

**HS120C: HISTORY: ANCIENT INDIA / ANCIENT KASHMIR  
DISCIPLINE SPECIFIC COURSE (CORE)**

**Semester I**

**GDC Pattan**

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**Unit I (Pre and Proto- History)**

**Material Remains:**

Innumerable material remains have been left by ancient Indians that give us an understanding of life lived that they lived. The stone temples in South India and the brick monasteries in eastern India still stand to remind us of the great architectural activities of the past. Though the most of these remains lies buried in the mounds scattered all over the country. However, it is only in the phase of burnt brick or stone structures that impressive and large scale remains are found in moist and alluvial areas. Excavations have brought to light the cities which got established around 2500 B.C in north-western India. Similarly, they tell us about the material culture that was developed in the Gargetic basin. They show the layout of settlements in which people lived, the type of pottery they used, the form of houses they dwelt, the kind of cereals they ate and the type of tools and implements they used for various purposes. Material remains recovered as a result of excavation and explorations are subjected to various scientific examination. Their dates are fixed according to the radio-carbon dating method. However, the history of climate and vegetation is known through an examination of plant residues and pollen analyses. The nature and components of metal artifacts are analyzed scientifically while an examination of animal bones enables us to find whether the animals were domesticated and to point out their uses.

**Numismatics:**

The study of coins is called numismatics. Coins are an important numismatic source that tells us about the Indo-Greek, Saka-Parthian, and Kushana Kings. These coins were made of metal, copper, bronze, silver, gold, or lead. Coin moulds made of burnt clay have been discovered in large numbers. Most of them belong to the Kushana period. Since there was nothing like modern banking system in those days, people deposited their coin currency in earthen ware and brass vessels and maintained them as precious hoards. Many of these hoards containing not only Indian coins but also those minted abroad such as in Roman Empire have been discovered in different parts of the country which have been preserved in various Museums of India. Besides coins of many dynasties have been catalogued and published.

The earliest coins in India contain few symbols, but the later coins make mention of kings, gods, or dates. The areas where they are being found indicate the region of their circulation. This has enabled us to reconstruct the history of several ruling dynasties, especially of the Indo-Greeks. Coins also throw significant light on socio economic activities. Even some coins were produced by the guilds of merchants and goldsmiths which show that crafts and commerce had become important. Coins helped transactions on a large scale and contributed to trade. The trade and commerce flourished in post Maurya and Gupta times however, there was a decline in trading activities in the Post Gupta period. Coins also contain religious symbols and legends that throw significant light on the art and religion of the time.

**Epigraphy:**

Epigraphy is the study of written matter recorded on rocks, pillars, temple walls, copper plates, seals, and other writing material. It is the science of identifying graphemes, clarifying their meaning, classifying their uses according to dates and cultural contexts and drawing conclusions. Moreover, inscriptions are the main source for reconstructing the history and culture of old ancient civilizations and serves as basis to establish socio-cultural and historical antiquity on the basis of engravings. The

earliest inscriptions in India were recorded on stone and thereafter copper plates. The practice of engraving inscriptions on stone continued in South India to serve a permanent record. The earliest inscriptions were written in the Prakrit language in 3<sup>rd</sup> Century B.C. However, Sanskrit was adopted as an epigraphic medium in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. Inscriptions also began to be written in regional languages in the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries. Ashokan inscriptions were engraved in Brahmi and Kharoshti, however, the Brahmi script prevailed in the whole country, except for the north-western parts. Greek and Aramaic scripts were employed in writing Ashokan inscriptions in Afghanistan. Most of the inscriptions bearing on the history of Maurya, Post-Maurya and Gupta times have been published in series of collections. However, there are over 50000 inscriptions of South India which await publication.

The Harappan inscriptions which await decipherment seem to have been written in a pictographic script in which ideas and objects were expressed in the form of pictures. The earliest inscriptions are found on the Seals of Harappa belonging to about 2500 B.C. the various types of inscriptions issued convey royal orders and decisions regarding social, religious and administrative matters. Some are votive records of the followers of Buddhism, Jainism, Saivism etc. and many are do-native which refer specially to gifts of money, cattle, land, etc. mainly for religious purposes.

Inscriptions recording land grants are very important for the study of the land system and administration in ancient India. These were mostly engraved on copper plates. They record the grants of lands, revenues, and villages made to monks, priests, temples, monasteries, vassals, and officials. These were written in all languages, such as Prakrit, Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu.

### **Religious Literature:**

The Indians knew art of writing as early as 2500 B.C and the most ancient manuscripts are not older than the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D., In India they were written in birch bark, and palm leaves but in Central Asia manuscripts were written on sheep leather and wooden tablets. Although old Sanskrit manuscripts are found all over the country, they mostly belong to south India, Nepal and Kashmir. Such type of matter is preserved in Museums and libraries. The ancient Indian literature is mostly religious in nature. The religious literature of Hindus includes the Vedas, the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata, the Puranas, the Brahmanas and Upanshidas. They throw a significant light on the social and cultural conditions of ancient India but do not reveal the political history. The Rig Veda is said to have been compiled roughly between 1500-1000 B.C followed by Yajur Veda, Sama Veda, Atharva Veda and Brahmanas and Upanshidas which belong roughly to 1000-500 B.C. The Rig Veda mainly contains prayers while the later Vedic texts contain rituals, magic, and mythological stories. However, the Upanshidas contain philosophical speculations. The *Puranic* and Epic literature are considered as history by Indians, but it contains no definite dates for events and kingdoms. The principles of history are preserved in the *Puranas* and Epics. These texts narrate the genealogies of kings and their achievements but are not arranged in a chronological order. Mahabharata is older in age and possibly reflects the state affairs from 10<sup>th</sup> century B.C to the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

The Jain and the Buddhist literature had been written in *Prakrit* and *Pali* languages. The religious books of the Jainas and Buddhists refer to historical persons and incidents. The Buddhist books are called as *Jataka* stories. They have been given some historical importance because they are related with the previous births of the Buddha. There are more than 550 such stories. These texts not only tell us about the life of Buddha but also some of his royal contemporaries who reigned over Magdha, north Bihar and eastern U.P. These texts throw invaluable light on the social, political and economic conditions of the times between 5<sup>th</sup> century and 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.

The Jain texts were written in Prakrit and were eventually compiled in 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. in Valabhi Gujrat. These texts help us to reconstruct the political history of eastern U.P. and Bihar and refer repeatedly to trade and traders in the age of Mahavira. The historic information mentioned in *Jaina* literature also helps us in reconstructing the history of different regions of India. Both Mahavira and Buddha are considered as the historical personalities and have created Jain and Buddhist religious ideology respectively.

### **Secular Literature:**

The *Dharmasutras* and the *Smritis* were the rules and regulations for the general public and the rulers and were compiled between 500-200B.C. It can be equated with the constitution and the law books of the modern concept of polity and society. They prescribe the rules according to which property is to be held, sold and ingirted. They also prescribe punishments for persons guilty of theft, murder, assault, adultery etc.

**Arthashastra** is a book on statecraft written by Kautilya during the Maurya period. The book is divided into 15 parts dealing with different subject matters and provides rich material for the study of ancient Indian polity, economy, and society. The final version of *Arthashastra* was written in the 4th century B.C. Kautilya acknowledges his debt to his predecessors in his book, which shows that there was a tradition of writing on and teaching of statecrafts.

The works of Bhasa, Kalidasa, Banabhatta and Sudraka who have written plays based on historical events. Their works also provide us with the glimpse of the social and cultural life of the northern and central India. Apart from this the Tamil texts found in the corpus of the *Sangam* literature is a major source of our information for socio-economic and socio-political life of the people living in Deltaic Tamil Nadu. What it says about trade and commerce is attested by archaeological finds and foreign accounts. The *Sangam* literature was produced over a period of 3-4 centuries by poets who assembled in colleges patronised by kings. Such colleges were called *Sangam*, and the literature produced in there was called *Sangam* literature. It generally describes events up to the 4th century A.D.

### **Foreign Accounts:**

Greek, Roman and Chinese visitors either as travelers or religious emissaries left behind the things that they saw in India. It is remarkable that Alexander's invasion of India finds no mention in Indian sources and it is purely on the basis of Greek sources that we have to reconstruct the history of his Indian exploits. Alexander's invasion of India in 326 B.C. is described as the "sheet anchor" of Indian chronology. A number of Greek historians, who recorded their impressions of India, have become a valuable source of ancient history of India.

The Greek kings send their ambassadors to *Pataliputra*. Megasthenes, Deimachus, and Dionysius were some of them. Megasthenes who came in the court of Chandragupta Maurya had written about the Indian society and culture in his book called as '*Indika*'. Though, the original work of Megasthenes has been preserved only in fragments quoted by subsequent classical writers. These fragments when read together, furnish vital information not only about the system of Maurya administration but also about social classes and economic activities in the Maurya period. The Greek writing about India, however, is based on secondary sources. They were ignorant of the language and the customs of the country and hence their information is full of errors and contradictions.

The '*Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*' and Ptolemy's *Geography* both written in Greek, give valuable information about the Indian coasts and ancient geography and commerce. Besides, many Chinese travelers visited India as Buddhist pilgrims from time to time. Mention may be made of two important pilgrims: Fa-Hien (Faxian) - visited India in 5th century A.D. and Hiuen-Tsang (Xuanzang) - visited India in 7th century. Fa-Hien describes the social, religious and economic conditions of India in the age of the Guptas, while Hiuen-Tsang had given valuable account about Harshavardhana and some other contemporary kings of Northern India.

### **Palaeolithic Culture or Old Stone Age**

**Palaeolithic sites:** The Paleolithic sites are widely found in various parts of the Indian sub-continent. These sites are generally located near water sources. Several rock shelters and caves used by the Palaeolithic people are scattered across the sub-continent. They also lived rarely in huts made of leaves. Some of the famous sites of Old Stone Age in India are:

a. The Soan valley and Potwar Plateau on the northwest India.

- b. The Siwalik hills on the north India.
- c. Bhimpetka in Madhya Pradesh.
- d. Adamgarh hill in Narmada valley.
- e. Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh, and
- f. Attirampakkam near Chennai.

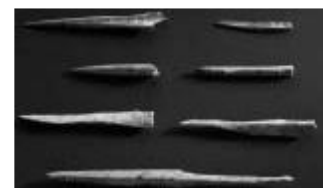
In the Old Stone Age, food was obtained by hunting animals and gathering edible plants and tubers. Therefore, these people are called as hunter-gatherers. They used stone tools, hand-sized and flaked-off large pebbles for hunting animals. Stone implements are made of a hard rock known as quartzite. Large pebbles are often found in river terraces. The hunting of large animals would have required the combined effort of a group of people with large stone axes. We have little knowledge about their language and communication. Their way of life became modified with the passage of time since they made attempts to domesticate animals, make crude pots and grow some plants. A few Old Stone Age paintings have also been found on rocks at Bhimbetka and other places. The period before 10000 B.C. is assigned to the Old Stone Age.

#### **Mesolithic or Middle Stone Age:**

The next stage of human life is called Mesolithic or Middle Stone Age which falls roughly from 10000 B.C. to 6000 B.C. It was the transitional phase between the Palaeolithic Age and Neolithic Age. Mesolithic remains are found in Langhanj in Gujarat, Adamgarh in Madhya Pradesh and also in some places of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The paintings and engravings found at the rock shelters give an idea about the social life and economic activities of Mesolithic people. In the sites of Mesolithic Age, different types of stone tools are found. These are tiny stone artifacts, often not more than five centimeters in size, and therefore called microliths. The hunting-gathering pattern of life continued during this period. However, there seems to have been a shift from big animal hunting to small animal hunting and fishing. The use of bow and arrow also began during this period. Also, there began a tendency to settle for longer periods in an area. Therefore, domestication of animals, horticulture and primitive cultivation started. Animal bones are found in these sites and these include dog, deer, boar and ostrich. Occasionally, burials of the dead along with some microliths and shells seem to have been practiced.

#### **Neolithic Culture:**

A remarkable progress is noticed in human civilisation in the Neolithic Age. It is approximately dated from 6000 B.C to 4000 B.C. Neolithic remains are found in various parts of India. These include the Kashmir valley, Chirand in Bihar, Belan valley in Uttar Pradesh and in several places of the Deccan. The important Neolithic sites excavated in south India are Maski, Brahmagiri, Hallur and Kodekal in Karnataka, Paiyampalli in Tamil Nadu and Utnur in Andhra Pradesh. The chief characteristic features of the Neolithic culture are the practice of agriculture, domestication of animals, polishing of stone tools and the manufacture of pottery. In fact, the cultivation of plants and domestication of animals led to the emergence of village communities based on sedentary life style. There was a great improvement in technology of making tools and other equipments used by man. Stone tools were now polished. The polished axes were found to be more effective tools for hunting and cutting trees. Mud brick houses were built instead of grass huts. Wheels were used to make pottery. Pottery was used for cooking as well as storage of food grains. Large urns were used as coffins for the burial of the dead. There was also improvement in agriculture. Wheat, barely, rice, millet were cultivated in different areas at different points of time. Rice cultivation was extensive in eastern India. Domestication of sheep, goats and cattle was widely prevalent. Cattle were used for cultivation and for transportation purposes. The people of Neolithic Age used clothes made of cotton and wool.



### **Metal Age:**

The Neolithic period is followed by Chalcolithic (copper-stone) period when copper and bronze came to be used. The new technology of smelting metal ore and crafting metal artifacts is an important development in human civilisation. But the use of stone tools was not given up. Some of the micro-lithic tools continued to be essential items. People began to travel for a long distance to obtain metal ores. This led to a network of Chalcolithic cultures and such cultures were found in many parts of India.

Generally, Chalcolithic cultures had grown in river valleys. Most importantly, the Harappan culture is considered as a part of Chalcolithic culture. In South India the river valleys of the Godavari, Krishna, Tungabhadra, Pennar and Kaveri were settled by farming communities during this period. Although they were not using metals in the beginning of the Metal Age, there is evidence of copper and bronze artifacts by the end of second millennium B.C. Several bronze and copper objects, beads, terracotta figurines and pottery were found at Paiyampalli in Tamil Nadu. The Chalcolithic age is followed by Iron Age. Iron is frequently referred in the Vedas. The Iron Age of the southern peninsula is often related to Megalithic Burials. Megalith means Large Stone. The burial pits were covered with these stones. Such graves are extensively found in South India. Some of the important megalithic sites are Hallur and Maski in Karnataka, Nagarjunakonda in Andhra Pradesh and Adichchanallur in Tamil Nadu. Black and red pottery, iron artifacts such as hoes and sickles and small weapons were found in the burial pits.

