Module - I
CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION
Unit -1

NATURE OF PREHISTORIC INDIAN SOCIETY

Unit Structure:

1.0. OBJECTIVES

By reading this material:

- Studentswill understand the nature of the Pre-historic age
- Students will understand transformation of the different Stone Age
- Student will understand the structure of Pre-historic age.

PALEOLITHIC CULTURES IN INDIA

1.1 INTRODUCTION:

The stage of human development began at the time when humans started using tools for their aid. It was around 2.6 million years ago, when

man started the regular use of tools in East Africa. Danish scholar Christian J. Thomsen coined the term "Stone Age" in the late 19th century on the basis of technological framework for the study of human past. Robert Bruce Foote was the first to discover a palaeolithic stone tool in India in 1863.The history of human settlement in India goes back to Pre-historic times. No written records are available for the pre-historic periods. However, plenty of archaeological remains are found in different parts of India to reconstruct the history of this period.

Division of History:

Human colonization in India encompasses span of at least half a million years and divided into three broad periods, namely the Pre-historic, Proto-historic and Historic. The stone age is further divided into Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic periods on the basis of geological age, the type and technology of stone tools and subsistence base.

In 1863 John Lubbock divided the stone age into two parts, the Palaeolithic and Neolithic. A few years after, Edouard Lartet suggested the division of the Palaeolithic into the lower, middle and upper Palaeolithic, largely on the basis of changes in fauna associated with the different tooltypes. The use of the term Mesolithic is relatively recent.

Making of Earth – The Emergence of men

Paleoanthropological research during last three decades overwhelmingly shows that the transition from an anthropoid Hominids – Homo*habilis* dating from 4 to 2 million years ago were confined to Africa. It was Homo*erectus*, who appeared sometime between 2 and 1.5 million years ago, who occupied the warmer part of Europe and Asia. Archaeologists have named the culture of this Hominid Acheulian, after the type locality of St. Acheul in France.

"The role of environment in shaping the development of human culture has been acknowledged by Archaeologists for long."Material culture is largely a response to an environment: it consists of the devices evolved to meet needs evoked by particular climatic conditions, to take advantage of local sources of food and to secure protection against wild beasts, floods, or other nuisances infesting a given region. Different societies have been prompted to invent different devices and to discover how to use different natural substances for food, fuel, shelter, and tools".

-V.Gordan Childe.

"When the prehistoric Archaeology in India is divided/grouped into Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Chalcolithic, it is generally understood that man first knew the use of stone, but not of Copper and Iron.

-Three age theory of Thomsen

1.2 PALEOLITHIC CULTURES IN INDIA

Indian Prehistory:

In order to understand Indian Prehistory, we must go back to the 19th century Europe, when scholars like Darwin, Lyell and John Evan

among others challenged the traditional beliefs of human origins. The young British geologist Robert Bruce Foote from the Geological Survey of India,who was working in South India was influenced by these scholars. He discovered and identified the first Palaeolithic tools in the subcontinent at the then village of Pallavaramin Chennai on 30th May 1863. However substantial development in the Palaeolithic studies began only from 1950 onwards. In India, the Prehistoric periods are divided into the Palaeolithic (Old Stone Age), Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age), and Neolithic(New Stone Age). However, these periods were not uniform throughout the Indian subcontinent.

The term Palaeolithic is derived from the Greek word "Paleo", which means old and "lithic" which means stone. Therefore, the term Palaeolithic age refers to the old stone age. The period, also known as Stone age, encompasses the first widespread use of technology as human progressed from simpler to more complex developmental stage and the humanity spread from the Savannas of East Africa to the rest of the world. It is generally said to have begun approximately 500,000 years ago and to have ended about 6000 BCE. It ended with the development of agriculture, the domestication of certain animals and the smelting of copper ore to produce metal. It is termed prehistorical, since humanity had not yet produced a script which is seen traditionally as the beginning of the recorded history.

Check Your Progress:

1. The term Palaeolithic is derived from which Greek word?

1.3 HUNTERS AND FOOD GATHERERS: -

CULTURES

Stone tools have mainly been the known evidence of this stage of man's life. Though nothing is known about man's other aspects of life such as the social, moral, religious etc., – the word 'culture' is applied, because stone tools of certain types constantly recur in both the ages. These forma leading characteristic and give an inkling of the material culture of the man. Hence, instead of grouping the stone tools into simple 'assemblages' or 'industries', a term 'culture' has been used.

PHASES IN THE PALAEOLITHIC AGE: -

Based on types and nature of tools and its technology the Palaeolithic age is further divided into phases and also according to the nature of change in climate.

- FIRST PHASE – Lower Palaeolithic – 500,000 BCE to 50,000 BCE
- SECOND PHASE –Middle Palaeolithic–50,000 BCE to 40,000 BCE
- THIRD PHASE - Upper Palaeolithic – 40,000 BCE to 10,000 BCE

1.4 LOWER PALEOLITHIC (Early Palaeolithic)

1.4.1 STRATIGRAPHY

The tools of the lower Palaeolithic industry are often associated with the alluvial deposits of the river valleys. These deposits are divided into Alluvium of Pleistocene Age/ the younger newer Alluvium of Holocene. Two or three cycles of the sediment, each beginning with gravel and ending with silt, have been noted in many of the river valleys of the peninsula. The sequence starts with boulder, cobbly or pebbly, gravel horizon and at some places with a deposit of secondary layer. The gravels forming the base of the first aggradation cycle have yielded tools of lower Palaeolithic industries at a number of places. The succeeding middle Palaeolithic industry is confined to the cycle, while the upper Palaeolithic industry is found in the upper portion of the older Alluvium and thus belongs to the closing face of the terminal Pleistocene.

1.4.2 CLIMATIC CONDITIONS/ENVIRONMENT

The subcontinent experiences a dry climate, and consequently the sea level dropped by the several metres. Excellent evidence of this phenomena is available in the western India, Didvana in Rajasthan, Junagarh in Gujarat and Paithan in Maharashtra.

The correlation of the Geomorphological and Archaeological data would indicate that the dune formation in the Thar dessert occurred sometimes between 1,91,000 to 1,50,000 B.C.E. This time period corresponds with the third glaciation in the temperate land of Europe. It was the period of intense cold, as a result of which water was locked into ice, resulting in lowering of sea level by as much as 100 metres or so on. It must be noted that the scientists have observed that when the temperate zone experience glaciation, the tropical countries suffer droughts. Therefore, dry phase in Rajasthan–Allchin, further argued that the absence of the lower Palaeolithic material in Afghanistan, Central Asia and much of Iran indicates that the link between India and Africa, where the earliest stone tools occur, was via southern Baluchistan and the southern margins of the Thar Desert.

Recent evidence from South Africa indicated that man was not the hunter but was hunted. He was more of scavenger, subsisting on the leftovers of wild animals and hunting big animals like Elephants require a tremendous community effort, which would not have been possible in the lower Paleolithic, where people were organised in very small numbers (10-20). Man, most of the time need to subsist more on tubers and other plant food.

The early human colonization of south Asia is represented largely by an abundance of stone tool assemblages. Lower Paleolithicassemblages from the Indian subcontinent have generally been assigned to either the Acheulian (biface) or Soanian (non-biface) traditionsThe oldest known tools, comprising simple cores and flakes, have been reported from the Siwalik hills at Riwat, near Rawalpindi in Pakistan. The earliest reliable stone tool assemblages belong to two distinct cultural and technological traditions, namely

(i) theSohanian and (ii) the Acheulian.

- *Sohanianculture*

https://www.quora.com/What-was-the-Soanian-culture-like-in-Ancient-Pakistan-in-500-000-B-C

Following the early human Riwat culture, the Sohanian culture appeared in the Lower Paleolithic (early stone age) between 500,000 to 125,000 years ago in the Soan Valley of upperPunjab.

The term "Soanian Culture" was first used by Helmut De Terra in 1936, but D. N. Wadia had identified the presence of these archaeological implements in 1928. The Sohan culture is named after the river Sohan(or Soan), a tributary of the Indus, and was found at a number of sites in the Siwalik hills in northwest India and Pakistan.

The animal remains from this site included horse, camel and wolf buffalo, straight-tusked elephant and hippopotamus, suggesting an environment characterized by perennial water sources, tree vegetation and grass steppes.

Five terraces comparable to those of the Indus-Sohan in the Potwar region have been recognized in the valleys of the Sutlej, Beas and Banganga rivers in the Punjab-Himachal Pradesh region.

1.4.3 Acheulian culture

Acheulian culture, named after French site of St. Acheul, was the first effective colonization of the Indian subcontinent and is almost synonymous with the lower Paleolithic settlements in India. Remains of Acheulian culture have been found extensively from the Siwalik hills in the north to areas in and near Chennai in the south but not in the Western Ghats and the coastal region running parallel to them, northeast India and the Ganga

These regions today receive adequate rainfall, have perennial rivers, a thick vegetation cover and are rich in wild plant and animal food resources. Chemical analysis of the sediments yielding Acheulian assemblages in rock shelter III F-23 at Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh suggests that conditions during the Acheulian occupation were as humid as, if not more than, they are today (Rajaguru 1978). The animal remains of Acheulian period comprise wild boar, cattle, elephant, horseandhippopotamus.These animals indicate the existence of both forest and open grassland environments and the availability of plentiful water round the yearTherefore, both plant and animal life must have been abundant.

The Acheulian culture was a hunter-gatherer culture that adapted to a variety of climates. Acheulian tools include the choppers, chopping tools, polyhedrons, spheroids, discoid, hand axes, cleavers, scrapers, denticulate, notches, flakes, blades and cores. They served a variety of functions like hunting, butchering and skinning of animals, breaking bones for extraction of marrow, digging of roots and tubers, processing of plant foods, and making of wooden tools and weapons.

In south India, Acheulian artefacts are usually found buried in boulder and pebble gravels of theNarmada, Godavari, Brahmani, Hunsgi, Krishna Kortalayarrivers and their tributaries. These gravels are believed to have been deposited during semi-arid climate with intermittent, erratic rainfall when there was sparse to no plant cover (Williams and Royce 1983)

1.4.4 TOOL KIT/ TOOL INDUSTRY

The most dominant tool type hand-axe, with its various subtypes, others are – cleavers, choppers, scrapers, flakes, blades and cores, discoidand points. They are mostly made up of quartzite, but a few of traprock have also been found. Most probably they served a variety of functions like hunting, butchering and skinning of animals, breaking bones for extraction of marrow, digging of roots and tubers, processing of plant foods, and making of wooden tools and weapons.

USES: -

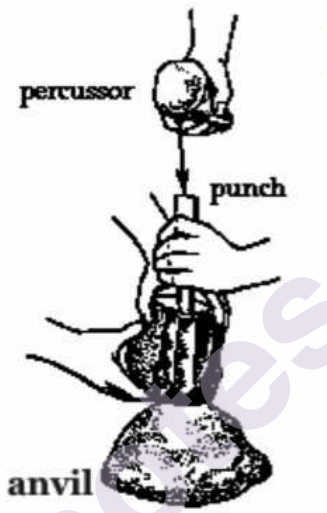
Hand-axewas an all-purpose tool,useful for digging roots and tubers, Cleavers was usedfor cutting chunks of meats and Choppers were usedfor breaking for marrow. Most probably they served a variety of functions like hunting, butchering and skinning of animals, breaking bones

for extraction of marrow, digging of roots and tubers, processing of plant foods, and formaking of wooden tools and weapons.

The raw material used for toolmaking varied regionally according to the geology of the area. In western Maharashtra dyke basalt or dolerite was the only rock available. Over the rest of the country quartzite was the preferred rock and occasionally trapwas also used. In the Hunsgivalley in Karnataka limestone was the main material but occasionally basalt and granite were also used

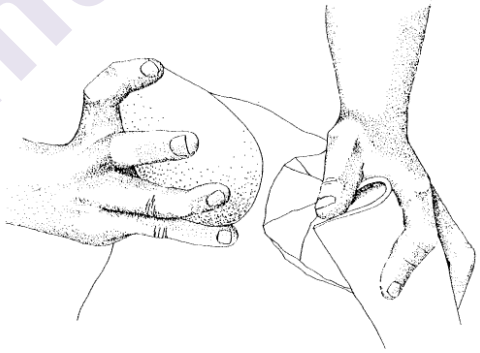
1.4.5 TECHNOLOGY

1. Indirect percussion (Anvil or Block on Block)



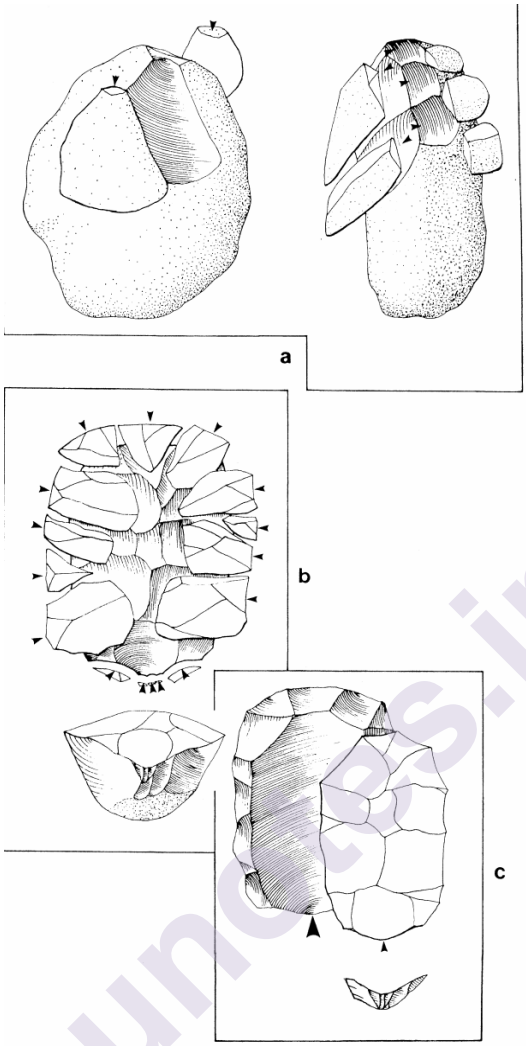
http://rogergrace.webmate.me/SARC/type/knaptools.html

2. Direct percussion or stone hammer



(Inizan*et al,*1999)

3. Levalloisiancore and flake or Clactonian



Levalloisdebitage of a preferential flake(Inizan*et al,*1999)

The early man always preferred hard, tough and fine-grained rocks, possessing good flaking qualities for preparing tools. The distribution of the stone age site is related to geological formation. Quartzite is a nonfoliate metamorphic rock which is of incredible strength and the stone tools are therefore concentrated in the region.

IMPORTANT SITES

1. Bhimbetka (M.P)
2. Hunsgi in Karnataka
3. Anagwadi (Karnataka)
4. Chikri – Nevada (Maharashtra)
5. Didwana (Rajasthan)
6. Samadhiala (Gujarat)

Check Your Progress:

1. Which culture was a hunter-gatherer culture that adapted to a variety of climates?

1.5 MIDDLE PALEOLITHIC

Middle Palaeolithic Culture as the name signifies occupied and intermediate position between lower and upper Palaeolithic cultures. The middle Palaeolithic culture developed during the upper Pleistocene, a period of intense cold and glaciation in the northern latitudes. There is a very marked cultural change during the middle Palaeolithic all over the world. The middle Palaeolithic sites are of two kinds: -

- Cave or Rock Shelter Sites (very few examples: Bhimbetka and Adamgarh in M.P)
- Open air sites(Bargarh, Odisha), Stratified/Riverine sites (e.g.Mewadaetc), b) Workshop/factory sites (Kovalli and Devpuri in Karnataka)

The miliolite formation of Kutch and Saurashtra and date of sanddune in the Thar desert of Rajasthan allow us to assign this phase to 1,25,000 to 20,000 B.P. In the western Europe the near East, North-Africa and Central Asia, the middle Palaeolithic occupation sites are associated with the physical remains of Homo*sapien*Neanderthal man. Though rather Robustly built and with prominent Supra orbital ridges and residual prognathism of face, Neanderthal man had attained the brain size of modern man and was of equal intellectual capacity. Though no physical remains of Neanderthal man have been found in India, stone tools very similar to those found with this species in Europe and other areas are widespread in the subcontinent.

It's existence as a distinct cultural phase in the Indian prehistoric culture-sequence was first recognized 1954, by Prof.H.D.Sankalia at the site of Nevasa, on the Pravara (Ahmednagar district)

1.5.1 CLIMATIC CONDITION/ ENVIRONMENT

The widespread distribution of the middle Palaeolithic sites indicate a congenial environment for human occupation. The dry phase of the lower Palaeolithic was replaced by a wet phase during the Middle Palaeolithic. In Rajasthan concluded that middle Palaeolithicwasmarked by considerable humidity. Sand-dunes formed in the preceding epoch hadstabilized because of abundant vegetation over there and higher level of precipitation allowed the formation of a layer of deeply weathered soil,

which occurred widely in the desert zone as at Pushkar, Benesa, Bagra and Pavagarh. The river in the region were flowing with abundant water and even such areas as the Jaisalmer district, which is now a desertwere occupied by the middle Palaeolithic man. Clearing of desert must have provided a suitable habitatfor a wide range of wild animals as also for man. Besides,innumerous sites, animal fossils have also been found and among these wild Elephant (Elephas Species), wild horse (Equus species) and hippo speciesshould find special mention.

Large animalssuch as wild cattle and deer were hunted bymiddle palaeolithic men. In this connection, it is interesting to note that a few flake tools were found embedded in askullofNomadius at Kalegaon on the banks of Godavari river. Karnataka, Andhara, M.P, and other areas in peninsular India covered with thorn-scrub anddeciduous vegetation reveal that a variety of small game (mammals like the hare and rodents, fishes, amphibians and insects) as well as range of wild plant food (leafy greens, fruits, berries, seeds, roots and tubers, etc) were available.

1.5.2 TOOL KIT

This phase witnessed a general switchover to find grained materials like, Chert, Chalcedony, Jasper and agate. Nodules and pebbles of these materials served as a core or nucleus for detaching a series of flakes. Middle Palaeolithic is often called a flake tool culture. These flakes may be round, square, oval, rectangular or irregular shape.Many other tools – Scrapper (in a different form) points, Borers, Knifes, Denticulate or Sans-Age like tools, Basins andhand axes, cleavers, etc are found in most of the sites

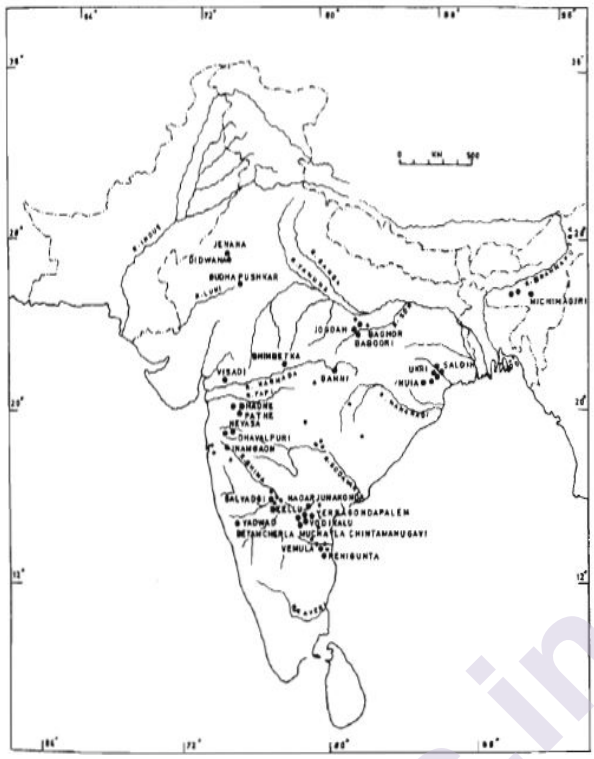
Check Your Progress:

1) When Indian prehistoric culture-sequence did was first recognized by Prof. H.D. Sankalia?

1.6 UPPER PALEOLITHIC

The identification of a distinct Upper Palaeolithic phase in Indian prehistory was made in the late 1960s and early 1970s, with major contributions by M.L.K. Murty, S.A. Sali and G.R. Sharma.

First and Foremost, the tools became smaller than those in the middle Palaeolithic. Upper Palaeolithictools comprise ofparallel sided lithic blade tool and bone tool technology. Chronologically, it is a culture of a terminate Pleistocene period and the authors are Homo*sapien*Sapiens.



1.6.1 CLIMATIC CONDITIONS/ ENVIRONMENT

In the tempered land, the environment of the upper Palaeolithic was characterized by an intensively cold climate as it was the period of the last glaciation. Since, large bodies of the water got locked into ice, the sea level lowered considerably. The tropical land suffered resulting in an extremely arid climate. The humid phase of the preceding phase continued in the earlier part of upper Palaeolithic and then the dry phase began. The faunal remains belonging to deer, four horned antelope, chital, sambhar, chinkara, nilgai, porcupine, jungle cat, giant squirrel, monitor lizard, hare etc found in Kurnool caves – suggesting hunting. A very surprising find is the occurrence of Ostrich egg shell at some of the upper Palaeolithic sites such as Bori, Inamgaon and Patne in Maharashtra which are also indicative of the arid environment.

1.6.2 TOOL KIT

The characteristic of lithic tool types of the upper Palaeolithicis back pointed blades. Large number of standardised blades some of which show edge damage, burins at some sites, variety of scrapers, flakes and blades. The palaeolithicmenutilized flakes probably used as edged flakes, shouldered and tented points of the flakes, unifacialand bifacial points and few choppers and bored stones.

Side-scrappers or racloirs, choppers and flakes (with edge damaged) can be associated with wood and bone, working burins indicates that they are used as chisels for making slots in wood or home, for the blade artefacts.

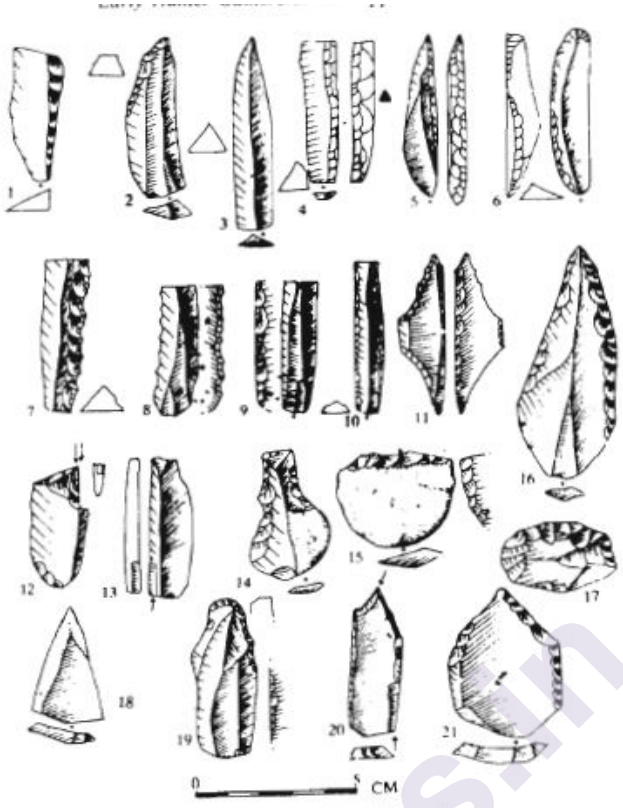


Fig. 4.2: Upper Palaeolithic tools

- IMPORTANT SITES

Kurnool Caves, Patne and Didwanalake in Rajasthan are some of the important Upper Palaeolithic Sites.

1.7 SITES – PALEOLOTHIC CULTURE IN INDIA

1.7.1BHIMBETKA

Bhimbetka is located some 28 miles (45 km) south of Bhopal, in West-Central Madhya Pradesh state.. Discovered by V.S Wankankar of Vikram University, Ujjain in 1957, the complex consists of some 700 shelters and is one of the largest repositories of prehistoric art in India. The shelters were designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2003.Over 500 of these contain prehistoric and later painting. The shelter has been divided into 8 areas or groups (I – VIII). Since 1972, systematic digging in several areas in Bhimbetka around the rock shelters have been done by the Vikram and V.N.Mishra.

Ecological Setting

Bhimbetka is located in the midst of dense deciduous forest. The rock shelters were carved by wind and rain out of hills and boulders in this forested region. Over 30 species of trees and plants in the forest have edible flowers, fruits, seeds and tubers which are extensively exploited for food by the local rural populations; pre-dominantly tribal. Bhimbetka thus has ample provision for the basic requirement of man – shelter, food and water, and study of cave sediments by S.N. Rajaguru shows that environment was not significantly different in the past. It is therefore, no

surprise that the site should have attracted hunting-gathering population over a very long period of time.

Stratigraphy

The maximum deposit, 3.90m, has been found in shelter III-F-23, excavated from 1973 to 1976, the stratigraphy of this shelter, can be taken to be fairly representative of the site in different layers. No organic material or traces of fire have survived in the Palaeolithic layers because of the acidic nature of the sediments. Sandstone and quartziteare available in plenty all over the area**.**

A number of tools, especially cleavers, mud-hand axes are broken into pieces or have their edges damaged is varying degrees. This shows that the tools were not only manufactured within the caves, but were also used there.Acheulian industry of Bhimbetka belongs to the terminal stage of Acheulian tradition. The upper Palaeolithic age was even more short-lived though it grew out of the local middle Palaeolithic.

Cave paintingse

The paintings can be assigned to 3 cultural and chronological phases: -

1. Prehistoric
2. Transitional
3. Historical

The colours were made by using minerals and plants. The rock paintings range in colours like white, red, green, yellow etc. The paintings were made using fingers, feathers, hairs, brushes made of horse hair depending upon the era they were from.

1.7.2 ATTIRAMBAKKAM

Attirampakkam is an open-air Paleolithic site situated near a meandering tributary stream of the river Kortalayar, northwest of Chennai, Tamil Nadu. The work in this area was initiated by R.B.Foote and Williamking in 1863and subsequently in 1935 by Krishnaswami. The situation seemed to provide scope on Archaeological grounds for a correlation with the mid-Pleistocene basal Narmada zone. Paterson, 1941, was the first to point out a quadruple Pleistocene terrace sequence around Madras.

Excavations in Attirampakkam was initiated in 1999 to establish the stratigraphy and culture sequence, to obtain a secure chronology and to study the assemblages with a view towards investigating changing patterns in hominin adaptation over the Pleistocene (Sharma Centre). Ongoing research at this site has resulted in new perspectives on the Acheulian culture and Middle Palaeolithic Agein South Asia. In 1964-65, K.D. Banerjee laid four trenches 1 km away from Attirampakkam along the right bank of the high cliffs of approximately 50m contour, showing the following stratification.

1. Sriperumbudur shale with a Clayey top and with embedded remarkably fresh hand axesand Cleavers.
2. Detrital laterite, containing the post-Acheulian flake industry, the tool types including points, scrapers and longish blade flakes.
3. Sterile brownish silt, and
4. Top surface yielding microliths.

The work shows that the current view that the laterite gravel is of Acheulian horizon is correct and the silt is not the horizon of the post-Acheulian flake industry

1.7.3 CHIRKI

ChirkiNala, Dt Ahmadabad: Excavation of the ChirkiNala on the right bank of the Pravara indicated that the Early Stone Age, horizon was represented by a deposit of rubble gravel which was found to rest on the uneven surface of the amygdule basalt. Overlying the gravel was fine sandy gravel containing Middle Stone Age tools. The tools assemblage consists mainly of various forms of hand axes, cleavers, choppers, scrapers, etc. These tools on the whole display an advanced Acheulian character. The collection also includes tools which on typo-technological grounds show some characteristic of middle Palaeolithic industry. It appears therefore that the early Palaeolithic industry in the region represents a late stage of the Acheulian phase. This site is somewhat different from the other Stone age found in India. Generally, the sites located in the riverine environment are of secondaryin nature and the tools embedded in pebbly gravel deposits are disturbed, transported and redeposited. At the present site the morphological character of the tools as well as the associated rubble suggest that they have undergone very little transportation from their original place of deposition. Thus, the site possibly represents a temporary camping site of the Lower Palaeolithic man. The presence of a few fossil bones from the site are also indicative of human activity in the region.

1.7.4 NEVASA

It was first explored by M.N. Despande of the ASI under H.D. Sankaliain 1954-56 and again in 1957-59. These revealed a sequence of six cultural Periods ranging from the Lower Palaeolithic to the Muslim-Maratha times.

Lower Palaeolithic tools were found in the cemented gravel resting on the rock. The material of these tools of olivine dolerite, a fine-grained variety of trap. Typologically they include handaxes, cleavers, flakes, cores hammer-stones and choppers.

Middle Palaeolithic is presented by the middle gravel at Nevasa and the lower most gravel of the BelPandhari, Suregaon and Kalegaon, all on the banks of river Godavari.

