

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOURCES

### Unit Structure

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  - 1.5.1 Monuments
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### 1.0 OBJECTIVES

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History Paper III, 'Ancient India' at SYBA level aims at studying the History & Ancient period from the Earliest times to 1000 A.D. For this study we need historical sources. The sources of the history of Ancient India are broadly classified into two main categories viz.

- 1] Archaeological Sources.
- 2] Literary Sources

In this lesson, a critical survey of the archaeological sources for the study of Ancient Indian history has been done. At the end of this lesson, students will be able to –

- i) Understand the importance of Inscriptions as a source of Ancient Indian History.
- ii) Describe the contribution of Coins as a source of history.

- iii) Realize the significance of Structural Monuments in understanding the Ancient Culture of India.
- iv) Study the role of Artifacts and other Antiquities discovered in the excavations.
- v) Describe the Socio-Economic life with the help of Ancient Sculptures and Paintings.

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

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The word 'History' comes from the Latin word 'Historia' which means 'finding out'. History is a study of events in the past. It is a record of the achievements of man. For the reconstruction of history of any country or people, we should know the past events. These events are called as the 'historical facts'. The history of any people is known to us by the records left behind by them. These records are known as historical sources.

The study of Ancient Indian history is important as it tells us how in Ancient times, the people of India developed their culture and civilization. The study of history is very much useful for :

- a) It helps us to know about our past.
- b) It helps us to understand our present in a better way.
- c) It helps us to learn some valuable lessons from our past mistakes.
- d) It also helps us to shape our future in a better way.
- e) It makes us broad minded and we learn to live in peace with people who have views different from us.

The History of any Ancient people is largely conditioned by the authenticity of the source material. In broad terms, sources of Ancient Indian history are classified into three categories. They are:

- 1) The Archaeological Sources,
- 2) The Literary Sources,
- 3) Accounts of Foreign Travelers



In this lesson, we will be studying the Archaeological Sources for the study of Ancient Indian history and their importance.

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## 1.2 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOURCES

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Archaeology is the science of antiquities. The archaeological sources included Inscriptions, Coins, Structural remains, Monuments and other antiquities like Sculptures, Paintings, Pottery, Ornaments etc.

The archaeological sources are treated as more authentic than the literary sources because of their contemporarity. These sources have provided immense information of many historical facts about which nothing was known previously. For example, Prehistoric cultures i.e. Paleolithic, Neolithic and Megalithic Cultures and Protohistoric like the Indus valley civilization.

Archaeology, recently has been developed scientifically and its evidence is regarded most trustworthy. In addition to the scrutiny and close examinations of the monuments such as temples, statues, ruins of the places etc. excavation has been adopted as a means to uncover Ancient cultures. Valuable material concerning both prehistoric and historic civilizations has been discovered during such as Mohenjodaro, Harappa, Kot-Diji, Lothal, Kalibangan, Nalanda etc. Some of the sites that have been excavated in Maharashtra are: Jorve, Inamgaon, Diamabad, Paithan, Nevase, Ter, Brahmapuri, Pauni, Sopara etc.

### 1.2.1 Importance of the Archaeological Sources:

The history of any ancient people depends on the authentic source materials. The archaeological sources are usually considered as the authentic source materials for the study of ancient history. The archaeological material is more authentic because it is based on actual finds of the contemporary periods. As a matter of fact, archaeological material is the only source of history for understanding the cultures of 'Proto-historic' period. The best example of this kind is the **Indus Valley Civilization**. Archaeological sources play a vital role in understanding the people and their culture in the historic period. It serves as a valuable supplementary source for a particular period. Many times, the gaps found in the literary sources are filled by the archaeological sources. It corroborates the historical facts mentioned in the literary sources and also reveals the historical facts.

The archaeological sources are treated as more authentic because of their contemporarity and they are not tampered with in the course of time. These are undying witnesses or the evidences of the history and have helped to reconstruct the history of Ancient India.

### **1.2.2 Development of Archaeology in India:**

Recently archaeology, has been developed scientifically in India, and its evidence is regarded most trustworthy. It was during the British Period that a systematic study of archaeology in India began. From the 18<sup>th</sup> Century onwards, the officers of British East India Company began to take keen interest in the Antiquarian wealth of India. In the year, 1784, under the guidance of Sir William Jones, a Judge of the Supreme Court, the 'Asiatic Society of Bengal' was established in Calcutta for the study of history, the antiquities, sciences and literature of Asia. Due to the efforts made by the European scholars such as Sir William Jones, Dr. Buchanan, Hamilton, James Prinsep, Sir Alexander Cunningham, James Burgess, Sir John Marshall, Aural Stein, Mortimer Wheeler, M.S. Vats, and Hargreaves and the Indian archaeologists such as Rakhaldas Banerjee, S.R. Rao and others have contributed a lot to the development of Indian archaeology.

The British and Indian archaeologists over the past century and more have gathered together an extensive range of architectural, iconographic and inscriptional materials related to the history of Mauryas, Satavahanas, Guptas, Chalukyas, Pallavas, Cholas, Pandyas, Palas and Senas and other dynasties. These archaeological sources offer us a wealth of information on Political and even more on Religions, Social, Economic and Cultural history of India.

Let us study all archaeological sources in detail and understand their historical importance.

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## **1.3 INSCRIPTIONS (EPIGRAPHIC RECORDS)**

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An inscription means an old engraved record. It is also known as 'Epigraph' and therefore, the study of inscriptions is known as Epigraphy. In other words, 'Epigraphy is the study of inscriptions and inscriptions literally means any writing engraved on some object'. Epigraphy forms a branch of archaeology. These are written records on some hard substance.

The objects which were used for engraving inscriptions in India were of various types such as lithic, metallic, earthen and wooden object, pottery, bricks, shells, ivory plaques and other objects. The term inscription also includes in it the writing in relief such as legends on coins and seals which are usually produced out of moulds or dies. Even the records painted on the walls or written in ink or on wooden tables are also regarded as inscriptions, although here the letters are not actually engraved but painted.

Inscriptions are found all over the country. Their number run into thousands. Many have to come to light. The earliest records in writing in India are attributed to the Indus valley people. They certainly knew the art of writing as is seen from their seals and pottery. However, this script is still undeciphered. Many scholars and historians are making serious efforts to decipher the Indus Script. If deciphered successfully, the beginning of Indian epigraphy will be pushed back by about three thousand years.

Inscription in Sanskrit, Prakrit, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and other languages have been discovered. But most of the earliest inscriptions are in Brahmi and Kharosthi Scripts. Brahmi Script is written from left to right. Brahmi is the oldest Indian script and dates back between 3<sup>rd</sup> Century B.C. to 7<sup>th</sup> A.D. It remained the main script of writing in India nearly for one thousand years. During the reign of Ashoka, we get a clear evidence of engraved records, incised on imperishable rock or stone surface in either Brahmi or Kharosthi script. During the period between 3<sup>rd</sup> Century B.C. and 7<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. Brahmi script underwent some paleographic changes after every two hundred years and hence, the script of different periods came to be known by different terms such as —

- a) Ashokan Brahmi (e.g. Ashokan rock edicts)
- b) Satavahana Brahmi (e.g. Inscriptions of the Satavahanas)
- c) Gupta Brahmi (e.g. Inscription of the Guptas) etc.

Broadly speaking the inscription can be classified into two main groups:

- i) The inscriptions issued by a ruling authority or issued on its behalf. For example, inscription of Ashoka, King Kharavela, Satavahanas, Chalukyas etc.
- ii) Inscriptions issued by private individuals or private organizations. In this category, largest number of inscriptions record the donations (endowments) made in favor of religious establishments or installation of images for worship.

### **1.3.1 Types of Inscriptions:**

In general, when we analyze the inscriptions on the basis of their contents, we come across many of its types such as:

#### **1] Commercial Inscriptions:**

The Commercial type of inscriptions provides valuable information to our historical knowledge. The seals of Indus valley civilization are the best example of this type.

#### **2] Magical Inscriptions:**

The magical inscriptions are found on the seals of Indus valley. They were used as amulets and contained some magical formulae on them.

#### **3] Religious and Didactic inscriptions:**

These inscriptions deal with the religious and moral matters. For example, the inscriptions of Ashoka are the best specimen of this type. His edicts relate to ethical aspects of Buddhism and contained his 'Dhamma' or the Moral Codes.

#### **4] Dedicative and Donative Inscriptions:**

These inscriptions record the donations or endowments made to the religious establishments. Most of these dedicative inscriptions are engraved on the walls of a temple or religious establishments and the pilgrim centers such as inscriptions found in Buddhist Monasteries at Kanheri, Kuda, Mahad, Sanchi, Vidisha, Nalanda and temples at Bhubaneshwara,

Kanchipuram, Thanjavur, Aihole etc. give an account of the endowments made by either royal persons or private individuals and organizations.

#### **5] Administrative Inscriptions:**

These inscriptions provide us the information about the administrative system of the Ancient Indians. For example, some of the edicts of Ashoka throw light on his provincial administration. From these inscriptions we come to know that during the time of Ashoka, there were at least four provinces of his empire and their capitals were Taxila, Ujjain, Tosali and Suvarnagiri. Besides, there is a reference to certain officers of the state in these inscriptions, Amatya, Mahamatras and Dharmamahamatras. These inscriptions provide valuable information regarding the Mauryan Administration.

#### **6] Eulogistic Inscriptions:**

The eulogistic compositions are called 'Prasasti'. Usually, these inscriptions contain the name and genealogy of the issuing ruler, the early life of a king, his personal accomplishment, his political military and administrative achievements. Some of the examples of this type are-

- i) Eulogy of Gautamiputra Satakarni in the Nasik cave Inscription.
- ii) Eulogy of Samudragupta on Allahabad Pillar Inscription.
- iii) Eulogy of Skandagupta on Bhitari Stone Inscription.
- iv) Eulogy of king Kharavela in Hathigumpha Inscription. etc.

#### **7] Miscellaneous Inscriptions:**

Besides the above-mentioned types of the inscriptions, there are a number of inscriptions mostly found in South India, conveying laws and legal institutions, crimes and punishment, elections, trade and commerce and on music and dance. These are of the miscellaneous type and throw light on various aspects of the life of ancient people.

Thus, inscriptions are of various types and they throw light on various historical facts. They provide the detailed information about political conditions of their times. They give us the information about the issuing ruler, his achievements, inter-state relations, political ideas and institutions and the administrative set up.

The study of inscriptions is of immense value in relating the social conditions of the times. They provide us information about the social life of the people, especially pointing out the caste system, the Joint family system, the different clans (Gotras) as well as innumerable existing communities etc.

A large number of inscriptions throwing light on the economic life of the people have been discovered in almost all parts of India. Different mercantile professions are recorded in the inscriptions such as Sethi, Nigama and Vanija. Trade and industrial guilds were a common feature of economic life since very early times. Reference to such organizations functioning during the ancient period are found in a number of inscriptions.



Even for understanding the religious life of the ancient Indian people. Inscriptions have proved to be the important historical source. They are called the dedicative inscriptions as seen earlier. There are a number of inscriptions throwing light on Jainism.

Inscriptions in general, throw a welcome light on history of languages and paleography. They help us mainly for the study of a cultural history. Indian inscriptions found in many of the South-East Asian countries such as Thailand, Burma, Java, Sumatra, certainly give evidence of India's cultural expansion in these countries.

Moreover, the epigraphical sources are more authentic because they are permanent and cannot be tampered with. Thus, it is for these authentic historical evidences; the study of ancient Indian history would remain incomplete for want of sufficient information.

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## 1.4 NUMISMATICS

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The coins form another important archaeological source for the study of history. The study of coins of the ancient period gives us valuable information. Such evidence is called Numismatic evidence.

Numismatics literally means "Collection of Coins". It means 'the study of coins as historical objects, as a source of history'. Numismatics form an important branch of archaeology. It contributes wealth of information to our understanding of the past. Coins as a source of history, throw light on various aspects of history. Thousands of ancient Indian coins have been discovered from which an idea about the contemporary economic condition, currency system, development of metallurgical art can be obtained.

Approximately 2500 years ago, the coins were struck in India for the first time. They were used as a symbol and token of value. With the use of coins, the obsolete system of barter exchange was now replaced by coin currency. The stage of minting coin was reached only in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. These coins have been discovered in large hoards in almost all parts of India. In ancient Indian literary works, instances of transactions in terms such as 'Vimsatika', 'Trimsatika', 'Sana' and 'Karshapana' are mentioned.

However, the earliest specimens of the coins are found from the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. They are made of Silver. These coins bear the stamps of one to five punches. More than one punch was used to stamp the coins. It is because of its manufacturing techniques; these coins are called as 'Punch Marked Coins'. These Punch Marked coins have been found in almost all parts of India and even in Afghanistan, Pakistan. They are found from Kabul-Qandahar region in Afghanistan to Bengal in the east and Coimbatore in the South. It means that there was a common currency almost throughout India before the Maurya.



The earliest die struck coins have been assigned to the 4<sup>th</sup> Century

B.C. These are found at Taxila and only one side of a coin was used. The other side was plain. Later on, the double die coins were struck by the rulers since 2<sup>nd</sup> Century B.C. These coins are found at Ayodhya, Kaushambi, Mathura etc. Some of these coins bear some inscription in Brahmi script.

The Indo Greek rulers also issued the coins of their own in India. They followed the Greek model of the coin initially issued by Alexander, to commemorate his victories in 4<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. The Indo Greeks, the Shakas and the Pahalavas also followed the Greek model and improved upon the coins. The Indo-Greek coins bear figures of the reigning chief with their name and legend. These coins obviously are helpful for understanding history of Indo-Greek rulers.

In the beginning of Christian era, the Kushan rulers became predominant in North India and Afghanistan. For the first time, gold coinage with legends in Greek, Brahmi and Kharosthi scripts was introduced by the Kushans. Most of the Kushan coins are bilingual, having Greek inscription on obverse and Kharosthi inscription on the reverse side.

The Gupta rulers followed the Kushan coin pattern. The Gupta dynasty founded their empire in the first quarters of the 4<sup>th</sup> Century

A.D. Almost all Gupta rulers issued their own coins. (We are going to study about Gupta coins in the later topic). These coins are very useful for the reconstruction of their history. They issued Gold, Silver, Copper and also Lead coins. The other dynasties such as the Satavahanas, the Shaka – Kshatrapas, the Chalukyas of Badami, the Gurjara Pratiharas, the Rashtrakutas, the Cholas, the Cheras etc. also issued their own coins.

#### **1.4.1 Importance of Coins as a Source of History:**

Coins are an important and authentic source of history as the inscriptions. By the study of different types of the coins, symbols, inscriptions, portraiture etc. found on coin, we can amass a wealth of information about historical fact. This data is extremely valuable for the study of ancient Indian Political history.

Coins reveal the names of unknown kings. For example, most of the Indo-Greek Kings, who ruled in India are known from their coins. Many rulers of the Kushan dynasty and Satavahana dynasty are also known from their coins only. Coins sometimes give us information about the titles of the kings.

The Coins help us to fix up the chronology. The location of the coins helps us to determine the extent of the territory of a king. The coins are of a great value for the study of constitutional and administrative history of scripts and languages of the ancient people.

From the social, economic and cultural point of view also coins are most valuable. They throw light on several aspects of economic history. The coins sometimes give clear picture of the royal amusements, hobbies, furniture, house materials, weapons of war and hunting. The aspects of cultural life such as dress, ornaments, hairstyle etc. also can be studied with the help of coins.

Numismatic evidence furnishes valuable material for religious history. The depiction of deity and symbols on coins help us in determining the association of different cults with different religion. Coins are of a great help in the study of art and chronology.

Thus, the coins are useful and authentic sources because they provide detailed information about the Socio-economic cultural, religious and other aspect of the life of the people of Ancient India.

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## **1.5 MONUMENTS, SCULPTURES, PAINTINGS, POTTERY AND OTHER ANTIQUITIES**

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The structural remains which are seen above the surface of the earth or underground are the monuments and are visible creations of the people of ancient India.

### **1.5.1 Monuments:**

The monuments such as palaces, tombs, buildings, temples etc. are important sources of the history of architectural and artistic development in Ancient India. The ornamental work on the walls, pillars, sculptural remains on the walls of palaces, temples etc. give us an idea of the artistic skill of the time. For example, the pillars of Ashoka, rock-cut architecture such as the caves, stupas, chaityas and the viharas, Gupta temples, Chalukya, Pallava and the Rashtrakuta temples pay glowing tribute to the aesthetic and architectural sense of the creators.

Since 18th and 19th centuries, a systematic study and close examination of the monuments (which are seen above the ground) as mentioned earlier, excavation has been adopted as a means to uncover ancient cultures. Valuable material concerning both, prehistoric and historic civilizations has been discovered in these excavations.

The source material i.e., the archaeological artefacts, pottery, weapons and tools of the ancient people etc. is much valuable particularly for the prehistoric period. In India, a number of sites have been excavated. These sites as mentioned earlier, have yielded a wealth of historical material which throw light on various aspects of ancient civilization.

### **1.5.2 The Sculptural Art:**

The Sculptural art or Shilpakala was a branch of the arts which reached excellent heights in Ancient India. The people of Indus valley also knew the sculptural art as is evident from their stone and bronze sculptures. Ancient sites of Pataliputra, Mathura etc. have fielded

numerous terracotta figurines. The sculptural art, since the time of Indus valley to the massive sculptures of later days is the tremendous progress registered by the Indians. In fact, religious zeal combined with artistic talents, resulted in the creation of beautiful images (i.e. Sculptures). These sculptures depict the religious or philosophical concept of the time.

Sculptures are found of various materials such as bronze, terracotta, copper, gold, ivory, wood etc. the Mauryan Sculptures, shunga sculptures, Andhra-Satavahana sculptures, Gupta sculptures etc. are important and there are various schools of sculptural art such as Gandhara School, Mathura School of art etc.

In south India, highly skilled craftsman and artisans made extremely beautiful images. The small images were for Private worship and the larger, images were installed in the temples. The finest example of the Indian bronze casting were made under the God Shiva as Nataraja. i.e lord of the Dance.

Study of the images of various deities such as Buddha, Jain Tirthankaras, Vedic gods such as Vishnu, Shiva, Kartikeya, Goddesses such as Laxmi, Durga, Uma and other deities throw light on the religious history of the Ancient Indian people.

### **1.5.3 Paintings:**

Painting is the art of producing a picture on a flat surface of wood, Paper, Canvas, Textile, rock etc. in lines and colours. It is a visual art and forms the art of specialized study of Ancient Indian history and culture.

The earliest paintings that are painted on the rock at Bhimbetka in M.P. and Mirzapur and Banda in U.P., give the glimpses of the performance of the proto historic artists. Indus valley people also had developed the art of painting as seen from the Paintings on their Pottery. Excellent Paintings from Ajanta and Ellora, also add to our knowledge. Paintings give us information of the hair style, Dress style, ornaments, jewellery, weapons, flora and fauna etc. of the Ancient people. Naturally, they are very useful sources for the study of Ancient people and cultures.

### **1.5.4 Pottery:**

During Ancient times, most of the people used earthen utensils in their day to day life. Pottery types like the bowls, lids, Plates, Jars and Urns etc. can be found in the excavations. The pottery of earlier period is coarse, but later on it became more and more sophisticated. During the Mauryan period, the refined pottery known as Northern Black Pottery (NBP) was used throughout north India. During the Andhra-Satavahana period, Indians imported the refined Roman pottery. The discovery of this pottery on a very large scale in India throws light on the brisk trade relations between the Indians and the Romans. In the absence of any other evidence pottery helps to ascertain the chronology of a particular culture.

The beautiful varieties of pottery and paintings and carvings on them reflect the contemporary technical and artistic skill. Pottery thus is regarded as the main archaeological source for the study of Ancient history and culture.

### **1.5.5 Other Antiquities:**

Archaeology studies a wide variety of artefacts or material remains of human civilization such as the pottery and other antiquities like tools, seals, weapons, toys, clay articles, beads and precious metals, seals, ornaments and jewellery etc. They speak of the ways of living of the people with the help of these sources we can reconstruct the history of these peoples and cultures and therefore are regarded as the most valuable sources of history.

### **Check Your Progress:**

1. Critically examine the archaeological sources for the study of Ancient Indian history.

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## **1.6 SUMMARY**

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The sources of history of Ancient India are broadly classified in two main categories

- 1) Archaeological Sources
- 2) Literary Sources.

In this lesson, we have studied the types of archaeological sources viz. The inscriptions, Numismatics and the monuments and other antiquities discovered in excavations. We have also studied the importance of these sources for the study of Ancient Indian history and culture.

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## **1.7 QUESTIONS**

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1. Examine the role of coins and monuments as the sources of Ancient Indian history.
2. Write short notes:
  - a) Inscriptions as the source of history.
  - b) Numismatics as the source of history.



## LITERARY SOURCES AND FOREIGN TRAVELERS ACCOUNTS

### Unit Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Classification of the Sources
  - 2.2.1 Indian literature
- 2.3 The Sacred Literature
  - 2.3.1 The Vedic Literature
  - 2.3.2 The Buddhist Religious Texts
  - 2.3.3 The Jain Literature
- 2.4 The Secular Literature
- 2.5 The Greek and Roman Accounts
- 2.6 Accounts of the Chinese Travellers
- 2.7 Tibetan Accounts
- 2.8 Arab and Persian Accounts
- 2.9 Summary
- 2.10 Questions

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### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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The literary works of ancient period form an important source for the study of ancient Indian history. The ancient Indian literature is an indirect but important source of the history of the ancient period. Ancient Indians have left a rich store house of religious and secular literature in Sanskrit and Prakrit languages. In this lesson a close examination of the literary sources has been done. At the end of this lesson, you will be able to

- i) Understand types and importance of the Literary Sources.
- ii) Study various categories of the sacred i.e. religious texts.
- iii) Describe the importance of secular literature.

In broad terms, sources of ancient Indian history are classified in two main categories viz. 1) The Archaeological and 2) The Literary sources. The Literary sources are divided into two groups i.e. Indian Literature and Foreign Literature.

In this lesson a review of the foreign literary sources has been taken. Among these, the Greek, Roman, Persian, Chinese Tibetan and Arab writers were prominent who wrote their accounts on India.

Therefore, at the end of this lesson, you will be

- 1) Able to know about these Foreign travellers
- 2) Able to study their Accounts and their importance as a source of history.

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## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

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Although, the ancient Indians produced vast and rich literature, they did not produce any regular historical chronicle. According to R.

C. Majumdar, "One of the greatest defects of Indian culture which defy rational explanation is the aversion of Indians to writing history. They applied themselves to all conceivable branches of literature and excelled in many of them, but they never seriously took to the writing of history." Alberuni was also of the opinion that, "the Hindus did not pay much attention to the historical order of things. They were very careless in relating the chronological succession of things, and when they were pressed for information and were of a loss not knowing what to say, they invariably took tale telling." Some writers have gone to the extent of maintaining that 'the people of ancient India had no historical sense in them. However, this view is now being given up and it is accepted even by European scholars like Dr. Keith that "there is certain amount of writing and number of facts attesting a degree of sense of history. In view of the antiquity and the developed character of Indian civilization it would indeed be ridiculous to expect to find India destitute of historical sense.

However, when we analyse and carefully study the available literary works of the ancient period, we find that the ancient Indians did not lack in historical sense. The religious literature such as the vedic texts, as well as writing of the Buddhists, Jains and other religious sects is much useful for the study of Ancient Indian History.

As we have seen in the previous chapters, that the literary sources are divided into two main categories viz.

1. The sacred religious texts and
2. The secular literary works.

The secular literary works are further divided into two parts. They are:

- a) The secular Indian literature that is written by Indians.
- b) The accounts or the Foreign Travellers.

We have taken a review of secular Indian literature in the previous unit. In this unit, we are going to study the foreign traveller's accounts and their importance as the sources of ancient Indian history.

The foreign traveller's accounts form an interesting source and have considerable historical value in respect of ancient times of India. Many foreign writers have left their accounts on India. Since ancient times, there has been close contact between India and her neighbours such as the Greeks and the Persians in the west, Chinese in the east and other countries in South-East Asia. Travellers from these countries have left records of their personal experiences and their observations about India. There are also writings of the foreigners, not travellers which contain observations on Indian subjects. There are foreigners those who did not visit India but still wrote about India. Their writings were based on hearsay, very few of such records have remained intact. Only a few fragments and portions quoted by later writers are available. Yet, they are valuable as they supplement the evidence of our own literary and other sources of history.

Among the foreign writers, the Greeks, the Chinese and the Arabs are prominent. This literature is more valuable as the sources of history perhaps, more than the Indian literature because these writers had recorded their observations on factual evidences and they had historical outlook.

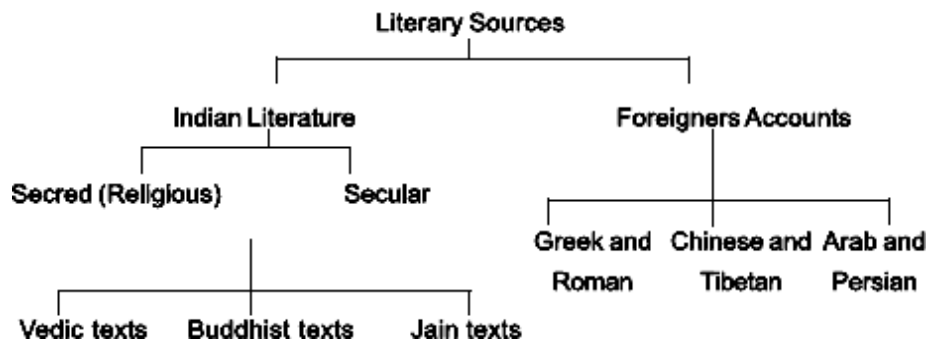
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## 2.2 CLASSIFICATION OF THE SOURCES

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What so ever the controversy regarding the historical sense of the ancient Indians, the fact is that the ancient Indians produced varied and rich literature. This literature is an indirect but important source of the history of the ancient period. These literary sources are classified mainly in two groups i.e.

- 1) Indian Literature and
- 2) Foreign Literature (Foreigners Accounts)





### **2.2.1 The Indian literature:**

Indian literature is further divided into two sub categories i.e.

- a) The Sacred Literature (Religious literature)
- b) The Secular Literature (Non-Religious literature)

The Sacred or Religious literature is further divided in three parts i.e. Vedic or Brahmanical texts, Buddhist texts and Jain texts.

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## **2.3 THE SACRED LITERATURE**

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The Sacred or religious literature is not precisely historical in content. But, if studied carefully, they do give us information of the social, religious, economic, cultural, intellectual aspects of the life of the ancient Indian people.

The sacred or religious literature is classified under three categories, i.e. Brahmanical or Vedic, Buddhist and Jain.

### **2.3.1 The Vedic Literature:**

The earliest literature is the Vedic literature with all its branches. They are Four Vedas — The Rigveda, The Yajurveda, The Samaveda and The Atharvaveda. They are considered as revealed books, written by the sages (Rishis) under the inspiration from God. The contents of the Vedas were handed down orally from generation to generation.

Vedic literature is further divided into two categories, viz. Early and Later Vedic literature.

#### **The Rigveda :**

The Early Vedic literature consists primarily of the samhita of the Rigveda, comprising 1028 hymns in praise of various gods, intended to be used as a mean of invoking the deities and soliciting their support. The hymns or (Suktas) are grouped into ten mandalas or books. It throws light on the political, social, economic and religious life of the Vedic Aryans. It also gives us historical information relating to the progress of the Aryans in India.

**Later Vedic literature** includes the samhitas of the 'Yajurveda', 'Samaveda' and the 'Atharvaveda'.

#### **The Yajurveda:**

It contains the formulas for the religious sacrifices which are borrowed from the Rigveda. It is divided into two parts viz. Shukla

'Yajurveda' i.e. white and Krishna Yajurveda i.e. black. The Shukla Yajurveda is concerned with Samhita and the Krishna Yajurveda deals with Sacrifices. In general, it was meant to be a guide book for priests performing sacrifices.

**The Samaveda:**

Samaveda is a collection of melodies. It contains information in musical forms. It is the earliest work in Indian music.

**The Atharvaveda:**

The Atharvaveda deals with spells, magic, charms and is a prayerbook of the common people meant for application at the humbler domestic sacrifices. It is a sort of encyclopedia. It contains information on various topics. These are the primary sources for the history of the early period which is known as the Vedic period.

Other Vedic literature comprises the commentaries on the Vedic hymns. There are three types of commentaries.

- 1] Brahmanas:** The Brahmanas are prose commentaries on the Vedic verses. They describe details of sacrifices, religious rituals and practices.
- 2] Aranyakas:** The Aranyakas appearing at the end of the Brahmanas are forest text to be read by hermits in woods. In fact it is Religious and Philosophical work composed in forest.
- 3] Upanishadas:** The Upanishadas contain the Vedic Philosophy. It is Philosophy of very high level. They are the sacred philosophical texts containing principles, which are to be taught by the Acharya to his trusted pupils sitting near him. It deals with the universal problems like God, Soul, Death, Brahman and Atman.

Each Veda has the Samhita, the Brahmana, the Aranyakas and the Upanishadas as its four parts. The study of these commentaries helps us understand the development of the Aryan Culture.

**Vedangas and Upavedas:**

Vedangas and Upavedas form two supplementary sections of Vedic literature.

**Vedangas** – The six Vedangas are:

1. Shiksha (phonetics) deals with pronunciation
2. Kalpa (ritual)
3. Vyakarna deals with grammar.
4. Nirukta deals with etymology.
5. Chhandas deals with meter.
6. Jyotisha deals with astronomy.

Out of six Vedangas, the Shiksha and Kalpa are considered to be very important. The Vedangas help us to understand the text of the Vedas.

**Upavedas:**

The Upavedas are supplementary Vedic literature. These Upavedas deal with secular subjects like Ayurveda (medicine), Dhanurveda (Archery art of war), Shilpa (architecture) and Gandharvaveda (Music).

**Smritis or Dhamashastras:**

In addition to the above literature, an exhaustive literature was produced on rules, regulations and other aspects of society as well as the religious rituals and the vratas. These literary works are popularly known as Smritis or Dhamashastras. They were composed by sages after whom they came to be designated. Some of the prominent smritis are the Manusmriti, Yagnavalkya Smriti, Gautama Smriti, Narada Smriti, Brihaspati Smriti and Apastambha Smriti. These smritis provide us valuable information about the Varnashrama system, duties of different Varnas, rights and privileges of the upper castes etc. It was during the later Vedic period that marks the beginning of a sort of rigidity and orthodoxy in the socio-religious matter. The Smriti literature throws light on the contemporary law.

**Epic Literature:**

The great epics 'The Ramayana and the Mahabharata' are rich sources of valuable material for history. The social and political conditions of the Aryans are clearly described in these popular works.

The Ramayana was composed by sage Valmiki.

The Mahabharata was the work of many composers though it has been regarded by tradition as the products of Vyasa's genius only. It is a massive epic of lakhs of verses.

The epics form a good source of information about the manners and customs, religious practices and beliefs, ideals and ideologies of the people in their times.

**Puranic Literature:**

The puranas are the stories of ancient times. The traditions preserved in the Puranic literature form the main source of information for the history of the early period. The puranas contain the genealogies of the contemporary rulers. They are eighteen in number. These puranas throw light on all aspects and phases of Hinduism. The puranas provide us information about the history of ancient cities which existed in their times.

**2.3.2 The Buddhist Religious Texts:**

Buddhism came into existence in India, during the 6<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. Consequently, a variety of literature was produced by the Buddhist writers. Most of the early Buddhist literature was written in Prakrit language viz. Pali. Under Ashoka, Buddhism received an extreme sort of royal patronage. This gave a boost to the revision of old Buddhist literature, known as the Tripitaka.

The Pali canon is divided into three pitakas or parts viz.

1. **Vinaya Pitaka:** Deals with the rules and regulations of the monastic life and the conduct of the monks.
2. **Sutta Pitaka:** Deals with the principles and the philosophy of Buddhism. It includes the five nikayas, viz. Digha, Majjhima, Samyutta, Auguttara, and Khuddukanikaya.
3. **Abhidhammapitaka:** Consist of seven texts, which are scholarly works on Buddhist doctrine.

The **Kathavatthu** which is a part of the Abhidhamma Pitaka was composed by Mogaliputta Tissa, a great Buddhist Acharya, during the time of Ashoka.

**Therigatha** is a collection of poems composed by Buddhist nuns for the purpose of Prayers and **Buddhavamsa** is a collection of Buddhist legends which depict the previous incarnations of Buddha.

Besides this non-canonical Buddhist literature was also produced of which **Netti prakarna**, **Petakopadesha**, **Sutta sangha** and the **Milindopanha** are some of the significant works. **Dhammapada** is a collection on sayings of the Buddha.

**The Jataka Stories** of Mahayana Buddhism deal with the previous births of the Buddha. These Jatakas convey Morals. They throw light on contemporary society; religion, economic activities and political life of the contemporary people about 549 Jataka stories have been collected and published. The Jataka have been assigned to the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> B.C. They give us supplementary information which helps us to check up the information available from the Brahmanical works.