### **The Harappan Civilisation:**

The earliest excavations in the Indus valley were done at Harappa in the West Punjab and Mohenjodaro in Sindh. Both places are now in Pakistan. The findings in these two cities brought to light a civilisation. It was first called the 'The Indus Valley Civilisation'. But this civilisation was later named as the 'Indus Civilisation' due to the discovery of more and more sites far away from the Indus valley. Also, it has come to be called the 'Harappan Civilisation' after the name of its first discovered site.

### **Date of the Harappan Civilisation:**

In 1931, Sir John Marshall estimated the duration of the occupation of Mohenjodaro between 3250 B.C. and 2750 B.C. Subsequently, as and when new sites were discovered, the dating of the Harappan culture is modified. The advent of the radiocarbon method paves way for fixing almost accurate dates. By 1956, Fairservis brought down the dating of the Harappan culture to between 2000 B.C. and 1500 B.C. on the basis of radiocarbon dates of his findings. In 1964, D.P. Agarwal came to the conclusion that the total span of this culture should be between 2300 B.C. and 1750 B.C. Yet, there is further scope of modification of these dates.

### **Emergence:**

Indus Valley Civilisation was an ancient civilisation that thrived in the Indus and Ghaggar-Hakra river valleys, now in Pakistan, along with the north western parts of India, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. The archaeological findings excavated for the last eight decades reveal the gradual development of the Harappan culture. There are four important stages of evolution and they are named as pre-Harappan, early-Harappan, mature-Harappan, and late-Harappan.

1. The pre-Harappan stage is located in eastern Baluchistan. The excavations at Mehrgarh northwest of Mohenjodaro reveal the existence of pre-Harappan culture. In this stage, the nomadic people began to lead a settled agricultural life.

2. In the early-Harappan stage, the people lived in large villages in the plains. There was a gradual growth of towns in the Indus valley. Also, the transition from rural to urban life took place during this period. The sites of Amri and Kot Diji remain the evidence for early-Harappan stage.

3. In the mature-Harappan stage, great cities emerged. The excavations at Kalibangan with its elaborate town planning and urban features prove this phase of evolution.

4. In the late-Harappan stage, the decline of the Indus culture began and the excavations at Lothal reveal this stage of evolution. Lothal with its port was founded much later. It was surrounded by a massive brick wall as flood protection. Lothal remained an emporium of trade between the Harappan civilisation and the remaining part of India as well as Mesopotamia.

**Prominent Sites:**

Among the many other sites excavated, the most important are Kot Diji in Sindh, Kalibangan in Rajasthan, Rupar in the Punjab, Banawali in Haryana, Lothal, Surkotada and Dholavira, all the three in Gujarat. The larger cities are approximately 100 hectares in size. Mohenjodara is the largest of all the Indus cities and it is estimated to have spread over an area of 200 hectares.

**Geographical Extent:**

The Indus Valley Civilisation extended from Balochistan to Gujarat and from the east of the river Jhelum to Rupar. Harappan Civilisation covered most of Pakistan, along with the western states of India. Even though most of the sites have been found on the river embankments, some have been excavated from the ancient sea coast and islands as well. As per some archaeologists, the number of Harappan sites, unearthed along the dried up river beds of the Ghaggar-Hakra river and its tributaries, is around 500. Apart from that, those along the Indus and its tributaries are approximately 100 in number.

**Salient Features of the Harappan Culture**

**1) Town Planning:**

The Harappan culture was distinguished by its system of town planning on the lines of the grid system—that is streets and lanes cutting across one another almost at right angles thus dividing the city into several rectangular blocks. Harappa, Mohenjodaro and Kalibangan each had its own citadel built on a high podium of mud brick. Below the citadel in each city lay a lower town containing brick houses, which were inhabited by the common people. The large-scale use of burnt bricks in almost all kinds of constructions and the absence of stone buildings are the important characteristics of the Harappan culture. Another remarkable feature was the underground drainage system connecting all houses to the street drains which were covered by stone slabs or bricks.

The most important public place of Mohenjodaro is the Great Bath measuring 39 feet length, 23 feet breadth and 8 feet depth. Flights of steps at either end lead to the surface. There are side rooms for changing clothes. The floor of the Bath was made of burnt bricks. Water was drawn from a large well in an adjacent room, and an outlet from one corner of the Bath led to a drain. It must have served as a ritual bathing site. The largest building in Mohenjodaro is a granary measuring 150 feet length and 50 feet breadth. But in the citadel of Harappa we find as many as six granaries.

**2) Economic life:**

There was a great progress in all spheres of economic activity such as agriculture, industry and crafts and trade. Wheat and barley were the main crops grown besides sesame, mustard and cotton. Surplus grain was stored in granaries. Animals like sheep, goats and buffalo were domesticated. The use of horse is not yet firmly established. A number of other animals were hunted for food including deer. Specialized groups of artisans include goldsmiths, brick makers, stone cutters, weavers, boat-builders and terracotta manufacturers. Bronze and copper vessels are the outstanding examples of the Harappan metal craft. Gold and silver ornaments are found in many places. Pottery remains plain and in some places red and black painted pottery is found. Beads were manufactured from a wide variety of semi-precious stones.

Internal trade was extensive with other parts of India. Foreign trade was mainly conducted with Mesopotamia, Afghanistan and Iran. Gold, copper, tin and several semi-precious stones were imported. Main exports were several agricultural products such as wheat, barley, peas, oil seeds and a variety of finished products including cotton goods, pottery, beads, terracotta figures and ivory products. There is much evidence to prove the trade links between the Indus and Sumerian people. Many seals of Indus valley have been found in Mesopotamia. Trade was of the barter type. The seals and the terracotta models of the Indus valley reveal the use of bullock carts and oxen for land transport and boats and ships for river and sea transport.

### **3) Social Life:**

Much evidence is available to understand the social life of the Harappans. The dress of both men and women consisted of two pieces of cloth, one upper garment and the other lower garment. Beads were worn by men and women. Jewelleries such as bangles, bracelets, fillets, girdles, anklets, ear-rings and fingerings were worn by women. These ornaments were made of gold, silver, copper, bronze and semi precious stones. The use of cosmetics was common. Various household articles made of pottery; stone, shells, ivory and metal have been found at Mohenjodaro. Spindles, needles, combs, fishhooks, knives are made of copper. Children's toys include little clay carts. Marbles, balls and dice were used for games. Fishing was a regular occupation while hunting and bull fighting were other pastimes. There were numerous specimens of weapons of war such as axes, spearheads, daggers, bows, arrows made of copper and bronze.

### **4) Arts and Crafts:**

The Harappan sculpture revealed a high degree of workmanship. Figures of men and women, animals and birds made of terracotta and the carvings on the seals show the degree of proficiency attained by the sculptor. The figure of a dancing girl from Mohenjodaro made of bronze is remarkable for its workmanship. Its right hand rests on the hip, while the left arm, covered with bangles, hangs loosely in a relaxed posture. Two stone statues from Harappa, one representing the back view of a man and the other of a dancer are also specimens of their sculpture. The pottery from Harappa is another specimen of the fine arts of the Indus people. The pots and jars were painted with various designs and colours. Painted pottery is of better quality. The pictorial motifs consisted of geometrical patterns like horizontal lines, circles, leaves, plants and trees. On some pottery pieces we find figures of fish and peacock.

### **5) Script:**

The Harappan script has still to be fully deciphered. The number of signs is between 400 and 600 of which 40 or 60 are basic and the rest are their variants. The script was mostly written from right to left. In a few long seals the boustrophedon method writing in the reverse direction in alternative lines-was adopted. Parpola and his Scandinavian colleagues came to the conclusion that the language of the Harappans was Dravidian. A group of Soviet scholars accepts this view. Other scholars provide different view connecting the Harappan script with that of Brahmi. The mystery of the Harappan script still exists and there is no doubt that the decipherment of Harappan script will throw much light on this culture.

### **6) Religion:**

From the seals, terracotta figurines and copper tablets we get an idea on the religious life of the Harappans. The chief male deity was Pashupati, (proto-Shiva) represented in seals as sitting in a yogic posture with three faces and two horns. He is surrounded by four animals (elephant, tiger, rhino, and buffalo each facing a different direction). Two deer appear on his feet. The chief female deity was the Mother Goddess represented in terracotta figurines. In latter times, *Linga* worship was prevalent. Trees and animals were also worshipped by the Harappans. They believed in ghosts and evil forces and used amulets as protection against them.

### **7) Burial Methods:**

The cemeteries discovered around the cities like Mohenjodaro, Harappa, Kalibangan, Lothal and Rupar throw light on the burial practices of the Harappans. Complete burial and post-cremation burial were popular at Mohenjodaro. At Lothal the burial pit was lined with burnt bricks indicating the use of coffins. Wooden coffins were also found at Harappa. The practice of pot burials is found at Lothal sometimes with pairs of skeletons. However, there is no clear evidence for the practice of Sati.

### **Decline of the Harappan Culture (Causes):**

On account of the absence of any written matter historians have made divergent speculations regarding the causes of the decline of Harappan civilisation. Some of the important causes are outlined hereunder:

1. The civilization is said to have fallen due to heavy floods, traces of which have also been detected. The recurring floods might have been due to violent geographical changes in the course of rivers.
2. The signs of human skeletons found at Mohenjo-daro indicate that the city was invaded by some furious people and the whole population got massacred.
3. The complete decline of this civilisation could have been due to the decay in agricultural practices. The cities depended upon the agricultural surplus of the rural population. It is evident that environmental changes in the country side might have affected the agriculture resulting in scarcity of food commodities in the cities that led to huge exodus of people.

Moreover, the signs of a gradual decline of the Harappan culture are believed to have started around 1800 B.C. The major reasons of the decline of the civilisation are believed to be connected with climate change. However, there is no unanimous view pertaining to the cause for the decline of the Harappan civilisation. Various theories have been postulated. Natural calamities like recurring floods, drying up of rivers, decreasing fertility of the soil due to excessive exploitation and occasional earthquakes might have caused the decline of the Harappan cities. According to some scholars the final blow was delivered by the invasion of Aryans but there is no conclusive evidence. The destruction of forts is mentioned in the Rig Veda. Also, the discovery of human skeletons huddled together at Mohenjodaro indicates that the city was invaded by foreigners. The Aryans had superior weapons as well as swift horses which might have enabled them to become masters of this region.

#### **Unit-II (From Vedic to Mauryas)**

The cities of the Harappan Culture had declined by 1500 B.C. Consequently, their economic and administrative system had slowly declined. Around this period, the speakers of Indo-Aryan language, Sanskrit, entered the north-west India from the Indo-Iranian region. Initially they would have come in small numbers through the passes in the north western mountains. Their initial settlements were in the valleys of the north-west and the plains of the Punjab. Later, they moved into Indo-Gangetic plains. As they were mainly cattle keeping people, they were mainly in search of pastures. By 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C., they occupied the whole of North India, which was referred to as Aryavarta. This period between 1500 B.C. and 600 B.C. may be divided into the Early Vedic Period or Rig Vedic Period (1500 B.C.-1000 B.C.) and the Later Vedic Period (1000 B.C. - 600 B.C.). The Vedic period is one of major milestones in the history of India. It is estimated that the Vedic period in India lasted from 1500-600 B.C. This period brought about a multitude of changes in the lifestyle of people. There was development in agricultural practices, worshipping patterns, philosophical outlooks, etc. A number of dynasties and new religions came into being during this period that left a huge impact on people. The migration of the Aryans to the Indian sub-continent is what triggered off the Vedic Age. As the name suggests, this period got its name from the four major Vedas or the sacred scriptures that were created during that time.

#### **Origin of Aryans**

The original home of the Aryans is a debatable question and there are several views. Different scholars have identified different regions as the original home of the Aryans. They include the Arctic region, Germany, Central Asia and southern Russia. Bala Gangadhar Tilak argues that the Aryans came from the Arctic region on astronomical calculations. However, the theory of southern Russia appears to be more probable and widely accepted by historians. From there, the Aryans moved to different parts of Asia and Europe. They entered India in about 1500 B.C. and came to be known as Indo-Aryans. They spoke the Indo-Aryan language, Sanskrit.

#### **Vedic Literature**

The word 'Veda' is derived from the root 'vid', which means to know. In other words, the term 'Veda' signifies 'superior knowledge'. The Vedic literature consists of the four Vedas-Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva. The Rig Veda is the earliest of the four Vedas and it consists of 1028 hymns. The hymns were sung in praise of various gods. The Yajur Veda consists of various details of rules to be



observed at the time of sacrifice. The Sama Veda is set to tune for the purpose of chanting during sacrifice. It is called the book of chants and the origins of Indian music are traced in it. The Atharva Veda contains details of rituals.

Besides the Vedas, there are other sacred works like the Brahmanas, the Upanishads, the Aranyakas and the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata. The Brahmanas are the treatises relating to prayer and sacrificial ceremony. The Upanishads are philosophical texts dealing with topic like the soul, the absolute, the origin of the world and the mysteries of nature. The Aranyakas are called forest books and they deal with mysticism, rites, rituals and sacrifices. The author of Ramayana was Valmiki and that of Mahabharata was Vedavyas.

### **Rig Vedic Age or Early Vedic Period (1500 - 1000 B.C.)**

During the Rig Vedic period, the Aryans were mostly confined to the Indus region. The Rig Veda refers to *SaptaSindhhu* or the land of seven rivers. This includes the five rivers of Punjab, namely Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas and Sutlej along with the Indus and Saraswathi. The political, social and cultural life of the Rig Vedic people can be traced from the hymns of the Rig Veda.

### **Political Organisation**

The basic unit of political organisation was *kula* or family. Several families joined together on the basis of their kinship to form a village or *grama*. The leader of *grama* was known as *gramani*. A group of villages constituted a larger unit called *visu*. It was headed by *vishayapati*. The highest political unit was called *Jana* or tribe. There were several tribal kingdoms during the Rig Vedic period such as Bharatas, Matsyas, Yadus and Purus. The head of the kingdom was called as *Rajan* or king. The Rig Vedic polity was normally monarchical and the succession was hereditary. The king was assisted by *purohita* or priest and *senani* or commander of the army in his administration. There were two popular bodies called the *Sabha and Samiti*. The former seems to have been a council of elders and the latter, a general assembly of the entire people.

### **Social Life**

The Rig Vedic society was probably the patriarchal in nature and the basic unit of society was family or *graham*. The head of the family was known as *grahapathi*. Monogamy was generally practiced while polygamy was prevalent among the royal and noble families. The wife took care of the household and participated in all the major ceremonies. Women were given equal opportunities as men for their spiritual and intellectual development. There were women poets like Apala, Viswavara, Ghosa and Lopamudra during the Rig Vedic period. Women could even attend the popular assemblies. There was no child marriage and the practice of sati was absent.