Within this of at least five phases of occupation have been distinguished on the bases of floors and associated burials. No complete

house plan however has been exposed. Huge storage jars with bold linear designs and tapering bottoms were embedded into the house floor. Under the house-floor of all five phases a total number of 131 burials have been found. Of these 126 are of children and 5 are of adults. The funerary goods associated with these comprise small painted bowls, small globular vessels, high-necked pots, tiny bead of faience, carnelian and copper and a copper anklet.

The cultural equipment comprises microliths blades and flakes, polished stone axes, copper bangles, beads, rings, hooks, chisels and a pot, beads of semi-precious stones, steatite and terracotta, terracotta skin-rubbers, lamps, pottery discs and wheels, bangle of shell and hammer stones, anvils, querns and Muller.

1.7.5 Art and religion of Upper Palaeolithic

Ostrich eggshells were engraved with cross-hatch patterns between horizontallines in phaseslID and HE at Patne. At Nisarpur in the Nimar region, abroken disc of micaceous schist was found with Upper Palaeolithic tools. Apiece of micaceous schist was also found at Patne and might show contact between the two groups. It might have served a decorative function in thatthe mica rubs off onto the skin. At Dharampuri and Mehtakheri, intertropicalfossil molluscs found at the site must have been collected by Upper Palaeolithicpeople. Wakankar collected green pigment pieces in the Upper Palaeolithichorizons at Bhimbetka, while fragments of red ochre are reported from the Baghor sites in the Soan Valley. From Baghor there is evidence of a possible shrine. All this shows that some concern for art, decoration and religion waspresent in the Upper Palaeolithic period.

Check Your Progress:
Q1. Who discovered the largest repositories of prehistoric art in India?

1.8 EVIDENCE OF ART IN PALAEOLITHIC PERIOD(?)

A close study of the total evidence has been made recently by R.G. Bednarik, and it should be useful to follow the discussion. The earliest evidence is from Bhimbetka site III.F-24 which is a tunnel (*c*. 25 m long) widening intoa hall. In its centre lies a large altar like rock whose flat vertical wall facing the passage, coming in from the main entrance of the tunnel, haves even cupules or smallcup-shaped depressions, up to 16.8 mm deep and they precede the present surface deterioration of the rock surface. Further, a huge boulder uncovered in an excavation pit near this

rock carries a single large, well-shaped and circular cup mark with an adjacent meandering line above which follows part of its circumference. According to Bednarik, neither this line nor the cupule is natural. He locates the cupmark and the medering line roughly at the interface of the Acheulian with themiddle Palaeolithic levels and considers it more likely to have been made duringtheAcheulian rather than the middle Palaeolithic. Bednarik further points outthat such cup marks occur at the site of the presumably later rock-art site of LaFerrassie in France.

The rest of the lower Palaeolithic evidence is tentative: astone disc from Bhimbetka, a similar disc from the Acheulian site of Maihar(also in Madhya Pradesh), six small quartz crystals in a similar context at SinghiTalav in the Didwana area of western Rajasthan, and more definitively, a redochre piece (1 cm across) from the locality V at Hunsgi. Both rock crystals andochre pieces are known to be found from Palaeolithic sites outside India. None of the evidences cited is strictly art but certainly suggests a level of cognitive awareness in the lower Palaeolithic. The evidence is more explicitly artistic in the upper Palaeolithic stage in India as it is elsewhere. The late V.S. Wakankar, the premier student of prehistoric artin India, used to argue that the earliest level of superimposed paintings at Indian rock-art sites was done in green and that 'green earth' was found in the upper Palaeolithic context at Bhimbetka site III.A-28. The opinion is by no means undisputed, but the issue is not yet settled either. There are, however, two indisputable pieces of upper Palaeolithic evidence: an engraved ostrich-shellfragment from Patne in Maharashtra, with two banded panels of criss-cross designs are considered as earliest evidence of Upper Palaeolithicsite in India.

Cup marks, Madhya Pradesh

https://beyondlust.in/tag/cup-marks/

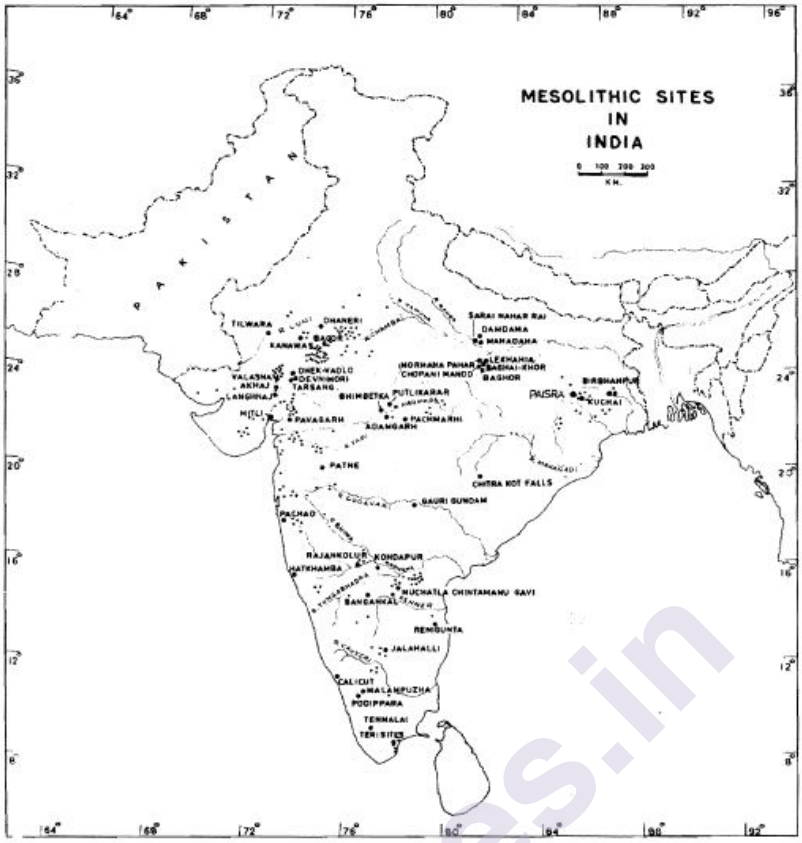
Check Your Progress:
Q1. Where did the cup marks evidences of arts found?

1.9MESOLITHIC CULTURES IN INDIA (1200- 4000 BC)

INTRODUCTION: -

In the term of geochronology, the Mesolithic coincides with earlier parts of Holocene when climate in previously glaciated area Ameliorate to finally acquire its present form. Culturally this stage is distinguished by the widespread an intensive use of microliths, they are Hafted in slotted wood and bone pieces for making compound tools. Regular use of bow and arrow suggest hunting and probably warfareand more intensified exploitation of the natural resources of localized ecological reaches. It is noteworthy that microliths were first discovered in India as early as 1867-68 by A.C.L. Carlleyle. Until Carlleyle's discoveries, European archaeologists had believed that there was a 'hiatus' or break between the Palaeolithic and Neolithic (Binford 1968: 314). Carlleyle realized that there was no break or hiatus, and was the first person to use the term 'Mezolithic' for the period intervening the Palaeolithic and Neolithic. There are number of sites in Europe, Africa and Asia. In India, the evidence for Mesolithic is better preserved and therefore richer than the preceding stone ages because of the following reasons:

A) There have been no significant geomorphic changes during this period in the dated sites belonging to Mesolithic
B) These Mesolithic sites are several times bigger than that of the sites of the preceding Paleolithic period.
C) Biological material, comprising of animal and human skeletal remains is preserved in good quality and quantity ina number of sites.



Mesolithic sites in India (Courtesy V.N.Mishra)

MESOLITHIC- FEATURES

1.10.1CLIMATE CONDITION: -

Mesolithic was perhaps the most congenial period for habitation and growth in the history of mankind. Tempered lands experienced a warm climate after aprolonged period of severe cold for the large species, ice sheets iterated and the vast of the northern Europe came to be occupied by man for the first time.

In India, it has been observed that the deglaciation of the Himalayas began some 18,000 years ago and the monsoon strengthened. This was supported by the Arabian record which indicate influx of fresh water because of improved monsoon. Therefore, the overall evidence points to a drastic change in climate during the early part of the Holocene.

Mesolithic sites have been found almost all over India except Assam. Several of streams of Gujarat and Maharashtra were rejuvenated and were flowing a few meters below their present bed level. This was obviously due to the increased ditch in rivers because of increase in annual precipitation. The rainfall seems to have been abundant all over the world as never before. Even in the arid areas of Rajasthansuch as in salt lakes of Didwara, Sambhar, Lunkaransar, etc., there was fresh water between 9000-4000 years. This resulted in the deposition of dark brown clays which are rich in pollen content. The sand dunes had stabilized and a layer

of brown thick vegetation had spread over the dunes. Sea level around Gujarat East had risen around 10 meters.

As a result of such favorable atmospheric conditions, and a thick overgrowth of vegetation all around abundant plant food was available. So also, was the case with small grains. The natural consequence of this prosperity was tremendous increase in population which is evident from numerous Mesolithic sites all over the country.

1.10.2 DIET: -

80% of the Mesolithic man's diet consisted of plant food and was supplemented by animal food. Animal flesh was cut up into chunks on compact stone plowed floors and on open fires for consumption**.** On several sites, there are also bones of fish and turtle. In rock paintings of Bhimbhetka and other sites, there are scenes of trapping of rats and of collection of honey and wild fruits in baskets. Plant remains have been recovered from Damdama (Kajale 1990, 1996). Besides, the deciduous forest region of central and Eastern India, where a large number of Mesolithic sites are concentrated, is very rich in a variety of plant foods which are even today extensively exploited by the local aboriginal populations.

1.10.3 HABITAT AND BURIAL: -

Inmuch of central India, Mesolithic people lived in natural rock shelters of the Vindhyan sandstone rock, else where they lived in the wattle or wattle-an- daub huts, the former lined with stones on the outer periphery. At Bagor, there are small stone-paved compact floors which were used as butchering places. At SaraiNaharRai, there is evidence of remains earth floor and of erection of super- structures supported by a wooden post over them.

The first evidence of intentional disposalof the dead comes from this period. Mesolithichuman burials have been found at Bagor in Rajasthan (Misra 1973; Lukacs*et al* 1982), Langhnaj in Gujarat (Sankalia and Karve 1949; Ehrhardt and Kennedy 1965),Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh (Misra 1976a, 1997), and Lekhahia, BaghaiKhor, MorhanaPahar (Varma 1986),Sarai-Nahar-Rai (Sharma 1973; Kennedy *et al* 1986), Mahadaha (Sharma *et al* 1980; Kennedy *et al* 1992) and Damdama (Varma*et al* 1985; Pal 1992) in Uttar Pradesh. At the last three sites cemeteries containing many individuals have been found. The dead were buried in graves both in extended and crouched position. In some cases, two individuals were buried in a single grave. The dead were occasionally provided with grave offerings which include chunks of meat, grinding stones, stone, bone and antler ornaments, and pieces of haematite.

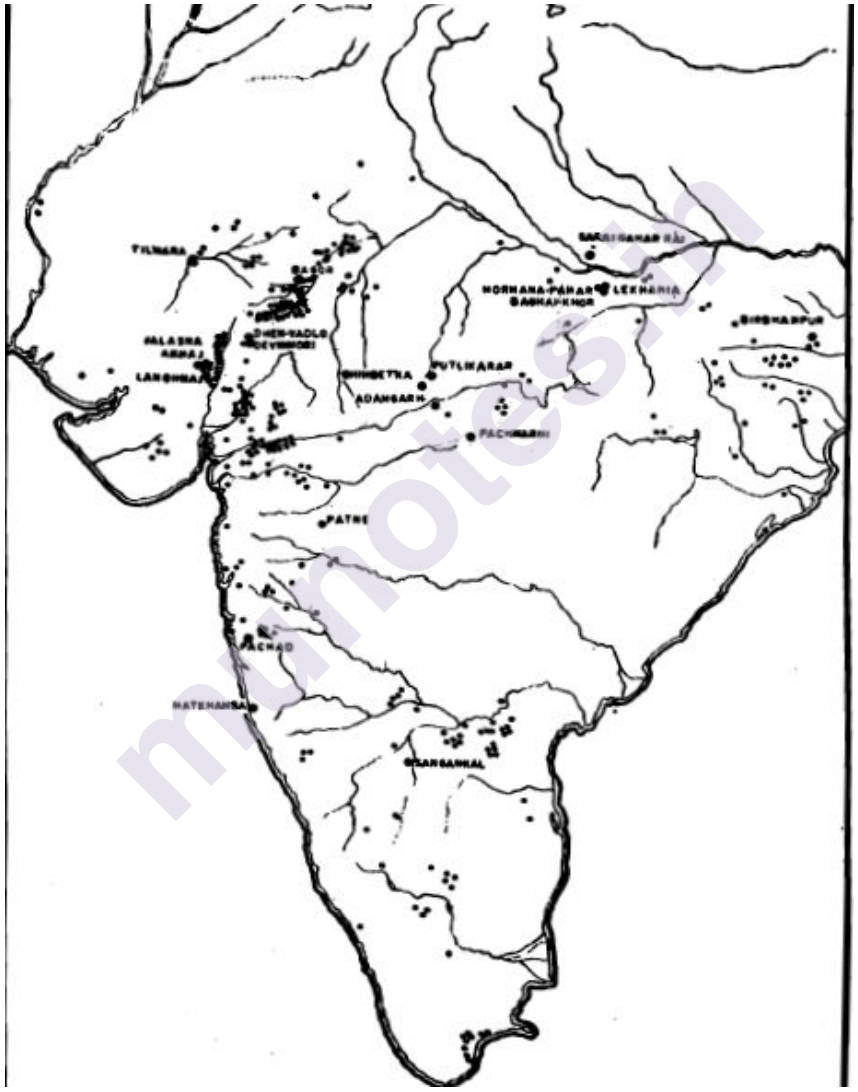
1.10.4 ANIMALS: -

Our knowledge of the food economy of the Mesolithic people to primarily is based on faunal remains from Langhnaj, Bagor, Tilwara, SaraiNaharRai, Adamgarh and Bhimbetka. The settlers here hunted several species of deer and antelopes, cattles, buffalo, pig, fox, goat and

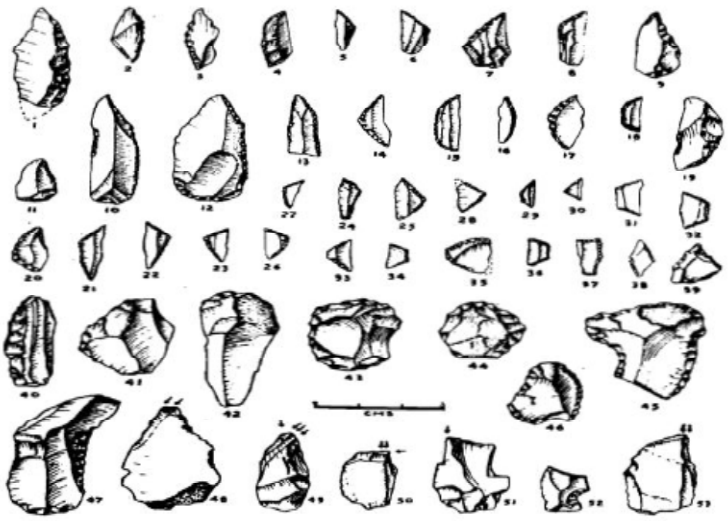
mongoose. At some site animals like rhinoceros and elephants, though it is likely these were scavenged rather than hunted.

1.10.5 MESOLITHIC TOOL INDUSTRIES:

The technology of the Mesolithic period consists of predominantly of microliths- small blades (1 to 4cm in length). Hunted steeply on one or more margins to produce rectangular, triangular, crescentic, trapezoidal, pointed and other forms. Groups of these microliths were hafted in slotted wood and bone handles to form tools like arrowheads, knives, sickles and harpoons. Most of the microlithic industries belong to a very developed technological stage.



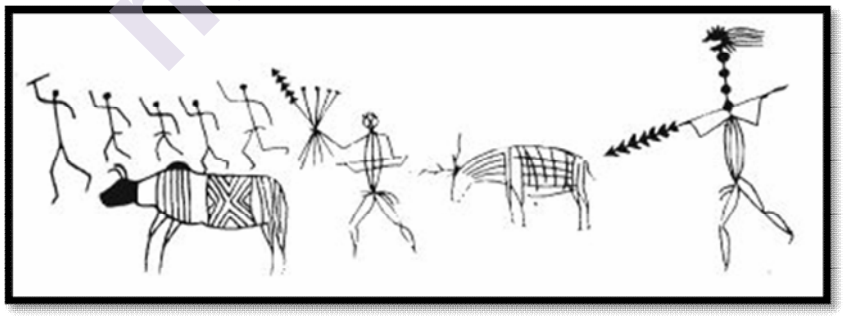
Microlithic industries (Courtesy:V.N.Mishra)

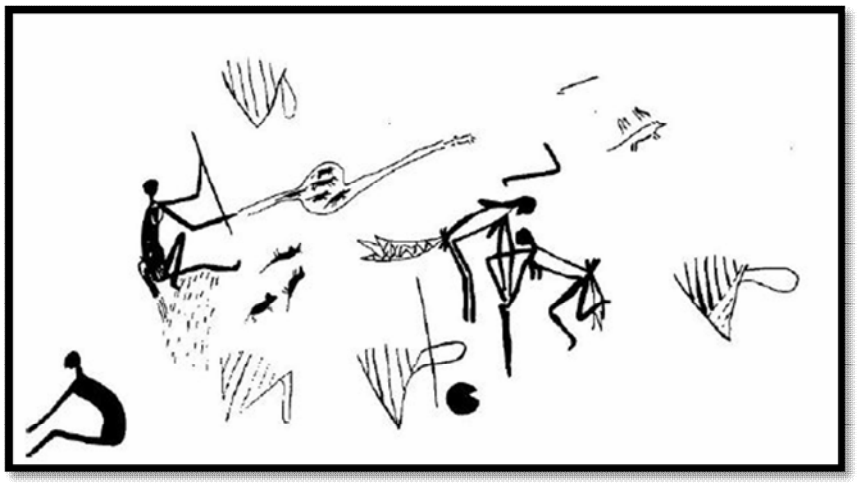


Microlithic industry of Bombay, Maharashtra (Courtesy. V.N. Mishra)

1.10.6 ARTISTIC ACTIVITY:

There are numerous evidences of artistic activity of this period, mostly in the form of paintings. Several thousand rock shelters in the Vindhyan sandstone hills in central India contain enormous quantities of paintings on their walls, ceilings and in niches. They are found in both inhabited and uninhabited shelters. The paintings are made mostly in red and white pigments. The paintings mainly depict the wild fauna in all its variety and scenes of hunting, fishing, plant food gathering and of social life. The portrayal of animal body is naturalistic, and it successfully captures the dynamism, vitality of moods of the wild animals. The paintings throw light not only on the aesthetic sensibilities and artistic creativity of the Mesolithic people but also on their behaviour with respect to hunting and food gathering techniques, dwellings, their social and religious activities and contemporary fauna.





Rock paintings- Mesolithic period

Rock Paintings at Bhimbetka (Courtesy: V.N. Mishra)

1.10. 7 DANCE AND MUSIC:

The Mesolithic man in rejoicing moods is to be seen in the scenes of dances painted at Bhimbetka. Some of the dances, perhaps the communal dances around fire, depicted here may have hadritual significance. Those in which dancers are shown in line and in a circlemight represent the dances performed during festivals and other social occasions. The musical instruments depicted here are the blow-pipes and horns.

https://beyondlust.in/tag/cup-marks/

1.10.8 SPIRTUAL SIDE:

The spiritual side of the Mesolithic man is very well represented by a rock-painting of a family mourning the death ofa child at Bhimbetka and the human burials found at Langhnaj and Sagar. At Laghnaj the dead was very carefully buried, in a highly flexed posture and Sagar in an extended position. At Langhnaj associated with human skeletons were the quartzite pebbles which arenot locally available and were probably brought from the bed of Sabarmati, 15 to 20 km away. Without doubt they were brought to Langhnaj for a specific purpose. Because, they were found placed on the skull or near the head after perhaps smashing the skull in some cases. The purpose of an intentional burial of a wolf with its heads mashed is difficult to presume although it might represent an important event in the life of the Langhnajians.

Check Your Progress:

Q1. Where did the Mesolithichuman burials have been found?

1.11 MESOLITHIC SITES

1.11.1 BAGOR: -

Bagor is Situated in the district of Bhilwara on the bank of Kothari river, belongs to Mesolithic period. The work at this site has yielded evidences for the domestication of plants and animals, gradual development of the settled life. The site of Gilund is bigger than Bagorand it provides remarkable potential to understand the development of the village life of Mewar. This site throws light on the cultural processes involving origin, growth and decline of a Mesolithic site.

The study at this site will enable us to understand the process of the domestication in this region. Much of the plain is covered by an open woodland of Khejri, babul, Dhak and Khajur. The rainfall of the region varies from 60-70cm. Extensive tracts of rocky ground provides adequate pasture for sheep, cattle and camels and pastoralism is an important segment of the rural economy.

The site was discovered in 1967 by L.S. Leshnik of the university of Heidelberg and late V.N. Mishra as part of a long-term project of investigation into the pre-history of North- West India, originallyenvisagedby V.N. Mishra in 1958.The total thickness of the habitation deposit in the trenches is about 1.50m representing occupation lasting for some 4000 years. The sequence was divided into three periods with five layers.

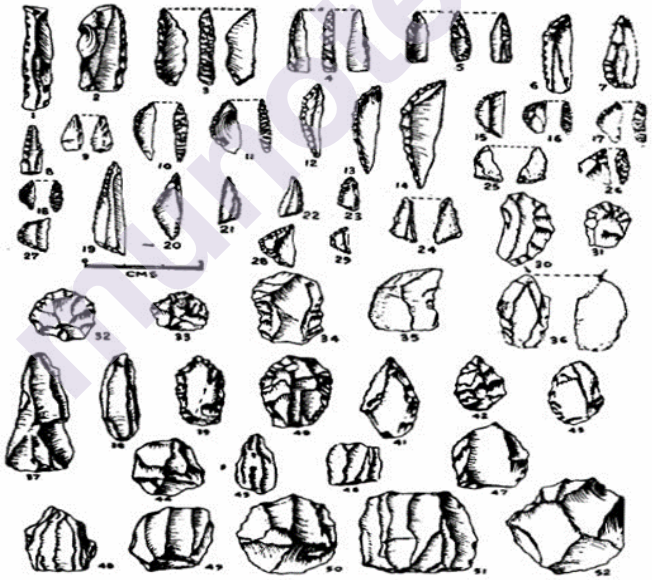
Phase I: - Occupies the lower 50-80cm of occupation deposit. Here microliths and animal bones were most profuse, and the economy was based on a combination of hunting- gathering and herding. People lived in huts, with stone- paved floors and probably wattle walls. Microlithic tools and animal- bones begins to decline in quantity. Querns and rubbers indicate consumption of plant-based food. Only one extended adult burial foundin this phase.

Phase II: Occupies 30 to 50 cm with the contemporary Chalcolithic Culture. Use of copper tools and beads is found. The pottery is handmade with incised decoration. Burials were found in flexed position. Copper repertoire containing one spearhead, three arrow heads and one awl was found in burials.

Phase III: - Is restricted to Central part of the mound where the occupation was 35 to 75 cm thick. The 'microlithic industry' is very poorin quantity and animal bones are scare and highly fragmentary. Iron tools came into use and the pottery is plentiful, and is entirely wheel-made.

Tool industries in Bagor

The stone industry of Bagor is truly microlithic. Large tools such as scrapers and burins made on flakes or cores are rare.



Microlithic industry of Bagor, Rajasthan (Courtesy.V.N.Mishra)

Five well- defined copper objects, one spearhead, one thin rod and three arrowheads, were found. Similar arrowheads, but without holes are known from a number of Harappan sites in Sindh, Punjab, Baluchistan, Rajasthan and Gujarat and one specimen is known from the Chalcolithic levels of Indore. Besides, many bits of iron two arrowheads came from Phase II. One of them is socketed and the other tanged.

Ceramics

The potteries were found at the site are poor- fired and fragile. The shapes include the broad-mounted jar of various size, the small lota- like pot, large shallow basin, some smaller and deeper basin.The pottery of Phase III is different from that phase II. It is entirely wheel- made. The common shapes are large jar, small cylindrical pot and bowl with broad mouth and narrow flat base.

Habitation and subsistence

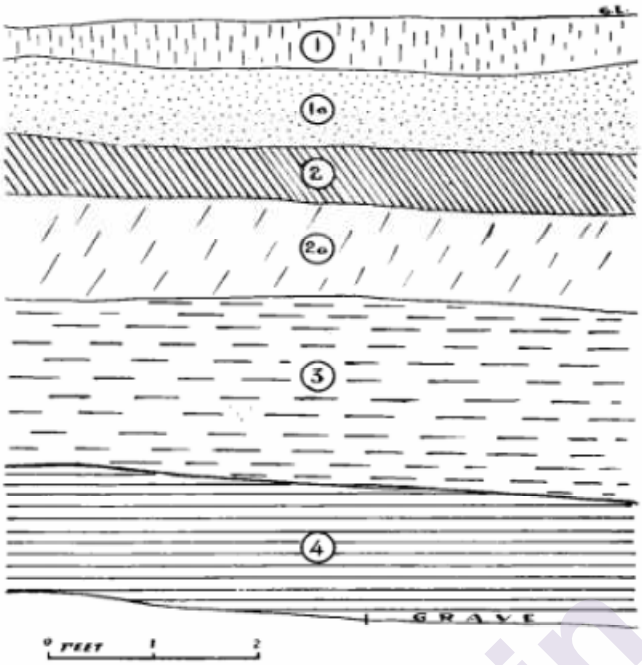
The habitational structure in all the phases, have large floors made on schist slabs quarried from rooks across the river together with occasional pebbles. In some places, the stones appear to be aligned in a circular fashion with diameters of 3 to 5m. These stones were likely to have been arranged on the outer periphery of circular wattle hutsas wind break which protect them from strong winds.

The only direct evidence of reconstruction of the subsistence basis is the animal bones which were found in large quantities. The following animals are represented: sheep, goat, humped cattle, pig, buffalo, blackbuck, chinkara, chital, sambar, hare, fox and mongoose. The economy of Bagor therefore was based from the outset on a combination of hunting- gathering and stock- raising.

Bagor provides important evidence of the process whereby primitive hunting and stone using cultures were slowly incorporated into metal using and food producing economies through acculturation. It is yet the most prolific and most extensively excavated site of its type in India.

1.11.2 LANGHNAJ

A habitation site dating from the late Mesolithic in the state of Guj arat. Langhnaj in Mahesansa district located on the river banks and especially on the sandy alleviate plain of North and Central Gujarat around small hill rocks of wind- blown deposits or dunes which enclose almost perennial small lakes, along with scrub vegetation that are ideally suited to support small and big game and fish. The site was investigated by the Indian archaeologist H. Sankalia in 1941–42and excavations were carried out between 1942 and 1963. Geometric microliths were the principal tools found along with pottery, metal, animal bones and 14 human skeletons.



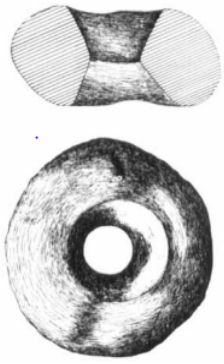
b

Section of the east wall sq. (d) showing the different layers, and indicating the grave line of skeleton No. 1, Langhnaj, 1947.
1) Pale brown sand; 1a) Deep brown sand; 2) Dark brown sand; 2a) Darkish brown sand; 3) Medium brown sand; 4) Light brown sand. Below layer four is virgin whitish brown sand.

https://anthrosource.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1525/aa.1949.51.1.02a00030

Section trenches at Langhanj, Northern Gujarat

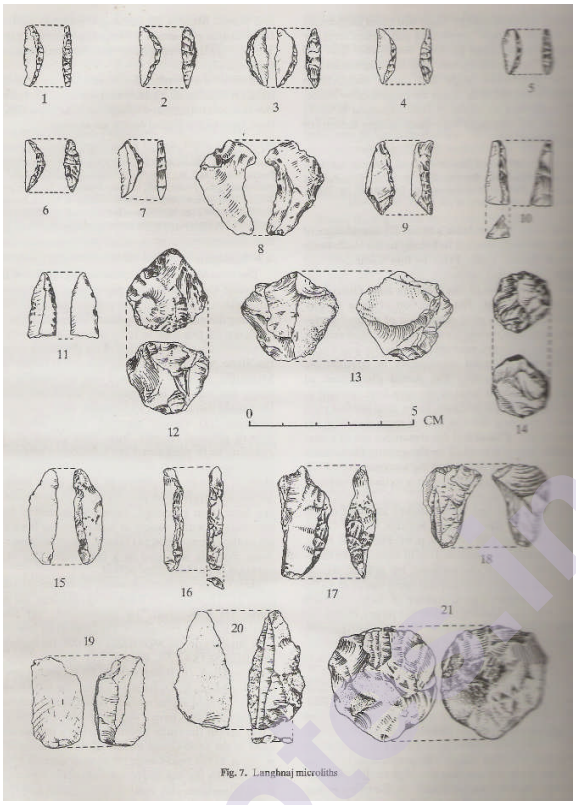
Excavation has revealed a ring stone (mace- head) and a hunting knife of pure copper and small sherds have been found.