#### **Milinda Panha (queries of King Milinda):**

The Milinda Panha also is very useful as a source of history because it is in the form of questions asked to his teacher, by the Greek king Menander. This Greek king was converted to Buddhism. He had many questions which he asked to his Guru Nagasena. This is a book in form of questions and answers (by Nagasena). It contains valuable information about the political, socio-economic and religious conditions of the centuries before and after the Christian era.

Some of the Buddhist literary works of this period were written in the Sinhalese language of Sri Lanka. Among these Divyavandana, Dipavamsa, Mahanamsa etc. are the most prominent. They are the religious texts. Nagarjuna, Ashvaghosha. Vasubandhu were the great Buddhist scholars and their contributions enriched Buddhism enormously. We may note that all the texts invariably deal with canons, ruler, regulations, Psalms and other matters on the religion.

After the emergence of Mahayana cult, Buddhist writers wrote in Sanskrit also.

Ashvaghosha, who was the contemporary of the Kushans is regarded as top most Sanskrit writer. He wrote '**Buddha Charita**', **Sari Putta – Prakarana** and **Soundarananda** in Sanskrit. The Mahayana canonical works are called **Vaipulya sutras**. The **Lalitvistara**, the **Pradnya Paramita** and **Saddharma Pundarika** are the famous vaipulya sutras. They are important works in Sanskrit dealing with Buddhism. The Lalitvistara contains the story of the life of Buddha. The Vaipulya Sutras deal with Buddhist doctrines in nine books.

The Buddhist literature is also full of mythological and imaginary descriptions but compared to the Brahmanical literature it is more authentic, because it was written during the contemporary period and it underwent comparatively less alterations.

### 2.3.3 Jain Literature:

Jain literature also contains a lot of historical information. Prof. Jacobi and Dr. Banarsi das have done a lot of work on Jain literature. Compared to the Buddhist literature, the number of Jain literary work is lesser. It was written in Ardhamagadhi language, one of the Prakrit languages. The Jain religious texts are known as the Twelve Angas. They supplement the information of the 'Tripitaka', i.e. the Buddhist religious texts.

Mahavira's teachings were passed on from one generation to another by oral tradition. Two Jain Scholars Sthandila at Mathura and Nagarjuna at Vallabhi made efforts to put the old Jain canon in a form acceptable to all Jains. The second Jain council at Vallabhi in the 5th Century A.D. brought about a final compilation of religious texts.

The Jain canonical texts are classified into 6 groups:

- 1) Twelve angas
  - 2) Twelve upangas
  - 3) Ten prakarna
  - 4) Six cheda sutras
  - 5) Four mula sutras and
  - 6) Four miscellaneous texts.
- 1) **Twelve Angas:** explain the Jain Doctrines with the help of legends and stories and prescribe rules of conduct for monks.
  - 2) **The Twelve Upangas:** are dogmatic and mythological Upangas are associated with the Angas texts.
  - 3) **The Ten Prakirnas:** which are in verse deal with miscellaneous topics regarding the doctrines of Jainism.
  - 4) **The Cheda sutras :** give the rules of discipline in monasteries and also Prescribe Penalties for breaking them.

- 5) **The Mula sutras** : deal with the basic doctrines of Jainism. Mula is the supreme penalty of the cancellation of monkhood.
- 6) **The Miscellaneous texts**: deal with religion, economics and other subjects. The Jain monks studied different subjects and these are given in miscellaneous literature.

Besides these canonical literary works, the Jain Monks Produced rich Supplementary literature. For instance, they wrote Nirvyaktis or Commentaries.

These Jain religious texts contain information about the contemporary Political, Economic, Social and Religious conditions.

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## **2.4 SECULAR LITERATURE (INDIAN)**

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The literary works other than the religious in nature, form the category of secular literature. It developed side by side with the religious texts and Provide Valuable information about ancient India and the Indians. We get different categories of secular literature such as Biographies, Dramas, Local Chronicles, Poetry and Miscellaneous Literature such as books on art, architecture, Science, Medicine, Music Mathematics and many other subjects. Most of these works refer to historical events, socio-economic and cultural conditions of the time.

### **Kautilya Arthashastra:**

Kautilya was the mentor as well as the Prime Minister of Chandragupta Maurya. Arthashastra is a work on Polity, but at the same time it has given us valuable information about the contemporary socioeconomic and cultural life. It is divided into 15 Prakarana, each dealing with a separate topic. The king, his ministry, state administration, domestic and Foreign Policy of the State taxation system, laws and punishment and relations between states etc. have been discussed in the Arthashastra. Particularly, it is very important for the study of Political and economic conditions of the Mauryan period.

### **Shukra Nitisara and Kamandakiya Nitisara :**

Shukra Nitisara and Kamandakiya Nitisara also belong to this type of literature. They give an idea of the high standard of Political thought and Organisation. These are the works dealing with State-Craft, economic System and Social Organisation.

### **Gatha Saptashati :**

Is a collection of 700 gathas or Poems composed by various poets its compilation is attributed to the Satavahana ruler Hala (1<sup>st</sup> century A.D.) and written in Maharashtri Prakrit and is like a folk literature. It throws light on the socio-cultural life of common people and therefore; it has proved to be an important Source material for the study of social history.

**Brihatkatha of Gunadhya:**

A large body of folk literature also exists in Sanskrit, consisting of fables. Stories with morals which have passed down from one generation to another. Therefore, Brihatkatha of Gunadhyais important. This work however, was originally written in Paishachi, one of the Prakrit languages. Its translations in Sanskrit are (1) **Brihatkathashloka Sangraha** by **Buddhaswami** (2) **Brihat Kathamanjiri** by **Kshemendga** and (3) **Kathasaritsagar** by **Somasharma**. Of these, the kathasaritsagar of somadeva has produced a great impact. The stories in this work deal with all possibly experiences, situations in human life. It has influenced the folk literature in many other languages. There are many other works of these types in Sanskrit language. The **Panchatantram**, written by Vishnu Sharma is another world famous Sanskrit work which is a collection of fables. In Panchatantram we get stories of animals, reflecting on human nature.

**Sanskrit Dramas** also were written by several dramatists.

**Bhasa** wrote many dramas in Sanskrit. His **Svapnavasavadatta** is the best known play.

**Kalidasa** wrote dramas such as **Malavikagnimitra**, **Vikramorvashiyans** **Abhidnyanashakuntalam**.

**Vishakhadatta** wrote **Mudrarakshasa** and **Devichandragupta**.

**Shudraka** wrote **Mrichhakatika** based on Bhasa's romantic play.

**Bharata** Wrote the **Natyashastra** which is considered to be the most authoritative treatise on Sanskrit dramaturgy.

**Emperor Harshavardhana** was a great scholar himself, he had also written three dramas namely **Ratnavali**, **Priyadarshika** and **Nagananda**.

**Bhavabhuti** wrote **Mahaviracharitam**, **Malatimadhavam** and **Uttararamcharitam**.

**Bhattacharyya** wrote **Venisanhara**.

**Ashvaghosha** wrote **Saundarananda**.

All of the above mentioned literary works deal with different subjects like grammar, science, medicine, etc., also process to be the source material which is useful for the study of socio-economic and cultural life.

**The Sangam literature:**

Under the patronage of the Pandyan rulers of Madura, high standard Tamil literature known as Sangam literature was produced. Tamil tradition mentions about three literary academies i.e. Sangam which met at



Madurai, the capital of the Pandyas. The literature was presented in the sangama by the authors and poets and only after it was passed by a committee of the scholars, was accepted as Sangam literature.

There is no any literary work left for us from the First Sangama, all its works have perished. Of the second there survives only the early Tamil grammar Tolkappiyam. The Poets of the third sangama wrote the Ettutogai (eight Anthologies). These contain 200 poems ascribed to 200 authors. In addition, there are Pattupattu (Ten songs) containing 10 longer Poems of similar style belonging to later period. The Kurul contains the didactic Poems composed by Tiruvallavar, a Jain Poet. Sangam literature is full of information's and a good source of history of the South Indian society economy, religion and culture.

Besides the Sangam literature, early Tamil works of the type of epics such as **Silappadikkaram**, **Manimekhalai** and the **Ramayana** are also important sources of history.

**Kavya or Poetic literature** : Several important Poets Flourished such as :

**Ashvaghosha** — wrote Buddhacharita **Magha** — wrote Shishupalvadha  
**Bharavi** — wrote Kirtarjuniya  
**Kalidasa** — wrote Raghuvamsha and Kumarsambhava  
**Banabhatta** — Harshacharita  
**Dandin** — wrote Kavyadarsha and Doshakumaracharitra  
**Bhatti** — Ravanavadha  
**Rajashekara** was a poet and also a dramatist.  
**Bilhana** — wrote Vikramankadevacharita.

Besides the above mentioned works. Several other works dealing mainly with different subjects contain valuable historical and cultural information.

**The works on Grammar:**

The works on Sanskrit Grammar were written by (Panini (Ashtadhyayi) and Patanjali (Mahabhashya) Vararuchi also was a grammarian.

**In the field of Medicine:** The medicinal Science, traditionally known as Ayurveda, was well developed in ancient India. Charaka wrote **Charaka samhita**, **Vagbhatta** wrote Ashtanga sangraha. **Palakapya** wrote Hastyayurveda.

**Sushruta** was the famous surgeon of ancient India who wrote Sushrutasamhita which gives us detailed information of different aspects of surgery.

**Aryabhatta** wrote on algebra, arithmetic and astronomy.

**Varahamihira** wrote his valuable works on astronomy such as Panchasiddhanta, Romaka and Paulisa.

**Vatsyayana** wrote the Kamasutra on sexology and erotics.

**Kamandaka** wrote Nitishastra.

**Kalhana** wrote Rajatarangini during the 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. It is the most famous among the local chronicles. It deals with the history of Kashmir upto the middle of 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

**Check Your Progress:**

1. Discuss the importance of the literary sources for the study of ancient Indian history.

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## **2.5 THE GREEK AND ROMAN ACCOUNTS**

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For a detailed and proper study of ancient Indian history, the Greek sources are very important. It is the fact, that India was known to the Greeks even before the invasion of Alexander the Great. Some of the Greeks, who have left their accounts on India, are mentioned below:

**Skylax:** was the first to write a book on India. He was sent by Darius in about 515 B.C. on a voyage of exploration to find out the course of river Sindhu (Indus). He wanted to astonish his countrymen by the accounts of his adventures.

**Aristotle,** the Greek philosopher- scientists has quoted from the work of Skylax.

**Herodotus:**

He was a Greek historian who never visited India, but believed in recording everything read or heard. He has also left his impressions about India, which were formed mainly on hearsay. He gives us information regarding the relations between India and Persia during the 5<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. however, these accounts does not refer to the whole Indian subcontinent. They are limited to only a part of North Western hilly tract. Herodotus has recorded about the trees which gave wool, from which the cloths were made (i.e. cotton). He also gives details of fairy tales. In general, he refers to the conquest of a small part of India by Darius and has also made some useful observations about the peoples of north western borders of India.

**Ktesias:**

He was a physician of the 5<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. who wrote his accounts on India. Like Herodotus, he had written about the relations between India and Persia. His information was based on hearsay, heard from the travellers who came to India. However, his writing is not a firsthand information and is full of fables, hence not much of value for the study of ancient India.

The historians, who came in the wake of Alexander's invasion, give more exact information than the earlier writers. Alexander was a lover of knowledge and he had collected a few scholars around him who accompanied him to India.

**Ptolemy, Nearchus, Onesicritus and Aristobulus** were some of the scholarly campaigners. They have their accounts about India. A description of the territory from the Persian Gulf to the river Sindhu is given in the book of Nearchus. This work is regarded as trustworthy. It was from their accounts that the Europeans came to know about India. Their writing is more exact than the earlier writers.

The intimate relations between the rulers of India, Greece and Persia were maintained by exchange of ambassadors. The ambassadors like **Deimachus** of Syria, **Dionysius** of Egypt and **Megasthenes**, who came to the courts of Indian rulers, have left their valuable records. Unfortunately, the works of accounts of all these have been lost except a few extracts from the **Indica of Megasthenes**.

**Megasthenes:**

He wrote one of the most valuable foreign traveller's records on India. Megasthenes was an ambassador of the Greek king Selucus Nicator to the court of Chandragupta Maurya. He lived in the city of Pataliputra and wrote his accounts on India which he named as 'Indica'. The original copy of this book has been lost in course of time. However, the other Greek writers have quoted the extracts from Indica in their works, and thus have been preserved only in fragments. On the basis of these extracts, the history of the Mauryan period has been reconstructed. Megasthenes has described the city of Pataliputra. It contains some useful information about the social classes and economic activities during the Mauryan period. It also provides information on our country, its soil, climate flora and fauna, the Mauryan administrative system etc. the Indica of Megasthenes though sometimes, it is not free from exaggerations has been regarded as a good source of information and has a high historical value.

Among the other Greek accounts, a special reference may be made to the classical writers who wrote about India. It has been observed that many of them never visited India but wrote about India on the basis of information which they gathered through Alexander's soldiers. Among these writers, Pliny, Arrian, Plutarch, Justin and Curtius are worth mentioning. Pliny wrote 'Natural History' which gives an account of the Indian flora, fauna and minerals in the 1<sup>st</sup> A.D. All these writers have

mentioned in their accounts about India with special reference to political, social as well as economic condition.

**Unknown author of the 'Periplus of the Erythrean Sea'** also gives us much information about India during the 1<sup>st</sup> A.D. As a matter of fact, when India developed brisk trade with the Roman Empire during the early centuries of the Christian era, some geographers and navigators visited India and wrote about it. The earliest of them is above mentioned anonymous author of the Periplus of the Erythrean Sea'. He was a Greek sailor, settled in Egypt. He made a voyage to the Indian coast about 80 A. D. and has left a record of his whole voyage starting from Red Sea to the Indian coast. In fact, it was a manual for others who wanted to go on a voyage to India. This book gives us detailed information about the chief ports of the Konkan i.e. western coast of India such as Bharuch, Sopara, Kalyan and Chaul, prominent trade centers such as Paithan, tagar etc. from the hinterland in Deccan have also been mentioned.

**Ptolemy** was a Greek geographer and wrote a geographical account of India in the 2<sup>nd</sup> A.D. His writing is based on scientific method. He also wrote a book entitled as 'Geography'. He has left a detailed account about the Indian ports and marts of the contemporary period.

**Kosmos Indikopleustes-** was another Greek trader who had lived at Kalyan in thane district of Maharashtra during the 6<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. In his account, he gives us information about the coastal areas, ports, other commercial centers, the trading business etc. which is a valuable account.

**Virgil, Diodorus and Strabo** also give us information about India's geography and trade practices. Strabo gives more details on the physical geography of India.

Writings of Pliny, Periplus and Ptolemy are more useful sources for the study of ancient's Indian history. They provide us detailed information about India's geography, maritime trade and merchandise, the people, their behaviour, flora and fauna, Indian industries, and the commodities of import and export etc.

In general, all these Greek accounts are valuable because unlike Indians, the Greeks had historical perspective and they had recorded whatever they observed. However, their writings have to be studied carefully. They were not familiar with the languages and customs of the people and about when they wrote and therefore, due to ignorance, their information, observations, sometimes may be wrong. In the light of new evidence, their information can be reviewed again.

Like the Greek sources, we get some Roman documents also that gives us some information of ancient Indian history. **Trogaus pompeius** wrote a history titles "Historiae Philippicae". This original work is lost but the extracts from it were taken by another Roman author **Justinus** in his book viz. ' Epitoma Historiarum Philippiarum'. It throws light on the

relationship of Selucus with India and also refersto the invasion of India by Bactrian Greeks. **Pomporius Melas** (1<sup>st</sup> Century A.D.) was another author. Pliny's work *Naturalis Historia* givesan account of Political Geography of India. **Quintus Curtius, Rufus**(2<sup>nd</sup> CenturyA.D) were some other Romans who wrote about India and their writings have become a source of ancient Indian history.

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## 2.6 ACCOUNTS OF THE CHINESE TRAVELLERS

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The teachings of Buddha were spread to foreign lands by the efforts of Ashoka. The Chinese accepted Buddhism in large numbers and several Chinese Buddhist devotees visited India on a pilgrimage. Some of them were great scholars who lived here and wandered over a wide territory. These scholars carried with them several manuscripts of religious philosophical and scientific works. Obviously, the accounts given by these scholarly pilgrims are very useful for reconstruction of the ancient Indian history.

About 60 Chinese pilgrims have left valuable records of their travels in India. The most notable from them were as follows:-

### **Fa- Hien: (309-414 A.D.):**

Fa- Hien visited India during the Gupta period. He has left a valuable account. He was a Buddhist pilgrim. He stayed mostly in Magadhan region. Almost fifteen years he spent in India learning Buddhism and visiting almost all the holy places associated with the life and career of Buddha. His account is titled 'Fa-Kou-Ki' in which he throws light on contemporary political economic and cultural conditions of the period. His account is a very reliable source for the study of the Gupta age.

### **Hiuen Tsang (629- 645 A.D.):**

Hiuen Tsang visited India during the first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. He was a great Chinese scholar. He came during the reign of Harshavardhana. Like Fa – Hien, Hiuen Tsang also spent more than 16 years in India. He travelled extensively in north and south India and has left a graphic account about the contemporary political, socioeconomic and cultural conditions. He has recorded his observations about Indian kings, capitals, provinces, Buddhist Monasteries and centers of education such as Nalanda. He has also described the various people living in different parts of India. He visited region of Maharashtra, which he called 'Mo-ho-le-cha' and also has described the nature of characteristics of Maharashtrian people during the 7<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. He had also stayed at Nalanda and gives a detailed information about Nalanda University. He gives interesting information about his royal patron Harshavardhana. His account mainly helps for the reconstruction of Harshavardhana's history. In general, he gives the valuable information about geography, literature, administration and religious life of the people.

His account titled as 'Si-Yu-Ki' i.e. 'Records of the Western world' has proved to be a store house of accurate information about India during

the 7<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. His account is really very useful and a good source of history of 7<sup>th</sup> C. India and the Indian people.

**I-tsing (673- 95 A.D.):**

I-tsing was another great Chinese pilgrim that visited India. He has left a very interesting account about Indian Buddhism. He visited India at the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. He had stayed at the University of Nalanda and gives a graphic picture of the campus of the Nalanda University, the grand buildings, the gardens and lakes, the huge library of Nalanda University, the curious students and the talented and versatile teachers as well as the administration of the university.

I-tsing does not mention names of any ruler in India, but indirect references to the political social and economic conditions of the Indians of that time are found in this work.

All these three Chinese scholars spent a number of years in India and learnt its language. They were all the Buddhist monks whose journey to India was merely a pilgrimage to holy lands. Thus their outlook was purely religious. Fa-Huiuen and I-tsing does not refer much to secular matters. Incidentally, we get some information in their accounts. However, Hiuen Tsang's account is most important and has proved to be the most valuable of the Chinese accounts on India.

Hwui-li was a friend of Hiuen Tsang, who wrote a biography of Hiuen Tsang. In this book some information about India is found and hence is the source of ancient Indian history.

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## **2.7 TIBETAN ACCOUNTS**

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The Tibetan accounts on India also are a good source material for the study of ancient India. The works of the Tibetan Lamas Taranath, Dulva and Tangyur etc. can be used for the study of ancient Indian history.

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## **2.8 ARAB AND PERSIAN ACCOUNTS**

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He Arab travellers, geographers and historians came to India from the 8<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. onwards. From those times some Arab writers wrote about India. Most prominent among them were Al- Masudi (9<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.) Al Itakri and Ibn Haukal (both 10<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.) and Al- Beruni (12 Century A.D.)

**Al-Masudi** has left a graphic account about north India during the 9<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. He and Al-Itakri as well as Ibn- Haukal all were traders and wrote their accounts which deal with the country and its inhabitants. They give us the valuable information about coastal India, ports, trading center and their merchandise.

**Al-Beruni** the most learned Arab scholar, who visited India, was Al-Beruni (1030 A.D.). He mastered Sanskrit language and literature. He was

a mathematician and astronomer and wrote his account on India titled 'Tahkik- I- Hind'. It is of utmost historical value because this great scholar travelled throughout India during the 11<sup>th</sup> C.A.D. and has recorded his observations about ancient Indian religion, philosophy, astronomy, astrology and various other subjects. He has also described the life of common people.

Apart from Al-Beruni, **Al-Biladuri**, **Hasan Nizami**, etc. also give us some information about India during their times.

**Firdausi (940 – 1020 AD)** was the great Persian writer who has preserved some Indian legends in his famous book, 'Shahnama' (Book of Kings) some other Persian works which have reference to Indian include –

- ❖ Jamit- ul – Twarikh (collection histories) by Rashid Uddin,
- ❖ Rauzat – us- safa by Mirkhond,
- ❖ Tarikh-i-Yamini by Al-Utbi.
- ❖ Taj-Ul-Masir by Hasan Nizami etc.

An account of India known as "Kisse Sanjan" of Post 10th Century A.D. was written by the Parsis, who came at Sanjan as refugees. This book also provides us valuable information about the early Parsis on the western coast of India and their settlements.

Although the foreign traveller's accounts are useful for the study of ancient Indian history, they have some drawbacks also. They must be used very cautiously while using the sources.

### **Check Your Progress:**

- 1) Evaluate the accounts of the foreign writers in the study of socioeconomic history of ancient India.

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## **2.9 SUMMARY**

The literary sources for early history of India may be classified on:

- 1) Indian Literature i.e. sacred and secular.
- 2) Accounts of the Foreigners.

In this lesson, we have studied the literary sources, which give us valuable information about the ancient Indians. The Sacred (religious) literature is subdivided in three parts i.e. Vedic or Brahmanical texts, Buddhist text and Jain texts. All these religious texts contain valuable material for the study of religion and culture.



We have also studied numerous works of a secular nature like Kautilya Arthashastra, Gatha Saptashati, other literary works like those of Bhasa, Kalidasa and others all these works contain some historical information and good deal of material for Cultural Study.

During ancient times India had very close commercial and cultural ties with foreign countries, particularly of the western world. Consequently, several foreign writers came to India and wrote their accounts on their personal observations. Among such writers the Greeks, Chinese, Persians writers have left their accounts which has proved to be a major source to reconstruct the history of ancient India. In this lesson we have taken a brief review of accounts these foreign travelers.

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## 2.10 QUESTIONS

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1. Critically examine the secular literature as the Sources of history.
2. Write short notes on
  - a) Foreign Traveller's accounts
  - b) The Vedic literature
  - c) The Jataka Stories
  - d) The Jain literature
  - e) The Buddhist literature.
  - f) Accounts of the Greeks
  - h) Accounts of the Chinese pilgrims.



## **INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND RELIGIOUSDECLINE**

### **Unit Structure**

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Social life
  - 3.2.1 Society
  - 3.2.2 Ornaments
  - 3.2.3 Cosmetics
  - 3.2.4 Family System
  - 3.2.5 Household articles
  - 3.2.6 Domesticated animals
  - 3.2.7 Sports and Entertainment
  - 3.2.8 Weapons of war
- 3.3 Economic Life
  - 3.3.1 Agriculture
  - 3.3.2 Industry
  - 3.3.3 Trade and Commerce
- 3.4 Religion and Culture
  - 3.4.1 Female deity
  - 3.4.2 Male deity
  - 3.4.3 Animal Worship
  - 3.4.4 Tree Worship
  - 3.4.5 Fire Altars
  - 3.4.6 Disposal of the dead
- 3.5 Decline of the Indus Valley Civilization
- 3.6 The Legacy of the Indus Civilization
- 3.7 Summary
- 3.8 Questions

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### 3.0 OBJECTIVES

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This lesson will enable you

- 1) To understand the Social life of the Indus valley people.
- 2) To understand the Economic life of the Indus valley people.
- 3) To imagine about their religious ideas and the deities they worshipped by studying the archaeological remains excavated from the sites of Indus valley.
- 4) To get some information about the destruction of the Indus Valley Civilization.
- 5) To know the legacy of the Indus Civilization.

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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

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For the study of socio economic life of the Indus valley people, no written records excepting inscriptions on the seals come down to us. These inscriptions have not yet been satisfactorily deciphered. Hence the sources of Indus valley civilization are the archaeological sources in form of ruins of the cities, household articles, seals, toys, statues etc. on the basis of which we have to imagine about their socio-economic life.

On the basis of the ruins that are excavated in the sites Indus valley Civilization, we can imagine to some extent about the Religion i.e. religious ideas of the Indus Valley People.

The time span of the Indus valley civilization extends in general terms from 2500-1500 B.C. covering the beginnings, development and maturation of the civilization manifested in the villages and urban concentrations.

However, recent radio-carbon method of dating antiquities have slightly modified the span which is now placed between 2300 and 1700 B.C. with carry overs going on for another couple of centuries. It seems that by 1900 B.C. the culture had already reached its maturity and thus began its period of decline.

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### 3.2 SOCIAL LIFE

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Discoveries of cities, buildings of burnt bricks, underground drainage system, household utensils, pottery, toys, seals, articles of jewellery and statuettes clearly show that highly civilized people lived in the Indus valley Indus valley in the ancient times between 3000 B.C. and 2000 B.C.

**Race:-**

The skulls and skeletons which are found at the excavations show that Indus valley people belonged to four racial groups

- Proto - Australoid
- Mediterranean
- Mongoloid
- Alpine.

The cities had the cosmopolitan population. However, majority of people belonged to Mediterranean race to which the Dravidians belonged. The average height of a man was 5' \* 4 1/2" and of woman 4' \* 4 1/2".

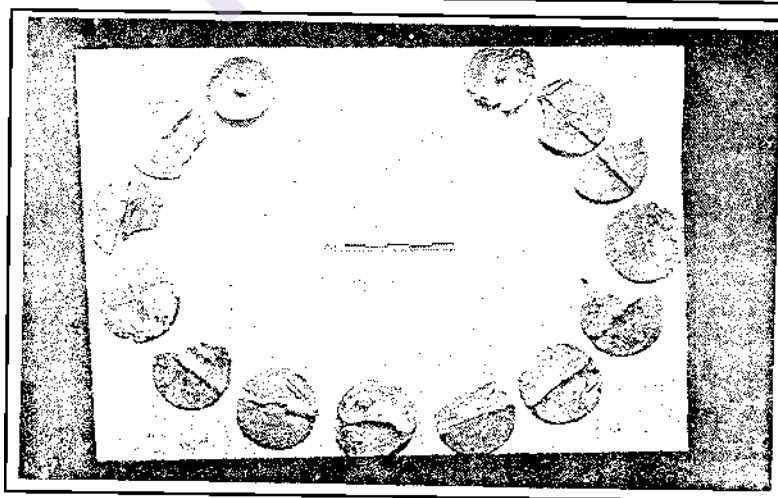
**3.2.1 Society:**

The excavations at various sites show that the society had 5 social groups such as-

1. Ruling class that lived in the upper part (Citadel).
2. Petty traders and professionals who lived in lower city.
3. Labourers who lived in one room houses near workshops.
4. Farmers who lived in villages surrounding the towns.
5. Roaming herdsmen who roamed from focus to town with their animals and common items of trade.

From the study of the seals some information of the style of their dress can be obtained. It seems that two garments were worn by people made either of cotton or wool. A shawl shows that two garments were worn. A shawl like cloth worn over the left shoulder and under the right arm, so as to leave the right arm free formed the upper garment. The lower garment resembled a modern dhoti. The costumes worn by women. However, women, as it appears from a seal, wore skirts. Their garments were made of cotton or perhaps of wool.

### 3.2.2 Ornaments:



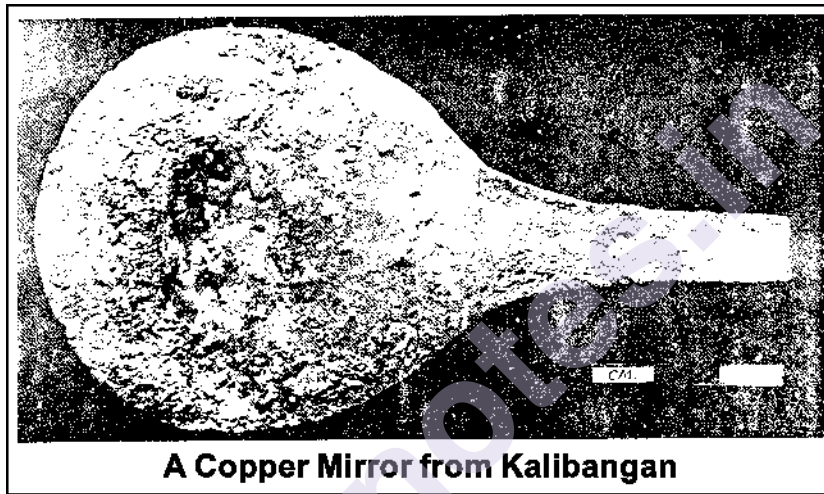
A Golden Necklace from Lothal

Were worn by both men and women of all classes. Necklaces, bangles, armlets, finger rings and bangles were worn by both men and women. The girdles, nose studs, ear-rings and anklets were worn by women alone. There was a great variety in the shape and design of these ornaments, and some of them are of singular beauty.

The ornaments were made of gold, silver, ivory, copper and both precious and semi-precious stones like Tassle, crystals, agate, cornelian etc.

Female statues adorning beautiful hair styles have been found women wore for shaped headdress. Men wore long hair and collect it in a ring on the top of the head. They sustained short beards.

### 3.2.3 Cosmetics :

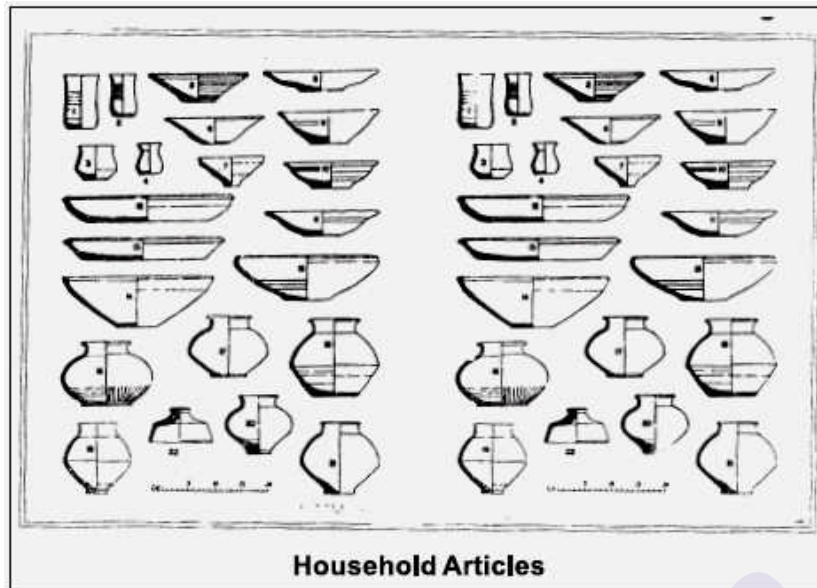


In the excavations, the toilet jars made of ivory, metals and stone were discovered. Women used collyrium in their eyes, a paint on their face and other cosmetics. A Vanity case found at Harappa which includes such as piercers, ear-scoop, tweezers etc are suggestive of the keen interest of women in beauty aids. Round metal rods are used for applying the cosmetics. They had oval shaped mirrors made of bronze. Also there were found fine design and well pointed razors made of bronze.

