwara's commentary on aspects of Hindu Laws "Mitakshara", etc were some of them. Historian R.S. Sharma identified them as a new tool for reimposing Patriarchy in the society.
- Certain other secular non-canonical texts also provide information of socio-economy of this age. E.g., the "Krishi-parashar" of Bengal gives relevant information of Agriculture practiced in post-Gupta period. While the Jain "Dharma kathas" (folk tales) are useful sources of information for the history of trade & commerce during this period. On the other hand, mathematical documents of Ganitsamagra or Lilavati by Bhaskaracharya offer useful information about weights, measure & coinage of this age.
- **Foreign Accounts :** Apart from the indigenous accounts, there are also works of foreign travelers which are useful to construct the history of this period. Foremost among them were the works of Hieuen Tsnag (600-64 CE) & I-Tsing (635-713 CE), both of whom were Buddhist pilgrims from China to India. They wrote a vivid account of life, society, Royalty, education & also the Buddhist doctrines practiced in India.

The important Arab Works includes those of Arab travelers & geographers like Al

Masudi, Sulaiman, Abu Zaid, Al Beruni, Al Idrishi, etc. These are particularly useful for the source of History of Trade & commerce.

● **Archaeological Evidences** : Likewise the previous centuries Archaeological evidences forms a major source for the History of EMI. As we will see, this period witnessed a considerable rise in Inscriptions & Epigraphs, constructed particularly to commemorate the Royal Land grants to Brahmin & Religious institutions or to sub-ordinate feudal beneficiaries. The assessment of this epigraphical data of Royal land grant is an important topic for debate concerning the Feudal nature of this period.

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### 8.3 The Political Narrative

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During the later half of 6th century the Great Gupta & Vakataka Empire in North India & Deccan respectively, began to break up. Soon numerous small & big regional kingdoms replaced them. Some of them like Gaudas, Pushyabuthis, etc. were short lived while some others like Cholas, Pallavas, Chalukyas, etc were relatively long lived. These kingdoms are more easily identified their nuclear centers or Capitals than their boundaries. Eg. Pushyabuthis of Kanauj, Rashtrakutas of Manyakheta, etc.

Let us now go through some of the chief political features of this age :

**Increase in warfare & militarism** : Owing to the proliferation of political power, this period witnessed an unprecedented rise of military build up & warfare. Apart from the central hired core, the kings of this period depended on feudal supplies & paid mercenaries in times of need. These mercenaries were drawn from different lineages & regions giving the armies a distinct heterogeneous outlook. E.g. Pala Inscriptions records that Pala army of this age apart from their central Gauda regiments also included hired soldiers from Khasi, Malavas, Huns, Latas, etc.

**Increasing conflicts with the tribes** : The period witnessed the expansion of the peripheries of the sedentarized states of both North & South India. This obviously led them to a conflict with adjacent tribal societies. E.g. Since it's formation, the Guhilla Rajput dynasty of SE Rajasthan were involved in serious conflict with the adjacent Bhill tribes. In fact, the foundation of this dynasty lies in the defeat of the Bhill chief Mandalika in the hands of king Guhadtta. Latter many of the Bhills converted from hunter-gatherers to taxpaying farmers. Again Inscriptions of Ganga king of Orissa, Anantvarman Chodaganga suggests how his ancestors defeated the Shabara tribes. These conflicts ultimately led to the displacement & integration/absorption of the tribal societies into the sedentarized Hindu societies. However, it also led to greater interaction between tribal & Brahminical cultures. It was not that only the tribal societies got "Hinduized", but also several tribal elements also penetrated into the Sanatan Brahminical culture. E.g. Sanskrit inscriptions from Assam suggests greater incorporation of Khasi & Gado words. Again the penetration of the tribal cultures in Orissa is best reflected in the rise of worship of the Jagannath cult, which clearly has tribal origins.

**Feudal sub-ordination & 'Prasastis' :** The Prasastis or Royal Inscriptions of this age enlightens the emerging chain of Political Hierarchies in this period. Sometimes subordinate rulers while glorifying their own deeds frequently referred to their overlord in Prasastis. While there are other instances of Prasasti Inscription where a overlord granting lands to their feudal chiefs in return of Military services. Certain titles like Parameshwar, Mahadhiraj, etc were used to refer paramount rulers while those for their feudatories were Samanta, Maharaja, etc. There is much controversies among the historians, whether at all this system is "Feudatory" or not.

**Women in throne :** Despite the patriarchal nature of the society, the political history of this period gives several instances of Queens succeeding to the throne. Didda, Yasovati, Sugandha - were queens from Kashmir. While Eastern Chalukyan Queen, Vijamahadevi, who succeeded her husband Chandraditya, used to donate Lands to Brahmins. Among the others, the 13th century Kakatiyan Queen Rudramadevi deserves special mention. She was nominated to the throne by her Father King Ganapati (1199-1261 CE). Not only she efficiently ruled for 17 long years (1262-1289), but like Sultana Razia of Delhi Sultanate, she too wore male attire & led her soldiers to battlefield. The inscriptions of Kakatiyan Temples portray her as Devi Durga & project her as a Heroic male king. Historian Cynthia Talbot argued that the decentralized political system allowed women to power. Again another factor is that in the socio-political system of this age, the 'family' is the centre. Hence, in absence of male heir, women could ascend the throne in order to preserve the ruler-ship within the immediate family blood or kin group.

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#### **8.4 North India : The political history of Pushyabhutis & Harshabardhana of Kanauj**

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The rise of Kanauj & the glories of its King Harshabardhan, covers a major portion of the Post-Gupta North Indian History. The major Historical sources for the Pushyabhutis were the "Harshacharita", a prose biography of King Harshabardhan written by his court poet Banabhatta & the accounts of the Chinese pilgrim Hieuen Tsang (Xuanagzang). The Pushyabhutis were originally based in a place called Thaneshwar (modern Ambala district of Punjab). It is assumed that the first 3 kings of the Pushyabhuti line viz. Nrvardhana, Rajyabardhana, & Adityabardhana were feudatories of the Guptas who ruled from 525 to 575 C.E. Gradually with the decline of the Gupta Imperial Power, the 4th King of the same line, Pravakarvardhana lost no time to declare himself independent & was the first to adapt the title "Mahadhiraja". The Harshacharita described him as a great military General who had the capability to challenge the powers of Huna, Gandhara, Malava & Sindh all at a same time.

Now, Pravakarvardhana had two sons - Rajyabardhana & future king of Kanauj, Harshabardhana, & one daughter Rajyarshi. With the marriage of princess Rajyarshi with the Maukhari ruler Grahavarman of Kanauj/Kanyakubja, the Eastern neighbors of the Pushyabhutis, an important marriage alliance was forged in.

But as to Harshacharita, certain dramatic events started taking place soon after this. After his death Pravakarvardhana was succeeded by his eldest son Rajyabardhana in 605 C.E. Around this time news came that Grahavarman was murdered by the King of Malava & Queen Rajyarshi was imprisoned. Rajyabardhan immediately marched for Kanauj & defeated & probably killed the King of Malava on his way. But as to Bana's writings, in the course of this campaign Rajyabardhan was "treacherously" murdered by Sasanka, the King of Gauda (Bengal), who was an ally of the Malava King.

Now it was his younger brother Harsha's turn to take the revenge. As such, Harshabardhana ascended the throne & took the title of "Rajaputra" instead of "Mahadhiraja", as a symbol of paying homage to his late brother. According to Harshacharita, his first task was to rush towards Kanauj & rescue his sister Rajyarshi from the nearby Vindhya Forests, who was on the verge of committing Sati. In due course Kanauj passed into the hands of Pushyabhutis & Harshabardhana declared it as his new Capital.

His next military target was to launch an operation against Sasanka, the King of Gauda. As a result skirmishes took place between the two & probably Harsha could inflict a temporary defeat over the Gauda forces & succeeded in capturing Kongada & small parts of Orissa. However, it is doubtful whether he could completely rout over Sasanka, since Harsha could not conquer Bengal at least up to Sasanka was alive.



Empire of Harshabardhana (606-47 CE)

Harshabardhana's next task was "Digvijay". His reign was marked by numerous military victories. As to the account of Banabhatta, Harsha's army was composed of some 5000 elephants, 2000 cavalry & some 60,000 infantry. He has almost total control over whole of North India from Thaneshwar to Magadha including Ahichatra & Prayag. In the West, he defeated the King of Sindh, the King of Vallabhi & invaded Gujarat & extended his empire up to Saurashtra & Kutch. In the North, he invaded Kashmir. In the East, Bhaskarvarman. The king of Kamarupa accepted his overlordship, so as the Tribal chiefs of Vindhyas. Orissa was added to his Empire in 641 C.E. But in his Southern campaign Harsha had to face a crushing defeat in the hands of the Western Chalukya ruler Pulakeshwan II who to commemorate his victory declared himself as "Sakala-dakhshinathanath" as to the contrast of Harsha's title "Sakala-uttarathanath". Thus, the southern bank of Harsha's Empire was restricted up to the Northern banks of River Narmada.

In 641 C.E. Harsha declared himself as the "King of Magadha" & exchanged embassies with the Chinese Empire. In this context the arrival of Hieuen Tsang (Xuangazang) deserve special mention.

Hieuen Tsang described how under the able rule of Harsha, the glory & grandeur of Kanauj rose to a new height. The King used to go for frequent inspection. Periodic assemblies of Feudal chiefs, donation ceremonies & religious land grants were organized. Beside the administrative system as also elaborately reformed by Harsha. Hieuen Tsang records that the people were taxed 'lightly'. Only 1/6th of the total produce was levied as tax. The inscriptional evidences suggest the Religious diversity of the Ruling class during this age. While the earlier Pushyabhuti Kings used to be the worshippers of Surya, Rajyabardhan was a Buddhist, while Harshabardha although was a devotee of Shiva, was also attracted to Buddha. He periodically patronized great Religious assemblies of discussion & debate where Hindu Brahmins. Buddhist Shramanas, & other religious adherents were invited to participate.

Harsha was also a patron of learning & he himself composed 3 plays, viz. - "Ratnavali" "Priyadarshika" & "Nagananda". Beside he also composed the scripts of Madhuvana & Banskhera Inscription.

Harshabardhana's death in 647 C.E followed a period of Political confusion that latter led the famous Triparrate struggle in North India between the three powers namely Pala-Pratihara-Rashtrakuta.

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### **8.5 South India : The Pahlavas/Pallavas of Kanchipuram**

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The 4th century CE marked the beginning of a transitional phase for the history of South India. While in Deccan it marked the end of the Satavahana Empire, the far South on the other hand, witnessed the disappearance of the Ancient Tamil Sangama kingdoms. As such, from the beginning of 4th century CE to the middle of 6th century CE , the history

of South India remained more or less obscure to us. A proper documented history again started only from the middle of 6th century CE with the establishment of Pallava power, North of the River Kaveri.

### 8.5.1 The Origin

The name “Pahlava / Pallava” is derived from the Sanskrit word meaning “tender leaves & shoots of a plant”. There are many views regarding the actual origin of the Pahlavas. Many believed that the Pahlavas had originated from the foreign stalk of Indo-Scythian tribes. According to historian P. Carnegy the Pahlavas had originated from the Ancient Persians / ‘Parsikas’ of Iran and that they spoke the Pehlavi, a derivative of the Parthian language. While in 4th century ‘Varika’ written by Katyana spoke about a Saka origin of the Pahlavas.

As for certain, most of the earliest inscriptions of the Pahlavas were not written in any South Indian language but in Prakrit. Prakrit was a middle Indo-Aryan Language of North India and thus it is taken granted that Pahlavas had came at least from the North of the Vindhya.

However, speaking Prakrit doesn’t solely testifies their foreign origin. For Prakrit is present in South India from a much longer time. A pseudo derivative of Prakrit had developed even in Sri Lanka called the Sinhalese Prakrit, ever since Ashoka had sent Dhamma-mahamatya missions to the island. In fact, some historians had tried to connect their origin with Jaffna at the Northern coast of Sri Lanka identified as the island of Manipallavam from the Sangam epic ‘Manimekalai’. Again, a Sanskrit inscription of Amravati had tried to trace the Pahlava's decent to the Rig Vedic priest Bhardawaj, the 5th son of Brahma.

Thus, it is impossible to trace the actual origin of the Pahlavas. Most probably, they were not Tamil or South Indian in origin. But they were quick enough to adapt the local traditions. However, it is certain that the Pahlavas rose to prominence in the service of the Satvahana Empire working as Feudal lords under them. With the decline of the Central Satavahana authority, they asserted their independence. In fact, the earliest Prakrit Inscription of the Pahlavas at Palnad (Guntur Dt.) clearly mentions Sinhavarman as the founder of the Kingdom, who had earlier worked under the service of the Satavahanas.

### 8.5.2 The Early Pahlavas

**King Shivaskandavarman**, the son of Sinhavarman is considered as the real founder of the Early Pahlava dynasty. He perhaps ruled around early 4th century CE. From three Prakrit Copper plate inscriptions, we came to know that his dominions extended from the Krishna River in the North to the Pennar River in South up to Bellary district. He belonged to the Bhardwaj gotra and performed a number of Vedic sacrifices like Rajsuyao & Aswamedha Yogyia & took the title “Dahamma-Maharajadhiraja”.

His successor was his son Buddhavarman, who died prematurely soon after his coronation.

After the death of Buddhavarman, the history of Pallava dynasty became obscure, until we got the reference of one Pallava king of Kanchi, named Vishnugopa in the late 4th century CE. He was one of the 12 kings of Dakshinapatha who were defeated by the Gupta Emperor Samudragupta (350-376 CE) in his Southern campaign. Thus, his name found mention in the famous Allahabad Prasasti of Samudragupta.

The history of the Early Pahlavas apart from this reference of Vishnugopa is obscure. Between 375-575 CE we got haphazard references of various Pahlava kings in Copper plate inscriptions & in literary tradition. However, no such constructive history can be formulated about them from these references.

**Kalabhra Interference :** But meanwhile a new power usurped the political arena of the Tamil lands and also the lands beyond the Pennar. They were called the Kalabhras and popularly known as the dominator of the Chera, Chola & Pandyan Tamil powers of South India. They were also strong proponent of Buddhism & as such considered to be the enemies of native Tamil culture. As a result, it led to a strong religious reaction by the celebrated Naynars (Shaivas) & Alvars (Vaishnava) saints of the region. In this context we witnessed a significant revival of the Pahlava/Pallava political power.

### 8.5.3 : The Latter Pallavas

**King Simhavishnu (575-600 CE)** was the first Pahlava king to rise to importance and successfully defeated the Kalabhra powers in the Tamil valley. Soon he became the master of the entire region from Krishna River in the North to Kaveri in the South. He was devout Vaishnava & took the title 'Avanisinha' (Lion of the Earth). His portrait is found Sculptured in the Adivaraha Temple of Mamallapuram.

**Mahendravarman I (600-630 CE)** succeeded his father Simhavishnu. He was versatile genius. Not only was he a good military commander and an able statesman, but he was also an ardent religious reformer, a poet and a musician all at a same time. "Vichitrachitra", "Mattabhilasha", "Gunabhara", "Avanibhajana", etc. were some of the titles adopted by him. His rule unfortunately faced the invasion of the Western Chalukyan king Pulakeshwan II from the North East. In the fierce Battle of Pullalur (618 CE) although Mahendravarman could save his capital Kanchipuram, but much of his Northern provinces were lost to the Chalukyans.

Initially, Mahendravarman was a follower of Jainism. But later under the influence of Saint Appar, he converted into Shaivism. Folklore said that as a result he destroyed the Jaina foundation of Patalipuram (Cuddalore) and built the Shiva Temple of Tiruvadi in its place. However, he was also an efficient religious reformer and tried to curb down the corrupt orthodox religious practices of the Kapaliks & Shakyabhiksus. He was an excellent Vina player, studied music under Rudracharya & composed exercises for students who are studying instrumental music. He also wrote a book called "Mattavilashaprahashana".



The Pallava Empire (7th century CE)

Mahendravarman also introduced the famous system of building Temple out of Rock-cut Manadapas. That's why, one of the inscriptions glorifies his innovative skill to build Temples without using bricks, timber, metal or mortar. The rock cut Temples of Trichinopoly, Vallam, Dalvanur, etc were some of them.

**King Narasihmavarman I (630-668 CE)** succeeded Mahendravarman. He was the greatest of the Pallava monarchs who raised the power & prestige of the dynasty to its zenith. He successfully defeated three consecutive Chalukyan invasions under Pulakeshwan II. Not only so, to avenge his father's earlier losses he invaded the Chalukyan territory and captured its capital Vatapi in 642 CE. The Chalukyan King Pulakeshwan II lost his life during the course of this campaign. Hence, to commemorate this victory Narshimavarman assumed the title “Vatapikonda”.

In around 650 CE Narasihmavarman invaded Sri Lanka / Ceylon. This invasion created such a profound influence on popular mind that his campaign was compared with that of Lord Rama's victory over Lanka.

During his reign famous Chinese traveler Hieuen Tsang visited Kanchipuram and noted that alongside Hinduism, the Buddhist school of Sthaviravadanis & Digmabara Jainism also flourished in the capital city. Narashimahvarman was also a great builder & constructed the port city of Mamallapuram / Mahabalipuram.

Narashimhavarman was succeeded by his son Mahendravarman II (668-70 CE) who had a short reign of 2 years. He was killed in a battle with the Chalukyas.

**Parameshwarvarman I (670-95 CE)** succeeded his father Mahendravarman II. He had to fight a series of battles with the Chalukyas under king Vikramaditya I & their ally the Gangas of Kalinga. But after years of turmoil he could finally defeat both of the powers successfully. That's why he was called the "Destroyer of the city Ranarsika". Ranarsika was the title of Vikramaditya.

**King Rajasinha or Narasinghavarman II (695- 722 CE)** succeeded Parameshwarvarman. His long & unhampered reign was marked by the establishment of peace & prosperity in the Empire. Maritime trade flourished and embassies & delegations were exchanged with China in the 720s. He also constructed a large number of imposing Temples such as the Kailasnata Temple at the capital Kanchi, The Airavateswar Temple at Kanchipuram, the Shiva Temple at Pnamallai and the famous Shore Temple at Mahabalipuram. He was conferred with the title "King of the kingdom of South India".

His son **Parameshwarvarman II** succeeded Rajasinha. He had to face a humiliating defeat in the hands of Chalukyas. The capital of Kanchipuram was lost & the king had to pay a heavy war ransom in order to negotiate a peace treaty with the invading forces.

Parameshwarvarman died without any heirs. Thus, a short period of anarchy followed his demise. Afterwards, the people chose from the collateral branch a young prince named **Nandivarman II (731-795 CE)** as their new King. In his long reign he successfully defeated a Triple Alliance of Chera, Pandya & the Shavara Kings. He also checked a Chalukyan invasion.

But his reign also witnessed the appearance of a new enemy over the Northern Frontiers, namely the Rashtrakutas. Sometime around 750 CE the Rashtrakuta King Dantidurga invaded Kanchi but failed. His campaign in turn resulted in a matrimonial alliance between the two & the daughter of Dantidurga, princess Reva became the chief Queen of the Pallava Monarch. But Nandivarman's too much interference in the Rashtrakuta court, resulted into an attack by Dhruva, the next king in the Rashtrakuta line. Nandivarman suffered a humiliating defeat & had to pay a heavy tribute of war Elephants. Nandivarman was a devout Vaishnav & constructed the Vaikuntha Perumal Temple. The celebrated Vaishnava saint Tirumanagai Alvar was his contemporary.

**Dantivarman (795 - 846 CE)** succeeded his Father Nandivarman II. He was the son of the Rashtrakuta Queen Reva. During his reign he had to face a Pandyan aggression from the South & was also defeated by the Rashtrakuta King Govinda III.



The Pallavas & it's neighbors in 9th century CE

His son, **Nandivarman III (846-69 CE)** organized a strong confederacy with the Rashtrakuta & Ganga Kings & defeated the Pandyas at the Battle of Tellaru in 850 CE. Nandivarman III was a patron of art & literature. A Tamil inscription at Siam in Malay Peninsula bore the name "Avani-varman". Scholars relate it with the title Avanivarman which was adapted by Nandivarman III. During his last years, he was defeated by Pandyan king Sri Mara.

**Nripatunga (869-96 CE)**, the successor of Nandivarman III, renewed the hostilities with the Pandyas to avenge his father's defeat. In the Battle of Kumabakonam (879 CE) he could successfully defeat Pandyan King Shri Mara. The reign of Nripatunga witnessed the rise of Chola power in South India.

The history of Pallavas after Nripatunga became obscure. It is certain that the Pallava Empire slowly merged into the Chola kingdom latter, who initially acted as Feudal lords under Pallava Royalty.

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## 8.6 Deccan : The Chalukyas of Badamai

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The Badami branch of Chalukyas offered a Flourishinh history in Post-Gupta period South of the Vindhyas in Deccan. They were the successors of the Vakataka Empire. Capital : Badami / Vatami (in modern Bagalkot district of Karnataka)

### 8.6.1 The Origin

There were various theories regarding the origin of Chalukyas. Some historians like

Rice, Carnegy, etc. believed that the Chalukyas like the Pahlavas were originally foreign migrants from Seleucia (erstwhile Empire of Selucas) or Persia.

Traditional history associate Chalukyas with Ayodhya. A later record of Eastern Chalukkyas mentions the northern origin theory and claims that one ruler of Ayodhya came south, defeated the Pallavas and married a Pallava princess. She had a child called Vijayaditya who is claimed to be the Pulakeshin I's father. However, historians like Kamath and Moraes negated it as a mere myth and claimed that it was a popular practice in the 11th century to link South Indian royal family lineage to a Northern kingdom particularly to Ayodhya. The Badami Chalukya records themselves are silent with regards to the Ayodhya origin. However, it's worthy to mention here that Chalukkyan King Pulakeshwan II himself claimed his decent from the Ancient Pandava royal lineage of the Hindu epic Mahabharata in his Aihole Inscription.

On the other hand, Vincen Smith & Dr. D.R. Bhandarkar believed that Chalukyas had originated from the Gurjaras of Gujarat & thus were a distant descendent of Gurjara Pratihars.



The Chalukyan Empire in Late 6th century CE

While many historians have dismissed the northern origin theory, the epigraphist K. V. Ramesh has suggested that an earlier southern migration is a distinct possibility. noted

historians such as John Keay, D.C. Sircar, Hans Raj, S. Sen, Kamath, K. V. Ramesh and Karmarkar is that the founders of the empire at Badami were not any migrants but native to the modern Karnataka region. Vincen Smith & Dr. D.R. Bhandarkar believed that Chalukyas had originated from the Gurjraras of Gujarat & thus a distant descendent of Gurjara Pratihars. While according to A.S. Altekar, Chalukyas had originated from an indigenous Brahman family of Karnataka.

However, it's certain that they came into prominence only during the late 5th century CE as mere feudal lords of Vakatakas.

### 8.6.2 Dynastic History of the Badami Chalukkyas

**Maharaja Pulakeshwan I (535-66 CE)** is considered the real founder of the Chalukkyan dynasty. The term “pulaksehwan” literally means “one who has tiger hairs”. He assumed the title “Ranavikram” (“the valorous in war”) and was the first Chalukkyan king to perform Ashwamedha Yoggya. He founded the capital city of Vatapi / Badami & hence is also known as Vallabheshwara.

Pulakeshwan I was succeeded by his eldest son Kirtivarman (566-97 CE). He made extensive conquest & as a result, the Chalukkyan Empire now extended over large parts of Maharashtra, Karnataka & Andhra Pradesh. The Cave Inscription in the Vishnu Temple of Badami credits Kirtivarman of defeating a large number rivals including Vanga, Anga, Kalinga, Magadha, Cheras, Pandyas, Cholas, Gangas. Etc. However it quiet naturally seemed to be exaggerated.

**Mangalesh (597-610 CE)**, who was the younger son of Pulakeshwan I, succeeded his brother Kirtivarman. He successfully halted a Kalchuri invasion. But in later years of his reign he got involved in a long drawn war of succession with his nephew (son of Kirtivarman), Pulakeshwan II who ultimately emerged victorious.