MACE- HEAD FROM LANGNAJ

The raw material utilized for microliths is mainly cryptocrystalline in nature, such as chert, chalcedony and quartz. The main stone tool types are- triangles, trapezes, lunates, asymmetrical points, borers or awls, notched and party retouched flakes, blunted- black blades, burins, scrapers, fluted cores and macro- scrappers. The other interesting finds

include quartzite pebbles, a rhinoceros shoulder blade pits, perhaps used as an anvil, a hammer stone, two small ground- stones axes of chlorite- schist and a large quartzite ring stone.



Microliths from Langhnaj (Sankhalia,1965)

Pottery remains are in the form of small sherds which do not indicate any shape. These sherds were also subjected under megascopic and microscopic excavation but it is clear that pots were made by hand, and also some on the wheel. The three main ceramic types were

1)Red ware

2)Black ware

3)Red and black ware.

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1.11.3 The Excavated Sites in Uttar Pradesh:SaraiNaharRai, Mahadaha and Damdama

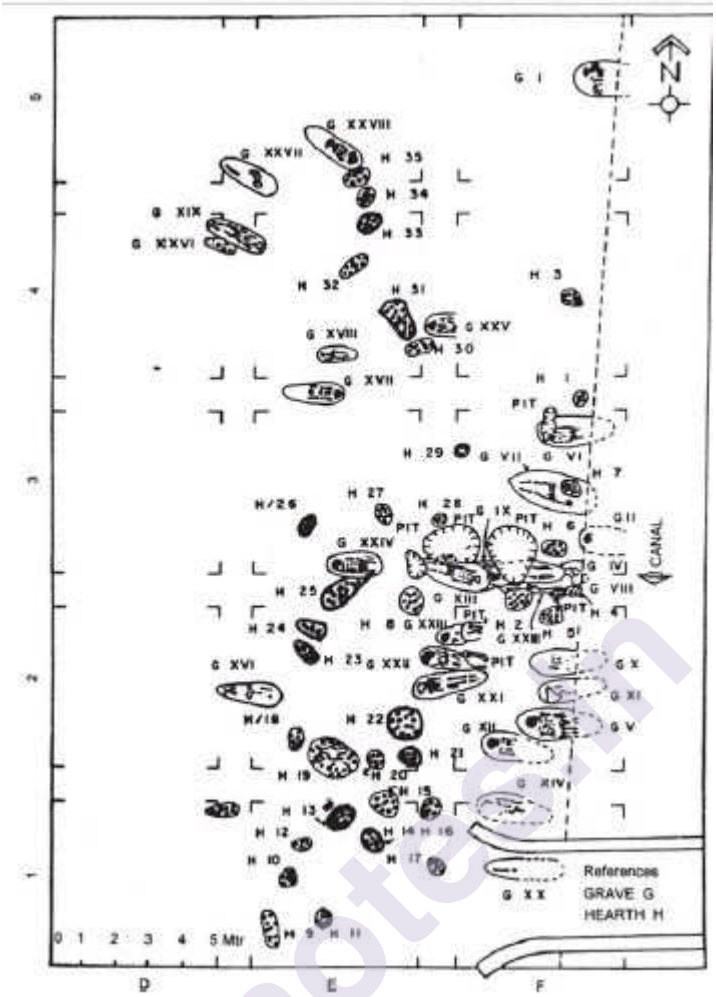
A. SaraiNaharRai:

This she, 15 km south-west of Pratapgarh, covers c. 1800 sq.m on the bank of a dried ox-bow lake representing a part of an old bed of the river Ganga which now flows about 55 km south. Such lakes are common in theUttar Pradesh countryside. Some of them retain monsoonal water throughout theyear while others dry up in winter., However, they aid irrigation, yield fish and provide rich fodder for the local cattle. In the winter months they are the breeding ground of migratory birds. At SaraiNaharRai a geometric microlithic industry was found accompanied by a profusion of bison bones, rhinoceros, stag, fish, tortoise, shells and 11 human burials with 14 individuals. Burials are within the habitation area

and this is clear from the traces of hearths, floors and post-holed enclosures that have also been found in the same area. Among the graves, the remains of four persons were found in one. The graves are oblong pits where loose soil was spread as a cushion before placing the dead body. The bodies lay extended in a west-east orientation (i.e., the head was placed in the west), with the right/left hand placed across the abdomen (the right hand in case of the male and the left in case of the female). Microliths and shells were put inside as grave goods. A microlithic arrowhead was found inside the rib-bones of a skeleton (excavation number 1972–X), indicating that the arrowhead was the cause of his death. The skeletal series showed considerable fossilization in the remains of nine males, four females and a child.

B. Mahadaha:

The main area of this settlement, also on the bank of a dried-up oxbow lake, measures 2400 sq. m. and the excavators demarcate three distinct areas here: the habitation-cum-burial area, the butchering area and the lake area. The60 cm thick occupational deposit yielded 28 burials in four phases, with two cases of male–female double burials. Among the total of 30 individuals,17 could be identified as males, seven as females and three as children. The grave pits are elliptical and slightly sloping, with a deliberately placed cushion of loose soil in some cases. The general orientation of the bodies is west–east; the grave goods include bone ornaments (inclusive of a necklace and a pendant),burnt fragments of animal bones, microliths, bone arrowheads and shells. The butchering area showed the remains of wild cattle, hippopotamus, varieties of deer, pig and turtle. Thousands of animal bones have been found in the lake area. The microliths were made of chert, chalcedony, quartz, crystal, agate and carnelian which were all brought from a distance of about 70–100 km in the Vindhyas. AsatSaraiNaharRai, the people were tall (up to 190 cm in case of the malesand 162–176 cm in case of the females). The most important disease noted isosteoarthritis, and the degree of dental attrition suggests a very abrasive diet, consistent with a hunting-foraging life.



Mahadaha excavations (Sharma et al., 1980)

C. Damdama:

This site is not on the bank of an ox-bow lake but on a stretch of high ground at the confluence of the two branches of a small stream within the drainage system of the Sairiver. Its 1.5 m thick occupational deposit showed both plastered and plain hearths, burnt patches of plastered floors, microliths, bone objects, querns, mullers, anvils and hammer-stones, burnt clay lumps, charred wild grains, animal bones and 41 human graves. Of the four cases of double burials, two showed male–female burials but in one case there were three persons—two males and one female, while in the fourth one two males were put together. While the bodies were generally put in extended positions, some were in a prone or lateral position.

Check Your Progress:

Q7. Where did the geometric microliths found in Gujarat?

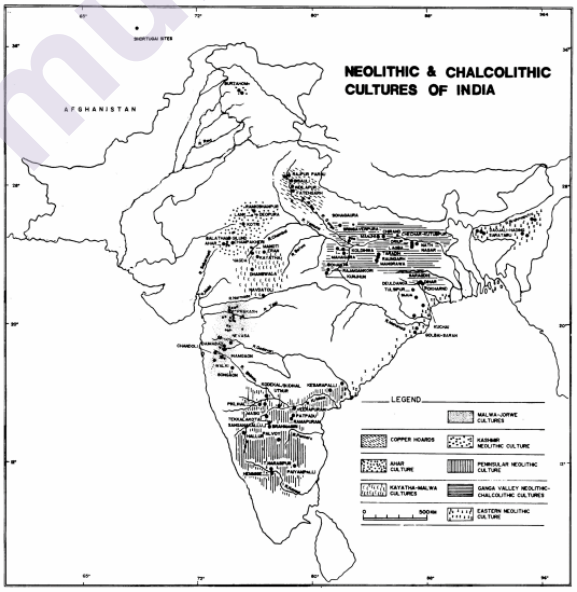
1.12 NEOLITHIC CULTURES IN INDIA

INTRODUCTION: -

Neolithic age is also called as 'food- producing stage' or 'Neolithic Revolution'. This shift from food- gathering to food production is in itself the most revolutionary change in human history.

V. Gordan Childe ecological model explained how the climate became arid after the end of the Mesolithic 10,000 years ago; in consequence, Oases were formed in the desert in West- Asia and this brought man and animal near to each other for water. The process of taming wild species of sheep, goat, cattle, pig, etc. stated and they were domesticated in course of time. However, it has now been challenged by another theory, but again ecologically. According to it, the adverse environment forced human group to adapt the technique of food production. But it has been emphasized that hunter- gatherer are generally reluctant to adopt food production- (Smith, 1972). Whereas Cohen (1977), observed that hunter- gatherers can procure nutritious plant food and even animal food with less expenditure of energy and are, therefore, reluctant to produce their own food. Agriculture involves considerable amount of labor, and what is more, man is tied to his land all the year around. In India, from around 3rd millennium, BCE, several village settlements sprang up, in the Andhra- Karnataka zone with new cultural traits. The characteristic features of this new culture called the Neolithic are-

a) A ground-stone axe industry,
b) Pottery
c) An economy predominantly based on cattle pastorally and agriculture, though hunting also played an important part.



These settlements were made on tips of granite hills on levelled terraces on hillside as well as will side plateau. According to Allchins, three phases of cultural development can be distinguished in the southern Neolithic.

1. THE PRIMARY NEOLITHIC: -

The primary Neolithic occupation ascribed to 3rd millennium BCE were made on the top of granite hills and on levelled terraces on hill sides. They possibly cultivated small hillside plots. The rubbing stones and querns- suggest some grain production. But the predominance of cattle bones, terracotta figurines of humped cattle and rock paintings suggest important role of the cattle. Domestication of sheep and goat; stone axe industry and predominantly handmade pottery of grey or buff- brown ware and red and black slipped ware found. The end of this phase is around C 1800 BC.

2. SECOND PHASE (FROM 1800 BCE): -

This is marked by circular wattle and daub huts with mud floors. In the material culture, new pottery forms like perforated pots, pots with spouts and vessel with roughened outer surfaces appear and the red and black slipped ware of the first phase disappears.

Ground stone axes and standardized blade artifacts increase in numbers. Metal objects of copper and bronze make their appearance for the first time and increase in frequency by the end of this period around circa 1500 BCE.

3. THIRD PHASE: -

In the third phase tools of copper and bronze became relatively numerous. Continuation of pottery is marked by some more new elements like grey or buff ware with a hard surface and an unburnished ware with purple paint turned entirely on wheel. The noteworthy feature is the association of a bone of domestic horse (EquusCaballus) at Hallurparallelly rock paintings around circa 1050 BCE. As the second and the third phases are associated with tools, they are usually referred to as the Neolithic Chalcolithic.

1.13 NEOLITHIC FEATURES

1 HABITAT AND FOOD: -

The evidence of the beginning of agricultural and settled life in sub- continent come from Mehrgarh (Baluchistan) which is near Quetta close to the Bolan pass, and has been radiocarbon dated to circa 6500 BCE. It is highly likely that the earliest occupation at Mohenjo-Daro may also go back to an equally early date. The cultural sequence at Mehrgarh ends with what is now known as the Early Indus Culture. The early Harappan period is now dated to circa 3200- 2600 BCE.

It appears reasonable to see the beginning of sheep pastoralism, as a specialized economic system, around this time, originating from a Neolithic base in the semi- arid grassland eco- system of the Deccan. The grain remains found at various southern Neolithic sites indicated that ragi, bajra, kodan, horsegram and green grams.

The dead were buried as known from some of the sites, either under the floors of the houses or outside close to the settlement Urns were used for, burial both of children and adults. Beads of shell, agate, carnelian, terracotta, gold and copper found variously at different sites indicate their use in ornaments, most probably for necklaces.

1.14 NEOLITHIC SITES

1.14.1 Mehergarh:

Mehrgarh is one of the most important Neolithic (7000 B.C.E. to 3200 B.C.E.) sites in South Asia. Archaeological digs have unearthed some of the earliest evidence of farming and husbandry in that region. Located near the Bolan Pass, to the west of the Indus River valley and between the present-day Pakistani cities of Quetta, Kalat, and Sibi, Mehrgarh was discovered in 1974 by the archaeological team directed by French archaeologist Jean-François Jarrige. The site was excavated continuously between 1974 and 1986. After a ten-year hiatus, the team resumed excavations in 1996. The earliest settlement at Mehrgarh, located in the northeast corner of the 495-acre (2.00 km²) site, had been a small farming village dated between 7000 B.C.E.–5500 B.C.E.

Period I A: The domesticated animals comprise cattle, sheep, goat and water buffalo while the cultivated plants comprise several varieties of wheat and barley. The houses were made of mud and mudbricks. Multiple rooms without doors are believed to have been used for storing grain. The dead were buried under the floors of the houses where people lived. Some of the skeletons which were buried have been found sprinkled with red ochre. Necklaces of microbeads of steatite along with beads of turquoise, lapislazuliand seashell, stone axes and microliths have also been found in the graves. In two cases, bodies of young goats were also found.

Period IB : saw the appearance of pottery. With the passage of time the role of hunting declined and that of agriculture increased

Period II : dated to later part of the fifth millennium B.CE., is divided into three sub-periods on the basis of changes in ceramic technology. The pottery of sub-period IIA is handmade

In sub-period **IIC** wheel-made pottery made its appearance. The vessels of buff to reddish colour were painted in black pigment with simple straight and curved lines, rows of dots and crisscrosses. The vessel shapes included bowls and globular pots. Sickles made of stone bladelets, set obliquely in wood handles with bitumen as the adhesive material, may have been used for harvesting. Discovery of a copper ring and a bead show the emergence of metal technology. Terracotta human figurines and bangles also appear in this phase. The presence of cottonseeds suggests the possibility of the use of this fiber for textile manufacture. Narrow rooms were probably used asgranaries.

Period III saw a marked increase in the size of the settlement and remarkable development in ceramic industry. Vessels were now decorated with paintings of birds and animals as also with geometric designs.

1.14.2 BURZAHOM

Burzahom, districtis16km Northeast of Srinagar off Naseem-Shalimar road, about 1800 above sea- level. The Megalithic menhirs, situated on a Karewa mound, were first noticed by Terra and Patersonin 1939 who collected some bone and stone tools from here in a short excavation. Subsequent exploitation by the ASI has brought to light about a dozen similar sites such as Bagagund, Brah, Gofkral, Hariparigom, Jayadevi-udar, Panzagom, Sombur, Waztal, all located on Karewar especially in the south-east parts of the Kashmir Valley.

Extensive excavation conducted at Burzahom by T.N. Khazanchi and his associates on behalf of the ASI from 1960 to 1971 has brought to light a fourfold sequence of culture: Periods I and II Neolithic; Pd- III megalithic and Pd IV, early historical.

PdI have revealed dwelling pits, circular oroval on plan, narrow at the top and wide at the base and also pit chambers, square to the rectangular in shape. The sides of the stone pits are plastered with Karewa mud. The pits must have been dug out with long stone celts, traces of the cuts being visible during excavation. The filling in some pits consist of ash and charcoal in regular bands, which is clearly indicative of human-occupation. Potholes on the periphery of these pits suggest that there must have been some superstructure of perishable material such as birch, carried on wooden posts as a protective cover. Storage pits 60-91cm in diameter, containing some animal bones, stones and bone tools.

No direct evidence of the cereals that were grown have come forth, but a stone quern has been found in one of the pit chambers. The total absence of any burials of this period may be indicative of some other practice for the disposal of the dead. The pottery is mostly crude and handmade, the color being chiefly steel-grey and shades of dull-red, brown and buff.

In **Pd II,** new structured patterns were evolved. The semi-subterranean pits and pit chambers were filled up and plastered with mud and sometimes covered with a thin coat of red ochre to serve as a floor. Probably partitions were provided for the larger timber structures. Such extensive structure suggests some sort of community living well- arranged post-holes on floor and mud and mud-brick structures have also been noticed.

An important discovery in this period is an engraved stone slab found fixed in a rectangular structure forming some sort of tank with the engraved face placed upside down making it non-functional at the place of its occurrence. Besides, numerous human and animal burials have been

found. Sometimes pet animals are buried with human skeletons in the same pit. The animals represented in the burial are –

1) Domesticated dogs of various types
2) Antlered deer
3) Wolf
4) Wild Uriel
5) Pig
6) Nilgai
7) Domestic goat
8) Domestic sheep.

The horse is missing at all levels.

The objects both in stone and in bone of this period are similar to those of period I. A unique composite tool in bone has also been found. The pottery is generally handmade. A burnished black ware of medium fabric which is the deluxe ware of the period makes its appearance. There is the dish with provision for a stand, bowl, high-necked jar, etc. a few painted pots are also found.

1.14.3 TEKKALAKOTTA

Tekkalakotta, in the district of Bellary, a predominantly Neolithic site with some straggling remains of the later Megalithic or early historical period in the upper levels, was excavated in 1963-4 by H.D. Sankalia and M.S. NagarajaRao. The Neolithic culture was of two phases, early and late, the later one being Chalcolithic in character. The early phase had microliths of chert and other siliceous stones, pecked and ground tools, bone artefacts, beads of steatite and semiprecious stones, gold and copper objects. Fractional burial without grave furnishing was the norm, the burialsare marked by a granite boulder over the pit. The paintings on pottery were post-firing. The ceramics were handmade employing the beater-and-anvil method. Uniformity of the surface was achieved by scraping off unwanted clay. Quartz powder and in some instance mica dust seem to have been used as *degraissant*. The clay was finer than in the succeeding phase. The surface treatment comprised burnishing of the exterior and as far as hand could reach on the inside as well, besides the application of slip and roughening. Applied decoration, rarely resorted to, consisted of fingertips. A few greyware pots, painted or unpainted, has perforated bottoms. Paintings on the rims of the bowl, and spout and external sides of the carinated vessel was confined to burnished grey ware, the designs being bands, curvilinear strokes, etc. The pigments were black, purple or violet and the paintings were executed after firing. The forms included the globular jar with flaring rim, bowl, cup, lid and goblet in the palegrey ware and spouted vessel, kettle, storage jar, bowl with or without spout, shallow dish, urn with flaring rim in brown and storage jar in buff ware.

In the later phase, besides the ceramics of the earlier phase, two industries; the black and red and dull-red wares- appeared; the former with a solitary, white-painted specimen was confined to burials and seems to be

turned on slow wheel. The dull- red ware was the major industry now. Paintings were executed before firing, the pigments used to be black and violet. The designs comprised of horizontal and curvilinear bands. There was no deviation in the surface treatment. The representative shapes were the globular pot, jar, spouted vessel, basin, etc. Shapes in the black and red ware were the bowl and dish. Paintings in white on the inner side of the vessel consisted of vertical strokes.

The excavated houses or huts fall into three categories:

1) Circular, with lower portion built of wattle and daub and with conical thatched roof resting on bamboos or wooden posts planted into the red *murram*.
2) Circular, with sides partially supported or buttressed by heavy stones boulders but otherwise similar to the above; and
3) Square or rectangular structures built against huge boulders for support and stability.

An example of a circular house having post-holes at intervals ranging from 23 to 27 cm had a small refuse-pit slightly away from the structure and contained animal bones and other dumps. Another and bigger one was surrounded and buttressed by boulders. The depressions in the floors were filled up with stone chips levelled and then plastered over with mud. Sometimes the roof was supported by a single central pillar/ post and the sides were made of bamboo screens plastered with mud. Such houses together with the rectangular ones belong to the later phase. For placing legged storage jars, flat stones were utilized. Rectangular platforms of baked earth with circular pot-rest also served the same purpose. It would be interesting to observe that the present-day Boyas of Tekkalakotta still construct circular huts with conical thatched roofs.

BURIALS: - burials were inside or even outside on the periphery of residences. Inhumation, fractional or extended burial was the normal mode. Extended burials with grave goods was usual practice, the orientation being north- south. Interment in multiple urns was also in vogue. Analysis of the skeletal and cranial remains has revealed a mixed population of Mediterranean and Proto-Australoid stock, the former element predominating.

THE STONE TOOLS: - The stone tools fall into two categories: ground and pecked tools, and microliths. The former can be further classified into edge and non-edge tools. Igneous and metamorphic rocks like diorite, dolerite and basalt were used in the manufacture of edge tools. Typologically they are axes, chisel, chopping tools, wedges, points, etc. Most of these are pecked and ground and exhibit use marks. Instances of re-used axes are not wanting. Non-edge tools comprising hammers, pounders, anvils, etc. are of coarse-grained rocks like granitic gneiss. The microliths are fashioned out of siliceous stones, chert being the major raw material and opal being rare. It comprises blades- parallel-sided, -backed, serrated etc., lunates, trapezes, triangles, scrapers, flakes, and flakes with

crested-guiding cores. Marks of use and retouch are noticed on the artefacts.

The bone tools, manufactured out of long bones, ribs, metatarsals, metacarpals and phalanges of animals, consist of chisel, scraper, points, etc. Besides antlers have been also utilized as tools.

Very few metal objects were recovered, the metals being gold and copper. In the early phase two, one broken coiled ear ornament or pendent of gold with solid ends were found. The solitary copper axe of this phase recalls the Jorwe example. In the succeeding phase copper was represented by coiled spiral flat copper, a wire, a coiled ring and a nail-head.

The beads were of steatite and semiprecious stones, carnelian being the chief material. Shell and glass were also used. The shapes were disc in steatite and short bicorne, barrel, cylinder and circular in other materials. The terracotta objects were human torsos, bulls, lamps, holed and plain discs and oval and ground-edged potsherds.

Cattle, sheep, molluscs, rodents and tortoises were part of the dietary. Bones were split for marrow; charred bones indicate meat being roasted. Although there is no evidence for cultivation of cereals yet from the evidence of sites of comparable cultures in this region, we may believe that cereals were eaten and cultivated.

1.14.4.BAGOR:

Bagoris in the district of Bhilwara, on the left bank of the Kothari river, a tributary of the Banas, 25km west of the district headquarters, lying in the center of the undulating rocky plain of Mewar, about 500m above sea level. Much of the plain is covered by an open woodland of *Khejri (Prosopisspicigera)*, *Babul (Vachellianilotica*), *Dhak (Buteafrondosa)* and *Khajur (Phoenix Sylvestris)*. The rainfall of the region varies from 60-70 cm. Extensive tracts of rocky ground provided adequate pasture for sheep, cattle and camels, as pastoralism was an important segment of the rural economy. Wildlife is now sparse in the region but known to have been plentiful till recently. Kothariis not a perennial river but a depression on the north-west edge of the village, retains water all through the year and must have been a major source of water for prehistoric human and animal populations. The dune is composed of wind-blown sand and the habitation materials occur throughout the same deposit, thus attesting that the dune was under active formation when the prehistoric man inhabited it.

The prehistoric sites lie on a large and prominent sand dune, locally known as Mahasati, overlooking the bank of the river about 1 km east of the village. TodateBagor is the largest Mesolithic habitation site excavated in India, and it has been horizontally excavated so as to expose extensive living floors. The variety and quantity of cultural materials recovered from the site are rich and varied compared to most Mesolithic sites so far known, and it has given an insight into the process of

acculturation in a Stone Age community arising from contact with full-fledged farming cultures. Bagor also possesses the largest number of C14 dates amongst all sites of its nature and is thus the most securely dated of all Mesolithic sites in the Indian subcontinent.

In the center of the Mahasati dune, covering an area of 200 m east-west and 150 m north- south and rising to a height of 6 m above the surrounding ground, a compact area of 20X10 m divided into 15 trenches, ten of them 4X4 m and five 4X2 m, was dug. Five layers were recognized, mainly from changes in the color of the sand, but within each the deposit was relatively homogeneous and so no separation of fine habitation or sedimentary layers was possible. Consequently, rather arbitrary spits of about 10 cm in dept were excavated, and all finds were related to these as well as to the broad stratigraphic divisions.

Layer 1, 5 to 10 cm in thickness, is composed of whitish sand of seemingly more or less recent origin. Layer 2, 80 to 90 cm thick, is of dark-brown sand contains most of the habitation deposit. Layer 3 is 70 to 80 cm thick and consists of fine brown sand. Occupational evidence decreases in the middle of this layer and is completely absent in its lower part. Layers 4 and 5 are archaeologically sterile.

1.CULTURAL SEQUENCE: -

The total thickness of the habitation deposit in the trenches is about 1.150 m, representing an occupation lasting for some 4000 years. The occupation sequence can be divided into two Periods with a break inoccupation in between. Phases I and II (of earlier sequences) would belong to period I and Phase III to period II. No stratigraphic break was however visible between the two Periods primarily because of the sandy nature of the deposit. Since the occupation of period II took place immediately over the period I deposit, a certain admixture of the cultural materials of the two periods was inevitable in a soft sandy medium.

Period I, Phase I (c. 5000 to 2500 B.C.E.)

It occupies the lower 50 to 80 cm of occupation deposit. Here microliths and animal bones were most profuse, and the economy was based on a combination of hunting-gathering and herding. People lived in huts with stone-paved floors and probably wattle walls or were sheltered behind wind breaks. The dead were buried in an extended position laid out east–west. delete

Phase II (c. 2500- 1000 B.C.E.)

It occupies the next 30 to 50 cm deposit. Microlithic tools and animal bones began to decline in quantity, but copper tools and pottery make their appearance. The pottery is handmade with incised decoration. The dead were buried in a flexed position and oriented west-east and the graves were richly furnished with pots, metal tools, ornaments and flood offerings. Increased material prosperity implies a more secure and stable

economy suggesting the possibility of plant agriculture and a greater reliance on animal domestication.

Period II (c. 500 B.C.E to C.E. 200)

It is restricted to the central part of the mound where the occupation was 35 to 75 cm thick. The microlithic industry is very poor in quantity and is perhaps derived largely or entirely from the deposit of Phase II. Animal bones are scarce and highly fragmentary. Iron tools came into use and the pottery is more plentiful and is entirely wheel-made. Glass beads are added to the repertoire of ornament; brick and tile are used alongside stone in structures.

1. MICROLITHIC INDUSTRY: -

The flaked stone industry in unusually rich, with several hundred thousand worked pieces, and comprises of the most common material at Bagor. No other site in India or perhaps outside has yielded microliths in such enormous numbers. The greatest density is found in Phase I, which contains 45 to 55% of the material, but it declines progressively in the Phase II and Period II. No marked typological change is noticeable from the lower to the upper levels. Quartz and chert are the most common raw material used and although quartz predominates in the waste material because of its intractable nature the majority of the finished tools are of chert.

The stone industry of Bagor is truly microlithic in that it is based on the mass production of micro-blades and their conversion into various microlithic forms. Large tools such as scrapers and burins made on flakes or cores are rare. The most common types and their frequencies are as follows:

1. Blades with flat retouch (2.78%);
2. Blunted- black blades (48.855)
3. Obliquely truncated and blunted- black blades (18.51%);
4. Triangles (14.19%)
5. Trapezes (1.20%)
6. Crescents (3.86%)
7. Points (10.06%)
8. Other tools (0.55%)

Technologically a distinctive feature of the industry is the virtual absence of the crested-ridge guiding technique. Although occasional tools measure 40 mm or more in length most are between 15 and 20 mm and some measure only 5 to 10 mm. The latter are perfectly symmetric in form and are very carefully retouched. It is indeed a puzzle as to how such tiny pieces could at all have been hafted and used.

1. COPPER TOOLS: -

Five well-defined copper objects, one spearhead, one thin rod and three arrowheads, were found among the offering of two burials of Phase II. The arrowheads measure from 20 to 25 mm in length. Two of them

have a concave crescentic base and the third has a barbed base; all the three are provided with two holes near and parallel to the base, which much have been used to secure them to the shaft with a string, metal wire or rivets. Similar arrowheads but without holes are known from a number of Harappa sites in Sind, Punjab, Baluchistan, Rajasthan and Gujarat, and one specimen is known from the Chalcolithic levels of Indore. Since there is no evidence to suggest that the people of Bagor themselves practiced metallurgy, the plausible explanation is that they obtained metal tools from a source that also catered to the needs of the Harappa and other communities.

2. IRON TOOLS: -

Besides many small bits of iron two arrowheads came from Period II. One of them is socketed and the other tanged.