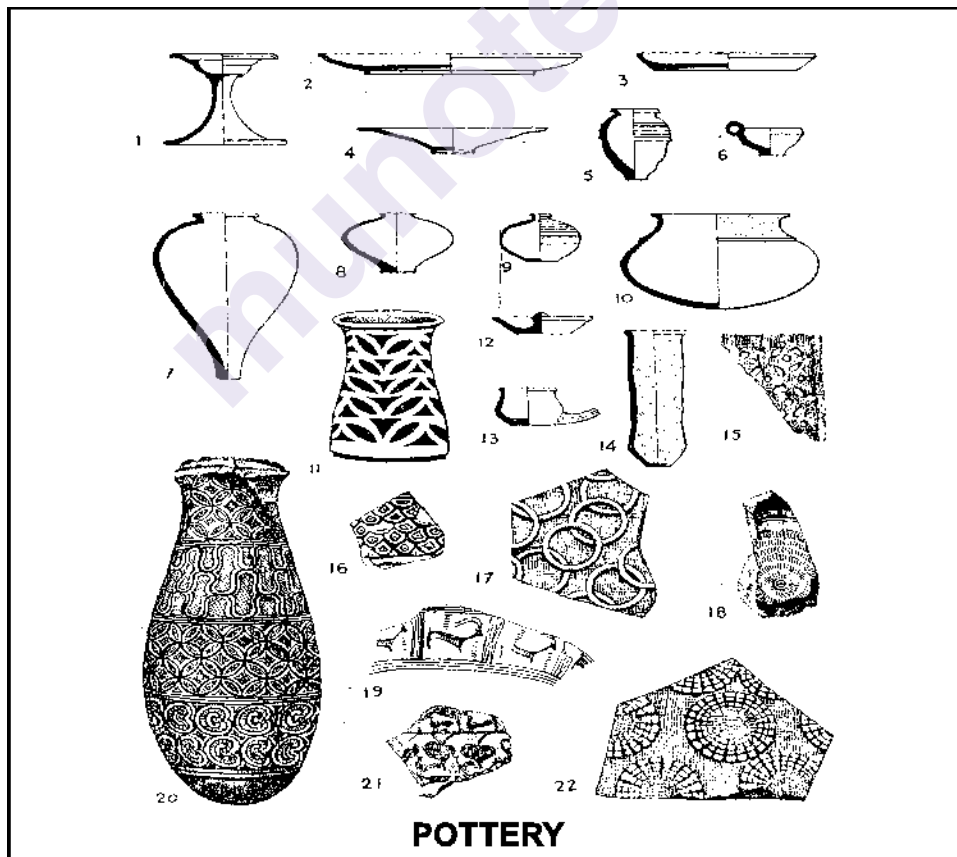
### 3.2.4 Family System:

The Harappans were a deeply family minded people. The compactness of their private houses accords well with the principle of family privacy. The discovery of numerous types of toys such as dolls, whistles, rattles, toy carts, tiny grain vessels, water jugs, animals and birds models indicate their deep interest in their children and obviously in the family life.

### 3.2.5 Household articles:



The earthen ware vessels of rich variety were made with the potter's wheel and were glazed vessels of copper, bronze, silver and porcelain were known though very rarely used. No iron and been found and that metal was obviously unknown.





Their homes were well furnished. Among the articles of domestic uses, chairs, beds heads and stools were used to decorate the drawing room. There were lamps of copper, shell and pottery. A pottery candlestick found in the ruins indicates that candles probably made of wax or follow with wicks of cotton played their part in illuminating the houses of Mohenjodaro.

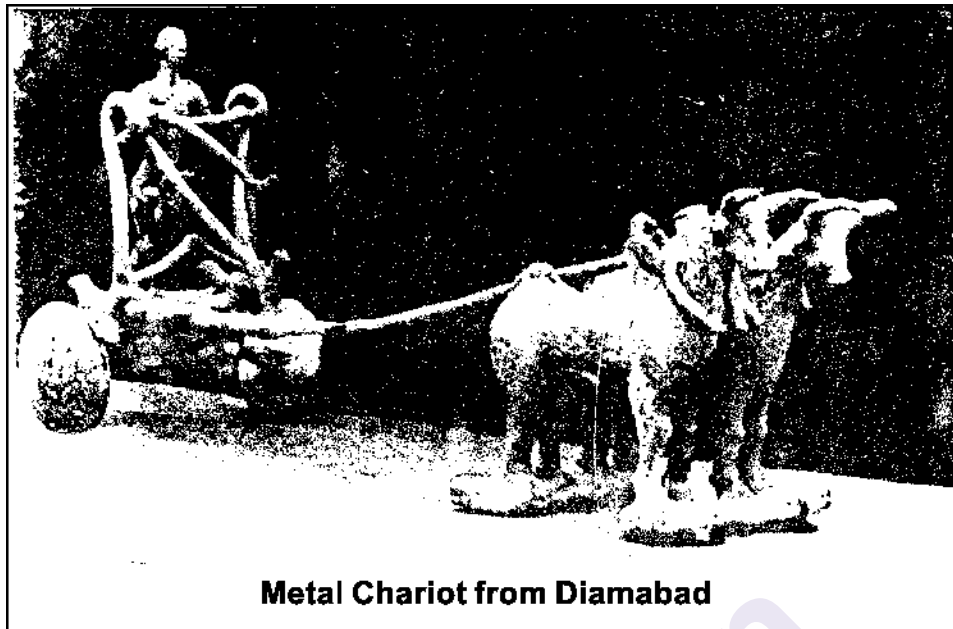
### **3.2.6 Domesticated animals:**

The remains of skeletons prove that the humped bull, the buffalo sheep, elephant and camel were domesticated. The carvings of dogs and children's toys show that dog was also familiar. There are some doubts about the horse.

### **3.2.7 Sports and entertainment:**

This discovery of a large number of dice pieces shows the prevalence of the game. They had several means of indoor and outdoor entertainment. Gambling dance and music were means of their indoor entertainment. They used stringed musical instruments and drums. The outdoor pastime included sports, games and hunting bull fighting was also a part of their pass time.





**Metal Chariot from Diamabad**

### **3.2.8 Weapons of war:**

These include axes, spears daggers, and maces with comparatively fewer specimens of bows and arrows. The absence of swords is significant. Shields, Helmets or any other defensive armour are conspicuous by their absence. The weapons of war, all offensive in character are usually made of copper and bronze though a few stone implements have also been found.

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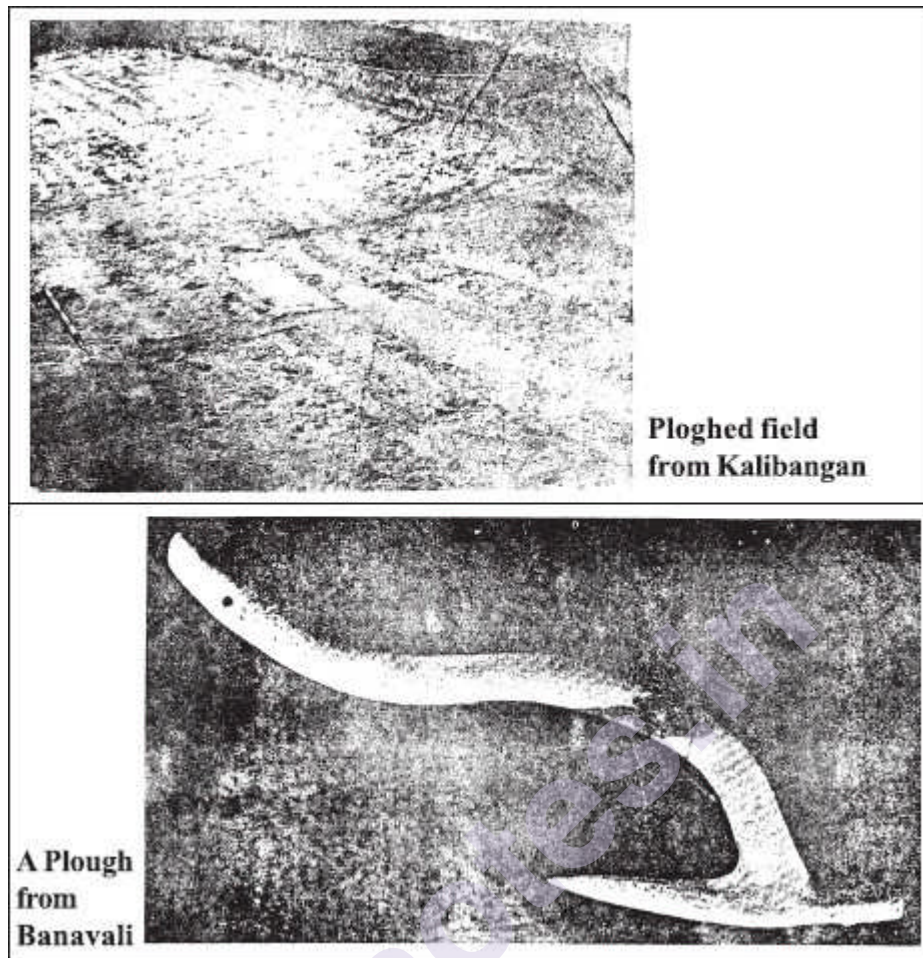
## **3.3 ECONOMIC LIFE**

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The Indus valley people had developed a multi-dimensional economy. The existence of the large cities with big houses, wide roads, and efficient sanitary system indicate that the Indus valley cities were inhabited by a considerably large population engaged in agriculture, trade, commerce and industry.

The life in the cities must have been active and vigorous as is suggested by the wide roads. The roads are big enough for the free movement of large numbers of the people and vehicles. They established commercial contacts with the distant places, within the country and with other contemporary river valley civilizations such as Mesopotamia and Egypt. They were industrious, enterprising, commercial, urban and prosperous, and had developed a distinct way of life.

### 3.3.1 Agriculture:



Being the river valley civilization Indus people were obviously the agriculturists. Their agriculture was rich the fertile land of the sindhu (Indus) valley, the figures of the bull, on their seals, agricultural implements and other domesticated animals, indicate that agriculture was the main occupation. Wheat, barley, rice, cotton and palm date were grown in abundance. Peas and sesamums were also cultivated in Harappa. Probably paddy was also raised as is evident from the rice husks and spikelet found embedded in clay and pottery at Lothal and Rangpur. A wide range of wild animals were hunted for food. They consumed fish, mutton, beef, pork and poultry.

### 3.3.2 Industry:

a)



Perhaps the Indus people were the first people in the ancient world to learn and practice the art of spinning cotton and dyeing cloth. The common vocations were that of a potter, weaver, and carpenter mason and of metal work. The metals known were copper, bronze, lead, silver and gold.

**The pottery** of the Harappan people was generally made on wheel. The majority of pottery is plain, but a substantial part is treated with red slip and black painted decoration. The technical knowledge in the preparation of the fine pottery and burnt brick was of a high standard.

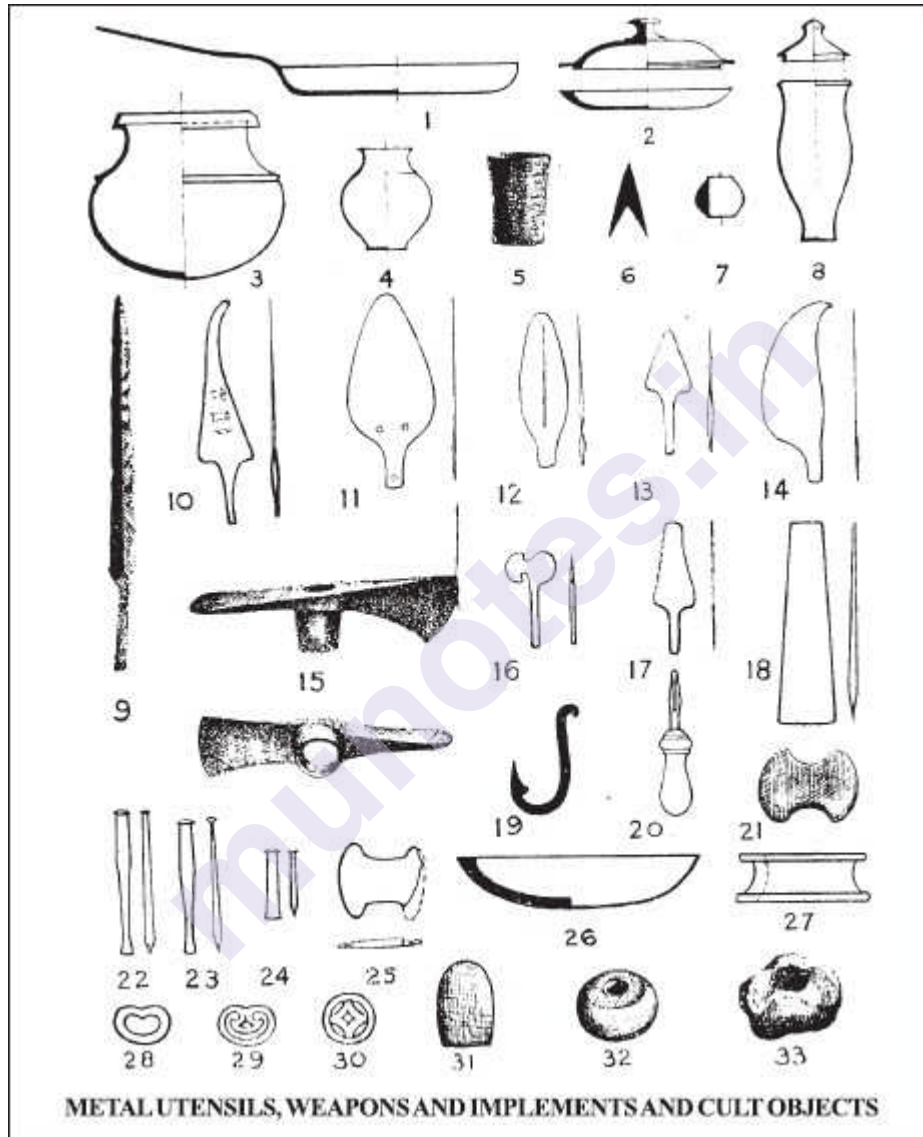
**The cotton** and **woolen** dresses reveal the advanced stage of weaving.

The **services of carpenter** were essential for a large agricultural and trading community. In the same way, the imposing constructions reveal the high skill of the masons.

**Jewellery making** was another important vocation during the period as is evident from various types of jewellery and ornaments. Ivory making (articles made from ivory) also must be another business.

**b) Metal Utensils, Weapons and Implements and Cult Objects:**

There were other **metal workers** busy in making tools and implements such as knives, spearhead, arrowheads, small saws etc.



Which were made of copper and bronze, as well as various types of vessels? These were made by simple casting, chiseling and hammering.

Making of **terracotta objects** must have been an important profession as is evident from ample terracotta human and animal figurines, toy carts with solid wheels and cubical dice and a few sculptures.



### 3.3.3 Trade and Commerce:



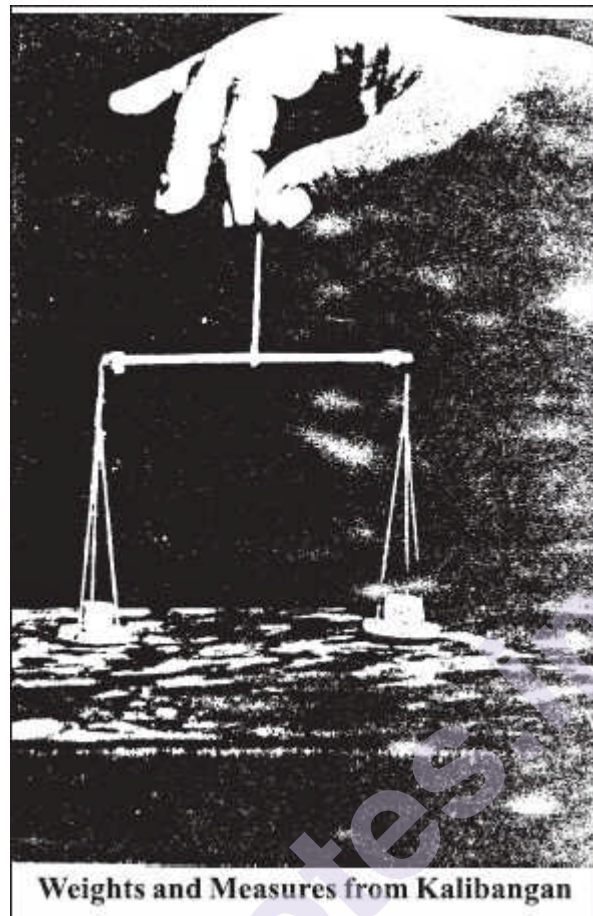
The archaeological discoveries suggest that the people had developed trade and commerce both i.e. **internal** and **external**. Trade and commerce greatly supplemented their economy. It contributes to their economic wellbeing. The existence of wide and long roads, broad streets and the use of wheel points to the existence of brisk internal trade.

The seals were most probably used in connection with trade. Indeed there is abundant evidence that the people traded not only with other parts of India but also with many countries of Asia.

They brought limestone to cover their drains from Rohri and Sukkar; gypsum to use as mortar from Kirthat hills, fine green Amazon stone from Nilgris, gold from gold mines of northern Karnataka; copper from Rajasthan, amethyst from Maharashtra and carnelian from Saurashtra.

The Indus valley people had developed **extensive foreign trade**. They brought silver from Afghanistan or Iran, lapis lazuli from badakshan; turquoise from Iran and jade from central Asia. There is much evidence about their trade links with the cities of Mesopotamia.

Different types of **weights** and **measures** were used by the merchants. A large number of weights belonging to a uniform system have been found at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa as well as in Chanhudaro and other smaller towns. The unit was ratio 16. The find of a broken scale engraved on a shell at Mohenjo Daro shows a decimal scale of inches rising to a foot which was, however, 13.2 inches long.



**Check Your Progress:**

1. Write an essay on the Socio-economic life of the Indus Valley People.

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### **3.4 RELIGION AND CULTURE**



**Seals with Bull**



**Horned God Tree Goddess**



Religion has always played a dominant part in ancient India. Very little is known about the religion of Indus valley people because of the absence of written evidence. Lot of seals have been found over which, the inscriptions can be seen. But the script is not yet satisfactorily deciphered. However, from the figures we can imagine about their religious life.

There are no traces of temples or any other structure of religious nature. For the study of religion, we have mainly to rely upon seals, images and figures.

#### 3.4.1 Worship of mother goddess or female deity:



A number of terracotta female figures found at numerous places are described to represent the Earth goddess, the Prithvi or the Mother Goddess. Some of the figures are smoke stained. It is possible that the oil lamp or incense was burnt before them. From this, it can be believed that the cult of the divine mother was widely practiced. It could be probable that they worshipped this goddess for fertility and prosperity. This cult must be very popular as is evident from large number figurines.

The portray of a standing seminude figure is the most conspicuous. It has an elaborate, head dress and a girdle and necklace. Another, seal from Harappa shows a nude female figure, turned upside down and a plant rising from her womb. On the obverse side are the figures of a man and a woman. This probably symbolizes human sacrifice to the goddess of earth.

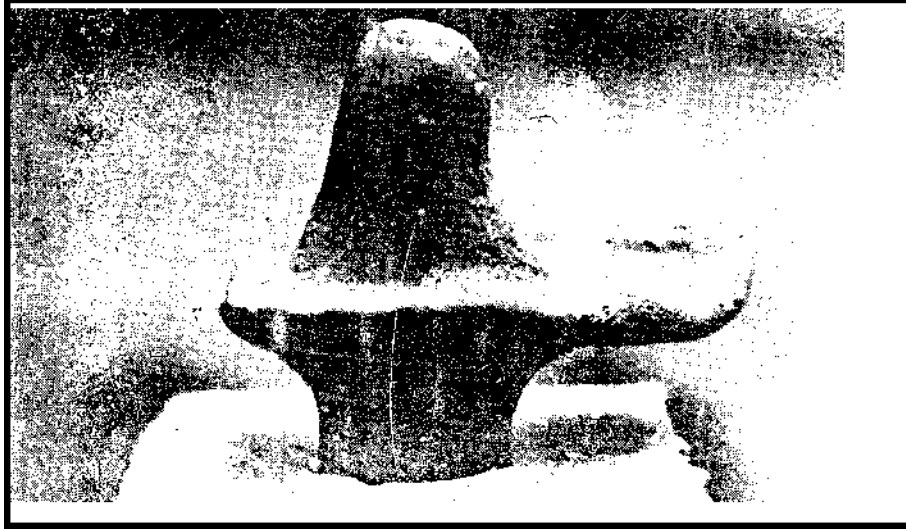
#### 3.4.2 Male deity:

The study of the seals and symbols, figures and images give a picture that the later Shiva worship followed it, in direct consequences. The Shiva idea is the most dominant here.

#### 3.4.3 Animal Worship:

**Pashupati Shiva:** Among the male Gods the most prominent figure is of a deity having three heads, sitting cross legged on a throne with penis standing upright and is surrounded by animals. He is wearing bangles in his hands. On the basis of the three heads, the sitting posture and the association of animals, the deity has been identified with Shiva in the form of Mahayogi and Pashupati.

### **Phallus (lingam) worship:**



Shiva worship was however, not merely iconic, but also phallic as would appear from the presence of a large number of conical and cylindrical stones. It probably was lingam worship.

Another male figure with all the details as above has got two horns and bunch of flowers or leaves rising between the horns. This probably is a personification of Shiva as the principal of creation or purusha.

#### **3.4.4 Animal and Tree worship:**

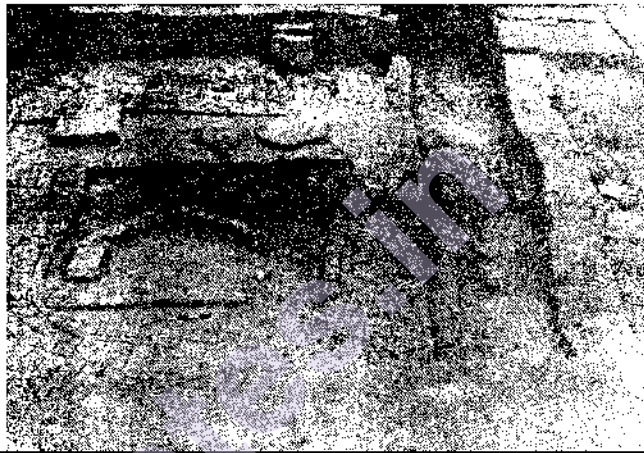
The tree worship was common among the Indus valley people as depicted on their seals. Some sealing from Harappa shows trees enclosed by a wall or a railing. It could be the symbol of tree worship. The Indus valley people also worshipped animals, birds, snakes, trees and fire. It is evident from their seals, sealing and by terracotta and stone figurines.

#### **3.4.5 Fire Altars (Fire Ritual):**

At Kalibangan, have been found series of brick of brick platforms, raised to a considerable height and crowned with 'fire altars', a well, bathing places and brick lined pits containing ashes or animal bones. Some scholars are of opinion that, "this complex must represent a civic ritual center where animal sacrifice, ritual ablution and some sort of fire altar featured." Outside the lower town at Kalibangan several fire altars were discovered in a small brick walled courtyard which could be indicative of domestic fire ritual or worship.



**Fire Altars  
from Klibangan**



**Fire Altar  
from Banavali**

#### **3.4.6 Disposal of the dead:**

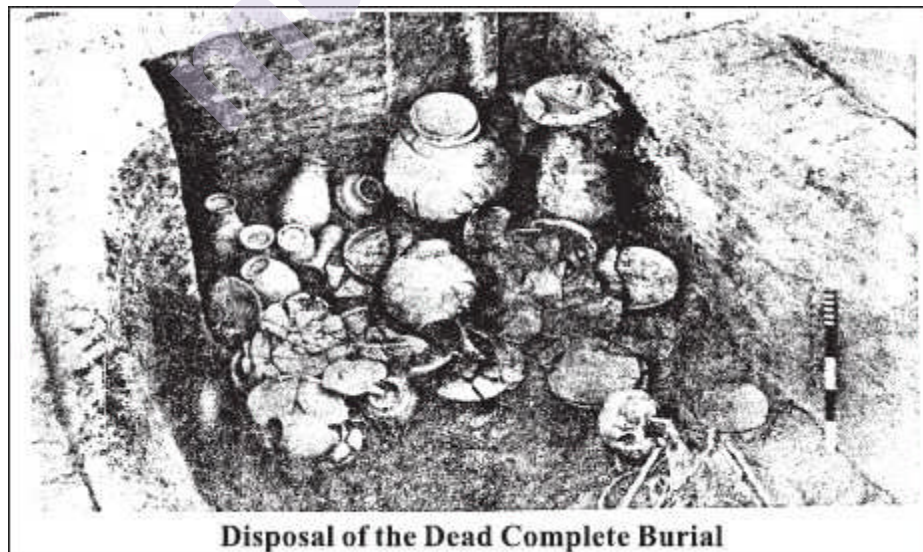
As regards the disposal of the dead, there seems to have been three methods:

- 1) Complete burials,
- 2) Fractional burials,
- 3) Post cremation burials.

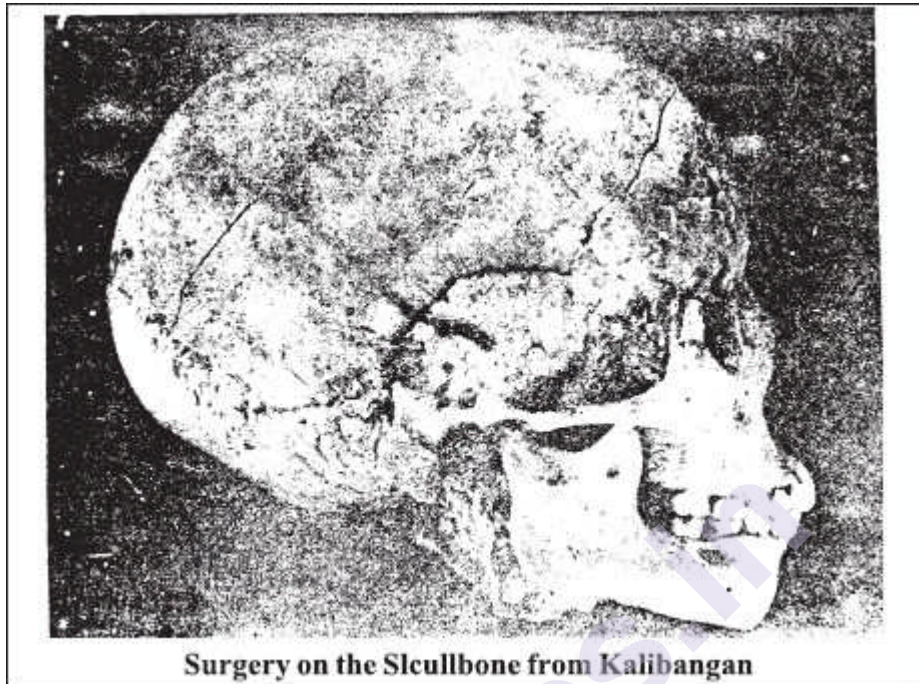
The complete burial means the burial of the whole body, with some articles and other Offerings.

Fractional burial means the burial of the bones collected after exposing the body to wild beasts or birds. Five such burials have been found.





The post cremation burial shows the ashes and the bones collected after burning, buried in urns similar to those used in first and second types of burials.



All these methods of disposal of the dead were in practice during the Vedic age also.

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### **3.5 THE LEGACY OF THE INDUS CIVILIZATION**

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The Indus valley people left their imprint on the life of later India in many ways. The idea of Mother Goddess, Shiva and lingam worship, the sanctity of the papal tree, perhaps the Yogic ideas, animal and plant worship, which is regarded as sacred, the ritual role of bathing, weights and measures and the concept of urban life were the elements of this legacy. The cities disappeared, the villages decayed and the external signs of culture submerged but Indus culture survived and enriched the complex fabric of Indian civilization for ages to come.

#### **Check Your Progress:**

1. Discuss the religious life of the Indus Valley People.

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### 3.4 SUMMARY

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In this lesson, we have studied the socio-economic life of the Indus valley people. The ruins that are discovered from the sites of Indus valley include numerous articles of daily use such as pottery and utensils of stone; Shell, terracotta etc., chairs, stools, toys, weapons and seals etc. help us to understand the life of the Indus valley people.

By a careful examination of these ruins, we are able to understand the social and economic life of the Indus valley people. We can make a clear idea about various aspects of social and economic life with the help of the Photographs added in this lesson.

In this lesson we also have studied two important aspects that are:

- a) Religion of the Indus Valley People.
- b) Decline of the Indus Valley People.

On the basis of the archaeological findings, we can imagine to some extent about the religion, religious ideas and the deities the people of Indus valley worshipped. These People worshipped the mother Goddess, Shiva, Animals, Tree and also had developed worship of Fire. Their religion seems to be similar to that of the Vedic People. Their methods of the disposal of the dead too were similar.

There are various opinions about the decline of this Civilization. Some scholars hold the view that these cities were destroyed by Floods. The civilization certainly continued to exist even after the destruction of the cities and the people of the old sites must have shifted to other Places. Recent excavations at several Sites notably at Kalibangan, Rampur, Lothal, Dholvira etc. have proved a close affinity between Indus Valley and the Vedic Civilizations.

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### 3.5 QUESTIONS

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- 1. Comment on the Economic life of the Indus Valley People.
- 2. Write Short Notes on :
  - a) Religion of the Indus Valley People.
  - b) Decline of the Indus Valley Civilization.



## INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION TOWN PLANNING, ARCHITECTURE, SCRIPT

### Unit Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Art of the Indus Valley People
  - 4.2.1 Terracotta
  - 4.2.2 Stone Sculptures
  - 4.2.3 Bronze Sculptures
  - 4.2.4 Pottery
  - 4.2.5 Seal engravings and the Indus Script
- 4.3 Town Planning and Architecture
  - 4.3.1 The Cities
  - 4.3.2 The Streets
  - 4.3.3 Water Supply
  - 4.3.4 Drainage System
  - 4.3.5 Street lights
- 4.4 Buildings
  - 4.4.1 Private Buildings
  - 4.4.2 Public Buildings
- 4.5 Discovery of the Civilization
- 4.6 Decline of the Civilization
- 4.7 Extent of the Civilization
  - 4.7.1 A Map showing the excavated Sites of Indus Valley
  - 4.7.2 A Map showing the extent of Indus valley Civilization on culture.
- 4.8 The Architects of the Indus Civilization
- 4.9 Summary
- 4.10 Questions

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### 4.0 OBJECTIVES

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1. To study of different art forms in Sculptures Pottery, Bead making of the People of Indus Civilization.
2. To get a knowledge about the town Planning and architectural Skill of the Indus Valley people.
3. To introduce the students the discovery of one of the oldest cultures in the world.



4. To explain the extent of the Indus Valley Civilization and the first of the Sites.
5. To show these sites on a map.

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## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

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The excavations carried on since 1921 have brought to light the ruins of two ancient cities of Indus Valley. Mohenjo-Daro in Sind and Harappa in the Punjab. Many more recent excavations have shown that this civilization had spread over a vast area from Harappa to Lothal in Gujarat.

The most significant characteristic of the Indus Valley Civilization is the tremendous progress made by these people in the field of art, architecture and town planning. The art of this period is depicted through human and animal figures, seals and ornaments.

The Indus valley civilization was distinguished for its high level of town planning and municipal organization. This town planning architecture can be studied from the various sites of Mohenjo- Daro, Harappa, Chanhu- Daro, Lothal etc. Many of these sites now are in Pakistan.

The earliest period of human civilization is known as the Stone Age as man then used stone as his weapon and tool. This age is again divided into the Old Stone Age and the new Stone Age, on the basis of the crude and improved implements.

Some of the basic arts of life such as kindling of fire, building of houses and boats, agriculture, construction of vehicle, etc. were discovered during the new stone age, i.e. (Neolithic Age) with the help of these discoveries man settled in a fertile river valley and since then the civilizations began to develop fast. Evidence of an early but fully developed civilization was provided by the Indus Valley civilization.

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## 4.2 ART OF THE INDUS VALLEY PEOPLE

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The most significant feature of this civilization is the tremendous progress made by those people in the field of art, architecture and town planning. The art of these people is manifested in the creation of earthen ware, sculpture i.e. terracotta, stone and bronze sculptures, seal engravings (the art of the script engraving) bead making etc.