**Pulakeshwan II (610-43 CE)** was the greatest ruler of the dynasty. A detailed account of his victories is carved in the famous Aihole inscription on the walls of the Jaina Temple at Aihole. It was composed by his court poet Ravikirti who claimed a similar status of himself with poet Kalidas. This Prasasti was for his patron king Pulakeshwan II. According to the Aihole Inscription, he won many battles against the Latas, Kadambas, Mlavass, Koshalans, Vishnukundinis & Gurjaras.

Sometime around 631-34 CE King Harshabardhan of Kannauj invaded his territory. But Pulakeshwan caused a crushing feat upon them & halted the Pushyabhuti troops over the banks of Narmada. This event is glamorously elaborated in the Aihole Inscription & hence Pulakeshwan assumed the title “Daksinpathanath” as a counter to the “Uttarapathanath” concept of Harshabardhan.

His reign also saw the beginning of the long drawn conflict with the Pahlavas. It all started when Pulkehwan invaded the Pallava territory under King Mahendravarman I. In succeeding tension with the next Pallava king Narsimhavarman I, Pulakeshwan lost his life.

Pulakeshwan sent a complimentary embassy to the court of Persian Emperor Khusrau in 625 CE. The Chinese traveler Hieuen Tsang visited the Chalukkyan territory during this time.

After Pulakeshwan II's death there was temporary eclipse in the Chalukkyan power which ended only with the accession of the next King on the line Vikramaditya (654-68 CE).

Vikramaditya was succeeded by his son Vinayaditya (668-696 CE).

His son **Vijayditya (696 - 732 CE)** in turn succeeded Vinaydittya. His long reign was marked by peace & prosperity and simultaneously growth of trade & commerce. The Sangameshwara Temple at Pattadakal was built by him.

Vikramaditya II (732-744 CE) succeeded his father, Vinayaditya. As soon as he came to throne he was faced with an Arab invasion. The Islamic Arab Caliphate had already crossed the Indus & annexed Sindh in 715 CE. The Umayyad Caliphate now tried to approach farther inroads into Gujarat. But at around 740 CE they were severely defeated by one Chalukkyan general Pulakeshi appointed by Vikramaditya.



Virupakhshya Temple, Pattadakal

His queen Lokmahadevi was great patron of Temple architecture. She constructed the famous Virupakshya Temple at Pattadakal.

Kirtivarman II was the last ruler of this line. Afterwards the Chalukyan kingdom was absorbed by the Rashtrakuta Empire.

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### 8.7 Conclusion

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Thus from our above discussion of this unit, we can conclude that in the Post-Gupta the Early Medieval Period in India was an Age of Expansion of the sedentary state society. We have discussed a brief political history of the Rise & fall of three dynasties from three different corners of the country geographically, viz. the Pushyabhutis of Kanauj in the Northern Plains, the Pallavas of Kanchipuram in the far South & the Chalukyas of Badami in the Deccan. Thus, we can see how in the political sphere there was a greater proliferation of regional state powers, each trying to compete with the other both politically & militarily.

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### 8.8 Model Questions

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1. What are the major sources for constructing the political history of the post-Gupta period ?
2. What were the major political characteristics of the Post Gupta Period chiefly from 5th - 11th century CE ?
3. Give a brief description of the emergence of the Pushyabhuti power in Kanauj ?
4. Why did Harshabardhan assume the title 'Uttarpathanath' ?
5. Describe in brief the rise & fall of the Pahlava/Pallava dynasty ?
6. What were the different arguments regarding the origin of Pahlavas ?
7. What was the Kalabhra Interference & how was it dealt with ?
8. Describe in brief the confrontation between the Rashtrakutas & Pallavas.
9. Give a brief account of the rise & fall of the Chalukyan Empire of Badami ?
10. From where did the Chalukyas originate?
11. "Pulakeshwar II (610-43 CE) is considered to be the greatest ruler of the Chalukyas" —Analyze this statement.

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### 8.9 Suggested Readings

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Majumdar, R.C., *A Comprehensive History of Ancient India*, (Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass Pub. : 1981)

Raychaudhuri, H.C., *Political History of Ancient India*, (Delhi, OUP : 1996)

Singh, Upinder, *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India : From the Stone Age to the 12th century*, (New Delhi, Pearson Pub. : 2009)

## **Block III Religion, Philosophy and society (C. 300 BCE -CE 750)**

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### **Unit 9 □ Consolidation of the Brahmanical tradition : Dharma, Varnasrama, Purusharthas, samskaras**

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#### **Structure**

- 9.0 Objective**
- 9.1 Introduction**
- 9.2 Vedic Period**
- 9.3 Post-Vedic Period**
- 9.4 Maurya and Post-Maurya age**
- 9.5 Varnasrama**
- 9.6 Caste Rules**
- 9.7 Sacrifices.**
- 9.8 Restoration of caste system.**
- 9.9 Religion**
  - 9.9.1 Sources**
  - 9.9.2 Worship of Vedic and Epic deities**
  - 9.9.3 Jainism**
  - 9.9.4 Buddhism**
  - 9.9.5 Bhagavatism**
- 9.10 Pre-Gupta, Gupta and Later ages**
- 9.11 Brahmanical deities**
- 9.12 Revival of Brahmanism : Bhakti**
- 9.13 Siva worship**
- 9.14 Other Religious sects**
- 9.15 Performance of vedic Rites**
- 9.16 Samskaras**
- 9.17 Definition and divisions**
- 9.18 Pre-natal samskaras**
- 9.19 Samskaras from Post-natal to childhood**
- 9.20 Samskaras of student life**
- 9.21 Domestic samskaras**

- 9.22 Post-Mortal samskaras**
- 9.23 Chaturasrama**
- 9.24 Division of chaturasrama**
- 9.25 Brahmacharya**
- 9.26 Garhasthaya**
- 9.27 Banaprastha**
- 9.28 Sannyasa**
- 9.29 Conclusion**
- 9.30 Model Questions**
- 9.31 Suggested Readings**

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## **9.0 Objective**

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- The objectives of present unit is to study the religious concept of Early Indian society ( 300 BCE - 750 CE)
- Learners may come to know that how did Varnasrama and caste rules prevalent in Post - Mayryan Age from this unit.
- The features of Jainism, Buddhism and Bhagavatism - will be discussed in this unit.
- Learers are able to gather some ideas about the meaning and significance of "Samskara" in Ancient India.
- The division of Chaturasrama will be also elaborated here.

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## **9.1 Introduction / Prologue**

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The early vedic religion has been designated by the name of henotheism or kathenotheism a belief in single gods, each in turn standing out as the highest. It has also been described as the worship of Nature leading up to Nature's God. The chief deities of the earlier books owe their, origin to the personification of natural phenomena.

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## **9.2 Vedic Period**

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An important characteristic of Vedic Mythology is the predominance of the male element. Goddesses occupy a very subordinate position. In this respect the vedic civilization presents a contrast to the proto historic culture of the Indus valley, where the Mother Goddess is co-equal with her male partner.

Another important feature of the vedic religion is the tenency towards monotheism. The hymns foreshadow the idea of universal unity and express the belief that God is one although he bears many names.

Sacrifices occupy a prominent place in the vedic ritual. These include offerings of milk, grain, ghee, flesh and juice of the soma plant. In the later vedic period, great changes took place in the religious life of the people. The lustre of the older gods was gradually dimmed. The common people however, did not understand abstruse theological or philosophical speculations and began to show predilection for certain deities already known to the Rig veda.

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### 9.3 Post-Vedic Period

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From the point of view of religion, the early days of the Magadhan ascendancy were among the most eventful in Indian history. Great changes took place within the fold of Brahmanism. Old ideas changed. New ones sprang into vigorous life. Popular cults and beliefs obtained recognition at the hands of the upper classes and humanitarian and theistic movements gathered force and momentum as popular faith in animal sacrifice and barren ritual tended to diminish with the growth of free speculation presaged in the Upanishads.

Among the most important religious concepts of the period, a prominent place should be assigned to the doctrines of samsara and karma i.e. belief in repeated transmigration and the law of the deed. The operation of the Law might, however, be modified by the grace (prasada) of the Lord, the Ordainer (Isvara, Dhatri) combined with the loving faith (Bhakti) of the worshipper. This new doctrine is preached among others by the Vasudevakas, later called Bhagavatas. They teach Bhakti in Vasudeva who is identified in an Aranyaka with Vishnu and Narayana. The religious and philosophical views of his followers are expounded in the Bhagavat Gita which forms part of the sixth book of the Mahabharata. Bhaktas of Vasudeva were known to Panini, and are probably to be identified with the worshippers of the Indian Herakles whose cult was specially popular with the surasenas of Mathura in the fourth century B.C. The most notable rival sects were the devotees of Siva. The new theistic sects did not break away altogether from Brahmanism.

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### 9.4 Maurya age and Post Maurya age

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'Varna' (Caste) and 'Asrama' (Periods of religious discipline), the two characteristic institutions of the hindu social polity, reached a definite stage in the Maurya period. Greek writers inform us that no one was allowed to marry out of his own caste or to exercise any calling or art except his own. A soldier could not become a husbandman or an artisan a philosopher. They lived in simple style and devoted their lives to serious study and discourses. These undoubtedly correspond to the vanaprastha order of Hindu anchorites. In the inscriptions of Asoka we have mention of householders and wandering ascetics. The system of the four ashramas was thus well established in the early Maurya age.

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### 9.5 Varnasrama

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'Varna' (Caste) and 'Asrama' (Periods of religious discipline), the two characteristic institutions of the Hindu social polity, reached a definite stage in the Maurya period. Greek writers inform us that no one was allowed to marry out of his own caste or to exercise any calling or art except his own. A soldier could not become a husbandman or an artisan or a philosopher. They lived in simple style and devoted their lives to serious study and discourses. These undoubtedly correspond to the vanaprastha order of Hindu anchorites. In the inscriptions of Asoka we have mention of householders and wandering ascetics. The system of the four ashramas was thus well established in the early Maurya age.

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### 9.6 Caste rules

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The rise of heterodox creeds, the influx of foreigners and many other causes must have affected to a certain extent the rigidity of caste rules. The Kautiliya Arthashastra mentions agriculture, cattle breeding and trade as the common occupation of vaishyas and sudras and the Greek writers mention new distinction between husbandmen, herdsmen and traders who constituted distinct castes. Another remarkable feature of the period is the growth of two Official castes, viz, the overseers and the councillors. The latter doubtless correspond to the amatyakula of the Pali texts. The philosophers, the husbandmen, the herdsmen and hunters, the traders and artisans, the soldiers, the overseers and the councillors constituted the seven castes into which the population of India was divided in the days of Megasthenes. There is no reason to doubt that the Greek writer described the actual conditions as witnessed by him as opposed to the theory of the law books.

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### 9.7 Sacrifices

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Sacrifices are very much in evidence during the Maurya age. Of the occasions on which the Maurya king, according to Strabo, went out in times of peace, one was for the performance of sacrifice. Sacrifices were also offered by private persons. The people of India, generally sober, freely indulged in drink when these ceremonies were performed. Asoka, the Maurya Emperor tried to put a stop to the killing of living creatures on such occasions. Vaisnava reformers made an attempt to spiritualise sacrifices by giving them a new ethical meaning. But a great Brahmanical revival followed the rise of the houses of Pushyamitra, Simuka-Satavahana and Sivaskandavarman Pallava. Rites like the Ashvamedha and Vajapeya came to be celebrated by princes on a grand scale.

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### 9.8 Restoration of caste system

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The restoration of the fourfold division of caste (Chaturvarna) was sought by the great Gautamiputra Satakarni, who referred to dvijas (brahmanas) and avaras (the lower orders) as objects of his special care and to the Kshatriyas as a conceited class whom he did much to repress. The cause of Gautamiputra's hostility to the warrior caste is not clear.

Perhaps the ranks of the latter were being swelled by Yavanas, Sakas and Pahlavas who are classed by the author of the Manava-dharmashastra (Institutes of Manu) as degraded Kshatriyas. Caste rules could not, however, be rigidly enforced. The Satavahanas themselves intermarried with Sakas.

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## **9.9 Religion**

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### **9.9.1 Sources**

For a description of the state of religion in the days of the imperial Mauryas and their successors we have to rely on Greek and Latin authors, inscriptions and coins, the Mahabhasya of Patanjali and the testimony of later writers.

### **9.9.2 Worship of Vedic and Epic deities**

The worship of the Vedic Gods was still far from obsolescent. Zeus Ombrios, the rain-god, worshipped by the Indians, probably represents the Vedic Indra or Parjanya, Indra and Varuna are invoked as late as the Satavahana period. But side by side with them appear other deities whose popularity dates from the epic period. The river Ganges, for example, is mentioned as an object of worship by classical writers.

Quintus Curtius states that an image of Herakles was carried in front of the army of Porus as he advanced against the Macedonian conqueror. The connection of the Indian Herakles with the Surasenas and the city of Mathura suggests his identification with Vasudeva or Sankarshana. Patanjali refers to the exhibition and sale by the Mauryas of images of Siva, Skanda and Vishakha, Skanda and Vishakha retained their popularity till the Kushana period. When they appeared on the coins of Huvishka. Even Asoka took pride in calling himself devanampiya, Beloved of the Gods.

### **9.9.3 Jainism**

From the beginning of the period Brahmanism had to reckon with the heterodox creeds of the Ajivikas, Jains and Buddhists which obtained a firm hold on certain sections of the people, especially in Oudh, Bihar and Orissa.

Traditions say that Chandragupta and Samprati of the Maurya dynasty were Jains. The epithet Vrishala, applied to the first Maurya by the Brahmanical playwright, makes it likely that in his later days he swerved from strict orthodoxy. An undoubted Jain king of this period was Kharavela, who, strange to say, engaged in sanguinary conflicts with his neighbours in spite of the quietist teachings of the Arhats and Siddhas, saints and perfect beings, whom he invokes at the beginning of his inscription. Jainism enjoyed special pre-eminence at Mathura during the early centuries of the Christian era, along with the cult of the Nagas or serpent deities like Dadhikarna. The rival sect of the Ajivikas enjoyed like many other denominations the bounty of the emperors Asoka and Dasaratha who granted cave dwellings for these sectaries. If tradition is to be believed the Ajivikas were also favoured by Bindusara.

#### 9.9.4 Buddhism

Buddhism, as is well known, secured the imperial patronage of Asoka and became, mainly through his efforts, a world religion. It received marked favour from Menandar and made a convert of the great Kanishka. But the Buddhism of Kanishka differed much from the simple ethical creed of the great Maurya. The human teacher of the four noble truths and the noble eightfold path now became not merely a deva (deity) but devatideva (the god of gods). He is repeated by born in the world of the living to remove the affliction of creatures and reveal to them the true law. Images of the teacher now appear in Buddhist sculpture and receive the devout worship of the faithful, like the icons of brahmanic deities. Side by side with the Buddha appear the dhyaniBuddhas and bodhisatvas. The newer Buddhism was known as the Mahayana or the Great vehicle to distinguish it from the older creed which came to be styled Hinayana. The formulation of its basic ideas is associated with the name of Nagarjuna, a philosopher of the satavahana period.

In the early centuries of the Christian era, Buddhism spread to China and several other parts of central, eastern and southern Asia. The Nagarjunikonda inscriptions make mention of the fraternities of monks who converted Kashmir, Gandhara, China, Chilata, Toshali, Aparanta, Vanga, Vanavasi, Yavana, Damila, Palura and the island of Ceylon. The introduction of Buddhism into China is traditionally attributed to a sage named KashyapaMatanga. There is, however, evidence to show that Buddhist scriptures were communicated to the Chinese by a Yue-Chi Chief as early as 2 B. C.

#### 9.9.5 Bhagavatism

Another Indian faith which showed great missionary activity was Bhagavatism or Vaishnavism, which already in the second century B. C. spread amongst the Greeks of the Indian borderland. Heliodorus, the ambassador of Antialcidas, king of Taxila, set up a Garuda column at Besnagar in honour of Vasudeva, the God of gods.

Several contemporary epigraphs bear testimony to the prevalence especially in central India and the Deccan, of the cult of Vasudeva and Sankarshana i.e. Krishna and his brother. The rival cult of Siva enjoyed the patronage of Kadphises II and Vasudeva Kushan.

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### 9.10 Pre-Gupta, Gupta and later ages

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### 9.11 Brahmanical deities

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The worship of the Goddess of good fortune or Sri Lakshmi was in vogue and she was also a familiar deity in Buddhist and Jaina traditions also. The worship of male deities, as we presumed from their terracotta representations, was also performed perhaps Ganesha, Indra and Agni received good respect.

Indra is an important vedic deity who also figures in the early Buddhist tradition as Sakra. Varahamihira refers to Indra's elephant in the Brihatsamhita. The sun God also received a considerable respect.

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### 9.12 Revival of Brahmanism Bhakti

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The Gupta age is unusually regarded as an era of Brahmanical revival with the growing importance of Bhakti (loving faith in God) and the love of fellow beings.

Bhakti i.e. intense devotion to God conceived of as personal, a saviour worthy of trust and ready to be gracious, is an important element of Vaisnavism and Saivism as expounded in the Gita and the svetasvatara Upanishad. The wide prevalence of a feeling of toleration is well illustrated by the epigraphic and Literary references.

Fa-hien, the Chinese pilgrim also admits to the benevolence of the people of the Ganges valley.

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### 9.13 Siva Worship

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Pasupata or Saivaacharyas are constantly mentioned in contemporary records of the Gupta and post Gupta periods. The literary works of Varahamihira, Bana, Mahendravarman Pallava, Hiuen Tsang, etc and the inscriptions also testify the fact. But in the sixth and seventh century A.D Saivism seem to have replaced Vaishnavism as the imperial religion of Northern India.

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### 9.14 Other Religious sects

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A list of the important religious sects that flourished at the close of the Gupta age is given in Bana's Harshacharita. We mention of Jains Digambaras and Svetambaras, Vaisnavas both Bhagavatas and Pancharatras, Saugatas or Buddhists, Mashkarins possibly identical with the Ajivikas, and adherents of various schools of philosophy including Sankhya, the Lokayatika, the Vaisesika, the Vedanta and the Nyaya.

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### 9.15 Performance of Vedic Rites

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Vedic rites which Samudragupta made attempts to revive, had their staunch advocates in the Purva Mimamsa or Karma Mimamsa school represented by Savarasvamin, Prabhakara and Kumarila. In spite of the teaching of the Mimamsakas, the karma marga, or the way of deliverance by the performance of Vedic rites, does not seem to have

attained amongst the masses of the Hindus the same popularity as the Bhakti marga professed by the ardent sectaries devoted to the cults of Siva, Vishnu and associated deities.

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### 9.16 Samskaras

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The ancient Indian society is basically multifarious and each of them has a religious significance. 'Samskara' means purification, the main purpose of 'samskara' is to purify or rectify a human being from birth to death. It is regarded as an important part of Vedic society and culture.

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### 9.17 Definition and divisions

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According to Sabara, Samskara is a combined form of those rites and rituals that make a person or thing purified, glorious and eligible. The ancient Law-givers like Gautama, Vashistha, Jaimini etc. use the word 'samskara' especially for the upper three Varnas.

We find the earliest discussion about the samskaras in the Grihyasutras. P.V. Kane has given a list of twentyseven samskaras, out of them, sixteen samskaras became very popular in the society of ancient India.

These are :

- 1) Garbhadhan
- 2) Pumsavan
- 3) Simontonnayan
- 4) Jatakarma
- 5) Namakarana
- 6) Nishkramana
- 7) Annaprashana
- 8) Churakarana
- 9) Karnabheda
- 10) Vidyarambha
- 11) Upanayana
- 12) Vedarambha
- 13) Keshanta
- 14) Samavartana
- 15) Vivaha
- 16) Antyeshti.

Holy fire, prayer, blessings, sacrifice, bathing, achmana, sitting towards east and other rituals are the relating parts of the samskara ceremony.

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**9.18 Pre-natal samskaras**

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- A. Garbhadhan -The Atharvaveda and the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad mention and vividly discuss about 'Garbhadhana' as an auspicious samskara.
- B. Pumsavana-This is to be performed for getting a male child as required mostly in the patriarchal society.
- C. Simontonyan - It is a symbolic samskara that signifies the caring attitude of a husband towards his pregnant wife.

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**9.19 Samskaras from Post-natal to childhood.**

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- A. Jatakarma : The Brihadaranyaka and Taittiriosamhita furnish a detailed description of the samskara.
- B. Namakarana : The Grihyasutras, Sayana and Manu mentioned the samskara in details.
- C. Nishkramana : This also called 'Adityadarshan' i.e. first look to sun by new born baby.
- D. Annaprashan : very essential samskara till now, generally to be performed at the sixth month of the baby.
- E. Churakarana : It is also called 'chaula' Grihyasutras prescribe different opinions about the samskara.
- F. Karnabheda : The Dharmasastras prescribe many rules for perforation of ear of children within one to four years old.

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**9.20 Samskaras of student life**

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- A. Vidyarambha : It is also termed as 'Akshararambha'. Dharmasastras prescribe the samskaras at the fifth year of the student.
- B. Upanayana : Vedic religion believes it as a spiritual rebirth of a student. It becomes a full fledged ritual at the time of our period under review. Dharmasastras and Smriti texts have given a vivid description of the samskara ceremony.
- C. Vedarambha : Introduction for the study of Vedas.
- D. Keshanta :Samskara ceremony of removing hair, moustache, beard of the student as Manu prescribe at the age of sixteen for brahmanas, twenty two for kshatriyas and twenty four for vaisyas. It is also called 'godana' as the ceremony ends with bestowing cow to the acharya brahmin or teacher.
- E. Samavartana : this is to be performed after the completion of study.

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**9.21 Domestic Samskaras**

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Vivaha : This is the most important samskara of vedic society because vivaha is the source of all domestic rituals. There are many similarities in modern marriage ceremony with the rituals described in Vivaha sukta of Rigveda.

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**9.22 Post-Mortal samskaras**

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This is called 'Antyeshthi', to be performed by the later generation of a deceased person. Manu and Yajñavalkya prescribe different rules for dvijas, male, female, children, householders saints and accidental deceased. Rigveda has furnished funeral mantras (10/14-18). Atharvaveda mentions 'samadhi' i.e. burial. Manu and Yajñavalkya also mention it.

'Sraddha' comes of 'sraddha', also take place in dharmasutras by the ancient law-givers as an important ritual of post mortal samskara.

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**9.23 Chaturasrama**

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The vedic literature utters the word 'Varnasramadharma'. But the term 'asrama' is totally absent in samhitas and old upanishads.

The theory of 'chaturasrama' has taken a complete structure in Dharmasutras and later Upanishads. The ideology of Chaturasrama is fully developed at the age of Kalpasutra.

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**9.24 Divisions of Chaturasrama**

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The life span of the upper three varnas i.e. Brahmana, Kshatriya and Vaishyas have been divided into four fold Asramas i.e. Brahmacharya, Garhasthya, Vanaprastha and Sannyasa.

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**9.25 Brahmacharya**

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It introduces the student life that is mandatory for the male child of upper three varnas. Generally the law givers prescribe twelve years to carry out the asrama. The Asvalayana Grihyasutra prescribes hard practice of austerities of the brahmacharis.

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**9.26 Garhasthya**

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A vivid description about the asrama has been given by Manu. The Mahabharata praises the asrama. The dharmasutras mention Panchamahayajnas for a householder i.e. Brahmayajna, Devayajna, Bhutayajna, Pitriyajna and Manushyayajna.

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**9.27 Vanaprastha**

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The third phase of human life also familiar as 'Vaikhanaśa' asrama. Manusmriti prescribes it for upper three Varnas. It is advised that a man should go to the forest with his wife after attaining fifty years old.

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**9.28 Sannyasa**

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The fourth as well as the last phase of human life. The Mahabharata, Kathopaniṣad,

Yajnavalkya-smriti, and the Puranas, the dharmasastras have produced detail discussion about the duties of a sannyasi. They may be divided according to their merits, into four categories, 'i.e. kutika, Bohudaka, Hamsa and Paramahamsa.

Many texts of the period admit the acceptance of sannyasa by women. The Mahabhasya of Patanjali, The Mahabharata, the writings of Kalidasa and Banabhatta record many terms for those women, such as Paribrajika, Mitakshara, Sannyasini etc. Arthasastra of Kautilya termed them as 'Prabrajita' The Kamasutra of Vatsayana mentions 'Bhikshuki', Buddhist 'sramana' and Jaina 'Kshapana'.