3. POTTERY: -

Isolated and small bits of pottery, 1 to 2 cm in size, appear almost down to the bottom of the occupation deposit. They had almost certainly sunk from the upper levels by infiltration, assisted by decaying rootlets and burrowing of rodent, into the soft sandy soil. Phase I is best regarded as devoid of pottery in the cultural sense. It is only Phase II and Pd II that are culturally associated with pottery. The pottery of Phase II is made of gritty and micaceous clay. Both surfaces of the pot are treated with a slip of fine clay and the outer surface is often burnished. A wash of bright- red color was applied over the slip but in most phases, it has largely faded away and the present surface color is dull- brown. The pottery is poorly fired and fragile. Most of the pots seem to have been made entirely by hand or by the use of slow wheel or turntable. There are a few sherds with a black inner surface which suggests attempts at producing a black-and-red ware. The shapes include the broad-mouthed jar of various sizes, the small lota-like pot, large shallow basin, some smaller and deeper basin and bowl in a range of sizes. Though no complete pot is decorated, many sherds bear incised designs which include groups of parallel bands, chevrons, herring-bone patterns, crisscrosses, groups of short strokes and finger- nail incisions. There are some affinities between the Bagor pottery and that of Kayatha and Ahar cultures of Malwa and Mewar in fabric and shapes. Judging from the technological and economic status of the Bagor settlement it would appear that the pottery was obtained from agriculture-based village settlements in the area rather than produced by the local people themselves.

The pottery of the Pd II is different from that of Phase II and does not develop out of the latter. It is entirely wheel-made. The firing is better, and the pots are thinner and lighter. The surface is rarely treated with slip or wash. The common shapes are the large jar, small cylindrical pot and bowl with broad mouth and narrow flat base. Decoration is rare and where present consists of simple incisions.

4. STRUCTURES: -

In phase I and II, the only structures are large floors made of schist slabs quarried from rocks across the river together with occasional pebbles. Some of these floors covered the entire excavated area. But it is difficult to discern any recognizable pattern in most of them. In some places, however the stones appear to be aligned in a circular fashion with diameters of 3 to 5m. These stones were likely to have been arranged on the outer periphery of circular wattle huts or wind break to protect them from strong winds. At several places, small areas; 40 to 70 cm across, were paved with lightly packed stones and these were associated with concentration of animal bones. They probably represent butchering floors. In Pd II kiln-burnt bricks, mostly fragmentary and tiles are also used in construction. In one case a wall nearly 3 m long and 1 m wide was made of massive and partly dressed stones.

5. DISPOSAL OF THE DEAD: -

Five burials, were found one in Phase I, three in Phase II and one in Pd II, all of them within the settlement area. In Phase I, the body was laid in an extended position with the lower left arm resting partly over the trunk and with the head towards the west. No grave goods were offered.

In the three burials of Phase II, the body was laid in aflexed position, with the head to the west. Whether this change in the burial practice signifies a change in the ethnic composition of the community is not possible to say as the skeletons of both phases I and II are too poorly preserved to draw and meaningful conclusions about their physical features. These burials were provided with many offerings in the form of pottery food vessels (originally no doubt full) ornaments, metal objects and cuts of meat. In one of the burials 36 beads of stone and bone were found strewn on the chest and around the neck. These must have been originally strung and worn as a necklace. With the same burial a fragmentary terracotta spindle whorl was placed near the feet. The sole burial found in the deposit of the Pd II, turned out to be a much later interment, not culturally related to this Pd because of the association of a medieval coin with it.

6. ORNAMENTS: -

In Phase I a few stone beads similar to those of Phase II were found. They are probably derived by infiltration from Phase II. The necklaces of phase II referred to earlier consist of tiny tubular and barrel-shaped beads of banded agate, carnelian, garnet and bone. In Pd II glass beads were also used and there were several kinds of stone pendants. Pieces of *geru* or ochre found throughout the deposit may have been used for decorating the human body.

7. STONE OBJECTS: -

Hammer- Stone bearing tell-tale marks of bruising and used no doubt for making microliths and splitting bones were found throughout the deposits, but were more common in Pd I. those of spherical shape were

probably used as sling- stones. In Phase II were also found two perforated stones of the type regarded as mace- heads or digging- stick weights.

8. FOOD AND ECONOMY: -

The only direct evidence for the reconstruction of the subsistence basis is the animal bones which were found in large quantities. Of the 2266 identified bone 72.29% came from Phase I, 19.06% from Phase II and only 2.65% from Pd II. The following animals are represented: sheep/goat (*Ovisorientalisvignei / Capra hircusaegagrus L),* humped cattle (Bosindicus L.), pig (Sus scrofacristatus Wagner), buffalo (Bubalus Bubalis L.), blackbuck (Antilopecervicapra L.), chinkara (Gazelle gazelle Pallas), chital (Axis axis Erxl), sambar (Cervus unicolor Kerr), hare (Lepusnigricolis F. Cuvier), fox (Vulpes. Sp.) and mongoose (Herpestes sp.). In all phase's sheep/goat bones account for between 60 and 80 % of the bones and these belong to the domesticated species. The economy of Bagor therefore was based from the outset on a combination of hunting-gathering and stock- raising. In Phase II the appearance of new material traits like copper tools, pottery, stone and bone beads and richly furnished graves as also the decline in the quantity of microliths and animal bones indicate increased reliance on stock- raising. The presence of perforated stones, ethnographically documented for their use as weight of digging sticks, might suggest practice of rudimentary agriculture. The presence of tortoise and fish bones shows the exploitation of aquatic resources as well.

9. DATING: -

Five C14 determinations, all obtained from uncharred bones, are available. These are (all B.P.): Phase I + 6430 ± 200, 5785 ± 160, 5235 ± 90; Phase II, ± 4715 ± 105, 4060 ± 90. Though no dates are available from the lowermost levels of Phase I it may not be unreasonable to put the beginning of this Phase around 5000 B.C.E. The beginning of Phase II can be put around the middle of the 2nd millennium B.C.E. because archaeological evidence does not justify expecting copper tools and pottery before that date in this area. The end of this phase cannot securely be dated owing to lack of C14 determinations but it is tentatively put around 1000 B.C.E. Pd II, because of the presence of iron tools and pottery with Mauryan and Kushan period affinities, can be dated between 500 B.C.E. andC.E. 200 or even slightly later.

Bagrai, District Jabalpur Microliths
Bagridihi, District Midnapur, Neolithic site.
Bahadar, District Dhule, Middle Stone Age (Middle Palaeolithic tools)

1.14.5 BAHADRABAD

Bahadrabad, District Saharanpur, 12 km west of the Ganga canal head works at Hardwar. While a diversion channel was being excavated here for setting up a hydro-electric powerhouse, the discovery of some sherds of red ware and later of a hoard of copper objects was reported by the excavating contractor from deep down the earth. The hoard contained several rings, flats celts, a shouldered celt and a hooked spearhead. It was clear that this was one of the so- called Copper Hoards of the Ganga valley

of uncertain authorship and cultural moorings. Despite loss of valuable direct evidence, several trenches at right angles to the channel on both the sides were laid in 1952. After cutting through a thickness of 5.7 m of alternating sterile layers of sand and pebbles was found an occupational layer, hardly 60 cm thick yielding a good amount of red ware but no copper object. Immediately above the natural soil on the south flank of the channel lay some quartzite flake tools and waste flakes. Obviously, these tools had no connection with the pottery and lay there before the arrival of pottery-using people. According to Krishnaswami, 1953, this industry 'belongs to a flake-tool complex assignable to two broad facies: (i) cleaver-chopper made on a mammoth lunate reminiscent of a microlithic lunate and (ii) a jagged wavy- edged scraper formed by a different technique as revealed in the Early to Late Sohan industry.

Made from medium-grained well-levigated clay and mixed with fine to coarse sand as *degraissant,* the ordinarily thick pottery from Bahadrabad has brightred to terracotta-buff surface and is occasionally greyish. Originally it was covered with a thick red slip which sticks to the lumps of clay or peels off as soon as the sherds are lifted. Normally the occupational layer is water- bound and only a continuous pumping out of the water lowered its table and made excavation possible. With a worn off surface the sherds have a rolled appearance. No painting has been noticed, and if there were any, which is likely, they have disappeared with the peeled – off slip. Wavy incised decorations or notching of cord design occur along the belly on a few pots. A looped handle has also been found.

Excavated sites and their material culture

Till date so many sites of southern India have been excavated and their subsistence pattern has also been worked out. The principal excavated sites are Kodekal, Utnur, Nagarjunkonda and Palvoy in Andhra Pardesh. Tekkalkota, Maski, Terdal, T. Narasipur, Sangankallu, Kupgal, Hallur, Brahmagiri and Hemmige in Karnataka, Payyampalli in Tamilnadu.

Lower Neolithic: - red, black, chocolate, brown ochre and painted wares are found in this level. They are handmade too.

Upper Neolithic: - grey, buff, olive green and black are burnished and turntable made wares are found.

Techno-typological features: - these wares termed as A ware. Again, classified from A1 to A5.Sherds are mainly of coarse gritty clay, ill-levigated, very few are finer ones, could be import from other sites. Mostly they are handmade, often turntable made with/without burnished. Burnishing applied in form of horizontal and vertical strokes. Slips also found in very few sherds. Occasionally incision, decoration and rustication are found. No kilns were found, possibly bonfire-type kilns were in use

Microlithic assemblage: -

Microliths made out of crypto-crystalline material included cores, blades, backed blades, lunate, flakes used pieces from excavation and blade cores, discoid, flakes, lunates, etc. from surface. Ground and pecked stone tools: - axes, discoid, pestles, concave querns, hammers, rubbers, hand-hammers are the common one variety distinct from other sites. Cattle bones have been found in large quantity.

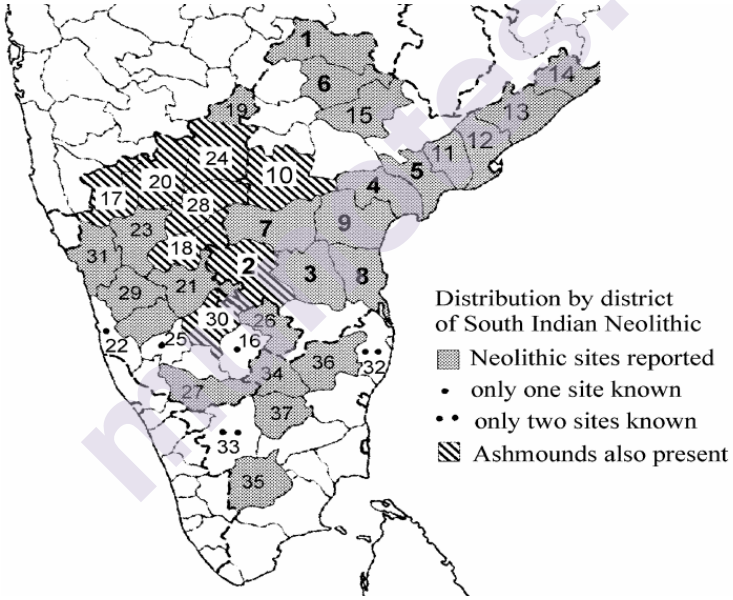
1.14.6 Ash Mound tradition of South India

Neolithic culture of South India comes under southern zone within zonal distribution. First, many sites have been explored and reported right from 19th century onwards by British and other scholars and secondly many sites have been excavated by archaeologists in late 20th century. South Indian Neolithic tradition is marked by the presence of ash mounds which is typical identity of the Neolithic culture of southern zone. Ash mounds are one of the important issues dealing with the archaeological remains related to Neolithic culture in South India. It remained the most debatable topics among the archaeologists as it essentially resulted either due to an economic activity or religiously significant that began in the second half of 3rd Millennium BCE.

Ever since the first discovery of ash mounds by Colonel Colin Mackenzie in 1952, including the famous ash mound at Kudatini on the Bellary-Hospet road, several individual scholars and institutions brought to light over a hundred such sites: some partially disturbed with mound features to a meager extent or completely erased to a greater extent leaving behind only the sub-surface features with traces of the original spot by shifting the vitrified lumps of ash to the field boundaries and intact mounds.

The ash in the mounds consists of several distinct layers; in some layers it is soft and loose and in others heavily vitrified, suggesting that cow dung was burnt at varying temperatures. The contents of the ash include stone and bone tools, animal bones and pottery. At Utnur and Budihal hoof impressions of cattle have been found beneath the cow dung, showing evidence of cattle penning. Besides, Budihal has also produced evidence of a butchering floor.

A view of ashmound from Kupagal.



Myth and problems about Ash mound

According to local tradition these Ashmounds are associated with the Rakshsas. Some villagers associated it with the demon Bakasura, who was killed by one of the Pandava brothers of the Mahabharata epic. The 'Cinder' or ashmound is nothing but a cow-dung ash.Cow-dung ash known as Vibhuti right from Vedic period. Lord Shiva, creator of the Universe pasted this Vibhuti known as Bhasma, Raksa, Bhasita, Bhuti and Ksara in other words (Upanishada).

Findings and Views about Ashmound

First the 'Cinder' or ashmound was found in Karnataka, which is the most predominant state known for its ample amount of ashmound. It must have been sighted by Col. Colin Mackenzie who says' Hilloock of white pebbles (fossil remains) at Callipiliyar in the district of Chettupat". Some scholar believed that heap had occurred due to iron smelting processes. Some scholars believed that it was due to gold smelting (Hutti). Subsequently Foote noticed and reported many sites and scientific investigations and excavations by Newbold, Foote, Munn and Zeuner laid out the view that it is cow-dung accumulated annually or over longer periods within the cattle-pens and burnt as Holy bonfire.

1.15 SUMMARY

The Indian subcontinent has been a constant source of fascination for archeologists. It is relatively close to Africa, as well as to East Asia. Trade routes ran easily from India to the Middle East, and by extension Europe. India has long been a crossroads of cultures, ideas, and people, and all of that is encoded in the archeological record, dating back to the Stone Age.

The Stone Age is the period of time defined by the use of stone tools by human and our hominin ancestors. The people of the stone age suffered from one great limitation. Since they had to depend almost entirely on tools and weapons made of stones, they could not found settlements far away from the hilly areas. In each of these periods, life in India grew and changed in different ways, setting the stages for advanced civilizations to comelater.

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1.17 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1. Underline the basic principles of the divisions of the Pre-historic time period.
2. What are the phases into which the Paleolithic Age in India is divided? What is the basis of this division?
3. Highlight the changes witnessed by human life in Mesolithic period.
4. The Indian subcontinent witnessed revolution during Neolithic age. Comment.
5. How are the Paleolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic Ages in India distinguished from one another? Describe the main characteristic features of each.

Unit - 2

JANA TO VARNA AND PASTORALISM TO SETTLED AGRICULTURE

Unit Structure:

2.0 OBJECTIVES:

By reading this material Students will understand:

A. the nature of the Rigvedic Society
B. the transformation of Rigvedic Society from simplicity to complexity
C. the structure of the Rigvedic Society
D. thestructure of Rigvedic society
E. the phases of Emergence of Janapada

2.1 INTRODUCTION: -

Theories on the earliest formation of states in India have been few and simplistic. Studies on the political institution of early India assumed the existence of the concept of state but rarely analyzed the process by which state formation took place.

The Emergence of the state marks a qualitative change in the history of a society since it arises out ofand imitates a series of inter-related changes at many levels. The transition from an absence of state to state system in the mid first millennium B.C.E, has generally been treated as a sudden change. (Thapar 1999)But the theory of Aryan invasion and

the date ascribed have been lately questioned by manyHistorians and Archaeologists.

Rigvedic Society has been described as a tribal society and that of the later Vedic period as one of state-based kingdom, the transaction having occurred during the period from the late second to the early first millennium B.C.E. This has been assumed based on theconquest theory of the rise of the state, which argues that after the supposed conquest of the area by the *Aryans*. When they gained control over the indigenous society, the state almost automatically came into existence. Where the theory of internal stratification and diversification has been applied in preference to the conquest theory it has been argued that class stratification is in the caste structure with the kshatriya formingthe ruling class and constituting the peasantry. In this situation the increasing power of the farmer led to the emergence of state.

The establishment of peasant economy is also crucial to many theories regarding the Origins of the state and the prime movers towards state formation.

2.2 FEATURES OF PASTORAL SOCIETY: -

Pastoralism is a way of living that is dependent on the herding of animals, mostly cattle, sheep, and goats. It is a misconception about pastoralist societies that they only eat the animals they raise, in fact, some pastoralists eat their animals onlyonspecial occasions or at times of distress or emergencies. They often depend on secondary resources from the animals such as milk or by-products like wool. It is now well known that pastoralists did small-scale farming too. Changes in the environment has been forcing the pastoral societies to keep shifting their bases frequently from prehistoric times.(Bonvillain 2010)

1) Simple and small society: -

The pastoral settlers lived in small villages; larger places were absent. Romila Thapar describes the pastoral villagers from first millennium BCE, as lineage societies- ‘corporate groups of unilineal kin with a formalized system of authority. It has rights and duties and accepts genealogical relationships as the binding factor’. The basic unit is the extended family based on a three or four generation lineage controlled by the eldest male who represents it on both ritual and political occasions. The strong emphasis on kinship notwithstanding, non-kin groups were sometimes allowed to labour the fields of the lineage.(Thapar 1999)

The constituentsof the family and their relations with the descent group are based on the system of marriage alliances, involving both the movement of women and exchange of wealth associated with theresidence pattern and the right relating to the wealth produced by the family as an independentunit as well as its relationship with the clan. Such right to property are determined by settlements in new territory, inheritance order and acquisition of wealth.

Myths of origin become significant in emphasizing the separate and spectral nature of the elite. Heterogeneous groups exist together through the dependence on the ruling Clan. Their identity was not individual but community identity.

Serious economic institution like currency, banking market were absent. They were very close to nature deity, natural forcessuch as sun, moon, rain, etc. Their religion was very closeto nature.

2) Not settled: -

Pastoralism is characterized by extensive land use. Instead of collecting fodder for animals they were moved to fresh pastures. Grazing lands wereliableto change since the same pastures may not haveremained constant year after year and cattle herdshad to be mobile. Since the economywas dependent on the increase of the herd, identification with land played a peripheral role and search for pastures remained crucial. Thus the 'Purus' were earlier said tohave settled along the grassy banks of the Saraswati but later became the core of the true line in the Ganga Yamuna doab.

Family had clearly defined right on pastoral land, andandon cultivated land. These rights of usage were determined by rule rather than by ownership. The optimum size of the land wasdetermined by environment and economy. Ritual occasions weremarked by sacrifices offered to a cult object where the congregation oftenconsisted of the descent group of the lineage.

3) Cattle Economy: -

The concept of ownership was restricted to animals, housing, and some domestic goods. Land was communal and centuries-old migratory patterns of different pastoral groups were recognized that was quite different from the modern land ownership.

Wealth was determined by herd size and often the number of wives and offspring a man had. All the cattle and cattle products were used for exchange. Even all festivals revolved around cattle economy.

4) Milk and milk products: -

Production is for more than meat and milk. Some animalswere used as beasts of burden, while others were used for their skin and fur. Animal products were for both personal use and for trade. Bovine Cattle were used for multiple purposes such as milk and milk products, cattle skin,bones etc.

5) Small scale farming: -

Thoughin pastoral society settled agriculture was absent, nomadic pastoralism was there for the fulfilment of cattle. Some pastoralists supplemented herding with hunting and gathering, fishing and/or small-scale farming or pastoral farming.

6) Barter: -

In a pastoral society, all serious economic institutionssuch as currency, banking, market wereabsent. Barter system was there for mutual exchange of goods. Barter is a symbol of a simple society because it has lot of limitations. In a pastoral society where an immediate exchange of goods took place in the form of a barter need not necessarily denote a kinship-based community.

Check Your Progress:

1.Write down the features of the Pastoral Society.

2.3 FEATURES OF SETTLED AGRICULTURE: -

1) Complex Society: -

Pastoral Society was simple and small, but with the settlement of agriculture, society became more Complex. The agricultural society included proper code of conduct, mannerisms, rules and regulations, a sense of right and wrong, ethics, limitations, fabrication of relationships, and a number of institutions in social, cultural, religious spheres of life. In settled agriculture Societies complicatedsocial practices such as untouchability and endogamy got crystallised.

2) Crafts: -

With the increase in cultivation, there was a societal need for carpenter, blacksmith, etc., for making tools of agriculture. This group which professed auxiliary function in an agricultural society aided its economy and was a chief transformative force in turning the ancient society into a complex one.

3) Trade: -

Trade is a complex system. It included production, gathering, marketing, supply and sale. It also included traditional and cash crops. With this, a new class emerged which only dealt with the trade. The complexity and the exponential nature of trade in certain societies led to urbanization, the invention of standardized currency and the system of coinage.

4) State: -

Establishment of economy is crucial to theories regarding the origin of state and the evolution of lineage-based society's move towards state formation. The state may have evolved through creation and evolution of surplus goods which in turn led to trade and urbanization which in turn demanded a despotic King extracting revenue from the village community which were otherwise autonomous and democratic. Production being purely agricultural was dependent on irrigational

facilities which was controlled by the state through a hierarchy of officials who collected tax The autonomous village community was nevertheless totally subservient to the state due to its dependence on it for security and infrastructural facilities. The king gained legitimacy through the propagation of divine right legends, his legitimacy was reasserted through the caste hierarchy, the upper-class elites popularizing the lore among the masses.

5) Complex Economy: -

Settled agriculture was characterized by an urbanized economy. Everybody was part of that Complex society. Goods and Services were exchanged for their money value, i.e. coins, that is symbol of settled life. Exploitation is another side of the same coin of the urbanization. As, different power relations among communities resulted into emergence of Class system and later evolved into slavery, serfdom and bonded labour.

Check Your Progress:

1. Write down the features of the Complex Society.

2.4 RIGVEDIC PASTORALISM: -

The word 'Veda' is derived from the Sanskrit root *'vid'* (to know) thus the word "Veda" means knowledge. It is contended that it is a revealed literature which was put to writing in due course of time. The Rig Veda is admittedly the oldest book in the world. The whole of Rigveda is nothing, but prayers and hymns divided in 10 Mandalas, expounded by different Rishis.

Rig Veda refers to various Tribes settled in the region between the Indus river system and the now extinct Saraswatian area described in the text as the *Sapta Sindhava*. The major concentration of settlement from the study of archaeological evidence points to the lower doabs of the Punjab and it is possible that text may have been referring to the five rivers at the point of Confluence rather than to the upper to reaches of these rivers. The Saraswati is described as eventually joining the ocean which it has since ceased to do. According to geophysicists, the disappearance of Saraswati was gradual and not sudden and as such the point of extinction or vinashna kept changing. They believe that the final extinction would date to the latter half of the second Millennium BCE a date which would not conflict with the Generally accepted chronology for much of the Rig Veda.

The careful study of Rig Veda clearly indicates that the Rigvedic economy was predominantly pastoral. The pastoralism of Rigvedic society made livestock breeding and especially cattle herding as a major activity. Pastoralism is dependent on large grazing grounds and the ability to

accumulate and increase the herd. this being the primary source of occupation, it required what the Rig Vedic texts describe as meadows rich in grass. The relative importance of the pastoral economy can be gauged by the fact that the Rigveda carries more reference to pastoralism than to agriculture. Such details as the marking of theears of the cattle to indicate ownership, the accessibility of pasture lands, and the daily tasks of the herdsmen are mentioned there. (Thapar 1999).

The wild animals - *mrga* is differentiated from the domesticated animals - *pasu*, mainly cattle which were evidently valued for food as well as for dairy products. The cow is most favourite animal of the Rigvedic people. This animal is par excellence amongst all the cattle. The early Aryans' every sphere of life is overshadowed by this animal. The term for cow- g*au* occurs 176 times in the family books of the Rig Veda. Cattle were synonymous with wealth- *rayi* and a wealthy person was known as*gomat*.(Sharma 1991)

Political implications demanded that grazing grounds be demarcated, and a constant vigil kept preventing trespasser entry. The accumulation of cattle, '*gavisthi'*, a Sanskrit term could mean desire for more cows which meant someone whose arched for cows that were stolen by the raider which led to cattle fights as well as capturing others herds Cattle raids were therefore a form of acquiring fresh stock and the same word is used for such raids. The winner of cows, '*Gojit'*, is an epithet of a hero who won such battles. The Kuru- Panchala 'rajas' we are told, raided in the season when the dew falls. Inevitably, the worst enemies were the Panis, who were given to cattle lifting and wholured people to gamble by giving them loans and when they defaulted, they put a noose around their neck and took them away to sell them in other countries.

In the very early Vedic period cattle might have been owned collectively. Those who herded their cows in the same cowsheds belonged to the same '*Gotra'*, a term which later became part of caste terminology, meaning a descent from a common ancestor. Cattle raiding is often accompanied by the capture of herds who were often enslaved. (Thapar 1999).

Unfortunately, archaeological evidence regarding dominant pastoral life of the Rigvedic people are scarce. If we accept four important archaeological sites, namely, Bhagwanpura, Dadheri, Katpalan and Nagar as reflecting Rigvedic material culture, then we may have some glimpses of pastoral life indicated by the findings of cattle-bones. A good amount of animal bones have been discovered at Bhagwanpura and Dadheri. These include charred bones of cattle, sheep, and goats, which were evidently used for food. Sharp cut marks on their bones corroborates this assumption. Textural evidence clearly show that cattle, sheep, and goats were domesticated for purposes both of dairy products and meat.(Sharma 1983)

Scholars like R. N. Nandi have refuted theories of D.D. Kosambi and R.S. Sharma about Rig Vedic societies being entirely pastoralists. He used a number of references to agricultural activities in the family books- such as*vap* (to sow) and *krish* (to cultivate) *Khanitra (*hoe) *datra*, (Sickle) *kshetra* (cultivated field) and have concluded that while cattle rearing was dominant, agriculture was also practiced secondarily or it may have been practiced by the non-Aryans.(Singh 2008)

The more elaborate ceremonial sacrifices of the later period such as the *rajasuya* included offering made of grain together with milk, ghee (*ghrit*), and animals. Plough agriculture is referred to in the Rigveda, generally in the later mandalas, but curiously some of the major agricultural implements carry names which are linguistically non- Aryan, such as Langale.

The herder might graze their animals on the stubble of fields ormay provide fodder in return for protection. Such agriculturalists then accepted the authority of the herder chiefs without necessarily being conquered by them. Most celebrated battles were among the major clans and conflicts involved claims to territorial control. Apart from the famous Dasarajan where the Bharatas fought against a confederacy of ten clans, the best known of which were the group of five, the Puru, Druhyu, Anu, Turvasa and Yaksha/ Yadu. The Bharatas were also involved in battles against the well-established dasa chief Sambara and raid against the cattle lifting Panis.

Rigveda also refers some agriculture related terms that were from the linguistically non- Aryan words like, Langala (plough), Vrhi (rice), Yava (barley). The cultivation of both, as the later text mention was possible in the lower Doab, as far example at Atranjikhera. In the later texts there are references to heavy ploughs drawn by anywhere between six to twenty- four oxen which could be indicative of the heavier wetter soil east of the Doab.(Thapar 1999)

2.5 TRANSFORMATION-

The Aryan transformation towards the east (later Vedic), especially the doab region, changed the social experience. The Early Vedic was the period of transition from nomadic pastoralism to settled village communities, with intermixing pastoral and agrarian economies. This gradual transformation to agriculture made an impact, perhaps indirectly on other aspects of Vedic life. Among these was the pattern of change in different sections of society.

The Vedic Jana (tribe) incorporated a number of*vis* (clans). The description of the *rajanya:* even in the later Vedic literature he is depicted as sporting a bow, shooting arrows with accuracy, running the chariot races, and drinking sura. It was from among these families that the 'rajan' was chosen. He was earlier known as Gopati.

Clan lands were held in common by both the lineages but worked by the lesser lineage. The clans were the original settlers which is the literal meaning of the word vis and when land was converted to agricultural use, it belonged jointly to the vis.

Visapati- The '*vis'* means a clan is generally accepted and it is used as such for *dasas* and *Aryas*. The 'Visapti' is in some contexts the chief of the clan and in others he is the head ofa household.

Pastoral lands raised no conflicts in remaining common to the village as 'Vraja' and most animal grazing took place on waste land andin the forests of which there were plenty at that time.