### 4.2.1 Terracotta:

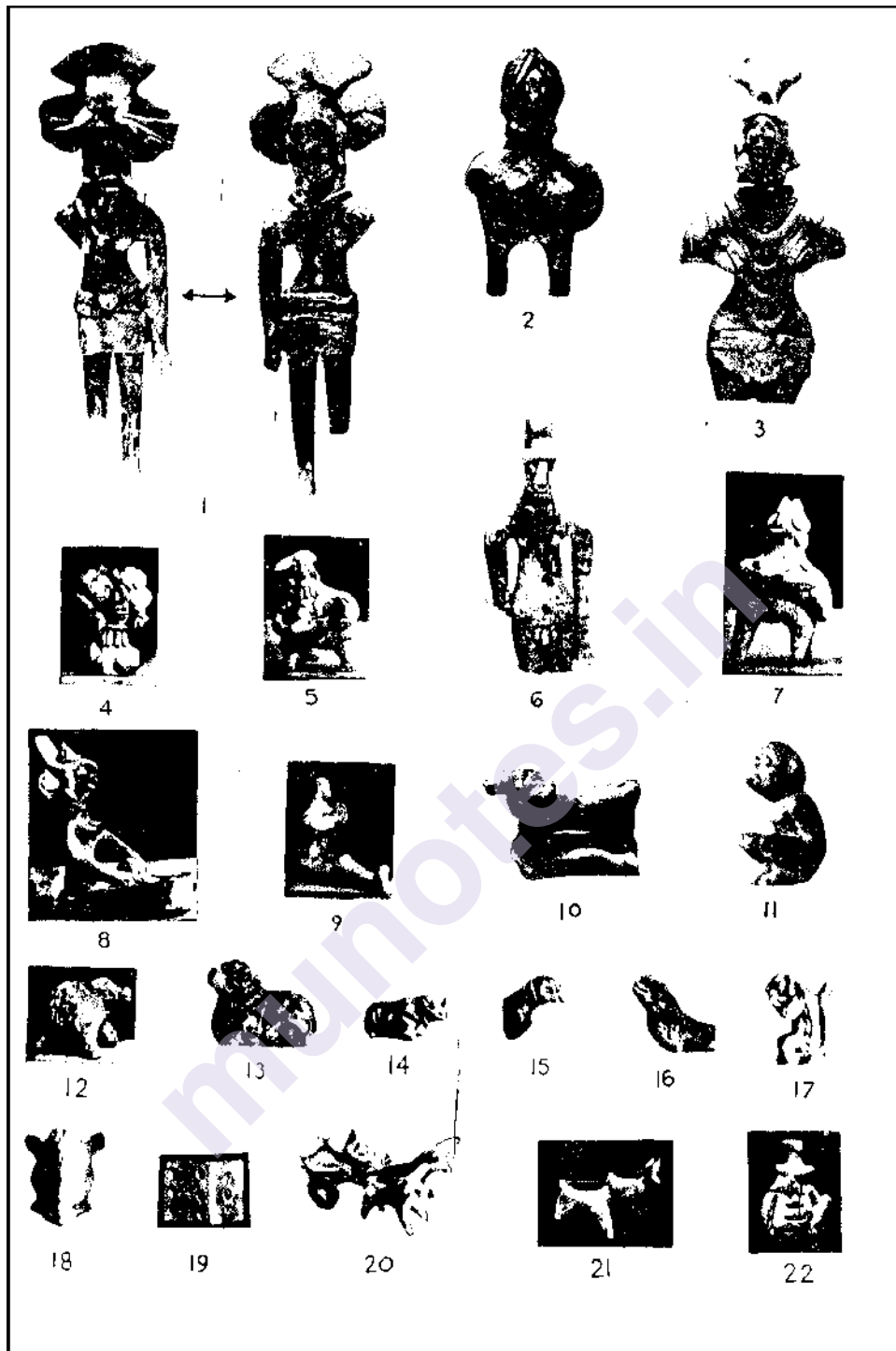
The sculptures of this civilization are to be found of terracotta, stone and bronze. The terracotta female figurines are more in number, are carefully done. Their appearance is primitive. They are handmade and made of pinching up or pressing down the clay. The Eyes are also made of two separate pellets and mouth by a small strip. They are finished with elaborate head- dress and ornaments. Many figurines wear a distinctive head dress of a

fan like shape held by a fillet round the forehead. The figures are nude except for a short girdle round the waist.



There are also more male figurines. These are to be found more at Harappa than at any other sites where they are extremely rare. Mostly they are shown entirely in nude and the dress is represented is a scanty loin cloth. A few figurines also wear a short beard the technique employed is the same as that used in female figures.

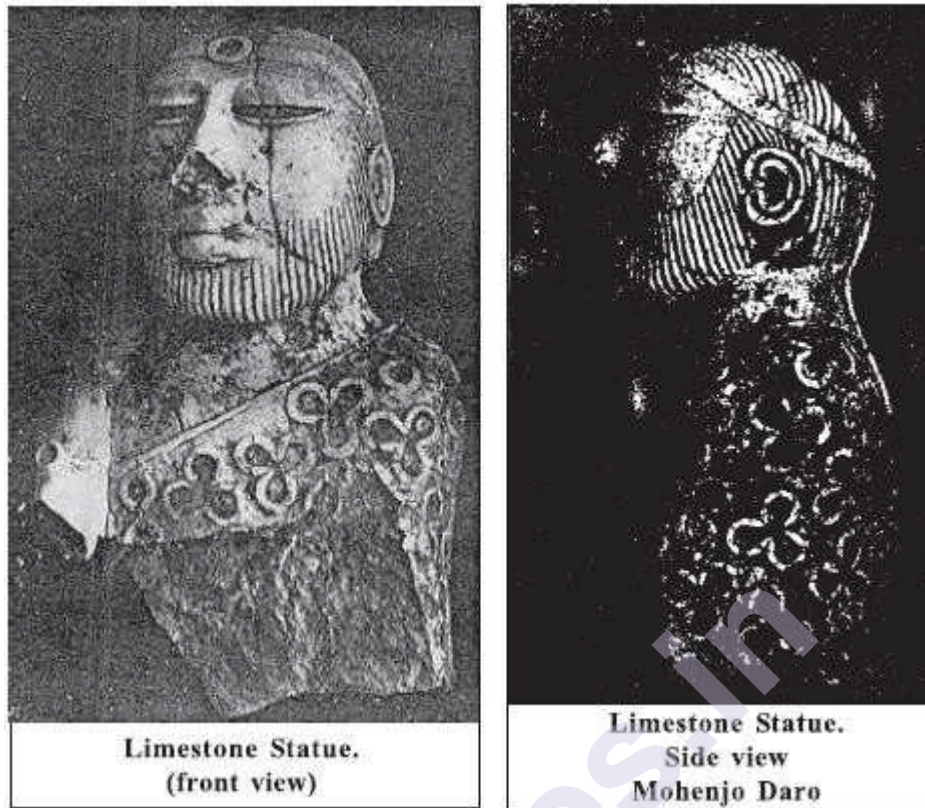
Terracotta animal figurines are found in large numbers. In them there is a greater naturalistic modeling. Besides bull, a variety of animal such as elephants, buffalo, pig, rhinoceros, goat, monkey are found. They are very helpful in reconstructing the climatic conditions of the



### FIGURINES TOYS AND OTHER OBJECTS

Region during that time. Short horned bull, humped bull, appears very beautiful. There is a very naturalistic representation of a monkey in terracotta from Harappa.

Besides these there are many terracotta toys. Toys of animals mounted on wheels. At Mohenjo-Daro a toy chariot with the head of horned ram and the body and tail of a bird has been found.



#### 4.2.2 Stone sculptures:

Many stone sculptures also are found in the excavations at the sites of Indus valley. There are two beautiful stone statuettes and a limestone statue from Mohenjo-Daro.

The best preserved sculpture from Mohenjo-Daro is a statue piece representing a head and a bust of a male figure. It shows that an elaborate shawl like garment having repetitive trefoil design, worn over the left shoulder and under the right arm, so as to leave the right arm free, which formed the upper garment. The eyes are long and half closed. The figure wears a short beard indicated by vertical incisions. The hair is parted in the middle and brushed back. A plain fillet surrounds the head and is tied at the back. The nose of the sculpture is damaged. The mouth shows thick lips and the ears are of the shape of double shells. The forehead is extremely low. Many scholars suggest that the eyes are half closed in yogi or mystical contemplation (indicating attitude of meditation and therefore, could be of a priest).

#### 4.2.3 Bronze sculptures:

From Mohenjo-Daro, we get a bronze statue, of 'dancing young girl'. The workmanship of this statue is rough. It is cast in the round and except for the feet, is in excellent preservation. The statue is just four and half inches high. The legs are bent with the left slightly forward. The right hand is on the hip, the left arm covered almost entirely with bangles, hangs loosely. The hair is tucked at the back in a heavy plait that rests against the right shoulder. There is a naturalness and grace in the modeling and alertness in

the movement. The use of bronze or stone for artistic creation seems to have been extremely limited. Terracotta in contrast, has been found in great number indicating their universal popularity either as toys or cult objects.

#### **4.2.4 Pottery:**

The potters craft during the Indus valley civilizations was fairly well-developed and the potters were quite a visible artisanal group. The potter's wheel was used and production was on a large scale. The pottery is so well established and varied. It shows great appreciation of the fabric and textures as well as painting of geometric forms and figures of live objects. Although, most of the pottery is wheel- turned, there are specimens of handmade pottery.

Most of the pottery is pinkish in color. But a substantial part of it is treated with red slip and sometimes black painted decoration. The pottery was both i.e. plain and simple as well as decorated very rarely the figures of animals, birds or fish appear on the pots. Kitchen utensils were mostly made up of pottery sometimes it was painted.

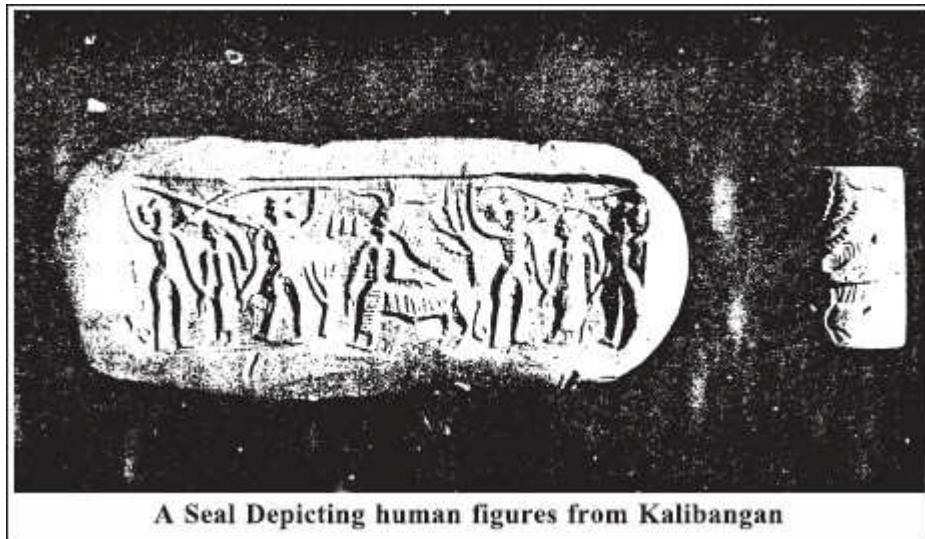
#### **4.2.5 Seal engravings and the Indus script:**

Besides the above mentioned craftsmanship, the Indus valley people practiced numerous other arts and crafts. Seal cutting occupied a place of importance.

More than five hundred seals have been discovered at different sites. These are made of terracotta and small in size. Some contain fine representations of animal figures- both mythical and real engraved on them. These are mostly square in shape the side measuring from 2 to 3 inches and were worn on the arm or neck by stringing cord through perforation. Some of the seals probably belonged to the traders. All of them contain a short record inscribed in a sort of pictorial writing which still remains undeciphered. However, they are said to be the alphabets of the Indus script. Nearly 3500 specimens of the Indus script have been discovered from various sites of Indus valley. Several scholars such as Sir John Marshall, Father Heras, Dr. Mahadevan and Dr. S.R. Rao etc. have attempted the reading of the Indus valley script.

Nearly three thousand inscriptions have been found so far, which contain more than 400 signs. A large number of signs indicate that the script cannot be an alphabet, it is probably syllabic. This pictorial Writing still remains undeciphered.





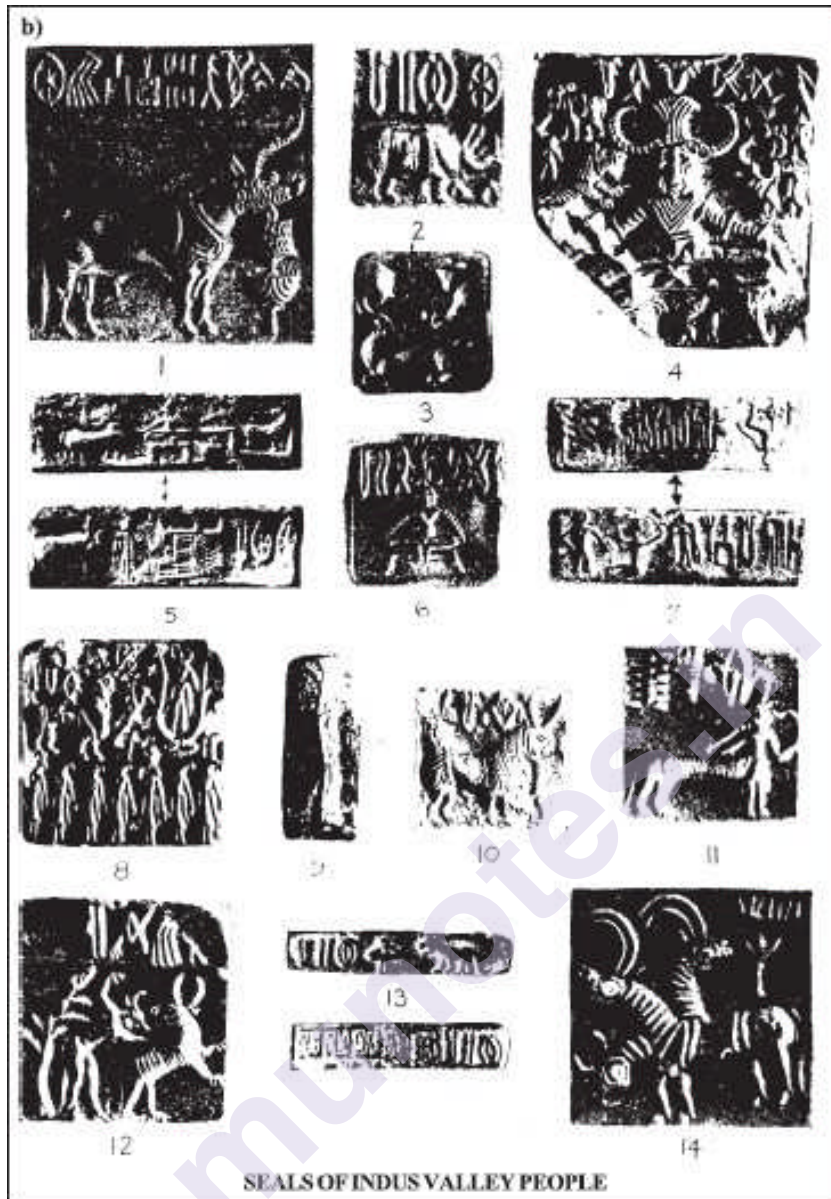
A Seal Depicting human figures from Kalibangan

Bead makers craft also was one of the important crafts of Indus valley people. Beads at various sites have been found in abundance. The beads are varied in form and material. Beads of gold, silver, copper, faience, steatite, semi-precious stones, shell and pottery have been found at various sites. At Chanhudaro and Lothal, bead — makers shop have been discovered.

Textile manufacturing was another important craft as is evident from Mohenjo-Daro, which has yielded a piece of woven cloth. Spindle whorls were used for spinning the cloth of wool and cotton and were woven.

Brick manufacturing and masonry appear to have been important craft. Kiln burnt bricks were used for buildings in places which were ravaged by floods and sun baked bricks in other places.

Boat buildings must be included in the art and craft. There are models of boat in pottery.



### 4.3 TOWN PLANNING AND ARCHITECTURE

The excavated ruins at Mohenjo-Daro, Harappa, Chanhudaro, Kalibangan, Lothal, Banawali and Dholavira provide us valuable information about the town planning of the Indus valley civilization other sites include Rangpur, Rajodi, Surkotada, Sutkagendor etc. The best sites which give us information about the town planning are Mohenjodaro and Harappa, both situated now in Pakistan.



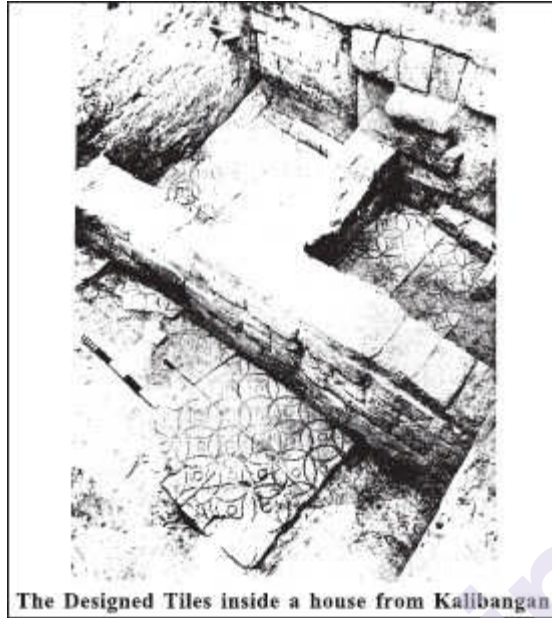


The basic layout of the larger settlements such as at Mohenjodaro, Harappa and Kalibangan include two major sections of the city. One, the smaller section is generally located on a high podium of mud- brick, often called the 'citadel or the upper town'. The second larger section, generally located on a slightly lower ground, is called the 'township' or the lower town.

The upper town or the citadel part of the city contains large buildings, including those apparently for public utility, such as the 'granary' and pillared hall'. 'Great Bath'. The lower town contains large and small houses for the common men, both rich and poor.

The important features of the town planning and buildings of Indus valley civilization are as follows:

**The cities** were well planned. Usually the city was divided by



The Designed Tiles inside a house from Kalibangan

Four major roads. The construction of ideal roads is the unique feature of this civilization.

#### **4.3.2 The Streets:**

The main street divided the city into large blocks of square or rectangle. The streets had the width of '9 to 34'. Some of the streets ran straight for nearly half a mile. These crossed each other exactly in ninety degree. The streets ran straight intersecting at right angles.

#### **4.3.3 Water supply:**

Indus civilization was watered by river Indus and her tributaries. There also existed private and public water supply arrangements. Most of the private houses at Mohenjodaro had wells. Each land had a public well. The wells occur at other sites also.

#### **4.3.4 Drainage system:**

The drainage system was a unique feature of these cities. All houses were connected by the drainage. The drainage system consisted of horizontal and vertical street drains and of soak pits etc. Below the main streets and lanes ran a main drain  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 feet deep. It was covered with the brick or stone. Periodical cleaning and inspection were provided.

Individual house drains, each with its own sump pit opened into street drains, which turn opened into large brick culverts. The main drain was carried to the river. The underground drainage system shows hygiene and civic sense of the people of the Indus valley. Perhaps no other contemporary civilization gave much attention to health and sanitation like these people.

#### 4.3.5 Street lights and Dustbins:

The careful town planning, adequate water supply and efficient drainage system indicate the existence of a well-organized civic institution like the modern municipalities. The existence of the lamp posts on the streets indicates that street lights were provided by the authorities at regular intervals. There were public dustbins used for disposal of waste material.

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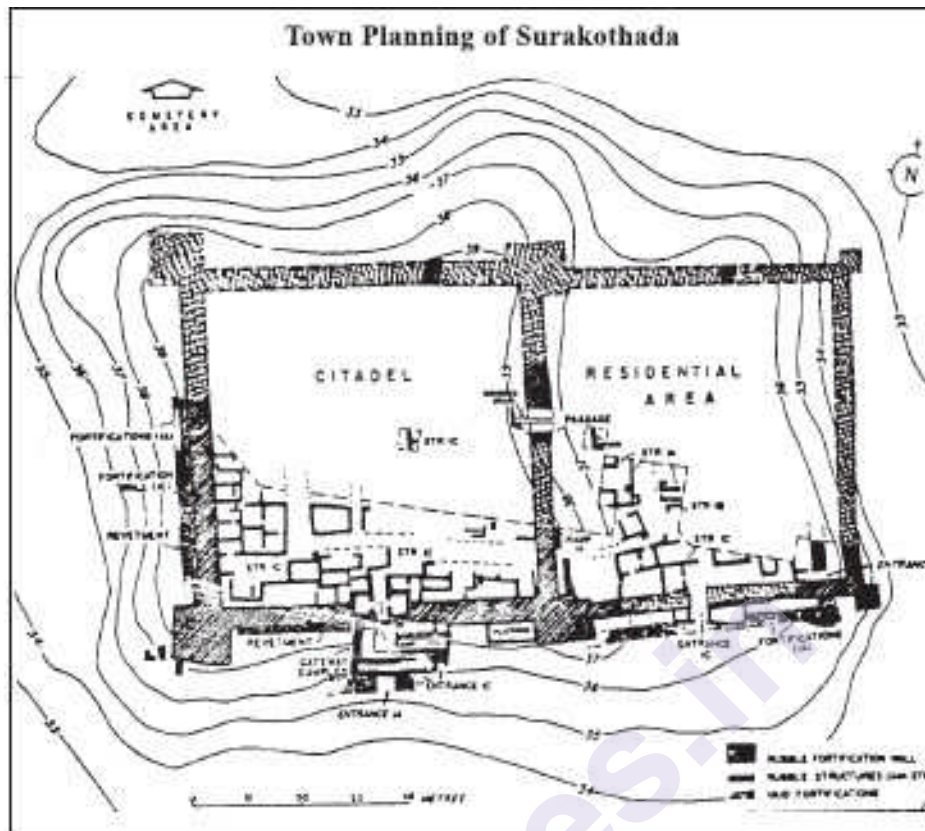
### 4.4 BUILDINGS

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The buildings at the Indus valley cities were mainly of twotypes:

- i) Private dwellings
- ii) Public buildings





#### 4.4.1 Private Buildings:

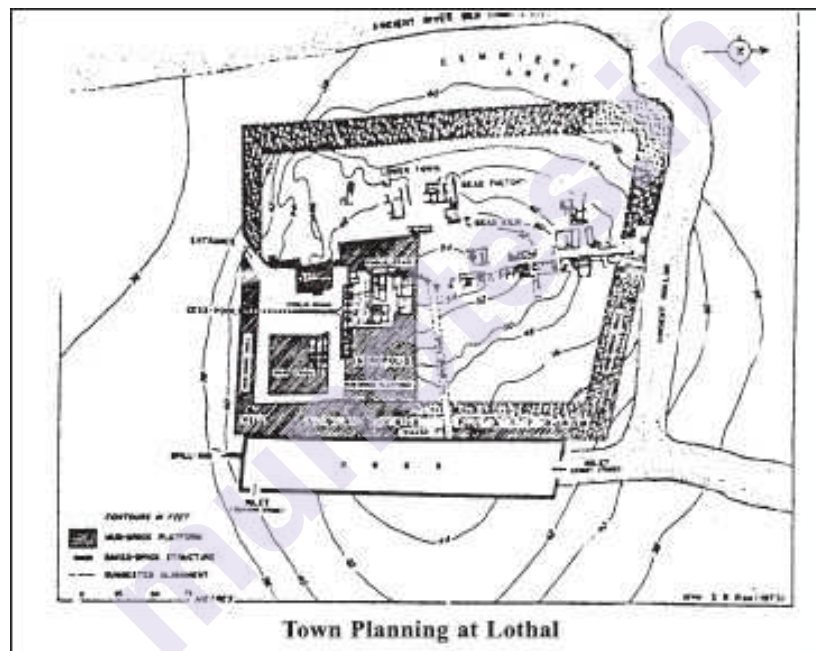
The dwelling houses stood on both sides of the streets. At Harappa and Mohenjodaro houses were built of kiln- burnt bricks, whereas at Kalibangan and Lothal, residential houses were made of sun-dried bricks. An average house had, besides kitchen and bath, four to six living rooms. Considerable variation is seen in the size of houses which range from single room tenements to houses with upwards of a dozen rooms. Generally, these are single storey houses sometimes double storeyed. Most of the houses had wells with them and a drainage system carried the waste water to the main underground drainage of the street.

The large houses were meant for the rich and had much. The plan of the house was same a rectangular courtyard surrounded. It was usually paved with bricks laid flat. Every house had a kitchen, bath, well and drains. However, at Kalibangan bathrooms are rarely seen. Sufficient gap was kept between two houses for light and fresh air. The entrance of the houses faces the smaller streets and not the main road.

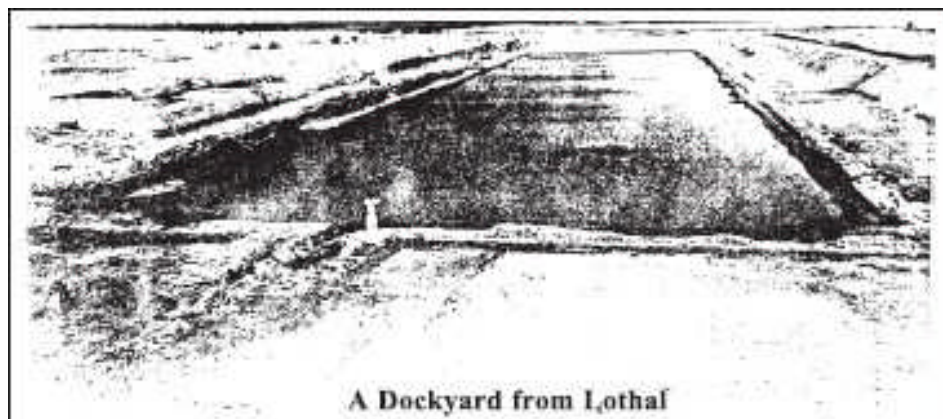




A big house consisting 13 rooms with remains of walls from Bhagvanpura



Town Planning at Lothal



A Dockyard from Lothal

#### **4.4.2 Public Buildings:**

Most of the large buildings have been discovered in the citadel or upper towns or in their vicinity. Among the public buildings some important ones are as follows:

##### **The Great bath:**

These are of the large buildings that have been so far discovered, the great bath in the citadel at Mohenjodaro is the moststriking. The great bath is 180 feet long and 108 feet wide. Its outer walls are about 8 feet thick and have four entrances. It consists of a large open quadrangle in the center with galleries and rooms on all sides. In the center of the quadrangle is a large swimming enclosure, 34 feet by 23 feet and about 8 feet deep. It has a flight of steps at either end and is fed by a well situated in one of the adjoining rooms. The water is discharged by a huge drain with a corbelled roof more than six feet in height. The Great Bath is a specimen of beautiful work.

##### **The Granary:**

To the immediate south – west of the Great Bath, was the granary. It consisted of a podium over which stood 27 blocks of kiln-burnt bricks, arranged in three rows. Each row had nine blocks. Between the blocks was a passage, about 1 meter in width, the size of this granary was 55 x 37 m.

##### **Pillared hall:**

Another building of great importance at Mohenjodaro was a pillared hall, 80 feet square. It has 20 rectangular bricks piers arranged in four rows of five each which divided the hall from east to west into five corridors. The exact nature and the purpose of this building is not known. It could be the assembly hall.

##### **The Great granary:**

Among the public buildings the great granary discovered at Harappa is worth mentioning. It consisted of a series of brick platforms on which stood rows of six granaries. The raised platforms were to protect granary from floods. It measured 169' in length and 135' in width. There were fourteen small rooms which were probably meant for the residence of staff.

- ❖ At Kalibangan also have been found brick platforms; which may have been used for granaries.
- ❖ At Chanhudaro, baked brick houses and drainages have been excavated.
- ❖ At Lothal, remains of a dockyard were excavated; which was connected with the Gulf of Cambay by a channel.
- ❖ At Sutkagen-Dor, 48 km from Arabian Sea on the Makran coast, consisted of a formidable citadel and a lower fortified settlement has been excavated which may have been a sea – port for trading. The coastal settlement served as ports and participated in regular maritime trade with west Asia.

- ❖ Town planning and building structures in most of these places appears to be uniform. Burnt bricks, mud mortar, and gypsum were used for construction. Crude brick was generally used for foundations, as also for the packing of terraces and other exposed parts. Walls were made of burnt brick laid in mud or in mud and gypsum mortar combined. The floors were made of bricks.
- ❖ At Lothal a bead-making factory was unearthed. There was also a copper – smith's work place.
- ❖ At Kalibangan a room containing four to five alters has been discovered, suggestive of some form of fire worship or sacrifice.

Thus we conclude that when we refer to the Indus valley civilization, we mean that cities had emerged as the focal points of economic, social and religious tradition. The people of Indus were great builders.

K.M. Panikkar observes on their achievements "A very high stage of civilization had been reached by the people of the Indus valley as evidenced by the excellence of the materials used in the construction of houses, the commodious nature of residences, the planning of the cities and great hydropathical establishments".

#### **Check Your Progress:**

1. Describe the Prominent features of the Indus valley Civilization.
2. Review the achievements of the People of Indus Valley in the field of Town planning and Architecture.

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### **4.5 DISCOVERY OF THE CIVILIZATION**

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The Indus valley civilization was one of the four ancient Civilizations of the world. It flourished 4500 to 5000 years ago in the river valleys of the north-western part of Indian subcontinent. Some of these valleys are now in Pakistan while others are in western India.

Till the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was no certainty about the exact antiquity of Indian history and civilization. Some scholars believed that the Vedic culture was the oldest Indian culture. Due to absence of authentic evidence, the date of this culture was put at Harappa in Punjab and Mohenjodaro in Sind reveal that a great civilization



flourished in India about 3000 B.C., before coming of Aryans. This is known as the Indus Valley civilization. This discovery put an end to the uncertainty about the Indian culture that began with the coming of Aryans. It was revealed from the fact that artifacts and the structural remains (in the excavations) from these sites belong to a very old period. This discovery of the Indus valley civilization had brought a revolution in the art and science of historiography in India.

As a matter of fact, the archaeological discoveries made by Dayaram Sahni at Harappa in Punjab in year 1921 and Sir Rakhaldas Banerjee at Mohenjodaro (Mound of the Dead) in Sind in 1922 proved that about 5000 years ago there was a great civilization in the Indus valley. Till then nothing was known about this earliest culture in India.

The Indus valley civilization is also known as Harappa culture as archaeologists call it from modern name of the site Harappa. (One of its two great cities).

In 1921-22, Rakhaldas Banerjee of the Archaeological survey of India was working on a mound at Mohenjodaro, Six miles from the rail road station at Dokri in Larkana District of Sind. He had excavated a trench in the 'Stupa' area of the Kushana era (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> Century A.D.) when he came across a 'Seal of Soapstone' bearing a figure of 'one horned quadruped'. At the same time, similar seals had been found at Harappa in the Montgomery District of the Punjab. These finds opened a new and revolutionary chapter in the prehistory of India.

In 1924, scholars and historians were roused by the announcement of Sir John Marshall that his Indian associates particularly Rakhaldas Banerjee, discovered in 1922-23 at Mohenjodaro (in Larkana district of Sind, Now in Pakistan), the remains of a civilization, one of the oldest of the world Civilizations. A few hundred miles towards the north of Mohenjodaro four or five superimposed cities were excavated at Harappa in Montgomery district of Punjab, now in Pakistan.

The scholars were attracted towards this new archaeological site. Since that time, for over half a century, the Indian, Pakistani and the western archaeologists have uncovered some 200 sites affiliated with this civilization named the Harappa or Indus valley civilization.

Archaeological sources form the only source for the study of this Indus valley civilization. These sources i.e. the archaeological evidence have been excavated from many of the sites. Initially R. D. Banerjee and D. R. Sahni had discovered this civilization in 1921-22. But later on systematic excavations were carried at the sites by Sir John Marshall, E. Mackay and K. M. Dikshit (all archaeologists) which resulted into unveiling of a very rich and antiquarian culture. The discovery of the Indus Valley civilization completely shattered the sequence of Indian History. It was proved that this culture was the oldest culture of India. It was further confirmed that it was as old as the ancient Egyptian and the Mesopotamian cultures of the Middle East.

Unfortunately we have no written records about the Indus Valley civilization comparable to those we possess in respect of the others. A number of seals have been discovered with a few letters engraved on each, but these still remain undeciphered. Many scholars and historians are making great efforts to decipher the Indus script, but till today, the efforts of deciphering the Indus script have not unanimously accepted. We are therefore totally ignorant of the political history of the Indus valley and are not in a position to form an adequate idea of its culture and civilization. Our knowledge of this civilization is entirely derived from a careful examination of the objects unearthed at Mohenjodaro, Harappa and other sites of the Indus valley civilization.

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## **4.6 DECLINE OF THE CIVILIZATION**

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There seems to be a consensus among scholars that by about the beginning of the second millennium B.C. the urban phase of the Indus civilization came to an end, though signs of its decay are noticeable even earlier when cities like Harappa, Mohenjo-Daro and Kalibangan began to experience decline in urban planning and structural activity tended to become slum. The Great bath and granary at Mohenjo-Daro fell into disuse. According to the archaeologists, the city shrank to a small settlement of 3 hectares from the original 85 hectares.

Decline is also evident at Harappa, Kalibangan, and Chanhudaro and at most of the Settlements.

This decline of the Indus of the Indus Valley civilization is a problem for the historians. The causes that brought about its decline have remained unexplained. However we can state that this great civilization covering an extensive area must not have declined just by a single cause. A number of causes must have contributed to its decline.

As seen earlier, the disappearance of systematic urban planning and building activity was the visible sign of its decline, which was accompanied by almost sudden vanishing of the Indus Scripts, weights and measures, bronze tools and the red ware pottery with black designs.

The population of Indus valley urban centers either perished or moved away to other areas. The traits of post Indus civilization are found at many places in Pakistan, Central and Western India, in Punjab, Rajasthan, Haryana, Jammu, Kashmir, Delhi and Western Uttar Pradesh during communities in different parts of India.

The progressive degeneration and final collapse of this civilization has been attributed to several factors.

Some scholars suggest that large scale flooding was responsible for the end Indus Valley civilization. It is generally held that those calamitous alterations in the course of the Indus and Ravi rivers led to the desiccation of the larger urban areas which ceased to produce food for the urban centers. This made the

major cities weak under the pressure of population which was forced to migrate as seen earlier.