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### 9.29 Conclusion

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The history of Brahmanical tradition from C. 300 BC to 750 CE clearly depicts the evolution of four fold caste structure along with different rites and rituals sacrifices, samskaras or purification and different stages of life of hindu society that still exist in modern society.

The present unit vividly discusses the history of gradual formation of brahmanical tradition of ancient India from C. 300 B.C. to 750 CE

In the early vedic religion, as we observe, the worship of nature gained a strong ground. Here the male deities are pre dominant and Goddesses occupy a subordinate position. Another important feature is the tendency towards monotheism. Sacrifices occupy a prominent place in the vedic rituals.

From the post vedic period to the Magadhan ascendancy, as we find, great changes took place within the four fold Brahmanism. This is discussed elaborately in the present unit.

In the Maurya and Post Maurya period there are two characteristic institutions of the hindu social polity that have been discussed here. We find the relaxation of caste rules due to the influx of foreigners and other relevant causes. The description of hindu castes, rituals and sacrifices furnished by indigenous and foreign writers provide valuable information to reconstruct the religious life of people.

The Jainism and Buddhism obtained a strong hold in the early centuries of the christian era. Bhagavatism, another Indian faith, also gained considerable popularity along with its rival cult Saivism.

Pre-Gupta, Gupta and post-Gupta ages have become remarkable for the worship of different Brahmanical deities, revival of Bhakti and Siva worship. Other religious sects are also familiar in Indian society.

This unit have discussed elaborately about the samskaras prevalent in hindu society under review. Lastly a long discussion about the 'Chaturasrama' has been furnished in the unit.

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**9.30 Model Questions**


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- a) Write the religious concepts of early Indian society during the time of Magadhan ascendancy.
  - b) Give a brief account about 'Varnasrama' and caste-rules prevalent in Maurya and Post Maurya age.
  - c) Write a note on restoration of Caste system.
  - d) Describe the state religion at the time of the Imperial Mauryas.
  - e) Discuss the features of Jainism and Buddhism.
  - f) Write a short note on Bhagavatism.
  - g) Analyse the revival of Brahmanism from Pre-Gupta period onwards.
  - h) Mention about the non-brahmanical sects.
  - i) What do you mean by 'samskara'?
- Write the significance of samskaras in ancient India.
- j) Give a detail account about the divisions of Chaturasrama.
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**9.31 Suggested Readings**


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## **Unit 10 □ Theistic cults (from circa second century B. C.) : Mahayana; the Puranic tradition**

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### **Structure**

#### **10.0 Objective**

#### **10.1 Introduction**

#### **10.2 Theistic cults : Preliminary forms**

##### **10.2.1 New Theistic sects**

#### **10.3 Mahayanism : Beginning of Christian era**

##### **10.3.1 Mahayanism Kushana Period**

##### **10.3.2 Spread of Mahayana school**

##### **10.3.3 Fourth Buddhist council : significance**

##### **10.3.4 Mahayana : Impact of the term**

##### **10.3.5 Scriptures**

##### **10.3.6 Characteristics of Mahayanism**

##### **10.3.7 Mahayana Bhaktibad**

##### **10.3.8 Prajnaparomita**

##### **10.3.9 Mahayana Buddhism : Inscriptional References**

##### **10.3.10 Monastery**

##### **10.3.11 Emergence of Mahayana Buddhism**

#### **10.4 Puranic traditions**

##### **10.4.1 Puranas : Early historical perspectives**

##### **10.4.2 Description of Puranas**

##### **10.4.3 Names of the Puranas**

##### **10.4.4 Contents of the Puranas**

##### **10.4.5 Upapuranas**

##### **10.4.6 Historicity of the Puranas**

###### **10.4.6.1 Early stage**

###### **10.4.6.2 Opinion of Historians**

###### **10.4.6.3 Characteristics of the Puranas**

#### **10.5 Conclusion**

#### **10.6 Model Questions**

#### **10.7 Suggested Readings**

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**10.0 Objective**

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- The present unit is an attempt to throw on a considerable light on theism, heistic cults from circa 2nd Century BCE onward.
- The learners may also come to know about the Mahayanas and Puranic traditions from this unit.

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**10.1 Introduction**

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‘Theism’ means belief in God or ‘Astikyabad.’ It is well-known that the identity of the originators of early Indus culture is uncertain. They appear to have professed a religion that was iconic and laid emphasis on the worship of the Mother-Goddess and a male deity who seems to have been the prototype of Siva. The phallic cult was prevalent. The identification of the male god with Siva is further strengthened by the discovery of stone pieces which look exactly like a Siva-linga.

In addition to the worship of Siva and Sakti, we find the prevalence of that primitive religious faith which we call animism. It means worship of stones, trees and animals in the belief that these are abode of spirits, good or evil.

An important characteristic as we traced in later period of Vedic Mythology where the pre dominance of the male element. In fact the vedic civilization presents a contrast to the pre historic culture of the Indus valley, where the mother Goddess is co-equal with her male partner.

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**10.2 Theistic cults : Preliminary forms**

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Among the most important religious concepts of the period from 4th century BCE onwards, a prominent place should be assigned to the doctrines of samisara and Karma, i. e. belief in repeated transmigration and the Law of the deed.

Rival sects also make their appearance, the most notable being the devotees of Siva, later called the Siva-Bhagavatas, Mahesvaras or Pasupatas.

**10.2.1 New Theistic sects**

The new theistic sects, though preserving their distinct individuality, did not break away altogether from Brahmanism and attempts at a synthesis were made in the epics and later literature whereby the gods of the Bhagavatas and the Pasupatas or Siva Bhagavatas were recognised as emanations of the supreme divinity of Brahmanism. This leads to the enunciation of the doctrine of Trimurti which, in its mature form, belongs to the later age.

Eastern India saw the rise of a class of wandering teachers who rejected the authority of

the Vedas and of Vedic priests, denounced the blood sacrifices that constituted so large a part of the Brahmanical rituals and even denied the existence of God and consequently the efficacy of divine grace.

It is a notable fact that the greatest of the wandering teachers were scions of free Kshatriya clans hailing from the territory that lies on the fringe of the Brahmanical Holy land.

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### **10.3 Mahayanism : Beginning of Christian Era**

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#### **10.3.1 Mahayana Buddhism : Kushana Period**

The coins of Kanishka, the famous Kushana king, point out the gradual transformation of his religious belief beginning with pantheism and culminating in adoption with Buddhism. He was a devout Buddhist of Mahayana school by faith. According to a legend, Kanishka came across Asvaghosha and was very much impressed by his teachings. Asvaghosha converted him to Buddhism.

#### **10.3.2 Spread of Mahayana school**

Kanishka devoted himself to the service of Mahayana Buddhism. Hiuen Tsang and Alberuni refer to the construction of a great relic tower at Peshwar by Kanishka which was famous throughout the Buddhist world. This tower was constructed by the Greek architect Agesilas. Hiuen-Tsang's statement has been proved to be true by the excavations conducted at Peshwar.

During the time of Kanishka, (1st cent. A. D. onwards) the famous Fourth Buddhist council was convoked at Kundalavana Vihara in Kashmir, According to another tradition, the council was held at Jalandhar in Eastern Punjab. The purpose of the council was to codify and collate the different views on Buddhist teachings and to write commentaries on them in the light of new developments. About 500 Buddhist scholars joined the convocation which was presided over by Basumitra. A select body of scholars headed by Parsva prepared a text of the scriptures with commentaries, in the light of the new philosophy of Mahayanism. The language of the new text was Sanskrit.

#### **10.3.3 Fourth Buddhist council : Significance**

The convocation of the Fourth Buddhist council marks the ascendancy of Mahayana Buddhism with Sanskrit as its vehicle of propagation, Kanishka regarded the Mahayana creed as his state religion. It was immensely suitable to the mentality of his subjects consisting of various nationalities. Its simple theme preaching the divinity of Buddha and his worship had a greater appeal than the dry and scholastic Hinayana creed. Mahayanism preached not only the divinity of Lord Buddha, but also it preached the efficacy of prayer, devotion and faith. The salvation of entire universe was the ideal of Mahayanism.

### 10.3.4 'Mahayana's : Impact of the term

'Mahayana' means 'great vehicle'. The pioneers of the Mahayanism were Mahanghikas and their related Lokottaravadis. The doctrines they propagated had come as Mahayana Buddhism in course of time under the influence of hinduism and its perspectives.

Generally, the Mahayana Buddhism is closely attached with the name of Nagarjuna, but he was not the forerunner of the Mahayana concept.

### 10.3.5 Scriptures

The Mahayana literature is written in pure and mixed sanskrit It is divided into two categories, sutras and their commentaries. Famous Mahayani texts are, Prajnaparamitasutra, Saddharmapundarik, Lalitavistara, Lankavatara, Dashabhumiśāstra etc. We may mention some great scholars of Mahayana Buddhism viz, Chandrakirti, Asanga, Vasubandhu, Shantarakshita, Shantideva, Dipankara Śrīgāya and obviously Nagarjuna.

### 10.3.6 Characteristics of Mahayanism

It is noteworthy to mention that, Shakyamuni had played an commanding role in Hinayana creed but he is not so prominent in Mahayana Buddhism. Here we find that Bhai Buddha Maitreya, Amitabha, Avalokitesvara, Manjusree, Bairochana, Vajrapani etc. have gained much importance. Some of the characteristics of Mahayana Buddhism are as follows.

The Mahayanis are called 'Bodhisattvas' Mahayana is 'Bodhisattvayana', gaining of 'Arhattva', Jivanmukti', Bhavanirodh-all of these Hinayana practices are partial. Bodhisattva Mahayana is Mahakarunika, he would repeated suffer for the cause of life and death, he would relieve the sinner by accepting his sin and sorrow as well as his sufferings. The moral of a Mahayani follower is Bodhisattvacharya. Avalokitesvara and others are adorned by those Bodhisattva Mahayanis who had achieved knowledge and wisdom along with compassion and mercy.

The followers of Mahayanism are basically atheistical and nihilists, one of their sects is yogacharists or believers of science.

### 10.3.7 Mahayana Bhaktibad

The Buddha is God and Shakyamuni has been considered as his incarnation in Mahayana Bhaktibad. The said Bhaktibadins believe that much of the incarnations like Shakyamuni appeared in the world before Gautama Buddha. He is the regulator, of the universe as 'dharmakaya', descended to release the mankind of the world. If the sinners may beg of mercy, love and freedom to Lord Buddha. 'Bodhisattvacharya' is not the cup of tea for

common people, but Buddhapuja and bodhisattvapuja in Mahayana Buddhism has been introduced to expand Buddhism among the people.

### **10.3.8 Prajnaparomita**

Prajnaparomita is, according to Mahayana Buddhist philosophy, practice of enhancement (Paromita), consists of six components viz, Dana, shila, Kshanti, Virya, dhyana, and Prajna : The practice of Prajnaparomita is an essential and mandatory practice of a Bodhisattva.

A sacred book named 'Prajnaparomita sutra' has been composed based on Prajnaparomita doctrines for Mahayana Buddhists.

We find a lot of books called 'Prajnaparomita', among them mention may be made of 'shatosahasrika', 'Panchavimsatisahasrika', 'Dashasahasrika', 'Ashtosahasrika' etc. The famous pilgrim, Hiuen Tsang from China (7th century AD) translated twelve sutras of different volumes in Chinese.

We do not know the exact date of composition of 'Prajnaparomita sutra'. But no doubt, it is one of the earliest sutras of ancient Mahayanism. A Prajnaparomita sutra has been translated in Chinese as early as 159 A. D.

### **10.3.9 Mahayana Buddhism : Inscriptional References**

Inscriptional References :

It is learnt from the Gunaighar copper plate grant (188 Gupta Era-507-8) A.D of Vainyagupta, one of the Gupta rulers, that he donated land on the request of his dependent officer (Padadasa) in order to meet all the expenses for worshipping Buddha in the monastery of Avalokitesvara which was built by the said officer in honour to Acharya Santideva, the propagator of the vaivartika school of Mahayana Buddhism.

Later on, the epigraphic records of Dharmapala and Devapala, the Pala kings of Bengal, also contain Mahayanic concept of Buddha, that afford us a glimpse of the new dimension of the Mahayana philosophy and its full length image may be found in the religious practice of the Pala kings, countless deities of Buddhist gods and goddesses, the concept of Vajrayana Mantrayana Kalachakrayana- sahayajana, songs and dohas of siddhacharyas and in the Buddhist philosophical texts of this period.

### **10.3.10 Monastery**

Vasibha Vihara : Hiuen Tsang speaks of a monastery named Po-shi-po located at a distance of about three miles to the metropolis of Pundravardhana (Northern part of Bengal). According to him, the towers and pavilions of this monastery were very lofty and it had spacious halls and tall storeyed chambers, its courts were also spacious and about 700

monks including many celebrated ones from eastern India of the Mahayana persuasion stayed here : The said 'Po-shi-po' monastery of Hiuen Tsang may be identified with the ruins of BhasuVihara in Bogra district of modern Bangladesh.

#### **10.3.11 Emergence of Mahayana Buddhism**

During the life time of Buddha himself several inmates of the monasteries openly violated strict discipline enforced by the Master and he was compelled to expel them from the sangha. The actual revolt against the original disciplinary rules, appeared, however, long after his Mahaparinirvana.

The reformists clashed with the orthodox elders (thera) in the second great council (Mahasamgiti) held at Vaishali in the early 4th century B. C. for settling the controversies about the correct interpretation of the vinaya rules (i. e. code of conduct for the monks and nuns). As the old orthodox elders did not compromise with the young radicals on certain points regarding these rules, the latter withdrew from the said council and called a separate great assembly or Mahasangha to devise their own system. This split among the Buddhists was of consequence. It eventually led to the emergence of Mahayana Buddhism.

Thus the orthodox group who strictly adhered to the canonical texts came to be known as Hinayana (Little vehicle) or Theravada Buddhists while the radicals who reoriented the canonical tenets got the name Mahayana (Great vehicle).

The emergence of Mahayana Buddhism represents the first significant phase of Buddhism.

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### **10.4 Puranic traditions**

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On brief, 'Purana' denotes a class of literature based on historical episodes or narratives as well as religious chronicles composed in post vedic period.

#### **10.4.1 Puranas : Early historical perspectives**

We find the reference of Puranas in the Atharvaveda, Satapatha and GopathaBrahmanas, TaittiriyaAranyaka, in the Chhandogya and Brihadaranyaka Upanishadas, in the Grihyasutra of Asvalayana, in the dharmasutras of Gautama and Apasthambo and also in the Mahabharata and Manusamhita.

According to traditions, the entire Puranic texts were written by Vedabyasa, these are named as 'joy' and introduced by sutaUgrasroba, son of Lomaharshana. The Puranas are not out of vedic consent but totally different from vedic religious philosophy. So it may be a new religion where the worship of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesvara took importance inspite of Indra, Marut and Agni. The complexity of sacred fire and yajnas gradually disappeared in puranic tradition. The Puranas describe elaborately about the

creation of images, construction of temples, new articles offered in religious worship, conduct of worship, non-vedic mantras and stavas, excellence of Tirthas etc. 'Harivamsa', the khila portion of Mahabharata has been enumerated as 'Purana'.

#### **10.4.2 Description of Puranas**

The Vishnupurana describes the eighteen names of Puranas. Vayu and Matsya Purana and the Amarakosha describe its characteristics.

#### **10.4.3 Names of the Puranas**

According to Vishnupurana, the Puranas bear the names as follows :

1) Brahma 2) Padma 3) Vishnu 4) Siva 5) Bhagavata 6) Narada 7) Markandeya 8) Agni 9) Bhabisyas 10) Brahmavaivarta 11) Linga 12) Varaha 13) Skanda 14) Vamana 15) Kurma 16) Matsya 17) Garura 18) Brahmanda.

#### **10.4.4 Contents of the Puranas**

**Brahma** -It is not the oldest one but mentioned first in the list, probably written in c. 12-13 century onwards, Mainly describes the glory of the temple, of Orissa.

**Padma**- It is Vaishnava Purana, have seven volumes.

**Vishnu**- One of the basic scripture of Pancharatra vaishnava sect. Acharya Ramanuja admits its authenticity. It has a commentary of Sridharaswami. Wilson suggests it as only Purana of 'Panchalakshana' (five characteristics)

**Siva**- divided into six samhitas.

**Vayu**- According to modern scholars it is the oldest one. Vanabhatta mentions . it has four parts.

**Bhagavata**- Most famous among Puranic literature and supreme religious text of vaishnavas with the excellent commentary of Sridharaswami.

**Narada**- we find the description of Lord Siva and Vishnu as well as the tirthas with greatness at its level best. Ballalasena mentions Naradapurana in his 'Danasagar.'

**Markandeya**- It describes the famous Devimahatmya or saptasatichandi.

**Agni**- it contains a huge number of different contexts including grammar, metaphors, dictionary etc.

**Bhabisyas**- describes an elaborate history about the worship of sun-god.

**Brahmavaivarta**-divided into four volumes of four segments, viz, Brahma, Prakriti, Ganesh and the birth of Krishna.

**Linga**- It is a saivapurana, deals with the greatness of Lord siva.

**Varaha**- Full of excellence of tirthas and penance, also describes about Mathura.

**Skanda**-Another saivapurana, contains tirthamahatmya.

Vamana- describes greatness of Lord siva and Vishnu, also mentions glories of Kashi, Prayag and the Narmoda.

Kurma- Ancient Purana, only Brahmasamhita has been revived.

Matsya-Large ancient purana, bease elaborate index of all the Puranas

Garuda- Vaisnavapurana, large in volume, bears innumerable topics like Astrology, Ayurveda, vastu etc.

Brahmanda -It includes Lalitopakhyan and saptakando spiritual Ramayana.

#### **10.4.5 Upapuranas**

Apart from eighteen Mahapuranas there are eighteen upapuranas some of them as mentioned below :

Debibhagavat, KalikaPurana, Vishnudharmottara, NilamataPurana, Adi, Aristonemi, Uttara, Padma, Lalitavistara (Considered as Baudhhapurana) etc.

#### **10.4.6 Historicity of the Puranas**

##### **10.4.6.1 Early stage**

Initially the sutas (offspring of a kshatriya male and Brahmana female) were the pioneers of introducing Puranas. But the Brahmana priestly class began to edit and amalgamate smriti and tantric influence into the puranas as they thought. In course of time, this Puranic source is the one of the important literary materials of ancient political and social history of India.

##### **10.4.6.2 Opinion of Historians**

R. G. Bhandarkar, the renowned historian, admits that the Puranas record history of ancient India categorically. But A. B. Keith is confused very much about the historical authenticity of the Puranas V. A. smith has shown that chronology and the regnal years of the kings of andhras are almost correct with the information supplied by MatsyaPurana. The puranas are more authentic in historical value than the Vedas as claimed by F. E. Pargitar. Another historian, L. D. Barnett supports Pargiter's view.

##### **10.4.6.3 Characteristics of the Puranas**

According to Vayu and Matsya as well as the Amarakosa, the Puranas bear five lakshanas (characteristics).

1. Sarga (Srishti Creation)
2. Protisarga (Newly created)
3. Vamsa (Genology of Gods and saints)

4. Manvantara - (administration of fourteen manus)

5. Vamsanucharita (Geneology of the kings)

The Chhandogya Upanishad has termed the Puranas as "Pancham Veda", but this is not true, not comparable, with the Vedas. The Puranic literature is obviously a principal literary source of Indian history, if we use it properly.

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### 10.5 : Conclusion

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The present unit is an attempt to reconstruct the history of theistic cults specially Mahayana Buddhism and Puranic traditions from second century B. C.

Buddhism as we have seen, is one of the most dynamic religions of the world. So long it was alive in its land of birth it received new ideas and new modes of expression according to its need for existence. In course of its evolutionary process it underwent significant stages. During this time of experiments through which Buddhism passed brought about conceptual, organisational and ritualistic changes and transformed the one-time simple religion into a full fledged esoteric cult of a complex character.

The two schools of Mahayana Philosophy, known as Madhyamika and the yogachara attained their culmination in fourth century A. D. onwards. As have been discussed Mahayana Buddhism was becoming increasing dominant and of the eighteen Hinayana schools only four or five eked out their existence. The emergence of Mahayana Buddhism thus represents the first significant phase of Buddhism. In the next part of the unit a vivid discussion have been made about the Puranic tradition. The Puranas, generally attributed to the period after the Vedic times, are not free from vedic influence. The present unit describes the historical perspectives of the Puranas and its characteristics. Here mention has been made of the 18 names of the Puranas with their short description as much as possible. Some of the upapuranas are also taken place in the unit. Actually, the Puranic traditions may be regarded as an important literary source to reconstruct the ancient Indian history. The opinions of some renowned historians have been summerised in this unit in a lucid manner.

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### 10.6 : Model Questions

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- a) Write the Theistic sects in its preliminary forms.
- b) Give an account of Mahayana Buddhism in the Kushana age.
- c) Describe the contribution of Kanishka I to spread Mahayana school in India.
- d) Write to Significance of fourth Buddhist Council.
- e) Write do you know about the impact of the term 'Mahayana'?
- f) Describe in details about the characteristics of Mahayana Buddhism.

- g) Write about the emergence of Mahayanism.
- h) Write a note on Puranas with its early historical perspectives.
- i) Describe the names and contents of Puranas.
- j) Enumerate the historicity of the Puranas
- k) Describe the characteristics of the Puranas.

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**10.7 Suggested Readings**

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Samuel Beal (Trans)	<i>Si-yu-ki : Buddhist Records of the Western World</i> (2 Vols), London, 1906
A.C. Banerjee	<i>Buddha and Bauddha Dharma</i> , Calcutta, 1966
R. G. Basak	<i>History of North Eastern India</i> , 2nd ed, Calcutta, 1967.
Nalinaksha Dutt	<i>Aspects of Mahayana Buddhism and its Relation to Hinayana</i> , London, 1930.
T. W. Rhys Davis	<i>Early Buddhism</i> , London, 1908
H. C. Roychowdhury	<i>Political History of Ancient India</i> , Calcutta, 1950.
R. C. Hazra	<i>The Puranas, the Cultural Heritage of India</i> , Vol. II.

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## **Unit 11 □ The beginnings of Tantricism**

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### **Structure**

- 11.0 Objective**
- 11.1 Introduction**
- 11.2 Historical perspectives**
- 11.3 Buddhist Tantra : Characteristics**
- 11.4 Tantricism in Buddhism : Elements**
- 11.5 ‘Bodhichitto’ in Tantric Buddhism**
- 11.6 Antiquity of Tantricism**
- 11.7 Opinion of scholars**
- 11.8 Traditional beginnings of Tantric Buddhism**
- 11.9 Historical beginning : Tantric Buddhism**
- 11.10 Mantras**
- 11.11 Pantheon**
- 11.12 Deities**
- 11.13 Avalokitesvara**
- 11.14 Chronology of Tantricism**
- 11.15 Asanga**
- 11.16 Opinion of scholars about chronology of Tantricism**
- 11.17 Views about Manjusrimulakalpa**
- 11.18 Date of Tantra texts**
- 11.19 Seats of Tantric Buddhism**
- 11.20 Description of four pithas**
- 11.21 Doctrines and Practices**
- 11.22 Tantric movement : Role on society**
- 11.23 Views of scholars**
- 11.24 Conclusion**
- 11.25 Model questions**
- 11.26 Suggested Readings**

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## **11.0 Objective**

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The unit under discussion, will throw considerable light about the initial stages of tantricism. The evolution of Tantricism will also be discussed.

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## **11.1 Introduction**

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The word 'tantra' derived from 'tatri' of 'Tantri', means wisdom. The unification of tattva and mantra is an important part of tantra.

Etymologically the word 'Tantra' may be taken to mean a kind of elaboration (if derived from root 'Tan', to spread) or to mean knowledge (if derived from Tantri). A critical study of the nature of Tantric Buddhism leads one to believe that there is no integral relation between Tantricism and Buddhism proper.

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## **11.2 Historical Perspectives**

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The Mahayanic development of worship and ritualistic ceremonies did not harm the cause of Buddhism so much as the incorporation of mysticism, known generally as Tantricism. Historically Tantric Buddhism is known as esoteric and the last phase of Buddhism in India. Buddhism in fact lost itself in the maze of mudras (finger gestures or physical postures), Mandalas (mystical diagrams), Kriyas (rites and ceremonies) and charyas (meditational practices and observance for external and internal purity).