Both men and women wore upper and lower garments made of cotton and wool. A variety of ornaments were used by both men and women. Both vegetarian & non-vegetarian foods were taken. Wheat and barley, milk and its products like curd and ghee, vegetables and fruits were the chief articles of food. The eating of cow's meat was prohibited since it was a sacred animal. Chariot racing, horse racing, dicing, music and dance were the favourite pastimes. However, during later Vedic age there was little change in social setup. While the previous style of dress continued, clothes were also made of silk & dyed with saffron. The tendency of meat eating increased. The later Vedic society came to be divided into four varnas called the Brahminas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, & Sudras.

### **Economic Condition**

The Rig Vedic Aryans were pastoral people and their main occupation was cattle rearing. Their wealth was estimated in terms of their cattle. When they permanently settled in North India they began to practice agriculture. With the knowledge and use of iron they were able to clear forests and bring more and more lands under cultivation. Carpentry was another important profession and the availability of wood from the forests cleared made the profession profitable. Carpenters produced chariots and ploughs. Workers in metal made a variety of articles with copper, bronze and iron. Spinning was another important occupation and cotton and woollen fabrics were

made. Goldsmiths were active in making ornaments. The potters made various kinds of vessels for domestic use. Trade was another important economic activity and rivers served as important means of transport. Trade was conducted on barter system. In the later times, gold coins called *nishka* were used as media of exchange in large transactions. Moreover, the Aryans tried to bring economic equality in the society. They divided the property according to the number of family members. The arrangement like *khilya* (common land) was made available for villagers.

### **Religion**

The Rig Vedic Aryans worshiped the natural forces like earth, fire, wind, rain and thunder. They personified these natural forces into many gods and worshipped them. The important Rig Vedic gods were Prithvi (Earth), Agni (Fire), Vayu (Wind), Varuna (Rain) and Indra (Thunder). Indra was the most popular among them during the early Vedic period. Next in importance to Indra was Agni who was regarded as an intermediary between the gods and people. Varuna was supposed to be the upholder of the natural order. There were also female gods like Aditi and Ushas. There were no temples and no idol worship during the early Vedic period. Prayers were offered to the gods in the expectation of rewards. Ghee, milk and grain were given as offerings. Elaborate rituals were followed during the worship.

### **Later Vedic Period (1000 B.C. - 600 B.C.)**

The Aryans further moved towards east in the Later Vedic Period. The *Satapatha Brahmana* refers to the expansion of Aryans to the eastern Gangetic plains. Several tribal groups and kingdoms are mentioned in the later Vedic literature. One important development during this period is the growth of large kingdoms. Kuru and Panchala kingdoms flourished in the beginning. Parikshat and Janamejaya were the famous rulers of Kuru kingdom. Pravahana Jaivali was a popular king of the Panchalas. He was a patron of learning. After the fall of Kurus and Panchalas, other kingdoms like Kosala, Kasi and Videha came into prominence. The famous ruler of Kasi was Ajatasatru. Janaka was the king of Videha with its capital at Mithila. His court was adorned by scholar Yajnavalkya. Magadha, Anga and Vanga seem to be the eastern most tribal kingdoms. The later Vedic texts also refer to the three divisions of India:

1. Aryavarta (northern India).
2. Madhyadesa (central India).
3. Dakshinapatha (southern India).

### **Political Organisation**

Larger kingdoms were formed during the later Vedic period. Many *Jana* or tribes were amalgamated to form *janapadas* or *rashtras* in the later Vedic period. Hence the royal power had increased along with the increase in the size of kingdom. The king performed various rituals and sacrifices to strengthen his position. They include *Rajasuya* (consecration ceremony), *Asvamedha* (horse sacrifice) and *Vajpeya* (chariot race). The kings also assumed titles like *Rajavisvajanan*, *Ahlabhuvanapathi*, (lord of all earth), *Ekrat* and *Samrat* (sole ruler).

In the later Vedic period, a large number of new officials were involved in the administration in addition to the existing *purohita*, *senani* and *gramani*. They include the treasury officer, tax collector and royal messenger. At the lower levels, the administration was carried on by the village assemblies. The importance of the *Samiti* and the *Sabha* had diminished during the later Vedic period.

### **Economic Condition**

Iron was used extensively in this period and this enabled the people to clear forests and to bring more land under cultivation. Agriculture became the chief occupation. Improved types of implements were used for cultivation. Besides barley, rice and wheat were grown. Knowledge of manure was another improvement. Industrial activity became more varied and there was greater specialization. Metal work, leather work, carpentry and pottery made great progress. In addition to

internal trade, foreign trade became extensive. The Later Vedic people were familiar with the sea and they traded with countries like Babylon. A class of hereditary merchants (*vaniya*) came into existence. Vaisyas also carried on trade and commerce. They organised themselves into guilds known as *ganas*. Besides *nishka* of the Rig Vedic period, gold and silver coins like *satamana* and *krishnala* were used as media of exchange.

### **Social Life**

The four divisions of society (Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras) or the Varna system was thoroughly established during the Later Vedic period. The two higher classes-Brahmana, and Kshatriya enjoyed privileges that were denied to the Vaishya and Sudra. A Brahmin occupied a higher position than a Kshatriya but sometimes Kshatriyas claimed a higher status over the Brahmins. Many sub-castes on the basis of their occupation appeared in this period.

In the family, the power of the father increased during the Later Vedic period. There was no improvement in the status of women. They were still considered inferior and subordinate to men. Women also lost their political rights of attending assemblies. Child marriages had become common. According to the *Aitreya Brahmana* a daughter has been described as a source of misery. However, the women in the royal household enjoyed certain privileges.

### **Religion**

During the Later Vedic period the gods of the Early Vedic period like Indra and Agni lost their importance while as Prajapati (the creator), Vishnu (the protector) and Rudra (the destroyer) became prominent in Later Vedic times. Sacrifices were still important and the rituals connected with them became more elaborate. The importance of prayers declined and that of sacrifices increased. Priesthood became a profession and a hereditary one. The formulae for sacrifices were invented and elaborated by the priestly class. Therefore, towards the end of this period there was a strong reaction against priestly domination and against sacrifices and rituals. The rise of Buddhism and Jainism was the direct result of these elaborate sacrifices. Also, the authors of the Upanishads, which is the essence of Hindu philosophy, turned away from the useless rituals and insisted on true knowledge (*jnana*) for peace and salvation.

### **Second Urbanization:**

The sixth century BC is known as an era of 'Second Urbanization' in the Indian Subcontinent. After the decline of the Harappan Towns urban centers now emerge again after a gap of more than a thousand years. However, this time towns developed in the middle Ganga basin and not in the Indus plain. It is said that more than sixty towns and cities such as Pataliputra, Rajagriha, Sravasti, Varanasi, Vaishali, Champa, Kaushambi and Ujjain developed between 600 and 300 BC. These cities became centre of craft production and trade, and were inhabited by a large number of artisans and merchants. The goods produced by artisans like textile, silk, jewellery, pottery etc, were carried by merchants to other towns. Varanasi was a major centre of trade connected with Sravasti and Kaushambi. Sravasti was also connected with Vaishali through Kapilavastu and Kusinara. *Jataka* stories tell us that traders travelled from Magadh and Kosala via Mathura to Taxila. Mathura was the transit point for travel to Ujjain and coastal areas of Gujarat also. Development of trade is reflected in the discovery of thousands of coins known as punch marked coins (PMC). Various kind of marks such as crescent, fish, trees, hill etc. are punched on these coins, they are therefore called Punched Marked Coins. Numismatists have identified nearly 550 types of such coins, made mainly of silver and sometimes copper.

The improvement in agriculture and development of trade, money and urbanization had an impact on the society as well. Indeed, due to these changes traditional equality and brotherhood gave way to inequality and social conflict. People wanted some kind of reprieve from new social problems like violence, cruelty, theft, hatred, and falsehood. Therefore, when new reformation movements' such as Jainism and Buddhism preached the concept of peace and social equality, people welcomed it. These reformation movements emphasized that true happiness does not lie in material prosperity or performance of rituals but in charity, frugality, non-violence, and good social conduct.

Besides, the general economic progress had led to the rise of vaisyas and other mercantile groups, who wanted better social position than what brahmanas gave them. Therefore, they preferred to patronise non-vedic religions like Buddhism and Jainism through substantial donations. Buddhism and Jainism were not the only religions, which challenged brahmanical dominance. According to the Buddhist sources, more than 62 sects and philosophies flourished in this period. One of these sects was known as Ajivika, which was founded by Makkhali Goshal. Ajivakas were very popular in Magadh in the third century BC and Mauryan kings donated several caves in the honour of Ajivaka monks.

#### **Janapadas/ Mahajanapadas:**

The 6<sup>th</sup> century BC was not only a period of socio-economic and religious development but it also witnessed new political developments. In the later Vedic period, as we have seen earlier, people had started agriculture, which made them settle down at a particular place. These permanent settlements led to foundation of *janapadas* or territorial states under the control of the king. In the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC the main area of political activity gradually shifted from Western UP to Eastern UP and Bihar. This region was not only fertile on account of better rainfall and river systems but was also closer to iron production centres. The use of better iron tools and weapons enabled some territorial states to become very large and they came to be called *mahajanapadas*. Most of them were situated north of Vindhya, between Bihar in the east to the northwest frontier of the subcontinent.

The Buddhist literature Anguttara Nikaya gives a list of sixteen great kingdoms called 'Sixteen Mahajanapadas'. The list of these sixteen *mahajanapadas* is given below with their current location. .

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

The Jain texts also contain references to the existence of 16 kingdoms. In course of time, the small and weak kingdoms either submitted to the stronger rulers or gradually got eliminated. Finally in the mid 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C., only four kingdoms: Vatsa, Avanti, Kosala and Magadha survived.

- 1. Vatsa:** The Vatsa kingdom was situated on the banks of the river Yamuna. Its capital was Kausambi near modern Allahabad. Its most popular ruler was Udayana. He strengthened his position by entering into matrimonial alliances with Avanti, Anga and Magadha. After his death, Vatsa was annexed to the Avanti kingdom.
- 2. Avanti:** The capital of Avanti was Ujjain. The most important ruler of this kingdom was Pradyota. He became powerful by marrying Vasavadatta, the daughter of Udayana. He

patronised Buddhism. The successors of Pradyota were weak and later this kingdom was taken over by the rulers of Magadha.

3. **Kosala:** Ayodhya was the capital of Kosala. King Prasenajit was its famous ruler. He was highly educated. His position was further strengthened by the matrimonial alliance with Magadha. His sister was married to Bimbisara and Kasi was given to her as dowry. Subsequently there was a dispute with Ajatasatru. After the end of the conflict, Prasenajit married the daughter of Bimbisara. After the death of this powerful king, Kosala became part of the Magadha.
4. **Magadha:** Of all the kingdoms of north India, Magadha emerged much powerful and prosperous. It became the nerve centre of political activity in north India. Magadha was endowed by nature with certain geographical and strategic advantages. These made her to rise to imperial greatness. Her strategic position between the upper and lower part of the Gangetic valley was a great advantage. It had a fertile soil. The iron ores in the hills near Rajagriha and copper and iron deposits near Gaya added to its natural assets. Her location at the centre of the highways of trade of those days contributed to her wealth. Rajagriha was the capital of Magadha. During the reign of Bimbisara and Ajatasatru, the prosperity of Magadha reached its zenith.

#### **The Mahajanpadas**

Most of these states had monarchical forms of government, while some others were republics. While there was a concentration of monarchies on the Gangetic plain, the republics were scattered in the foothills of the Himalayas and in north western India. Some of the republics consisted of only one tribe like the Sakyas, Licchavis and Mallas. In the republics, administration was run by an elected king with the help of a large council or assemblies comprising heads of all important clans and families. All decisions were taken by a majority vote.

The political fight among these *mahajanapadas* led ultimately to one of them namely Magadha to emerge as the most powerful state and the centre of a vast empire. The earliest important ruler of Magadha was the king Bimbisara, who ruled for 52 years from 544 BC to 492 BC. He pursued a three-pronged policy, namely, matrimonial alliances, friendship with strong rulers and conquest of weak neighbours to expand the empire. Under the policy of matrimonial alliances, he married the sister of Prasenajit, the king of Kosala. She brought in dowry the territory of Kashi, which yielded a revenue of 1,00,000 coins. The control over Kasi and friendship with Prasenajit allowed Magadha to concentrate on other areas. His other wives were daughters of the chiefs of Licchavi and Madra (middle Punjab) respectively. He also conquered Anga by defeating its ruler Brahmadatta. Anga and specially its capital Champa were important for the inland and maritime trade. Thus, Kashi and conquest of Anga became the launching pad for the expansion of Magadha. He was a contemporary of both Buddha and Mahavira and paid equal respect to them. It seems that he was either killed or forced to commit suicide by his son Ajatasatru, who was eager to take over the throne himself. Ajatasatru was an aggressive person and first came into conflict with his maternal uncle Prasenajit, who was aggrieved by the treatment meted out to Bimbisara. He asked Ajatasatru to return the territory of Kasi, which was given to his mother in dowry. Ajatasatru refused and it was only after a fierce battle Prasenajit agreed to leave Kasi with Magadha. Similarly he fought with his maternal grandfather Chetaka, the chief of Vaishali and after 16 long years of war Ajatasatru succeeded in breaking the might of Vaishali. Therefore, he not only retained Kasi, but also added Vaishali to Magadha. Ajatasatru was succeeded by Udayin and his main contribution was building a fort on the confluence of river Ganga and river Son at Pataliputra or Patna. It was strategically a significant step as this site was not only centrally located but also allowed easy movement of merchant and soldiers.

Udayin was succeeded by the dynasty of Shishunaga. The most important achievement of Shishunaga was to defeat Avanti (Malwa) and make it a part of Magadha. The successor of Sisunaga was his son Kalashoka. It was during his rule the second Buddhist council was held. The Shishunaga dynasty was succeeded by the kings of the Nanda dynasty. Mahapadma Nanda was its most important ruler. According to the Brahmanical texts he belonged to a low caste or at least a non-kshatriya caste. He possessed a large army and added Kalinga to his empire. The last Nanda king was Dhannanand. He is believed to be an arrogant and oppressive ruler who imposed heavy taxes on the common man. It made them quite unpopular among the masses and ultimately Chandragupta took advantage of this public resentment and uprooted the Nanda rule and set up the Mauryan Empire. The question is how Magadha could establish gradually its dominance over all other states of the period. Magadha certainly benefited from numerous able and ambitious rulers, but its strength was based primarily on certain geographical factors. Its earlier capital Girivraja or Rajagir was surrounded by five hills, which helped it to provide natural fortification. Secondly, its fertile river plain provided a vast amount of agricultural surplus, which was essential for raising a vast standing army. Forests in southern areas gave it timber and elephants. Magadha had another advantage in its control over iron deposits found very near south Bihar. Such access to iron made Magadhan weapons far superior and agriculture tools more productive. It was this material background which helped Magadha to become more powerful than other *mahajanapadas*.