Gopati- Gopa is a head of family. In the later Vedic period Gopati meant master. Later the term 'Janasya Gopati', was used to denote the extended power. Corresponding to the increase in power and the expansion of areaunder his control, the nomenclature also vispati, nrpati, naresvara, (king of wara), 'rajanya' later the term 'maharaja' was used. Society transformed progressively from simple to more complex.(Sharma 1991)

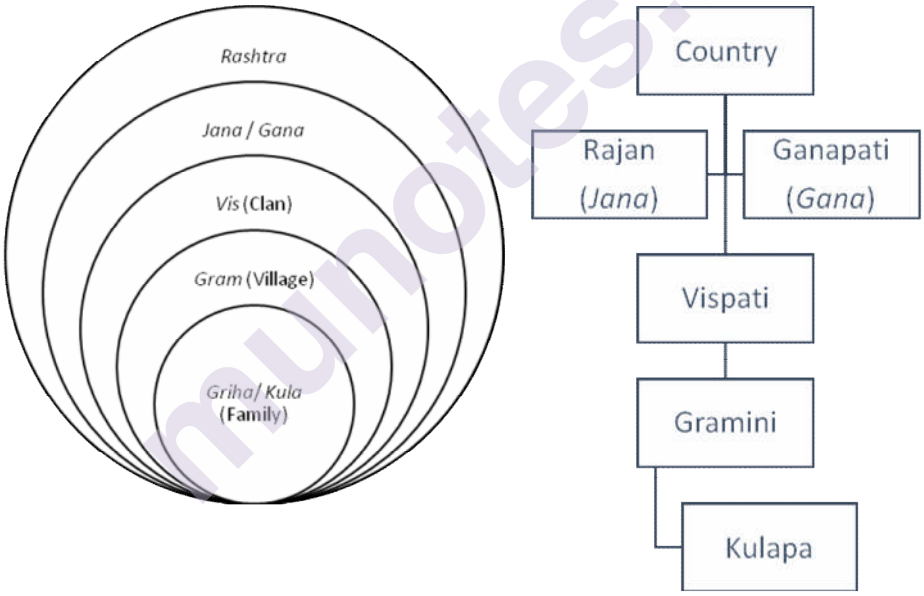

Fig. 1: Division of Rigvedic Society and their respective heads.

In Rigveda there are references to Panch Jana, Yadava Jana, and Bharat Jana. According to Prof. Apte, 'Vis, Jana, and Grama were used synonymously'. The relation between Vis and Jana is not clear. According to Prof. Ray Choudhury "in some Vedic passages, there is clear contrast between the two, as the Bharatas are referred to as one Jana, but when Vis is used we have plural *visah*, pointing to the existence of multiple *vis*."(Singh 2008)

Check Your Progress:
1.Write down the nature of the Rigvedic Society.

2.6 JANAPADA: -

A group of clans constituted a 'jana' and the territory where they settled was referred to as the *Janapada* which literally meant *where the tribe place its feet*. Since the economy of the jana included hunting and pastoralism, large, forested area adjoined the settlements and could even carry the name of the jana as for example, the Kuruvand.

The nuclear unit in such a society was the kula, the family and a group of families made up the gramas or village. Grama by extension therefore also was referred to a community. It was therefore a larger unit than the kula but smaller than the vis. The term gramini was used for a village headman. It counted in turn towards the identity of the 'tribe' or 'jana' and further it became "Janapada". When the area started expanding it became "Mahajanapada". The boundaries between janapadas tended to be topographical features such as forests, rivers, streams and hills.

Mahabharata: - It contain words like Gandharva, Kinnar, Kimpurusha, Asura, Naga, vagaetc. (mostly tribal and non- Aryan). Victorious always imposed their culture over the conquered. Anoverarching Aryan culture subsumed the tribal culture leading to suppression of people whom they later termed as Shudras. A Conglomeration of culture took place in North- Indiaduring this period. (Thapar 1999)

2.7 VARNA SYSTEM: -

In earlier period pastoral society was small and simple and was egalitarian. But with the introduction of the varna, the society gradually became more graded. During the Rig Vedic period the Varna description was probably primarily between the Aryan and non-Aryan inhabitants. The four varnas were later associated with the colours white, yellow, red and black. With sharpening of the stratification and the beginning of professional specialization, the constituents of the Aryas were more clearly demarcated as Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya and with the Shudra incorporating a group of excluded clans and lower status profession. As the non-Aryans and the tribal sinteracted with outsiders, their function, responsibility, professions, role and the status changed. The migration of Aryans from west to east, had played a very important role in establishing the 'varna' system. Accordingly, with the changing size and the nature of

the society a vertical gradation of Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra was formed. The varna system finds mention in the 10th mandala of Rig Veda in "*Purushosukta*"

1) Brahmans: - The word 'Brahman' is derived from the word 'Brahma' (creator). His duty deals with knowledge, practicing rituals and sacrificial performance.
2) Kshatriya: - The word 'Kshtriya' is derived from the word 'Kshetro' means those who fight for kshetro and protect kshetro. This profession later became more crystalized.
3) Vaishya: - The word is derived from "Vishaya" a kind of exchange and commerce activities. Vaisya is not used for the cultivation although the vaisya may have derived his wealth from agriculture.
4) Shudra: - This section mainly served the upper three class. They did physical labour and undertook menial jobs and they did not belong to Aryansociety. and were later castigated as lower class.

The relationship between Brahmana and Kshatriya varnas was close but complex. Later Vedic texts mention the importance of the *Purohita* for the king whereas the Brahmanas were dependent on the redistribution of wealth via *Dana* and *Dakshina* in the sacrifices performed by the king and the horse heads. (Sharma 1983)

YAJNYA COMPLEXITIES: -

Sacrifices occupied important role in the Vedic society. Specialised sacrifices find mention in the texts. Occasions on which sacrifices were performed changed phenomenally. When the society transformed from pastoralism to agriculture, modes of production and the power relations also changed. Those having power, started to control production. With the performance of Yajna, claims to sovereignty and increase in demands for prostration were sought to be justified through the consecration ritual. This led to the greater inter- dependence of the Kshatriya and the Brahmans. At first, they were separated and thus undermined each other's power. The Kshatriya must always have a Brahman (the reverse is too obvious and is left unsaid). Later this led to the development of the 'divine right of king' as espoused by Brahmans. According to Romila Thapper, ritual status is very much important than actual status, in the ancient time. E.g., Ashwamedha Yadna, Rajasuya Yadna.

Everyone got involved in the rituals and it consumed time and expenditure. When the production is on higher level, property and production were enhanced.

Kumkum Roy has underlined the close connection between the emergence of the monarchy, the varna hierarchy and the increased sacrificial complexities. "The grand *shrauta* sacrifices performed by the king legitimized his control over the resources of the *jana*; whereas domestic or *grihayagnya* performed by the *grihapati* legitimized his control over resources of his household." (Roy 1994)

GRAHAPATI: -

Initially the householding system was probably common to both the *rajanyas* and the *vis*. Hence the Grahapati or the head of the household could be from either of the lineages and is mentioned with respect in the text. The grahapti appears to be of the higher lineage. Elsewhere in Rigveda, Agni is called the Grahapati and the scared household fire is the Grahapatya. That the Grahapatiis associated with wealth is indicated by a hymn. In the later-Vedic literature there are references to grahapati and *yajmanas*which could be kshatriyas but do not preclude Vaisyas. The principalritual role of the graphapati was that of ayajmana, it was he who ordered the sacrifice and it is possible to trace the growing importance of grahapati through the rituals.

2.8 STATE

The state is characterized by its ownership of land. With the absence of private property, and a despotic king extracting revenue in grains, the village communities which were otherwise autonomous and autarkic being dependent on irrigation facilities controlled by the state, through a hierarchy of officials who were also revenue collectors.

In the Doab region use of Iron, helped people to settle in agriculture. With the coming of iron, physical activities reduced. With iron implements and weapons security increased, which indirectly contributed for increasing population. As the population increased, it led to more food requirement, which ultimately led to the search and migration to newer areas. During this period, demand on agricultural requirements began on a large scalethus, transforming Janapadainto Mahajanapada and it in turn became ganasang has.

Bali Bhaga: - The mention of bali, bhaga and sulka has been interpreted as reference to taxes of various kinds. But none of these were collected at a specified time and regularly, nor were they of precisely defined amount and there is no mention of specific occupational groups from whom they were collected or of designated persons who made the collection. All these conditions were fulfilled in the post- vedic period when taxes were collected, and these terms were used as terms for taxes.

The word *bali*, *bhaga* and *sulka* do change their meaning from tribute, distribution, and price (in the sense of value) in the Rigveda to forms of taxes and dues in the later dharma- shastra literature. Bali-Bhaga, is a mandated tax by the king. Here role of the state, was not only to protect the subjects, but also to give them irrigation facilities. Bhaga is a forcefully collected tax. Shulka is tax- revenue. Hence state institution became more assertive in making state's claim over subjects' revenue. According to Romila Thappar it is a symbol of settled agriculture. (Thapar 1999)

2.9 SETTLED AGRICULTURE AND OTHER PROFESSIONS

The painted grey ware culture marks an assertive society, richer than its immediate predecessor. There is evidence of pastoralism and agriculture with the noticeable presence of a new animal, the horse and with minimal use of iron (almost restricted to weapons) in the early part of the first millennium B.C.E. The finely made, wheel thrown pottery with its floral and geomatic designs provided a further distinction to the culture.

Stratification has been viewed as a precondition to the emergence of the state since stratified groups became involved in internal conflicts, and required contracts for agreements or results in the evolution of a powerful elite. The prerequisites for stratification are however under debate.

The theory of stratification is applied, in village communities consisting of peasant agriculturalists in majority, who had a communal land tenure and where the state intervened and appropriated the surplus. It is argued that the state owned the land and organized agriculture through settlements of cultivators. (Thapar 1999)

Peasants started producing a little more than what they needed to support themselves. Now they could maintain non-producing section such as priests and princesses and even some other professional groups which had just started to emerge during this period. R.S. Sharma is of the opinion that although the practice of agriculture had increased many folds it was still in primitive stage.

The later Vedic period also witnessed the emergence of professional groups, arts and crafts. We hear of smith and smelters, who had certainly produced iron tools. Many copper objects also have been found. They were used mainly for war, hunting and for ornaments. The study of PGW settlements clearly indicates that the PGW phase of culture does not warrant its characterization as urban. The excavations at Hastinapur and Kausambi show the faint beginnings of towns towards the end of the later Vedic period.(Singh 2008).

But the recent excavations in Hastinapur and Sanauli (S.K. Manjul 2018) associates ochre coloured pottery (OCP) / copper hoard which is found beneath the layer of PGW with the Mahabharata period dating it to around 2000 BCE. According to Manjul the period was marked with advanced weapons and tools, antenna swords, harpoon celts, dagger and shield, metal, copper and chariot made of advanced technology. However, a conclusive proof on the dates are yet to emerge.

2.10 IRON AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Though use of Iron was known in India since the second millennium BCE (Mark Kenoyer, Harappa.com, 2021), the iron

technology became widely prevalent in c. 1000-800 B.C.E According to D. D. Kosambi the eastern movement of the Indo-Aryans towards the Gangetic plains was to reach the iron ores of south Bihar. Moreover, Kosambi credits use of iron for large scale wars and animal slaughter for sacrifices as an important factor for rise of Buddhism after 6th Century.(Kosambi 1975).

Prof. R. S. Sharma has suggested that the use of iron implements was responsible for generating an agricultural surplus, which paved the way for second urbanization, as it helped in clearing the forest at large scale for agriculture and use of iron plough has increased the land under cultivation. (Sharma 1983).

This theory was later cancelled by Makkhan Lal, based on archaeological data, as he argued that there was no significant increase in the usage of iron from PGW to the NBPW phase in 1st Millennium. (Lal 1984)

A. Ghosh also has raised doubts claiming that "the forests of the Ganga valley could have been cleared though burning – the most common practice- also supported by texts of Mahabharata and Ramayana. (Ghosh 1990)

Check Your Progress:

1. How invention of Iron Contributed in the complex society?

2.11 SUMMARY

According to Marxist historians the transition of the economy of the sub-continent from pastoralism to the settled agricultural took place between 2000-500 BCE though the recent studies and excavations conducted by Prof. Jonathan Kenoyer and Prof. Shinde tend to give an earlier date to this transition. It all happened very gradually and in multiple waves unlike popular belief of immediate replacement of the Harrapans that with the Aryans. "The archaeological sources combined with the literature of this age gives us an idea of broad patterns of historical changes. This process of transition from pastoral tribe to territorial state paved the way for India's second urbanization." (Singh 2008)

2.12 SUGGESTED READING

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2. 13 UNIT END QUESTIONS

Q.1 Explain transition of economy from pastoralist to agricultural settlement in early India.

Q.2 Analyze the nature of transition of the subsistence pattern from Pastoralist to settled agriculture in early South Asia.

Q. 3 Explain the difference between Varna and Jati. Make your arguments based on historical works debating about its evolution in early India.

Q. 4 With reference to the transition of Pastoralist to the settled agriculture in First millennium in India bring out the relationship between subsistence and social practice and how changes in one can lead to changes in other.

Unit - 3

C) RISE AND GROWTH OF CASTE SYSTEM

Unit Structure:

3.0 OBJECTIVES

After the study of this unit, students will be able to:

1. Understand the concept of caste.
2. Study the theories of origin of caste system in India.
3. Understand the growth of the caste system in Ancient India.
4. Analyze the various aspects of Varnasamkara or Hybridization of caste.
5. Understand the inter-relationship between caste and gender.
6. Study the growth of caste system from Vedic period to Post-Gupta period.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The word Caste is derived from Latin word 'Castas' which means pure. This word was first used by the Portuguese to denote the Indian social classification as they thought that the system was intended to preserve purity of blood.

According to Sir H. Risley, "A caste may be defined as a collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name, claiming a common descent from a mythical ancestor, human or divine, professing to

follow the same hereditary calling and regarded by those who are competent to give opinion as forming a single homogeneous community".
Ketkar in his 'History of Caste' defines caste as a social group having two characteristics: -

1) membership is to those who are born of members and includes all persons so born

2) the members are forbidden by an inexorable social law to many outside the group.

The chief characteristics of the Caste System which is considered unchanging are restrictions regarding marriage and social intercourse based on either heredity or hierarchy. Members of a caste can neither marry outside their caste nor accept food from somebody who is of a lower caste. The notion of high and low is linked up with birth and heredity. Once a person is born as a Brahmana, he is regarded as such and so are his descendants and no one can change his caste in his lifetime.

3.2 THEORIES OF ORIGIN OF CASTE SYSTEM

Various theories are given for the origin of caste system. We will see all these theories in detail one by one.

Theory A-
Caste arises as a result of colour

According to this theory, colour is the base of race it means that caste is a result of racial differentiation. There were two racial groups in ancient India – Aryans and Dravidians According to Dayanand Saraswati, Aryans came from outside and not from west to east. When they came into India they mixed with local races which led to the creation of a number of castes. But this theory was rejected by scholars

Theory B

Caste was the creation of Hindu religion. According to this theory, caste was created by orthodox Vedic religion i.e., today's Hindu religion. This theory was also demolished because if the caste system was derived from Aryans, then caste must be prevalent outside India, but it is not the case. That is why this theory was not accepted and it was rejected by scholars.

Theory C-
Caste originates due to particular socio-economic factors.

This theory is propounded by pioneer historian D.D. Kosambi. He traces the origin of caste to the assimilation of the Aryans and contemporary tribal groups in the ancient Indian society. According to him, the formation of the service caste from the defeated Dasa and the Shudra tribes led to the development of new relations in the society. This was the reason behind the origin of the caste System in the northern part of India in the ancient times. As far as Peninsular India is concerned, it

developed as external stimulus to the confrontation and assimilation of the societies.

Traditional origin of caste system:

According to Manu, the four original Varnas were created namely Brahmans, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Shudra and then many castes or jatis were produced by services of classes by the descendants of these initial unions.

Secondly, many castes were formed by degradation from the original Varnas on account of non-observance of sacred rites. These are called Vratyas.

This theory seems to be highly falsified and absurd because it assumes that in one way or the other the whole population of the world is descended from the four original Varnas. Thus, even the people of foreign countries like china (Chinese) Yavana (Greek), Sake (Sythian) etc. were said to have been Kshatriyas at one time buthad later degraded to a lower status because they hadceased to observe the prescribed sacraments.

Risley has noted processes by which castes are formed, generated and expanded that:-

1) A whole tribe of aborigines, or a large section of a tribe, enroll themselves in the ranks of the society either under their own tribal designation or under a new caste name, eg. mlechcha, the Rajbanshis of North Bengal, the Bhumij of West Bengal, the Gonds of Central India.

2) The functional or occupational type of caste is so numerous and so widely diffused and its characteristics are so prominent that the community of function is ordinarily regarded as the chief factor in the evolution of such castes., eg. sonar, kumbhar, Teli, barbers (Madhunapits), milkmen (Sadgopas), washerman (Chasadhobas) etc.

3) The sectarian type comprises a small number of castes which commenced life as religious sects founded by philanthropic enthusiasts, who had evolved metaphysical formula for salvation.

   eg. The Lingayats, the Jats, the Sikhs, Vaishnabas of Bengal, Alvaras, Swami Narayan Sect, shaivites, Narayaras, Daundapanthis,Satanamis etc.

4) Castes of the national type

   There exist certain groups usually regarded as castes at the present day which cherish traditions of bygone sovereignty and seen to preserve traces of an organization considerably more elaborate than that of an ordinary tribe.

   eg. Konkani, Malvani, Gomantak, Karadi, the Newars of Nepal and the Mahratta-Kunbis etc.

5) Castes formed by migration-

If members of a caste tear away from their original habitat and settle permanently in another part of India, then there is a tendency for them to be separated from the parent group and to develop into a distinct caste.

eg. Padmashalis migrated to Sholapur from Andhra Pradesh, Gour Brahmana, Dravida Brahmana etc.

6) Caste formed by change of custom –

Due to neglect of established custom or the adaptation of new ceremonial practices or secular occupations new casts were developed.

eg. Ajodhya kurmis of Behar and the Kanojakurmis of the U.P.

7) Variants of the division of society in the four classes in ancient India can be priests, warriors, cultivators, and artisans.

Sub-prohibition of marriage within one's gotra as a fundamental basis of the Indian caste system.

According to another theory the Caste System is based on notions of purity and impurity. The Brahmans possess the purity of the first degree, the Kshatriyas of the second degree and so on. The ritual ranking of the Varnas and jatis is based on their relative purity. But the exponents of this theory do not realize that notions of purity and impurity found in primitive and ancient societies outside India did not give rise to the caste system. Even in case of India working in leather was not regarded impure in Vedic times. In fact, the more they moved away as from physical labour and primary production the purer and noble they were regarded.

There is another theory which explains the origin of caste as a legacy from the aboriginal tribal communities of India. According to it every tribe is sub-divided into several clans, and members of a clan may marry within the tribe but outside the clan. When such a tribe is absorbed as a caste in the Brahmanical system it continues to merge within the tribe or caste and refuses to have social intercourse with other castes. There is no doubt that once the Caste System was established tribes were converted into castes, but the earliest history of tribal amalgamations would show that tribes entered into marriages, relations with one another as a result of war and trade.

Marriage served as a form of exchange that was considered necessary to keep life going. Insistence on marriage within the caste began because of the need of maintaining the privileges of the upper orders which automatically barred the lower orders from having social intercourse with the upper castes and condemned them to marriages within their circles.

Another theory of origin of the Caste System said that all human beings are divided into four categories. According to their natural aptitudes and endowments, some possess high spiritual and intellectual

qualities, others fighting qualities, still others producing qualities and accordingly they are placed in various categories. The Caste System is therefore based on natural and inherent attributes found in mankind. It is therefore called a contribution of the Hindu genius and credited with ensuring continuity and durability to Hindu society despite foreign onslaughts. But to think of the natural qualities of human beings without considering the social and material environment in which they are born and nurtured would-be selective analysis. Such a theory of the origin of the Caste System obviously serves the interests of those who want to perpetuate this system.

The last theory accounts for the origin of the caste system in terms of the division of labour. It is said that the need for occupational division leading to more production and economic efficiency gave rise to castes. There is some validity in this theory. But what is ignored is the hereditary aspect of the caste system. In Vedic times castes were occupational in nature and changes from one occupation to the other was possible. But overtime this change became impossible. What is further important, the division of labour was affected in such a manner that Brahmans or priests and Kshatriyas or warriors were withdrawn from direct production which was placed in the hands of the Vaisyas and Shudras.

These are the numerous theories given by various authors on the origin of the caste system. By studying these theories, we can understand the origin of the caste system. Now we will see the growth and development of the Caste System in ancient India.

Check your progress :

1) Explain in short, the theories of origin of caste system in India.

3.3 GROWTH OF CASTE SYSTEM IN ANCIENT INDIA

Caste is the development of thousands of years, from the association of many different racial and other groups in a single cultural system. Rigvedic society was practically free from the caste system. During this period the Varna system existed, and the society was divided into four classes and they were based on occupation. Thus, we can say that the caste system developed during the later Vedic period.

3.3.1 Later Vedic Period

A series of changes took place during the later Vedic period. There were many political developments: Several tribal identities got territorial identities. It is very much close to rise and development of castes. The

territorial units or Janapadas that emerged were named after the Janas (tribes) settled there such as Kuru, Panchala, Gandhara, Matsya, Cedi Magadha etc. due to rise of such cities in later Vedic period. Caste become an important factor. The stress on kinship ties was further emphasized by using the word jati (assigned by birth). This word occurs first in later Vedic texts and is used in the sense of an extended family. This word was used in Katyayana Srautasutra where we could see the references to Jana (tribe) decreased and those to Jati increased. Later in Pali literature Jati is used in the sense of caste implying an endogamouskinship growth ranked in a list of specialized occupations and service relationships reflecting an increase in social stratification.

The intensification of agriculture provided the economic base for the growth of towns in the Ganga valley. The upcoming urban centers produced its own social stratification. The guild was emerging as an essential institution. It ranked in the list of specialized occupations and service relationships. Therefore, in the later Vedic period caste overtook Varna. As time went by, the social stratification became very rigid, and peoples' social standing was based more and more on birth not on occupation. Earlier varnas were interchangeable and Rig Veda mentions people professing different varnas living together. But in the caste System social mobility was not allowed and the caste groups became watertight compartments. Later, the main four castes came to be further divided into many sub-castes, each with a definite status and position within the bigger caste group.

Some new castes were formed by the admission of non-Aryans into the fold of Aryans. Thus, the Caste System was an instrument of civilization by which the new people were allotted status within the Aryan fold.

Caste taboos crept in during the later Vedic society. It had no basis in the Vedic religion. Its appearance was a result of sociological and economic causes and perhaps due to the continuous wars the Aryan and non-Aryan groups waged frequently. A process of war, expansion and assimilation of cultures took place during this period and different groups were mixing freely with each other. A serious threat to culture must have been felt by the Aryan Society. So, in later Vedic literature, for the first time we get a manual of behaviour of code of conduct, rules and regulations for the society. It shows the pressures on the society from different directions.

In the earlier phase of later Vedic literature sometimes we come across words like Ananya, Dasa, or Dasya, mleccha etc.

Later Vedic age witnessed the geographical expansion of the Indo-Aryan speaking groups from the Punjab to Bengal from Himalayas to Vindhyas and over to Deccan resulting in considerable changes and development in the society. This period witnessed the beginning of the process of assimilation, acculturation, and integration; in short, the cultural

intermingling of a number of societies – tribes mainly in the northern part of India. The later Vedic Society perhaps undertook earnest efforts to save Aryans' kin-based society from mixing with non-Aryans. Therefore, all efforts were made to maintain exclusiveness:

1) Institutionalization of caste

During the later Vedic period, the institution of caste developed further. Upanayana samskara played a pivotal role in the society. A careful study of upanayana samskara in later Vedic literature shows that apart from exclusion of Ekajatayah-(once born) from Dvija (twice-born) even within the Dvija group there was a manifestation of hierarchy.

2) Purity and pollution

Composition of later Vedic literature, especially about caste, made attempts to uphold certain privileges of Aryans. The concept of purity became synonymous with power and exercised dominance. The division of society was mainly based on purity – pollution and dictum in other words, the higher the Varna greater the amount of purity. Pollution was linked not only to birth, death, menses, and bodily secretions but it implied the transgression of certain boundaries. A shudra's food is customarily viewed as abhojya (not to be eaten).

3) Pataniya (outcaste)

An outcaste was the one who had been removed from his caste for violation of its customs and rules. It is a sort of social boycott or exclusion from society. There is a difference between chandala and outcaste. Chandala (who lived in the fringes of the society) and mlecchа (foreigner), who never came in the fold of the Aryan culture were as outcastes and were temporarily secluded from the society and were called Vratya or vagabonds.

4) Chandala

Throughout the literature, chandala was used as a synonym for untouchable. Most of the composers used it as a caste of the progeny of Shudra male and Brahman female. Chandala was considered as the most polluted and hated person. His very existence was troublesome. Recitation of the Vedas was advised to be stopped if chandala was in the village. A householder was not recommended to stay in the village where chandala was staying.

Varnasamkara or Hybridization of caste

A number of castes originated from the unions of men and women belonging to different varnas. Number of caste and sub castes were decided on the social status of the two parental varnas.

Gautama Dharmasutra gave detailed information about samskaras and possible status of progeny in the Varna structure. He gave several combinations Anuloma (accepted order) and Pratiloma (unaccepted order). Due to this number of castes originated in ancient India.

Anuloma combination: Higher caste male and lower caste female

1. From a Brahman male-Kshatriya female-Murdhavasikta
2. Brahmana male-Shudra female-Nishada or Parasava
3. brahmana male – Vaisya female – Ambastha
4. Kshatriya male – Shudra female – Ugra
5. kshatriya male - Vaishya female-Mahishya
6. Vaisya male- Shudra female-Karana

These are unaccepted combinations.

Pratiloma combination included offspring from Lower caste male and higher caste female

1. Shudra male-Brahman female-chandala
2. Vaishya male-Kshatriya female-Vaidehaka
3. Shudra male-Vaishya female-Ayogava
4. Shudra male-Kshatriya female-Kshattri
5. Vaisya male-Kshatriya female-Magadha
6. Kshatriya male-Brahman female-Suta

The progeny of Pratiloma combinations were not recognized in society. They were considered as outsiders in society.

Analysis of eight forms of Marriages according to Caste System:

A number of scholars assigned particular forms of marriage to particular caste like Brahma and Daivya forms of marriage were pertaining to Brahmana caste whereas Arsha and Gandharva forms of marriage were pertaining to Kshatriya. Asura pertaining to Kshatriya and torturous forms of marriages like Rakshasha and Paischachya were pertaining to Shudra or lower castes.

Women and caste system:

Women were always equated with Shudras irrespective of their caste status. It is a paradoxical statement. For most of the Dharmasastra, women are most impure and therefore outcast during her monthly courses. Her status was dependent on her progeny. She was regarded as the gateway of the caste system. Caste influenced various forms and institution of marriage i.e. approved (Anuloma) and unapproved (Pratiloma) forms, the practice of divorce, widow remarriage, Niyoga, polygamy monogamy etc.

According to a number of Dharmasastrakaras, krishnavarniya women were only for pleasure. She was never granted the status of a wife. The punishment varies according to the caste of that woman.

for eg. If a husband went outside the village for some work or became an ascetic, the wife of that person had to wait for him before remarrying. This period of waiting varies from upper caste women to lower caste. Brahman wife had to wait for 12 years, Kshatriya wife-10 years, Vaisya wife-8 years and Shudras wife for 6 years.

Proprietary rights:

After the death of the husband, the property was divided among his wives according to their caste status only. The property of the deceased person used to be divided into 10 parts and divided among his wives according to their caste. First 4 parts were given to Brahman wife, second 3 parts given to Kshatriya wife, third 2 parts given to Vaisya wife and last 1 part given to Shudra wife. This shows the differences of caste status of women in society. The treatment and rights and privileges were given to them according to their status only.

During the later Vedic period caste became an institution. Caste operates society and it was followed blindly and uncritically. It had become a watertight compartment based on birth. One cannot change his /her caste. Now birth decided it. Higher caste people wanted to maintain their purity of blood. They wanted to maintain their social status in society. Inter-caste marriage between different varnas gave rise to a number of other castes. In this way, we can say that during the later Vedic period, caste became an institution in the real sense.

3.3.2 Caste System in Pre-Mauryan Period

If we want to study the development of the caste system during the Pre-Mauryan period, we must refer to Buddhist literature. Though Gautama Buddha preached against caste distinctions based on birth, the institution of caste continued to develop gradually. It was deep rooted in society. Brahmanas were considered as a superior caste. The Pacitliyapali of Vinaya pitaka differentiates jati as low castes (Candala, Vena, Ncsada, Rathakara and Pukkusa) and high castes (Khattiya and Brahmana). But the word is used there also in the sense of birth, species, varna and tribe which shows the jati system evolving out of the tribal varna system. With sangha-ganas, which were based on two-varna system (Kshatriyaand Dasa-karmakara), varnas had become synonymous with classes, that is with masters and slaves, while disintegrated sangha-ganas themselves were turning into jatis in the post-Buddha period. Apart from these sangha-ganas, other tribal states and classless tribes were being incorporated as jatis by the new non-tribal feudal kingdoms.