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## **11.3 Buddhist Tantra : Characteristics**

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The primary concern of the Buddhist Tantra is not to establish a definite system of metaphysical thought. Just as the Hindu tantras, taking for granted fundamental texts of the Darshanas, apply to them to a practical effort of realisation, so the Buddhist tantra on the basis of Mahayanic principles, dictate practical methods for the realisation of the supreme goal. These Tantras are primarily concerned with the sadhana or the religious endeavour, but not with any system of abstract philosophy. The subject matter of the Tantras may include esoteric yoga, hymns, rites, rituals, doctrines and even law, medicine, magic and so forth.

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## **11.4 Tantricism in Buddhism : Elements**

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Tantricism in Buddhism includes a mass of heterogeneous elements, the chanting and muttering of Mantras describing the various mystic diagrams, making of postures and gestures, worshipping various types of Gods and Goddesses including a host of demigods and other such beings, meditations and salutations of various types and last but not the least yogic practices sometimes involving sex-relations. Tantric Buddhism imbibed the spirit of Mahayana. The idea of Arhathood was replaced by the idea Bodhisattva hood of the Mahayanists.

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### **11.5 'Bodhichitta' in Tantric Buddhism**

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'Bodhichitta' means chitta or mind firmly bent on attaining Bodhi or enlightenment and becoming a Buddha. Bodhichitta is perfect enlightenment attained for the sake of others. We find a new definition of Bodhichitta in the tantric Buddhist texts where it is said that Bodhichitta comprises in it two elements, viz, enlightenment of the nature of essencelessness (sunyata) and universal compassion (Karuna).

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### **11.6 Antiquity of Tantricism**

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The Tantras make no claims for historicity, instead they claim to be revelations. It can not be denied that in the beginning of Buddhism and when Mahayana sprang up in later times a strict discipline were followed, even during the life of Buddha these strict discipline rules were opposed by some monks. Party quarrels were in evidence in the second Buddhist council when the Mahasamghikas were expelled by the orthodox who refused to make any concession on the ten minor points of discipline. The orthodox followers of the faith were sure to challenge anything that had not been sponsored by Buddha and that seems to be the reason of the great popularity of the sangiti literature, Tantras of Buddhism are written in the sangiti, which are diametrically opposed to the original teaching of Buddha.

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### **11.7 Opinion of scholars**

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The Tantras were regarded as spiritual authority per excellence and often classed with the vedas. It has been held by some that Tantra was of foreign origin. H. P. shastri while maintaining that sakti worship in the important factor of Tantra held that "Tantra came from outside India. Most probably it came with the Magi priests of the scythians." Likewise B. Bhattacharya opines that the "introduction of sakti worship in religion is so un-indian that we are constrained to admit it as an external or foreign influence." P. C. Bagchi pointed out some possible foreign elements in the Tantras.

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### **11.8 Traditional beginnings of Tantric Buddhism**

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Buddhist Tantras like the Mahayana sutras claim to have been revealed by Buddha, the origin of esoteric or Tantric Buddhism is therefore traced to Buddha himself. In the Sekoddesatika, a commentary on the sekoddessa section of kalachakra tantra, it is stated that Mantrayana had been first imparted Buddha Dipankara, at the request of Suchandra, king of Sambhala, Buddhasakyamuni convened a council of Sri Dhanyakataka and delivered a discourse on the Mahayana at Gridhrakuta.

This tradition is confirmed by the Tibetan historians. Accordings to B. Bhattacharya there is no room for any doubt that the tantras and the mantras, mudras and dharanis were taught by Buddha to the lay-devotees. What Buddha emphasised to his pupils

was the need of purity, fear from doing evil, sense control and mindfulness. The Kevattha sutta shows that Buddha disapproved the magical and superhuman feats and regarded these as black arts like the Gandhari Vija. In the Brahmajalasutta a long list of pseudo sciences (Vijjas) is given but Buddha apparently condemns them as low arts.

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### **11.9 Historical Beginning : Tantric Buddhism**

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The beginnings of Tantric or Esoteric Buddhism seem to be inseparable from the beginnings of Mahayana Buddhism.

Mantras become so fundamental to Esoteric Buddhism that the latter is often called Mantrayana (Mantranaya). Mantras seem to have been developed from dharanis. These dharanis are often traced to the parittas e. g. in Atana tiya sutta of the Dighanikaya and to Milindopanho. But their sense in texts is not identical with those mantras as found in the sadhanamala.

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#### **11.10 Mantras**

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B. Bhattacharya's attempt to trace the evolution of the seed syllable (bijamantra) pram, hints at the possible process of the developments of mantras from dharanis, 'Pram' symbolizes 'Prajnaparamita'. The Astasahasrika was a stupendous text which could not be recited by illiterate Mahayana laity.

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#### **11.11 Pantheon**

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Besides mantras, a vast and varied pantheon is another principal feature of Tantric Buddhism. A number of semi-divine, semi human and even demonic beings like Mara, yakshas, Gandhabbas, Nagas and Devas, are known to old Buddhism. Lalitavistara, a text partly sarvastivadin and partly Mahayanists, introduces Buddha in an assembly attended not only by Bhiksukas, Bhikhunis, upasakas and upasikas but also by Deva, Nagas, Yakshas, Gandharvas, saktia, Brahma and the Lokpalas.

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#### **11.12 Deities**

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The Dharmasangraha attributed to Nagarjuna knows the following deities, five Buddhas vairocana, Aksobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitabha and Amogha siddhi, four goddesses Rochani, Mamki, Pandura and Tara. The list of 18 Lokpalas includes Indra, Yama, Varuna, Kuvera, Brahma, Krsna, Chandra, Surya, Prithvi and Asura. The six yoginis mentioned in it are Vajravahni, yamini, Samacharani, Samtrasani, Chandika. The eight Bodhisattvas listed are Maitreya, Gaganaganja, Samantabhadra, Vajrapani, Manjusree, Sarvanivasan, Viskambhi, Kshitigarbha and Khagarbha.

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#### **11.13 : Avalokitesvara**

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The most important and famous Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara is not mentioned in the

list of deities. Avalokita, the supreme advocate of the doctrine of compassion is seen as the husband Prajnaparomita, now called Tara, the embodiment of wisdom (Prajna). The description of Nairatmya (i. e. Prajna and sunyata) in the Nairatmyaparipracha sutra reads like the description of Prajnopaya; in fact the compounds like "Mahasukha" etc. are used here as synonym and this is called Prajnaparamitanaya. This "Mahasukha", according to vajrayana authorities, is impossible of attainment without Sakti the embodiment of Karuna.

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#### **11.14 : Chronology of Tantricism**

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The generally accepted opinion among scholars is that the Tantrik Buddhism appeared in the 7th century A. D. B. Bhattacharya, G. Tucci, Gopinath Kabiraj seem to have been inclined to push the date of the emergence of Buddhist esoterism back to the time of Maitreya and Asanga. Rahul Samkrityayana had also drawn attention to the great antiquity of Mantrayana. According to the great Tibetan traditions, Nagarjuna, father of Mahayana was a great magician (Mahasiddha)/ acquired many dharanis, Prajna texts and sadhanas and propagated esoteric teachings.

In all probability this Tibetan account of Nagarjuna refers to another person of that name, a Tantric author and a Siddha who flourished in about the 8th century A. D. The Madhyamika philosopher's association with mystical system is also suggested by reliable authorities like Hiuen-Tsang, I-tsing, Banabhatta and Manjusrimulakalpa. Moreover, Paramitayana is in essence identical with Mantrayana or Tantricism.

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#### **11.15 : Asanga**

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'Asangas' is famous in tradition to have received from Maitreya in Tusita heaven not only esoteric teaching but also a number of works. This Maitreya supposed to be a celestial Bodhisattva by Hiuen Tsang and Taranatha, was a historical person, who wrote some standard books on Buddhist mysticism which were commented upon by Asanga. G. C. Pande has pointed out in Asanga's Abhidharma samuchhaya, an allusion to erotic mysticism and the author uses the compound Abhisandhivinischaya which implied a double meaning, one manifest and the other intended.

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#### **11.16 : Opinion of scholars about chronology of Tantricism**

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Tucci has drawn a pointed attention to the fact that in the Rattvasiddhisutra of Harivarman there is a reference to a Tantrika school called Nayasaumya probably a Tantrika Kapalika sect, which believed in sixteen categories. Winternitz criticised the great antiquity claimed for the rise of Buddhist tantricism by B. Bhattacharya and Tucci. The Karandavyuhasutra existed before the 4th century A. D. bears clear impact of Tantra and Puranic religion. The suvarnaprabhasa sutra first translated into Chinese in A. D. 414-33 by Dharmaksema and in the 6th century by Paramartha and in the 7th century by

I-tsing for a great part already bears the stamp of a tantra and is quite Tantric in its contents, formulae and rites. Another sutra held been translated into Chinese by Dharmagupta in 615 A. D. and by Hiuen Tsang 650 A. D. This text shows unmistakable influence of Tantricism. It refers to dreadful Tantrika practices and spells and includes raksas among deities that were worshipped.

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### **11.17 More texts about Tantricism**

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A few more texts, the contents of which are quite Tantrika are also known. The Mahamayurividyarajni, a Tantric Dharani was translated into Chinese by Srimitra and by Kumarajiva (402- 4 A. D.). The Manjusrimulakalpa is a ritual text of Mantrayana, dealing with numerous gods, goddesses, their iconography, mudras, mantras, mandalas and popular worship, although it styles itself as Mahayana Vaipulya sastra.

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### **11.18 Views about Manjusrimulakalpa**

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B. Bhattacharya placed the original text of the Manjusrimulakalpa which had 28 chapters only in the 2nd century A. D. The subsequent chapters he described as later additions. His main argument was that Manjusrimulakalpa does not know the systematic theory of five dhyanī Buddhas and their saktis. The dating is arrived at after comparing Manjushimulakalpa with Guhyasamajatantra; the latter states the theory of five dhyanī Buddhas and their Kulas; it is therefore later than Manjusrimulakalpa. The Guhyasamajatantra is placed by B. Bhattacharya in the 3rd or 4th century A.D. and its authorship is attributed by him to Asanga.

Winternitz criticised this view of length and said that Manjusrimulakalpa has not much to do with Guhyasamajatantra, the former is a vaipulyasutra of Mahayana while the later is a Mahaguhya tantraraja, attributed to 8th century A. D.

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### **11.19 Date of Tantra texts**

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It should suffice to indicate the appearance of Tantras before the 7th century A. D. But Winternitz emphatically, maintained that the word 'Tantra' ought to be restricted to the texts connected with sakti worship. Tantra texts in this sense cannot be proved to have existed before the 7th century. Hiuen -Tsang in Si-yu-ki describes the image of Isvara and goddess Bhina i.e. Bhimadevi or Durga, spouse of Siva Mahesvara, in the state of Gandhara. From this we can place the date of Tantric Buddhism about 7th century A. D.

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### **11.20 Seats of Tantrik Buddhism**

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In the Tantras there is a tradition about the four famous seats or pithas where esoteric doctrine and sakti worship were first revealed. In the Sadhanamala are mentioned the four pithas of sacred spots are (1) Kamakhya (2) Srihatta (3) Uddiyana and (4) Purnagiri. They are also called saktipithas owing to the legend associated with the corpse of Sakti.

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**11.21 Description of four Pithas**

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Kamakhyā has been identified with Kamarupa, Srihatta with Sylhet, Purnagiri is most likely identical with Purnagiri in Nainital district of U. P, but much controversy has been raised over the location of Uddiyana or Udyana. In all probabilities, Uddiyana has to be located in the eastern and Assam area. In the medieval period when Tantras flourished in Vanga and Samatata were two important centres of culture in Bengal. Bengal is borne out by the numerous Buddhist and Brahmanical images of the Tantric types discovered in the whole of the region. Numerous old inscriptions, remains of old buildings, coins and terracottas found in these regions. Tantricism of the Buddhists therefore originated in the Uddiyana-Vajrayogini and thence was transmitted to the rest of India.

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**11.22 Doctrines and Practices**

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The Buddhist esoteric treatises describe the Truth in negative terms : the terms 'sunyata', 'Vijnanachitta' and the compounds 'nairatmya' frequently occur in connection with the ceremonies and yogic practices.

The Hevajratāntra gives a negative description of the Reality (tattva). The Vajrayana sages speak of samsara and Nirvana in the same vein in which Nagarjuna the great characterised them. The Vajrayanists call the samsara as a condition. of the mind which is enveloped with the darkness born of innumerable false ideations, is as ephemeral as the lightening in a storm and is besmeared with the dirt of attachment etc. not easily removable. Advayavajra, a late vajrayana saint and scholar, says that in Esoteric system, 'sunyata' is described as vajra because it is firm and sound, indivisible, impenetrable, cannot be burnt and destroyed.'

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**11.23 Tantric Movement : Role on society**

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Tantric movement was accelerated chiefly by the members of the lower orders of the society. This movement succeeded in raising some of the lowliest men to the status of 'adepts' or perfect siddhas. These teachers who wandered free from convention and social taboos, did teach in teachings and doings that there is practically no distinction between brahmana and a domba, a king and a slave. The Brahmanic practices of study, sanskaras and rituals are ridiculed openly.

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**11.24 Views of scholars**

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According to H. Kern "tantrism is, so to say, a popularised and at the same time, degraded form of yoga because the objects are commonly of a coarser character and the practices partly more childish, partly revolting. R. L. Mitra declared that "no good purpose would be served by dwelling further on the absurd and often disgusting

prescriptions of such works as the Tathagataguhyaka". Charles Eliot held that "the details of saktism are an unprofitable study." Winternitz do not seem to have appreciated the language and style of the Tantras, and found in them an "unsavoury mixture of mysticism, occult pseudoscience, magic and erotics". La vallee, Poussin frankly attributed to Tantricism "disgusting practices, both obscene and criminal."

B. Bhattacharya stigmatizes the Tantras as example of "the worst immortality and sin, and Tantricism as a disease." It is true that the vajrayana yogins is said to have attained final Nirvana in the blissful embrace of a young girl. It is stated that the Buddhahood resides in the female organ, that lust is crushed by lust; and that there can be no liberation without a female partner.

According to Tucci, apart from some exceptions "The tantras contain one of the highest expressions of Indian Mysticism which may appear to us rather strange in its outward form, chiefly because we do not always understand the symbolical language in which they are written. Tucci in his excellent work on the mandalas, compares the symbols of the Tantras with those of Upanishads. It is generally believed that the abuses of Tantrika practices may have resulted in moral degeneration and the decline of Buddhism.

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### 11.25 Conclusion

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The unit under discussion clearly depicts the impact of the term "Tantricism" as well as antiquity of Tantricism, beginnings of tantric Buddhism, both traditional and historical, chronology of tantric Buddhism, doctrines and practices, speciality of the tantricism and the role of tantricism in the society with views of scholars in details.

It is proved from the long discourse that the primary concern of the Buddhist Tantra is not to establish a definite system of metaphysical thought. Just as the Hindu tantras, taking for granted fundamental texts of the Darshanas, apply them to a practical effort of realization, so the Buddhist tantra on the basis of Mahayana principles, dictate practical methods for the realization of the supreme goal. These tantras primarily concerned with the sadhana or the religious endeavour, but not with any system of abstract philosophy. The subject matter of the Tantras may include esoteric yoga, hymns, rites, doctrines and even law, medicine, magic and so forth that have been discussed elaborately in this unit.

The supreme reality is often described as the unity of Prajna (wisdom) and upaya (means); it is no dual, two-in-one, the state of final realization. Prajna, as described, is the same as sunyata (voidness) and upaya is the same as karuna or compassion; these two terms are very well known to Mahayana sutra. The Bodhisattva fixes his intention on obtaining bodhi or enlightenment and this he does by constantly endeavouring for the liberation of all beings in Mahayana, Bodhichitta is the mind directly goes towards Enlightenment but in esoteric Buddhism the compound Bodhichitta of great technical significance and of a complex nature.

Another important feature of Tantric Buddhism is Mantra. The term 'Mantra' means a 'hymn' or 'prayer' sacred to a deity, it is also understood to mean a 'spell' a charm or incantation. Yogic practice is always indispensable for the attainment of the Bodhicitta. Another term, 'Mandala' we have found in Tantricism which literally means 'round', or 'circle', 'halo round the figure, such as of any God. But technically and in esoteric buddhism mandala implies one of the subtlest concepts of Indian mysticism.

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### 11.26 Model Questions

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- a) Write the historical perspectives of the Tantricism.
  - b) Briefly discuss the antiquity of the Tantricism.
  - c) Review the opinion of scholars regarding Tantricism.
  - d) How do you know about traditional beginning of Tantric Buddhism.
  - e) Sketch the mantras and pantheon of tantricism in brief.
  - f) Describe the deities and importance of Avalokitesvara in Buddhist Tantricism.
  - g) Discuss the chronology of Tantricism.
  - h) Write about date of Tantra texts.
  - i) Mention the seats of Tantric Buddhism
  - j) Describe the doctrines and practices of Tantricism.
  - k) Discuss the role of society regarding Tantric movement.
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### 11.27 Suggested Readings

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S. N. Dasgupta	<i>An introduction to Tantric Buddhism</i>
N. N. Basu,	
(Introduction by H. P. Shastri)	<i>Modern Buddhism and its followers in Orissa.</i>
S. B. Dasgupta	<i>Buddhist Esoterism,</i> Sadhanamala, Vol II.
P. C. Bagchi	“Foreign Elements in the Tantra” - <i>Indian Historical Quarterly</i> , Vol. VII, 1931.
M. Winternitz	<i>History of Indian Literature</i> , Vol I. II.
B. Bhattacharya	<i>Buddhist Iconography</i> , Buddhist Esoterism
L. M. Joshi	<i>Studies in the Buddhist Culture of India.</i>
G. Tucci	<i>Aspects of the Doctrines of Maitreya and Asanga.</i>
R. L. Mitra	<i>Sanskrit Buddhist Literature in Nepal</i>
Kshanika Saha	“Tantric Buddhism”, <i>Journal of Ancient Indian History</i> , Vol. XXI.

## **Block IV : CULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS.**

### **(c. 300 BCE - 750CE)**

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#### **Unit 12 □ A brief survey of Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit and Tamil Literature**

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##### **Structure**

##### **12.0 Objective**

##### **12.1 Introduction**

##### **12.2 Beginning of Sanskrit literature**

###### **12.2.1 Classification of Sanskrit literature**

###### **12.2.2 Sanskrit works of 4th to 2nd century B.C.**

###### **12.2.3 Sanskrit works written before 4th century A.D.**

###### **12.2.4 Sanskrit works from 4th century A.D. onwards to 8th century A.D.**

##### **12.3 Pali**

###### **12.3.1 Origin of Pali language**

###### **12.3.2 Pali literature-Earlier phase**

###### **12.3.3 Divisions of Pali Canonical literature**

###### **12.3.4 The Jatakas**

###### **12.3.5 Pali literature in subsequent ages**

###### **12.3.6 Historical and descriptive works in Pali**

###### **12.3.7 Grammar, Lexicons and Dictionaries in Pali**

##### **12.4 Prakrit literature**

###### **12.4.1 Origin of Prakrit**

###### **12.4.2 Literature written in Prakrit**

###### **12.4.3 Maharastri Prakrit**

###### **12.4.4 Ardhamagadhi Prakrit**

###### **12.4.5 Paishachi Prakrit**

##### **12.5 Tamil Literature**

###### **12.5.1 Admixture in Tamil language**

###### **12.5.2 Different stages of Tamil Literature**

###### **12.5.3 Old Tamil Literature**

###### **12.5.4 Classic Tamil Literature**

**12.6 Conclusion****12.7 Model Questions****12.8 Suggested Readings**

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**12.0 Objective**

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- The present unit is an attempt to throw a considerable light on the beginning, classification and written works on Sanskrit literature.
- Learners are able to gather some ideas about the origin, phase, divisions & descriptive works of Pali literature.
- The origin and written works of Prakrit literature will be discussed here.
- The other objective of this unit is to gather the knowledge about origin, phase & evaluation of Tamil literature.

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**12.1 Introduction**

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It is very interesting to note that about 260 BCE, for his inscriptions addressed to his people, King Asoka used, not Sanskrit but dialects similar to Pali. Buddha, too, as early as the sixth and fifth century BCE preached, not in Sanskrit but in the popular language. But popular epics were written in popular Sanskrit. The epics, as H. Jacobi said, can not be composed in an already 'extinct' language, but must be composed in the living language of the people. According to M. Winternitz Sanskrit has always 'lived' in India as a literary language. There is nothing strange in the fact that, at the same time as Buddhist and Jain monks composed and preached in popular dialects, Sanskrit epics also were composed and listened to. Down to the present day in India it is not at all unusual for two or more languages to be current side by side in the same region. Therefore, if we here and there encounter the same verses which we find in the Epics, in Pali or in Prakrit, in Buddhist or in Jainistic texts, it does not always follow that the Sanskrit verses must have been translated from the popular languages.

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**12.2 Beginning of Sanskrit literature**

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No doubt, Sanskrit is the principal medium of ancient Indian culture, religion as well as literature, the language under review may be divided into two phases i.e. Vedic Sanskrit and post Vedic Sanskrit which is familiar as 'Classical Sanskrit'. Sanskrit comes from the Indo-European group of languages, closely related with Greek, Latin and other ancient languages, even Avesta and old Persian language are also connected with Sanskrit.

**12.2.1 Classification of Sanskrit literature**

The voluminous Sanskrit literature may be categorized into several divisions, viz, Literature, Philosophy, Tantra, Dharmashastra, Science etc. Classical Sanskrit literature is also divided into several parts according to the successive periods of history.

### 12.2.2 Sanskrit works of 4th to 2nd century BCE

The earliest grammatical work of ancient India is the *Ashatadhyayi* of Panini, written in c.5th or 4th century BCE. Katyayan, another grammarian of c.3rd century BCE has annexed some sutras called 'Vartika' in Panini's *Ashtadhyayi*. Generally, the classical age or the age of classical Sanskrit began from the time of Panini, i.e. 5th or 4th century BCE.

It is difficult to assign any extant Indian work definitely to the Maurya age. But a few exist as independent works. The most famous among these is the *Arthashastra* attributed to Kautilya. But it is doubtful if in its present shape it is as old as the time of the first Maurya. The *Kalpasutra* of Bhadravahu is traditionally attributed to a personage who is said to have flourished in the Maurya period. The epoch under review probably saw the composition of the *Mahabhasya* of Patanjali, an exposition of the grammatical aphorisms of Panini. Patanjali is said to have flourished in c. 2nd century BCE. Another grammatical work, the *Katantra* or *Kalapaka* of Sarvavarman is traditionally assigned to the Satavahana period, i.e. 3rd-2nd century CE.

### 12.2.3 Sanskrit works written before 4th century CE

Towards the end of the Satavahana age probably belongs the *Brihat Katha* of Gunadhya.

The *Gatha Saptasati* attributed to Hala, a Satavahana king, bears signs of a much later age. The epoch of the Kusanas produced the great work of Asvaghosha, poet, dramatist and philosopher. He wrote two *kavyas* in c.1st or 2nd century CE. These are 'Buddhacharitam' and 'Soundarananda'. Asvaghosha also composed a lengthy drama named 'Shariputra'. Bhasa, the another litterateur who probably flourished in this period, composed many works. Among them, most mentionable work is 'Swapnabhasabhatta'. Among other authors of the period mention may be made of Charaka, Susruta, Nagarjuna, Kumaralata and possibly Aryadeva.

### 12.2.4 Sanskrit works from 4th century A.D. onwards to 8th century CE

Buhler observed long ago that during the Gupta age court poetry was zealously cultivated in India. Samudragupta took delight in the title of Kaviraja or king of poets. There can hardly be any doubt that many poets who were none too wealthy received his patronage. The most notable poet of his court was Harishena, the writer of the Allahbad panegyric. Chandragupta II also counted among his high ministers a poet named Virasenasaba.

Tradition associates the name of Kalidasa, the greatest of Sanskrit poets after the immortal writers of the two ancient epics, with king Chandragupta II Vikramaditya and the acharya Dignaga who probably flourished during this time. Notable works of Kalidasa are *Raghuvamsam*, *Kumarasambhavam*, *Meghdutam* and several other *Kavyas* and dramas like *Abhijnanasakuntalam*, *Malavikagnimitram*, *Vikramorvashiyam* etc. composed in c. 5th century A.D.