### **Rise and Growth of Magadha:**

**Causes:** On account of political, economic, military, geographical, and social conditions the Magadha Empire rose to prominence.

1. **Political Cause:** The Magadhan rulers adopted certain political strategies to strengthen their political power by entering into matrimonial alliances with different princesses. They preferred diplomacy rather than using the force and were farsighted and ambitious as well.
2. **Economic Conditions:** The region of Magadha was blessed with rich and vast iron ore deposits which enabled its rulers to exploit the same for various purposes. Moreover, the region was very fertile and the agriculture sector played a vital role in keeping the economy of the region in good shape. Both agriculture and industrial sector brought prosperity in the region.
3. **Geographical factors:** The strength of the region was primarily based on certain geographical locations. The strategic situations of both of its capitals were very favourable. The earliest capital Rajagir was surrounded by hills and Pataliputra, the new capital was situated on the confluence of the river Ganga, Gandak and Sone. Both the capitals were quite safe from the enemy.
4. **Military power:** The Magadhan rulers on account of their richness could afford to have a strong, well equipped, and well-organized army. The army consisted of chariots, elephants, horses etc.
5. **Social Conditions:** The Magadha rulers made the best use of the intermixing of the cultures of both the Aryans and non-Aryans. A significant proportion of non-Aryans lived in hilly regions and forests and they proved as good fighters. While as the talents of the Aryans were used to promote the art and literature. A favourable social climate in the region was witnessed during this period.

### **1. Empire building, political significance:**

The ascendancy of the Mauryas had resulted in the triumph of monarchy in India. Other systems like republics and oligarchies that were prevalent in the pre-Mauryan India had collapsed. Although Kautilya the foremost political theorist of ancient India supported the monarchical form of government,

he did not stand for royal absolutism. Historically speaking the foundation of the Mauryan Empire opens a new era in the history of India. For the first time, the political unity was achieved in India. Moreover, the history writing has also become clear from this period due to accuracy in chronology and sources. Besides plenty of indigenous and foreign literary sources, a number of epigraphical records are also available to write the history of this period. The establishment of the empire is a landmark in the history of India on account of the following reasons:

1. Political unification of India: By bringing several petty states together, the Mauryan rulers provided political unity to India and the work of empire building reached to its zenith. The whole of India except Kashmir and Kalinga (Modern Orissa) and all of modern Afghanistan and Baluchistan constituted the part of Mauryan empire.
2. Driving away of foreign rulers: This period witnessed the end of the foreign domination of the Greeks who had under then some territories of Northwest Frontier Province, Sindh and Punjab.
3. Strong central administration: for the first time, a strong administrative set up came into existence and remained in vogue for a long time. The most important ideal before the king according to Kautilya is that "in the happiness of his subjects lies his happiness, in their welfare his welfare. What pleases him, he shall not consider as good, but whatever pleases his subjects he shall consider as good".

The Mauryan Empire was arguably the largest empire to rule the Indian subcontinent and under Chandragupta, the Mauryan Empire conquered the trans-Indus region, defeating its Macedonian rulers. Chandragupta then defeated the invasion led by Seleucus I, a Greek general from Alexander's army. Under Chandragupta and his successors internal and external trade, and agriculture and economic activities, all thrived and expanded across India. Chandragupta created a single and efficient system of finance, administration, and security. The Mauryan empire stands as one of the most significant periods in Indian history.

After the Kalinga War, the Empire experienced a half century of peace and security under Ashoka. India was a prosperous and stable empire of great economic and military power. Its political and trade influence extended across Western and Central Asia into Europe. During that time Mauryan India also enjoyed an era of social harmony, religious transformation, and expansion of learning and the sciences.

## 2. Administrative Structure:

**Central Government:** The ascendancy of the Mauryas had resulted in the triumph of monarchy in India. Other systems like republics and oligarchies that were prevalent in the pre-Mauryan India had collapsed. Although Kautilya the foremost political theorist of ancient India supported the monarchical form of government, he did not stand for royal absolutism. He advocated that the king should take the advice of his ministry in running the administration. Therefore, a council of ministers called Mantriparishad assisted the king in administrative matters. It consisted of Purohita, Mahamantri, Senapati and Yuvaraja. There were civil servants called Amatyas to look after the day-to-day administration. These officers were similar to the IAS officers of independent India. The method of selection of Amatyas was elaborately given by Kautilya. Ashoka appointed Dhamma Mahamatras to supervise the spread of Dhamma. Thus the Mauryan state had a well organised civil service.

**Revenue administration:** Samharta, the chief of the Revenue Department, was in charge of the collection of all revenues of the empire. The revenues came from land, irrigation, customs, shop tax, ferry tax, forests, mines and pastures, license fee from craftsmen, and fines collected in the law courts. The land revenue was normally fixed as one sixth of the produce. The main items of expenditure of the state related to king and his household, army, government servants, public works, poor relief, religion, etc.

**Army:** The Mauryan army was well organised and it was under the control of Senapati. The salaries were paid in cash. Kautilya refers to the salaries of different ranks of military officers. According to Greek author Pliny, the Mauryan army consisted of 6,00,000 infantry, 30,000 cavalry, 9,000 war elephants and 8,000 chariots. In addition to these four wings, there were the Navy and Transport and Supply wings. Each wing was under the control of Adyakshas or Superintendents. Megasthenes mentions 6 boards of 5 members each to control the 6 wings of the military.

**Department of Commerce and Industry:** This department had controlled the retail and wholesale prices of goods and tried to ensure their steady supply through its officers called Adyakshas. It also controlled weights and measures, levied custom duties and regulated foreign trade.

**Judicial and Police Departments:** Kautilya mentions the existence of both civil and criminal courts. The chief justice of the Supreme Court at the capital was called Dharmathikarin. There were also subordinate courts at the provincial capitals and districts under Amatyas. Different kinds of punishment such as fines, imprisonment, mutilation and death were given to the offenders. Torture was employed to extract truth. Police stations were found in all principal centres. Both Kautilya and Ashoka's Edicts mention about jails and jail officials. The Dhamma Mahamatras were asked by Ashoka to take steps against unjust imprisonment. Remission of sentences is also mentioned in Ashoka's inscriptions.

**Census:** The taking of Census was regular during the Mauryan period. The village officials were to number the people along with other details like their caste and occupation. They were also to count the animals in each house. The census in the towns was taken by municipal officials to track the movement of population both foreign and indigenous. The data collected were cross checked by the spies. The Census appears to be a permanent institution in the Mauryan administration.

#### **Provincial and Local Administration:**

The Mauryan Empire was divided into four provinces with their capitals at Taxila, Ujjain, Suvarnagiri and Kalinga. The provincial governors were mostly appointed from the members of royal family. They were responsible for the maintenance of law and order and collection of taxes for the empire. The district administration was under the charge of Rajukas, whose position and functions are similar to modern collectors. He was assisted by Yuktas or subordinate officials. Village administration was in the hands of *Gramani* and his official superior was called *Gopa* who was in charge of ten or fifteen villages. Both Kautilya and Megasthenes provided the system of Municipal administration. Arthashastra contains a full chapter on the role of Nagarika or city superintendent. His chief duty was to maintain law and order. Megasthenes refers to the 6 committees of 5 members each to look after the administration of Pataliputra.

These committees looked after:

1. Industries
2. Foreigners
3. Registration of birth and deaths
4. Trade
5. Manufacture and sale of goods
6. Collection of sales tax.

#### **3. Mauryan Art and Architecture:**

The monuments before the period of Ashoka were mostly made of wood and therefore perished. The use of stone started from the time of Ashoka. Even of the numerous monuments of Ashoka, only a few have remained. His palace and monasteries and most of his *stupas* have disappeared. The only remaining *stupa* is at Sanchi. The artistic remains of the Mauryan period can be seen in the following heads:

**1) Pillars:** The pillars erected by Ashoka furnish the finest specimen of the Mauryan art. Ashoka's pillars with inscriptions were found in places like Delhi, Allahabad, Rummindei, Sanchi and Saranath. Their tops were crowned with figures of animals like lion, elephant and bull. The Saranath pillar with four lions standing back to back is the most magnificent. The Indian government adopted this capital with some modifications as its state emblem.



**2) Stupas:** Ashoka built about 84,000 *stupas* throughout his empire but majority of them were destroyed during foreign invasions. Only a few have survived. The best example is the famous Sanchi *stupa* with massive dimensions, and originally built with bricks.

**3) Caves:** The caves presented to the Ajivikas by Ashoka and his son Dasaratha remain important heritage of the Mauryas. Their interior walls are polished like mirror. These were meant to be residences of monks. The caves at Barabar hills near Bodh Gaya are wonderful pieces of Mauryan architecture.

#### **4. Causes of the decline of Mauryan Empire:**

Mauryas maintained a huge army, a vast bureaucracy and ruled over a large part of the Indian subcontinent. But soon after the death of Ashoka the empire got divided into two parts. While king Dasaratha controlled the eastern part of the empire, the western part was under Samprati. Why did such a large empire decline so early? Some historians believe that Ashoka under the influence of Buddhism became a pacifist and weakened his army. It is also said that the religious policy of Ashoka antagonized the Brahmins as he banned the animal sacrifice, which affected the economic and religious activities of the Brahmins. Therefore, Pusyamitra, the Brahmin chief of the army, killed the last Mauryan king. But this does not seem to be correct as the study of Ashokan inscriptions reveals that Ashoka paid full respect to Brahmins. Moreover it is true that Ashoka followed a policy of peace and harmony, but he did not disband his army and was always prepared to face any eventuality. One of the main reasons for decline could be the succession of weak rulers. Who could not keep under check those, ministers and officials of far-flung regions, who had become oppressive and acted against the interest of the centre. It is also possible that Mauryan rule may have suffered some kind of economic crisis. It is reflected in the debasement of some coins of that period. This crisis might have developed either due to massive donations and charity or overspending on the imperial administrative system. In fact, the reason of decline was inherent in the structure of the vast centralized empire itself. The successors of Ashoka could not maintain the balance between the centre and the various provincial governors of the empire, and at the first possible opportunity, they made an effort to separate themselves from the centre. However, Mauryan empire though declined had a positive effect of spreading agriculture and iron technology in the different parts of the subcontinent. It also facilitated the rise of several regional kingdoms in the post-Mauryan period.

#### **Unit-III (Post –Mauryan Period upto Harshavardhana)**

##### **Central Asian Contacts.**

The Mauryan period is remembered for the greatness of the vast empire. However, the fall of the Mauryan period from 200 B.C. to A.D. 300, was followed by the emergence of a large number of city states all over the Indian sub-continent. Some were small whereas others were large such as the kingdom of the Kushanas which extended into central Asia. But more than the states, what brought the sub-continent together in this period was the spread of commerce and trades. It was a time when there was noticeable material prosperity in many areas. The Sunga dynasty succeeded the Mauryas at Magadha. The Satavahanas emerged as a great power in the trans-Vindhya. The Indo-Greeks, the Sakas, the Palavas also ruled over several territories. The net result was that there was no strong central authority in India. The intermingling of several races, Indian as well as foreign had far-reaching consequences on the socio-cultural life of India.

##### **Impact on Society, Economy and Culture; Main features:**

1. **Integration with India:** The Indo-Greeks, the Sakas, The Pallavas, and the Kushanas brought several new elements in the Indian society. They became an integral part of Indian society and Indianised themselves. This greatly influenced the Indian society in general and art, literature, material culture, polity and sciences in particular.
2. **Social life:** Since most of the foreign invaders, i.e. the Sakas, Parthians and Kushanas belonged to warrior classes, and in sequence they were absorbed in Indian society as Kshatriyas. Moreover, their intermingling with the natives led to the increase in the number of castes in India.

3. Rise of practice of inter-caste marriages: The inter-caste marriages became very common with the mingling of the foreigners in Indian society.

#### **Cultural Life:**

1. Literature: Menander's curiosity about Buddhism led Nagasena to produce the Milindapantha in Pali language. He also got translated Homer and Greek dramas in Indian languages. The Saka rulers patronised Sanskrit and got some inscriptions engraved in this language.
2. Coinage: The coins issued by the Indo-Greeks, the Parthians, the Saka and the Kushana rulers influenced Indian coinage. In one coin on the obverse is the king, on the reverse is four armed Shiva. Before the Greeks, Indian coins were unpolished and had no proper shape. They were merely lumps of gold or other metals. They carried a picture or an inscription on one side of it but under the Greeks the Indian coins began to be embossed on both sides with a picture and title on one side and a symbol on the other side.
3. Building craft: the Saka-Kushana phase witnessed a distinct development in building activities. The use of burnt bricks for flooring and that of tiles for both flooring and roofing were common. The period is also marked by the construction of brick-walls. As a result of Greek influence, the Gandhara School of Arts developed. The most notable characteristics of this influence is that the subject matter and thought are Indian in essence while as expression is Greek. In the construction of caves, the Indian artists learn the technique of using chisel and hammer to give life to the stones.
4. Medical Science: Some scholars find traces of Greek influence on the Indian system of medicine. Charak's treatise 'Charak Samhita' bears Greek influence.
5. Philosophy and religion: Indian philosophy and religion greatly influenced the Greek philosophy and religion. Several Greek rulers in India embraced Buddhism and Hinduism. India slowly converted her military conquerors into her moral and spiritual captives.
6. Trade: Greek contacts strengthened India's foreign trade. Indians merchandised cotton and woolen textiles, perfumes and spices etc. which brought enormous wealth to India.

**1. A brief history of Indo-Greeks:** The term Indo-Greek rulers implied those rulers whose origin was Greece but they got settled in India. They are also called Indo-Bactrian as they first settled in Bactria (Balkh Afghanistan) and then entered into India. The disintegration of Mauryan empire provided an opportunity to these foreigners to invade India. A series of invasions began in about 200 B.C. The first to cross the Hindukush were the Greeks who ruled Bactria, the area covered by north Afghanistan.