Excavations reveal that Mohenjo-Daro itself was flooded more than once. Chanhudaro was also twice destroyed by massive inundations. The floods perhaps derived from violent geomorphological changes in the lower Indus region. This must have led to the economic decline of the Indus settlements.

The archaeological evidence shows that by the middle of the second millennium B.C. there was an increase in arid conditions in the Indus cultural zone which dried up the river Ghaggar — Hakra in one of its core regions with disastrous consequences for rural and urban economies.

Some scholars are of the view that the Aryan invaders destroyed the Indus cities. According to a dominant view, the major blow was given by a group of 'Barbarians' who began to migrate into India a little before the middle of the second millennium B.C. The archaeological remains such as thick layer of burning (in Baluchistan), half dozen groups of human skeletons belonging to the later phase of occupation at Mohenjo-Daro may also indicate that the city was invaded. At many places there is evidence of the superimposition of barbarian life.

Whether these barbarians were from the Aryan stock? Is a question before the scholars? But no final statement can be given in this regard is the fact.

Thus numerous causes, both natural and human were responsible for the end of the Indus civilization.

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## **4.7 EXTENT OF THE INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION**

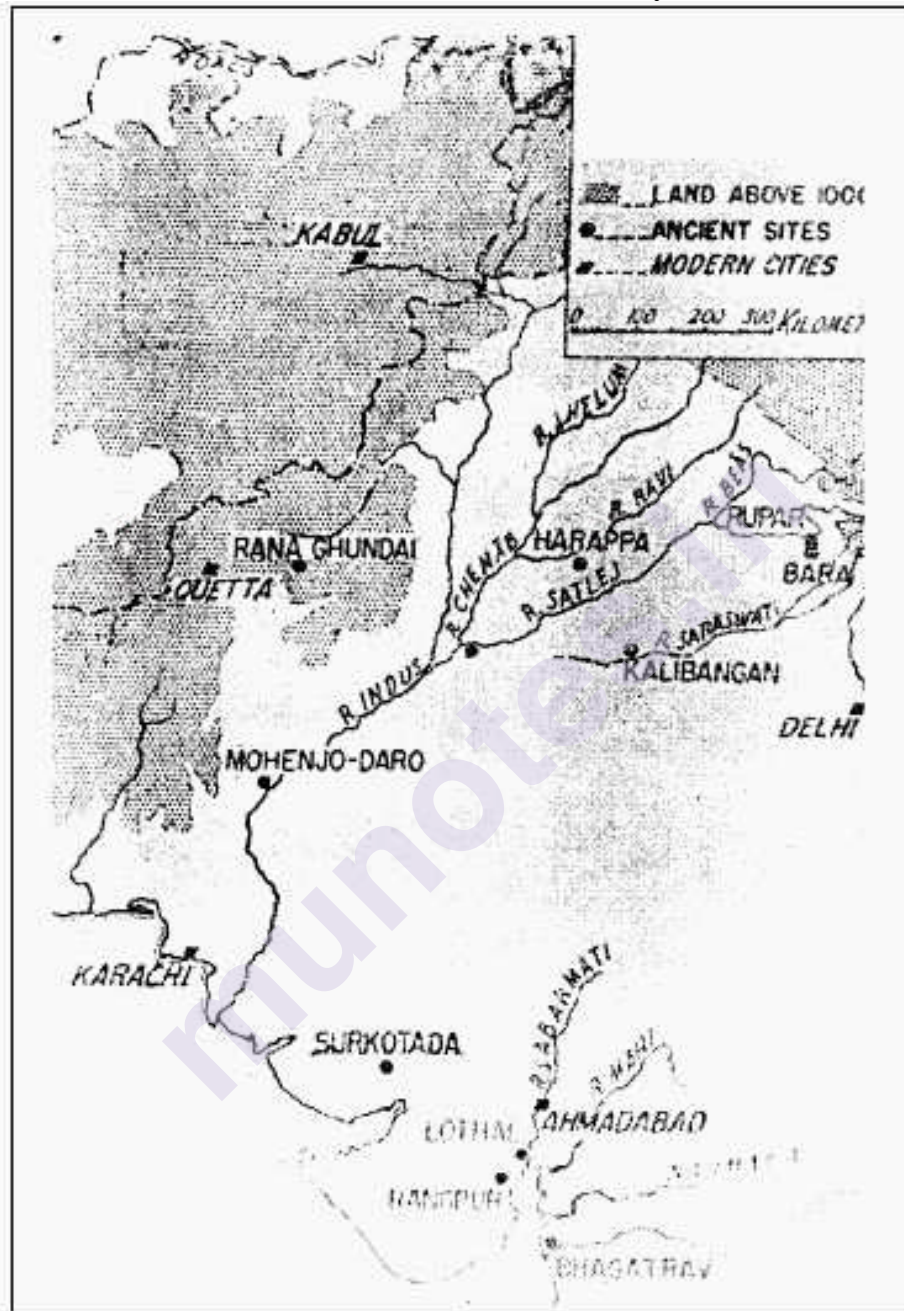
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This civilization is known as Indus valley civilization because the earliest discovered sites were situated in the Indus valley. But subsequent explorations and excavations have revealed that it had spread over in major parts of India. The important sites of this civilization are:

- 1) Mohenjo Daro in Sind (Now in Pakistan)
- 2) Harappa in Punjab (Now in Pakistan)
- 3) Chanhudaro and Kot-Diji in Sind (Now in Pakistan)
- 4) Rupar in Dist. Ambala in Punjab (India)
- 5) Hastinapur in Meerut Dist. Of U.P.
- 6) Alamgirpur in U.P.
- 7) Kalibangan in Rajasthan
- 8) Banawali in Hissar Dist. of Haryana
- 9) Lothal, Rangpur, Somnath, Amra and Lakhabwal in 'Gujarat.
- 10) Sutkagen-Dor on the sea board of South Baluchistan (Afghanistan)

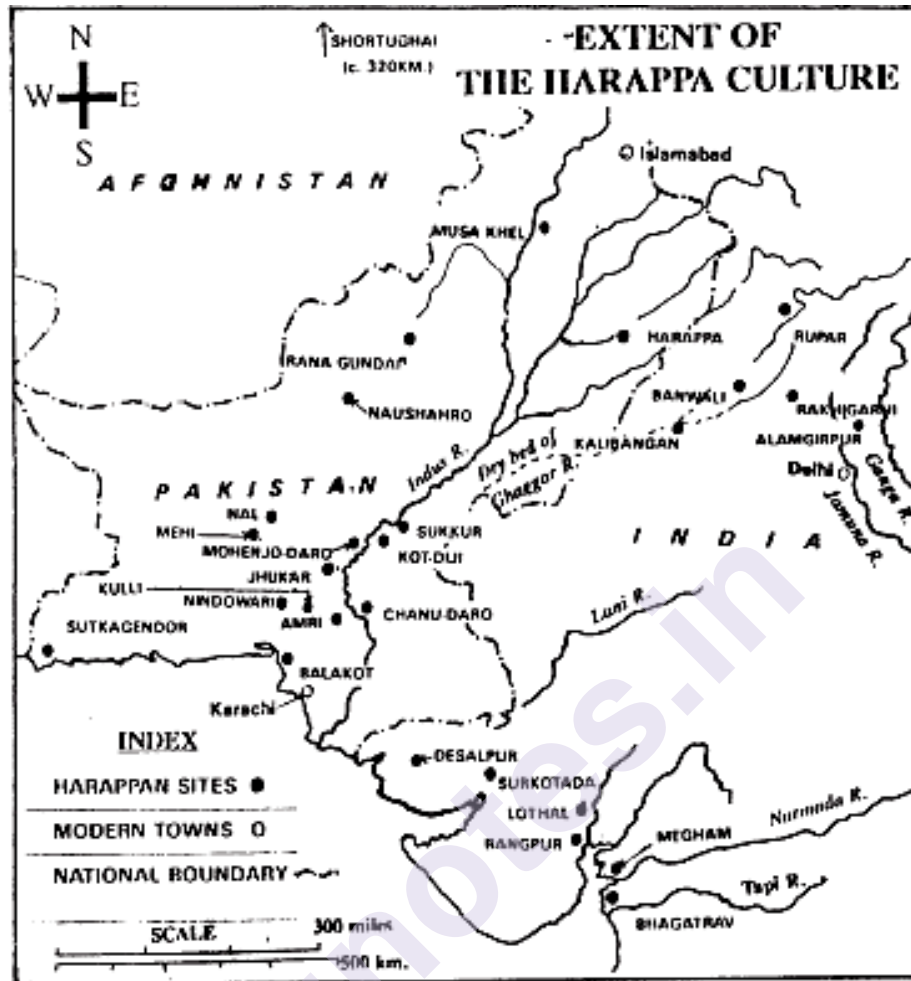
Recent excavations have indicated the extension of this culture even up to Maharashtra. The excavations at Diamabad in Maharashtra have proved that it was one of the centers of valley civilization.

#### 4.7.1 Some of the excavated sites of Indus Valley Civilization:



More than 60 sites in this large area have been located so far.

#### 4.7.2 Extent of the Indus Valley i.e. Harappa Culture:



This civilization belongs to the chalcolithic i.e. copper-bronze age of history. No trace of iron has been found.

From the above mentioned sites of Indus valley civilization we can conclude that this civilization had covered a very vast region that includes parts of modern Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. So far nearly one thousand sites of this culture have been discovered in the Indian Sub-continent. These sites are spread over the Sindh, Baluchistan, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and a site in Maharashtra. They are extended from Rupar at the foot of **simla hills** in the Narmada up to Diamabad in Maharashtra. These various sites represent early mature and late phases of this civilization. From a careful study of these sites we can study the different Stages of this culture.

##### **Mohenjo-Daro:**

The two prominent cities of the Indus valley civilization were Harappa and Mohenjo Daro. Mohenjo Daro i.e. 'Mound of the dead' is the local name to a high mound situated in the plains of Larkana dist. The surrounding region is so fertile and is called even today Nakhlistan or 'Garden of Sind'. Here a city was built some fivethousand years ago. This



city was successively destroyed and rebuilt no less than seven times, the inundation of the river Indus being perhaps the chief agency of destruction, but sometimes, the city remained in ruins for a considerable period before a new city rose upon them. Thus after the foundation of the city, many centuries passed before it was finally abandoned.

#### **Harappa:**

Harappa was another important city. These two towns were connecting also by land and their town planning was similar. Stuart Piggott is of the opinion that the towns of Mohenjo Daro and Harappa were the two capitals of the Indus Valley civilization. But in absence of more reliable evidence it will not be proper to accept the view.

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### **4.8 THE ARCHITECTS OF THE INDUS CIVILIZATION**

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The architects of this civilization were mostly of the Mediterranean race to which the Dravidians belonged. The only definite and reliable materials available are the human skeletal remains and the skulls which have been discovered in the ruins of the cities of the Indus civilization. From an examination of the skulls it has been found that the Indus people were the heterogeneous people and comprised Proto-Australoid, Mediterranean, Alpinoid and Mongoloid racial groups. In certain cities, however, one or the other racial type was more predominant than the others. For example, the Mohenjo Daro people were mainly Mediterranean type.

Most of the anthropologists and scholars prefer to name the Dravidians as the authors of the Indus civilization. However according to many other scholars the credit of this civilization was ascribed to groups such as the Dravidians, Brahuis, Sumerian, Panis, Asuras, Daras, Nagar, Aryans etc. However, majority of scholars accept the view that architects of this civilization were the Dravidians.

There are some scholars who try to show that the Aryans were the architects of the Indus valley civilization and link the civilization to the Vedic culture. According to them, the Aryans had entered India while the Indus civilization was at its peak and they also contributed to the advancement of the civilization. Dr. A.D. Pusalkar opines that the Indus valley civilization represented the synthesis of the Aryan and Non Aryan cultures.

In fact, the authorship of the Indus civilization cannot be ascribed to any particular race and the excavations have proved that a various social groups were existing there and the credit should be given to all of them.

### Check Your Progress:

1. Write an essay on the discovery and extent of the Indus Valley Civilization.

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## 4.9 SUMMARY

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In this lesson, we have studied about the Art and Architecture of the Indus Valley People. We have discussed about the sculptural art i.e. Terra cotta, Stone and Bronze sculpture, art of Pottery making, art of writing as depicted on the seals, etc. All their arts and crafts indicate high skill as well as advanced knowledge of several Sciences acquired by these People.

We have studied the architectural Skills that were developed by the Indus Valley People, discovered through the excavations. The excavations of various sites including Mohenjo Daro, Harappa, Kalibangan, Dholavira, etc. show that these were built according to well-thought out plans. Roads, streets, houses, underground drainage system found at Mohenjo Daro etc. are indicative of a highly advanced stage of Civilization.

The Big Hall, the Great Granary and the Great Bath are some of the outstanding monuments of these cities.

The excavations carried on since 1921 have brought to light the ruins of two ancient cities of the Indus Valley: Mohenjo Daro in Sind and Harappa in the Punjab (now both in Pakistan). More recent excavations have shown that this Civilization had spread over a vast area from Harappa to Lothal in Gujarat.

In this lesson, there are maps showing the excavated sites and the extent of the Indus valley Civilization. From these maps the students will be able to get clear idea about the geographical locations of the sites of ancient Civilization in the valley of River Indus and her tributaries and also as far as up to the Lothal and Rangpur in Gulf of Cambay. By studying this lesson, students will be able to know about the discovery and extent of this early Civilization popularly known as the Indus valley Civilization or Harappa Civilization.



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## 4.10 QUESTIONS

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1. Write an essay on the Art and Architecture of the Indus Valley People.
2. Write Short notes on :
  - a) The Seals of Indus Valley
  - b) Town Planning of Indus Valley.
  - c) Important Sites of Indus Valley Civilization.



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## VEDIC AGE POLITY, ECONOMY AND SOCIO- RELIGIOUS LIFE

### Unit Structure

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Advent of the Aryans in India (The Original Home theAryans)
- 5.3 The Sources of the Vedic Age - The Vedic Literature
- 5.4 Early Aryan Settlements and Expansion
- 5.5 Vedic Polity
  - 5.5.1 Tribal Organization
  - 5.5.2 Kingship
  - 5.5.3 Sabha and Samiti
  - 5.5.4 Other Officials
- 5.6 Economic Life
  - 5.6.1 Agriculture
  - 5.6.2 Domestication of animals
  - 5.6.3 Industries
  - 5.6.4 Trade and Commerce
- 5.7 Social Life
  - 5.7.1 Family
  - 5.7.2 Marriage
  - 5.7.3 Position of women
  - 5.7.4 Varnashrama Dharma System
- a) 5.8 The Four Varnas
- 5.8 Religion
  - 5.8.1 The Celestial Gods
  - 5.8.2 The Aerial Gods
  - 5.8.3 The Terrestrial Gods
- 5.9 The Rituals and Scarifies
- 5.10 Deities
- 5.11 Sacrifice and Rituals
- 5.12 Philosophy
- 5.13 Education and Literature
  - 5.13.1 Education
  - 5.13.2 Vedic Literature
- 5.14 Summary
- 5.15 Questions

### 5.0 OBJECTIVES

In this lesson we will be studying the Vedic Age that followed the Indus valley civilization. This is the period, about which we get the literary

sources for the study of history. The Vedic literature is the earliest records of the Aryans.

After studying this lesson you will be:

- 1) Able to know about the Vedic Aryans, their origin and expansion of their Settlements.
- 2) Able to understand their Polity or Political life.

In this lesson, we are going to study the socio structure of the Vedic Aryans. The Aryans evolved the social institutions such as family, marriage, Varnashrama system etc. during the early Vedic period. However, during the later Vedic period it was quite changed. Along with this changed social structure, we are going to study some other aspects of social life such as their food, drinks, dress and ornaments, their sports and pastimes etc.

The aspects economic life such as agriculture, occupations, their industries, trade and commerce etc. also will be discussed in this chapter.

The Objectives of this lesson are as follows -

- 1) To understand the religion and philosophy of the Vedic Aryans.
- 2) To study the system of education
- 3) To know about the Vedic Literature.

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## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

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The Vedic age is an important period in the history of India. The Vedic culture was evolved by the Vedic Aryas or Aryans. The classical civilization of India developed from the early Vedic civilization. The Vedic age can be studied on the available literary sources i.e. the Vedic literature.

According to Romila Thapar, "The Indus valley civilization declined the second millennium B.C. and had almost completely degenerated when (by 1500 B.C.) the Aryans entered the North West of India through the passes in the Hindukush Mountains"

The Aryans in India evolved a distinct culture commonly known as the Aryan culture. It spans over a period from around 1500 BC to around 700 BC and is divided into two viz. the early and the later Vedic period. The social organization existing during the early Vedic period began to change during the later period. Also many changes occurred in the economy from early Vedic to later Vedic period.

The religion of the Vedic Aryans was plain and simple. As a matter of fact, the Aryan civilization developed amidst nature, therefore nature had influenced all aspects of their life including their religion. The Aryans had deep reverence towards the forces of nature as human life was mainly depended on them.

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## 5.2 ADVENT OF THE ARYANS IN INDIA (THE ORIGINAL HOME OF THE ARYANS)

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The word Arya means 'noble', 'respected', 'high born', 'elderly', 'cultured' etc. The north India was referred as Aryavarta i.e. the country where the Aryans live. Who were these Vedic Aryans? From where did they come to India? What was their original home? These questions have not satisfactorily been answered.

Different scholars have put forward divergent theories regarding the original home of the Aryans. On the basis of striking similarity between the Latin, Zend Avesta and Sanskrit, there is unanimity of opinion about the common origin of these languages. It is believed that this language was spoken by the main Aryan tribe. In the early part of the second millennium B.C. these tribes began to migrate from their original homes and spread in Europe in Greece, eastern Turkey, the Caucasus and finally in to the sapta Sindhu region. Wherever they went they opened new cultural vistas and transformed the life of the lands they settled in.

The Aryans were adventurous, had knowledge of the use of the horses and could use iron. They brought a new language into India i.e. Sanskrit, which was the mother of Indo European languages. This migration must have spread over decades or centuries. The dispersal of the Aryans in India was not a single event. It took place in several stages covering several centuries and involving many tribes.

There are some scholars who do not accept this theory of Aryan migration from central Asia. Various scholars give different theories about their original home. Some of them are as follows:

- ❖ According to B.G. Tilak, the Aryans came from the arctic region in around 10,000 BC and gradually migrated to India around 4000 B.C.
- ❖ Pargiter believed that they came from Tibet.
- ❖ A.C. Das and some other scholars advocate that they were the original residents of Sapta Sindhu.
- ❖ Some scholars like Ganganath Jha are of the opinion that the original home of the Aryans was Brahmarshidesha.
- ❖ D.S. Trivedi placed it as Multan was their homeland; while L.D. Kalla held that Kashmir and the Himalayan regions may have been their home land.
- ❖ According to Mc- Donall the original home of the Aryans was south east Europe.

However the generally accepted theory about the original home of the Aryans as mentioned above is that the Aryans originally lived in central Asia. Great German scholar Max Muller also supports this view. He opines,

"During the course of time different Aryan tribes migrated to different parts such as Europe, Asia Minor and Persia.

This view is supported by the discovery of an inscription at Bog hazKoi, dated 1400 B.C.; which throws light on the age of the Rig- Veda. A treaty of the Hittite king of C.1380 B.C. mentions the Rig Vedic gods such as 'Indra', 'Mitra', 'Varuna'. This tablet also mentions some terms which are in pure Sanskrit. On the basis of this it has been proposed that, the Rig Vedic civilization was in considerably advanced stage around 1400 B.C. thus the Vedic Aryans came to India probably via Iran, through Hindukush Mountains about 1500 B.C.

They moved in tribes. They spoke Sanskrit language. The Vedic age spans almost a millennium of Indian history (1500-600 B.C.). It was a period which witnessed crucial changes in north India. These developments are evident in a number of spheres- social – economic, political and religious.

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### **5.3 THE SOURCES OF THE VEDIC AGE - THE VEDIC LITERATURE**

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To study the history of the early Vedic age, only the literary sources are available. The Early Vedic literature (which pertains to the period 1500-1000 B.C.), consists primarily of the Samhita of the Rig-Veda, comprising 1028 hymns (suktas) in praise of various gods, intended to be used as a means of invoking the deities and soliciting their support. These hymns are grouped into ten Mandalas or books.

The later Vedic literature belongs to a period C. 1000- 600 B.C. to which belong the remaining Vedas and their branches viz. the Yajurveda, the Atharvaveda, the Samaveda and the Brahmanas (are the explanatory prose manuals) the Aranyakas (forest books) and the Upanishadas (are commentaries appended to the Aranyakas).<sup>3</sup>

The Vedic literature has been traditionally held sacred because it is believed to have divine source. The Vedas, according to popular Indian perception are eternal (Nitya). The various sages (Rishis) who were their authors no more than received from god. The Vedas are transmitted orally from generation to generation.

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### **5.4 EARLY ARYAN SETTLEMENTS AND EXPANSION**

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The early Aryans knew Sapta-sindhu and the neighboring region. The geographical area eventually occupied by the Rig-Vedic tribes is clearly indicated by the mention of certain rivers. The most important among these are:

The Kubha (Kabul), the Suvastu (Swat), the Krumu (Kurram) and the Gomati (Gumal), the Sindhu (Indus), the Sushoma (Sohan), the Vitasta (Jhelam), the Asikini (Chenab), the Murud Vridha (Maruwardwan), the

Purushini (Ravi), the Vipasa (Bias), the Shatadru (Sutlaj), the Saraswati, the Drishadwati (the Rakshi or Chitang) the Jumna, the Ganga and the Sharayu.

The above mentioned rivers (in the Vedic literature) show that the Aryans possessed a considerable portion of the country stretching from eastern Afghanistan to the upper valley of the Ganga. The major part of this area came to be known as Sapta – Sindhu – the Land of the Seven Rivers.

Initially Aryans occupied the Punjab and the Delhi region while settling in India, the Aryans had to confront on one side within dense forests and the local inhabitants on the other. Among these non- Aryans, the Dasas are frequently mentioned in the Vedic literature that had developed an advanced civilization. They lived in fortified towns or Puras. There are references in the Rig-Veda to constant conflict between the Aryans and the Dasas. In these conflicts, the non-Aryans (i.e. Dasas) were defeated and the Aryans extended their settlements towards the east.

Panis were another prominent non-Aryan people who harassed the Aryans by cattle theft. Though, Aryans defeated & forced them to vacate their settlements, could not wipe out their culture which had deep roots in this soil. Consequently a gradual fusion of both these i.e. Aryan and non-Aryan cultures began and out of this synthesis, the Indian culture emerged. Besides their wars against the non-Aryans, inter-tribal wars also were fought by the Aryans such as the battle of Kurukshetra fought between king Yudhishthira of the Bharata tribe and the confederation of ten tribes led by Vishvamitra. The chief Aryan tribes that are mentioned in the **Rig-Veda** were the **Purus**, the **Yadus**, the **Turvasas**, the **Anus**, the **Drahus**, the **Bharatas** and the **Srinjayas**.

The later Vedic period seems to have witnessed the expansion of the Aryans as is evident from Punjab to nearly the whole of present day western Uttar- Pradesh covered by Ganga-Jamuna Doab. The **Bharatas** as and Purus, the two important tribes, came together and formed the Kuru people. From the fringes of the doab, they moved to its upper portion called Kurukshetra or the land of the Kurus. Later they coalesced with the Panchalas. Together with the Kurus, they occupied Delhi and the upper and middle parts of Ganga – Jamuna divide and established their capital at Hastinapur (Meerut District in Uttar Pradesh.)

Towards the end of the later Vedic period, Vedic people moved further east to Kosala in eastern U.P., Videha in north Bihar, and Magadha in south Bihar. Their territorial expansion was accompanied by important changes in the economy, including a shift from a predominantly pastoral to a predominantly agrarian economy, accompanied by changes in the socio political organization as well.

In course of time, they assimilated with some of the factors of the non-Aryan culture. This gave a new impetus to the developments of political, social and religious institutions.



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## 5.5 VEDIC POLITY

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### 5.5.1 Tribal Organisation:

The Aryans favored a monarchical form of Government. This had emerged through the evolution of the Patriarchal groups of tribal Organizations. The Chief of the tribe was the Patriarch. Due to the growing need for Protection of the most capable patriarch was elected as the Chief who gradually assumed kingship. At the beginning, kingship was elective but later on it became hereditary. In the Rig- Veda several tribes have been mentioned. There are references to tribal conflicts. The political organization was tribal in the beginning which gradually evolved to territorial state.

**Grama:** During the Rigvedic period, a group of related families was called grama, meaning village. Grama or village was the lowest administrative unit

**Kulapa:** Was the chief of family and Gramani was the village chief. The next higher units of administration were known as **Visha,**

**Jana and Rashtra.** However, the exact nature of the groups such as Jana and Visha are not yet clear.

During the **later Vedic period**, we see the changes that occurred in the political conditions. It was during this period, that the nature of the political organization gradually changed from tribal to the territorial state. The tendency of expanding the territories increased which led to gradual emergence of territorial states. During this period, the Aryans expanded their colonies in the Central and the Eastern part of North India which is referred to as 'Madhya Desha'. In this land new kingdoms were established such as Kashi, Kosala, Videha and Magadha which continued to prosper till the beginning of the historical period. There were several kingdoms big and small.

'**Rajya**', **Samrajya**, **Shoujya**, **Vairajya**', '**Svarajya**' etc. were some of the types ranging from small kingdoms to great empires.

### **Kingship:**

During the **early Vedic period**, the Aryans favored a monarchical form of government. The chief of the tribe was the patriarch. Due to the growing need for protection in the tribal organizations, the most capable patriarch was elected as the chief of the tribe, who gradually assumed kingship. At the beginning, kingship was elective but later on, it became hereditary. King was called 'Raja' but was not an absolute monarch.

During the **later Vedic period**, the increasing size of the kingdom strengthened than the earlier period. The theory of the 'divine character of kingship' emerged during the period.

The expansion of territories was not only defended but magnified. There are references that the kings assumed various titles such as

### **Ekrat, Samrat, Sarvabhouman, Maharajadhiraja.**

Samrat was a full sovereign, sarvabhauma or Ekrat was the emperor who aspired to be the king of the whole universe. The term Maharajadhiraja denotes that he is the great ruler, having rule over other kings.

Republics or Ganas also existed side by side. But monarchical form of government was accepted widely.

### **5.5.3 Sabha and Samiti (popular Assemblies):**

For the administrative purpose, king was assisted by some popular assemblies. During the **early Vedic period**, provision was made for the tribal councils.

These councils were known as Sabha and Samiti.

**The Sabha:** was a body of the tribal elders. It was an assembly of the distinguished great persons.

**The Samiti:** was a popular assembly, a representative body of the whole tribe.

**Sabhasad** was the member of the Sabha was greatly respected. Gramani, the representative of grama was also included in the assembly.

The Sabha and Samiti exerted high influence on the king. Even his accession to the throne was to be approved by them. These bodies worked as powerful checks on the power of the king & protected the interests of people.

During the **later Vedic period** the popular control over the king was still exercised by Sabha and Samiti. They are referred to in the later Vedic literature with more respect. They are described as the twin daughters of prajapati (i.e. the creator). This reference is suggestive of the increasing importance of these two assemblies.

### **5.5.4 Other officials.**

During **early Vedic period**, king was assisted by purohit and senani.

**Purohit** was a learned man who guided the king and people in all matters of religion, social customs, law, morality etc.

**Senani** was the leader of the army.

During the **later Vedic period**, the body of administrative officials of the state was also expanded in addition to purohit and senani of the early Vedic period, there were-

– Sangrahitri	– the treasurer
– Bhagadhuka	– the tax collector
– Suta	– herald or charioteers
– Ksatri	– chamberlain
– Akshavapa	– superintendent of gambling
– Palagala	– courier
– Gramani	– The chief of the village.
– Sachiva	– A minister or head of a department is alsomentioned in later Vedic literature.

Thus there existed a regular system of administration. The king was now assisted by a council of above mentioned ministers who were designated as Ratnins. The Ratnins played a very significant role at the time of king's coronation. Later on the council of Ratnins gave place to the council of ministers.

Administration of Justice was one of the most important duties of king. But usually, the disputes were settled in the village through the arbitrator (Madhyamasi) crimes of theft, robbery, murders etc. were condemned and punished with heavy fines such as vairadeya and shatadaya. Failure to repay debts often resulted in slavery.

During the later Vedic period, the administration of justice was more elaborate. Of course, small cases of village decided by the Village council. A Village judge was appointed for this, designated as Gramyavadin. Arbitration was the usual method in all civil cases. The local assembly usually entrusted the work of judicial administration to small body of its members. Adhyakshas or presidents of the boards of justice were appointed by the king and the final authority in the administration of justice was king (with his Sabha) himself.

Village administration enjoyed the autonomous status. Administration of justice, election, education, police arrangements at village level were all managed by the village councils.

With expansion of the territories, the beginning of a system of provincial administration is found during this period.

### **Check Your Progress:**

1. Write an essay on the Political life of the Vedic Aryans.

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## 5.6 ECONOMIC LIFE

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The Rigvedic Aryans were mostly scattered in villages. The village was the base of early Vedic economy. The Aryan village was a group of families. The family affairs were managed by kulapati. The Gramani was the head of the village, who looked after the affairs of the village both civil and military.

The Aryans cleared forests, cultivated lands and built houses of mud and bamboo. Agriculture and cattle rearing were the chief occupations of the early Vedic Aryans. There are many references to agriculture and the pastoral pattern of life.

### 5.6.1 Agriculture:

Fields were ploughed with the help of oxen. The art of tilling was considered to be very important. Cultivated fields were known as 'Urvara' or (kshetra) these cultivable lands were irrigated by means of canals.

The use of manure was also known. Wheat, barley, rice, cotton and oilseeds were the main agricultural products. The grain was grown on the soil and when ripe, they were cut with sickle, tied in bundles and threshed on the floor of the granary. Different stages of the harvest such as reaping of the crop, bundling, thrashing and winnowing etc. are all described in the Rigveda.

### 5.6.2 Domestication of animals:

The cattle breeding or domestication of animals was another important occupation of the Vedic Aryans. Among the domestic animals, mention may be made of the cattle, horse, dog, sheep, goat etc. Cows were held in much esteem and milk formed an important part of the dietary in the Vedic household. Cattle were daily led to the pasture by the Gopa (Cowherd). The importance of cow made it a medium of economic transition.

Other useful animals were the draught — ox, the horse, the dog, the goat, the sheep and the ass all were domesticated by Vedic Aryans.

During the later Vedic period, agriculture continued to be the main occupation, and was considerably developed. Implements of agricultural operations were greatly improved. The introduction of manures and improved techniques of agriculture increased the rate and varieties of agricultural products. There are references of the ploughs drawn by six, eight, twelve and even twenty — four oxen. Usually, people belonging to a single family worked together and agriculture was a common enterprise.

Rice, wheat and barley were the chief crops. Cotton, several minor crops and oil seeds were grown. Vegetable, fruits etc. were in abundance.

During the later Vedic period, cattle continued to be the chief source of wealth and were held in much esteem and were most useful and

were called a goddess. Bulls also were regarded as sacred animals, buffalo, goat and sheep were other domesticated animals.

The later Vedic period marks the beginning of landed aristocracy. The growing economic prosperity and the increase in man power are other important features of the later Vedic period.

### **5.6.3 Industries:**

The Rigvedic Aryans followed a mixed pastoral and agricultural economy. Being an agricultural community, Aryans had developed all the crafts, necessary for the profession. Many craftsmen are mentioned in the Rigveda. They are the carpenter, the potter, the weaver, the tanner, metal workers, chariot makers etc. their services were essential for agriculture. There were the village industries which produced commodities of agricultural and domestic use. The village was thus self-dependent.

Metals like gold, silver, copper and bronze were known to them. The metal workers designed all types of weapons, implements and household utensils. 'A-yas' which in later Sanskrit meant iron is found in Rigveda. However, this A'yas may have been copper, bronze or iron.

Among the cottage industries, spinning, weaving, sewing, making of mats from grass or reeds etc. were chiefly done by women.

During the later Vedic period, there was considerable progress in economic life. Agriculture provided work for several artisans. The number of occupations was fairly large during this period. The village was a self-sufficient unit and developed a corporate life. The society was properly organized and therefore, maintained a high standard of efficiency. The production of wealth increased, which added to their prosperity. On the whole, the Aryans in later Vedic period were both industrious and prosperous.

### **5.6.4 Trade and Commerce:**

The Rigvedic hymns clearly indicate that trade and commerce was known to the people of early Vedic age. Commerce was largely in the hands of the people known as VW, who were probably non-Aryans. Generally barter system was followed. Cow was a measure of wealth as well as the medium of exchange. Nishka' a gold coin of later time is mentioned in the Rigveda as a sort of currency. It was used as ornament also.

Whether any maritime trade was carried on during the early Vedic period is a matter of controversy. Barter was still in practice particularly in villages. Cow was used as a unit of measurement of value. Nana' was a weight unit. Trade was carried by both land as well as sea route. The later Vedic period also saw the onward march of internal and external trade. Rich trading centers like Kashi, Mathura, Ayodhya emerged on the riverine routes and formed the rural life into urban.