Next to Kalidasa, mention must be made of Bharabi, another great poet and writer who composed 'Kiratarjuniyam'. The fame of Kalidasa and Bharavi is well attested by Bana and Ravikirti who adorned the court of Harsha and of Pulakesin II respectively.

The rulers of Valabhi extended their patronage to the famous author of the Bhattikavya. To the Gupta period have also been assigned and celebrated dramatists who wrote the Mrichhakatikam (Sudraka), the Mudraraksasa (Vishakhadatta) and the Devichandraguptam; from 7th century onwards saw the compositions of Megha (ShishupalaBadham), Bhababhuti (Uttararamacharitam) and others. The said era observed the composition of the works of Banabhatta, i.e. Kadambari and Harshacharitam. In this connection, mention may be made of Mayura, Bhatihari, Subandhu and the royal poets, Sri Harsa and Mahendravarman.

In the post-Gupta period we have in addition to male writers a number of poetesses, among whom Silabhattarika deserved special mention. The KaumudiMahotsava is also ascribed by some scholars to a female dramatist, but her identity and date are uncertain. Bhababhuti stands pre-eminent. Epic poetry and the drama in the period after the great Guptas did not always reach the level of Bharabi and Bhavabhuti. But the later age still produced poets and playwrights of ability like Magha, Sri Harsa and others whose works of merit continued to be produced in other fields of learning and literature. In one domain, that of historical literature, the post Gupta period produced works the like of which had not been seen in earlier ages. The most notable among them were the Harshacharitam of Bana, the Ramacharitam of Sandhyakarnandi, the Vikramankacharita of Bilhana and though belonged to later age, the Rajatarangini of Kalhana (11th century A.D.).

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### 12.3 Pali

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'Pali' is the main language of Buddhist scriptures. It is interesting to note that, the language under review was not an usage of any particular area or region.

#### 12.3.1 Origin of Pali language

The scholars generally believed that Pali had been originated from Ujjaini. Buddhaghosha, a renowned Ceylonese scholar named the language as 'Pali', derived from Sanskrit 'Paribhasa'. 'Pali' is a mediatory language between Sanskrit and Prakrit.

#### 12.3.2 Pali literature-Earliest phase

According to the Ceylonese tradition, the sacred texts and commentaries were written down in books in the first century B.C. during the reign of king Vattagamani Abhaya. In the 5th century A.D. the texts, as distinguished from the commentaries, came to be known as Pali. The use of the term Pali to denote the language in which the texts were written is not warranted by any early evidence. The language was called Magadhanam Niruki (Nirutti) or the idiom of the people of Magadha, which was probably a dialect spoken in Magadha in the early days of Buddhism and which had ceased to be current speech in the days of Asoka who used a somewhat different idiom in his inscriptions.

### 12.3.3 Divisions of Pali canonical literature

The Pali canon is divided into three Pitakas or caskets, viz; the Sutta, the Vinaya and the Abhidhaman. The first consists of five Nikayas or collections of Suttas or Suttantas i.e. religious discourses. The second contains rules of monastic discipline and the third contains discourses of a philosophical character.

The fifth Nikaya of the Sutta Pitaka includes the famous Dharmapada, the psalms of the brethren and of the sisters (Theragatha and Therigatha) and the still more celebrated Jatakas or Buddhist Birth Stories.

### 12.3.4 The Jatakas

The extant Jataka commentaries belong to a period much later than the rise of the Maurya dynasty, but the original stories are fairly old and are often illustrated in bas-reliefs of the second century and first century B.C. They were apparently not so well known in those period. The Jatakas belong to a class of literature which foreshadows the epic, and there are indications that the epic itself was assuming coherent shape during the early days of the Magadhan ascendancy.

### 12.3.5 Pali literature in subsequent ages

The Pali Buddhist canon is said to have been reduced to writing in the first century B.C. The celebrated work known as the Milindapanho, or the questions of Menandar, is also usually regarded as a product of the post Mauryan period. Some scholars believe that the astronomical work of Garga, the Paumachariya (Paumachariya) of Vimalasuri, portions of the Divyavadana as well as the Lalitavistara and the Saddharma pundarika are also to be assigned to this age.

Buddhaghosha, the eminent commentator of 5th century A.D. mentions Athakatha (Arthakatha), Maha Athakatha Jataka Athakatha etc. written before his time. The commentaries written in later periods are Buddhasiher (c.4th century A.D), Vinayavinichchaya, Abhidhammatika of Ananda, Uttara-vinichchaya of Buddhadatta, Abhidhammavavata, Rupa-rupavivhaga of Buddhadatta, Samantapasadika, Kankhavitarani, Dhammasangani of Buddhaghosha (5th century A.D), Nettipakarana Athakatha, Udana Athakatha of Dhammapala (7th century A.D) etc. Among the theoretical works mention may be made of Abhidhammathasamgraha of Aniruddha, Suttasamgaha, Paritta etc of Khemachariya and others. The biographical poetic works in Pali came into prominence from first century A.D.

### 12.3.6 Historical and descriptive works in Pali

At first mention must be made of Dipavamsa (earlier than 4th century A.D?) and

Mahavamsa written by Mahanaman (6th century A.D). Here we find the history of preaching Buddhism in Lanka.

Apart from those two works, Mahabodhivamsa, Gandhavamsa, Chulavamsa of Upatissa (4th century A.D) are the famous historical works of Ceylon.

### **12.3.7 Grammar, lexicons, metros dictionaries in Pali**

We find a strong influence of Sanskrit in the grammars of Pali literature. Kacchayan (5th century A.D?) and Moggalayan were the two renewed grammarians on Pali language. Balavatara, Rupasiddhi, Mahanirukti Payogasiddhi etc are the famous grammatical works of Pali written by Dhammakitti.

Moggalayan composed Abhidhanppadipika. Therasamgharakshita wrote Buttoday and Subodhalankar. Among other works, specially mentionable are Kamandaki, Chandobichiti, Kabisarapakarana and Kabisaratikanissaya. These must be regarded as valuable literature on Pali dealing with Abhidhan, Chhana and Alamkara.

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## **12.4 Prakrit Literature**

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### **12.4.1 Origin of Prakrit**

The Prakrit language originated from ancient Indo-Aryan or more precisely from Sanskrit. It came into existence roughly in c.5th or 6th century BCE and existed upto c.10th or 11th century A.D. The modern Indian Arya languages had come into prominence during this broad time span. The evolution of Prakrit language may be categorised into three stages, i.e. Ancient Indo-Aryan, Medieval Indo-Aryan and later Indo-Aryan. The Medieval Indo-Aryan is termed as ‘Prakrit’ by the old Grammarians.

### **12.4.2 Literature written in Prakrit**

The Prakrit Literature flourished as an appendix (upanga) of Sanskrit literature in dramas, music, as dialogues of the women and illiterate human beings. The earliest reference of the introduction of Prakrit may be traced in the drama composed by Asvaghosha of c.2nd century CE. But the liberal composition in Prakrit is much older. We find two poems in old Brahmi script and Prakrit language (c.3rd century BCE) in Jogimara cave of Ramgarh hills. It is famous as ‘Sutanuka lipi’.

### **12.4.3 Maharastri Prakrit**

The eldest scholars think that the this Prakrit is the bost of all, used in aristocrat sanskrit dramas. We find two or three epics are written in Maharastri Prakrit but of sanskrit manner; these may dated after 5th century CE. The works are, Setubandha of Pravarasena,

Gaudavaho of Vakpatiraja etc. Mention may be made of ‘Gathasaptasati’, written in Maharastri Prakrit.

#### **12.4.4 Ardhamagadhi Prakrit**

The ‘Agamashastra’ of Digambara Jains has been composed in Ardha magadhi, among the books of Agamashastra, the oldest is Ayaranga Sutta. Suyakaranga Sutta, Uttaranjhan Sutta are composed in later period.

#### **12.4.5 Paishachi Prakrit**

A voluminous collection of literature in Prakrit has been composed but we are failed to ascertain its exact time. The writer is Gunadhya and the collection is ‘Baddhakatha’ (or Brihatkatha). The original book is lost. But it has been preserved in two or three translations, one of them is ‘Brihatkathamamjari’ of Kshemendra, a poet of 11th cent. CE and the other is ‘Kathasaritsagara’ of Somadeva.

The dramas, written only in Prakrit, are datable not before 9th century A.D. In this connection mention may be made of ‘KarpuraManjuri’ composed by Rajashekhara (last half of 9th century CE). It is the earliest dramas written in Shouraseni Prakrit.

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### **12.5 Tamil Literature**

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Tamil is the most important and oldest language among the dravidion languages. The earliest literature written in Tamil, is ‘Takkappium’. It is an authentic Grammatical work of c.5th century BCE.

#### **12.5.1 Admixture in Tamil language**

Like other post. Aryan languages, Tamil also has faced the infiltration of Sanskrit and Prakrit. But still it bears the originality of Dravidian language. It maintains the traditional sequence of southern dravidian stream in the sphere of Tamil literature.

#### **12.5.2 Different stages of Tamil Literature**

The history of evolution in Tamil language and literature may be divided into two phases. Firstly, the old Tamil (c.5th century CE) and secondly the ancient Tamil or Classic Tamil (c.5th century CE to 1350 CE). A part from these, the Tamil literature has been classified in several phases in later period.

#### **12.5.3 Old Tamil Literature**

It is also termed as “Sangam Literature”. There was a prevalent custom to invoke literature meet or ‘Sangam’ for the felicitation of poets and writers from remote age. According to the scholars, before after the birth of Christ, the Sangama poets composed poems but

these are traced in old Tamil. The earliest date of Tamil literature, as presumed, is c. 1st century A.D. The examples of Tamil literature of Sangama age are mostly collections compiled in books; among them two important collections are, Pattupattu contains ten ballads. The poems are composed by eight poets of the second half of 1st century CE 'Patitena kirak-Kanakku' a collection of eighteen ideological poems, are composed after 5th century CE. These poems are short and 'dvipadi'. Among them the most important is 'Kural' of Tiru Valluvar. It has been translated in different languages.

### 12.5.4 Classic Tamil Literature

The Tamil literature has been glorified at the beginning of Gupta and Pallava reign when Brahmanism revived. Two renowned poetic works of the Sangama age are, Chilappatikaram and Manimekalai.

A remarkable number of Tamil poets have come into prominence at the period ranging from 10th century A.D. to 13th century CE.

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## 12.6 Conclusion

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The present unit is an attempt to throw a considerable light in ancient Indian languages like Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit and Tamil Sanskrit, as we find, is the prime medium of literature and culture of ancient India during our period of review. It has been shown that the vast Sanskrit literature is divided into many streams. Elaborate discussion have been made about Sanskrit works of 4th to 2nd cent. B.C. as well as the progress of literature during subsequent ages of our period. The Sanskrit works from 4th to 8th century A.D. need special mention for its enrichment.

Next to Sanskrit, we have discussed about antiquity and importance of Pali language and literature. The divisions of Pali canonical literature have been described vividly in this unit. The importance of Jataka literature is clearly depicted here. The Pali Buddhist canon, is said to have been reduced to writing in the first century B.C. The writers of the literary works are mentioned with their tentative periods. The literature under review also bears many historical and descriptive works, grammar, lexicons, dictionaries etc.

The Prakrit language came into prominence roughly from 6th or 5th century B.C. The earliest reference of the Prakrit literature is a drama composed by Asvaghosha a renowned author of c. 2nd century A.D.

The traditional Prakrit literature bears diversified classification, as we have gone through; viz; Maharastrī Prakrit, Ardhamagadhi Prakrit and Paishachi, Prakrit, Shouraseni Prakrit. Lastly, the antiquity of Tamil literature has been discussed with examples and references. It is the oldest among Dravidian languages. Facing infiltration throughout the ages, it still maintains originality of Dravidian school. The literature written in Tamil may be divided into two categories as mentioned in the unit. The old Tamil or Sangam literature

passed through different ages. Most of the literary works are collections, compiled in books. The names of those works are mentioned in the present unit. Next to the old or Sangama Tamil literature, mention has been made of classic Tamil literature composed at the beginning of Imperial Gupta and the Pallava rule.

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### 12.7 Model Questions

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- (a) Write an essay about the classification of Sanskrit literature during our period.
- (b) How do you explain the development of Sanskrit literature during 4th century to 8th century A.D.
- (c) Describe the origin of Pali language and earliest phase of literature.
- (d) Describe the divisions of Pali canons and Pali literature in subsequent periods.
- (e) Enumerate the antiquity of Prakrit and literature in initial stage.
- (f) Describe different forms of Prakrit and literary works.
- (g) Write an account regarding different stages of Tamil literature.
- (h) Mention the renowned works written in Tamil.

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### 12.8 Suggested Readings

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- (a) Suniti Kr. Chattopadhyay, *Languages and Literatures of Modern India*, Calcutta, 1963.
- (b) Sukumar Sen, *Bharatkosha*, vol-V, P.529-30,
- (c) Sahitya Academy (Published), Bangiya Sahitya Parishad Calcutta, *Contemporary Indian Literature; A Symposium*, New Delhi, 1957.
- (d) M. Winterniz, *A History of Indian Literature* Vol. I, Part I & II, Calcutta, 1978.
- (e) Sukumar Sen, *Bharatakosa*, vol-IV, P.457-459, Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, Calcutta, 1970.
- (f) Suniti Kr. Pathak, As above, P.377-379.
- (g) R. Condwell, *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Languages*, Madras, 1961.
- (h) R.S. Sharma, *Early Medieval Indian Society*.
- (i) A.B. Keith, *A History of Sanskrit Literature*.

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## **Unit 13 □ Scientific and Technical Treatises**

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### **Structure**

- 13.0 Objective**
- 13.1 Introduction**
- 13.2 Ayurveda**
- 13.3 Charakasamhita**
- 13.4 Bagavattas**
- 13.5 Madhavakara and Vrinda**
- 13.6 Nagarjuna**
- 13.7 Astronomy and Mathematics**
- 13.8 Aryabhatta**
- 13.9 Varahamihira**
- 13.10 Brahmagupta**
- 13.11 Siddhanta-Jyotisha**
- 13.12 Theory of Atomic energy**
- 13.13 Chemistry (Rasayana)**
- 13.14 Chemistry of Charaka and Susruta**
- 13.15 Bagabhatta and Vrinda**
- 13.16 Kimia of 'Tantric' chemistry**
- 13.17 Rasaratnakara**
- 13.18 Development of Technology**
- 13.19 Currency**
- 13.20 Currency in subsequent ages**
- 13.21 Other Industries and technologies and workers**
- 13.22 Elements of science and technology from Epigraphs**
- 13.23 Conclusion**
- 13.24 Model Questions**
- 13.25 Suggested Readings**

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### **13.0 Objective**

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- The objective of present unit is an attempt to throw a light on origin and development of Medical Science in Ancient India

- The other objective of this unit to give an idea about the development, of currency system, Industries , Techonology in Gupta Period.
- The eliments of Science and Techonology as furnished on Epigraph - will be also elaborated in this unit.

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### 13.1 Introduction

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Science and technology are the means by which the whole of our civilization is rapidly being transformed. It is well-known that science is growing, not as in the past, steadily and imperceptibly, but rapidly by leaps and bounds for all to see. According to claude Berned ‘science increases our power as it lessons our Pride’?

Fortunately, we have gone through a huge number of literary works that clearly depicts that our country, India in ancient times, was very much acquainted with cultivation of science and technology. Ayurveda or medical science, Astronomy, Mathematics, discussion about atomic energy, experiments relating Chemistry and others were practised in large scale as evident from literary testimonies.

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### 13.2 Ayurveda

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Ayurveda is the ancient medical science. The word under review derived from ‘Ayu’ of lifespan. It is said in the Brahmavaivarta Purana, that the Ayurvada is the compact form of four vedas and according to Kasyapa, Ayurveda may be placed immediate after the four vedas.

Some historians opine that maharshi Charaka was the ‘rajvaidya’ (court physician) in the court of Kanishka I, the greatest king of kushana dynasty. After a few centuries, Dhanwantari, a renowned Ayurvedacharya who wrote about the herbal science, was one of the gems among ‘navaratna’ in the court of Vikramaditya, the Gupta monarch. Amarasingha, another ‘ratna’ of the navaratnas, composed ‘Amarakosha’ where various names of alternative medicines are mentioned.

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### 13.3 Charakasamhita

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Actually, we have no definite information regarding the date and whereabouts of Charaka, the wellknown Ayurvedacharya, who composed ‘Charakasamhita’. Some of the historians think that he was the ‘Sabhapandita’ or court scholar of Kanishka I. The Charaksamhita, mentioned by Kalhana’s Rajatarangini is a sanskrit version of Agnibesh-samhita written by Kapilbala Charaka. The ‘Charaka-Samhita consists of eight sections, viz, Sutrasthan, Nidanasthan, Chikitsasthan, Kalpasthan and siddhisthan. Harichandra composed ‘Charaka-Tika (6th cent.A.D). Asharavarma wrote ‘Parihara-Vartika’ in 9th century A.D. and Jejata composed ‘NirantarapadaVyakhya’ in 10th cent. A.D. These are renowned commentaries of ‘Charakasamhita’.

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### 13.4 Bagavattas

There are more than one Ayurvedic authors named Bagavat or Bagavatta. The oldest is Briddhabagavatta. Most probably I-tsing, the Chinese pilgrim who visited India during 7th century CE mentioned him in his accounts. This Bagavatta wrote 'Ashtangasamgraha'. The second Bagavatta composed 'Ashtangahridayasamhita'.

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### 13.5 Madhavakara and Vrinda

Madhavakara was a renowned Physician well known in medical science. He wrote 'Bugbinischaya Madhavanidan' in c. 8th or 9th century CE the other great physician and chemist was Vrinda of the same period.

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### 13.6 Nagarjuna

There are three Nagarjunas in the history of ancient India. The first is the author of Sutravritti and familiar as Bauddha Nagarjuna. We find mention of another Nagarjuna in Siddhayoga of Vrinda, flourished in 4th or 5th century CE. Scholars think that Susruta-samhita was composed by this Nagarjuna. Nagarjuna, mentioned at first, was famous in 1st century CE.

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### 13.7 Astronomy and Mathematics

The Astronomy or Astroscience means the science related to stars and planets. It has a remote antiquity in India from Vedic period. The main literary source of Indian astronomy as far we know, is 'Siddhantagrantha'.

We may discuss in brief about some of the Astronomical works of ancient India.

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### 13.8 Aryabhatta

One of the pioneers of astronomy and mathematics in ancient India was Aryabhatta, born in c. 476 A.D. He composed 'Aryabhattiya', contains only 121 slokes. It is divided into four chapters, viz, Gitikapada, Ganitapada, Kalakriya and Golapada. Aryabhatta is the founder of scientific Astronomy and familiar as Andubertius or Ardubertius among Greeks and Arjavar among the Arabians. Alberuni mentioned him as the resident of Kusumapura (Patna).

In later period (953 CE) another astronomer of the same name (Aryabhatta) wrote 'Aryasiddhanta', an astrological work.

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### 13.9 Varahamihira

Varahamihira was born in c. 505 CE. He was an eminent scholar of Astronomy and Mathematics. His renowned work is 'Brihatsamhita' where the necessity of Astrology and astronomy has been discussed in the sphere of human life. His other works are, Brihatbibahapatala, Pallavabibahapatala, Yogajatra and Panchasiddhantika etc.

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**13.10 Brahmagupta**

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Brahmagupta, the famous scholar of astronomy and Algebra, was born in c. 598 CE. His renowned work is 'Brahmasphuta siddhanta', familiar as 'sindhind' at Arab countries. The said work is divided into 24 chapters, containing Mathematics, Astrology, Arithmetic and Algebra. Brahmagupta refutes the theory of Arayabhatta relating rotation of the earth.

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**13.11 Siddhanta - Jyotisha**

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The tentative time-span of composing SiddhantaJyotisha is c. 1st century CE to 5th century A.D. A group of scholars, came from outside, composed these works. They were basically Shakadvipi - Brahmins. We have traced 18 types of Siddhanta Jyotishas, among then 'Suryasiddhanta' is the best. The modern form of the book contains 14 chapters.

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**13.12 Theory of Atomic energy**

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The second urbanisation commenced in India, as far we know, at c.6th century B.C. In subsequent ages, numerous theoretical views have been introduced for searching the origin and evolution of visual materialistic world. As a result of these doctrines, the theory of Atomic energy incepted in ancient India.

The said theory has been accepted in Nyaya and Vaisheshik Philosophical thoughts. The pioneer of introducing the theory of Atomic energy is Maharshi Kanad. He describes the initial doctrines of the cosmos in 1st century A.D. In 5th century A.D. Prashastapada explains the creation of world by atomic energy in his work Padarthadharma Samgraha. The 'Nyayasutra' of Gautama proves the existence of Atom. Later on, the commentators like Vatsayana, Udyatkar and Vachaspati explain this theory in their commentaries.

The Buddhist philosophic groups throw glimpses about the theory of Atomic energy. 'Abhidhamakosha' of Vasuvandhu, 'Vahyarth - Sidhikarika' of Shubhagupta (7th century AD) and several commentaries composed in different periods furnish fundamental information regarding theory under review.

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**13.13 Chemistry (Rasayana)**

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'Ras' means extracts. The extracts by crushing or smashing or boiling from the leaves and herbal trees are called 'Rasa' in ancient India. Chemistry originates from two totally different sources in the subcontinent, firstly, from industrial workmanship and lastly, from medical science.

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**13.14 Chemistry of Charaka and Susruta**

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Both Charaka and Susruta prepared several kinds of alkali, salt and other chemicals from six metals, viz; gold, silver, copper, iron, tin and lead. Charaka mentions five types of salt i.e. Sora, Saindhava, Black, Oceanic and botanic salt.

‘Alkali’ means ‘khar’, comes from Arabic Al-kali or bhasma. In ancient India Alkali used to be prepared from the ashes of tamarind, linseed, banana, ginger and other numerous trees after drying in sun and burning them in fire. We find a vivid description of the process in Charaka and Susruta Samhita.

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### 13.15 Bagabhatta and Vrinda

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Both of them mentioned above, are the followers of Charaka and Susruta. Bagabhatta only repeats Susruta for processing or preparing Alkali from same sources. From the time of Bagabhatta the admixture of metals and minerals began. It revealed a new horizon in the field of Ayurveda.

In Siddhayoga Vrinda advises some methods to prepare compound materials.

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### 13.16 Kimia or ‘Tantric’ Chemistry

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The first and foremost scholar in this field is Nagarjuna, author of Louhashastra, Rasaratnakar, Kakshaputatantra and Arogyamanjori.

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### 13.17 Rasaratnakara

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Here Nagarjuna describes an incomplete artificial process of converting inferior metals into Gold. He also describes the method of extracting zinc by mixing alkali, Lac etc. The Rasarnava, another work of Nagarjuna describes the characteristics of six metals viz, gold, silver, copper, iron, lead and tin.

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### 13.18 Development of Technology

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An important measure of ancient India in the field of technology is the progress of metallurgy. In this connection mention must be made of Mehrauli iron pillar of c. 4th-5th century A.D. This is a glorious evidence of excellence about metallurgical superiority. Apart from that, the copper image of Buddha from Sultangunj and other bronze images undoubtedly prove the efficiency of the artisans.

The war strategy had been revived after the introduction of the technology in steel in ancient India. The commodities made of metals had a high commercial value in East and Western markets. Ancient India was famous for producing heatproof steel from which the word named ‘Damascus’ was manufactured. The weapons made from Indian steel had a widespread market in outer world.

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### 13.19 Currency

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Alexander Cunningham and Edward Thomas contended that there was an indigenous Indian coinage. In regard to the lack of Indian knowledge of mining even during Megasthenes, we can only turn to Kautilya who so shrewdly observed that mines were the source of the treasury from which springs the power of government. The exploitation of mines must certainly have been known in India for the superintendent of

Mines was expected to possess the knowledge of the science of dealing with copper and other minerals, experience in the art of distillation and condensation of mercury (rasapaka). With the aid of experts in mineralogy and equipped with mining labourers and necessary instruments, he had to examine mines which, on account of their mineral deposits, crucibles, charcoal and ashes, might appear to have been once exploited and to discover new mines. Had Indians not been acquainted with the science of mining or smelting of ores even in the 4th century B.C., not to mention earlier times, the mention of officials pertaining to mining operations, their knowledge of mineralogy and the fusion of metals from them would have been impossible.