Important Indo-Greek rulers: Demetrius (200-170 B.C.) the 4<sup>th</sup> ruler of Bactria, was the first Greek king after Alexander to invade India. Towards the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> Century B.C., he crossed the Hindukush and occupied the vast territory of Punjab and Sindh. He also tried to advance towards Magadha but he was pushed back by king Pushyamitra.

Menander (165-140 B.C.): Among the Indo-Greek rulers Menander has been regarded as the greatest ruler. He ruled for about 25 years and his empire included Central Afghanistan, Northwest Frontier Province, Punjab, Sindh, Rajasthan, Kathiwar, and some districts of Uttar Pradesh. He became a Buddhist under the inspiration of Nagasena, a Buddhist monk and scholar.

**2. Sakas or Scythians:** The Sakas or the Scythians were a nomadic tribe who originally belonged to Central Asia. They were driven out of their original home in about 150 B.C. They attacked Bactria and Parthia and captured them from the Greek rulers. Following the footsteps of the Greeks, the Sakas crossed the Hindukush and Sulaiman ranges and settled in Northern India in the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. and gradually extended their rule over north western India. There were two different groups of Sakas: the Northern Satraps ruling from Taxila and the Western satraps ruling over Maharashtra. The founder of the Saka rule in India in the first century B.C. was Maues. His son and successor was Azes I, who was considered to be the founder of the Vikrama era. Sakas rulers of Taxila

were overthrown by the Parthians. Their rule in different parts of India lasted for about 3 centuries. The last of the Saka ruler was defeated by Chanda Gupta II of the Gupta dynasty.

Main features of the Saka rule: The Sakas adopted themselves to new surroundings and in due course of time integrated with Indians-its culture and civilisation.

The Sakas called their rulers four 'Satraps' or Kshatrapas (governor) derived from a Persian term meaning governor. Some Sakas have served as Satraps under Persian rulers. Although they themselves became independent rulers, and continued to use this term. The Sakas of Ujjain are said to have started Saka Era in 78 A.D and the rulers carried out the day to day administration with the advice of council of Ministers.

### **3. Pallavas:**

Today's southern India was once ruled by the Pallava dynasty between the 2nd and 9th centuries CE, who are known for their great architecture. The Pallava dynasty was one of the most significant dynasties of ancient India, and a major force in southern India. Kanchi or modern-day Kanchipuram was the capital city of the Pallavas. Telugu, Tamil and Sanskrit were their main languages. Different architectural patterns, especially the stone-cut religious sites in Mahabalipuram, are associated with them. The Pallavas are known for their cultural development rather than political acumen. Gifts of land were frequently given to gods and Brahmins. Also, Vedic sacrifices and Aswamedha rites were part of their rituals. For writing purposes, a one-of-its-own-kind southern Brahmi script was developed by them, which was later on exported eastwards. It is said that this writing script has influenced almost all the southern Asian scripts.

The first great ruler of the early Pallavas is thought to be Skandavarman, though there are indications that there might be predecessors of Skandavarman as well. The origin of the Pallavas is still a mystery as no reliable information is available. It is believed that they entered India from the south. Some scholars also believe that the Pallavas were from the Pahleves of Parthians, and migrated to south. But again, there is no strong evidence to prove this. As per another theory, the Pallavas was the native dynasty and rose to power after the Andhra empire. According to Srinivas Aiyangar, the Pallavas were part of the ancient Naga people. They first lived in the Tondaimandalam districts around Madras, and later won Tanjore and Trichinopoly districts.

The Pallavas were the prime enemies of Tamil kings, and today *palava* means "rogue" in Tamil language. Also it is believed that the origin of the Pallavas was from a Chola prince and the Naga princess of Manipallavam. The princess gave birth to a son who was made the king of Tondaimandalam. The dynasty was named after his mother's homeland. Even in the literature of the Sangam era, the Pallavas as Tondaiyar have been described. But this theory is also debated.

#### **Administration of Pallavas**

Most of the Pallavas kings were great scholars who were given titles like Maharajadhiraja, Dharma-maharajadhiraja, and Agnistomavajpeya. For their assistance, the ministerial council was constituted. All the matters of the villages were looked after by the council or *sabha*. Informal gathering in the villages were known as *urar* and were used to assist village courts. Also, minor criminal cases were resolved at village-level courts. Towns and districts had judicial courts, with the king as the supreme authority of justice. All land was owned by the king. Villages with huge inter-caste population used to pay taxes to the king. In the Brahmadeya village, the entire land was either given to a single Brahmin or a group of Brahmins, who were exempted from paying royal taxes. Also, there was one unique category of land known as the *sripatti* or tank land. The village tank constructed by the villagers used to get maintenance funds from this land. There were two types of taxes – the one paid to the state, and the one collected in the villages and spent for the need in the village.

#### **Pallava Society**

The history of the Pallavas is very complex and covers about four centuries. The period of Pallavas is significant as it completed the Aryanisation of southern India. The North Indian Dharma Sastras gained full authority during the Pallavas' reign. The University of Kanchi was an important seat of education in the South. This has been mentioned in the writings of Hiuen-Tsang, a Chinese traveler. Most of the

kings of Pallava dynasty were orthodox Hindus who worshipped Lord Shiva. Some Jain monasteries were destroyed by Mahendravarman as he was fanatical about Jainism. Like Jainism, Buddhism also lost its appeal during this time. But overall the Pallavas were flexible towards other religions and beliefs. Local traditions were replaced by the Vedic traditions. As Brahmins had the knowledge of the Vedas, so they achieved superior status. Early education was influenced by Jains and Buddhists. Madurai and Kanchi were the main centers for Jain institutes but soon these were replaced by Brahminical institutions. Popularity of mathematics increased in the 8th century. The main medium of instructions in all the schools was Sanskrit.

#### **Decline of the Pallavas**

The Pallavas were invaded by the Chalukyan army and posed a major threat to its capital, Kanchipuram. The Pallava power came to an end with the defeat of their last king, Aparajitavarman, by the Chola king close to the 9th century.

#### **4. Kushanas:**

The Kushanas were a branch of Yuechi tribe or Tocharians a nomadic people from the steppes of north Central Asia living the neighbourhood of China. They were one of the five clans into which the Yuechi tribe was divided. They first came to Bactria or north Afghanistan displacing the Sakas. Then they gradually moved to the Kabul valley and seized the Gandhara region, replacing the rule of the Greeks and Parthians in these areas. Finally they set up their authority over the Indus basin and the greater part of the Gangetic basin. Their empire extended from the Oxus to the Ganga, from Khorasan in Central Asia to Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh. A good part of Central Asia now included in the USSR, a portion of Iran, a portion of Afghanistan, and almost the whole of northern India were brought under one rule by the Kushanas. This created a unique commingling of peoples and cultures, and process gave rise to a new type of culture which embraced five modern countries. The founder of the Kushana dynasty was Kujula Kadphises or Kadphises I. He occupied the Kabul valley and issued coins in his name. His son Wima Kadphises or Kadphises II conquered the whole of north western India as far as Mathura. He issued gold coins with high-sounding titles like the 'Lord of the Whole World'. He was a devotee of Lord Shiva.

The house of Kadphises was succeeded by that of Kanishka. Its kings extended the Kushan power over upper India and the lower Indus basin. The early Kushan kings issued numerous gold coins with higher gold content than is found in the Gupta coins. The most famous of Kushana rulers was that of Kanishka. Although outside the borders of India he seems to have suffered defeat at the hands of the Chinese, he is known to history because of two reasons: First, he started an era in A.D. 78, which is now known as the Saka era and is used by Government of India. Secondly, Kanishka extended his whole-hearted patronage to Buddhism. He is said to have held a Buddhist Council in Kashmir, where the doctrines of the Mahayana form of Buddhism were finalized. Kanishka was also a great patron of art and Sanskrit literature.

#### **Kanishka (78 – 120 A.D.)**

Kanishka was the most important ruler of the Kushana dynasty. He was the founder of the Saka era which starts from 78 A.D. He was not only a great conqueror but also a patron of religion and art.

#### **Kanishka's Conquests**

At the time of his accession his empire included Afghanistan, Gandhara, Sindh and Punjab. Subsequently he conquered Magadha and extended his power as far as Pataliputra and Bodh Gaya. According to Kalhana, Kanishka invaded Kashmir and occupied it. His coins are found in many places like Mathura, Sravasti, Kausambi and Benares and therefore, he must have conquered the greater part of the Gangetic plain. He also fought against the Chinese and acquired some territories from them. During the first expedition he was defeated by the Chinese general Pancho. He undertook a second expedition in which he was successful and he scored a victory over Panyang, the son of Pancho. Kanishka annexed the territories of Kashgar, Yarkand and Khotan into his empire.

The empire of Kanishka was a vast one extending from Gandhara in the west to Benares in the east and from Kashmir in the north to Malwa in the south. His capital was Purushapura or modern day Peshawar. Mathura was another important city in his empire.

### **Kanishka and Buddhism**

Kanishka embraced Buddhism in the early part of his reign. However, his coins exhibit the images of not only Buddha but also Greek and Hindu gods. It reflects the Kanishka's toleration towards other religions. In the age of Kanishka the Mahayana Buddhism came into vogue. It is different in many respects from the religion taught by the Buddha and propagated by Ashoka. The Buddha came to be worshipped with flowers, garments, perfumes and lamps. Thus image worship and rituals developed in Mahayana Buddhism.

Kanishka also sent missionaries to Central Asia and China for the propagation of the new faith. Buddhist *chaityas* and *viharas* were built in different places. He patronised Buddhist scholars like Vasumitra, Asvagosha and Nagarjuna. He also convened the Fourth Buddhist Council to discuss matters relating to Buddhist theology and doctrine. It was held at the Kundalavana monastery (Harwan) near Srinagar in Kashmir under the presidentship of Vasumitra. About 500 monks attended the Council. The Council prepared an authoritative commentary on the Tripitakas and the *Mahayana* doctrine was given final shape. Asvagosha was a great philosopher, poet and dramatist. He was the author of *Buddhacharita*. Nagarjuna from south India adorned the court of Kanishka. The famous physician of ancient India Charaka was also patronised by him.

### **Gandhara Art**

The home of the Gandhara School of art is the territory in and around Peshawar in north western India. The best of the Gandhara sculpture was produced during the first and second centuries A.D. It originated during the reign of Indo-Greek rulers but the real patrons of this school of art were the Sakas and the Kushanas, particularly Kanishka. Gandhara art was a blend of Indian and Graeco-Roman elements. Specimens of Gandhara sculpture have been found in Taxila, Peshawar and in several places of North West India. The Gandhara School made sculptures of the Buddha in various sizes, shapes and postures. The reliefs depict Buddha's birth, his renunciation and his preaching. The salient features of Gandhara art are:

1. Moulding human body in a realistic manner with minute attention to physical features: like muscles, moustache and curly hair.
2. Thick drapery with large and bold fold lines.
3. Rich carving, elaborate ornamentation and symbolic expressions.
4. The main theme was the new form of Buddhism-Mahayanism and the evolution of an image of Buddha.

A large number of monasteries were also built from first to fourth centuries A.D. Ruins of about 15 monasteries were found in and around Peshawar and Rawalpindi. The Buddhist *stupas* erected during this period had Graeco-Roman architectural impact. The height of the *stupa* was raised and ornamentation was added to the structure of the *stupa*. These changes made the *stupa* more attractive.

### **Mathura School of Art**

The school of art that developed at Mathura in modern Uttar Pradesh is called the Mathura art. It flourished in the first century A.D. In its early phase, the Mathura school of art developed on indigenous lines. The Buddha images exhibit the spiritual feeling in his face which was largely absent in the Gandhara school. The Mathura school also carved out the images of Shiva and Vishnu along with their consorts Parvathi and Lakshmi. The female figures of yakshinis and apsaras of the Mathura school were beautifully carved.

### **Guptas: Significance of their rule in ancient India.**

**Origin:** There are divergent views regarding the origin of Guptas. As stated by R. C. Majumdar, they originally belonged to Bengal. K.P Aggarwal regards Prayag as their original home. According to Romilla Thapar Magadha was their real home. However, Dr. Dodwell says that they were foreigners. More over they have been referred as Jats, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas or land lords.

There were more than 12 Gupta Kings who ruled for more than 200 years from 330 A.D. to 540 A.D. Sri Gupta is said to be the founder of the Gupta dynasty but it is said that he was not totally independent. Generally speaking Chandragupta I (300-330 A.D) is considered the founder of the Gupta dynasty. However, it is believed that Samudragupta (330-370 A.D) and Chandragupta (375-414 A.D) are considered the greatest rulers of this dynasty on account of their marvelous and wonderful administrative organisation.

Significance of their rule:

**1. from the darkest period to the brightest period:** After the political breakup of the Kushana the period between the extension of the Kushana and Andhara dynasties and the rise of the imperial Guptas is one of the darkest on the whole range of Indian history. After the collapse of the Kushana power in India, the political solidarity of India was torn into pieces. The darkest period which lasted for 200 years there arose a new empire called Guptas in India which provided political stability, cultural advancement, economic development, ethical and cultural values, progress in art and architecture and literature, besides the renaissance in religion.

The Guptas in fact, struck a severe blow to the foreign rule of the Sakas and the Kushanas and established a national empire. It brought about the political unity and economic prosperity of the people. Besides, development of indigenous art and architecture, peace, law and order was restored in the country side. Historically speaking the Gupta period marked a new epoch and is at times referred as the 'Golden Period' in ancient India.

**Sources of information about Gupta Empire:** Indian literary sources such as four important puranas provide information about the Guptas. The foreign account such as Fahien's account is very important for study. The famous Chinese pilgrim, Fahien visited India during the reign of Chandragupta II. Out of his 9 years stay in India, he spent six years in the Gupta empire. He came to India by the land route through Khotan, Kashgar, Gandhara and Punjab. He visited Peshawar, Mathura, Kanauj, Sravasti, Kapilavastu, Kusinagara, Pataliputra, Kasi and Bodh Gaya among other places. He returned by the sea route, visiting on the way Ceylon and Java. The main purpose of his visit was to see the land of the Buddha and to collect Buddhist manuscripts from India. He stayed in Pataliputra for three years studying Sanskrit and copying Buddhist texts.

Fahien provides valuable information on the religious, social and economic condition of the Gupta Empire. According to him, Buddhism was in a flourishing condition in the north western India but in the Gangetic valley it was in a state of neglect. He refers to the Gangetic valley as the 'land of Brahmanism.' Fahien mentions the unsatisfactory state of some of the Buddhist holy places like Kapilavastu and Kusinagara. According to him the economic condition of the empire was prosperous. Although his account is valuable in many respects, he did not mention the name of Chandragupta II. He was not interested in political affairs. His interest was primarily religion. He assessed everything from the Buddhist angle. His observations on social conditions are found to be exaggerated. Yet, his accounts are useful to know the general condition of the country.