The chief means of transport by land were chariots (Ratha) and the wagons (anas). The rathas were drawn by horses while theanas by oxen.

During the later Vedic period, people belonging to different professions began to organize themselves into different groups. The 'Guilds' were known as 'Shrenr of artisan craftsmen and merchants are mentioned.

Thus in the later Vedic period, the Aryans began to live an organized and settled social and economic life. As the society expanded, the economic activities increased. A remarkable progress was seen in the field of agriculture, trade industry and occupations. The prosperity led to the rich and varied tests of life, which was reflected in the dress, jewellery, amusements and pastime etc.

**Check Your Progress:**

1. Write an essay on the Social life of the Vedic Aryans with special reference to the Varnashrama Dharma.

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## **5.7 SOCIAL LIFE**

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Before coming to India the Aryans were pastoral. After coming to the land of Sapta Sindhu' (i.e. valley of seven rivers) they took to agriculture. This resulted into the beginning of a settled life. Now they gradually developed their social institutions. The family was regarded as the primary social and political unit.

### **5.7.1 Family:**

The foundations of the social life of the Vedic Aryans was the 'kula<sup>s</sup> or family. It was a joint family in which the partriarch or the eldest male member was the chief. He was referred to as 'Grihapati'. He enjoyed absolute control over his children and exercised full powers over all the members of the family.

The family discipline was strict. Sometimes he had to inflict harsh punishment to wrong doing members. Normally, the Vedic family was quitted large, several members of the family along with their children lived under a common roof. They performed their common duties and worshipped in common their family deity. Every house had a fireplace i.e. 'Agnishala', a sitting room and other rooms. The patriarch and his wife performed all religious sacrifices.

The Vedic family was quite large and nearly three to four generations living together in it. The family shouldered the responsibility of looking after the widows and weak persons of the family. This set up of the joint family proved to be very useful for their agricultural occupation.

### **5.7.2 Marriage:**

Marriage came to be an important social institution. Marriage was an important 'samskara'. The boys and girls had considerable freedom in choosing their spouses. During the early Vedic period, childmarriage did not exist.

Monogamy was the general rule, however, polygamy certainly prevailed and polyandry and intermarriages are also referred to. There are also references of remarriage of widows.

Marriage was regarded as a samskara and the beginning of Grihasthashrama. It was supposed to be the most creative stage of life. Marriage was supposed to be essential because it enabled a person to continue the family line.

There were healthy restrictions on the institution of marriage. Marriage between father and daughter, brother and sister, and mother and son were forbidden. Cases of giving dowry by fathers of disabled girls and high bride price offered by ugly looking men have been referred to in the Vedic literature. During the Early Vedic period, the custom of sati was unknown.

During the later Vedic period also the institution of marriage continued to play the same role. But certain rigid conditions were laid down for marriages.

The Smritis i.e. the later Vedic literature had recognized the following eight forms of marriages. The rituals of vivaha were generally followed by majority of people. But in certain circumstances, they could not be followed strictly. Caste marriage had become an important tradition and still inter caste marriages did take place.

These intercaste marriages were approved in two types: -

- a) Anuloma Vivaha in which the groom belongs to the higher caste and the bride to lower caste and,
- b) Pratiloma Vivaha in which the bride belonged to higher caste and the groom lower caste.

Legalized marriages in different castes were classified in eight forms which were known as 'Ashtavivaha Prakara'. They were:-

- i) Brahma Vivaha
- ii) Prajapatya Vivaha
- iii) Daiva Vivaha
- iv) Arsha Vivaha
- v) Asura Vivaha
- vi) Paishacha Vivaha
- vii) Rakshasa Vivaha
- viii) Gandharva Vivaha

All these eight forms were recognized but the first four of them i.e. Brahma Vivaha, Daiva Vivaha, Arsha Vivaha and Prajapatya Vivaha were regarded as ideal. The rest were recognized under unavoidable circumstances.

### **5.7.3 Position of women:**

Women enjoyed equal status to men during early Vedic period. A married woman was well respected in the household of her husband. She participated in the sacrificial offerings at home. Girls were educated like boys as is evident from the examples of scholarly women like Apala, Ghosala, Lopamudra, Sikta etc. whose compositions were included in the Vedic texts. Married women had the right over their bridal gifts or parinaya.

Women could move freely and were not secluded from the daily activities. She attended feasts and festivals.

Widows could either remarry or was permitted to co-habit with her brother in law until the birth of a son. This system was known as 'Niyoga'.

During the later Vedic period, the status of women began to deteriorate. Their activities came to be restricted to the household. She was respected as equal with her husband in the performance of social and religious activities, but outside liberties came to an end. She was expected to be obedient and subservient to her husband.

The other factor in lowering the status of women's was Polygamy. The freedom, given to girls to marry at a matured age and their choice in selecting their life partners was withdrawn. Introduction of the evil custom i.e. sati and the general tendency against widow remarriage and Niyoga made their life still miserable. This resulted into increasing preference to get male children. Instances of learned women like Gargi are found in the later Vedic literature but was an exception in general, the restrictions were imposed on female education and their participation in social, political and religious activities. Child marriages came in vogue. During this period, she was confined to the household duties only. Women lost their high social status, as they enjoyed during the early Vedic period, never to get it again, till the beginning of modern age.

### **5.7.4 Varnashrama Dharma System:**

**a) The Four Varnas:**

During the early Vedic period, the four-fold Varna system was virtually absent. The 'varna' actually denoted colour or complexion. It was initially used to distinguish the fair skinned Aryans from the dark complexioned non Aryans. The society was divided into four strata, based on the occupation and profession of an individual and not on birth. In the Rig-Veda, we do not find any caste consciousness. There are only fourteen references to Brahmins, nine to Kshatriyas, and one to the Shudras. The first reference to the Varna system occurs in the purushasukta hymn of the tenth mandala of the Rigveda. Here, the society is compared to a giant organism, the 'Viratpurusha' and the four Varnas the Brahmanas, the Kshatriya, the Vaishya and the Shudra to its organs the head, arms, trunk and the feet respectively.

There was no rigidity in the caste system during the early Vedic period. Any person was free to choose his own profession inter marrying and inter dining was common. There were major divisions of society:

- i) **Brahmins**- the priests
- ii) **Kshatriyas**- the Aristocrats or warriors,
- iii) **Vaishya** or common people.

These Varnas had come into existence on the basis of the principle of divisions of labor.

All these Varnas were known as Dvija or twice born. The Varna or caste of a person was determined on the basis of his own profession. Later, another class was added that was the class of **Dasus** or **Dasas** which consisted of persons with dark skin, and were mainly non-Aryans. Therefore, it was regarded as an inferior class.

During the later Vedic period, the Varna system, which was flexible earlier, became rigid. The four Varnas i.e. classes of the society, were now taken in the sense of castes. This period witnessed gradual hardening of the caste system and deterioration of the position of the Vaishya and Shudras in relation to the Brahmanas and Kshatriyas.

The Shudras, who were the conquered non- Aryans, were kept under the state of subjugation. They remained excluded from the status of the Aryans. The Smritis of the later Vedic period emphasized on the rigidity of the caste system due to which the evil principles of untouchability crept in to this system. Consequently the two upper castes i.e. Brahmins and Kshatriyas enjoyed a much higher social status than the Vaishya and Shudras. They enjoyed several privileges such as exemption from taxes and favorite treatment before law. The functions or duties of the each Varna were:

- 1) **The Brahmanas:** was the teacher, priest of the sacrifice and receiver of gifts.

- 2) **The Kshatriya-** he was the protector of all within the state. He collected taxes, he had to perform duties of education, offering gifts, ruling and protecting the country.
- 3) **The Vaishya:** The Vaishya did agriculture, remained engaged in commerce and did all other allied works to raise wealth. These three Varnas were the Dvija, the twice born, meaning educated and disciplined.
- 4) **The Shudra:** This class failed in acquiring education and did the work of serving the three upper classes. He worked as washer man, painter or blacksmith etc. against the service charges.

#### b) **The Four Ashrams:**

The institution of Ashrams is a unique contribution of the Aryan society. The success of the Varna system is based on individuals who are duty conscious. This institution was introduced during the later Vedic period, to regulate the life of an individual.

The aim of the life was described as **Purushartha'** i.e. a fourfold principles. Every person was to perform the four Purushartha or noble aims in his life. They were-

- i) **Dharma** meaning righteous way of living and piety.
- ii) **Artha** meaning acquiring wealth by honest means.
- iii) **Kama** means the desire for enjoyment. It means enjoying worldly pleasures and promoting arts.
- iv) **Moksha** means the spiritual freedom, the self-realization, and the salvation of soul.

To achieve these noble aims during the lifetime, life was divided into the four Ashramas of twenty five years. Ashrama, literally means, "Making an effort" the implication was that at every stage one should do one's best to have the best of the life.

#### **The four Ashrams were:**

##### 1) **Brahmacharyashrama :**

This was the first stage of human life which began with the performance of the Upanayana ceremony. It was regarded as spiritual birth, as distinguished from the physical which he had from his parents. He was now a dvija. With it began his educational career. A person was expected to observe celibacy and devote himself to study. During this stage, he lived with his teacher till the completion of education. This stage continued up to the age of 20 to 25 years.

##### 2) **Grihashthashrama :**

The Grihashthashrama of a person began with his marriage. This was the most important stage of life. He was expected to fulfill his social obligations to gods, parents and to his children. He was supposed to perform three Purushartha of Dharma, Artha and Kama. Every person had to repay the three debts to



- a) Gods,
- b) Rishis and
- c) Ancestors.

He could repay or release himself from the debt to gods by performing yajna (sacrifice), to pitaras (ancestors) by raising offspring and to the Rishis by observing continence on parvan days.

In this stage material well-being was given due importance. He was to earn money through righteous means, to get children to continue the line of family and observe piety. An individual was expected to lead the life of pious households.

### **3) Vanaprasthashrama:**

When man crossed the age limit of 50, after the children needed no further parental care and attention and had settled down, he was expected to prepare himself for retirement from the worldly life by giving up sexual pursuits and living in forests. At this stage of progressive retirement, he lived a simple life and subsisted on corn, fruit and vegetable.

### **4) Sanyasashrama:**

The stage commenced at the age of seventy five. A sanyasi lived a detached social life. He was expected to retire completely from worldly life and lead the life of a seclude. His mission was to impart high spiritual education to all. He was expected to observe complete austerity to get salvation.

This system of Ashrams emphasized the social obligations of the individual. During the course of all four stages, there was scope for individual development coupled with social service. Thus the individual as well as social interests were harmonized.

In the view of K.V.R. Aiyangar, " Indian society was kept from disintegration by the sublime conception of the scheme of varna and Ashrama, which gave its women and men a clear vision of spiritual winning post and showed them how to order their lives and mould their actions in order that they may, in the fullness of time, or even in this life itself, triumphantly reach it."

### **5.7.5 Dress and ornaments :**

During the early Vedic period, people used two garments. The lower garment was known as Vasa and the upper Adhivasa. An undergarment known as Nivi was also introduced during the later Vedic period. The garments were made of wool, cotton and silk and were also dyed. Head-dress, the turban was used by both men and women. Both plaited their hair.

Men wore beards Shaving was also prevalent among men. Both men and women were fond of ornaments. The ornaments of common use were

the pravarta (ear- rings) and the Nistika and Rukma were the neck ornaments, rings and jewels, armlets and anklets.

#### 5.7.6 Food and Drinks:

Various dietary preparations of rice, barley, milk and ghee are mentioned in Vedic literature. Meat, fruits and vegetables also were the chief eatables of the early Vedic Aryans. In the later Vedic period, beans and sesame were introduced. The common intoxicant drink was sura. Its use was often condemned as leading to the quarrel. Another intoxicating drink was soma. Soma was a juice of plant which was consumed even at the time of sacrifices, whereas sura was liquor probably prepared from grains.

#### 5.7.7 Sports and pastimes:

The amusements of the Vedic people included the chariot race, gambling, hunting music and dancing. Dice was a favorite pastime. There are frequent references to musical instruments such as Vina, Dundubhi, flute, lute etc. both men and women could participate in dancing during the early Vedic period. Festive gatherings were a sort of entertainment, and were commonly attended by men and women.

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### 5.8 RELIGION

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The Aryans worshipped nature gods representing the forces of nature are mentioned in the Rigvedic hymns. The total number of gods was 33 and they lived in three spheres. These were

1. The Terrestrial Gods,
2. The Aerial Gods,
3. The Celestial Gods.

The Rigveda mentions prayers to Gods such as the Sun, the Moon, the Sky, the Dawn, Thunder and Air.

#### 5.8.1 The Celestial Gods:

The Celestial Gods of the Aryans ❖ Were the God of vast blue sky, the shining God of heaven?  
 were the Dyaus, Varuna, Mitra, ❖ The sky god was regarded as god of truth and upholder of physical and moral values symbolized in Rita. He was the regulator of the whole universe. He controlled activities of other Gods.  
 Surya, Savitri, Pushan, Vishnu, ❖  
 Aditi, Usha and Ashwins  
 etc. **Dyaus Varuna**

#### **Vishnu**

- ❖ Is credited to have covered the whole universe in 3 strides. During later period he occupied the prime position of Varuna. He was the symbol of swift movement.

#### **Rudra and Marut Solar deities**

- ❖ Were Gods of storm and winds?
- ❖ Surya was the chief solar deity providing light, life, wealth and energy. He activated the

people. The solar God was worshipped in various forms such as Surya, Mitra, Savitri, Ashwins, Pushan and Aditi.

**Mitra Aditi Usha**

- ❖ was God of light
- ❖ Female deity relieving man from bondage.
- ❖ The dawn, female deity corresponding with beautiful early morning.

**Ashwins Pushan**

- ❖ Were the physicians of God and
- ❖ Was the charioteer Surya and protecting deity of roads.

### 5.8.2 The Aerial Gods:

Among the atmospheric Gods Indra is the most prominent deity. Nearly one fourth of the hymns of Rigveda are devoted for the praise of this deity. He was regarded as the protector of the Gods and therefore occupied the prominent position among the Vedic deities.

**Rudra** — was the deity associated with thunder and storm and regarded as fierce, mighty and auspicious

**Marut and Vayu** — were other Gods of storm and wind. **Parjanya** — was the God of rain.

### 5.8.3 The Terrestrial Gods:

These were Gods on earth also. They were Agni, Soma, and Saraswati Etc.

#### **Agni:**

Was regarded as the chief deity among the terrestrial Gods. He was next to Indra. He was treated as a messenger who conveyed the ablutions to heavenly Gods which were offered by the people at the time of sacrifices.

#### **Soma:**

Is another deity who inspired literary qualities and protected plants and forests. Soma is also identified with Moon who is associated with vegetation.

#### **Saraswati:**

At first was regarded as the river Goddess, but later on as Goddess of learning.

Among other deities on the earth mention may be made of Prajapati, Vishwakarma, Dhatri, Vidhatri, Shraddha and Manju.

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## 5.9 THE RITUALS AND SACRIFICES

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The Aryans needed the favors from these Gods. They pleased these deities by reciting the prayers. Prayers played an important role during the early Vedic period. Prayers were offered individually and collectively.

The ritual of sacrifice is another important feature of Vedic religion. During the early Vedic period it was simple and could be performed by anyone without the mediation of priests. A number of domestic and public sacrifices are mentioned in the Rigveda. In a simple sacrifice, every Aryan couple offered milk, grain, ghee, flesh and soma to their Gods. Through Agni, for which they used to light sacrificial fire for the sacrifice (Yajna). Chanting of mantras, animals sacrifice, drinking of soma rasa were parts of the rituals.

During the later Vedic period great changes took place in the religious life of the people. Religion developed into two different aspects - towards sacrificial ceremonies and rituals and other towards philosophical thoughts.

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## 5.10 DEITIES

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The later Vedic Aryans continued to worship earlier deities and also added some more to the list. Old deities like Varuna and Indra were now replaced by Rudra, Vishnu and Prajapati. Rudra (Shiva, Mahadeva or Pashupati) became a more popular God. The worship and adoration of the trinity Gods namely Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva with their consorts Saraswati, Lakshmi and Parvati became a common feature. The religion continued to be polytheistic, but the monotheistic tendencies were becoming marked with the passage of time.

Appearance of semi deities such as the Apsaras, Gandharvas and Kinnaras and the adoption of animal worship are another change of this period. Earlier deity Rudra was now accepted as Mahadeva. The acceptance of Rudra as Mahadeva and the introduction of animal and snake worship were probably the impact of the Indus Valley civilizations. Sorcery, witchcraft and superstitions were new elements entered into the Aryan religion. Atharvaveda contains prayers, verses related with these subjects. Mantras or magic charms giving victory in war and relief from diseases are mentioned in the Atharvaveda.

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## 5.11 SACRIFICES AND RITUALS

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To win favours or boons of the Gods in order to live a happy, healthy, long and wealthy life, the Rigvedic Aryans worshipped the Gods by performing prescribed sacrifices under the guidance of learned priests. They offered milk, honey, grains, ghee, flesh and soma to the Gods and sung collectively the hymns of Rigveda in which the power and nature of different gods is praised.

The ritual of sacrifice is an important characteristic of the Vedic religion. During the early Vedic period it was simple and therefore could be performed by anyone without the mediation of the priests. Number of domestic and public sacrifices is mentioned in the Rigveda. In a simple sacrifice, every Aryan couple offered milk honey, grains, ghee, etc. to their Gods through Agni i.e. fire, for which they used to light sacrificial fire for the sacrifice.

During the later Vedic period the institution of sacrifice became very predominant and several rituals and ceremonies were introduced at the time of their performance. Members of the later Vedic society who performed sacrifices needed the guidance of several competent priests. The elaboration of these rituals resulted into the indispensability of the priests for performing sacrifices. The multiplied number of sacrifices and elaboration of their rituals made their performance complicated and expensive. Certain sacrifices lasted for several years and required several priests. Consequently the religion during this period became very costly and monopoly of wealthy priests began.

To guide the life of the people during the later Vedic or Hindu society on the path of morality, the spiritual thinkers laid down nearly 40 rites i.e. samskara performed by them in course of their life under the guidance of priests.

Some of the most important sanskaras are given below.

1. Garbhadhana
2. Pumsamvana
3. Simantannayana
4. Jatakarma
5. Namakarana
6. Anna- Prashana.
7. Chudakarma
8. Upanayana
9. Vidyarambha
10. Vivaha
11. Antesti etc.

For performing the rites and rituals. A priest was necessary. The complicated method of performing rituals increased the importance of priestly class. These priests were known as purohit. In course of time priests became guardians and protectors as also the guides of the religion of common people. In addition to rituals several festivals were observed.

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## 5.12 PHILOSOPHY

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During the early Vedic period, the Aryans worshipped different Gods. However, they regarded those Gods as manifestations of one God who has created the Universe. In the tenth Mandala of the Rigveda the

multiplicity of Gods has been questioned and the ultimate unity of the universe is ascribed by one God. Thus initially polytheism prevailed but gradually monotheistic tendencies developed.

The Vedic Aryans were in favour of enjoying the world. But at the same time man was advised to lead a virtuous life leading him after his death to heaven. Ideal moral life according to Rigvedic Aryans was that of offering prayers performing rites and living with virtue. During the later Vedic period, Hinduism achieved all its characteristics. Prayer, worship of God and sacrifices were the chief religious duties. Truth or reality was the goal of life. Everyone was bound by a common search for truth. Purity of life and conduct were stressed. Fourfold Purushartha i.e. Dharma, Artha, Karma and Moksha were regarded as the guiding principles of life. The Vedas were authority on religious ideals but experienced through learning and reflection was their real basis.

The theory of relief and doctrine of Karma was also developed. To escape the cycle of life and death, man must realize the nature of 'Brahman'. Sacrifice and rituals were the means of improving conduct of an individual and conscious approach to religion. Every Aryan had 3 primary duties to be performed:

1. Adhyayana (learning)
2. Yajna (sacrifice)
3. Dana (charity)

A Brahman had 3 more duties to perform. They were

- 1) Adhyapana (teaching)
- 2) Yajna (supervising sacrifices)
- 3) Pratigraha (receipt of gifts)

The Upanishads are main philosophical works. They provided material to all different schools of philosophy developed during the later Vedic period. They evolved the theories of creation of universe and doctrines of Karma and soul. The doctrine of Moksha leading to the state of rebirthlessness and deathlessness in another important development of this period. The important thoughts evolved during this period are Nyaya Vaisheshi, Sankhya, Yoga, Mimamsa and Vedanta. They discuss the philosophical problems raised in the Upanishads and Sutras.

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## **5.13 EDUCATION AND LITERATURE**

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### **5.13.1 Education:**

The Vedic Aryans had given great attention to learning and education. Education was obligatory to each and every person. In early Vedic period, education was characterized by simplicity. The home of the sage i.e. Rishi was the center of learning, which functioned as a Vedic school. It was known as Guru Kula. In fact, the house of the teacher was the first school known to the man. The studentship commenced with the Upanayana ceremony. In the Gurukulas, hymns composed by the Rishis were orally



transmitted as the art of writing was not developed. Emphasis was laid on enunciation (purity of speech) and pronunciation proficiency in these was regarded a mark of high culture. The Guru Kula system was characterized by strict discipline by the pupils and performance of their duties (Dharma). Some of the duties of the students or pupils were collecting fuel for the sacrificial fire, learning the Vedas, looking after the cattle of Guru, practicing austerities and control of senses etc. A pupil could stay in the Guru Kula for twelve years or more. Education was regarded as a continuous process. The student had to serve the teacher and obey him. Due to constant touch with the teacher the students could build their characters and were properly disciplined. Truth speaking, observance of piety, devotion to gods, teachers and parents and charity was supposed to be the essential virtues for students. Besides recitation of the Vedas, there were discussions among eminent touring scholars and learned students, which enlarged the scope of education. Vedic literature, grammar, logic, astronomy, astrology, ethics and archery were the main subjects taught and studied.

The teacher did not charge any fee but those who could pay offered 'Guru Dakshina' to their teacher, at the end of their education.

The subjects taught were "The Veda Samhita, Itihasa and Purana described as the fifth Veda, Vyakarna, Rasi or science of numbers, Nidhi, explained as mineralogy. Tarka shastra or science of Logic, Bhuta-vidya i.e. biology, Shastra Vidya (Military science) Nakshatra vidya, i.e. astronomy and Ayurveda, i.e. medicine. The aim of education was to achieve success both in secular and spiritual life. Thus it was started to be Shraddha (faith), Medha (retention of knowledge acquired), Praja (Progeny), Dhana (wealth) Ayuh (longevity), and Amritatva (immortality).

The higher knowledge in philosophy and religion was imparted to a selected few. The education began with the study of Vedas and Upanishadas. Methods of teaching were both interesting and convincing. Several passages in the Upanishadas indicate a high standard of learning, direct method of instruction, close relations between the teacher and his students and a wide range of subjects taught. The student got a thorough moral and intellectual training by his constant association with his Guru.

The highest position in society was occupied by the intellectual aristocracy. The Brahmins were highly respected for their intellectual work. However, the Kshatriyas also were enjoying the learning of the Vedas. Kshatriya kings like Janaka were famous for their learning and were respected by all including the Brahmanas. Women education was not neglected theoretically at least. Wife was still given a high position in a family. There are also references to women teachers, who possessed the highest spiritual knowledge. Some women like Gargi and Maitreyi were learned and could challenge Yajnavalkya, the greatest philosopher of the age.

There were many centers of Vedic learning, which evolved different schools of thoughts. Vedic scholars exchanged their views by occasional assemblies under the patronage of generous and enlightened kings. Debates were commonly held to discuss difficult problems of philosophy and religion. The teacher was the chief figure in the system of learning; teachers led an ideal life and maintained a high moral character. Instruction was oral and therefore the students were at the mercy of the teachers. Student had to learn by service and observation.

The Student's life was not easy, he had to do all sorts of manual labour as mentioned earlier. The teacher taught the students for many years and when he was satisfied about the attainments of the students gave him last sermon and usually known as Snatakopadesha (advice to the graduate). In this sermon a snataka (a graduate) was told the basic principles of the individual's behavior in society. He was asked to speak the truth, to live according to Dharma, to regard parents, elders and teachers as gods to practice charity, to observe nonviolence and such other principles with constitute 'Samanya Dharma'.

#### **5.13.1 Vedic literature:**

The contribution of the Vedic Aryans to the growth of literature is most important. The size and quality of their literary works proclaim the greatness of the people. The fact that the literary works were learnt and taught by oral method speaks about their devotion to literature learning and teaching. The Vedic literature is already mentioned in unit no.2 of our book. They are as follows.

#### **The Vedas:**

1. The Rigveda
2. The Yajurveda
3. The Samaveda
4. The Atharva veda

#### **The commentaries on the Vedas: -**

There are three types of commentaries: -

- 1) Brahmanas
- 2) Aranyakas
- 3) Upanishadas

#### **Vedangas:**

The Vedangas were composed to systematic study of the Vedic literature. They are regarded as the limbs of Vedas. They are six in number and are as follows:

- |   |          |                            |
|---|----------|----------------------------|
| 1 | Shiksha  | – The Science of Phonetics |
| 2 | Kalpa    | – Rites and rituals        |
| 3 | Vyakarna | – Grammar                  |
| 4 | Nirukta  | – Etymology                |
| 5 | Chhandas | – Meters                   |
| 6 | Jyotisha | – Astronomy                |

Out of the Six Vedangas, the Shiksha and Kalpa are considered to be very important. They help us to understand the text of the Vedas.

Upavedas or supplementary Vedas Consist of some more Sciences like -

- |    |            |                     |
|----|------------|---------------------|
| 1  | Ayurveda   | – Medicine,         |
| 2  | Dhanurveda | – Archery,          |
| 3) | Shilpa     | – Architecture etc. |

**Sutra literature:** - is divided into 3 groups:-

- Shrouta (Ritual)
- Grihya (Domestic ceremonies)
- Dharma (law). They discuss all social problems several scholars like Manu, Vishnu, Yajnavalkya and Narada have written elaborate commentaries on this. These works form the basis of Hindu law.

Thus Vedic literature is very wide in scope and quite deep in insight and analysis.

### **Smriti Literature:**

The Smritis were the treatises written by different Rishis. The Smritis deal with religion, rituals, Philosophy, and Codes to be observed by the different castes. The Smritis were known after the author such as Manusmriti, Yajnavalkya Smriti, Narada Smriti and Vishnu Smriti.

### **Puranas:**

The Puranas were the old narratives of the bards to which Brahmanical Priests had made additions from time to time. They received their present form during the Gupta Period. Puranas are eighteen in number and equal number of Upapuranas. In general, the Puranas deal with the evolution of the Universe, genealogies of gods and sages and traditional history of royal families.

### **The Epics:**

The Ramayana and the Mahabharata are two great epics. The authorship of these two epics is ascribed to Valmiki and Vyas. The theme of Ramayan is the conflict between Rama and Ravana. It contains the history of the Ikshvaku dynasty to which Rama belonged and deals with Aryan Penetration into South India.

The Mahabharata gives an account of the dynastic quarrel of the Kauravas and Pandavas and its culmination into a war. It also gives us an idea of the mutual rivalries of the Ar<sup>y</sup>an tribes. It contains the Gita, a divine advice of lord Krishna to Arjuna.

**Check Your Progress:**

1. Write an essay on the religious life of the Vedic Aryans.

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## 5.14 SUMMARY

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The People of the Vedic India called themselves Aryas as distinct from others who did not accept the Vedic Civilization, whom they called Anaryas or Dasyus. In this lesson, we have studied various theories about the original home of the Vedic Aryans, early Aryan Settlements and expansion, their Political life i.e. their Political ideas and institutions.

Families formed the grama (village) and a number of gramas formed the Vish and Jana. Gramani was the head of the Village, Vishapati and Janapati were in charge of the other divisions. The State was governed by Rajan (king) who was usually elected during the early and became hereditary during the later Vedic period. The king was guided by two assemblies, the Sabha and the Samiti and assisted in his duties by the Purohita and the Senani.

In this lesson, we have studied various aspects of the socio-economic life of the Vedic Aryans.

The Family was the basic unit of Society. Marriage was the basis of Family. It was considered as a sacred bond. Marriage was regarded as a Sanskara and the beginning of Grihasthashrama. Legalized marriages in different castes were classified in eight forms, were known as 'Ashtavivaha prakara'. Status of women was very high. Women enjoyed several privileges and were highly respected. Some of them were educated and proficient in fine arts.

The Vedic Aryans evolved the Varnashrama Dharma System. The Four Varnas were the four classes during early Vedic period; during the later period, the varnas were associated with the birth of an individual and since then it became the caste system. The Four castes were: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras.

The aim of life was described as Purushartha, a Four-fold principle, consisting of Dharma (Justice), Artha (Material Prosperity), Kama (Satisfaction of emotional interests) and Moksha (Salvation).

A hundred year span of life was divided into four equal Ashramas or stages, each being devoted for specific functions. They were Brahmacharyashrama for education and training, the Grihasthashrama – the most important, the Vanaprasthashrama the period of retirement and the sanyasa, an ashrama of complete renunciation.

The Economic life of the Vedic People during early and later Vedic period also is studied in this lesson. Our study throws light on the Agriculture, and related professions. Industries and Trade and commerce of the Vedic Aryans. During the early Vedic period, the Aryans depended upon cattle-rearing and agriculture trade was limited and barter was in vogue. However, during the later Vedic period, the land under cultivation expanded and implements were greatly improved. Irrigation was considerably improved. The professional organisation

i.e. shrenis (guilds) came into existence. Trade and commerce flourished. They became more industrious and prosperous. The society was properly organized and therefore maintained a high standard of efficiency.

In this lesson, we have studied the religion and Philosophy of the Vedic Aryans. Their educational system and the literature that they produced.

The Aryans worshipped nature gods representing the forces of nature. Prayer and sacrifice were the main religious activities.

The Vedic Aryans had given great attention to learning and education. The home of the sage i.e. Rishi was the center of learning, which functioned as a Vedic school. It came to be known as Gurukul system of education. Here, the education was imparted through oral tradition. It is through this oral tradition that the literature that was produced by them was survived and was passed on from one generation to the other generation. The Vedic literature includes the Four Vedas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas, Upanishadas, Vedangas, Upavedas, Sutra literature, Smriti literature, Puranas and the Epics.

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## 5.15 QUESTIONS

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1. Explain the Socio-Economic life of the Vedic Aryans.
2. Write a detailed note on the education and learning during the Vedic age.
3. Write short notes on:
  - a) Original home of the Vedic Aryans
  - b) Sabha and Samiti.
  - c) Position of the women during the Vedic Age
  - d) Varnashrama Dharma

- e) Economic life of the Vedic Aryans
- f) Marriage as an important Samskara.
- 3. Write short notes on:
  - a) Vedic Deities
  - b) Rites and rituals
  - c) Samskaras
  - d) Gurukula System of education
  - e) Vedic literature.



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## INDIA AFTER 6TH CENTURY B.C. AGE OF JANAPADAS PERSIAN & GREEK INVASIONS

### Unit Structure

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Causes for the Rise and Growth
- 6.3 Administration of the Mahajanapadas
- 6.4 Contribution
- 6.5 Persian Invasion
- 6.6 Macedonian Invasion
- 6.7 Alexander the Great
- 6.8 Alexander's Conquests
- 6.9 21 year old Alexander invades India
- 6.10 Impact of Greek invasion on India
- 6.11 Summary
- 6.12 Questions

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### 6.0 OBJECTIVES

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- a) To learn the causes for the rise and growth of Janapadas.
- b) To discuss the contribution - Political, Economic and Social on India.
- c) To Study the conquests of foreigners.
- d) To evaluate the impact of foreign invasions on Indian Soil.

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### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

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The Vedic Age (1500 B.C.-600 B.C.) was a period of raging political instability. It is witnessed that around 600 B.C., North India was dotted with a number of republics and kingdoms with towns as centers of power. Monarchy as well as republican governments was gaining importance. Of the two Systems, definitely monarchy was gaining more grounds and kings were now hereditary and even attributed lot of divine powers, which were repeatedly asserted through rituals and sacrifices such as rajsuya and ashwamedha sacrifices. The rise of small kingdoms and republics was witnessed especially in the Gangetic plains of Bihar. These small states later paved the way for large empires and came to be called as Mahajanapadas.

In the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. while Magadha was making a successful bid for establishing political supremacy, the North West was seeing a

foreign invasion, which was nothing else but a chain of attacks which was soon to be followed along the same areas in the years to come. Among the many who invaded the first worth-mentioning people were the Persians. Macedonians, Sakas, Kushanas, Scythians, Huns and Turks followed them in centuries to come. The Turks who came along this frontier wrought chaos and executed gruesome acts in India. Though one often hears of the good influence of their rule in the classrooms their serious effects are faced in daily life.