The fusion of metals is clearly mentioned in the manufacture of coins. Silver coins were made up of four parts of copper and 1/10th part of any of the following metals namely, tiksna (dhatu) (iron), trapu (tin), sisa (lead), anjana (lead or iron, may be a mixture of both). Copper coins (tamrarupa) were to be made up of four parts of an alloy. If the smelting of metals was unknown then the methods of rendering metals soft, temporarily or permanently or the eradication of impurities from ores would not have been laid down or determined. The heavier the ores, the greater will be the quantity of metals in them is a proof of their purification.

In the Maurya period, it can be definitely inferred that artisans in the Mint were engaged not only in the manufacture of gold and other metallic coins, but also of the lakshana, viz, stamped or marked pieces which could hardly have been anything else other than, in this context, gold coin.

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### 13.20 Currency in subsequent ages

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India has always been rich in her natural resources. All these rich resources offered scope for a large number of handicrafts and professions. The Chotanagpur areas are the main source of metallic ores in northern India and provided most of her gold, copper iron and mica. This would appear to have been one of the earliest centres of mineral resources of ancient India. Moreover, there are remains of numerous furnaces for melting the different kinds of metals. The only definite evidence of the date of the working of these mines is provided by the kushana-type coins. These mines may have been worked under Chandragupta I or his son Samudragupta. This is also supported by the evidence of the Amarakosha which refers to wrought and unwrought gold and iron, iron bars and mines. The Amarakosha gives a comprehensive list of metals. The art of metal working was fully developed at that time, for it was one of the 64 arts (Kala) listed in the Kamasutra. Brihaspati also refers to the workers of base metals.

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### 13.21 Other Industries & technologies and workers

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Among all the metals iron was the most useful in everyday use. In the Raghuvansa, there are references to working in iron by heating and beating the piece of iron with the help of a steel hammer.

The work of Goldsmiths was a highly specialised one, and at least in Gupta period onwards. The Kamasutra describes their art vividly. The working of other metals such as silver, copper, bronze and brass was well developed in the Gupta period. Copper and bronze were mainly used for making statues, utensils and coins. Diamonds pearls, other precious stones, coral and conchshells were largely used and worked up as ornaments. Next to metal pottery was the most essential manufacture. Potters of the Gupta period showed much skill and efficiency in moulding, colouring and burning pottery.

The use of leather for different purposes was known. The Amarakosha mentions shoe maker together his tools and leather products.

The ivory industry was also well developed, silk industry was very well developed technically. Actually the technology of textile industry was always very important in India. In the Amarakosha, we find reference to the weaver, his loom, the threads and act of weaving. The manufacturing of oil was another, essential industry. We have reference of techniques for producing oil from mustard seeds, sesamum, linseed etc.

In Gupta period liquor was probably produced throughout the country. Considering the importance of industrial products, our smriti writers lay down certain rules for apprenticeship in different crafts.

Here we find the essence of the whole system of technical education is that the young craftsman is brought up and educated in the actual workshop of his master, who may have been his own father.

During the Gupta period pottery, metal technology, minting of coins, weaving, stone-working, ivory-work, wood-work, jewellery, embroidery, dying and other technical endeavours made unprecedented progress. There is nothing to show that the state itself played a very important part in industrial production, as it did in the Mauryan period, the iron pillar of Meharauli, however, seems certainly to have been made in a royal foundry, no doubt, chiefly concerned with the manufacture of arms and armour. This pillar and the Sultangunj Buddha can scarcely be the work of individual founders working on a cottage, industry basis. Yet it would seem that most industries and technologies were carried on by individual families or guilds. One of the reasons for the progress of these seems to have been the esteem in which the artisans were held. They are often noticed in our epigraphs in the most respectful manner.

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### 13.22 Elements of Science and Technology from Epigraphs

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It appears that the term 'Kulyavapa' is most popular in many epigraphs of Bengal in the context of measurement. At the same time the term 'Drona', 'Adhaka' were also popular in the field of measurement of land. The Damodarpur copper plate inscription of the time of Budhagupta of 476 A.D. refers to Kulyavapa of land with building grounds. The Paharpur Copper plate inscription of 479 A.D. claims the term 'apratikara' means 'sunys pratikara' which denotes not yielding and revenue or income in crops

etc. The Gunaighar copper plate inscription of 507 A.D. mentions ‘Sunya Pratikara ajjika-khilabhumairapi..... means hajasuka i.e. flood and drought, loss caused by them, here hajjika means marshy land. In Ancient India, forest was considered as one of the four land categories, arable land (ksestra), homestead land (Vastu), Pasture (Vraja) and forest (aranya). The Kautilya’s Arthasasthtra as mentioned earlier, recognises the sovereign right of the ruler over certain land types. Kautilya categorically states that forests are mainly of four kinds, i.e. (1) forests of wild animals (Pasu-Vana) (2) forest of domesticated animals (mrga-vana) (3) economic forests (dravya-vana) and (4) elephant forests (hasti-vana).

The dravyavana is our concern and it lays considerable stress on the economic importance and resource potential of Dravyavana i.e. forests yielding raw materials from production of goods. The reference of Karmanantas or royal factories or workshops definitely points out different stages of production of commodities from forest goods. This is assumed that in the past the artisans, toolmakers and other manual workers are commonly called working scientists and ‘Kritasastra’ dealt with this working class which taught us as to make something with hands. The Ghoshrawa Rock inscription of Devapala says : “Having studied all the Vedas and acquiring mastery over all the branches of science (\*he\*) reached the prosperous monastery of Kanishka.....”

Actually the history of science, technology, metals and mineralogy has its very traditional past in our country. This has defined the technological status of then people in the fields of metallurgy and metal forging as also to understand its socio-economic implications.

The role of metal technology has played an important role in the history of urbanisation also.

Lastly, reference of astronomy and mathematics are also seen in ancient epigraphs because Astronomy is the oldest of all the science and mathematics is the queen of science.

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### 13.23 Conclusions

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The unit discussed here clearly depicts a picture of origin and development of science and technology in ancient India in our period concerned.

We find a considerable number of literary works vividly explain the utility of science and technology in the spheres of Ayurveda, Astronomy, Mathematics, atomic energy, chemistry etc.

In the field of Ayurveda, Charakasamhita, the works of Bagavattas, the works of Nagarjunas are the landmarks of ancient Indian medical science. We also have gone through the works dealing with Astronomy and Mathematics and have seen the amazing concepts of Aryabhatta, Varahamihira, Brahmagupta and other renowned scholars.

The theory of Atomic energy has been elaborately discussed here with the references of Maharshi Kanad, Prashastapa and other famous scholars. The chemistry or Rasayana of Charaka and Susruta, Bagabhatta and Vrinda surprised us most. Kimia or Tantric chemistry gained popularity where we find the works of Nagarjuna viz, Rasaratnakara, Kashaputatantra and others describe the procedure of melting different metals.

Not only the different branches of science, but also we witnessed the development of technology in ancient India. In the field of technology, an important measure is the progress of metallurgy.

The fusion of metals, as we find, is clearly mentioned in the manufacture of coins were made up of copper and several other metals. India in Maurya period and subsequent times has always been rich in her natural resources. We have discussed about other industries, technologies and workers of ancient India during our period under review.

A vivid description has been furnished about different industries and technologies of the Gupta period.

Lastly, we have witnessed the element of science and technology as gleaned from some epigraphs.

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### 13.24 Model Questions

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- (a) Write an essay about the origin and development of Medical Science in ancient India.
- (b) What do you know about Astronomy and mathematics prevalent in our period in ancient India?
- (c) Discuss the theory of Atomic energy.
- (d) Write about chemistry of Charaka and Susruta, Bagabhatta and Vrinda.
- (e) Enumerate the development of technology with a special reference to the currency.
- (f) Discuss the development of currency system in Gupta period.
- (g) Give a sketch on other industries and technologies of the Gupta period.
- (h) Write a note on elements of science and technology as furnished on epigraphs.

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### 13.25 Suggested Readings

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- (a) A. F. R. Hornle, *Studies in Medicine in Ancient India*, Oxford, 1907.
- (b) Samarendranath Sen, *Bigyaner Itihas*, Vol-I & 2, Calcutta, 1955, 1958
- (c) D. P. Chattopadhyay, *Science and Society in Ancient India*, Calcutta.
- (d) S. K. Maity, *Economic Life in Northern India*, 2nd ed., Delhi, 1970
- (e) D. C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions Vol-I*, Calcutta, 1965.

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## **Unit 14 □ Art and Architecture and forms and patronage : Maurya Period**

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### **Structure**

#### **14.0 Objective**

#### **14.1 Introduction**

#### **14.2 Art and Architecture in Vedic age**

#### **14.3 Origin of Art**

#### **14.4 Maurya Period : Perspective**

##### **14.4.1 Asokan art : Pillars**

##### **14.4.2 Architectural remains**

##### **14.4.3 The Stupas**

##### **14.4.4 The Caves**

##### **14.4.5 Characteristics of the Mauryan Art and Architecture**

##### **14.4.6 Foreign influence on the Mauryan art**

##### **14.4.7 John Marshall's view**

##### **14.4.8 Criticism**

##### **14.4.9 Originality of Mauryan art**

##### **14.4.10 Aspects of the Mauryan Art**

#### **14.5 Conclusion**

#### **14.6 Model Questions**

#### **14.7 Suggested Readings**

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#### **14.0 Objective**

- The objective of present unit is to study the charecteristic of Mauryan art and architecture.
- Originality of Mauryan art will be disussed here.
- The Learners may come to know that the foreign influence on Mauryan art from this unit.

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#### **14.1 Introduction**

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The origin and antiquity of art and architecture in India is a very interesting subject and cannot be discussed here in detail R.P. Chanda held that “the excavations at Harappa

and Mohenjodaro have brought to light ample evidence to show that the worship of images of human and superhuman beings in yoga postures, both seated and standing, prevailed in the Indus Vally in the chalcolithic period”. In fact, many of the numerous terracotta figurines, unearthed there in course of excavations and tentatively described by Mackay as images of household gods, are no doubt, bear magnificent signs of art.

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### 14.2 Art and Architecture in Vedic age

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The art of poetry was in full bloom as is evidenced by the splendid collection of lyrics known as the Rik-Samhita, consists of hymns in praise of different gods. A knowledge of the art of writing has been deduced from references to ashtakarni cows. The epithet ‘astha-Karni’ is interpreted to mean “having the sign for the number 8 marked on the ear.” The prevailing view has been that the Rig-Vedic people did not possess the art of writing, and that the old script in which the inscriptions of Asoka and his successors are written goes back to semetic, and not Vedic Aryan origin.

Writing was no doubt practised by the people of the Indus Vally who developed the ancient culture of Harapppa and Mahenjodaro, but it is significant that the early literature of the Aryans was transmitted orally.

Arichitecture made some advance in Rig-Vedic India. There are references to mansions supported by a thousand columns and provided with a thousand doors. Mention is also made of stone castles and structures with a hundred walls. Allusions to images of Indra possibly point, according to some, to the beginnings of sculpture.

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### 14.3 Origin of art

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The artistic relics of the Pre-historic period consist first, of Neolithic implements and secondly, of seals, buldings, sculptures and implements of copper and bronze found at Mahenjodaro and a few other sites.

The most artistic objects at Mahenjodaro are no doubt seal engravings, portraying animals like the humped bull, the buffalo, the bison etc. Regarding these, Sir John Marshall observes as follows :

“In no sense can these objects be regarded as products of primitive or archaic art. Small as they are, they demonstrate a thorough comprehension of both work in the round and relief, an exhibit a spontaneity and truthfulness to nature of which even Hellenic art right not have been ashamed” The same author makes the following remarrks on two stone statues found at Harappa. “When I first saw them I found it difficult to believe that they were pre-historic; they seemed so completely to upset all established ideas about early art. Modelling such as this was unknown in the ancient world up to the Hellenistic age of Greece.”

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#### **14.4 Maurya Period : Perspectives**

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The earliest ruins of Harappa and Mohenjodaro have been assigned to a period not later than 2700 B.C. For more than two thousand years after that we possess no ancient monuments that deserve any serious consideration.

In the historical period we have ruins of monuments that may be referred to as early a period as 500 B.C. But it is only in the age of Asoka, the great Maurya emperor, that we come across monuments of high quality in large number which enable us to form a definite idea about the nature of Indian art.

##### **14.4.1 Asokan art : Pillars**

The finest examples of Asokan art are furnished by the monolithic pillars, on which his edicts are engraved.

Each pillar consists of a shaft or column, made of one piece of stone, supporting a capital made of another single piece of stone. The round and slightly tapering shaft, made of sandstone, is highly polished and very graceful in its proportions. The capital, equally highly polished, consists of one or more animal figures in the round, resting on an abacus engraved with sculptures in relief; and below this is the inverted lotus, which is usually, though perhaps wrongly, called the Persopolitan Bell.

A high degree of knowledge of engineering was displayed in cutting these huge blocks of stone and removing them hundreds of miles from the quarry, and sometimes to the top of a hill.

Extraordinary technical skill was shown in cutting and chiselling the stone with wonderful accuracy and importing the lustrous polish to the whole surface. But these pale into insignificance before the high artistic merits of the figures, which exhibit realistic modelling and movement of a very high order.

The capital of the Sarnath Pillar is undoubtedly the best of the series. The figures of four lions standing back to back and the smaller figures of animals in relief on the abacus, all show a highly advanced form of art and their remarkable beauty and Vigour have elicited the highest praise from all the art-critics of the world. Dr. V.A Smith made the following observation on the Sarnath capital.

“ It would be difficult to find in any country an example of ancient animal sculpture superior or even equal to this beautiful work of art, which successfully combines realistic modelling with ideal dignity and is finished in every detail with perfect accuracy.” Many other pillars of Asoka, though inferior to that of Sarnath, possess remarkable beauty. It may be mentioned in this connection that the jewellery of the Maurya period, also exhibits a high degree of technical skill and proficiency.

#### **14.4.2 Architectural remains**

As compared with sculptures, the architectural remains of the Maurya period are very poor.

Contemporary greek writers refer to magnificent palaces in the capital city of Patliputra, and regard them as the finest and grandest in the whole world. Some seven hundred years later the Mauryan edifices inspired awe and admiration in the heart of the Chinese traveller, Fa-hien. But these noble buildings have utterly perished. Excavations on the site have laid bare their ruins, the most “remarkable being those of a hundred-pillared hall.”

The Greek writers have paid glowing tribute, as mentioned earlier, to the Maurya imperial palace at Patliputra which could excell in splendour the persian palaces at Susa and Ecbatana. But unfortunately there are no extant remains of the Maurya Palace or residential buildings. The gildedpillars of the Maurya Palace were adorned with golden vines and silver birds. Many centuries later the Chinese traveller Fa-hien as described earlier, applauded the workmanship of the imperial palace with the remark that “the royal palace and halls were all made by spirits which Asoka employed,” Fa-hien believed that “no human hands of the world could accomplish this.” Probably there were similar palaces in other cities. All towns were surrounded by high walls with battlements and ditches with water, bearing lotuses and other plants and the whole was surrounded by railings.

#### **14.4.3 The Stupas**

When Hiuen Tsang visited India long after the reign of Maurya emperor Asoka, he saw numerous Asokan stupas scattered over the country. But most of the Asokan stupas have not been survived the ravages of time. The famous stupa of Sanchi is said to have been constructed by Asoka. Sir John Marshall had described the Sanchi Stupa as a hemispherical dome, truncated near the top, surrounded at the base by lofty terrace to serve as gate for procession.

The extant archaeological as well as architectural remains consist, besides a small, monolithic stone rail round a stupa at Sarnath, mainly of the rock-cut Chaitya halls in the Barbar hills and neighbouring localities in the Patna district. Although excavated in the hardest rock, the walls of these caves are polished like glass.

Asoka built quite a large number of stupas. The stupa is a solid domical structure of brick or stone, resting on a round base. It was sometimes surrounded by a plain or ornamented stone railing with one or more gateways, which were often of highly elaborate pattern and decorated with sculptures.

Tradition credits Asoka with building 84,000 stupas all over India and Afghanistan but they have almost entirely perished. Some of them, enclosed and enlarged at later times, perhaps still exist, the most famous example being the big stupa at Sanchi, referred

earlier. The diameter of the present stupa is  $121\frac{1}{2}$  feet, the height about  $77\frac{1}{2}$  feet, and the massive stone railing which encloses it is 11 feet high.

According to Sir John Marshall, the original brick stupa built by Asoka was probably of not more than half, the present dimensions, which were subsequently enlarged by the addition of a stone casing faced with concrete. The present railing also replaced the older and smaller one. A similar fate, has possibly overtaken many other stupas of Asoka.

#### **14.4.4 The Caves**

The Pillars and stupas are not the only artistic achievements of Asokan reign. The rock cut caves of Asoka and his grandson Dasaratha constructed for the residence of monks are wonderful specimens of art. The Barbar hill Caves in the north of Gaya donated by Asoka to the Ajivika monks and the Nagarjuni hill caves, the Sudama caves, the Karna Chaupar cave etc. are the extant remains of cave architecture in the reign of Asoka. The Gopi cave was excavated in the reign of Dasaratha in a tunnel like fashion. The caves are chaste and severe and their interior is polished like mirror and are wonderful monuments of patient skill and infinite labour.

#### **14.4.5 Characteristics of the Mauryan Art and Architecture**

R.C. Majumdar observes “A life of ease and luxury is favourite for the growth of art and literature, and the period under review witnessed remarkable progress of both.” The Mauryan art and art and architecture had certain characteristics.

Firstly, in the pre-mauryan art and architecture hardly stone was used as medium.

But the Asokan art was marked by nature use of stone and production of masterpieces. The Indian art, barring a few cases started its lithic career from the reign of Asoka.

Secondly as R.C Majumdar remarks in India, art has always been a handmaid of religion, Asoka also used art as a vehicle of preaching his Dhamma.

The sculptors engraved on the stones many Buddhist legends and Asoka particularly engraved his message on the pillars and rocks.

Thirdly, but the Mauryan art was not purely devoted to religion. It had a secular aspect which is denoted by the luxurious ornamentation of the Maurya imperial palace at Patliputra. The religious devotion was lively combined with the joy of life. The Artist did not neglect the appreciation of the scenes of nature and every scene in the sculpture of Bharhut or Sanchi is full of the joy of life.

#### **14.4.6 Foreign influence on the Mauryan art**

Scholars have postulated various theories about the extent of foreign influence on the Mauryan art.

#### **14.4.7 John Marshall's view**

Sir John Marshall opines that there were different types of the Maurya sculptures.

The first type is represented in the Prakhm statue. It is primitive in style and bears influence of the indigenous art, second type is represented by the Sarnath capital. It is a product of developed style without any trace of primitiveness. There is a combination of wonderful naturalism and striking realism and exquisite perfection in it. There are marks of Greek influence in its modelling; and it is exotic, alien to Indian ideas. Thus the Parkham statue and the Sarnath capital represent the alpha and the omega of early Indian art. There are Perso-Hellenic influence upon them.

Some other scholars have found Persian influence in the bell-shaped capital of the Sarnath column. It is also suggested that the very concept of Asokan columns is a borrowing from Persian (Achaemenian) style.

#### **14.4.8 Criticism**

Mr. Havell on the other hand had rejected the theory of foreign influence on the Maurya art. He has criticised the theory that the Maurya emperors appointed Persian craftsmen to construct the columns.

The symbolism used on the capitals are Indian not Persian. It is misleading to interpret the symbol on Sarnath capital as "bell-shaped Persian" style.

In reality it is 'blue lotus of sky' of God Vishnu, a characteristic of Indian artistic symbol.

#### **14.4.9 Originality of Mauryan art**

That the Asokan art had some definite individuality and originality and had much difference with the Perso-Hellenic school can not be entirely denied.

Firstly, the Persian pillars of Persepolis etc. were structural while those of Asoka were free standing and monumental.

Secondly, while the Persian pillars were not used for some Independent purpose, the Asokan pillars were used for religious purpose.

Therefore, it may be assumed that though clearly inspired by foreign models, the Mauryan art is entirely different and in some respect superior to them.

Although the Asokan monuments owed something to alien models, but the details and executions were carried by Indian hands with substantial originality. In fact, it was a synthesis of foreign style adopted to Indian tradition.

#### **14.4.10 Aspects of the Mauryan art**

It is quite evident from what has been said in the chapter, that Maurya art exhibits in many respects an advanced stage of development in the evolution of Indian art. The artists of Asoka were by no means novices, and there must have been a long history

of artistic effort behind them. But we don't know how are we then to explain the almost total absence of specimens of Indian art before c.250 BCE.

This is the problem which faces us at the very beginning of our study of Indian art highly finished specimens of art, belonging to such remotely distant periods as 2700 BCE and 250 BCE, with little to fill up the long intervening gap.

We are not in a position to solve this problem until more data are available. But it is not unlikely that the artistic traditions of the Indus Valley continued down to the Maurya period. The absence of specimens has to be explained by the supposition that most of the monuments being made of wood or other perishable materials have left no trace behind. Rare specimens in stone or other durable materials may yet be unearthed by future excavations. The solution is prompted by the analogous problem of Indian alphabets.

The earliest Indian alphabets so far known, and from which all the current Indian alphabets have been derived, are those found in the inscriptions of Asoka. How they came to be evolved into that finished stage has been a mystery, and attempts have been made to derive them from various types of alphabets in western Asia. But the numerous seals found at Mohenjo-daro and Harappa with pictorial writings have induced some scholars to regard these as the origin from which the Brahmi alphabet of Asoka has been ultimately derived.

In a similar way the artistic traditions of the Asokan period might be ultimately traced to those of the Indus valley.

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### **14.5 Conclusion**

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The present unit is an attempt to reconstruct the history of Mauryan art and architecture. It is interesting to note that, from the end of the Indus Valley civilisation to the beginning of the reign of Asoka we have no tangible remains of Indian art except some cyclopean masonry remains at Rajagriha.

It is hard to say whether Indian artistic talent was barren in this age.

However, after the relative unproductiveness of the pre-mauryan period, we have the unprecedented fertilization in art in the Asokan era.

The Mauryan art, as we have seen, is mainly Asokan and can be viewed under four main aspects, viz, stupas, pillars, caves and palaces.

We have discussed about the finest examples of Asokan art, furnished by the monolithic pillars, on which his edicts are engraved. The capital of the Sarnath pillar astonished us most.

Contemporary greek writers as we find, refer to magnificent palaces in the capital city of Pataliputra.

Fa-hien, the Chinese traveller also regard them as the finest in the whole world and expresses his admiration after seven centuries later.

When Hiuen Tsang visited India in 7th Century CE, long after the reign of Maurya emperor Asoka, he saw numerous Asokan stupas all over India. Here a vivid description has been made about stupas.

It has already been shown that the pillars and stupas are not the only artistic achievements of Asoka's reign. The rock-cut caves of Asoka and his grandson Dasaratha constructed for the residence of monks are wonderful specimens of art.

In fact the Asokan art and architecture was marked by nature use of stone. The Indian art started its lithic career from the reign of Asoka. It has also a religious character. Asoka used art as a vehicle of preaching his Dhamma.

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#### 14.6 Model Questions

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- a) Discuss about the origin of art.
- b) Write an essay on pillars built at the time of Asoka.
- c) What do you know about the architectural remain of the Maurya period?
- d) Describe the stupas of the Asokan time .
- e) Write a note on Asokan caves.
- f) Describe the characteristics of the Mauryan Art and Architecture.
- g) How do you enumerate the foreign influence on the Mauryan art?
- h) Discuss the originality of the Mauryan art.