**Gupta Polity and administration:**

Chief features of Gupta polity and administration:

1. **Divine right of kings:** The Guptas were great believers in the divine right of kings. The kings were regarded as the incarnation of the gods such as Vishnu. Samudragupta is considered as incomprehensible being and the cause of creation and destruction.
2. **King as source of all honour, property and titles:** The Gupta kings enjoyed all administrative, political, military and judicial powers. They were their own commanders in chief and led their armies themselves in the time of war. The kings appointed all provincial governors, military and civil officers who worked under the control of the king. The central secretariat also worked under the supervision of the king. All land in the country was the property of the king and the kings enjoyed all titles and honours.
3. **Law of succession:** The law of primogeniture was not in vogue. Usually the practice was selection of the dying king of the best fitted prince from amongst his sons. The throne did not

always go to the eldest son. This created uncertainties, of which the chiefs and high officials could take advantage.

4. **Mantri Parishid (Council of Ministers):** the king had a number of ministers to assist and advise him in running the affairs of the state. All the matters were placed before the council and efforts were made to arrive at some consensus. When this was done decision was conveyed to the king who was free to arrive at any conclusion he pleased so. The final word was with the king; however, the king rarely overruled the decision of the council. The prominent among the council of ministers were the prime minister, finance minister, law minister and foreign minister.
5. **Decentralized administration:** Though the Gupta kings enjoyed wide powers but the administration was highly decentralized. The district officers and guilds of traders enjoyed a good amount of autonomy in their respective spheres. The village assemblies were also given wide powers in respect of village administration.
6. **Provincial administration:** the whole empire was divided into provinces called *Bhuktis* in the north and *Mandalam* in the south. Provinces were also divided into districts called *Vishayas*, which were further subdivided into *Mandals*, *Bhogas* and *Gramas*. The head of the province governor called *Uparika* were appointed by the king. They appointed their subordinate officers in their provinces and could work independently in matters concerning public welfare. The governor of the province was helped in formulating policies by representatives of trade and industry.
7. **Local administration:** Each district had number of villages which were headed by village headman called *gramika*, who managed the village affairs with the help of a committee of village elders. In the towns and cities, there were *Nagarapatis* like Mayors who carried on administration with the assistance of a council of citizens.
8. **Military organisation:** There was hierarchy of officers headed by *Mahasenapati* (Chief Commander). The infantry, cavalry and war elephants constituted the chief divisions of the army. Chariots were also used. Probably the Guptas maintained naval force also. The army was well organized and was paid in cash.
9. **Source of revenue:** Land tax was the chief source of revenue. Other taxes were the fines realized from offenders, salt tax, tax on sale and purchase, tax on mines, gifts and annual tributes from the tributary rulers.
10. **Judicial system:** There was some separate civil police to enforce law and order which was headed by a high-level police officer called *Dandapasadhikarna*. Justice was administered according to the law of *Smiritis* especially *Manusmiritis*. Punishments in general were lighter and mostly fines were imposed on law breakers. Corporal punishments were awarded only in extreme cases of repeated offences.

#### **Decline of the Gupta rule, Causes:**

1. Rise and fall of monarchies is a law of nature: There was nothing unique in the rise and fall of the Gupta Empire in history. In fact change is the law of nature. History has rolled on with such repetitions of rise and fall. However, it goes to the credit of the Gupta Empire that in ancient India, it was the only empire that survived for so long in north India. Monarchical system of government in itself is a great threat and weakness. A day is bound to come when strong rulers will be followed by weak ones and the empire will inevitably decline. History is replete with such cases where great and strong rulers are followed by weak and corrupt successors.
2. Weak successors of Guptas: The Gupta rulers were lastly succeeded by weak successors who failed to maintain the empire built by their predecessors.
3. Absence of law of succession: There was no definite practice among the Gupta rulers as to who would succeed after the death of a king. In fact, the death of almost every ruler was followed by war of succession. Besides the court intrigues also undermined the power of the empire.

4. Neglect of defense of frontiers: One of the main causes of weakness of the Guptas had been the neglect of defense of the frontiers, which provided opportunities to the invading armies especially the Huns to cross into the country unchecked and unguarded. The continuous and forceful attacks of the Huns broke the tottering empire and paved the way for many to become independent rulers in their regions. The fact of the matter is that the political unity established by the early Gupta rulers was shattered. The successors of Kumara Gupta could not defend their kingdom as he had done, thus each repeated wave of the Hun invasions making the Guptas weaker.
5. Financial strain: The prolonged wars that took place between the Guptas and Huns drained the state treasury and the country became economically depressed.
6. Weakness of the army: Long periods of peace during the major phases of Chandragupta II and other rulers affected the martial spirit of the army. Also the vastness of the empire proved to be a disintegrating factor. In times of the revolt in far off areas, the imperial army from the centre could not reach in time to control the chaotic situation as the means of communication and transportation were very difficult.

However, it may be mentioned here that the main cause of the decline of the Gupta Empire was due to internal dissensions in the royal house and the rebellion of feudal chiefs and provincial satraps, though foreign invasion was an important contributory factor.

#### **Harsha Vardhana Nature and administrative structure:**

The decline of the Gupta Empire was followed by a period of political instability, disorder and disunity in North India. It was only in the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. that Harshvardhana succeeded in establishing a larger kingdom in north India.

The chief sources for tracing the history of Harsha and his times are the *Harshacharita* written by Bana and the Travel accounts of Hiuen Tsang. Bana was the court poet of Harsha. Hiuen Tsang was the Chinese traveler who visited India in the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Besides these two sources, the dramas written by Harsha, namely *Ratnavali*, *Nagananda* and *Priyadarsika* also provide useful information. The Madhuben plate inscription and the Sonpat inscription are also helpful to know the chronology of Harsha. The Banskhera inscription contains the signature of Harsha.

#### **Early Life of Harsha**

The founder of the family of Harsha was Pushyabhuti. Pushyabhutis were the feudatories of the Guptas. They called themselves *Vardhanas*. After the Hun invasions they assumed independence. The first important king of Pushyabhuti dynasty was Prabhakaravardhana. His capital was Thanesar, north of Delhi. He assumed the title Maharajadhiraja and Paramabhataraka.

Prabhakara Vardhana (580-605 A.D.) was the first important king of this dynasty. He gave his daughter Rajyasri in marriage to Mukhari King Grihavarman of Kannauj. After Prabhakara Vardhana's death, his elder son Rajya Vardhana came to the throne. He had to face problems right from the time of his accession. The ruler of Malwa, Devagupta in league with Sasanka, the ruler of Bengal had killed Grihavarman and abducted his wife Rajyasri. Immediately on hearing this news, Rajya Vardhana marched against the king of Malwa and routed his army. But before he could return to his capital, he was treacherously murdered by Sasanka. In the meantime, Rajyasri escaped into forests. Harsha now succeeded his brother at Thanesar and ascended the throne in 606 A.D. His prime responsibility was to rescue his sister and to avenge the killings of his brother and brother-in-law. He first rescued his sister when she was about to immolate herself.

#### **Harsha's Military Conquests (606-647 A.D)**

In his first expedition, Harsha drove out Sasanka from Kanauj. He made Kanauj his new capital. This made him the most powerful ruler of north India. Harsha fought against Dhruvasena II of Valabhi and defeated him. Thereafter, Dhruvasena II became Harsha's vassal.

The most important military campaign of Harsha was against the Western Chalukya ruler Pulakesin II. Both the accounts of Hiuen Tsang and the inscriptions of Pulakesin II provide the details of this campaign. Harsha with an ambition to extend his kingdom south of the Narmada river marched against the Chalukya ruler. But the Aihole inscription of Pulakesin II mentions the defeat of Harsha by



Pulakesin, who after this achievement assumed the title *Paramesvara*. Hiuen Tsang's accounts also confirm the victory of Pulakesin. Harsha led another campaign against the ruler of Sindh, which was an independent kingdom. But, it is doubtful whether his Sindh campaign was a successful one. Nepal had accepted Harsha's overlordship. Harsha established his control over Kashmir and its ruler sent tributes to him. He also maintained cordial relations with Bhaskaravarman, the ruler of Assam. Harsha's last military campaign was against the kingdom of Kalinga in Orissa and it was a success.

Thus Harsha established his hold over the whole of north India. The regions modern Rajasthan, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Orissa were under his direct control. But his sphere of influence was much more extensive. The peripheral states such as Kashmir, Sindh, Valabhi and Kamarupa acknowledged his sovereignty.

#### **Administrative set up:**

1. Great in peace and war: Harsha distinguished himself in the acts of peace and war. He could wield the pen as well as sword. He took several steps which are generally adopted in peace time. He encouraged literary activities, patronised scholars. Promoted morality and above all after every five years he donated his entire wealth for the welfare of the needy. On the war front he won several victories.
2. Administration: The administration of Harsha was organised on the model of previous great Hindu rulers. Hiuen Tsang gives a detailed picture about this. The king was just in his administration and punctual in discharging his duties. He was himself the head of the state and all administrative, legislative and judicial powers were concentrated in him and was himself the commander in chief of his army. He even led his army in the times of war. He was a benevolent ruler and supervised the administration personally. He made frequent visits of inspection throughout his dominion. The day was too short for him. Taxation was also light and forced labour was also rare.
3. Council of Ministers: the king was assisted by a council of ministers which advised the king in matters of foreign policy and internal administration. Besides the ministers there were other important officers of the state.
4. Administrative divisions: The whole empire was divided into Bhuktis (provinces) and the divided into Vishyas (Districts) for administrative convenience. The principal officer of the province was Upariks, that of a district was Vishayapati and that of a village was Gramika. The village was the smallest unit of administration. The highest officials of the state were not paid in cash rather they were assigned land grants in return of their services.
5. Revenue system: The main source of revenue was land tax. Besides realizing the 1/6<sup>th</sup> of the produce, tax was imposed on pastures and mines. Toll tax and sales tax were also realized, however, forced labour was not allowed.
6. Harsha's army: Harsha had a standing force of 100,000 cavalry and 60,000 war elephants, besides a greater number of infantry which is a much bigger than the Guptas. Harsha's army swelled perhaps due to the army of his feudatories who assisted the king in wars. The army was well looked after by a force of officers and superintendants assisted by stable keepers etc. the recruitment in the army was made by a public notice. Trusted men of courage and valour were given much preference.
7. Law and order: During Harsha's reign, law had become more strict and punishments harsher. Cruel punishments of the Mauryan period continued in the times of Harsha. This may have been due to continuous uncertainty and disorder brought about by foreign invaders and wars within the country between local warlords and princes every now and then. Punishment was awarded by mutilation such as cutting of the nose, hand or leg. Ordeals by fire, water, poison etc. were frequent to test innocence. Heavy fines were also imposed but that did not help in keeping the roads safe from robbers or houses from thefts.

## **Cultural Progress**

The art and architecture of Harsha's period are very few and mostly followed the Gupta style. Hiuen Tsang describes the glory of the monastery with many storeys built by Harsha at Nalanda. He also speaks of a copper statue of Buddha with eight feet in height. The brick temple of Lakshmana at Sirpur with its rich architecture is assigned to the period of Harsha. Harsha was a great patron of learning. His biographer Banabhatta adorned his royal court. Besides *Harshacharita*, he wrote *Kadambari*. Other literary figures in Harsha's court were Matanga Divakara and the famous Barthrihari, who was the poet, philosopher and grammarian. Harsha himself authored three plays- *Ratnavali*, *Priyadarsika* and *Nagananda*. Harsha patronised the Nalanda University by his liberal endowments. It attained international reputation as a centre of learning during his reign. Hiuen Tsang visited the Nalanda University and remained as a student for some time.

## **Nalanda University**

The Chinese travelers of ancient India mentioned a number of educational institutions. The most famous among them were the Hinayana University of Valabhi and the Mahayana University of Nalanda. Hiuen Tsang gives a very valuable account of the Nalanda University. The term Nalanda means "giver of knowledge." It was founded by Kumaragupta I during the Gupta period. It was patronised by his successors and later by Harsha. The professors of the University were called *panditas*. Some of its renowned professors were Dingnaga, Dharmapala, Sthiramati and Silabadhra. Dharmapala was a native of Kanchipuram and he became the head of the Nalanda University.

Nalanda University was a residential university and education was free including the boarding and lodging. It was maintained with the revenue derived from 100 to 200 villages endowed by different rulers. Though it was a Mahayana University, different religious subjects like the Vedas, Hinayana doctrine, Sankhya and Yoga philosophies were also taught. In addition to that, general subjects like logic, grammar, astronomy, medicine and art were in the syllabus. It attracted students not only from different parts of India but from different countries of the east. Admission was made by means of an entrance examination. The entrance test was so difficult that not more than 30% of the candidates were successful. Discipline was very strict. More than lectures, discussion played an important part and the medium of instruction was Sanskrit.

Recent archeological excavations have brought to light the ruins of the Nalanda University. It shows the grandeur of this centre of learning and confirms the account given by the Chinese pilgrims. It had numerous classrooms and a hostel attached to it. According to Itsing, the Chinese pilgrim, there were 3000 students on its rolls. It had an observatory and a great library housed in three buildings. Its fame rests on the fact that it attracted scholars from various parts of the world. It was an institution of advanced learning and research.

## **Unit-IV (Ancient Kashmir)**

### **Paleolithic period:**

It is difficult to draw a line marking the emergency of man. He started right from his animal inheritance and in course of time, stage by stage, developed a large variety of remarkably efficient tools and weapons, learnt to cover his body with the skin and took to settled community life. Material culture in whatever form left over the centuries, surviving the natural process of destruction and decay is the best and the only way to get information about the prehistoric or non literate people outside the range of written history.

The Paleolithic period or the Old Stone Age constitutes the longest phase of pre history and covers the whole range of the Pleistocene epoch from about 2 m.y.a. to 10000 BP. The exploration and excavations over the last few decades have brought to light a large number of Paleolithic sites. These are spread almost all over the Indian subcontinent, from the foot-hills of the Himalayas in the north to Tamil Nadu in the south, and from Peshwar and Sindh in the west to Meghalaya (Garo Hills) and Bengal in the east.

In the north, Riwat in the valley of River Soan in the Potwar Plateau has reported the earliest pebble tools dating back to 2 million years. Pebble tools belonging to later dates are found from various other

regions such as Jhelum basin (Dina and Jalapur), the river terraces of Beas and Banganga (Himachal Pradesh) and Ladakh and Pahalgam in Kashmir valley.