With the advance of time and the growing complexities of society the number of professional castes had much increased since the early Vedic period. Thus, we come across castes of smith, potter, stone grinder, ivory carver, carpenter, garland maker, barber fisherman, dancer, drummer, elephant tamer etc. generally these professions were hereditary. To increase the isolation of these guild castes they occupied separate quarters and even lived in separate villages of their own.

The chandalas were the most despised caste of the society. They were not allowed to live within the walls of towns and even touching or seeing chandala were believed to cause impurity. Higher castes wanted to maintain their purity of blood so that they did not allow inter-caste marriages between different castes. During this period food and drink restrictions also increased.

3.3.3 Caste during Mauryan Period

Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador to India around 300 B.C.E. in his work Indica says that the population of India was divided into seven endogamous and craft exclusive groups. They are philosophers, soldiers, govt-officials, artisans and traders, herders, and councilors. Evidence of Megasthenes thus indicates that the people were divided into seven categories, which were occupational groups rather than hereditary groups or castes. His sevenfold division is certainly false but gives evidence to show that in Mauryan times class divisions were already hardening. The number of castes in 300 B.C.E., was much more than seven as we know from the Sutras and the early Buddhist literature. But Megasthenes living in the court of Chandragupta Maurya could have come in contact with a only a few of them and even among those few, he being a foreigner, could not have understood the caste differences within these groups. Also, during this period few new caste groups developed which combined caste with the occupation they professed. These intricacies must have been missed by him and he must have misunderstood the caste system in India but from the Sutra literature we can understand the caste System of this period and Post Mauryan period.

3.3.4 Caste System in Post-Mauryan Period

During this period the caste system was further institutionalized. According to Manusmriti, the origin of the numerous mixed sankara varnas is in the marriage between different varnas. These were called anuloma and pratiloma. Buddhist texts and other evidence also leave no doubt that the so-called mixed castes really resulted from organization like guilds of people following different arts and crafts.

One of the most important developments of this period was the gradual absorption of foreigners like Indo-Greeks, Sakas, Yavanas, Kushanas, Parthians etc. into Indian society and thus formed sub-castes with their peculiar modes of life. Inter-marriages among the various castes further gave rise to many new castes.

3.3.5 Caste System in Gupta Period

The Varna system seems to have been considerably modified owing to the proliferation of castes. The Kshatriya caste swelled up with the influx of the Huns and subsequently of the Gujjars who joined their ranks as Rajputs. The increase in the number of Shudra castes and untouchables was largely due to the absorption of backward forest tribes into the settled varna society. Often guilds of craftsmen were transformed into caste. It has been suggested that transfer of land or land revenue gave rise to a new caste, the Kayasthas (scribes). In the countryside in Northern India there emerged a class of village elders and headman called mahattoras who had to be informers of the land transfer. Later they also got classified into a caste. In this way the caste system further developed during the Gupta period.

3.3.6 Caste System in Post-Gupta Period

From the 7th C.E., onwards two trends were witnessed in the society. One was the continuity of the assimilation of foreign elements and second was the segregation of the Jati system. The law of the period accepted birth, profession, and residence as the deciding factor in the determination of Jati. In the medieval period, the Muslim invasions further increased the rigidity of the caste system. Besides several new religious sects- Sikhs, Daudapanthis, Vaishanavas and Satanamis were founded to counter the spread of Islam in India. There sects and their various branches in course of time gave birth to many new sub-castes too. In this way the invasions of Muslims further led to the rigidity of the caste system during this period and several sub-castes were founded.

Check your progress :

1) Discuss the growth of the caste system in Ancient India.

3.4 SUMMARY

To summaries, Caste System based on the principle of birth is undesirable. The social divisions, according to Gita, should be based on Guna and Karma i.e., character and recognition of work. The caste system has been responsible for the narrow outlook and caste exclusive society. The burden of caste discrimination and untouchability brought about untold miseries and humiliation to millions of people in the country. Till recently. Caste hindered the growth of nationalism that is why social reformers tried to reform and annihilate the institution of caste system in India during the modern period.

3.5 ADDITIONAL READINGS

1) A. L. Basham - The Wonder that was India
2) D. N. Dutt – Origin and Growth of Caste in India
3) G. S. Ghurye – Caste and Class in India
4) D.N. Jha – Ancient India In Historical Outline
5) V. D. Mahajan - Ancient India
6) R. S. Sharma – India's Ancient Past
7) R. S. Sharma – Perspective of Social and Economic History of Early India
8) Social Scientist Series, School of Social Sciences, New Delhi

3.6 QUESTIONS

1) Explain the meaning and genesis of the concept of Caste.
2) Discuss the various theories regarding the origin of Caste System in India.
3) Critically evaluate the development of the Caste System in Ancient India.
4) Evaluate the development of the Caste System from vedic period to Post-Gupta period.

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Unit - 4

C) RISE AND GROWTH OF CASTE AND UNTOUCHABILITYRISE AND GROWTH OF UNTOUCHABILITY

Unit Structure:

4.0 OBJECTIVES

After the study of this unit, students will be able to :

1. Understand the concept of Untouchability.
2. Study the various theories of origin of Untouchability in India.
3. Analyse the rise and growth of Untouchability in India.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The institution of Untouchability originated in India during ancient times. Untouchability, in its literal sense, is the practice of ostracising a minority group by segregating them from the mainstream through social custom or legal mandate. The term is commonly associated with the treatment of the Dalit communities in the Indian subcontinent who were considered 'polluting'. Traditionally, the groups characterized as untouchable were those whose occupations and habits of life involved ritually 'polluting' activities, such as manual scavenging, sweeping, and washing. Untouchables were also those who had eating habits like eating dead animals with diseases, in contrast to groups who supposedly followed higher standards of cleanliness. The origin of untouchability and its historicity are still debated. Number of scholars and historians have tried to theorise the origin and growth of untouchability in India.

Origin of untouchables, as much as the origin of untouchability, is a puzzle to social historians. They put forth their theories which are at variance with one another. It is not without significance that although there is a rich purpose of ethnographic literature on Indian tribes, few field studies of untouchable communities are available and scholars writing on the subject are mostly depended for their interpretation on literary sources written by the members of upper castes without any assistance from the contemporary data which could throw some light on the origin, evolution and continuance of a value system that barely disguises its exploitative character. Historians of ancient India have been more concerned with the study of varna system as a whole and with the problems of dominant groups such as Brahmin or Rajput referring only to the existence of despised castes mentioned in the Buddhist sources and foreign accounts. R.S. Sharma explains the lack of interest on the part of scholars in the fortunes of lower communities as due to their vision being limited by their dominant class outlook. The idea and practices of untouchability in Hindu society was striking enough to have given rise to a number of theories regarding its origin.

1. It is not possible to accept the explanation of the origin of untouchability given in *Dharma Sastras* which attribute it to the inter mixture of castes. It has been suggested that in many instances origin of untouchables took place as a result of complete isolation and loss of tradition of these communities, but such a view is untenable for the social phenomena appearing in the pre-Mauryan period which witnessed rise and growth of Buddhism.

2. According to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar:

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, an Indian social reformer and politician, who came from a social group that was considered untouchable, theorized that untouchability originated because of the deliberate policy of the upper-caste Brahmanas. According to him, the Brahmanas despised the people who gave up the Brahmanism in favour of Buddhism. Ambedkar believed that untouchability has existed at least as far back as 400 C.E. The roots of untouchability, lies in the deliberate policy of the Brahmins who were full of contempt and hatred towards those who continued to eat beef and isolated themselves from Brahmanical traditions by embracing Buddhism has been successfully refuted by Vivekanand Jha.

3. Nripendra Kumar Dutt:

Historian Nripendra Kumar Dutt theorized that the concept of untouchability originated from the pariah-like treatment accorded to the aborigines of India by the early Dravidians, and that the concept was borrowed by the Indo-Aryans from the Dravidians. Scholars such as R. S. Sharma have rejected this theory, arguing that there is no evidence that Dravidians practised untouchability before coming into contact with the Indo-Aryans.

4. Furer Haimendorf:

Furer Haimendorf put forward the theory of urban origin of untouchability. He remarked that the untouchables have no particular close connection with the soil. They were generally craftsmen such as leather workers and weavers or doing menial work as watchmen, sweepers etc whose services are essential to the urban settlements but may not be needed in the rural areas and he points out that even today there is no need of for scavengers in Indian villages. In the villages nearly everyone's labour is needed in agriculture so there is less contempt for manual labour. Towns have greater economic and cultural disparity and those classes compelled to pursue unclean occupations are naturally segregated and banished outside the city in a society which identifies personal cleanliness with purity. Furer Haimendorf concedes that it was the idea of untouchability developed in urban or semi-urban settlements which could have spread to villages as well, as 'it is everywhere the towns which set the standard'. Scholars such as Suvira Jaiswal reject this theory, arguing that it lacks evidence, and does not explain why the concept of untouchability is more pronounced in rural areas.

5. John Henry Hutton

British anthropologist John Henry Hutton traced the origin of untouchability to the taboo of accepting food cooked by a person from a different caste. This taboo presumably originated because of cleanliness concerns, and ultimately, led to other prejudices such as the taboo on marrying outside one's caste. Scholars such as Suvira Jaiswal argue that this theory cannot explain how various social groups were isolated as untouchable or accorded a social rank. Jaiswal also notes that several passages from the ancient Vedic texts indicate that there was no taboo against accepting food from people belonging to a different varna or tribe. For example, some *ShrautaSutras* mandate that a performer of the Vishvajit sacrifice must live with the Nishadas (a tribe regarded as untouchable in later period) for three days, in their village, and eat their food.

Scholars such as Vivekanand Jha, R. S. Sharma and Suvira Jaiswal characterize untouchability as a relatively later development after the establishment of the varna and caste system.

6. Vivekanand Jha

In an illuminating and systematic study of the history of untouchables in India upto 1200 C.E., Vivekanand Jha has distinguished four major stages in the origin of untouchable groups. He points out that the Rigveda shows no knowledge of any group of peoplewith whom contact is tabooed even remotely. The later Vedic texts also do not give any indication of the practice of untouchability although tribal groups of Chandalas and Pulakasas are mentioned with much spite and revulsion. In the second phase extending upto 200 B.C.E., certain tribal groups such as chandalas and the Pulakasas emerge clearly as untouchables. The third phase being a continuation of the second, some more ethnic groups are classified as untouchables, but the peak was attended in the fourth phase

extending from 600 to 1200 C.E. when number of occupational groups such as Rajukas were regarded to be the category of untouchables and several new ethnic groups were added to the list.

7. R. S. Sharma

Historian R.S. Sharma theorizes that institution of untouchability arose when the aboriginal tribes with low material culture and uncertain means of livelihood came to be regarded as impure by the privileged classes who despised manual labour and regarded associated impurity with certain material objects. According to him, one of the reason for origin of untouchability was the cultural tag of the aboriginal tribes who were mainly hunters and fowlers in contrast to the members of Brahminical society who possessed the knowledge of metals and agriculture and were a part of a developing urban life .The low material culture and consequent wretched condition of these tribes with their uncertain means of livelihood and the contempt, disrespect and despise the privileged classes had for the manual work combining with the primitive ideas of taboo and impurity associated with certain material object gave rise to this unique institution.

8. Suvira Jaiswal:

According to Suvira Jaiswal, when the members of aboriginal groups were assimilated into the Brahmanical society, the privileged amongst them may have tried to assert their higher status by disassociating themselves from their lower-status counterparts, who were gradually branded as untouchables.

Untouchability is believed to have been first mentioned in *Dharmashastras*. According to the text, untouchables were not considered a part of the varna system because of their grievous sins, barbaric or unethical acts such as murder, harassment etc. Therefore, they were not treated like the savarnas. An introduction of untouchability and the theory of purity and pollution,shouldnot to be treated as part of the development of varna system and its ideology rather than as an independent system.

Check your progress:

1) Discuss in brief the origin of untouchability in ancient India.

4.3 GROWTH OF UNTOUCHABILITY

In later times the idea of untouchability was extended not only to the Nishadas and Pulakasas but also to craftsmen such as the leather workers and weavers. For during this period although the crafts of the cammakaran and pesakaran were considered contemptible, they themselves were not regarded as untouchables.

4.3.1 Pre-Mauryan Period

According to the *Dharmasutras*, marriage with a woman of lower caste was permissible but it shows great aversion and strong dislike for connection of the reverse order. According to Gautama, a son begotten by shudra on a woman of unequal caste is regarded as patita. It is mostly to such marriages and connections that early law books trace the origin of about a dozen mixed castes. Thus, an issue begotten by a shudra male and a woman of kshatriya varna is known as kshattr and one begotten through a woman of Vaishya caste is Magadha. The son of a Shudra by a brahmana woman is called nisada. The issue begotten from the union of kshatriya male and a shudra woman is known as ugra, while that of the Vaishyaman and a shudra woman was regarded as rathkara. According to Gautama, a child begotten by a Brahman, a Kshatriya, a Vaishya and a Shudra through a woman of shudra caste are respectively known as parasavas, yavanan, karanan and shudras.The above list of caste would show that in the opinion of dharmasutra anuloma (regular order) and pratiloma (inverted order) connections between shudra and the members of higher varna were regarded as the most plentiful source of the origin of the mixed caste. Many of whom relegated to the position of lower social order.

Several despised jatis of Buddhist texts correspond to the untouchable section of Brahminical society. According to Buddhist and Jain texts the chandalas were not included in the Shudra Varna. But Dharmashastras incorporate them in the list of mixed castes who were supposed to have Shudra blood. According to Patanjali, Panini seems to have included the Chandalas and Mratapa in the list of those Shudras who lived outside towns and villages and whose contact permanently defiled the brahmanas.

Originally chandalas seem to have been an (aboriginal tribe). This is clear from their use of their own dialect. In Jain texts they are mentioned along with the other tribes such as sabaras, dravidas, kalingas, goudan, and gandharas. But gradually chandalas came to be looked upon as untouchables. Apastambha holds that to touch and see chandalas is sinful. This passage, however, is not to be found in two earlier manuscripts of *Dharmasutras*, which shows untouchability probably appears towards the end of pre -Mauryan period. A similar provision occurs in the later work of Gautama, who provides that, if a chandala defiled the body, it can be purified by bathing dressed in clothes.

In Pali texts, chandalas are clearly depicted as untouchables. A later Jataka described chandala as the meanest men on the earth. Contact with the air that touched a chandala's body was regarded as pollution. Food and drink if seen by him, were not taken. It is said that 16 thousand brahmanas lost their caste because they unknowingly took food which had been polluted by contact with the leftovers of a chandala's meal. In a Jataka story, when chandala enters a town, people beat him and render him senseless. By and large, in Jataka references suggest that although the

chandalas were despised as untouchables by the members of higher varnas, they were especially hated by Brahmanas.

When chandalas were absorbed in Brahmanical society, assimilation did not mark the complete break with their former style of life. Probably on account of their being hunters and fowlers, they were assigned the task of removing dead bodies of animals and human beings. They always appear to be associated with the removal and cremation of the corpses. This work was also done by Panas, who were known as Candalas. The chandalas were also sometimes engaged in sweeping. In oneof the Jatakas, hestories, he is employed in whipping and cutting limbs of criminals. It has been also suggested that the Coraghataka (executioner of thief) of Jataka may have been a Chandala. Some of them earned their living by professing the occupation of jugglers and acrobats. Thus, the Chandala led a life of misery and squalor. In popular parlance the term Chandala signified a person who was without any virtues, a person without faith and morals.

4.3.2 Mauryan period

The Mauryas had a highly organised administration, the head of each department such as treasurer, collector, chief priest, ambassador, officer of harem, superintendents showed that the avenues of higher bureaucracy were closed to people of lower orders.

The shudras were not given place in the espionage system, which constituted a vital part of Mauryan administration. Kautilya provides that amongst the orders, women of Shudra caste can be employed as wandering spies. It further says that those who are employed as person who obtained women for prostitution, water for bathing, shampooers, bed makers, barbers, toilet makers, water servants, actors, dancers, should be keep an eye on the personal character of officers of the king. Working as domestic servants and being in contact with their masters every minute, they were the best persons to report correctly on their master's personal conduct. Further, according to Kautilya almost all sections of the people including cultivators, herdsmen, and jungle tribes should be recruited as spies. To watch the movement of enemy -a provision which covers Shudras as well. Members of lower order also acted as messengers, for Kautilya states that messengers though untouchables do not deserve death.

Arthashastra provides for the enrolment of Shudras in the army. The *Dharmasutra* gives the impression that – normally only kshatriyas and in emergency only Brahmanas and Vaishyas could take up arms. But Kautilya prefers the army composed of Vaishya and Shudra on account of numerical strength. But it is doubtful whether the members of two lower varnas were recruited during this period.

It has been shown earlier that Panini seems to have included the Chandalas in Shudra caste. But Kautilya does not consider them as Shudras. They have no place in the four-fold varna system. Thus, according to Kautilya, damage done toany animal, bird, Chandala and

forest tribes should be punished with half the fine of that done to similar possession of the member of the four varna. In addition to four varnas, Kautilya mentioned the caste of Antyavasayins who seems to be identical with chandala, for the later lived outside the village near burial ground. It is laid down that if chandalas touches Arya women, a fine of hundred panas shall be imposed on them. Similarly, water tanks used by the chandala should not be used by anyone else. So, there is a doubt whether the chandala was continued to be regarded as an untouchable. The Arthashastra introduced us to a new avocation (activity, occupation) of the chandala. He is to be engaged in whipping, transgressing (go beyond limit) in the centre of the village. He may be also asked to drag with rope along the public road, the bodies of such men and women who commit suicide by various methods.

4.3.3 Post-Mauryan period

The chandalas, svapakas, antyavasayins were engaged in executing criminals and were given clothes, beds and ornaments. The Nisadas lived by fishing, the Medas, and Andhras were employed in the catching and killing of wild animals. The Ayogava practised woodwork and Dighavanas and Karavar worked in leather. The Venan played on drums and Sairandhri was considered skilled at adorning, attending to her mistress. Some of the above low castes are mentioned in Buddhist sources. It is stated that the followers of Buddha shall have nothing to do with the Chandalas, Kukkutikas, (polluters), Samkarikan (pork – unsalted pig meat, butchers), Saundikas (sellers of liquors) Mustikas (boxers). These people were despised by the Buddhists on account of their association with cruel and unpuritanical activities.

Most of the mixed class enumerated by Manu were untouchables. According to Manu they should live outside the village near the famous tree and burial grounds on mountains and in groves (group of trees). This shows that these people lived outside Brahminical settlement. Certainly, chandalas also lived outside. Food vessels used by them were discarded forever. Their sole property consisted of dogs and donkeys, they took their food in broken dishes, used ornaments of iron and clothes of dead people and wandered from place to place. They were not permitted to appear in towns and villages at night, where they could work only during the day. Manu provides that the Chandalas should be distinguished by marks at the king's command. Raghavananda'sexplains that the chandalas should be branded on the forehead. Possibly the chandalas and Svapakans were required to put on uniform to distinguish them from the rest of the people. They could not enter into any transaction regarding marriage, debt, loan etc. which could take place only with the members of their own caste. Manu ordains that members of higher varnas should not give them grain with their own hands.

But in particular, Manu wants to avoid contact between Brahmans and the untouchables. He laid down that a Brahman should not stay with the Chandala, Pukkasas, Antyas and Antyavasayins. Among those who shouldn't look at the Brahman at the shraddha ceremony are the

Chandalas, village pigs, cocks, dogs, etc. Manu further declares that if a Brahman either has intercourse with Chandala or with Antya women or partakes their food, he shall fall from his status.

When the untouchables and mixed castes were regarded as Shudras by Manu is not clear. He categorically states that there are only four varnas which may imply that mixed castes were included in Shudra varnas. Myths of their origin show that they were supposed to have Shudra blood in their vein. But the term Antyaja is also used by Manu in the sense of Chandala. The mixed castes such as Suta, Vaidehaka, Chandalas, Magadha, Kashttr and Ayogava also known as Bahyanswere regarded by the commentators as peoples outside fourfold varna system. But Patanjali defined the Niravarita Shudras as Chandala and Mrtapas were those whose food vessels could not be used by the peoples of higher varnas .This suggests that these untouchables were considered as Shudras. Manu also used the term Apatram (i.e., whose vessels could not be used) for such Shudras. Thus, it seems that mixed castes and untouchables were being absorbed as inferior Shudra who were distinguished from ordinary Shudra by theirisoltaed habitation, backward culture, and primitive religious beliefs.

4.3.4 The Gupta period

The law books of the period retain distinction between the Shudra and the untouchables. Thus, Yajnavalkya lays down that the Shudra who has intercourse with a chandala woman is reduced to her position. Shudra and Svapakas are mentioned separately in several texts. But in Amarakosha mixed castes and untouchables are looked upon as part of the Shudra community. Ten mixed castes the Karnna, Ambartha, the Udgra (agra), the Magadha, the Mahisa, the Ksattr, the Suta, Vaidehaka, Rathkara and Chandala are included in the shudra varna of the work.

Amara gives ten names for Chandala, some of which Plava, Divakirtis, Janangama are rarely mentioned in the earlier texts which may suggest an increase in the number of this untouchable caste.

The Dombas, who came to form a numerous section of untouchables in northern India in subsequent times seems to have appeared as a caste in Gupta period.

During this period, there seems to have been not only an increase in the number of the untouchables but also some intensification in the practice of untouchability. The Brihaspati Smriti provides a penance for removing the sin that arises out of touching a chandala. Fa-Hien informs us that when a chandala enters the gate of the city or market they strike a piece of wood to give a prior notice of their arrival so that men may know and avoid them.

There is not much new information about the occupation of mixed castes and untouchables. The chandalas continue to be employed in the work of cleaning streets, working in the cremation grounds, executing

criminals, and tracking down thieves at night. Fa-Hien informsthat at the outset the chandalas were fishermen and hunters. But the Chandalas mentioned by Kalidasa are separate from fowlers and fisherman although they all belonged to the same class. We also learn that the svapakas cooked the flesh of dogs and sold bow strings.

There is some information about the manners, customs, beliefs of mixed castes especially of the Chandalas. Iron objects were the chief ornaments of the mixed castes who lived outside the village settlements. A Chandala is represented as besmeared by dust raised by dogs and asses. Fa-Hien informs us that only chandalas drink intoxicating liquor and eat onion or garlic which shows that they were particularly addicted to these practices. Being hunters and fowlers, they were naturally habitual meat eaters. The entertainment of the people seems to have been an important occupation of the Dombas. They lived by singing and selling winnowing blankets and similar such articles.

The untouchables and chandalas in particular, are portrayed in very disparaging terms. It is stated that the antyavasiyans are characterized by impurity, untruth, theft, heterodoxy, useless quarrels etc, Ferocity appears as a special trait of chandala's character.

Check your progress :

1) Explain in short, the growth of untouchability in ancient India.

4.4 SUMMARY

To summarise, the institution of untouchability originated during ancient period and developed in course of time in India. It has affected several people and they had to bear the hardships even upto modern times. Number of social reformers and national leaders tried to remove the practice of untouchability during the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. In 1950, the Constitution of India legally abolished the practice of untouchability and provided measures for positive discrimination in both educational institutions and public services for scheduled castes and other social groups who lie within the caste system.

4.5 ADDITIONAL READINGS

1) B.R. Ambedkar – The Untouchables
2) A. L. Basham - The Wonder that was India
3) Swaswati Das- Social life in Ancient India
4) D.N. Jha – Ancient India In Historical Outline

5) R. S. Sharma – Perspective of Social and Economic History of Early India
6) R. S. Sharma – India's Ancient Past
7) Y.B. Singh- Social life in Ancient India
8) SuviraJaiswal, *'Some Recent Theories of the Origin of Untouchability; A Historiographical Assessment'*. Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 1978

4.6 QUESTIONS

1) Explain the genesis and development of untouchability in India.
2) Describe the various theories regarding the origin of untouchability in India.
3) Evaluate the development of the untouchability in ancient India.

Unit-5

C) VARNA SHRAMA DHARMA VYAVASTHA

Unit Structure:

5.0 OBJECTIVES

After the study of this unit, the student will be able to:

1. Understand the meaning of the concept of Varnashrama.
2. Understand the origin of Varna System in Ancient India
3. Understand the features of four varnas.
4. Analyze the various aspects of four Ashramas
5. Understand the concept of Varnashrama-Dharma.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The Vedic society depended on the unique system of Varnashrama which concerned itself with the organization and management of the individual as well as the group or society. The Varnashrama system was the framework of Ancient Indian Vedic society. The society was based on the four-fold classification of people into varnas and fourfold division of life of each individual into ashramas (stages) and they were interrelated

with each other. Thus, the Hindu social organization has been noted for its Varnashrama Dharma i.e., duty based on order and stages in life.

The Varna system was based on the four-natural physio-psychological aspects of human beings, the man of knowledge (Brahmana), the man of valour (Kshatriya), the man of enterprise (Vaishya) and the man of labour (Shudras). The Ashrama system was based on the natural stages in each individual life, Student (Brahmanacharya), householder (grihastha), forest dweller (Vanaprastha) andascetic (sanyasa). But the four stages have different implications. These two systems were interrelated with each other. That is why it is called Varnashrama Vyavastha. Thus, these two organizations of the Ashrama and the Varna (Varnashrama Vyavastha) serve as the cornerstones of the Hindu theory of social organization.

5.2 VARNA SYSTEM

The Hindu society was divided into four Varnas viz. Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra. The word Varna comes from the word Vr which means to describe, to classify. Varna itself has many meanings: In general Varna would mean classify, order, type or colour. In the opinion of E. Senart the word Varna was used to represent the distinction between the Aryans and the non-Aryans. The first three classes: Brahmana, Kshatriya and Vaishyas were regarded as Aryans and they were called as Dvijas the twice born and the Shudras were considered as non-Aryans.

By the end of the Rigvedic period the fourfold division of society was regarded as fundamental, primeval, and divinely ordained. Varna system is different from Caste System. The Varna system was based on occupations whereas the Caste System was based on birth and it was hereditary. In the Varna system, a person could be in any occupation, there are a number of examples, which show that in many cases Brahmins used to do the work of kshatriyas. It means the division was not concrete as such. Inter-class marriages prevailed. The Varna system was totally based on occupation. Social mobility was there, and one could change one's Varna by changing the occupation.

5.2.1 Origin of Varna system

There are several passages in the oldest Vedic literature dealing with the origin of the Varnas. The oldest is the hymn in the Purusha Sukta of the Rigveda which says that 'from his (Purusha) mouth came forth the Brahmana, and of his arms were Rajanya made, from his thighs came the Vaishyas, and his feet gave birth to Shudra'. The broad division of the Vedic society was originally associated with the colour conscious Aryans (Arya Varna) to distinguish them from the non-Aryans (Dasa Varna).

The main idea behind this theory is that the Varna system is God's creation and not a creation of humans. The divine origin of the Varna system has been propounded probably to show its sanctity.

The detailed information of four Varnas is as follows:

5.2.2 Brahmana

The Brahmanas occupied the highest social status in the society. The chief duty of the Brahman is to study and teach, performance of and officiating rituals, sacrifices, taking care of religious practices and to give and receive gifts. Brahmans also used to teach martial arts, archery, boxing. They were the basic trainers of different skills. Because of the work of knowledge production, Brahmins had a dominant position in society.

The Brahmin community enjoyed esteem and honour at the courts of kings functioning as purohits whose main duty was to perform sacrifices to avoid natural and other calamities befalling all including the theking and the kingdom. The Brahmin was a great divinity in human form. In law he claimed great privilege, and, in every respect, he demanded precedence, honour and reverence. The learned Brahmanas were exempted from capital punishment.

The Brahmans played a major role in the choice of the king. They enjoyed high positions such as being minister. In the later period, often, they lived under the patronage of a king or a chief, and were provided for by grants of tax-free land, farmed by peasants, who would pay their taxes, to the Brahmin instead of to the king, but there were also land-owning Brahmans, who cultivated large estates by hired labour or serfs.

The changing circumstances and pressure of social and economic necessities forced some of the Brahmans to abandon their hereditary profession of teaching and priesthood. The Brahmana Dharmasastrakaras appear to have been quite aware of this and hence they permitted a Brahmana to take up the profession of other castes for the sake of livelihood. In times of adversity or distress, the Brahmana was allowed to follow the occupation of a Kshatriya or even that of a Vaisya, if he was not capable of performing the duties of Kshatriya. The Brahman class was also allowed to follow the occupation of the Vaisya, i.e., the trade, agriculture, and cattle breeding.

The Brahmans were also appointed in the administration. They were appointed as ministers, judges, royal priest and on other high posts. The Brahmana were not to be offended or assaulted. The Brahmana class occupied special status in law. They were given lesser punishment in comparison to persons belonging to other three Varnas. Thus, we can say that Brahmans enjoyed the highest place in Ancient Indian Society. The worst punishment meted out to them was stripping them of their status in the society and humiliating them by branding on their forehead the crime they had committed and also making them outcastes.