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#### 14.7 Suggested Readings

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- a) A. Foucher : *Beginnings of Buddhist Art*
- b) V.A. Smith : *History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon*
- c) J. Fergusson : *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, (ed) J. Burgess & R.P. Spiers
- d) Percy Brown : *Indian Architecture*
- e) Stella Kramrisch : *Indian Sculpture*
- f) S.K. Saraswati : *A survey of Indian Sculpture*
- g) R.C. Majumdar : *Ancient India*

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## **Unit 15 □ Art and Architecture & Forms and patronage : Post-Mauryan Period**

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### **Structure**

#### **15.0 Objective**

#### **15.1 Introduction**

#### **15.2 Age of Sungas**

#### **15.3 Kushana Art & Architecture**

##### **15.3.1 Importance of Kanishka's reign**

##### **15.3.2 Stupas and Railings**

##### **15.3.3 Materials**

##### **15.3.4 Mathura sculptures**

##### **15.3.5 The Gandhara school**

##### **15.3.6 Origin of Gandhara school**

##### **15.3.7 Contribution of Gandhara Art**

##### **15.3.8 Patronage**

#### **15.4 Art and Architecture after the Kushanas and before the time of the Guptas**

##### **15.4.1 Art and Architecture of Amaravati**

##### **15.4.2 Art and Architecture at Nagarjunikonda**

##### **15.4.3 Post-Maurya period : A review**

#### **15.5 Conclusion**

#### **15.6 Model Questions**

#### **15.7 Suggested Readings**

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### **15.0 Objective**

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- The Learners may come to know the art and architecture during the Sungas and Kushana.
- The contribution of Mathura sculpture, Gandhara & Amravati art will be also elaborated here.
- The other objective of this unit is to gather the knowledge about the art and architecture during the Post - Mauryan period.

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### 15.1 Introduction

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The five hundred years that intervened between the fall of the Mauryas and the rise of the Gupta empire constitute a distinct period in the evolution of Indian art.

So far as we can judge from extant remains, several important schools of sculptures flourished in different localities during this period- at Bharhut and Sanchi in Madhya Pradesh, Bodh-gaya in Bihar, Mathura in U.P, Amaravati and Nagarjunikonda near the mouth of the Krishna river and Gandhara in West Pakistan.

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### 15.2 Age of Sungas

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In the second century B.C. during the reign of the Sungas, a big stupa was constructed at Bharhut.

Nothing now remains of the stupa itself, but a portion of the railing that surrounded it, and one of the gateways, are now preserved in the Indian Museum, Kolkata. The railing is made of red sandstone and consists, as usual, of uprights, crossbars and coping stone. All these have sculptures engraved on them representing incidents from Buddha's life, Jataka stories and many humorous scenes. Short labels incised below the sculptures enable us to identify the episodes represented therein.

Taken individually, the human figures do not appear to be well executed and there are obvious defects in the physiognomy and posture of the bodies. But taken as a mass, the sculptures represent the religious faith and beliefs, the dress, costumes, and manners, and are executed with wonderful simplicity and vigour.

We get an insight into the minds and habits of the common people of India, and a keynote of the joy. Sand pleasures of life seems to pervade them all.

Ancient India, with its robust optimism and vigorous faith in life, speaks, as it were, through these stones, in a tone that offers a sharp but pleasing contrast in the dark pessimistic views of life which some of the old religious texts are never tired of repeating. From this point of view, the art of Bharhut is a great corrective to the impression which we are likely to form from literature. The construction of the famous Bharhut railings has made the name of the Sungas immortal. Vidisha became the center of an important school of art. According to Foucher. "it were the ivory workers of Vidisha who carved, one of the monumental gates of Sanchi."

Among other well-known examples of Sunga art mention may be made of the rock cut viharas near Poona, a stupa at Amaravati and the Garuda pillar at Besnagar.

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### 15.3 Kushana Art & Architecture

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#### 15.3.1 Importance of Kanishka-I's reign

The reign of Kanishka I, the renowned ruler of Kushana dynasty, is a landmark in the realm of art and architecture. Four eminent styles of sculpture developed from four centres. Each school of sculpture had a separate style of its own.

In art, the reign of Kanishka is marked by the growth of two distinct styles, one is Indian and another is exotic.

In architecture, Kanishka's reign was also highly creative. Numerous monuments, stupas, columns were built in his reign.

#### 15.3.2 Stupas and Railings

At Bodh-Gaya there is a small railing round the great temple. The railing probably belongs to about the first century B.C; but the temple is of a much later date. The sculptures on the railing belong to the same type as a Bharhut, though the individual figures are somewhat better.

Sanchi contains three big stupas and, happily, they are all in a good state of preservation. The big stupa, originally constructed by Asoka, was enlarged during this period, and four gateways of elaborate construction were added to the railing, one in each cardinal direction. Although the railing is quite plain, the gateways are full of sculptures, illustrating the Jataka stories and various episodes in the life of Gautama Buddha.

The scenes represented are similar to those of Bharhut, and convey more or less the same ideas, but the individual figures, the method of their grouping, mode of expression, and decorative elements- all show a far higher standard of technical skill and artistic conception. The obvious defects in the representation of the physique at Bharhut are removed and human figures are elegantly carved and shown in various difficult moods and poses.

The sculptors of Sanchi are throughout inspired by the far higher sense of beauty, rhythm, and symmetry and possess the difficult art of telling a complicated story in the simple lucid way. As at Bharhut, we find before us a wonderful panorama of scenes of daily life and concrete illustrations of faith, hope and ideals, though as a rule these are more complex and varied in character showing a more intelligent appreciation of the facts and views of life.

On the whole, the railings of Bharhut, Bodh-Gaya and Sanchi may be regarded as three landmarks in the gradual evolution of art during the two centuries, 150 BC-A.D. 50. The Indian artists had now mastered the difficult technique and acquired a highly developed aesthetic sense. The stone sculptures proved in their hands to be a valuable medium for expressing faiths and beliefs, and ideas and feelings.

Mathura has proved a large treasure house of ruins of this period.

No big railing, like that of Bharhut or Sanchi, with a continuous series of relief sculptures, has yet come to light, but we have instead numerous fragments of smaller railings with sculptures, and quite a large number of images either detached or engraved in very high relief on some architectural fragments.

### **15.3.3 Materials**

The Mathura sculptures are easily distinguished by the material used—a kind of spotted red stone. It is possible to classify the sculptures of Mathura into two chronological periods.

### **15.3.4 Mathura Sculptures**

We have already mentioned the two chronological phases of the sculptures of Mathura. The earlier ones are rude and rough works, somewhat resembling those of Bharhut, but of a different style, and do not call for any special remark.

The sculptures of the later period possess one distinguishing characteristic, viz, the representation of Buddha as a human figure. This is entirely unknown at Bharhut, Bodhgaya and Sanchi where Buddha is always represented by a symbol such as a wheel, a throne, or a pair of footprints, and never by any human figure. With the evolution of a human type of Buddha at Mathura begins a new epoch in Indian art, and for centuries the best artistic efforts of India were directed towards giving a concrete expression of the spiritual ideals of India through the images of Buddha and other great beings.

### **15.3.5 The Gandhara school**

The Gandhara school of sculpture has attained a celebrity perhaps beyond its merits. There was a time when European scholars considered it as the only school in ancient India which can rightfully claim a place in the domain of art. Many still regard it as the source of all subsequent development of art in India and the Far east. In spite of the undeniable merit of Gandhara sculptures, the above views seem to be highly exaggerated.

The Gandhara sculptures have been found in the ruins of Taxila and in various ancient sites in Afghanistan and west Pakistan. They consist mostly of images of Buddha and relief sculptures representing scenes from Buddhist texts. Some technical characteristics easily distinguish them from all other specimens of Indian sculpture.

In the first place, there is a tendency to mould the human body in a realistic manner with great attention to accuracy of physical details, especially by the delineation of muscles and the addition of moustaches, etc. Secondly, the representation of the thick drapery with large and bold-lines forms a distinct characteristic.

The Gandhara sculptures accordingly offer a striking contrast to what we meet with

elsewhere in India, viz, the smooth round features of the idealised human figures, draped in a transparent or semi transparent cloth, closely fitting to the body and revealing its outline.

#### **15.3.6 Origin of Gandhara school**

The distinguishing characteristics of Gandhara sculptures were undoubtedly derived from Greek art, or, to be more precise, the Hellenistic art of Asia Minor and the Roman empire. Gandhara art is accordingly known also as Indo-Greek or Graeco-Roman. There is, also, no doubt that this art owed its origin to the Greek rulers of Bactria and North West India. But though the technique was borrowed from Greece, the art was essentially Indian in spirit, and it was solely employed to give expression to the beliefs and practices of the Buddhists.

With a few exceptions, no Greek story or legend, and no Greek art motif if has been detected among the numerous specimens of the Gandhara sculpture. The Gandhara artist had the hand of a Greek but the heart of Indian.

#### **15.3.7 Contribution of Gandhara Art**

The most important contribution of Gandhara art was the evolution of an image of Buddha, perhaps an imitation of a Greek God like Apollo. Fine images of Buddha and Bodhisatta, and relief sculptures illustrating various episodes of Buddha's present and past lives, are remarkably executed in a kind of black stone.

For a long time it was believed that the Gandhara Buddha image served as the model for those executed at Mathura and other centres. But it is now recognised that the Buddha image was evolved independently at Mathura and Gandhara.

There is a striking difference between the Buddha images of Gandhara and those of the Indian interior. The former laid stress on accuracy of anatomical details and physical beauty, while the latter strove towards imparting a sublime and spiritual expression to the figure. The one was realistic and other idealistic, and this may be regarded as the vital difference between western and Indian art. The rich and varied contents of Gandhara sculpture, like those of Sanchi and Bharhut, hold before us a mirror, as it were reflecting ancient life and ideals.

#### **15.3.8 Patronage**

It must be mentioned that both the schools of Mathura and Gandhara flourished under the lavish patronage of Scythian kings. The portrait-statues of the Kushana kings add a novel feature to the art of this period.

The Kushana art, particularly that of the Gandhara school, spread through Chinese Turkestan to the Far East and influenced even the arts of China and Japan.

### **15.4 Art and Architecture after the Kushanas and before the time of the Guptas**

Somewhat later than the flourishing period of the schools of sculpture, beautiful stupas were erected in the lower valley of the Krishna river, at Amaravati, Jagayyapeta and Nagarjunikonda.

Not only were the railings of the Amaravati stupa made of marble, but the dome itself was covered with slabs of the same materials. It must have produced a marvellous effect, when intact. Unfortunately, the entire stupa is in ruins, and the fragments of its railings have been removed, partly to the British Museum, London, and partly to the Government Museum at Chennai.

The sculptures of all the stupas resemble one another and are marked by striking differences in style from those of Northern India. Hence they are classed as belonging to a new school, viz. that of Amaravati.

#### **15.4.1 Art and Architecture of Amaravati**

The figures at Amaravati are characterised by slim, blithe features and they are represented in most difficult poses and curves. But the scenes are mostly overcrowded, and although there is a distinct charm in individual figures, the general effect is not very pleasing. Yet there is no doubt that the technique of art had reached a high degree of development. The plants and flowers, particularly the lotuses are most admirably represented in this school.

The image of Buddha occurs here and there, but the Blessed one is often represented by a symbol. It thus points to the period of transition between Bharhut, Bodhgaya and Sanchi on the one hand and Mathura and Gandhara on the other.

#### **15.4.2 Art and Architecture at Nagarjunikonda**

At Nagarjunikonda, important relics of the period have recently been discovered as a result of excavations made by the Archaeological survey of India. The finds include a stupa, two chaityas and a monastery.

Near the stupa were found slabs of limestone illustrating scenes from Buddha's life. The panel represents the nativity and seven footprints of Buddha on the piece of cloth held by the deities, who were present to welcome the arrival of the Blessed one.

#### **15.4.3 Post-Maurya period : A review**

The period under review (C.200 BC to A.D. 320) is not so rich in architecture as in sculptures. There were, of course, beautiful temples and monasteries, and the famous tower of Kanishka 1 at Purushpur(Peshawar) was one of the wonders of Asia. But all these have perished without leaving any trace behind. There is only one class of buildings

which merit serious attention as works of art. These are the caves hewn out of solid rock of which hundreds have been found in different parts of India.

The caves of the Asokan period were plain chambers, but now the addition of pillars and chambers and sculptures made them beautiful works of art. Some of the caves were used as monasteries i.e. residences of the monks. A chaitya was a fine work of art. The fully developed specimen consisted of a long rectangular hall. Two long rows of pillars divided the hall into a nave (big central part) and two side aisles. A small stupa, called a dagoba, stood near the apsidal end.

There are many such Chaitya caves at Nasik, Bhaja, Karle and other places in modern Mumbai. The Karle cave is unanimously regarded as the finest specimen, on account of the beauty of the sculptures on the front wall, the remarkable rows of pillars inside the hall and the fine proportion of the different parts of the building.

In addition to the pillars inside these caves, we have also several free-standing pillars, as for example that at Besnagar which was dedicated as a Garudadhvaja by the Greek ambassador, Heliodoros. They are in many cases monoliths but they lack the wonderful polish, the fine proportions and the grand capitals which characterise the best pillar of Asoka. In this respect there was undoubtedly a decline.

But in sculpture and the construction of stupas and caves there was wonderful progress. It is perfectly true that the fine figures of certain animals which we see on the pillar of Asoka have no parallel in subsequent times, but the loss is made up by the delineation of human figures and the evolution of the wonderful image of Buddha. It is evident from the discourse that Indian art continued more or less under the foreign tutelage long after Asoka, until a full-fledged Indian art was developed under the imperial Guptas. That is the another epoch of history on art and architecture.

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### 15.5 Conclusion

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We have started the unit from the great development in art during the Sunga period. The stone railings of the Sunga period replaced the Maurya wooden railing in the Buddhist stupas. Vidisa became the centre of an important school of art. Among other well-known examples of Sunga art mention may be made of the rock cut viharas near Poona, a stupa at Amaravati and the Garudha pillar at Besnagar.

Kanishka's reign is a landmark in the realm of art and architecture. Four Eminent styles of sculpture developed in this period and subsequent ages before the advent of the Guptas. Each school of sculpture had a separate style of its own. The Gandhara school had a significant progress in his reign, in art, the reign of Kanishka is marked by the growth of two distinct styles, one Indian and another exotic, The Indian style is represented by the headless statue of Kanishka at Mathura and the image of Buddha

found in Sarnath. The exotic school known as Gandhara art was the Graeco-Roman art applied to Buddhist subjects found in Gandhara region.

In architecture Kanishka's reign was also highly creative. Numerous monuments, stupas, Columns were built in his reign, The great relic tower of Peshwar was constructed by Agesilus at his command. This tower was made chiefly of wood. It was 400 ft. high. It was known throughout the Buddhist world.

Kanishka built many other monasteries at Kashmir, Mathura and Taxila, He also beautified the cities of Taxila, Mathura in addition to his own capital Peshwar. In the 5th century A.D. Fa-hien observed numerous chaityas, viharas, Buddha-images of the Kushana period in the Gandhara region.

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### 15.6 Model Questions

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- a) Write an essay on the art and architecture of the age of the Sungas.
- b) What do you know about the stupas and railings built during the time of Kanishka I ?
- c) Discuss the characteristics of Mathura sculptures.
- d) Enumerate the importance of Gandhara school with special reference to its origin and development.
- e) Describe the contribution of Gandhara art.
- f) Write a note on art and architecture after the Kushanas and before the time of the Guptas.
- g) What do you know about the art architecture of Amaravati.
- h) Give a brief account on the art and architecture of the post-Maurya period.

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### 15.7 Suggested Readings

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- a) A. Foucher : *Beginnings of Buddhist Art*.
- b) V.A. Smith : *History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon*.
- c) J. Fergusson : *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture* (ed) J. Burgess & R.P. Spiers.
- d) Percy Brown : *Indian Architecture*.
- e) Stella Kramrisch : *Indian Sculpture*.
- f) S.K. Saraswati : *A survey of Indian Sculpture*.
- g) R.C Majumdar : *Ancient India*.

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## **Unit 16 □ Art and Architecture & Forms and patronage : Gupta Period**

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### **Structure**

- 16.0 Objective**
- 16.1 Introduction**
- 16.2 Images and Divinities of the Gupta Period**
- 16.3 Excellence of Metallurgy**
- 16.4 Art of Painting in the Gupta Period : Caves**
- 16.5 Sculptures**
- 16.6 The Bengal Sculpturas of the Gupta age**
- 16.7 “Eastern Trend” on Gupta Art : Examples**
- 16.8 Terracottas of the Gupta Period from Bengal**
- 16.9 Perspectives**
- 16.10 Terracottas of our period of study**
- 16.11 Temple Architechture of Bengal during the Gupta Period**
- 16.12 Gupta Architechture and Sculpture : Comparative Observation**
- 16.13 Gupta Coins : Artistic Value**
- 16.14 Conclusion**
- 16.15 Model Questions**
- 16.16 Suggested Readings**

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### **16.0 Objective**

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- The objective of present unit is to study the meaning of “classical phase” in the Ancient India.
- The Learners may come to know about the conception of images, divinities, sculpture, and terracotta in Gupta period with special reference to Bengal.
- Art and painting of caves in Gupta period will be discussed in this unit.
- The learners may also come to know some ideas about the comparative observation about Gupta architecture and sculpture.
- Artistic value of Gupta coins-will be elaborated here.

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### **16.1 Introduction**

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With the Gupta period, we enter upon the “classical phase” of Indian art, architecture and sculpture. By the efforts of centuries techniques of art were perfected, definite

types were evolved, and ideals of beauty were formulated with precision. There was no more groping in the dark, and no more experiments.

A thorough intelligent grasp of the true aims and essential principles of art, a highly developed aesthetic sense, and a masterly execution with steady hands produced those remarkable images which were to be the ideal and despair of the Indian artists of subsequent ages.

The Gupta sculptures not only remained models of Indian art in all times to come, but they also served as much in the Indian colonies in the far East. The sculptures of the Malay Peninsula, Sumatra, Java, Vietnam, Cambodia etc South-Eastern countries bear the indelible stamp of Gupta art.

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### **16.2 Images and Divinities of the Gupta Period**

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The most important contribution of Gupta art is the evolution of the perfect types of the divinitie both Buddhist and Brahmanical. A large number of Buddha images have been unearthed at Sarnath near Benaras, and one of them is regarded as the finest in the whole of India.

Stone and Bronze images of Buddha have also been found at Mathura and other places. The images of Siva, Vishnu and other Brahmanical gods are sculptured in some of the finest panels of the deogarh temple and also occurred elsewhere. These images are the best products of Indian art. They present a beautiful figure, full of charm and dignity, a graceful pose and a radiant spiritual expression.

In general, a sublime idealism, combined with a highly developed sense of rhythm and beauty, characterises the Gupta sculptures, and there are vigour and refinement in their design and execution.

The intellectual element dominates Gupta art and keeps under control the highly developed emotional display and the exuberance of decorative elements which characterise the art of succeeding ages.

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### **16.3 Excellence of Metallurgy**

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The art of casting metals reached a degree of developments which may well be regarded as wonderful.

Hiuen Tsang saw at Nalanda a copper image of Buddha, about 80 ft. high. The Bronze Buddha, found at Sultangunj, is 7/1/2 feet high and is a fine piece of sculpture.

The iron pillar of Delhi, near the Qutab Minar, is a marvellous work belonging to the early Gupta period. It would have been difficult, even for the best European foundry, to manufacture a similar piece made of wrought iron.

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### 16.4 Art of Painting in the Gupta Period : Caves

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The art of painting reached its height of glory and splendour in this age. The fine fresco-painting on the walls and ceilings of the Ajanta caves have extorted the unstinted admiration of the whole world. Of the twenty-nine caves, sixteen contained paintings which survived, to a greater or less extent, even at late as 1879. Most of these have been destroyed and the rest are also gradually crumbling to dust. Although some are as old as the first century A.D., most of them belong to the Gupta age. A fine conception, brilliant colour and admirable drawing invested these paintings with an unique charm which we can only faintly realise in their present ruined condition.

In addition to decorative designs “as varied and graceful as they are fanciful” and “executed with masterly skill”, they depict sacred objects and symbols, the figures of the Buddha and the incidents of his life (including past lives described in the Jataka stories). Those known as “The Dying Princess”, “The Mother and the child”, etc, have won the highest admiration. The fresco-paintings at Sigirya in Ceylon, executed towards the close of the fifth century A.D., show a close resemblance to those of Ajanta and are in a better state of preservation. Some fresco paintings of high merit also adorn the caves at Bagh.

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### 16.5 Sculptures

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The transition from the Kushana to the Gupta style of sculpture is well-marked, and the characteristic differences between the two are easy to define, on the basis of the images of Buddha and Bodhisatta of the two styles. The heavy solidity and earthliness of the Kushana images offer a striking contrast to the “delicate, reposeful and intensely spiritual type of Buddha in the Gupta period.” The Gupta sculpture is presented in its best form in the Buddha images of Sarnath as we have seen as products of the classical age with highest grade of excellence. It is also regarded as the best exponent of the artistic conception of the highest spiritual ideals in India. Its chief characteristics are not only delicacy and refinement of form and a relaxed attitude, indicated by the calmness of the face, the disposition of the two hands avoiding harsh angles at the elbows noticed in the Kushana images, and, generally speaking, graceful pose of the body in place of the erect posture. In the words of R.P. Chanda “The Median line instead of being perpendicular and dividing the body into two exactly equal halves, bends into a graceful curve by the inclination of the torso to one side and throwing the weight of the body on one leg, so that one hip is slightly higher than the other. This imparts to the form a degree of liveness and movement in refreshing contrast to the columnar rigidity of the images of Mathura of the Kushana period.”

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### 16.6 The Bengal sculptures of the Gupta age

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The Bengal sculptures of the period concerned were inspired by the ideals of Sarnath artists, but it is evident that they imparted to it something of their own, probably derived

from earlier traditions which have left no visible trace. This modification is described by art critics as the “Eastern trend” of the Gupta art “distinguished by a vivacious emotion.” Stella Kramrisch describes this as a “the eastern version of the classic idiom of Sarnath. It is characterised by an emotional feeling which even the sublimity of the Sarnath inspiration fails to suppress. There is, at the same time, a subtle change in plastic content and the figures acquire thereby a sensuous import, hardly be expected in the spiritual and impersonal creations of Sarnath.”

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### **16.7 “Eastern Trend” on Gupta Art : Examples**

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So far as Bengal is concerned this “Eastern Trend” is illustrated by several examples:

1. Standing image of Buddha from Biharail (Rajshahi dt). It is executed in Chunar sandstone, the material used in Sarnath, and so closely resembles the images of Buddha found at that site that it may be mistaken for the latter. It may be assigned to the beginning of the fifth century A.D. The emotional trait marks its appearance in the two Surya images from Kasipur (24 pgn) and Deora (Bogra dt.)

2. The gold-plated bronze image of Manjusri from Mahasthan (Bogra dt), now in the Museum of VRS. Rajshahi, also shows definite marks of Gupta style. This graceful and exquisitely modelled figure is one of the best specimens of the Bengal school of sculpture of this period. Artistically viewed, it presents several features of special importance. Its simple naturalism and the paucity of ornaments offer a refreshing contrast to the inordinate taste for over-ornamentation and complexity of design which became prominent factors in all artistic attempts of the later period.

On these grounds the image has been referred to the sixth century A.D. The image is of great interest for its gold-plating which shows an advanced skill in the casting of metal images. This is the earliest known gilt bronze so far discovered not only within the limits of Bengal but even in eastern India. It is almost certain that there were earlier specimens for otherwise it is difficult to explain the state of perfection reached by this image, as evidenced by the fact that its gold-plating, though “thinner even than an egg shell” still sticks to the surface (though it has peeled off in many places).

These figures mentioned above, practically represent all that we know of the sculptures of Bengal exhibiting the idiom of Gupta art, namely a combination of the sublime spiritualism and the emotionalism of its eastern version, as Stella Kramrisch puts it.

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### **16.8 Terracottas of Gupta period from Bengal**

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It may be easily taken for granted that terracotta art must have flourished in hoary antiquity in the riverain plains of Bengal, where all kinds of clay suitable for good type of terracotta are within easy reach of everybody.

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### 16.9 Perspectives

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Tamluk has proved to be a rich quarry for ancient terracottas. A terracotta female figurine found there has been tentatively assigned to the Maurya age. Another male figure, assigned to the Sunga period with two wings on the shoulders, has been found there. He holds two stalks with lotus blossoms and wears ear-studs, a heavy neck collar and bracelets. Other beautiful and typical terracotta figurines of 3rd-2nd century B.C. are also magnificent pieces of art.