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## **6.2 CAUSES FOR THE RISE AND GROWTH**

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The earlier Aryan societies in India were tribal in context. Tribal chiefs, whose position was not hereditary, ruled these. The key factor of selection of the chief was the number of cattle (cows in particular) a person owned. Clans often fought with each other over the control of herds of cattle. In the course of time as the population of the tribes grew, their needs and desires also began to rise. The one-time small settlements grew into large settlements. It became difficult to manage large tracts of land. Soon these societies saw the rise of a ruling class, which belonged to the Kshatriya (warrior class) caste.

The strength of the early Aryan tribes was derived from the Jana (people) and not the Janapada (land). During the latter part of the Later Vedic Age (1000 B.C.-600 B.C.), a number of changes took place. The Kshatriya (warrior class) caste and the Brahmin caste (priestly class) took control of the society in their hands. The Kshatriyas and Brahmins together began to exploit the people belonging to the subordinate castes.

The period saw the expansion of agriculture as new areas were brought under cultivation. The Aryan society shifted from tribal to a territorial one. Agriculture became the main occupation of the people. As a result they started settling in fixed places. The farmers suffered if there were wars between petty chieftains. It was in their interest that they preferred having larger kingdoms with an able ruler where they could have stability and security.

The growth in agricultural produce resulted in a larger number of arts and crafts and consequently flourishing of trade activities. This gave rise to the merchant class, which needed security from thefts and other crimes whenever it passed from one janapada to the other. The traders felt the need for a strong ruler who would not only protect them but also help them in their material progress.

The period also witnessed an unprecedented religious and spiritual conflicts and the rise of heterodox sects - most powerful of which were Jainism and Buddhism.

All these factors combined to give rise to the so-called 'Second Urbanization of Indian history (Indus Valley Civilization being the first urbanization).

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### 6.3 ADMINISTRATION OF THE MAHAJANAPADAS

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In 6th century BC, ancient India had a number of kingdoms which emerged during the Vedic age. This period saw socio-economic development along with religious and political developments across the Indo-Gangetic plain. These permanent settlements led the evolution from Janapadas to Mahajanapadas. By sixth century BC, the centre of major political activity shifted from western part of gangetic plain to the eastern part, comprising the presentday Bihar and eastern UP. Major reason for this shift was, the fertile lands of this area with better rainfall and rivers, their closeness to iron production centres also played a key role. In fact, it was the increased use of iron tools and weapons that enabled small states to become kingdoms, known as Mahajanapadas.

Majority of these states were monarchical but some were also republics, known as “ganasangha”. Ganasangha had oligarchic system for governance where administration was headed by an elected king who had a large council for his aid. This was close to be called a democracy but common man had no say in administration.

#### 6.3.1 Sixteen Mahajanapadas:

Angutara Nikaya, a Buddhist scripture mentions 16 great kingdoms or Mahajanapadas at the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE in India. They emerged during the Vedic Age. The history of the emergence of Mahajanapadas can be linked to the development of eastern Uttar Pradesh and western Bihar during the 6th to 4th century BCE where agriculture flourished due to the availability of fertile lands and iron production increased due to availability of iron ore in large quantities. This resulted in the expansion of the territories of the Janapadas (due to the use of iron weapons) and later addressed as 16 highly developed regions or the Mahajanapadas.



<b>Name of the Mahajanapada</b>	<b>Capital</b>	<b>Location</b>
Anga	Champa	Included the modern districts of Monghyr and Bhagalpur in Bihar.
Magadha	Earlier Rajgriha, later Patliputra	Covered the modern districts of Patna, Gaya, and parts of Shahabad.
Malla	Capitals at Kusinara and Pawa	Covered the modern districts of Deoria, Basti, Gorakhpur and Siddarthnagar in eastern UP.
Vajji	Vaishali	Situated north of the river Ganga in Bihar.
Kosala	Sravasti	Covered modern day districts of Faziabad, Gonda, Bahraich of eastern Uttar Pradesh.
Kashi	Varanasi	Located in the region around Varanasi (modern Banaras).
Chedi	Shuktimati	Covered present day Bundelkhand region.
Kuru	Indraprastha	Covered modern Haryana and Delhi.
Vatsa	Kaushambi	Covered modern districts Allahabad, Mirzapur.
Panchala	Ahichhatra (Uttara Panchala) and Kampilya (DakshinaPanchala)	Covered the area of present western UP up to the east of river Yamuna up to Kosala janapada.
Matsya	Viratanagara	Covered the areas of Alwar, Bhartpur and Jaipur in Rajasthan.
Sursena	Mathura	Covered the area around Mathura.
Avanti	Ujjaini and Mahishmati	Covered the western India (modern Malawa).
Ashmaka	Potana	Situated in the southern part of the India between the rivers Narmada and Godavari.

Kamboja	Capital at Rajapura in modern-day Kashmir	Covered the area of Hindukush (modern Hazara districts of Pakistan)
Gandhara	Taxila	Covered the western part of Pakistan and eastern Afghanistan.

1. **Anga:** This mahajanapada finds mention in the Atharva Veda and the 'Mahabharata'. During the reign of Bimbisara, it was taken over by Magadha empire. It is located in present day Bihar and west Bengal.
2. **Magadha:** It also finds reference in the Atharva Veda which tells that Magadha was semi-brahmanical place. It was situated in present day Bihar close to Anga, separated by river Champa. Later, Magadha became a center of Jainism. Along with that, the first Buddhist Council was held in Rajagriha.
3. **Kasi:** It was located around Varanasi which was the capital as well. It is believed that this city got its name from rivers Varuna and Asi as mentioned in the Matsya Purana.
4. **Vatsa or Vamsa:** This mahajanapada followed the monarchical form of governance. This kingdom was one of the sixteen Mahajanapadas. And its capital was located at Kausambi. This was an important city for economic activities. There was a prosperous trade and business scenario in 6th century BC. After the rise of Buddha, the ruler Udayana made Buddhism a state religion. Vatsa was located around the present day Allahabad.
5. **Kosala:** It was located in modern Awadh region of Uttar Pradesh. Its capital was Ayodhya.
6. **Saurasena:** Its capital was Mathura. This place was a centre of Krishna worship at time of Megasthenes. Also there was a dominant followership of Buddha here.
7. **Panchala:** Its capital was Ahichchatra and Kampilaya for its northern and southern regions respectively. It was located in present day western Uttar Pradesh. And it shifted from monarchy to being a republic later.
8. **Kuru:** Their capital was Indraprastha in present day Meerut and Haryana. The region around Kurukshetra was supposedly the site for Kuru Mahajanapada. It shifted to a republican form of governance later.
9. **Matsya:** It was located to south of the Kurus and west of the Panchalas. Its capital was at Viratanagar, which lies around present day Jaipur.
10. **Chedi:** This was mentioned in the Rigveda, Its capital was Sothivati. It lay around the present day Bundelkhand region.
11. **Avanti:** Avanti was important in terms of rise of Buddhism. Its capital was located at Ujjain or Mahismati. It was located around present day Malwa and Madhya Pradesh.

12. **Gandhara:** Their capital was at Taxila. Gandhara are mentioned in the Atharva Veda as people who were highly trained in art of war. It was important for international commercial activities.
13. **Kamboja:** Kamboja had its capital named as Pooncha. It is located in present day Kashmir and Hindukush. Various literary sources mention that Kamboja was a republic.
14. **Ashmaka or Assaka:** The capital of this mahajanapada was located at Pratisthan or Paithan. Ashmaka was located at the bank of Godavari.
15. **Vajji:** Its capital was Vaishali. It was an important Mahajanapada. The major races residing here were Licchavis, Vedeans, Jnatikas and Vajjis.
16. **Malla:** It was one of the sixteen mahajanapadas. It finds mention in 'Mahabharata' and Buddhist and Jain texts. They were a republic (Samgha). Their capital was Kusinara located around present day Deoria and Uttar Pradesh.

In the course of time, smaller or weak kingdoms, and the republics were eliminated by the stronger rulers. Vajji and Malla were Gana-Sanghas. The Gana-Sanghas had a government by assembly and within the assembly they had oligarchy. In the 6<sup>th</sup> century only 4 powerful kingdoms remained:

1. Magadha (Important rulers: Bimbisara, Ajatashatru)
2. Avanti (Important ruler: Pradyota)
3. Kosala (Important ruler: Prasenjit)
4. Vatsa (Important ruler: Udayana)

Among them Magadha, Vatsa, Avanti and Kosala were the most prominent ones. Out of these four, Magadha emerged as the most powerful kingdom. The causes of Magadha's success were as following:

1. Availability of rich iron deposits which were used in making weapons
2. Its location at the rich and fertile Gangetic plain
3. Use of elephants in military warfare against its neighbours
4. Surrounded by natural boundaries like thick forest, rivers etc
5. Availability of abundance natural resources

### 6.3.2 Monarchical and Republican Mahajanapadas:

The basic administrative system headed by tribal chieftains was transformed by a number of regional republics or hereditary monarchies that devised ways to appropriate revenue and to conscript labor for expanding the areas of settlement and agriculture farther east and south, beyond the Narmada River. First, there existed monarchical types, where the king or chieftain was the head of the territory. In this type, the Vedic ceremonies and Brahmanas were given much importance. The kings performed vedic sacrifices in these regions. For instance, Kosala belonged to the category of monarchical mahajanapada. Prasenajit, the king of Kosala was known to have performed several sacrifices. The second type



among mahajanapadas was republican or oligarchic which differed from the monarchical states. In this second category, the king was selected from the group of people called rajas. There is reference to assemblies called sabha where the members used to have discussions regarding a particular matter, then the item was put to vote.

Republican Mahajanapadas	Monarchical Mahajanapadas
1. The chief office was not hereditary and was known as Ganapati or Ganaraja.	1. All the powers were vested with the King and his family.
2. The Ganas were located in or near the Himalayan foothills in eastern India.	2. Majority of the kingdoms occupied the fertile alluvial tracts of the Ganga valley.
3. Representative form of government. The council discussed and debated the issues in a hall, called Santhagara. Salakas (pieces of wood) were used for voting and Salaka-Gahapaka (collector of votes) ensured honesty and impartiality.	3. Political power was concentrated in the king who was assisted by ministers, advisory councils such as Parishad and Sabha. However, with the emergence of the concept of the divinity of king and more emphasis on priestly rituals, the centrality of the popular assemblies was reduced.
4. The Gana-Sanghas had only two strata- the Kshatriya Rajakula (ruling families) and the DasaKarmakara (slaves and labourers).	4. The focus was mainly on caste loyalties and loyalty towards the king.
5. GanaSanghas were more tolerant than the kingdoms. It is because of this tolerance – Mahavira (Jainism, belonged to Vajji confederacy) and Buddha (Buddhism, belonged to Shakya clan) were able to propagate their philosophy in a more unrestricted way in Gana-Sanghas as compared to Kingdoms.	5. The Brahmanical political, social and religious theory was more deeply entrenched in the kingdoms.

**Changes in Agriculture:** Agriculture prospered in most of the Mahajanapadas as they were located in fertile areas. Two major changes came in agriculture. One was the increasing use of the iron plough. Secondly, people began transplanting paddy which led to increased production.

Around 3000 years ago, there were some new ways of choosing 'rajas'. Some men became 'rajas' by performing big sacrifices. One of such rituals was 'ASHVAMEDHA' (horse sacrifice). The 'raja' was an important figure.

**Taxes:** Money was required by new rajas for building forts and armies. They started collecting regular taxes from the people. The tax could be paid either in cash or in kind.

The 'rajas' needed resources to build forts and to maintain armies. Officials were supposed to collect taxes from people. Taxes were in the form of crops, labour, animals and their produce, etc. There were changes in agriculture too. The use of Iron Ploughshares increased, thus enhancing grain production. People started transplanting paddy. This also increased production.

Magadha became the most important 'mahajanapada' in about 200 years. Transport, water supplies, fertility, forests, elephants, mines, etc. made Magadha important.

**Ashvamedha':** (horse sacrifice) This was ritual in which a horse was let loose to wander freely and it was guarded by the 'rajas' men. If the horse entered other kingdoms, there would be a duel between the two kings. Complex rituals started emerging during this period like Rajasuya, Vajpeya etc.

#### **Standing Armies:**

These armies were very different from the ones mentioned earlier. Soldiers in the new army were paid regular salaries and maintained by the king throughout the year. We also find elephants being used on a large scale. If we remember that elephants are difficult to capture, tame and train, it becomes evident that now armies have become far more elaborate and well organized than before. And maintaining such large armies would have required far more resources than what was needed for the simple armies of the janapadas. A well-equipped army, led by ambitious rulers, meant that the ruler of Magadha could soon overcome most other rulers, and expand control over neighbouring areas. In some cases, the rulers tried to acquire control over routes of communication, both overland and along rivers. In other cases, they tried to acquire control over land, especially over fertile agricultural land, as this was an important means of acquiring more resources.

#### **6.3.3 Conclusion:**

The formation of the state can be traced to Early Vedic Period where the chiefdoms gradually gave way to formation of kingdom as a result of battle for pasture land. The battles fought used a range from fight among tribes or a group of tribes fighting against other group tribes. The early kingdom called as Janapadas gradually gave way to Mahajanapads characterized by stone walled forts, large number of servants, huge armies. There were different ways in which the raja or chief was different from the common people called janas. Gradually the position of the raja became hereditary. He had a large army which required huge expenses to maintain it. These were met through taxes on crops, taxes on craft and goods.

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## 6.4 CONTRIBUTION

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### 6.4.1A) Political:

The position of the king became important during this time. He not only became the protector of people but also the upholder of the sacred Law or Dharma. In the Republics, the people elected the ruler. However, in the kingdoms, the Brahmins (priests) sanctified the rule of the king (who was a Kshatriya) and promoted him not as an ordinary human, but God. The Brahmins endowed the king with God-like powers by performing certain religious ceremonies. The king was surrounded by a group of ministers who helped him in the affairs of the state. The king maintained an army and was responsible for collecting taxes.

### 6.4.2. B) Economic:

With the rise of kingdoms and republics, more and more villages and towns emerged. The economy of the state depended on the taxes collected from the people. Towns like Ayodhya (Uttar Pradesh), Bhri-gukachchha (Gujarat), Champa, Kaushambi, Pataliputra, Pratisthana (Deccan), Rajagriha (Bihar), Shravasti, Tamralipti (Ganga Delta), Ujjayini (Malwa) and Vaishali prospered during this time. Towns became the focal points of crafts. They played the pivotal role as capitals of the early kingdoms and republics. Trade and commerce also helped in the rise of towns and barter system was common. River Ganga became an important trade route.

### 6.4.1. c) Social:

The society was strictly divided on caste lines: the Kshatriyas (warriors) were rulers, the Brahmins (priests) maintained education and religious activities, the Vaishyas (traders) carried out trade, while the Shudras were manual workers and farm workers. Fifth castes, namely the class of untouchables also grew. This group was looked down upon, as it performed menial jobs. The people of the upper caste established their right over the others and did not allow them to grow. Thus the people of the upper caste, the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas, usurped the power in the Kingdoms and did not allow the people of the lower caste to have their say in the affairs of the state.

### Check Your Progress:

1. Write a note on the Mahajanapadas.

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## 6.4 PERSIAN INVASION

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For more than three thousand years Persia was a melting pot of civilizations and demographic changes between Asia and Europe. Under Cyrus the Great, it became the nucleus of the world's first empire. Persia has been recognized by its people as Iran (land of the Aryans) or "noble people", although it was referred to as Persia (Pars or Fars) by the Europeans, largely because of the writings of Greek historians.

Cyrus founded the Persian Empire 550 B.C. and it dominated the adjoining areas until the time of Alexander the Great conquered the kingdom and established the Persian Empire.

Amongst the foreigners, the Persians were the first to invade India. They came in the 6th Century B.C, at this time north India was scattered into various big and small kingdoms worth mentioning among them being Taxila, Gandhara, Abhiras.

Cyrus, one of history's great leaders, conquered Babylonia and Antholia and ruled Persia from 558 B.C. to 530 B.C. He also seems to have led an expedition to the northwest frontier in India. There is a mention made by the historian Herodotus about Cyrus the upper regions of Asia conquering every nation. Pliny informs that Cyrus destroyed the city of Kapsi while Arrian tells that he conquered territories as far as Kabul. However his expeditions are based on vague statements made by the historians, Cyrus seems to have tried to capture the political power of India but was probably defeated in his endeavors.

Cambyes, (530 B.C.-520 B.C.) who was the son of Cyrus succeeded, diverted his attention towards Egypt and Greece and had no time to launch an expedition towards India. This actually slackened the hold of Persia in the northwest frontiers in India.

Darius I who ruled Persia from 520 B.C. to 486 B.C. reimposed political stability in Babylon and ushered in a period of great economic prosperity. Darius pushed the Persian borders far as Indus River, had the river Indus surveyed by his Greek commander Skylax and constructed a canal connecting the Nile River and the Red Sea. Between 520 and 486 B.C, the efficient and innovative Iranian leader undertook an Indian campaign and he conquered Punjab in the year 518 B.C. His greatest achievements were in road building—which significantly improved communication among the

provinces. S. Chattopadhyaya writes that Darius built a fortress in Kapisa and the Susa.

Darius I was succeeded by Xerxes. A thing to be noted here is that Xerxes employed Indian army against the Greeks. Xerxes's successors were weak and incapable. Trade also was greatly reduced during this period.

Other well-known Persian Kings were Ardashir, Shapur, Yazdegerd, Firuz, Khosrau. The last of the Sassanid kings was Yazdegerd III, during whose reign (632-41) the Arabs invaded Persia and replaced Zoroastrianism (Persian religion at the time and still practiced by some Persians in Iran and around the globe) with Islam.

Darius III was the ruler during whose time Alexander fought with the Persians and defeated Darius III in 330 B.C.

#### **The effects of Persian invasions :**

The Persian control over the north western part of India had several effects in political, economic and cultural life of India.

- a) The direct impact of the invasions was felt only on the borders of India but its political ideas and court etiquettes flowed into the interior of the country.
- b) Large number of Persian nobles were employed in the courts of the Indian kings.
- c) The Persian coinage system influenced Indian coins.
- d) Kharoshti script widely used in North western India was derived from Aramaic used in Persia. The Ashokan inscriptions are in the Kharoshti.
- e) The royal road of the Mauryas from western frontier to Pataliputra was influenced by its prototype in Persia between Sardis and Susa.
- f) Monuments and palaces during the Mauryan period had resemblance to the Persian art.

The greatest impact of the invasion of the Persians over North Western India according to historians is that it led to the trade relationship between India and Persia and it also encouraged other foreigners to launch invasion over India. As Persians had established their authority over India and India had become a part of their empire, people were free to travel in any part of India or Persia. The Indian traders started trading with the Persians on a large scale. It encouraged the Greeks and the Bactrians to launch invasions over Indian Territory.

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## **6.5 MACEDONIAN INVASION**

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#### **The Origin of the Term 'Hellenistic':**

The term 'Hellenistic' was first used in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to describe the era and civilization, which materialized from the conquests of Alexander the Great (330 B.C. to 7 B.C.). During this period Greek culture spread

from the Mediterranean eastwards to the Indus River Valley and westwards to the Atlantic. Hellenistic civilization represented the synthesis of Greek and Near Eastern civilizations. The 'founder' of Hellenistic world was Alexander the Great.

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## 6.6 ALEXANDER THE GREAT (CA. 356-323 B.C.)

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Little information is available about Alexander's childhood except for his close attachment to his mother and that Aristotle played the role of his instructor between 343 and 341 B.C. His father's name was Phillip and his mother's name was Olympias. He was born in Pella. Alexander rose to throne under doubtful conditions. Philip the founder of the Macedonian empire had left Alexander's mother and married another man shortly before his death. It is told that Philip was murdered by one of his kinsmen. But whatever his role in his father's death, Alexander either killed or expelled his rivals to get his throne.



"My son, ask for thyself  
another kingdom,  
For that which I leave is too  
small for thee."  
King Philip's words to his 16  
year old son, Alexander



Alexander was this kind of person; a restless soul, never satisfied with what he had, always longing for more. He had immense thirst for knowledge, amazed at the great sight of the world. His face showed zeal and strength. He was impulsive but had a fervent will to win. He wanted to expand his horizons and enjoy his life to the fullest. He was a very difficult person, a combination of light and shadows, impulsiveness and calm, self-centeredness and an intense need to be loved, accusable vices and unbelievable virtues.

During the historic span of 32 years, he conquered Persia, brought about a revolution in Greece, extended his power and influence up to the Indus valley and consequently was responsible in spreading western culture in the east. Alexander's conquest was a major part of western history but his entry into India for a short while brought dramatic changes here.



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## 6.7 ALEXANDER'S CONQUESTS

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In the fourth century B.C. it is at last possible to give a more or less connected account of a short period in the history of India, or atleast of the Indus valley, this we owe to the classical records of Alexander's Indian campaign.

All Greece was taught to fear and respect Alexander. He had imbibed the idea that Herculean blood was flowing through his veins and therefore he was fit to conquer the world. Thus having brought his own house into order, he resumed his father's war against Persia. In 334 B.C., Alexander led 34,000 troops across the Hellespont into Asia Minor. By 333 he had conquered Syria. Three years later' he defeated Darius III of Persia (at Gaugamela) and occupied the Persian capital of Persepolis.

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## 6.8 21 YEAR OLD ALEXANDER INVADES INDIA

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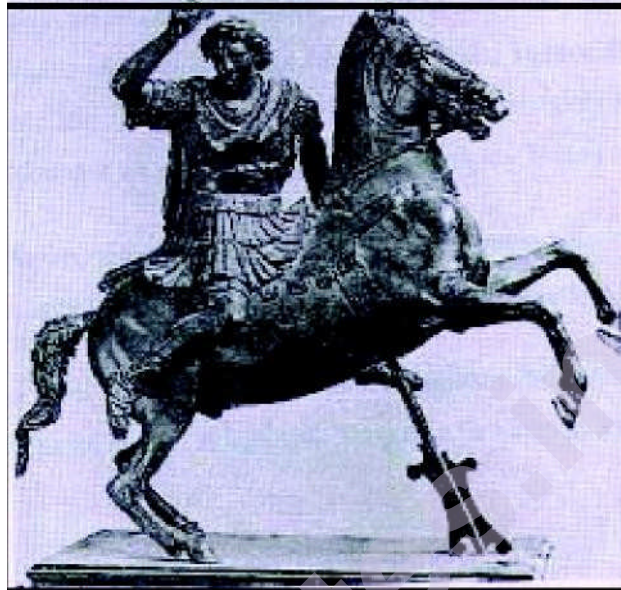
Having defeated the Persian ruler, he crossed the Hindukush Mountains and strengthened his position in Kabul. He captured the fortress of Massaga and Aornos. Alexander moved through the dense jungles of Ohind. Then having crossed the Indus river he secured the help of Ambi, king of Taxila and marched to Jhelum. The greatest of Alexander's battles in India was against Porus, one of the most powerful Indian leaders, at the river Hydaspes in July 326 B.C.E.



Alexander's army crossed the heavily defended river in dramatic fashion during a violent thunderstorm to meet Porus' forces. The Pauravan king with an army of 30,000 soldiers, horses and elephants provided fierce resistance. But the Indians were defeated in a fierce battle, even though they fought with elephants, which the Macedonians had never before seen. Alexander captured Porus and, like the other local rulers he had defeated, allowed him to continue to govern his territory. When Alexander asked the Pauravan king to bow the latter answered "Act like a king" impressed with King Peru's efforts he gave him back his kingdom. Alexander even subdued an independent province and granted it to Porus as a gift.

Alexander had moved further. He wished to capture the Ganges valley, but was stopped by his troops. In 325 B.C. his troops threatened to mutiny. They demanded that Alexander allowed them to return to Macedonia. So with a heavy heart, Alexander retraced his steps to Jhelum and brought his army back to Babylon in 324 B.C. Apparently, he had planned to organize a new army, which would not force him to depend on

the questionable loyalty of his Macedonian troops. On his way back to Babylon, he had to undergo terrible sufferings in the deserts of Baluchistan. He was severally wounded while storming one of the citadels of a tribe of Malavas. Alexander died of a fever in 323 B.C., not long after his return to Babylon and much before he was able to put his new plans into action.



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## 6.9 IMPACT OF GREEK INVASION ON INDIA

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Alexander is supposed to have invaded the Punjab in 326 B. C. Every schoolboy is taught and is expected to know, that he invaded India's Northwest.

But with regard to the effects of his invasion opinions vary from those who felt that there was no significant impact to those who opine that India was completely Hellenized. Nowhere did Sir William Jones, (1746-1794), who came to India as a judge of the Supreme Court at Calcutta and pioneered Sanskrit studies, find any mention of Greeks. British historian Vincent A. Smith, conservatively appraised the impact of Alexander's invasion as follows:

"The Greek influence never penetrated deeply in the Indus valley civilization. On the other hand, the West learned something from India in consequence of the communications opened up by Alexander's adventure. Our knowledge of the facts is so scanty and fragmentary that it is difficult to make any positive assertions with confidence... The notions of Indian philosophy and religion, which filtered into the Roman Empire, flowed through channels opened by Alexander.

According to Indian historian Dr. R. C. Majumdar, Alexander's military achievement can hardly be called a great military success, as the only military achievement to his credit were the conquest of petty tribes

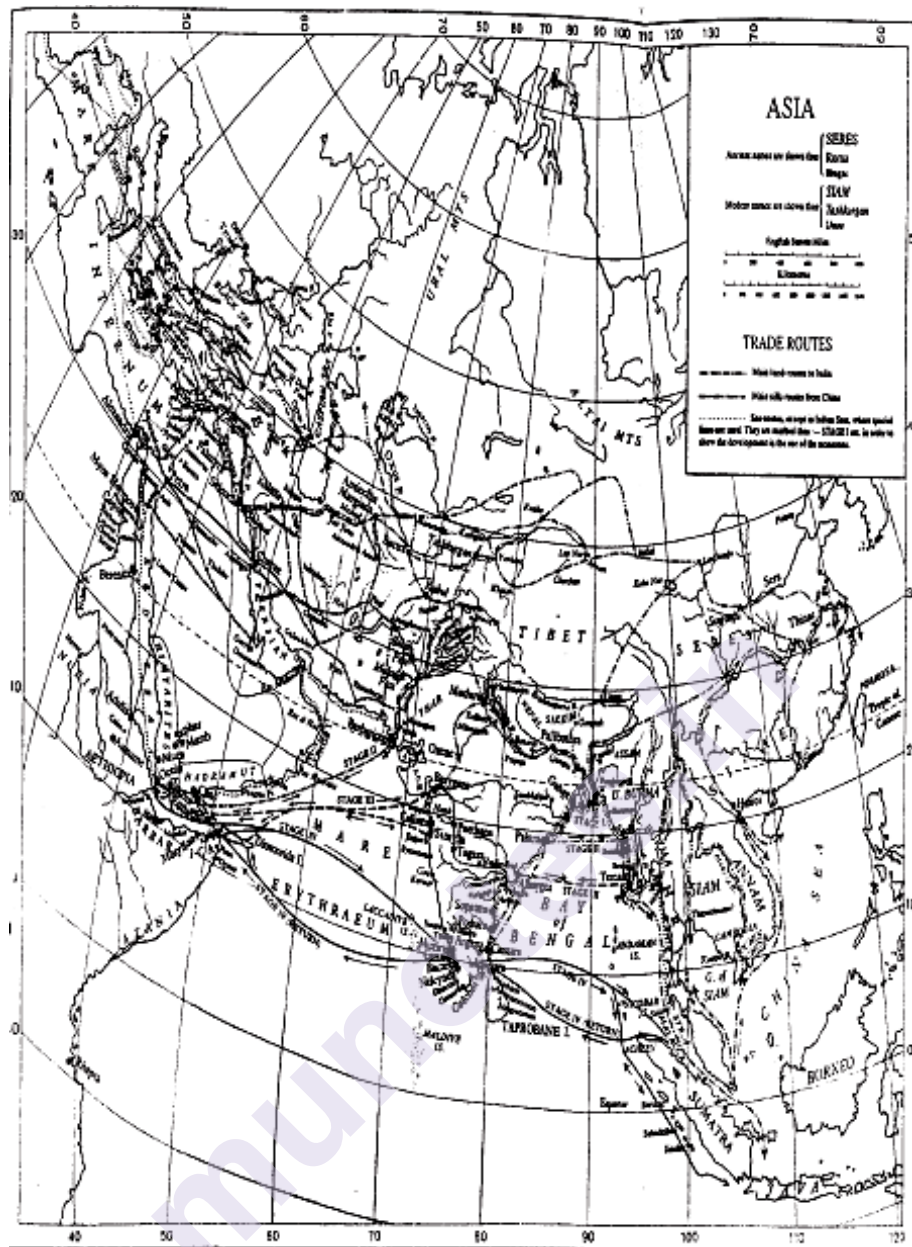
and States by installments. He never approached even within a measurable distance of what may be called the citadel of Indian military strength, and the exertions he had to make against Poros, the ruler of a small district between the Jhelum and the Chenab, do not certainly favor the hypothesis that he would have found it an easy task to subdue the mighty Nanda empire."

H. G Rawlinson, refers to the invasion, " had no immediate effect, and passed off like countless other invasions, leaving the country almost undisturbed."

However there has been very little impact of the invasion the fact that there have been several indirect influences cannot be ignored.

They may be listed as follows:

- a) Communication between India and Greece increased after Alexander's campaign. Trade received an impetus. Alexander followed the Persian route to India and he further extended it to the west. Sea routes also were opened. Greek and Oman settlements were seen in both the western and the eastern coast. Greek colonies were established in Afghanistan, Bactria and Northwest frontiers. There was a floating population as a result of the trade routes and trade.
- b) Indian philosophy, religion, astronomy, mathematics was influenced by the Greek invasion. There was Greek influence on Indian astrology and the method of preparing horoscopes. Indians borrowed the concept of the twelve signs of the Zodiac from the Greeks.



**Route of Alexander's invasion on India**

- c) Another positive influence can be seen in the field of art and literature. Greek sculpture influenced Indian sculpture, giving rise to the Gandhara School of art. The Kushana ruler Kanishka adopted Mahayanism and invited Bactrian artists to make the images of Buddha. This gave rise to a fine blending of Indian and Greek image sculpture.
- d) The Indians adopted the Greek idea of minting well-formed coins of particular shapes. Although the Greeks did not introduce coins here, their coins were designed as works of art. The Sakas, Parthians and others later copied them.

- e) In the political field its impact was felt in the emergence of powerful monarchies like Magadha. Centralized Greek system was absorbed and the smaller and weaker kingdoms were merged into the larger ones. Alexander's General Seleucus took control of many of the provinces of Macedonian empire. He also sent an ambassador called Megasthenes to reside in the court of Mauryas at Pataliputra. The ambassador wrote a detailed account of India, which was useful for the later Classical writers.

### **Check Your Progress:**

1. Give a brief sketch of Persian invasion on India.

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## **6.10 SUMMARY**

The sixth century B. C. is described as one of the most remarkable landmark in the history of India. It witnessed a mental effervescence not only in India but also in Greece, Persia and other countries. The age saw the emergence of two masterminds – namely Gautama Buddha and Mahavira. A number of large and small kingdoms and Republics emerged in the northern parts of India. Thus the 6th century B.C. witnessed political, cultural, religious changes which were to have far-reaching effects.

Thus, it is true that Alexander's expeditions did not have a direct impact on India but the fact cannot be denied that the invasion broke down the walls of the east and the west and opened up different lines of communication and brought about synthesis in art and architecture.

### **Additional Readings:**

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- ❖ R. C. Majumdar, an Advanced History of India, London, 1950.  
Ramesh Chander Dutt, History of Ancient and modern India.
- ❖ B. Keith, Buddhist Philosophy in India and Ceylon, Oxford, 1923.
- ❖ L. Basham, History and Doctrines of the Ajivikas, London. 1951.
- ❖ N. Lunia, Life and Culture in Ancient India internet.

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## 6.11 QUESTIONS

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1. Write a note on the Mahajanapadas.
2. Review the achievements Alexander. Discuss the impact of Alexander's invasion on India.
3. Write a brief note of Administration of the Mahajanapadas.
4. Write short notes on the following
  - a) Rise of Magadha.
  - b) Political history of Mahajanapadas.
  - c) Effects of Persian invasion.
  - d) Alexander's Conquests.





## **JAINISM & BUDDHISM: TEACHING AND IMPACT**

### **Unit Structure**

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Founder of Jainism
- 7.3 Jain Philosophy
- 7.4 Principles of Jainism
- 7.5 Teachings of Mahavira
- 7.6 Development of major sects
- 7.7 Jain Literature
- 7.8 Importance of Symbols in Jainism
- 7.9 Spread of Jainism
- 7.10 Life Story of Buddha
- 7.11 The Prophecy of Buddha
- 7.12 Gautama becomes The Buddha
- 7.13 Philosophy of Buddhism
- 7.14 Teachings of Buddha
- 7.15 Buddhist Texts
- 7.16 Spread of Buddhism
- 7.17 Causes for the decline in the land of its own birth
- 7.18 Summary
- 7.19 Questions

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### **7.0 OBJECTIVES**

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Our objective is

- a) To understand the political conditions of the 6<sup>th</sup> C.B.C.
- b) To learn the influence of Jainism
- c) To study the impact of Jain literature.
- d) To understand the new religious influence.
- e) To learn the teachings and principles of Buddhism.
- f) To evaluate the impact of this religion.
- g) To understand the causes of its decline.