5.2.3 Kshatriya

The Kshatriyas occupied the second position in Ancient Indian society. The Kshatriya class enjoyed more privileges and esteem in society

because of it being the ruling class. Protection of the people and the county, saving it from internal revolts as well as from external aggressions, and maintenance of peace were the main functions to be performed by a Kshatriya. They were supposed to be custodians of law and order and protectors of the other three varnas of the society. The ancient scriptures place the king above a Brahmana.

They enjoyed all rights of Brahmans except the duties of teaching and officiating sacrifices, but they could perform various sacrifices and study the scriptures. Because of their martial nature, they were respected all the more. Kshatriyas were exempted from capital punishment.

The kshatriyas were generally appointed in military and administrative service. The care of the Brahmins was one of the foremost duties of a king and a king who lavishly bestowed on the Brahmins gained endless praise. Like Brahmins, Kshatriyas were also allowed to adopt the means of livelihood of a Vaisya in times of adversity or distress.

The higher administrative position seems to have been monopolized by the brahmins and Kshatriyas. But from the later Vedic period a struggle had started between the Kshatriyas and Brahmans for power. The brahmans regarded themselves as superior to the Kshatriya because of their superiority in spiritual knowledge, but the latter were no less superior in temporal power. The superiority of the brahmans was not accepted by all kshatriyas.

There are instances to show that sometimes the two Varnas were in conflict. Parasurama is said to have destroyed the Kshatriyas several times. There are several references to armed conflict between these two classes in the Mahabharata and puranas. It thus appears that sometimes the Brahmans came into conflict with the Kshatriyas, but overall the relationship between these two classes remained cordial. In this way the Kshatriyas also enjoyed the special status in ancient Indian society.

5.2.4 Vaisyas

The Vaisyas were regarded as the third Varna in the Hindu society. Earning a livelihood by fair means was supposed to be one of the specific duties of a Vaisya. The chief function of Vaisyas was to breed cattle, to till the earth to pursue trade and to tend money. It appears that their main sources of income were agriculture, trade, and cattle-breeding. The Vaisyas also enjoyed the right of studying the Vedas. The Vaisyas were entitled to make gifts to the Brahmans.

Like Brahmans and Kshatriyas, Vaisyas were also allowed to take the occupation of Shudra class in times of distress or adversity. The Smriti texts not only incorporate the traders and the agriculturists in this class but also include dancers, actors, and other artists within its fold. People following any profession other than that of a Shudra as a means of livelihood would generally be placed in this class. Manu admits many other legitimate Vaisya occupations besides cattle rearing and farming.

The ideal Vaisya was supposed to have expert knowledge of jewels, metals, cloth, threads, special, perfume, and all manner of merchandise. According to A.L. Basham, Vaisya is, in fact, the ancient Indian businessman. Buddhist and Jain scriptures mention many wealthy merchants living in great luxury, and members of extremely well-organized guilds. Wealthy Vaisyas were respected by kings and enjoyed their favour and confidence. It was they, rather than the Kshatriyas, who chiefly favoured the rising unorthodox religions of Buddhism and Jainism. The Vaisya came third in the social order of ancient Indian society, but also, they occupied an important place in society.

5.2.5 Shudras

The Shudras were regarded as the fourth and the last Varna in the ancient Indian society. Their main duty was to serve the upper three classes who were twice born. The Shudras were in fact considered to be second-class citizens, on the fringes of Aryan society. They were considered as non-Aryans. They were employed as hired laborers and slaves. Their economic condition was pitiable. They did not have the right to collect wealth if they did so, it was believed that they would incur sin. They were to be maintained by the three other Varnas. Shudras were not allowed to recite Vedic mantras. They had no right to perform a sacrifice like the three higher Varnas. Even the touch of a Shudra to various articles was prohibited. They were kept by the Aryans as slaves. Shudras were to eat the remnants of his masters' food, use his cast-off clothing and use his old furniture. He had few rights, and little value was set on his life in law. A Brahmin killing a Shudra performed the same penance as for killing a cat or dog. The Shudra was not allowed to hear or repeat the Vedas. If he did so severe punishments were meted out to them.

During the Mauryan period, they were employed as sweepers, potters, painters, weavers, woodworkers, leather-dressers, smiths etc. thus Shudras followed the profession of different artisans and this idea grew stronger in the Gupta period.

The Shudras are considered as the most impure section of society. There was a wide gulf between the Brahmans and the Shudras. The Brahmans were advised not to keep contact with the Shudras. They being the lowest in the social order were the recipients of the severe punishments. Among the different lawgivers of the period Manu was the most severe on Shudras. Manu lived in the Gupta age (3^{rd} to 5^{th} Century C.E.,) and it is clear that the conditions had become regressive by then. Extreme penalties including physical torture and mutilation were prescribed for the Shudras compared to other Varnas. In this way it is clear that the Shudras held the lowest position in the society with no rights.

Though the Ancient Indian society was divided into four Varnas, mobility was permissible. One could change the occupation and could move to a different varna. Inter-class marriage was prevalent in higher classes. They were not water-tight compartments. The three higher classes

enjoyed special status in the society and enjoyed various rights, but Shudras were not given such status and rights.

5.3 ASHRAMA SYSTEM

The framework of ancient Indian society was based on two systems – Varna and Ashrama. This is called the Varnas-Ashrama system (Varnashrama Vyavastha). The life of an individual was divided into four stages with a graduated course of duties calculated to lead an individual step by step towards a realization of the supreme spiritual ideal. The whole life of an individual was supposed to be a cycle of schooling and self-discipline and handling household responsibilities.

The word asrama is originally derived from the Sanskrit root srama which means to exert oneself liberally. An asrama is a halting or resting place. The word therefore signifies a stoppage, or a stage in the journey of life just for the sake of rest in a sense, in order to prepare oneself for the next stage in life. The asrama then are to be regarded as resting places during one's journey on the way to final liberation which is the final aim of life.

Each of the ashrama is a stage of life in which the individual has to train himself for a certain period, and exert himself within the circuit of the same in order to qualify himself for the next.

The ashramas are four in number:

1) The Brahmancharya- that of a student
2) The Grihastha- that of a married man the householder
3) The Vanaprastha- that of retired life in the forest, after abandoning the home, preparatory to complete renouncement of worldly relations, and
4) The Sanyasa- the life of complete renunciation of worldly relations and attachments.

Now we will see all these four ashramas in detail:

5.3.1 Brahmcharyashram

The upanayana or initiation ceremony introduces the young boys into the Brahmacharyasrama. According to the scheme of the four stages, life began not with physical birth, but with the second birth or investiture with the sacred thread. Students had to live the life of celibacy and austerity at the home of their teacher. Students had to study Vedic scriptures and other arts according to their Varna. Kshatriya boys studied the art of boxing, weapon training while the Brahmana boys used to study rituals and sacrifices. It shows that the course of study was different for each Varna. Students had to maintain discipline and chastity.

The proper age for entering the Brahmcharyashram differs according to the Varna of the boy. The detailed information about this is

given in Dharmashastras and Grihya Sutras. Grihya Sutra gives us the information about the hierarchy of each Varna. Brahmana boys could enter asrama 8 years after conception and the maximum age limit was 16 years. They were supposed to wear antelope skin or reddish yellow garment, and the girdle of Munja grass and take the staff of Palasa Wood.

Every Kshatriya boy was supposed to be initiated in the 11^{th} year after the conception and maximum limit was 22^{nd} year. He was supposed to wear the skin of a spotted deer or a light red garment, girdle was supposed to be made of bowstring and his staff used to be made of ununbara wood.

A Vaisya boy was supposed to be initiated in the 12^{th} year after the conception and was supposed to use a goat skin or a yellow garment girdle made of wool and staff of wood.

The period of studentship may have lasted for 48 or 24 or 12 years or until the student had learned the Vedas According to Hiranyakesin Grahasutra. Thus, we can see how the Varna system maintained social hierarchy. The distinction was based on age, Girdle, garment, and wood.

From the point of view of the acquisition of knowledge by the individual, the brahmacharya ashrama would evoke the highest praise.

5.3.2 Grihasthashrama:

After the samavartana ceremony, the individual returned to his home and was married and became a householder or grihastha. Of all the ashramas, however, the Grihashtashrama was given a high place of honour. Three purusharthas, dharma, artha and kama were an integral part of this ashram and they were meant to take a human being towards moksha. This stage was also supposed to be extremely important from the perspective of its direct contact with the society and the consequent direct contributions made by it to the society. In fact, this mode of life is considered as the very basis of all the others. The other three ashramas derive from this ashrama, the means to live upon, the offerings they make to the departed ones and in short, their entire support.

All the obligations of life, the individual and social, all the three debts (runas) the debt to the gods (devarina) the debt to the ancestors (pitririna) and the debt to sages (rishirina) could be satisfied by a person living a full life in the Grihastha Ashrama. The spirits, too, bestow the highest praise upon the Grihastha Ashrama. The sastrakara praise for the grihastha as the best ashrama emanates from the point of view of the social values of the ashramas.

After fulfilling the obligations, an individual was allowed to enter the next asrama of vanaprastha.

5.3.3 Vanaprasthashrama

When well advanced in middle age, after an individual had seen his children's children and had thus surely established his lineage, he was supposed to leave his home for the forest to become a hermit (vanaprastha). In the Vanaprasthashrama, as the name itself suggests, the individual has to leave the settlement not only of the family (kula) and of the home (griha), but of the village (grama) too. He must go to the forest (vana) and live there, all the while striving to bring under control his sense of enjoyment in the following manner: He had to eat vegetables and fruits only; he was not to touch sweet things or meat. For his clothing he had to use the deerskin or the bark of a tree. He was not supposed to make deliberate attempts to obtain comforts and he had to lead a celibate life, sleeping on the floor and residing under a tree.

Besides, an individual was supposed to utilize his time in studying the Upanishadas and the shrutis and practice penance (tapas) for the purging of his body and mind, as also to elevate his status to higher levels. Thus, he was supposed to devote his heart and soul to his studies and meditation.

In the vanaprastham, dharma and moksha became the main concerns of life, dharma occupying the primary position. If the individual dies while he is pursuing his life in the vanaprashtrasrama, he is expected to attain moksha. But if he survived the Vanaprastha Ashrama the individual had to inter the last asrama of samnyasa, casting off all attachment to the world.

5.3.4 Sanyasa Ashrama

Samnyasashrama was the last asrama of these four stages of life. The man who had entered the sanyasasrma was supposed to possess nothing, he was to move about all alone without being dependent upon anyone for help or support. He was to beg for alms only once in a day, and he was not supposed to feel dispirited whenever he used to fail to procure alms, nor was he supposed to feel elated whenever he was able to procure it. Indeed, he was not supposed to care either for the living or for the dead. By restraining his senses, by casting away the love and hatred from within and by leading a life of a non-violence towards other living beings, the sannyasi was to become fit to achieve moksha. All the sins of the man, who used to pass through the Samnyasashrama in this manner were, warded off and nullified and thus such a person according to scriptures used to attain the ultimate end or goal of existence i.e., moksha.

From the point of view of individual salvation, the Samnyasashrama would take the place of honour. In the Samnyasashrama, moksa was to occupy the supreme position in a samnyasi's mind in fact, his dharma was in pursuit of moksa.

The ashramas are regarded as Schools of life, as several stages of human existence devised and organized towards the best likelihood for the individual to attain moksa, in accordance with the conception of existence

and its relation to the ultimate. During these different stages of life, the functions of the group with that of the individual are both different and definite with regard to each other.

5.4 VARNASHRAMA-DHARMA VYAVASTHA

Varnashrama Dharma is a combination of Varna and ashrama together forming a way of life based on Brahmanical ideology. The idea of Dharma is fully articulated in the theory of Varnashrama dharma where the definition and boundaries of one's duty has a reference not only to one's caste but also to the particular stage of life. This is the essence of Varnashrama vyavastha.

The Vedic social organization has been noted for its Varnashrama dharma i.e., duty based on order and stages in life. The implication of the phrase is that dharma is not the same for all. There is indeed a common dharma, a general code of conduct which all must follow unfailingly. However, there is also a dharma appropriate to each class and to each stage in the life of the individual. The dharma of high birth is not that of men of low birth and the dharma of students is not that of the old man. The recognition that men are not the same and that there is a hierarchy of classes each with its separate duties and distinctive way of life, is one of the most striking features of ancient Indian society.

Dharma means duty. One must follow the duties according to his Varna and asrama. We have seen how the upanayana ceremony is different for each Varna. Thus, the varna dharma denies the accumulation of wealth to the Brahmana, his main dharma lies in spiritual and intellectual quests. Likewise, different duties were assigned to different Varnas and it has to be followed because the next birth depended on the fulfillment of one's Varna in this life. One who is born in a higher varna must live up to the duties and obligations of his Varna if he does not want to be degraded in the next birth. The specific dharmas of each of the Varnas are noted by literary sources. It is better to do one's own duty badly than another's well. This epigram was the leading theme of Indian social thought, for each man there had a place in the society and a function to accomplish, with a set of duties and rights.

5.5 SUMMARY:

It is important to note that the system was opened only for twice-borns. Vaishyas, Shudras and women were not allowed to follow the asrama system, Shudras were not allowed to perform Upanayana or investiture ceremony. Thus, we can say that the idea of dharma is fully articulated in the Varnashrama system.

5.6 ADDITIONAL READINGS

1) A. L. Basham - The Wonder that was India
2) Saraswati Das- Social life in Ancient India
3) D.N. Jha – Ancient India In Historical Outline
4) V. D. Mahajan - Ancient India
5) P.H. Prabhu- Hindu Social organization
6) R. S. Sharma – Perspective of Social and Economic History of Early India
7) R. S. Sharma – India's Ancient Past
8) Y.B. Singh- Social life in Ancient India

5.7 QUESTIONS

1. Trace the origin and Growth of the Varnashrama system in Ancient India.
2. Examine the Varnashrama system and its role in society.
3. Which are the four Varnas and four Ashramas and why is it called Varnashramadharma?
4. Write a critique on Varnashrama Vyavastha.

Module - II
Evolution of Early Indian State

Unit - 6

STATE FORMATION IN EARLY INDIA

Unit Structure:

6.0 OBJECTIVES:

- To understand the background of State Formation in Early India
- To explain the nature of State Formation in Early India
- To understand the process of State Formation in Early India
- To get a glimpse of how the State Formation in Early India has influenced the present.

CHRONOLOGY

7000 -5000 B.C.E.	Food Production Phase
5500 – 2600 B.C.E.	Harappan/Indus Valley Civilization, Early Harappan Phase (Harappan Culture)
2600-1900 B.C.E.	Mature Harappan Phase (Harappan Civilization or Urbanisation Phase)
1900- 1300 B.C.E.	Late Harappan Phase
	Early Vedic Age
	Later Vedic Age
c. 600 BCE	The Sixteen Great Republics
c. 600 -321 B.C.E.	Magadhan Empire
321 – 184 BCE	Mauryan Empire
c. 2nd century BCE to 3rd Century CE	Kushan Kingdom
c. 320 – 550 CE	Gupta Empire
600 – 1300 CE	Early Medieval India
1206 – 1526 CE	Delhi Sultanate

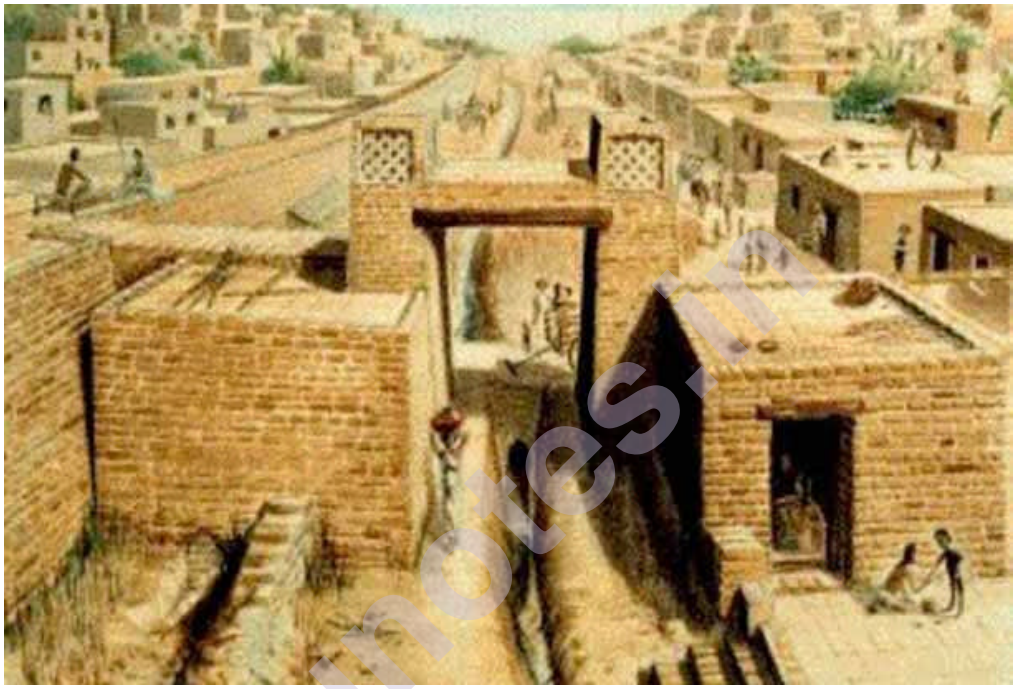
6.1 INTRODUCTION

Nature of state in India must be studied for understanding how the modern state evolved in India. History is not just a study of the past but also a study of how that past has guided our present. History as a discipline is not only a study of names, places, and dates but of processes, events, and their outcomes over time. The modern state in conceptualizing its policies can test its actions against the barometer of the similar actions or processes in the past. It is said that 'History repeats itself'. Those who do not learn from the past are on the path of destruction. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the formation of state in India not only from an academic perspective but also to learn from the mistakes and successes of that past in building a strong, durable, prosperous and an inclusive nation state.

Our knowledge of the ancient world has been drastically changed by impressive archaeological discoveries over the last two centuries. Prior to the twentieth century, historians believed that India's history began in the second millennium BCE, when a people known as Indo-Aryans migrated into the Indian subcontinent and created a new civilization. Yet, even during the nineteenth century British explorers and officials were curious about brick mounds in the landscape of northwest India. A large one was in a village named Harappa. A British army engineer, Sir Alexander Cunningham, sensed its importance because he also found other artifacts among the bricks, such as a seal with an inscription. He

was, therefore, quite distressed that railway contractors were stealing these bricks for ballast.

When Cunningham became the director of Great Britain's Archaeological Survey in 1872, he ordered the protection of these ruins. But the excavation of Harappa did not begin until 1920. Harappa, it turned out, was an ancient city dating back to the third millennium BCE, and only one part of a much larger civilization sprawling over northwest India. With the discovery of this lost civilization, the timeline for India's history was pushed back over one thousand years.



Gateway at Harappa: Indus Valley Civilization

Check your progress:

1] How has archaeology helped us in understanding Ancient India?

6.2 BACKGROUND

1. Indus Valley Civilization

The Indus Valley civilization (3300 – 1700 BCE) now stands at the beginning of India's long history. Like the states of ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt, the foundations for that history were established by Paleolithic people who migrated to the region. Later the Neolithic agriculturalists settled in the villages. During the third millennium BCE, urban centers

emerged along the Indus River, along with other elements that contribute to making a civilization.

The Rig Vedic and the Later Vedic corpus of literature talk about a civilization, religious, economic, social, and cultural life. While the date is not certain the scholarly world is divided on the issue of who were the Vedic Aryans with diametrically opposite views. Historians such as Romila Thapar and others believe that the Aryans migrated from outside India. According to Thapar the Indus Valley Civilization declined in the second millennium B.C.E., and had almost disintegrated when (by 1500 B.C.E.) THE Aryans entered the north-west of India. The Aryans or Indo-Aryans descendants of the Indo-Europeans – had remained for some time in Bactria and the northern Iranian plateau, but by about 15000 B.C.E., they migrated into northern India through the passes in the Hindu Kush mountains. At first, they wandered across the plains of Punjab, searching for pastures, as they were mainly a cattle-breeding people. Finally, they settled in small village communities in forest clearings and gradually took to agriculture, which had been the main economy of the earlier Indus people. It was during this period that the hymns of Rig Veda were memorized and collected. The two epics Ramayana and the Mahabharata are concerned with events which took place between c. 1000 to 7000 B.C.E.

According to Thapar Mahabharata may have been the description of a local feud but caught the imagination of the bards and in its final form all the tribes and peoples of the sub-continent were seen participating in the battle. The events described in the Ramayana probably occurred somewhat later, since the scene is set further east than that of the Mahabharata in eastern Uttar Pradesh. As the southward movement of the Aryans is generally dated to about 800 B.C.E., the original Ramayana must have been composed at least fifty or a hundred years later.

While Upinder Singh resonates with Thapar's views she says that due to complex internal chronology it is difficult to use the Sanskrit epics-the Ramayana and Mahabharata as sources for any specific period. They can at best be used in a very general way for a comparative perspective on cultural practices.

B.K. Gosh calls this the Aryan problem, where he explains the different theories prevalent regarding the original home of the Aryans which leaves the original home of the Aryans to be inconclusive.

Prof. Vasant Shinde, leading Harappan Archaeologist, who recently conducted genome studies in collaboration with CCMB, Hyderabad, Harvard University, and Max Planck Research School for Genome Science, in Rakhigarhi, says that if the Aryans had migrated from outside in large numbers, it would have been reflected in Archaeological evidence as well as in DNA. If they had come from outside, destroyed the local civilization and settled here then a new genome sequence would

have gotten added into the DNA which is not there. So, as per archaeological and DNA evidence there was no largescale migration from outside. But there was exchange of cultures and trade. So, there was movement both ways and that can be gleaned but not a different ancestry due to mass migration.

Similarly, Jonathan Mark Kenoyer, an expert on Harappan civilization in Pakistan, says that it was the same people who lived in Mehrgarh, transitioned from the Neolithic period to the food producing age and later to the Early Harappan phase and there was no large scale migration from the west or south west.

With divergent views and with no consensus amongst Archaeologists and historians on this issue it is better to avoid dating the Vedic and the epic periods. As Upinder Singh suggests these periods can at best be used in a very general way for a comparative perspective on cultural practices.

2. THE VEDIC AGE

During the long course of the Vedic Age, states were formed in northern India. The surplus from farming and pastoralism allowed people to engage in many other occupations and there was a vigorous trade. Villages thus grew in number and some became towns. Consequently, there was a need for greater leadership. This was provided by chieftains of the many Aryan clans. Over time, advanced levels of political organization developed, and these chieftains became kings or the leaders of clan assemblies. By the beginning of the sixth century B.C.E.,North India was divided into sixteen major kingdoms and oligarchies.

The next three centuries (c. 600 – 321 BCE) were a time of transition. These states fought with each other over territory. The most successful state was the one that could most effectively administer its land, mobilize its resources, and command the largest armies. That state was the kingdom of Magadha which, by the fourth century BCE, had gained control of much of northern India along the Ganges River.

2. THE MAURYAN EMPIRE

In 321 BCE, the last king of Magadha was overthrown by one of his subjects, Chandragupta Maurya, and a new period in India's history began. Through war and diplomacy, he and his two successors established control over most of India, forging the first major empire in the history of South Asia. That Empire was known as the Mauryan Empire (321 – 184 BCE). Chandragupta's grandson, Ashoka, ended the military conquests and sought to rule his land through Buddhist principles of non-violence and tolerance. But after his time, the empire rapidly declined, and India entered a new stage in its history.

After the Mauryan Empire fell, no one major power held control over a substantial part of India for five hundred years. Rather, from c. 200 BCE to 300 CE, India saw the growth of numerous, regional kingdoms. Some of these were in northern India, along the Ganges River, but others grew up in the south or the area known as the Indian Peninsula(300 B.C.E. to 300 C.E.) Also, some kingdoms emerged through foreign conquest. Outsiders in Central Asia and the Middle East saw India as a place of much wealth and wanted to plunder or rule it. Thus, throughout its history, India was repeatedly invaded by conquerors coming through mountain passes in the northwest. Many like the King Kanishka of Kushan Empire (c. 100 CE), established distinguished kingdom that extended from India into these neighboring regions from which they came.

4. POST MAURYAN PERIOD

After 400 C.E and up to the fifteenth century, India was never again unified for any length of time by one large empire. Substantial regional powers emerged, and they contributed in other important ways to India's civilization. The period 300 – 600 CE is often referred to as the Gupta Period and Classical Age. The Guptas (c. 320 – 550) were rulers who forged an impressive empire in northern India. As their empire flourished, Indian intellectuals were also setting standards for excellence in the fields of art, architecture, literature, and science, in part because of Gupta patronage. But important kingdoms also developed in south India.

5. EARLY MEDIEVAL INDIA

The last period of ancient India overlaps with early medieval India (c. 600 – 1300 CE). After the Gupta Empire, and during the following seven centuries, the pattern of breakup intensified. Numerous regional kingdoms large and small frequently got established and disintegrated. In such unstable and fluid political scene, kings granted land to loyal subordinate rulers and high officers of their courts. The resulting political and economic pattern is referred to as Indian feudalism. Also, kings put their greatness on display by waging war and building magnificent temples in their capital cities. And, during the medieval period, a new political and religious force entered the Indian scene, when Muslim Arab and Turkish traders and conquerors arrived on the subcontinent.

This overview briefly summarizes major periods in India's political history. But we also must pay close attention to social, cultural, and economic life. Socially, the people of India were largely organized by the caste system. Culturally, the people of India shared in the development of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism the three major religious traditions that shaped their worldview. Finally, throughout the ancient and medieval periods, India flourished as a civilization because of its dynamic economy. The people of India were linked in networks of trade and exchange not only with other parts of South Asia but also with neighboring regions of the Afro-Eurasian world.

India's history alternated between two different periods. Sometimes it was partially unified by empires and sometimes it consisted of an assortment of regional states. This history was also impacted by influxes of migrants and invaders. India's geography has no doubt influenced its history. It is important to remember that "India" can mean different things. Today, India usually designates the nation-state of India. But modern India was only formed in 1947 and includes much less territory than India did in ancient times. As a term, India was first invented by the ancient Greeks to refer to the Indus River and the lands and people beyond it. When used in this sense, India also includes today's nations of Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The history of this region was shaped by a multitude of ethnic groups who spoke many different languages and lived and moved about on a diverse terrain suited to many kinds of livelihood.

Map of South Asia

6. GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES:

Large natural boundaries define the subcontinent. Mountain ranges ring the north, and bodies of water surround the peninsular region. To the east lies the Bay of Bengal, to the south the Indian Ocean, and to the west the Arabian Sea. The largest mountain range is the Himalayas, which defines India's northern and northeastern boundary. A subrange of the Himalaya—the Hindu Kush— sits at its western end, while a ridge running from north to south defines the eastern end, dividing India from China and mainland Southeast Asia. To the northwest, the Suleiman Range and Kirthar Range complete the impenetrable barriers. Yet, these ranges are punctuated by a few narrow passes that connect India to Central Asia and West Asia.

To the south of the mountain ranges lie the Indo-Gangetic Plain and the two great rivers of northern India that originate from the higher Himalayan ranges: Indus and the Ganges Rivers. These rivers originate in the Himalayas and are regularly fed by snow melt and monsoon rains. The Indus River, which originates inTibet flows through

upper Himalayan ranges, its tributaries crosses Kashmir, flows into the northwest and drains into the Arabian Sea, can be divided into an upper and lower region. The region comprising the upper Indus and its many tributary rivers is called the Punjab, while the region surrounding the lower Indus is referred to as the Sindh. The Ganges River begins in the western Himalayas and flows southeast across northern India before draining into the Bay of Bengal. Because they could support large populations, the plains surrounding these river systems served as the heartland for India's first major states and empires.

Peninsular India is also an important part of the story as over time great regional kingdoms emerged in south. The peninsula is segregated from north India by the Vindhya Mountains of which lies the Deccan Plateau. This arid plateau is bordered by two coastal ranges— the Western Ghats and Eastern Ghats, beyond which are narrow coastal plains, the Malabar Coast, and the Coromandel Coast. This nearly 4600 miles of coastline is important to India's history because it linked fishing and trading communities to the Indian Ocean and, therefore, the rest of Afro-Eurasia. Sri Lanka also served as an important conduit for trade and cultural contacts beyond India.

Check your progress:
1] Discus in brief about the Indus Valley Civilization.