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### 16.10 Terracottas of our period of study

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The terracottas assigned to the 3rd-4th century A.D., showing Kushana and Gupta influence, and the lower part of superb terracotta figurine characterized by a graceful modelling and transparent drapery of the early Gupta period have also been found at Tamluk. A terracotta female figurine like that of the Maurya period, mentioned earlier, at Tamluk, has been found at Pokharna in Bankura district. A few other terracottas including yakshinis and a plaque depicting a damsel dancing before a throned personage have also been found at Tamluk.

The Gupta period may be assigned an unique terracotta plaque representing a richly adorned dancing male figure. Terracottas of the typically Gupta period include an unique piece in the round with applied eye-balls, pinched-up nose and ears and outspread ornamented short hands shown up to the waist. Some terracotta moulds and an inscribed seal also belong to this period. Terracottas have been found in many other places in Bengal. In addition to Yakshas and Yakshinis, other divine beings and mithuna are also represented on terracotta plaque. More interesting are the numerous plaques containing narrative reliefs, some of which have been identified with well-known stories like the hunting scene of Dushyanta, immortal used by Kalidasa in his drama *Abhijnana Sakuntalam* and Jataka stories.

The terracottas of the Gupta period are comparatively much fewer in number, and some of them fully exhibit all the refined traits of the Gupta plastic tradition, but the style is more human and less hieratic and the spiritual experience is less intense. A terracotta sealing with the legend 'Sri Bhadrasya' in late Gupta characters and a terracotta Jain figurine have been found at Tilda in Midnapur district.

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### 16.11 Temple architecture of Bengal during the Gupta Period

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The actual remains of buildings found in Bengal do not convey an adequate idea of the state of things in ancient Bengal. Both epigraphic records and accounts of foreign travellers testify to the existing of numerous temples and monasteries all over Bengal, and some of them, must have been magnificent structures.

Here reference may be made to the ruins of a big temple at Chandraketugarh

(Berachaampa, North 24 pangs) of the Gupta period and the Panchayatan temple- complex at Rajbadidanga (Murshidabad dt) of the same or slightly later period, exposed by the excavations at these two places.

But beyond the idea of their massive character, and a few details of the general plan nothing more can be said of them. The massive temple at Chandraketugarh had a large square sanctum cella with projections on three sides and a covered ambulatory passage. The bigger square was preceded by a rectangular covered vestibule with a rectangular open porch in front, complete with a flight of steps. Around the large square, the vestibule and the porch, was a rectangular structure with projections on three sides, corresponding to those of the inner square. Rising from the same level as that of the main temple, its facade and the two sides up to the vestibule were decorated with shallow niches, possibly plastered with stucco, and embellished with rounded offsets and striking course of dentils made of moulded bricks.

Each side of the square of the cells was 63 ft. long and the vestibule attached to the middle of the northern side was 45 ft. square. There were also massive brick buttresses and open ambulatory passages.

Nearby are the remains of miniature replica of the temple and the basement of a votive stupa flanking the stairway.

The Panchayatana temple- complex at Rajbadidanga consists of a rectangular enclosure wall, four square shrines at the four corners, main temple of triratha plan, the rectangular mandapa on the north, surki rammed platform etc. The compound wall, measuring 20.87 m. in length on its western side and having several offsets at the plinth level on its southern face, contained beautiful niches and decorated and moulded cornices on its exposed southern and northern faces. The rectangular main temple had projection on three sides, leaving northern side open for the entrance, thereby giving a triratha shape. The inner area of the main shrine was surki -rammed and over it were laid bricks to form the platform. the rectangular mandapa was built subsequently on the northern side of the main shrine. The south of this temple there was another oblong temple complex consisting of walls, platforms and ardhachandra entrance platform on a rectangular basement.

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### **16.12 Gupta architecture and sculpture : Comparative observative**

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Compared with sculpture, Gupta architecture, to judge by the extant remains, must be regarded as poor.

The stone temple at Sanchi, like that Deogarh, is very small, but exhibits refinement in style. The brick temple at Bhitargaon is large but ruined. Remains of stone temples of this period have also been found at Nachna-ki-Talai and other places. These temples are well-designed, and consist of a square chamber, a shrine and a portico or veranda as

essential elements. They are decorated with fine sculptured panels, but the decoration is properly subordinated to, and is in full harmony with the architectural plan of the buildings. There is no doubt that magnificent temple of large dimensions were constructed during the Gupta age, but they have been completely destroyed. High and elaborately- worked towers or shikharas which surmounted the roofs of temples in later age had not yet made their full appearance, but the beginnings of this development are seen in the Bhitargaon temple and the miniature representations of temples on relief sculptures of the Gupta period.

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### **16.13 Gupta Coins: Artistic Value**

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The artistic excellence of the Gupta period also found expression in the rich variety of Gold coins issued by the wealthiest and mightiest monarchs of the age.

According to some scholars, foreign influence is clearly traceable in this series, but the engravers who produced them were no mere imitators of the work of others. They gave free and spontaneous expression to their own ideas, and skillfully assimilated alien models with their own national tradition. The masterly execution of these coins is only matched by the elegance of their design and they are justifiably regarded as among the finest examples of Indian art.

The silver coins of the imperial Gupta monarchs are also marked by refinement and elegance representing a high watermark of Indian coinage. Chandragupta 1 showed a considerable originality in casting his coins. The goddess Lakshmi is seated on a lotus than on the throne. He also introduced Horseman type, Lion type coins. He introduced silver coins for the first time.

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### **16.14 Conclusion**

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The present unit has given a vivid description about the art and architecture of India during the time of the Imperial Guptas.

We have seen that in architecture, sculpture, painting and other arts the Gupta age is a golden period of Indian history. The age under review heralded a new epoch in the history of temple architecture. For the first time permanent materials like brick and dressed stone were used instead of perishable materials.

The Gupta sculpture had outgrown the foreign influences of Gandhara school and attained an unprecedented excellence in national style. The style originally developed at Mathura was carried to perfection in Sarnath, where Buddha first turned the wheel of law. The pivot of Gupta sculpture is human figure with plastic modelling. The faces of figures glow with wisdom, knowledge of the inner meaning of life, their eyes look into the heart with drooping eyelids instead of looking into the world.

The reliefs of Gupta sculpture are found in the Siva-Parvati reliefs at Kosam, in the Ramayana panel at Deogarh and also at Sarnath, Garhwa.

The Gupta painting assumed a secular character and was the most popular art among the rich and poor.

The aristocratic families had their pratimagrihas or chitra-salas or picture-galleries. Among the common people painting on linen scrolls (Yama-patta) was in vogue. The remains of the painting of the period are few in number, some traces are found in the caves of Bagh, Ajanta and Badami.

The imperial Gupta gold and silver coins are marked by refinement and elegance representing a high watermark of Indian originality in casting his coins. The Goddess Lakshmi is seated on a lotus than on the throne. The introduction of horseman type, lion type and the silver coins is a rare characteristic of the Gupta period.

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### 16.15 Model Questions

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- a) What do you mean by “classical phase” of Indian history?
- b) Write a note on images and divinities of the Gupta period with special reference to Bengal.
- c) Describe the art and painting of caves in the Gupta period.
- d) What do you know about the sculpture of Gupta period with special reference to Bengal.
- e) Enumerate the ‘Eastern Trends’ on Gupta art with references.
- f) Describe the terracottas of Gupta period from Bengal.
- g) Describe the comparative observations of Gupta architecture and sculpture.
- h) Discuss the artistic value of Gupta coins.

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### 16.16 Suggested Readings

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- a) A. Foucher : *Beginnings of Buddhist art*.
- b) V.A. Smith : *History of Fine art in India and Ceylon*.
- c) J. Fergusson : *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture* (ed) J. Burgess & R.P. Spiers
- d) Percy Brown : *Indian Architecture*.
- e) Stella Kramrisch : *Indian Sculpture*.
- f) S.K. Saraswati : *A Survey of Indian Sculpture*.
- g) R.C. Majumdar : *Ancient India*.
- h) R.C. Majumdar : *History of Ancient Bengal*.

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## **Unit 17 □ Art and architecture & forms and patronage : Post-Gupta Period**

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### **Structure**

- 17.0 Objective**
- 17.1 Introduction**
- 17.2 Styles of Architecture**
- 17.3 South India**
- 17.4 The Upper Deccan**
- 17.5 Images of Bengal**
- 17.6 Architecture of Bengal**
- 17.7 Sculptures of Bengal**
- 17.8 Paintings of Post-Gupta period Bengal**
- 17.9 Terracotta of Post-Gupta period**
- 17.10 Conclusion**
- 17.11 Model Questions**
- 17.12 Suggested Readings**

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### **17.0 Objective**

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- The objective of present unit is to study the different forms of art & architecture, sculpture of post - Gupta period.
- The learners may also come to know some ideas about the art & architecture, sculpture of south India & Upper Deccan from this unit.
- The objective of present unit is an attempt to throw a light on the images, architecture, sculpture & painting of Bengal during this period.
- The different types of terracotta art found in Post - Gupta period - will be also discussed here.
- The different types of terracotta art found in post- Gupta period will be elaborated here.

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### **17.1 Introduction**

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The period that followed the Gupta age, architecture gradually assumed the more important role in the evolution of Indian art. It was during this age that the different styles of architecture were evolved and led to the construction of the magnificent temples which we see all over India.

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## 17.2 Styles of Architecture

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Broadly speaking, there were two important styles of architecture Indo-Aryan or North-Indian and Dravidian or South Indian. Two differences lie mainly in the shape of the *sikhara* or the high tower-like structure which now almost universally surmounts the *cella* or the shrine containing the image of the deity.

The North Indian *sikhara* has the appearance of a solid mass of curvilinear tower, bulging in the middle and ending in almost a point. The South Indian *sikhara* looks like a pyramid made up of successive storeys each smaller than and receding a little from the one beneath it. This also ended in a small round piece of stone as its crowning member. Both types of *sikharas* were minutely carved with decorative sculptures.

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## 17.3 South India

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The history of architecture, art and sculpture in the South Indian peninsula begins with the Pallava temples, and here for the first time, we meet with the Dravidian style. In addition to the temples in the capital city, Kanchi or Conjeeveram, and other places, some of the rock-cut temples, known as the seven pagodas or rathas of Mamallapuram, are built in the style which may therefore be justly called the Pallava style. The latter are small temples, each of which is cut out of a single big rock-boulder. They lie near the sea-beach and Puram or Mahabalipuram, founded by the great Pallava king, Narasimhavarman (7th Century AD)

It is now an insignificant place and its only attraction is provided by these wonderful monolithic temples and a series of fine sculptures on rock walls. The temples or pagodas are named after the five Pandava brothers and their common spouse Draupadi (Dharmarajaratha, Bhimratha, Draupadiratha etc.)

These monolithic temples, wrought out of massive stone, are complete with all the details of an ordinary temple and stand today as an undying testimony to the superb quality of Pallava art. Among the sculptures one large composition has obtained great celebrity. The scene represented is usually described as the penance of Arjuna, but this is very doubtful. There are also many rock-cut caves belonging to the Pallava period.

It is important to note that the earliest specimens of Pallava art already exhibit a fairly advanced stage of development. Although we have no remains of an earlier epoch, we must presume its existence. For the men who built the temples at Kanchi or Mamallapuram or wrought the sculptures on the rocks at the latter place, were no novices in their art, and must have been trained in schools with art traditions of centuries and generations at their back. The problem is analogous to that offered by the finished art of the Maurya period, and its probable solution has been already discussed. But the theory that foreign artists were imported to do the work can hardly be maintained in this case. We must hold, therefore that earlier artists mostly worked in wood or rather perishable

materials and hence their work has entirely disappeared, though chance or luck might some day restore a few relics of it.

The style of Pallava architecture not only set the standard in the South Indian Peninsula, but also largely influenced the architecture of the Indian colonies in the South-east Asia. The characteristics Pallava or Dravidian type of *sikhara* is met with in the temples of Java, Cambodia and Vietnam. But there are important differences between them and the South Indian temples. The pillars which form such an important adjunct to the latter are altogether absent in the former.

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#### **17.4 The Upper Deccan**

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Between North India and the Far South, which had evolved two independent styles of architecture, lay the Deccan plateau where both the styles in pure or slight modified form, known as Chalukya and the Rastrakutas who ruled in this region were great builders. Near the Chalukya capital, Badami, we find a number of cave-temples which are dedicated to Brahmanical gods, and contain a number of fine image and good sculptures. There are also many stone temples at Badami and various other places constructed in the ordinary way. Most of these show the Pallava or Dravidian style. The same style was also largely adopted by the Rastrakuta and the world famous Kailasha Temple at Ellora is a marvellous specimen of the Dravidian style. It was constructed during the reign of Krishna I, slightly later period of our study, in the latter half of the eighth century A.D.

The process of construction employed in the case of the Mamallapuram rathas was repeated here on a much bigger scale. An entire hillside was first demarcated and separated from a long range of mountains, and then a huge temple was cut out of it in the same way as each Ratha at Mamallapuram was cut out of a rock-boulder. The big temple, standing in an open court, now appears like an ordinary one, but it is merely the remnant of a solid mass of stone that once formed a part of the hill which now surrounds the temple on three sides.

The temple has a Dravidian *sikhara* and is elaborately carved with fine sculptures. Caves, excavated in the sides of the hills round it, contain big halls decorated with finely wrought pillars and images of various Brahmanical divinities. The Kailasha temple at Ellora is a splendid achievement of art, and considering the technical skill and labour involved, is unequalled in the history of the world.

The hill at Ellora contains a number of rock-cut caves with in a short distance of the famous temple.

The caves generally resemble those of the earlier period at Nasik and Karle, but the facade of the Visvakarma cave shows a pleasing modification.

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### 17.5 Images of Bengal

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Reference may be made to some images which belong to the period of transition from the Gupta to the period of fully developed Bengal school of sculpture which took a definite shape during the Pala Sena period.

First in point of date are two octo-alloy images unearthed together from Deulbadi (Tippera dt) and probably belong to the same period. The first is an inscribed image of Sarvani of the time of the Khadga dynasty ruling in this region in the 7th century A.D. It may thus be definitely dated—a rare thing in history of sculptures in Bengal.

It is an eight-armed deity, standing in sampada-sthanka pose on the back of a lion couchant on a double lotus and a triratha pedestal, accompanied by two chowry-bearing female figures; the hands carry conch-shell, arrow, sword discus, shield, trident bell and bow. The image though described as Sarvani in the inscription, closely follows the description of the goddess with such names as Bhadradurga, Bhadrakali, Ambika etc, given in the Sarada-tilakatantra.

The second is a miniature of Surya in the Dacca Museum, shown as seated, a rare specimen rather.

Another metal image of the same style is the image of Siva standing erect, found at Manir Tat, 24 Parganas. The image standing erect on a lotus placed over a pedestal and distinguished by urdha-linga and Jata-mukuta which bears a crescent moon. Behind the head is an oval, decorated aureole on a lintel supported by two struts. A trisulisa (over which probably placed the left hand of the God) stands on the pedestal which has the figure of a full on one side, just below the trisula. The image is regarded as the 'Hara' aspect of Siva described in the Hayasirsha Pancharatra.

To the same period also probably belongs the Vishnu image found at Kakadighi and somewhat later, the Vishnu-Vamana image found in west Dinajpur.

A small seated image of Tara of about seventh century has been found amid the ruins of a Gupta temple at Karnasuvarna. These images indicate, in their plastic form and content, an intermediate stage between the domination of the Gupta idiom of art and the growth of a distinct school of sculpture in which the regional stage trends and tendencies are clearly traceable. The marks of transition are thus described by S.K. Saraswati.

'We find in the stiff and erect Sarvani a likely antecedent of the conventional Pala image. The surrounding rim to which the hands of the Goddess and other ill-filling decorative devices serve as struts anticipates the stela composition of Pala sculpture. The Siva image from Manir tat, as well as Vishnu from Kakadighi foreshadow also the composition of the conventional type of Pala images. The Surya image with its composite elements of attendants, charioteer, horses etc, represents not a very distant approach to the full fledged stela composition of Pala art. Some critics may condemn a Pala sculpture

as being stiff, rigid and conventional. But one should not forget that the more rigid lines of the main figure in this composition seem to be consciously constructed with the flowing rhythm of the attendant figures, the vigour of the animal mount and of the decorative motifs. ...they should be better termed as Pre-Pala.'

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### **17.6 Architecture of Bengal**

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**Stupa :** Though the accounts of the Chinese pilgrims indicate the existence of several structural stupas of varying dimensions, they have disappeared with the passage of time.

The votive stupas of Bengal are made of either bronze, or brick, the only stone example being that of Jogi-gupha. The bronze variety is illustrated by the specimens coming from Ashrafpur, (Dacca), Paharpur and Jhewari (Chitagang). The seventh century Ashrafpur votive stupa consists of a cylindrical drum and a hemispherical dome standing on a lotus over a high and slightly sloping square basement the latter having an offset projection on each place. The dome bulges a little towards the top. At the centre of the square harmika rises the shaft of chhatravali, only one of its discs now surviving. The unique feature of this specimen lies in the square turret of the harmika which has each of its sides adorned with a figure of the Buddha. From the Ashrafpur bronze stupa of Khadga dynasty as illustrated above, it is, however, reasonable to believe that the stupa architecture was characteristically affiliated to Buddhism, and hence it received impetus from the Buddhist rulers of the pre-Pala periods.

#### **Viharas :**

In course of excavations carried out by the department of Archaeology of Bangladesh in 1973-74 at Bhasu-Vihara (Po-Shi-po of Hiuen Tsang's 'Travels') at Mahasthan (8 miles due north of the Bogra town) have laid bare the remains of two comparatively small monasteries and a semi cruciform temple.

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### **17.7 Sculptures of Bengal**

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Specimens of sculptural art upto 6th century A.D. found in Bengal and Bihar demonstrate that artists of Eastern India were following the traditions of the great art centres of India. With the decline of and exhaustion of the classical Gupta school in the seventh century A.D. local traditions and ideas began to assert themselves and paved the way for the rise of what may be described as the Bengal, or for that matter, Eastern Indian School of art.

The excavations at Mainmoti and Mahasthan have brought to light several sculptures, in relief as well as in the round. The earliest of them belonging to the sixth-seventh century are carved in soft grey stone and in the relief (mostly damaged) In subject-

matter they are entirely Buddhist. Buddha or Bodhisattva being the dominant central figure in the panels. The classical Gupta tradition which persisted in easterns India till the seventh century is also apparent in the delicacy of the limbs, the roundness of the forms and the refined expressions of these Buddha Bodhisattva figures. An elegant image of Buddha found at Mahasthan may be furnished as a representative example of the perpetuation of the Gupta idiom. Yet these earliest Mainamoti stone sculptures articulate and idiom of their own : they exhibit a harmonious blending of physical charm with spiritual vision and experience as well as a spontaneity in appear to have been approaching the Mainamoti terracottas and conception.

A few sculptures which are assigned to the eight century, still exhibit the soft modelling of the last phase of Gupta sculpture. From about eight century A.D. a few dated images are available and they have helped us to trace the evolution of the Pala art.

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### **17.8 Paintings of Post-Gupta period Bengal**

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Though any specimen of painting belonging to Pre-Pala period of Bengal is yet unknown, we are told by Fa-hien “that the pictorial art flourished well in Bengal, particularly in Tamralipti during the beginning of the 5th century A.D. It is quite probable that the age-old folk art of patachitra, dhuli-chitra etc, was not unknown in Bengal and that the monasteries in Bengal were embellished with paintings. The important illustrated manuscript of the Pala period are mentioned hereunder in a chronological order. Most of them bear dates in the regnal years. Most of them bear dates in the regnal years of the Pala kings of Bengal and Magadha; 1) Ashtasahasrika Prajnaparamita 2) pancharaksha 3) Manuscript of a sacred text 4) A Dharani manuscript etc.”

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### **17.9 Terracotta of Post-Gupta period**

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Apart from the few well-known terracottas from Mahasthan and Tamralipti i.e. the amorous couple plaque and pancha-chuda Yakshini of the Pre-Pala period, the art of clay sculpture seems to have been in comparatively flourishing state in the Pala culture epoch.

The treeacotta plaques dicovered at Mainamoti and Mahasthan deserve special mention. Among the Mainamoti pieces have been noticed the typical dharmachakra and triglyph symbols, the latter occuring on a number of coins recovered from the same site. One of them depicts a richly jewelled person, perhaps a Bodhisattva of the Deva period (first half of the eighty centruy A.D.), while another piece portrays a crowned person, probably an early member of the Deva dynasty, holding a bow. Besides these plaques, a few terracotta human and animal figurines and architectural and decorative terracottas (carved and ornamental bricks) have come to light.

The most interesting among the Mahasthan serious are a half-man and half-fish, a half-

flower motif and a panel showing an archer aiming at an elephant with a cobra behind him in striking pose. According to a scholar who has brought these objects to light, the terracotta finds from Bhasu Vihara at Mahasthan, appear to be somewhat different from the others in general character, refinement, style and workmanship, probably because they may be somewhat later in date.

The terracotta plaques and figurines constitute an unusually attractive and distinctive school of art, all dating from about the second half of the seventh century A.D. onwards. They represent an indigenous idiom practically unrelated with similar objects found in the other regions of India.

A slightly different type of material is found used in the embellishment of a number of the late Gupta and Post-Gupta monuments in Nalanda. In fact, stucco decoration became a characteristic feature of the said structure. Stucco seems to have found favour with the artists of Bengal also. Stucco art of Bengal is represented, among other, by heads from Tejanandi (Rajshahi) and Rangamati (Murshidabad Assignable to the Pre-Pala Period, both of them are characterised by a soft and refined modelling and a felicity of expression.

Terracotta plaques and figurines have been discovered from other places like Tamluk, Bangarh, Harinarayanpur, Deulpota etc, all in West Bengal;)

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### 17.10 Conclusion

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A review of the progress and development of Indian art during Post-Gupta Period and earlier times, such as we have attempted in several modules, is necessary for the proper understanding of the high culture and refinement of the ancient Indians. For true art a architecture is an inerring expression of mind, and a national art is a true reflex of national character. Great nations of the world have left behind them unmistakable evidence of their greatness in their works of art. The nature and excellence of art constitute a sure means by which we can understand the essential characteristics of a nation and make a fair estimate of its greatness.

Judged by the standard of art, Indian Civilization must be regarded as occupying a very high place indeed among those of antiquity. It exhibits not only grace and refinement but technical skill and patient industry of a very high order. Taken in a mass, Indian art offers the most vivid testimony to the wonderful resources in men and money possessed by the rulers, and the religious spirit, occasionally reaching to a sublime height, that dominated the entire population. It shows, as the national ideals, the subordination of ideas of physical beauty and material comfort to ethical conceptions and spiritual bliss.

Amid the luxuries and comforts of worldly life, the thought of the world beyond ever ceased to exercise a dominant influence. The changes in spiritual ideas and ideal, from the sublime purity of early Buddhism to the less pleasing form of the Tantric cult, are

also reflected in art, Its meaning and significance for the correct interpretation of ancient Indian life must be clearly grasped by every student of History.

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**17.11 Model Questions**

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- a) What do you know about the styles of architecture in Post-Gupta period?
- b) Write a note on variation of style in architecture of the upper Deccan.
- c) Describe about the images of Bengal in the Post-Gupta Period.
- d) Give a short note on the architecture of Bengal in the Post-Gupta Period.
- e) Discuss the excellence of sculptures found in the excavations of different sites.
- f) What do you know about the paintings of Post-Gupta Period.
- g) Describe the Terracotta art of the Post-Gupta Period found in different sites of Bihar and Bengal.
- h) Enumerate the greatness of art and architecture of ancient India as depicted in different forms and style.

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**17.12 Suggested Readings**

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- a) N.K. Bhattasali : *Iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculpture in the Dacca Museum*, Dacca 1929.
- b) Percy Brown : *Indian Architecture*, Vol. I, Bombay, 1971.
- c) James Burgess : *Ancient Monuments, Temples and Sculptures of India*, London, 1897.
- d) S.K. Saraswati : *Early Sculpture of Bengal Calcutta*, 1962.
- e) A. Foucher : *The Beginning of Buddhist Art and other Essays*, Delhi, 1972
- f) James Fergusson : *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, London, 1910
- g) Stella Kramrisch : *Indian Sculpture*, Calcutta 1933.
- h) R.C. Majumdar : *History of Ancient Bengal*, Calcutta, 1972.