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## 7.1 INTRODUCTION

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Jainism is essentially one of the oldest living religions of India. It is original, quite different and detached from other systems of Indian philosophy.

In ancient times Jainism was labeled in various ways. They were Saman tradition, the Nirgantha faith or Jina. Factually Jina means a conqueror. A person who has conquered desire, hatred, anger, greed and pride by one's own personal efforts becomes a Jina. He need not necessarily be a supernatural being or an embodiment of the all-powerful God but having conquered worldly passions, he may be viewed as God in Jainism. One more thing to be noted is that every human being has the potential to become a Jina.

Since Jainism believes that any common man is capable of achieving the goal to be a Jina, the very concept of God being the creator, protector and the destroyer of the universe is not accepted in Jainism. Parallel to this idea, it does not believe in the reincarnation of God, as a human being to destroy evil on the earth is also not recognized.

A great religion that originated in India in about 6<sup>th</sup> century

B.C. is Buddhism. Ironically though Buddhism flourished overseas; in the land of its birth it was till recently nonexistent. It received a lease of life after independence, when Dr. B.R. Ambedkar decided to embrace Buddhism. A significant section of the scheduled castes followed Dr. Ambedkar and they today constitute an overwhelming portion of the adherents of Buddhism in India today. But they do not form part of the two traditional sects of Buddhism viz., (Mahayana and Hinayana) and are generally termed as Neo-Buddhists (Nava-Baudha). The history of Buddhism in India starts with that of its founder Gautama Buddha who lived in the 6th century B. C.

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## 7.2 FOUNDER OF JAINISM

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The founder of Jainism was Mahavira. According to tradition Jain religion was founded in hoary antiquity and was developed by a series of 24 teachers called as tirthankaras. About 2600 years ago Mahavira widely called Vardhaman (599 to 527 BC), the twenty fourth and the last Tirthankara of this period recharged the Jain philosophy previously advocated by his predecessor Parshva (950 to 850 BC) in India.

Mahavira was born to Siddhartha, a wealthy merchant in a suburb of Vaishali called Kundagrama. Trishala his mother was a Kshatriya lady related to the ruling families of Vaishali and Magadha.

Very little is known about his early life. He married a princess Yashoda and had a daughter by name Priyadarshana.

Being born in a wealthy family, he was taken by many worldly pleasures, comforts, and services at his command. But a sudden change came about in him after the death of his parents who ended their lives by voluntary starvation. According to Will Durant, his parents looked upon rebirth as a curse. To free themselves from the chain of rebirth they fasted unto death. Vardhamana was thirty years old then. This incident probably was a turning point in his life and he left his family and royal household, gave up his worldly possessions, and became a monk in search of a solution to get rid of pain, sorrow, and suffering from life.

Vardhamana wandered for next twelve years in concentrated silence and meditation to conquer his desires, feelings, and attachments. He found life in inanimate things also. Therefore he cautiously avoided harming other living beings including animals, birds, insects, and plants. He also went without food for long periods of time. He made deliberate attempts to remain composed and peaceful against all intolerable hardships. It is said that during this period, his spiritual powers fully developed and he realized perfect perception, perfect knowledge, perfect power, and total bliss. This realization is known as kevalyajnana or the perfect enlightenment. He was now a kevalin or an omniscient, a Jina or a conqueror and Mahavira or a great hero. The ultimate objective of his teaching is how one can attain total freedom from the cycle of birth, life, pain, misery, and death, and achieve the permanent blissful state of one's self. This is also known as liberation, nirvana, absolute freedom or Moksha. He spent the next thirty years of his life in preaching his new doctrine and establishing a religious community. He roamed as a naked ascetic and travelled in several parts of eastern India.

In recapitulating, the Jainas believe that Mahavira was not the founder of a new religious system. Jainism existed before Lord Mahavira, and his teachings were based on those of his predecessors. Thus Mahavira was more of a reformer and propagator of an existing religious order than the founder of a new faith. He followed the well-established creed of his predecessor Tirthankara. However, he did reorganize the philosophical tenets and codes of conduct to correspond to his time.

At the age of 72, in the year 527 B. C, Lord Mahavira attained nirvana (death) at Pava in south Bihar and his purified soul left his body and achieved complete liberation. He became a Siddha, a pure consciousness, a liberated soul, living forever in a state of complete bliss. On the night of his nirvana, people celebrated the Festival of Lights (Dipavali) in his honor. This is the last day of the Hindu and Jain calendar year.

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### **7.3 JAIN PHILOSOPHY**

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First and foremost Jainism presumes that the universe is without a beginning or an end, being endless and eternal. There exist six fundamental bodies in the universe, which are eternal but constantly undergo innumerable changes. But nothing is lost or destroyed while changes take place. Everything is recycled into another form. The Six

Universal Substances or bodies are as follows:

Soul or Consciousness	Jiva	Living body
Matter	Pudgal	Nonliving body
Medium of motion	Dharma	Nonliving body
Medium of rest	Adharma	Nonliving body
Space	Akasa	Nonliving body
Time	Kaal or Samay	Nonliving body

The wheel of time incessantly revolves like a pendulum. Mahavira believed that man is the architect of his own destiny. He further explained that every living being (soul) due to its ignorance is in bondage of karmic tiny parts known as karma. Karma is continuously mounts up by our actions of body, mind and speech. Under the influence of karma, the soul is habituated to hunt for pleasure in materialistic things and possessions. This itself becomes the deep-rooted cause of fierce thoughts, actions, anger, hatred, greed, and such other vices. The result is further amassing of karma.

It is possible to get rid of karma and attain freedom from bonds by following the threefold path of right belief (samyak-darshan), right knowledge (samyak-jnan), and right conduct (samyak-charitra). Proper knowledge of the six universal substances (six Dravya) and the nine fundamental truths (nine Tattva) is called right knowledge and true faith in that knowledge is called right belief. The right conduct includes nonviolence, self-purification, kindness, self-punishment, strictness, and meditation. The result of the three fold path will be that souls will be released from transmigration and finally reach the heavenly abode (siddha sila).

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## 7.4 PRINCIPLES OF JAINISM

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There are nine tattvas, which form the most important subject of Jain philosophy.

Without the proper knowledge of these tattvas, a person cannot progress spiritually. Mahavira rejected the authority of the Vedas and sacrificial rites and the existence of God. The universe functions through the interaction of the living souls.

The Nine Principles (Tattvas) are:

Jiva	Soul or living being (Consciousness)
Ajiva	Non-living substances
Asrava	Cause of the invasion of karma
Bandha	Bondage of karma
Punya	Virtue or righteousness
Papa	Sin
Samvara	Stoppage of the influx of karma
Nirjara	Exhaustion of the accumulated karma
Moksha	Complete liberation from karma

## 7.5 TEACHINGS OF MAHAVIRA

The supreme ideal of the Jain religion is nonviolence (Ahimsa), equal kindness, and reverence for all forms of life in speech, thought, and action. "Ahimsa Parmo Dharm" (Non-violence is the supreme religion). Ahimsa is a principle that Jains teach and practice not only towards living things but also towards all nature. Jain texts pronounce-Do not harm, exploit, oppress, enslave, insult, torment, torture, or kill any living being. Ahimsa refers not only to noticeable physical acts of violence but to violence in the hearts and minds of human beings. In a constructive sense ahimsa means universal friendliness (maitri), universal forgiveness (kshama) and universal fearlessness (abhaya).

Mahavira added the vow of Brahmacharya. He also lay emphasis on discarding all external things including garments if freedom from bonding was to be attained. It lay down five great vows. They are as follows:

Nonviolence (Ahimsa)	Not to cause harm to any living beings
Truthfulness (Satya)	To speak truth
Non-stealing (Asteya)	Not stealing other's belongings.
Chastity (Brahmacharya)	Not to indulge in sensual pleasure
Non-possession/Non-attachment (Aparigraha)	Detachment from people, and material things or limiting one's possessions

These vows cannot be fully followed without the acceptance of a philosophy of non-absolutism (Anekantvad) and the theory of relativity (Syadvad). Monks and nuns follow these vows strictly and wholly, while the common people follow the vows according to their lifestyles.

### **Sallekhana: (The Holy Death)**

Jainism is unique in allowing the very spiritually advanced person to gradually terminate his life by certain practices (principally fasting) under specified circumstances and under the supervision of Acharya. The point is to meet death in a state of complete awareness with all of one's faculties functioning properly. Jainism does not advocate suicide (assisted suicide) mercy killing, or removal of life-supporting devices.

Thus, the principles of Jainism if properly understood in their right perspective and faithfully adhered to, will bring contentment and inner happiness and joy in the present life. This will elevate the soul in future reincarnations to a higher spiritual level, ultimately achieving Perfect Enlightenment, reaching its final destination of Eternal Bliss, ending all cycles of birth and death.

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## **7.6 DEVELOPMENT OF MAJOR SECTS**

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Mahavira categorized his supporters, into four-fold ranks. They were monks (Sadhu), nuns (Sadhvi), laymen (Shravak), and laywomen (Shravika). This order is known as Jain Sangh. Broadly speaking, a senior and learned Shramana (sadhu and sadhvi) lead the Jain Sangha. Their duty was to impart religious instruction to followers. Laypersons or followers (shravak and Shravika) were known as upasakas and were supposed to take care of their livelihood in the righteous manner.

As time passed Jainism became complex and eventually two major sects were established. They were the Digambaras and the Shwetambaras. In the Digambar sect monks wear no clothes, while the Swetambar monks wear white clothes. They are relatively more liberal and progressive. The fundamental views of both sects are identical on ethics and philosophy.

Each major sect has many sub-sects. They include idol and non-idol worshipping sects. Later generations almost placed Lord Mahavira and other Tirthankars on the throne of Hindu deities. The Digambaras believed that women couldn't achieve salvation while the Shwetambaras held just a contradictory view.

Jainism advocates six essential rites to be executed by its followers:

Six essential rites of Digambar Institution

Devapuja	Prayer to God
Gurupasti	Devotion and service to ascetics
Swadhyay	Studying of Scriptures
Sayam	Self-restraint
Tap	Penance
Dana	Charity



Six vital rites of Svetambar Institution:

Samayik (Meditation)	To remain calm and undisturbed for 48minutes.
Praying of Tirthankars	To pray and appreciate the qualities of the twenty four Tirthankars.
Vandana	To respect Ascetics
Pratikraman	To repent and confess past bad thoughtsand deeds.
Kayotsarg	Non-attachments to the body
Pratyakhan Pachchhakhan	or Religious vows renouncing certain acti- vities for some time to discipline one's self

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## 7.7 JAIN LITERATURE

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Lord Mahavira's sermons were orally compiled into several texts (scriptures) by his disciples. These scriptures are known as Jain agama or agama Sutras.

The agama Sutras teach respect for all forms of life, strict codes of vegetarianism, asceticism, nonviolence, and opposition to war. The scriptures were not recorded in any type but were learnt byheart by ascetics and orally passed on to future generations of ascetics.

In the course of time, many of the Agama Sutras were forgotten, some were custom-made, and additional Sutras were written. About one thousand years after Lord Mahavira's nirvana (death) the remembered Agwn Sutras were written on leafy papers known as tadpatris. It is also an accepted fact that the original doctrine taught by Mahavira contained in fourteen old texts styled aspurvas. Towards the end of the fourth century a famine broke out in South Bihar. This resulted in an important sect under the leadership of Badrabahu leaving the place to migrate to Mysore. Those whoremained behind held a council to breathe life into the knowledge of Jain texts. As a result, a compilation of the twelve angas was complete. Thus there were 12 angas, 12 upangas, 10 painnas, 7 chayya suttas, 4 mulla suttas, 1 nandi sutta and 1 anogadara. All these came to be regarded as the important tenets of Jain religion.

Svetambars accepted the Sutras as a valid version of Lord Mahavira's teachings. But Digambars did not accept them as authentic. Digambars follow two main texts called Shatkhand Agam and KasayPahud and four Anuyogs, which consist of about twenty texts put in writing by Acharyas (teachers) from about 100 to 800 AD.

In the south the Jains preached in vernaculars. A Jain monk Tiruvallavar wrote a treaties in tamil called Tirukkaral. Tiruttakata Devar, a

Jain poet, named Jivika chintamani, composed another great epic. Similarly, Jains also contributed to Kannada and Telugu literature and enriched the languages of south India.

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## **7.8 IMPORTANCE OF SYMBOLS IN JAINISM**

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The Jain symbol consists of a digit of the Moon, three dots, the Swastika or Om, the palm of a hand with the wheel (Chakra) inset, and an outline figure which includes all symbols.

The Swastika signifies the cycles of births and deaths due to karma, in any of the four forms; heaven, human, tiryanch (animals, birds, and plants), and hell of the worldly (non-liberated) souls. It tells that one should follow the right path and be free from suffering.

The meaning of the Palm of the hand is assurance namely 'do not be afraid'. It indicates persons suffering due to karmic bondage need not be saddened and there are ways to come out of it.

The Wheel of Dharma (Chakra) symbolizes the religion advocated by the 24 Tirthankaras.

The outline figure stands for the Jain explanation of the shape of the universe, similar to a person standing with feet apart and arms resting on both hips.

By and large symbol signifies that the living beings of the three worlds suffer from the unhappiness of Trans migratory life. They can follow the path of religion shown by the Tirthankaras. Thus they can bring about goodness for themselves and obtain perfection.

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## **7.9 SPREAD OF JAINISM**

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Jainism took roots in Magadha and spread to the Gangetic plains, Malwa, Andhra, Gujarat, Tamil territories as a result of the royal patronage. The Mauryas, the Satavahanas, the Shakas, the Chalukyas, the Kadambas, the Gujars, were some of the important dynasties that extended their generous patronage to Jainism. Abhaykumar, son of king Bimbisara of Maurya dynasty was the follower of Mahavira. King Kharavela of Kalinga patronized Jainism. Bhadrabahu, one of the heads of Jain church migrated to Mysore and was responsible for the establishment of Jainism there. Nevertheless it must be admitted that Jainism did not attract the masses as it should have and centers were established at various places for its spread.

### **Check Your Progress:**

1. Give an account of the life and teachings of Vardhamana Mahavira.

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## **7.10 LIFE STORY OF BUDDHA**

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On the full moon day of May, in the year 623 B.C., a noble prince destined to be the greatest religious teacher of the world and the founder of Buddhism was born in the Lumbini Park at Kapilavasthu, on the Indian borders of present Nepal. His father was King Shuddhodatta of the aristocratic Sakya clan and his mother was Queen Maha Maya. His original name was Siddhartha (meaning one who has accomplished). The beloved queen died seven days after his birth. Her younger sister, Maha Prajapati Gotami, who was married to the King, adopted the child and therefore he was called Gautama.

There is an interesting legend about Gautama turning from a happy go lucky prince to a sage and a universal teacher. An astrologer seems to have foretold his father, the king, that young Gautama would either grow up to be a powerful king, or would give up the throne and luxury and renounce the world the day he happened to face any of the sorrows of life. Keen as King Shuddhodhana was to see Gautama to be a successful ruler, he built an exclusive palace for his dear son from where he could set his eyes on none of the world's miseries. Even when Gautama went out for stroll or ride, all unpleasant things were kept far away so as to stop Gautama's mind from being troubled. He was married at the age of sixteen to Yasodhara. Some days after marriage a son was born to them who was named Rahul.

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## **7.11 THE PROPHECY OF BUDDHA**

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But the prophesy of Gautama becoming a universal teacher was predestined. He was always inquisitive to know what lay beyond the tall fence of his palace. At the age of 29, Gautama managed to slip out unnoticed from the palace. Riding through the streets of the city he saw for the first time in his life, a lame person, a sick person, a dead body and an ascetic.

The impact of the dark side of life made him restless. He set thinking for hours upon the cause of sufferings and sorrow. Consequently, Gautama began overlooking the business of the State, which his father had assigned to him.

Married life also could not keep him bound to worldly affairs. He became aware of the hollowness of all worldly pleasures. Gautama decided to forsake all luxuries and family life and he sneaked out of his palace accompanied by his servant Chandaka. After moving out of the city, Gautama cut off his hair, removed his royal ornaments and jewels, his rich garments and sandals and gave them to Chandaka and asked him to return to the palace with the news of his (Gautama's) departure.

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## **7.12 GAUTAMA BECOMES THE BUDDHA**

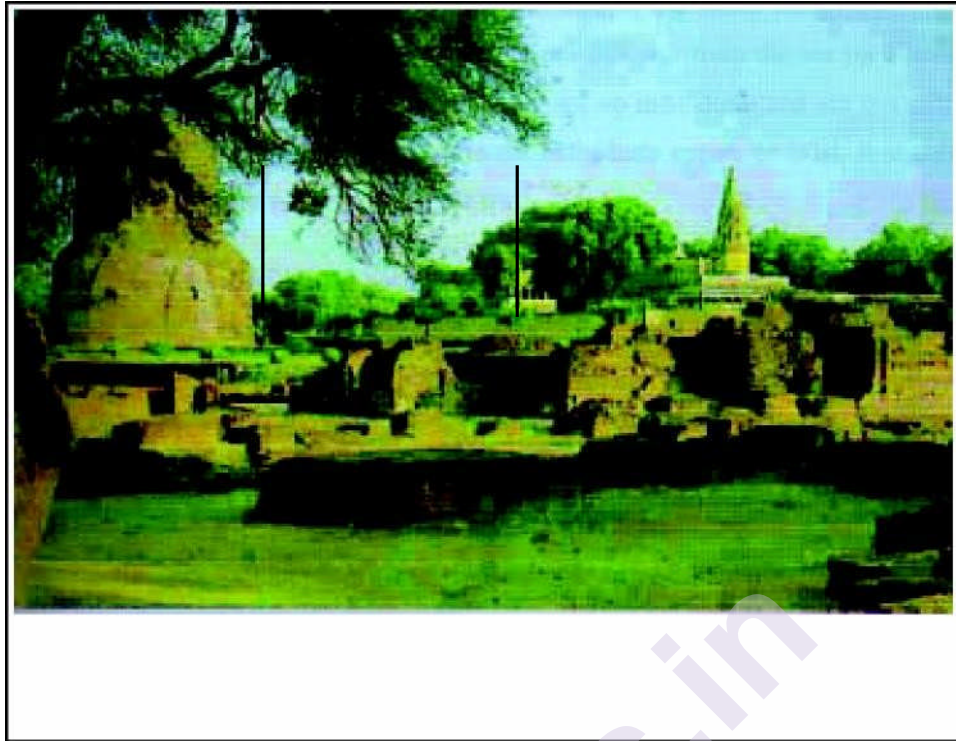
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Thus Gautama set out on his search for the cause of sufferings (Klesha). In ancient India, great importance was attached to rites, ceremonies, penances and sacrifices. It was popularly believed that no Deliverance could be gained unless one leads a life of strict asceticism. Accordingly, for six long years the ascetic Gautama made a super-human struggle to practice all forms of the severest austerity. He took to fasting. But fasting and logic practices bore no fruit and his knowledge of truth remained as distant as before. His delicate body was reduced to almost a skeleton. The more he tormented his body the farther his goal receded from him. Realizing that this was not the way to arrive at the truth, he gave up the austerities. Horrified at their Master's escapist policy, the five disciples who had accompanied him left him. But unafraid, Gautama continued his hunt for the cause of sufferings.

Realizing that the path of asceticism was not leading him to his goal, he decided to quietly sit under a fig tree (Mahabodhi tree) at Gaya in Bihar. He decided not get up unless he found answers to his questions. His enlightenment is said to have come suddenly. While meditating he suddenly saw the light. He discovered the true reality of all happenings and it was all exceedingly simple for him - viz. all pain is caused - by desire, and therefore peace comes when one ceases to crave for anything. Freedom from all desires was said to release a person from the cycle of re-birth and lead to his salvation (Nirvana). Thus he came to be known as the Buddha, which means the Enlightened one.

Having seen the light, Gautama started preaching to people and for this he travelled from place to place. The Buddha traveled to Saranath, in Northern India where he began to offer his teachings based on his experience, to a small group at a place called Deer park. He is said to have delivered his first sermon (Isipatana) setting in motion, the wheel of law (Dharma-chakra or Dhammachakra in Pali).

Later, he spent the remaining 45 years of his life in preaching his new doctrine mainly in Bihar and Eastern Uttar Pradesh. He travelled bare-foot, clean-headed, with nothing more on his self than his saffron robe, walking stick and begging bowl. As his teachings impressed people his followers grew. Among his early converts were Sariputta, Mogallana and Ananda. He even received the patronage of rich traders like Anathapindika (i.e. feeder of poor) and powerful kings of the age like Ajatashatru of Magadha. He died at the age of 80 in the year 483BC. His death is known as Mahaparinirvana.



**Sarnath** This place is also known as **Isipatana** or "**Deer Park**" Situated **5 Kms north of Varanasi**, here the **Buddha** is said to have preached his first sermon.

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### 7.13 PHILOSOPHY OF BUDDHISM

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This Philosophy of Buddhism is based on three guiding principles. They are

The Buddha
The Dhamma
The Sangha

Buddha was silent about the existence or non-existence of **God**. He did- not deny the existence of God. A disciple once asked Buddha whether God exists. He refused to reply. When pressed, he said that if you are suffering, from a stomach ache would you concentrate on relieving the pain or studying the prescription of the physician. "It is not my business or yours to find out whether there is God. Our business is to remove the sufferings of the world". Buddhism provided Dhamma or the "Impersonal law" in place of God.

**Dhamma** is the teachings of **Buddha Dharma** meaning or the teachings of the awakened one. These teachings can best be followed through an organization which Buddha himself devised namely the **Sangha** or the monastery.

Buddhism did not believe in the real existence of the world either. The

ignorant people feel that it exists. For example waves are not different from the sea yet a common man differentiates them. Just the same way there are no individuals and are not different from the world. For the unenlightened, different individuals appear to exist. It is only the spiritually advanced ones who can grasp the truth.

Similarly nirvana cannot be described in limited words. Nirvana' literally means "blowing out" or "extinction". According to Buddhism, this is the ultimate goal of life and can be described in various words. It is a cessation of all sorrows, which can be achieved by removing desire by following the Eight Fold Path. It is only when a man lives a good life, does good, thinks good, without expecting any reward he will free himself from the bondage of self and his soul will escape into a state of nirvana. A.L. Basham writes, ' In nirvana all idea of an individual personality or ego ceases to exist, and there is nothing to be reborn.

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## 7.14 TEACHINGS OF BUDDHA

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### 7.14 a) Four Noble Truths:

The primary teachings of Buddha may be summed up in what the Buddhists call the 'Four Noble Truths' or 'Char Arya Sattya' -

- 1) There is suffering and misery in life.
- 2) The cause of this suffering and misery is desire.
- 3) Suffering and misery can be removed by removing desire.
- 4) Desire can be removed by following the Eight Fold Path.



### 7.14. b) Eight Fold Path :

1. **Right view** is the true understanding of the four noble truths.
2. **Right aspiration** is the true desire to free oneself from attachment, ignorance, and hatefulness.

These two are referred to as prajna, or wisdom.



3. **Right speech** involves refraining from lying, gossiping, or hurtful talk.
4. **Right action** involves abstaining from hurtful behaviors, such as killing, stealing, and careless sex.
5. **Right livelihood** means making your living in such a way as to avoid dishonesty and hurting others, including animals.

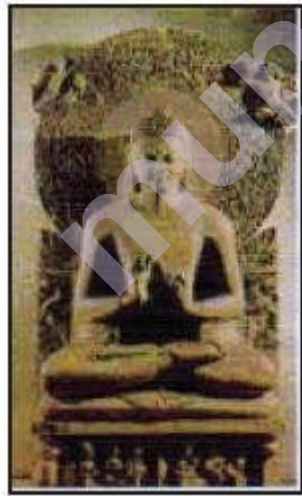
The above three paths are referred to as **sheela**, or morality.

6. **Right effort** Bad qualities should be abandoned and prevented from arising. Good qualities should be carried out and raised.
7. **Right mindfulness** is the focusing one's body, mind, thoughts, and awareness in such a way as to overcome passion, hatred, and ignorance.
8. **Right concentration** is meditating in such a way as to progressively realize a true understanding of imperfection and impermanence.

The last three are known as **Samadhi**, or meditation.

### **Split into Two Sects - Mahayana (Greater Vehicle) and Hinayana (Lesser Vehicle)**

During the time of Kanishka, the religion had vertically split up into two schools. They were the Mahayana (Greater Vehicle) school or the northern school of Buddhism and the Hinayana (Lesser Vehicle) school stuck to the original character of Buddhism.



**Buddha – The Great Master** This statue dates back to the 1<sup>st</sup> Century B.C.E. It was sculpted during the reign of the Kushana Emperor Kanishka.

Hinayana was simple and regarded the salvation of an individual as its goal and prescribed good deeds as the only way to salvation. Mahayana advocated elaborate rituals and ceremonies and relied more on the devotion and worship of Buddha. Nagarjuna, contemporary of Kanishka was a great exponent of the Mahayana.

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## 7.15 BUDDHIST TEXTS

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Buddhist Scriptures can be divided into Pali and Sanskrit Literature

### **Pali Literature:**

The early Buddhist canon is traditionally referred to as the "Three Baskets" (tripitaka; Pall: lipitaka). The Hinayana sect of Buddhism dominated the Pali literature.

**Tri Pitaka:** It is supposed to be the earliest recorded Buddhist literature, which was written in the 1st Century B.C.

The TRI-PITAKA or Three Baskets of law is composed of 3 books:

**1. Vinaya Pitaka:** "Rules of Conduct": This is a book of discipline and mainly deals with rules of the order.

**2. Sutta Pitaka:** It is a collection of sermons and discourses of Gautama Buddha and the incidents in his life. It is the most important Pitaka.

The Sutra (Pali : Sutta) part of the Pali canon is divided into five "groupings" (nikaya): (1) the long (digha) discourses, (2) the medium length (majjhima) discourses; (3) the grouped (samyutta) discourses, (4) the enumerated (anguttara) discourses, which are arranged according to the enumerations of their topics; and (5) the minor (khuddaka) discourses. It includes stories of the Buddha's former births (Jataka), which report how he gradually perfected the high qualities of a Buddha.

**3. Abhidhamma:** This third basket includes Meta physical principles and is known as Buddhist meta physicals. It is an analytical and logical explanation of the first two pitakas. It contains analysis and exposition of Buddhist doctrine. The Abhidharma (Pali: abhidhamma) section includes seven essays, which organize the doctrines of particular classes of Buddha's discourses. Everything in the world—people, animals, plants, inanimate objects—consists of impermanent groupings of dharmas. Thus nothing possesses an underlying soul or essence. The collections of dharmas are changing in every moment, and so all of reality is viewed as a vast interconnected network of change and interlinking causes and conditions.

### **Sanskrit Literature :**

The Mahayana preferred Sanskrit literature. Much of the original Sanskrit literature has been lost. Some was translated into other languages like Chinese and are now being retranslated into Sanskrit.

**1. Maha vastu:** Mahavastu is the most famous work in Sanskrit which has been restored from its Chinese translation. It consists of voluminous collection of legendary stories.

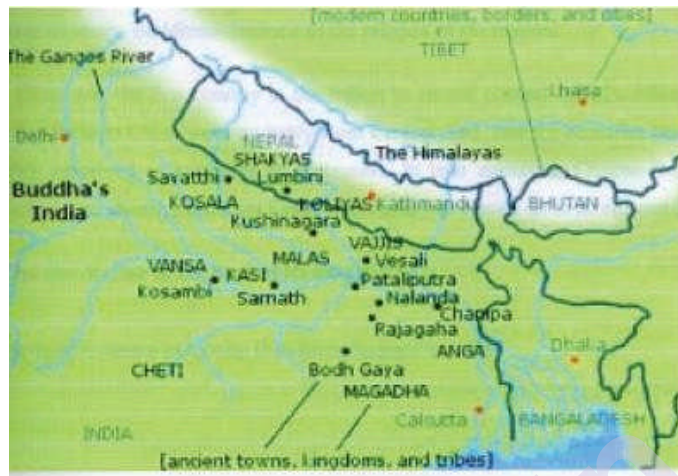
**2. Lalitavistara :** Lalitavistara is one of the holiest of the Sanskrit

literature. It belongs to the first century. It contains the miracles, which the superstitious people have ascribed to Buddha.

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## 7.16 SPREAD OF BUDDHISM

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During the third century B.C. the spread of Buddhism was promoted by Ashoka (270-232). He began to preach Buddha's teachings through the edicts inscribed on stone pillars placed throughout his kingdom.

His advocacy of Buddhism was one of the primary reasons for the spread of the tradition into Southeast Asia. He sent missionaries all over the Indian sub-continent, and to Sri Lanka, Burma, and other neighboring areas. His son Mahindra, who traveled to Sri Lanka along with four other monks, led one of the most successful of the missions he sponsored.

Although the growth of Buddhism began to gradually decline it saw the flowering again during Harsha's time around the 7th century A.D. He extended many favours to the religion. During his reign the fifth religious council was held at Prayaga (Allahabad).

The monks who controlled the monastic universities like the one at Nalanda kept its tradition alive. These universities were highly respected as seats of learning and attracted students from abroad. Fa Hien, Huiyen Tsiang and I-Tsing who came from China were said to have studied at Nalanda and other centres of Buddhist learning. But from the 5th century onwards, Buddhism declined as the religion of the masses.

China was the first country in the region to record contact with Buddhism. The earliest Buddhists in China were probably from Central Asia, and for centuries Buddhism was widely perceived as a religion of foreigners. In later centuries, Chinese Buddhism developed its own identity, and from China Buddhism was passed on to Korea and Japan.

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## 7.17 CAUSES FOR THE DECLINE IN THE LAND OF ITS OWN BIRTH

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There are various causes as to why Buddhism declined in India

- a) Buddhist sanghas became centers of corruption. Buddhist monks and nuns got involved in petty quarrels and obviously did not inspire the confidence of the people.
- b) Under the Guptas, Hinduism saw its revival. Moreover Mahayana brought Buddhism nearer to Hinduism and this resulted in Buddhism getting absorbed in Hinduism.
- c) Muslim invasions gave severe blow to Buddhism. Decline of intellectual activity and the development of tantrik or magic form of Buddhism also was responsible for its decline.

### Check Your Progress:

1. Give a brief Sketch of Gautama Buddha's life and teachings.

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## 7.18 SUMMARY

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Thus, People from all walks of life, rich and poor, kings and commoners, men and women, princes and priests, touchable and untouchable embraced it. Jainism was opposed to caste system. The most significant contribution of Jainism in the social field was the establishment of social equality among the four classes namely Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra. Another important thing to be noted is that women were attracted to Jainism. Mahavira proclaimed that in the matters of spiritual progress, both men and women are on an equal footing. Therefore many women followed Mahavira's path and renounced the world in search of ultimate truth and happiness.

In this day and age, there are about six to eight million Jains that live and host exclusively in India. About 100,000 Jains live in North America and other countries.

In the mid-20th Century, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, who was one of the architects of India's Constitution, gave Buddhism a fresh life by embracing it. A large number of people who were denied equal rights in the Hindu caste hierarchy also embraced Buddhism. Today an overwhelming proportion of Buddhists in India are these recent converts who term themselves as Nava-Baudha or Neo- Buddhists. A comparatively recent event of significance was the 6th religious council held at Rangoon in 1954 which came 1300 years after the 5th council held at, Prayaga in 643 C.E. in the reign of Harsha Vardhana. The Rangoon council was also the first one to be held outside India.

Buddhism is becoming increasingly popular in Western countries, and a number of prominent Buddhist teachers have established successful centers in Europe and North America.

Thus in Buddhism, India gave birth to a major worldwide religion. Buddhism was the world's first missionary religion and won its success through missionary activity. The ancient Buddhist monks who carried the Master's message of peace, love and universal brotherhood were pioneers in such a mission in Human history.

And whatever its defects, it has unquestionably done much to benefit the human race by introducing and bringing about a higher standard of conduct in life. One is inclined to bow before the Buddha, not in honor to a deity but in gratitude to a finer craftsman in the art of living.



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## 7.19 QUESTIONS

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1. Trace the development of Jainism. Bring out the contribution of Jainism to Indian culture.
2. Narrate the life and teachings of Gautama Buddha. Show the cause of the decline of Buddhism in the country of its birth.
3. Short Notes:
  - a) Teachings of Gautama Buddha.
  - b) Causes for the decline of Buddhism.



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