In Kashmir valley the study of the glaciations sequence was taken up as early as 1928 by Grinlinton which was further elaborated by De Terra and Paterson in 1935. It was further carried on by H. D. Sankallia in 1969. The most important sites that have yielded the Paleolithic tools in Kashmir are Pahalgam, Balpura (shopian), Sukhnag, Kulladur, Tapribal (Baramulla) and Khan Sahib (Budgam). At Pahalgam (65 kms from Srinagar) on the right bank of river Liddar, the first Paleolithic tool represented by a huge massive flake (225 cm long and 10 cm broad) was found in the exposed section. Two distinct flake scars were noticed on both sides of the tool. A large diffused bulb of percussion on the under – surface just near the two consecutive scars was observed. The process of flaking gave a long and sinuous edge for cutting and scrapping. The tool was noticed to be a man made artifact. Another tool of crude hand axe was spotted at a much higher level at the junction of the boulder conglomerate and the brown clay. Step flaking was noticed on it. At Sombur more than 100 artifacts and tools have been found. These include flakes, knives, cores, ponders and borers etc. most of these tools are unpolished. Most of these tools belong to Holocene age and have close resemblance with the tools found at Soan vally Punjab, Potwar plateau Pakistan at Gobi desert etc. signifying the shared history of the period. In short, in the Paleolithic period, which forms the longest phase of human history, man lived by hunting animals and gathering wild fruits. He inhabited the area close to river banks and hilly terraces where there enough food and mineral resources for his requirements. His survival depended upon his efficiency to make stone tools which, with experience, became sharper and more handy. The tool making required a great deal of knowledge and expertise not only in selecting a suitable raw material but also in technique to turn it into a desired shape. The gradual refinement in tool types represented the cultural growth of Paleolithic man and set the stage for further progress in the next phase called the Mesolithic phase.

#### **Neolithic culture:**

The Neolithic cultures in Kashmir are represented by a large number of sites above the flood plains of river Jhelum, but the most important among them are Burzahom and Gufkral. These are multi- culture sited which reveal, besides Neolithic phase, the evidence of Megalithic and early Historical periods. The cultural process in the valley is divided broadly into two phases to highlight the change and continuity in its subsistence economy, and these are assigned to a time bracket of 2500 BC -2000 BC and 2000-1500 BC, respectively. At Gufkral, there is an evidence of acermic phase, i.e., the phase before the introduction of pottery when man was still learning the food value of plants, and it goes back to 2800 BC.

In the first phase, people lived in underground pits, circular or rectangular, with a wooden roof-cover overhead for protection from cold. It is indicated by the post –holes on the mouth of the pits. In the later period, the underground chambers were abandoned and over ground dwelling units of mud or mud -bricks came into use. The life pattern too showed greater advancement. The people domesticated sheep, wheat, barley, lentils common peas. As per Allchin's observation, the meat element in diet was markedly reduced in the final phase of Neolithic culture.

The Neolithic people used a variety of tools and weapons fashioned on stone and bone. The stone tools included polished axes, points, pestles, querns and also the harvesters. The bone industry at Burzahom is most developed of all Neolithic cultures of India and forms its distinctive feature. It comprises harpoons, needles, arrowheads, spear-joints, daggers, etc.

The pottery is generally handmade, but the wheel turned pottery appears at a later stage and includes bowls, high-nicked jars, etc. the mat impression on the pottery, particularly on its bottom, indicates the knowledge of weaving. About a thousand beads of carnelian and agate found in a wheel-made pot suggest a trade contact with the regions of Rajasthan and Gujarat, the source areas of these stones. Similarly, a painted pot with a horned figure of a deity like the one found one at Kot Diji(sindh) may indicate cultural contact between these regions, but the process of contact in not clear.

The burial practice in the Kashmir valley furnishes some interesting data. The burials are found in the residential areas or house compounds. Both primary and secondary burials were practiced- the former

contained the whole skeleton while in the latter only a few bones were buried. Red ochre has been found sprinkled on the human bodies. However, the ritual significance of ochre, if any, cannot be correctly ascertained. An evidence of human skull with holes has been taken to suggest the prevalence of the ancient surgical practice of trepanning or drilling to draw out excessive fluid. At times, animal bones, generally of dogs are found along with their masters. Another interesting feature is the ritualistic burial of a group of animals. Other animals represented in the burials include deer, wolf, pig, sheep, goat, etc. the horse however, is missing at all levels.

In short, the Kashmir valley on account of its special features such as pit dwellings, the use of harvesters, prolific use of bone tools fashioned out of antlers, the practice of placing the domestic dogs in the graves of their masters, the ritualistic sacrifice of animals, and the use of red ochre on the dead bodies occupies a distinctive place in the Neolithic culture of India.

### **Kashmir Between 1000 BCE to 600 CE: Indo-Greeks, Kushanas and Huns**

#### **Introduction:**

Kashmir is situated amidst the great centres of civilization. It is surrounded by China on the east, central Asia on the north, Iran on the north-west, and India on the west. At the same time the mountain ranges of land locked Kashmir has a large number of passes which link it with the neighbouring world. Moreover, since the time of its very occupation by the humans up to the recent past, Kashmir has been virtually a cul-de-sac into which peoples have infiltrated from different parts of the world. The Kashmiri culture is a diffusion-stimuli culture. In other words, it originated and grew largely because of different influences that radiated into the valley from different centres of civilizations in the wake of immigrations, settlements and the constant movement of people flowing back to forth for various purposes during the long period of 1100 years from 6<sup>th</sup> century BC to 7<sup>th</sup> century AD.

#### **Mauryas:**

Towards the beginning of 3rd century B.C. the mighty Mauryan empire emerged on the borders of Kashmir when it extended up to eastern Afghanistan. All the extant sources namely Greek records, Milinda Panha and Buddhist texts unanimously say that at this time Kashmir and Gandhara formed one political entity. Therefore, it is quite logical to say that Kashmir became the part of the Mauryan empire with its occupation of Gandhara region. This is further substantiated by Rajatarangini and other archaeological records. It is remarkable to note that Ashoka is the first historical figure mentioned by Kalhana in his Rajatarangini. The famous archaeological site, Semthan has yielded two important traits of Mauryan culture namely Punch Marked Coins and Northern Black Polished Ware. Ashoka ruled Kashmir is also corroborated by Hieun Tsang (625 A.D.) who saw Ashokan stupas in the Valley. The Mauryan influences resulted into the use of Iron, rice cultivation, introduction of Northern Black Polished Ware, Punch Marked Coins, popularization of *Kharoshthi* script, beginning of urbanism (Srinagar was built by Ashoka), organisation of elaborate system of administration and, last but not least, Buddhism was introduced in Kashmiri during the reign of Ashoka.

#### **Indo-Greeks**

Around 180 B.C. the Bactrian Greeks extended their empire up-to Kashmir. This is evidenced by the Semthan archaeological site, numismatic evidence and Rajatarangini too. The non-conventional sources such as place-names, physiognomy and philology not only substantiate the archaeological and literary evidence that Kashmir was a part of the Indo-Greek empire but they provide a clinching evidence in this regard. Of these non-conventional sources place-names provide rich evidence. All those places of Kashmir which bear the names ending in –hom, (for example, Sirhom, Monghom, Balahom, Chattarhom, Dirhom, Burzahom, Danihom, Bihom, Kanihom etc), were once Greek military colonies. Hom is Greek ‘ium’. As elsewhere, ‘ium’ was either associated with the official who founded it or with some historical event or with some virtues or vices of the place. Referring to a specific category of the Greek settlements in Asia Taran says, “...any place bearing a non-dynastic man’s name, like Docimium, Zenodotium, Menidemium, Themisionium, was once a military colony which had named itself after the official who founded it.”

There are also many place-names in Kashmir which are essentially Greek names. For example, Kalaros

(Gk. Cleros), Methan (Gk. Meitona or Methone), Odus (Gk. Edessa), Anch (Gk. Antioch), Sotur (Gk. Sotoer or Soteira), Athan (Gk. Athena), Zeus (Gk. Zeus), Charus (Gk. Charis), Ach (Gk. Achea), Medur (Gk. Modura), Aplun (Gk. Apallo), Hamar, Hamari (Gk. Homer), Pa'rgaum (Gk. Pergamum), Memandar (Menendar), Romoh (Gk. Roma, Riom), Solun (Selena), La'spur (after Lysias), Āmon (Ammon), Nicas (Gk. Nicias, the Greek ruler) etc. Besides there are some place names which are, essentially nick-names, given by the pre-Greek inhabitants of Kashmir to newly founded Greek settlements. Of such settlements mention may be made of Awanpur, a corrupt form of yavanapura i.e. the settlement of Greeks, Poonzu, actually pa'nz meaning monkeys and Panzgum, meaning village of monkeys. Even after the elapse of 2000 years since Greeks ruled Kashmir and despite an un-ending influx of varied ethnic groups into the Valley and the consequent, rampant inter-ethnic marriages, the physiognomy of the people of these places present a marked affinity with Greek physiognomy. It may be noted that it was common among the Greeks to transfer the population from old Greek towns to new foundations.

A culture with which Kashmir had direct contacts for about one and a half centuries and, more so, which formed the reference culture, being the culture of the ruling class, it is quite natural to see it having left its deep impact on the life and conditions of the people. In this regard we should also remember the capital of Indo-Greeks was situated on the borders of Kashmir (first at Taxila and then at Sailkot (Sagala). Thus, Kashmir was environed by a powerful Greek culture right and left leaving a powerful impact on different aspects of Kashmir.

Money currency, was no doubt introduced in Kashmir by the Mauryas, it is however true that it became wide spread only during the Indo-Greeks. The fact that it was for the first time during the Indo-Greek rulers that the Kashmiri people became aware of the money currency at a mass scale is substantiated by the evidence that now onwards the term dīnār, (after Greek dinarius) was used for money currency in Kashmir in place of *hār* (cowry). The term dīnār changed into *dyar* in Kashmir which up-to the present is used for money currency in the Valley.

As is true of the other parts of the Indian sub-continent, the credit for the introduction of proper coinage in Kashmir goes to the Greeks. They were the first to introduce the coins which can be definitely attributed to the kings. The custom of putting portraits of the rulers, their names and epithets, bilingual inscriptions, figures of deities etc. on the coins, all owe to them.

Many architectural features of Kashmiri temples, namely, columns of Doric order, pediments, trefoil arches, pilasters, dentil and cornice were borrowed from Greek architecture. The S-shaped and other types of brackets were used in the Hellenistic world as early as 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. Other motifs of unmistakable Greek origin are caryatids, acanthi, pedimental arches, carved door jambs, figures seated or standing under arches, birds perching on either side of arches and host of other decorative motifs such as meanders, vine-scrolls, laurel leaves, garland-bearers, atlantes, tritons etc.

Greek art taught freedom to the artists of the east. Greek art figures are shown in every attitude, face-view, side-view, even back-view, and in every kind of intermediate posture. Frontality, which became a normal treatment of the figure during the Parthians, was an exceptional treatment in Greek art restored to only for definite reasons. That the Greek art left a profound impact on the art of Kashmir is clearly evidenced by the motifs stamped on the Harwan tiles where the figures are shown in varied attitudes.

The Indo-Greeks not only brought their own gods, goddesses and religious beliefs but they also brought with them many other beliefs prevailing in Selucid empire in general and Bactria and Gandhara in particular. Thus, Kashmir became a hub of syncretic religion and culture. After all, the Greeks are known for their religious tolerance. Being the reference belief, the heathenic pantheistic religion of the Greeks further promoted Polytheism and added more gods and goddesses to the heathenic Pantheons that prevailed in Kashmir. Worshipping of images was so widespread among the Greeks that some scholars believe that idolatry was introduced into India by the Greeks. However, the Greeks were also influenced by Zoroastrianism in Bactria and Buddhism, Savism and Vaisnavism in the Indian environment. While we know that the famous Greek ruler Menender was converted to Buddhism, a poem written not later than the first Century B.C and addressed to Apollo is an early

expression of Vaisna belief that all deities merge in the Sun. It may be mentioned that while Siva was powerful in Pushkalavati (Greek Capital) Visnu was strong in Taxila. The Greeks were already influenced by Anatolian and Syrian religious beliefs. For example, we find one Greek making a dedication to (appadocian goddess) **Ma** and there is a Greek epigram addressed to Apollo by the Syrian title Mara, 'Lord'. Ma as well as Mara are commonplace idioms in Kashmir. Ma stands for Mother goddess and **mara** is a common term used by the Kashmiri Pandits to address someone with respect.

Certainly, Kashmiris were exposed to Greek science and they admired it. It was therefore natural that the Kashmir tradition should credit them with working wonders. According to the famous 11<sup>th</sup> century AD polymath of Kashmir, Ksemendra, "Yavanas can make and fly aeroplanes." The profound impact of Greek influence on Kashmir is also borne out by the Kashmiri language which still possesses some Greek words like **kūr** (Gk. kori = girl), **piala** (Gk. Phiali = cup), **kukur** (Gk. kokaras = cock), **gunnia** i.e., carpenter's L-shaped instrument for right angles (Gk. gonie = angle, corner) etc.

It is significant to mention that whereas the Scythio – Parthian – Kushan costumes served as the model for male attire of India including Kashmir from first century of the Christian era, the female dress showed more gravitation to Greek influences. The modern mode of wearing sari has evolved out of the Hellenistic chiton and himation apparel; and the long loose tunic falling down the ankles worn by the Kashmiri **panditanis** has also most probably evolved both out of the Chiton and himation as well as the **kancuka**. A terracotta figurine of Greek lady found at Semthen archaeological site is clad in a loose Chiton with a himation of considerable length. Both the apparels are loose enough, and the himation was arranged in such a way as to raise difficulty in distinguishing it from the tunic underneath. Such was, as a matter of fact, the most common way of draping as is delineated by the Gandhara artists.

It is stated that Greco–Roman art has bequeathed the floating scarf adorning a variety of female figures. These figures hold two ends of the Scarf in their hands. This is what we exactly find in a Harwan tile which contains a motif of a dancing girl who holds the scarf in her two hands. Such a motif can be traced back to Hellenistic art as early as the 5<sup>th</sup> century B. C. Interestingly the motif occurs on glassware from Begram and also on a toilet dish from Taxila.

#### **Karkotas: Empire building and architecture.**

The Karkota Dynasty was founded in 627 CE by king Durlabhavandhana. Kalhan's history assumes an authentic character and gives more detailed and reliable information about the dynasties ruled from the seventh century CE to his own Times (1149AD). After Durlabhavandhana's death his son Pratapaditya I Durlabhaka became king. He seems to have had a long but uneventful reign. He laid the foundation of the town which he named after him and is known as Pratapaditya (Tapar). Chindrapida, the eldest son succeeded his father Pratapaditya I. But the name best remembered by the Kashmiris is that of Lalitaditya. In 724 king Lalitaditya ascended to the throne. Lalitaditya is credited with extensive conquests not only in the Himalayan regions adjoin to the valley of Kashmir but also in the distant plains of India. He is said to have defeated Yasovarman, king, Dvaraka and Avanti. After subduing the kings of India he came back after twelve years, to Kashmir by way of Tibet. He brought with him learned men and skilled artisans from all countries and devoted himself to great public works. He built grand temples and ornamented them with the gold which he had acquired in India. He constructed a large cauldron from which 100,000 men could be fed daily. He was first and magnificent but at times when intoxicated, he issued cruel orders and did not always keep faith. After a time he yearned for more conquests and left Kashmir for Central Asia (Uttara Kuru). The Kashmiris besought him to return, but he died in Turkestan after a reign of thirty seven years. Before he left Kashmir he gave his subjects wise advice, some of which sounds like a glass of latter-day chronicles. He commences by warning them against internal feuds and says that if the forts are kept in repair and provisioned they need fear no enemies. He laid down the rule that in a mountainous country discipline must be strict and that the cultivators must not be left with grain more than sufficient for the year's requirements. Cultivators should not be allowed to have more ploughs or cattle than absolutely necessary and their style of living must be lower than that of the city people or the latter will suffer. Finally Lalitaditya orders that

officer should not be held by family cliques when the Kayasthas are united to one another by marriage, when kings see their officers behaving like Kayasthas, and then you will know for certain that the people lot is going to be changed for the worse. Lalitaditya was glorious conqueror and his advice to his people has a ring of prophecy. In the second half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, Kashmir was ruled by another powerful prince of this line named Jayapida.

**Utpalas: Economy and Architecture with special reference to Avantivarman.**

Avantivarman came to the throne in 855 A.D. with the help of Sura, his step-brother and also a minister. Though his reign is devoid of the glamour of foreign conquests and acquisition of fresh territories like those of the mighty Karkotas, yet he was successful in establishing order, stability and peace in the valley. It is indeed a commendable page in the history of Kashmir that the ruler and the minister, Sura, maintained cordial relations between themselves. The latter gave his unstained support to the king at the cost of his personal likings and blood-relations, even sacrificing his own son—a thing rare in the annals of any country.

Avantivarman's reign appears to have brought a period of consolidation and prosperity for the kingdom which had suffered considerably from internal troubles during the preceding reigns. He was the noblest of all the rulers of ancient Kashmir. He waged no wars, not even to regain control over the territories which his predecessors had lost not long ago. His were the piping times of peace and plenty, and in point of prosperity, about the quarter of a century of his rule found Kashmir at its zenith. Never before or for centuries later were the people as happy as they were in his time. Truly, therefore, Avantivarman's reign forms a glorious chapter in the history of Kashmir.

Kalhan's mention of the numerous temples built and towns founded by the king and his court, throws light on the affluent circumstances the people lived in. Sura built a temple of Siva and His consort at Suresvarikseta at Ishabar, on the eastern bank of the Dal Lake and also a *Matha* calling it, after his own name, *Suramatha*. He founded the town of Surapura (Hurapor near Shopian) locating there in the watch station which was formerly high up on the Pir Panjal pass. His wife and sons followed his example and built several temples and *Mathas*.

For most among the foundations of Avantivarman is the town of *Avantipura*. *Avantipura* stood on the high and dry area of western hills on the right bank of Jhelum (*Vitasta*), 27 Kms from Srinagar on the Srinagar-Jammu highway. Owing to its central and strategic location in the valley, the city was of considerable importance since the date of its foundation. According to chronicles of Kalhan, Jonaraja and Srivara, it covered a large area. It was a flourishing city up to the 12th century A.D. when it was destroyed and burnt down by *Damaras* (Feudal Hindu tribe). Avantivarman built two temples at *Avantipura*. The ruins of those massive stone temples are still seen in this town. The temples are now shapeless however; the gateways and the colonnades of these ruins are worth seeing. The temples were named *Avantisvarmin* and *Avantisvera* dedicated to these two Hindu deities. Avantivarman's first task was to look for more arable land, as its shortage had deep effects upon the economy of the country. Also, the valley had been ravaged by the floods of *Mahapadma* Lake whose waters were formerly drained out through suitable channels during the days of Lalitaditya and which had also provided some land fit for cultivation. These outlets had been neglected during the reigns of the later Karkota rulers and had remained blocked for years by boulders which had not been removed. To add to these misfortunes, the country had been visited by a great famine.

Fortunately, one Suyya of uncertain lineage and brought up by a Sudra woman, caught the attention of the King and was able to come to the rescue of the people. Suyya insisted that, given an opportunity and means to carry out his scheme, he could relieve the sufferings of the people. Avantivarman was impressed by his confident tone and allowed him for reins to carry out his plan of clearing the *Vitasta* of its boulders. The chronicle has given a graphic account of his schemes. Soon the bed of the river was cleared and a dam constructed for storing its waters for agriculture purposes. Suyya also planned the confluence of *Sindhu* (Indus) and *Vitasta* (Jhelum) near Srinagar which had their junction near the temple of Vainyasvami. The collected waters of the river were allowed to different villages for irrigational purposes through minor streams and these were rendered safe through embankments constructed at suitable distances. These and food-grain store houses (*Kundalas*) established at a

number of places brought immediate relief to the people who had now more land at their disposal to cultivate with assured supplies of water. Suyya indeed deserve the high praises heaped upon him in the chronicle for his unitising efforts. Prices of food-grains, which had rocketed as high as 10, 50 *Dinnars* per Khari were decreased. Thus the engineering dexterity and genius of Suyya was fully utilised by Avantivarman and the valley was once more on the way of prosperity.

#### **Economy and Architecture with special reference to Avantivarman**

Karkota dynasty ruled Kashmir from 625 to 855AD. It was succeeded by the Utpala dynasty which established its rule in 855AD under a powerful ruler Avantivarman who ruled from 855 to 883 AD. Kalhana the author of *Rajtarangini* has given a good account of his rule in Kashmir. He also says that ancestors of Avantivarman were spirit- distillers by profession and they had come into prominence during the Karkota rulers. Utpala one of the persons of this dynasty had embezzled the public funds and his son Sukhavarman even made a bid for the throne, but failed. Avantivarman was his son.

Utpala dynasty ruled Kashmir from 855 to 939AD under different rulers, but Avantivarman founder ruler proved to be one of the best rulers who worked tirelessly for providing a good administration to the people who had suffered a lot during the rule of later Karkotas because they were weaklings.

Avantivarman did not wage any war to gain the new territory, not even to regain the lost territory. His primary concern was to work for economic development and welfare of the masses. Peace, plenty and prosperity became the hallmark of his administration. Avantivarman by nature was a benevolent person. This has been described by Kalhana in *Rajtarangini*. As soon as he ascended the throne he distribute –d wealth among the needy and poor. He thought that wealth is purified when bestowed on proper persons. He broke the golden ornaments and things, and gave them to Brahmanas.

Avantivarman had to face many difficulties during his early years of reign. His brother and brother's son rose against him several times, but he defeated them in battle, and restored peace in his kingdom.

The Damras a landed aristocracy posed many problems to the king. They had become very powerful and disturbed not only the common people but challenged the authority of the ruler. Some leaders of the Damras were given serious punishments, the rest of the Damras in future kept low profile.

During the later Karkotas the administration had become inefficient because of the rivalries in the royal household. Avantivarman reorganised his administrative set-up. He adopted new procedure and gave up the old age practices of ruling the country like an autocrat. He established a council which comprised, besides himself, his brother, Sura and his son.

Economic development, restoration of rule of law, controlling floods and checking of Damra menace were the priorities of Avantivarman. Peasants and common people were suffering due to the floods. Produce from land had fallen and prices had increased adding to the difficulties of people. Since the later karkotas had not done any drudging of the river Jhelum, therefore the water would not flow smoothly result being the recurrence of floods. Suyya the chief engineer took this gigantic task in his hands and with his novel techniques overcame this problem; Avantivarman gave huge amount of money to Suyya for working on his schemes. Kalhana commenting on the works of Suyya says that "so well and so successfully were all these measures carried out that the stream, flowing to the ocean, set out on its course in haste, as if eagerly longing for the sea after its detention."Suyya also changed the junction of the Jhelum and the Sindh rivers to the present position near Srinagar and made their combined waters flow through the Wular Lake.

Suyya was also instrumental in improving the irrigation system which helped the peasants to bring more land under cultivation. This increased the production of different crops in the country particularly the rice. Suyya also used another novel –l system of finding how much water is needed for irrigation in a soil. He took samples from each village and noticed the time taken by each sample to dry up. By this method he got an idea of the time for which irrigation was required by each village and accordingly arranged the supply of water to it.

Kalhana says that because of these measures food grains became cheaper. Kharwar of rice which was previously of two hundred Dinnaras, was now for thirty-six only.

Due to the economic prosperity which resulted because of the effective measures of Avantivarman people became prosperous and state also benefited in terms of revenue enhancement. As a



consequence the building activities got a boost during Avantivarman's time. A number of new towns came up with a number of beautiful buildings and temples. The king himself founded the town of Avantipur and built there the temples of Avantivamin and Avantisvara. Avantivarman's family members also built many temples. His minister Sura founded the town of Surapur modern Hurpor near Shopian. Many other temples of Siva and Visnu were built by his ministers. Sura built the town of Suyapur modern Sopore. By the study of these temples one comes to understand that during Avantivarman's period Hinduism had dominated and Buddhism had lost the position it enjoyed once. Avantivarman's period is also considered as period of revival of Sanskrit learning in Kashmir. Civasvamin was one the gems of Avantivarman's court. Some of the other scholars included Ratnakara, who wrote the Haravijya in fifty cantos and lived under two kings, viz Jayapida and Avantivarman. Anandvardhana, the author of Dhvanyaloka, Kallata, the great pupil of Vasugupta, the originator of the Spandacakra also lived during this period. Civasvamin is credited with the authorship of seven Mahakavyas, several dramas, prose works and other writings. But very few verses have survived till date for the students of literature. Avantivarman had extended patronage to these people mentioned above and they were given respect, they were brought to the court in royal carriages and were well received.

Avantivarman from his childhood was a Vishnuvite, but out of regard for Shura his minister inclined towards shivism. He died after a successful reign of 28 years in a Vishnu Temple.

#### **Lohara Polity: A brief Account.**

##### **SAMGRAMARAJA(1003-1028AD)**

Samgramaraja was son of udyaraja(brother of Didda) ruler of lohara (Poonch).He was nominated by Didda before her death in 1003AD to the throne of Kashmir. Therefore when Samgramaraja ascended the throne of Kashmir in 1003AD, he laid the foundation of lohara dynasty in Kashmir . Initially Samgramaraja had to face many challenges from his powerful Prime Minister Tunga and Brahmins. But he overcame all these difficulties after sometime.

It was during Samgramaraja rule that Mahmud invaded Kashmir frontier once in 1015AD and secondly in 1021AD. But on both the occasions Mahmud had to beat a retreat . Samgramaraja died in 1028AD.

##### **ANANTA(1028-1063AD):**

Ananta ascended the throne of Kashmir in 1028 AD in spite of the opposition of the mother Srilakha .But being just a boy he had to fare a number of troubles in the beginning. He soon fall in the company of some Sagi Princes who had taken refuge in Kashmir after the eclipse of the power of their family in Punjab at the hands of Mahmud Ghazni.

Ananta had to face a number of troubles from Damras and his own relatives. But he defeated them all. He married Suryamati the daughter of the ruler of Jalandhara (Jalandhar). She became very powerful and Ananta was cast into the shade for all practical purposes . But Suryamati was able to restore peace and order in the country . The peace of the country was disturbed again by two uprisings. The first was caused by the Damras .But the Government crushed it. The second was the rising of the khasas ,most probably on the borders of Kashmir , and this too was suppressed.

Ananta abdicated the throne in favour of his son, Kalsa in 1063AD, under the pressure of his wife . But Kalsa didn't treat his parents kindly, their life became miserable and Ananta put an end to his life with a dagger in 1081AD. Suryamati also committed sati on the death of her husband.

##### **KALSA(1063-1089AD):**

Kalsa had ascended the throne of Kashmir while his father was still alive. He did not treat his father kindly .He had differences with his son Harsa . But he patched up his differences with his son because he realized that it was established for the smooth functioning of the rest Kalsa was a man of licentious habits, he went on adding more and more ladies to his Seraglio. But Kalsa did not ignore his administration because of it the economy of the country improved and people became prosperous . A number of temples were built in honour of Siva.

Kalsa also sent some expeditions in the neighbouring areas. Harsha son of Kalsa was not on good terms with his father. He was imprisoned by his father. Towards the end of his life he wanted to made his son (Harsha) his successor. But his ministers opposed his nomination. They supported the candidature

of his brother Utkarsa, who was accordingly, summoned from lohara ; few days later the kings breathed his last

**HARSA(1089-1101):**

Utkarsa the elder brother of Harsa succeeded Kalsa in 1089AD .But his rule lasted barely for twenty two days . Harsa succeeded his brother. Utkarsa wanted to kill him but he had a miraculous escape.

Harsa was a learned ruler. He knew many languages , he was also a great warrior too.He was a patron of scholars, artists and Brahmins . He would reward these people for their scholarship. Not only Harsa but even all his courtier used gorgeous dresses and gold ornaments. Kalhana says that “The wearing of golden chains and bracelets became so common that whenever the king went out in the company of his ministers, each minister was in turn everywhere mistaken by the spectators for the king”.

Harsa reformed his administration. He wanted to provide even handed practice to his people. He re-organised his administrative set up.

But there was a sudden change in Harsa. He went on plundering the temples and seizing all the treasures of temples. He also defiled the statues of Gods. According to Kalhana:”In order to defile the statues of gods he had excrements and urine poured over their faces by naked inebriants whose noses, feet and hands had rotted away. Divine images made of gold, silver and other materials rolled about even on the roads , which were covered with night soil, as if they were logs of wood”. Numerous reasons for this attitude of Harsa have been given by the scholars.

Harsa’s character had degenerated to this extent that he did not hesitate to outrage their modest and in this regard he even did not spare his close relatives.

We have numerous examples that Harsa harassed his own subjects to satisfy his pride. There was also general slaughter of Damras and languages. Kalhana says:”In the form of Harsa some demon had descended to the earth to destroy this land hallowed by gods, Tirthas and rises”. Harsa had a tragic end and he was put to death by Uccala’s men.