6.3 POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN ANCIENT INDIA

1. THE HARAPPAN CIVILIZATION (Mature Phase, 2600 BCE – 1900 BCE)

Three different types of settlements based on size and sophistication can be seen in the Harappan Civilization. The top consists of five major cities of roughly 250 acres each. At the bottom there are fifteen thousand smaller agricultural and craft villages. In the middle there are several dozen towns.

Excavations throughout this region show a pattern of development whereby settlements start looking more like towns than villages and ground plans become larger. Similar artifacts spread over larger areas show that the local communities building these towns were becoming linked together in trade networks. Archaeologists date this transitional period when India was on the verge of its first civilization from 5000 to 2600 BCE. The mature phase, with its advanced cities, begins from 2600 BCE.

The ruins of Mohenjo-Daro, Harappa, Rakhigarhi and other Indus cities dating to this mature phase suggest a vibrant society thriving in well planned urban areas. Some of the principal purposes of these urban settlements included coordinating the distribution of local surplus resources, obtaining desired goods from more distant places, and turning raw materials into commodities for trade.

Artifacts indicate that there was a well-organized urban system. Farmers and pastoralists brought their grain and stock to the city for trade or to place it in warehouses managed by the authorities. Laborers dug the wells and collected garbage from rectangular bins. Craftsmen made bronze tools, ceramics, manufactured jewelry and beads out of gold, copper, semi-precious stones, and ivory. Merchants carried raw materials and finished goods by bullock carts or boats to the towns and cities throughout the region.

Some goods also went to foreign lands. Harappan cities located along the coast of the Arabian Sea engaged in coastal shipping that brought goods upto the Persian Gulf, the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. In Mesopotamian city-states, Harappan seals and beads have been found. Mesopotamian sources speak of a certain place called "Meluhha," a land with ivory, gold, and lapis lazuli. That land may have been Harappan Civilization. Cities like Mohenjo-Daro were linked in networks of exchange extending in every direction.

But this civilization has not yet provided sources we can read, and this poses major problems of interpretation. True, over four thousand inscribed objects with at least four hundred different signs have been found on clay, copper tablets, along with small, square seals**.** Since we cannot decipher them, we call it as a protohistoric civilization. This distinguishes it from both prehistoric cultures that have no writing and historic period where the script has been deciphered.

This proto-historical state of the evidence raises many questions concerning Harappan people's political organization. On the one hand, we see that there was a lot of effort in planning. Cities and towns were similarly designed, burnt bricks had the same dimensions, and weights were standardized. On the other hand, the ruins lack structures that can be identified as palaces, temples, or large tombs. In other words, there is little evidence for either a central political authority ruling over an empire or for independent city-states. One fascinating relic found in Mohenjo-Daro is a little sculpture of a bearded man. The dignified appearance, the headband and cloak of this man suggests he may have been a priest or king, or even both. Yet, this is purely speculation, as the sculpture is unique. He may also have been a powerful landowner or wealthy merchant who met with others of a similar status in assemblies convened in the Great Hall of the citadel. Perhaps local assemblies of just such elites governed each city.

Priest King of Harappan Civilization

The decline of Harappan civilization set in from 1900 B.C.E. and it ended in different time periods in different sites. The towns and cities and their lively trade networks faded away, and the region reverted to rural conditions and in a few sites the people even went back to hunter-gatherer stage. Likely causes include geologic, climatic, and environmental factors. Movement by tectonic plates may have led to earthquakes, flooding, and reverse flooding in the deltaic region of the Indus due to tectonic shifts. Less rainfall and deforestation may have degraded the environment's suitability for farming. All these factors would have impacted the food supply. Consequently, urban areas and the civilization they supported were slowly starved out of existence.

2. THE VEDIC AGE

Vedic Age is named after a set of religious texts composed during these centuries called the Vedas. The people who composed them are known as the Vedic Aryans and Indo-Aryans. The Aryans first settled in the Punjab, but then they pushed east along the Ganges, eventually impressing their way of life, language, and religious beliefs upon much of northern India. The course of India's history was completely changed during this period. By the end of the Vedic Age, numerous states had emerged and Hinduism and the *varna* social system was beginning to take shape.

a. The Early Vedic Age

The early history of the Vedic Age does not have much primary source material. For example, for the first half of the Vedic Age we are largely limited to the ***Rig Veda***. This is the first of four *Vedas*. It consists of 1028 hymns addressed to the Vedic pantheon of gods. But scholars believe that it was not actually written down until after 500 BCE. These

hymns were orally composed and transmitted by Aryan poet-seers, eventually becoming the preserve of a few priestly clans who utilized them for specific religious functions. Thus, these hymns only offer certain kinds of information. Yet, despite these limits, historians have been able to sketch out the Aryan's way of life in these early centuries.

The Vedic Aryans were pastoralists They referred to themselves as Aryans, a term meaning "noble" or "respectable." They spoke Sanskrit and used it to transmit their sacred hymns. At first, they settled along the hills and plains of the Indus River and its tributaries, pursuing pastoral and farming way of life. In their hymns, the Aryans supplicate the gods to bless them with cattle, bounteous harvests, rain, friends, wealth, fame, and sons. From these, it is apparent that herding was the principal occupation and cows were especially prized. But the Aryans also farmed, as apparent in hymns that speak of plough teams and the cutting and threshing of grain.

During the early phase, some Aryans retained a semi-nomadic way of life, living in temporary dwellings and then moving about with their herds. Others settled down in villages. In both cases, kinship was especially valued. At the simplest level, the society consisted of extended families of three generations. Fathers were expected to lead the family as patriarchal heads. Sons were expected to care for the herds, bring honor through success in battle, and sacrifice for the well-being of their fathers' souls after death. They also inherited the property and family name. This suggests a male dominated society. Yet, women had some choice in marriage and could remarry.

Clans were made up of several extended families, and the members of a clan shared land and herds. Groups of larger clans also constituted tribes. The *Vedas* speak of Rajas who were clan or tribal chieftains. These men protected their people and led from forefront in times of battle. The clans and tribes fought with each other. In times of war, these chiefs would rely on priests who ensured the support of the gods by reciting hymns and officiating sacrifices for them. At assemblies of kinsmen the Rajas redistributed war booty. Sudas, for example, was the chief of the Bharata clan. After settling in the Punjab, the Bharatas were attacked by neighboring clan confederacies, but with his skills in chariot warfare and the support of priests, Sudas successfully fought them off.

b. The Later Vedic Age

During the early centuries of the Vedic Age, the Aryan tribes were based in the Punjab region. Some settlers, however, migrated east to the upper areas of the Ganges River, setting the stage for the next period in India's history, the later Vedic Age. The later Vedic Age differs from the early Vedic Age. During this phase lands along the Ganges River were colonized by the Aryans and their political, economic, social, and religious life became more complex.

Over the course of time, Aryan tribes, with horses harnessed to chariots and wagons drawn by oxen, drove their herds east, migrating along and colonizing the plains surrounding the Ganges. Historians debate whether this happened through conquest and warfare or intermittent migration led by traders and people seeking land and opportunity. Regardless, by the later Vedic Age the Aryans had reached the lower areas of the Ganges and as far south as the Vindhya Range and the Deccan Plateau. Most of northern India would therefore be shaped by the Aryan way of life. But in addition, as they moved into these areas, the Aryans encountered indigenous peoples and interacted with them. They ultimately forced their way of life on them but also adopted various elements of non-Aryan languages and traditions.

During this time, agriculture became more important and occupations more diverse. As the lands were cleared, village communities formed. Two new resources made farming more productive: iron tools and rice. Implements such as iron axes and ploughs made clearing wilderness and sowing fields easier, and rice paddy agriculture produced more calories per unit of land. Consequently, population began to grow, and people could more easily engage in other occupations. By the end of this period, the earliest towns had started to form.

Before this state formation, chiefs known as Rajas and their assemblies, with the assistance of priests, looked after the needs of their clans and administered them. This clan-based method of governing sustained and may have evolved later into oligarchies. As the Aryans colonized new territories, the heads of clan families or chiefs of each clan in a confederacy then jointly governed the territory. They would convene meetings often in assembly halls. A smaller group of leaders managed the deliberations and voting, and carried out the tasks of day-to-day governing. These kinds of states have been called oligarchies because the heads of the most powerful families governed. They have also been called republics because these elites governed by assembly. The well-known example was the Vrishni Sangha of the Yadavas.

But in other territories clan chiefs became kings. These kings elevated themselves over kinsmen and the assemblies and became the head of the administrative system. Their chief priests conducted grand rituals that demonstrated the king's special relation with the gods. A sort of divinity was ascribed to the Kings. This majesty overawed the people and, in a sense, intimidated them. At the same time. it gave them the sense that they would be protected. Treasurers managed the compulsory gifts kings expected in return. Most importantly, kingship became hereditary, and dynasties started to rule.

Society changed too. In earlier times, Aryan society was organized as a fluid three-class social structure consisting of priests, warriors, and commoners. But during the later Vedic Age, this social structure became more hierarchical and rigid. A system for classifying people based on

broad occupational categories was developed by the religious and political leaders in society. These categories are known as *varnas*, and there were four of them: Brahmins, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra. The Brahmins were the priests. Their duty was to memorize and orally transmit the *Vedas*. They also had to perform and officiate sacrifices. The Kshatriyas were the chiefs and warriors, whose duty was to govern well and fight. The Vaishyas were commoners who traded and farmed. They were responsible for society's material prosperity. The Shudras were servants who labored for others, usually as artisans or by performing menial tasks.

Warriors were respected for their leadership and they supported the Brahmins. In return, the Brahmins affirmed the authority of the Kshatriyas by carrying out royal ceremonies. Together, they dominated society. The Shudras or the servants were considered to be the most polluted and could not participate in any sacrifice. They could not freely interact with the members of other *varnas*. Over time, this way of organizing society came to be viewed as normal and natural.

In conclusion, by the end of the Vedic Age, northern India had undergone immense changes. An Aryan civilization emerged and spread across the Indo-Gangetic Plains. This civilization was characterized by the philosophy of Brahmanism, the use of Sanskrit, and the *varna* social system. The simpler rural life of the clans of earlier times was giving way to the formation of states. New religious ideas were being added.

3. TRANSITION TO EMPIRE: MAGADHAN IMPERIALISM:STATES, CITIES, AND NEW RELIGIONS (600 TO 321 BCE)

The sixth century begins a transitional period in India's history marked by important developments. Out of the formative stage of state development, sixteen powerful kingdoms and oligarchies emerged. At the end of this period, one kingdom dominated. At the same time, India entered a second stage of urbanization. Towns and cities became a prominent feature of northern India. Other developments also took place. The caste system took shape as an institution, giving Indian society one of its most unique traits. Besides, new religious ideas were put forward that challenged the dominance of Brahmanism.

States and Cities

The kingdom of Magadha became the most powerful among the sixteen states that dominated this period. At the beginning, it was just one of sixteen located on either side of the Ganges River. The rest were established in the older northwest or central India. In general, larger kingdoms dominated the Ganges basin while smaller clan-based states thrived on the periphery. They all fought with each other over land and resources, making this a time of war and shifting alliances.

The victors were the states that could field the largest armies. To do so, rulers had to mobilize the resources of their realms. The Magadhan kings did this most effectively. Expansion began in 545 BCE under King Bimbisara. His kingdom was small, but its location to the south of the lower part of the Ganges River gave it access to fertile plains, iron ore, timber, and elephants. Governing from his inland fortress at Rajagriha, Bimbisara built an administration to extract these resources and used them to form a powerful military. After concluding marriage alliances with states to the north and west, he attacked and defeated the kingdom of Anga to the east. His son Ajatashatru, being a patricide, after killing his father, broke those alliances and waged war on the Kosala Kingdom and the Vrijji Confederacy. Succeeding kings of this dynasty and later two more Magadhan dynasties continued to conquer neighboring states upto 321 B.C.E., thus forging an empire. But its reach was largely limited to the middle and lower areas of the Ganges River.

To the northwest, external powers gained control. As observed earlier, the mountain ranges around that boundary contain passes permitting the movement of people. This made the northwest a crossroad, and, many a times, the armies of rulers who sought to control the riches of India passed through. Foreign powers from Afghanistan, Iran, or beyond extended political control into the subcontinent, making a portion of it as part of a larger empire.

One example is the Persian Empire. During the sixth century, two kings, Cyrus the Great and Darius I, made this empire the largest in its time. From their capitals on the Iranian Plateau, they extended control as far as the Indus River. They incorporated parts of northwest India as provinces of the Persian Empire. Another example is Alexander the Great. Alexander was the king of Macedonia, a Greek state. After conquering other Greek states, he attacked the Persian Empire, defeating it in 331 B.C.E. He then took his forces all the way to mountain ranges bordering India. He wanted to conquer the whole world. He was attracted to the famed fabulous wealth of India. Alexander took his army through the Khyber Pass and conquered several small states and cities located in the Punjab. But to Alexander's disappointment, his soldiers refused to go any further, forcing him to turn back. They were exhausted from years of campaigning far from home and discouraged by news of powerful Indian states to the east, especially that of the empire of Magadha.

Magadha's first capital, Rajagriha is one of many cities and towns with ruins dating back to this transitional period. During the Rig Vedic period Magadha was outside the pale of Aryan influence and urban centers were sparse during this period, but they had blossomed during this phase. As more forests were cleared and marshes drained, the agricultural economy of the Ganges basin produced more surplus food. Population grew, enabling more people to move into owns and engage in other occupations such as craftsmen, artisans, and traders. Kings encouraged this economic growth as its revenue enriched their treasuries. Caravans of

ox-drawn carts or boats laden with goods travelled from state to state. They had to pay tolls to the king's customs officials. Rivers became especially important to contact these trade networks. That is why the Magadhan kings moved their capital to Pataliputra, a port town located on the Ganges. Thus, it developed as a hub of both political power and economic exchange. In fact, most towns and cities began as one or the other, or as places of pilgrimage.

The Caste System

As the population of North India rose and the landscape was dotted with more villages, towns, and cities, society became more complex. The social life of a Brahmin priest who served the king differed from that of a blacksmith who belonged to a town guild. Similarly, the life of a rich businessman residing in a city was different from that of a poor agricultural laborer living in a village. Thus, the social identity of each member of society differed. In ancient India, one measure of identity was the *varna* system of four social classes. Another was caste. By this time, the society had moved from Varna to Jati. Like the *varnas*, castes were hereditary social classifications. But they were far more distinct social groups. The four- fold *varna* system was important for establishing clearly who the powerful spiritual and political elites in society were: the Brahmins and Kshatriya. But others were more conscious of their caste. There were thousands of these, and each was defined by birth,occupation, residence, marriage, customs, and language.

The lowest castes were the untouchables. These were those who engaged in occupations considered highly impure. Such occupations included corpse removers, cremators, those worked in cleaning the Hyde, and sweepers. So those who practiced such occupations were despised and pushed to the margins of society. As members of higher castes believed that touching or seeing them was polluting, untouchables were forced to live outside villages and towns, in separate settlements.

Emergence of Buddhism

During this time of transition, some individuals became dissatisfied with life and decided to leave the everyday world behind. They were people who chose to renounce social life and material things so that they might gain deeper insight into the meaning of life. Some of them altogether rejected Brahmanism and established their own belief systems. The most renowned example is Gautama Buddha (c. 563 – 480 B.C.E).

4. THE MAURYAN EMPIRE (321 – 184 B.C.E.)

The kingdom of Magadha was the most powerful state in India when the Nanda Dynasty came to power in 364 BCE. Nine Nanda kings made it even greater, by improving methods of tax collection and administration, funding irrigation projects and canal building, and maintaining an impressive army of infantry, cavalry, elephants, and chariots.

But Nanda aspirations were cut short when they were overthrown by Chandragupta Maurya (r. 321 – 297 BCE), who began a new period in India's history. He and his son Bindusara (r. 287 – 273 BCE) and grandson Ashoka (r. 268 – 232 BCE) forged the first large empire in India's history, one that inspired the imagination of later empire builders in South Asia. The Mauryan Empire included most of the subcontinent and lasted for 140 years.

Conflicting accounts make it difficult to say anything definitive about the first two kings. Chandragupta may have come from a Kshatriya (warrior) clan, or a Vaishya (commoner) clan, or a clan of peacock-tamers. In his youth, he spent time in the northwest (Swat), where he encountered Alexander the Great. With the mentoring of Kautilya, a disgruntled Brahminin charge of the Dhanasala of the Nandaempire, Chandragupta formed alliances with Nanda enemies, overthrowing them in 321 BCE. Thereafter, through diplomacy and war, he secured control over central and northern India.

Kautilya, whose advice may have been critical to Chandragupta's success, is viewed as the author of the *Arthashastra*, a treatise on statecraft. This handbook for kings covered in detail the arts of governing, diplomacy, and warfare. To help ensure centralization of power in the ruler's hands, it provided a blueprint of rules and regulations necessary to maintain an efficient bureaucracy, a detailed penal code, and advice on how to deploy spies and informants.

Chandragupta's campaigns ended when he concluded a treaty with Seleucus Nicator in 301 BCE. After Alexander retreated from India and later died, a struggle for his empire broke out among his generals Ptolemy, Antigonus, Seleucus, Antipater, Perdiccas, and Lysimachus. Seleucus gained control of the eastern half and sought to reclaim northwest India. But he was confronted by Chandragupta, who defeated, and forced him to surrender the Indus Basin and much of Afghanistan, giving the Mauryan Empire control over trade routes to West Asia. The treaty, however, established friendly relations between the two rulers, Seleucus gave Chandragupta his daughter in marriage and dispatched an envoy to his court. Chandragupta gifted Seleucus three hundred elephants. Hellenistic kings maintained commercial and diplomatic ties with India.

Military expansion continued under Bindusara and Ashoka. Almost the entire subcontinent came under the empire's control. With King Ashoka, however, warfare came to an end. We know far more about him because he left behind a fascinating record on his ideas on governing. He had edicts inscribed on rocks throughout the realm and on sandstone pillars in the Gangetic heartland.

His thirteenth rock edict at Shabhazgahri mentions as to why King Ashoka decided to renounce violence. While waging war against the state of Kalinga, his southern neighbour, located along the east coast, he was

deeply disturbed by the amount of suffering and dislocation the war heaped upon innocent people's lives. This realization caused him to redouble his faith in the Buddha. Ashoka, it turns out, was a lay follower of Buddhism.

Through his Girnar rock edict, he proclaimed to his subjects that the sound of the war drum would be replaced by the sound of the dharma**.** In ancient India, dharma meant universal law. For the Brahmin priests, for example, dharma meant a society and religious order founded on Vedic principles. For Buddhists, dharma consisted of the truths taught by the Buddha. For kings, dharma was enlightened governing and just rule. Thus, Ashoka was proclaiming that he would now rule by virtue, not force.

Ashoka's kingly dharma was shaped by his personal practice of Buddhism. This dharma consisted of laws of ethical behavior and right conduct fashioned from Indian traditions of kingship and his understanding of Buddhist principles. To gain his subject's willing obedience, he sought to inspire a sense of gratitude by presenting himself in the role of a father looking out for his children. He told his subjects that he was appointing officers to tour his realm and attend to the welfare and happiness of all. Justice was to be impartially administered and medical treatment provided for animals and humans. A principle of non-injury to all beings was to be observed. Following this principle meant not only renouncing state violence, but also forbidding slaughtering certain animals for sacrifices or for cooking in the royal kitchen. His Shahbazgarhi rock edict states that formerly in the kitchen daily many hundred-thousands of living creatures were slaughtered for purposes of curries. But now only three living creatures are slaughtered: two peacocks and one deer that too not regularly. In future, even these three will not be slaughtered. Ashoka also proclaimed that he would replace his pleasure tours and hunting tours with dharma tours. During these, he promised to give gifts to Brahmins and the aged and to visit people in the countryside.

In return, Ashoka asked his subjects to observe certain principles. He knew his empire was pluralistic, consisting of many peoples with different cultures and beliefs. He believed that if he instilled certain values in his subjects, then his realm might be knit together in peace and harmony. Thus, in addition to non-injury, Ashoka taught forbearance. He exhorted his subjects to respect parents, show courtesy to servants, and, more generally, be liberal, compassionate, and truthful in their treatment of others. These values were also to be embraced by religious communities, since Ashoka did not want people fighting over matters of faith.

The king's writ shaped the government. They were advised by a council of ministers and served by high officials who oversaw the major functions of the state. The Mauryans were particularly concerned with efficient revenue collection and uniform administration of justice. To that end, they divided the empire into a hierarchy of provinces and districts and

appointed officials to manage matters at each level. But given such alarge empire spread over a geographically and ethnically diverse territory, the level of Mauryan control varied. Historians recognize three broad zones. The first was the metropolitan region—with its capital Pataliputra—located on the Ganges Plain. This heartland was tightly governed. The second zone consisted of conquered regions of strategic and economic importance. These provinces were placed under the control of members of the royal family and senior officials, but state formation was slower. That is, the tentacles of bureaucracy did not reach as deeply into local communities. Lastly, the third zone consisted of hinterlands sparsely populated by tribes of foragers and nomads. Here, state control was minimal, amounting to little more than establishing workable relations with chieftains.

After King Ashoka, the Mauryan Empire declined. The precise reasons for this decline are unknown. Like many ancient dynasties, the Mauryas placed faith on their vast and expanding bureaucracy. Since loyalty to the ruler was one element of the glue that held the centralized bureaucracy together,theweak successors of Ashoka, a fact attested by contemporary and later Buddhist, Jain and Puranic sources, the division of the empire into three parts and the invasion of Bactrian Greeks must have worsened the situation prevailed in the empire. Furthermore, the Mauryan court's demand for revenue sufficient to sustain the government and a large standing army may have contributed to discontent. In 184 BCE, the last king Brihadratha was assassinated by his own military commander Pushyamitra during the guard of honour, and India's first major imperial power came to an end.

5. REGIONAL STATES: INDIA 200 BCE – 300 CE

After the Mauryan Empire fell, no one major power held control over a substantial part of India until the rise of the Gupta Empire in the fourth century CE. Thus, for five hundred years, from c. 200 BCE to 300 CE, India saw a fairly rapid turnover of numerous, competing regional monarchies. Most of these were small, while the larger ones were only loosely integrated. Some developed along the Ganges. Others were of Central Asian origins, the product of invasions from the northwest. Also, for the first time, states formation took place inSouth India. Yet, despite the political instability, India was economically dynamic, as trade within and without the subcontinent flourished, and India was increasingly linked to other parts of the world in networks of exchange. And new trends appeared in India's major religious traditions. A popular, devotional form of worship took root in Buddhism, Similarly, the Bhakti cult became a defining element in Hinduism.

The general who brought the Mauryan Empire to a close by a military coup established the Shunga Dynasty (c. 185 – 73 BCE). Like its predecessor, this kingdom was centered on the middle Ganges, the heartland of India's history since the late Vedic Age. But unlike it, the Shunga Kingdom rapidly dwindled in size.

Shunga rulers were constantly warring with neighboring kingdoms, and the last fell to an internal coup in 73 CE. Subsequently, during the ensuing half millennium, other regions of India played equally prominent roles.

The northwest remained a source of dynamism, as different ethnic groups living beyond the Hindu Kush invaded India and established one kingdom after another. Most of this movement was caused by instability on the steppe lands of Central Asia, where competing confederations of nomadic pastoralists fought for control over the region.

The most powerful amongst this succession of states was the Kushan Kingdom, whose origins take us far away to the north of China. There, in the second century CE, one of the nomadic groups by name Xiongnustruggling with scarcity moved west, violently displacing another group and forcing them into northern Afghanistan. The displaced groupwas known as the Yuezhi (yew-eh-jer), and they were made up of several tribes. In the first century CE, a warrior chieftain from one Yuezhi tribe, the Kushans, united them, invaded northwest India, and assumed exalted titles befitting a king. His successor, ruling from Afghanistan, gained control over the Punjab and reached the plains of the upper Ganges River.

The greatest Kushan ruler, King Kanishka, furthered what these first two kings began, forging an empire extending from Central Asia across the mountain ranges of Afghanistan into much of northern India. Ruling the many peoples of such a sprawling territory required more than the periodic plundering campaigns of nomad chieftains. One sculpture of King Kanishka puts these Central Asian roots on display. In it, he is wearing a belted tunic, coat, and felt boots, and carrying a sword and mace. Kushan gold coins, however, cast him and his two predecessors in another light: as universal monarchs. On one side, the crowned kings are displayed along with inscriptions bearing titles used by the most powerful Indian, Persian, Chinese, and Roman emperors of that time. The obverse side contains images of both Indian and foreign deities. The Kushan rulers, it appears, solved the problem of ruling an extensive, culturally diverse realm by patronizing the many different gods beloved to the peoples living within it. Buddhists, for instance, saw King Kanishka as great Buddhist ruler, much like they did King Ashoka. In fact, Kanishka supported Buddhist scholarship and encouraged missionaries to take this faith from India to Central Asia and China. But his coins also depict Lord Siva, Persian gods *Vato*, *Atash, Mithra, Bahram, Fa'rr*, Greek, god Helios etc., suggesting that he was open-minded, and perhaps strategic, in matters of religion.

After Kanishka's reign, from the mid-second century CE onwards, the empire declined. Like the other, larger Indian states during this time, only a core area was ruled directly by the king's servants. The other areas were governed indirectly by establishing tributary relations with local

rulers. As Kushan power waned, numerous smaller polities emerged, turning northern and central India into a mosaic of states.

The Indian peninsula—the territory south of the Indo-Gangetic Plain and the Vindhya Mountain Range—also features more prominently after the fall of the Mauryan Empire. In the south, kingdoms emerged for the first time. The largest was the Satavahana Kingdom, which included most of the Deccan Plateau and lasted about three centuries. The first rulers were former Mauryan officials who capitalized on its dissolution, established their own state, and expanded to the north. To establish their legitimacy, Satavahana kings embraced Aryan civilization by allowing Brahmins to perform sacrifices at the court and by upholding the *varna* social order. They also prospered from a rich agricultural base and trade. However, like so many of the larger states during these centuries, this kingdom was only loosely integrated, consisting of small provinces governed by civil and military officers and allied, subordinate chieftains and kings.

Far south, in the area roughly constituting modern Tamil Nadu and Kerala, from 3rd Century B.C.E. to the 3rd Century C.E., arose three kingdoms namely the Cheras, the Cholas and the Pandyas and an enormous number of smaller lineage-based chieftains. Raids, wars, and redistribution seemed to have been part of the efforts to the maintenance of the contemporary economy, though another important component was the trade that was both land and sea based. A vast corpus of literature which defined and gave the nomenclature Sangam age to this period. The ruling class big and small became the chief patrons of the bards who produced these literatures. Their extensive trade relations with the Romans, Arabs and in far-east made them wealthy and gave them technological edge in seafaring. Availability of iron and the technological knowhow to produce rust-free iron objects including weapons and the finesse they showed in turning out rouletted ware gave them a market far beyond the sub-continent. The uneven distribution of this wealth gave rise to extreme poverty in some areas within the region resulting in frequent wars, raids, and redistribution of wealth. The largely classless and casteless tribal society was rapidly absorbing class and caste influences from immediate and far north is defined by some of the rulers of the three major kingdoms sporting Sanskrit titles and practicing yajnas and the caste based social formations in big cities which led to very rigid caste and class formation in the region in the centuries to come. Interestingly, the Sramanic religions played an important rolein social stratification in south.

Check your progress:

1] Examine the Vedic Age in India.

6.4 DEFINITION OF STATE

State formation is especially an important aspect of historical studies. Many reasons have been given by historians for the transition from tribal society to a state. One must understand the evolution of the State in theIndian history. We need to understand the nature and attributes of state in ancient India to understand medieval history and establish the trajectory for the emergence of state in modern India.

A State is defined as a set of institutions that have the authority to govern the people. It has internal and external sovereignty over a definite territory. Max Weber has defined a state in his essay *Politics as a Vocation*. According to him, it is that organization which has “monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory” So it would include the armed forces, civil service, courts, and police. It consists of common obedience to a single sovereign.

Charles Tilly has defined state as “coercion wielding organizations” in his book *Coercion, Capital and European States*. Jeffrey and Painter state in their book *Political Geography* that, "if we define the 'essence' of the state in one place or era, we are liable to find that in another time or space something which is also understood to be a state has different 'essential' characteristics".

Marxist thought considers the state as being the tool of class domination in favour of the ruling class. In a capitalist society the ruling class is known as the bourgeoisie. The state wants to grant private property to the ruling class and capture surplus profits without giving anything to the proletariat. Marx claimed in his book *Communist Manifesto* that "the executive of the modern state is nothing but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie". Thus, we can conclude that there is no uniformity in the definition of a state. A commonly accepted definition of the state is the one given at the Montevideo Convention on Rights and Duties of States in 1933. It says the state should possess the following qualifications: (a) a permanent population; (b) a defined territory; (c) government; and (d) capacity to enter into relations with the other states.

Check your progress:
1] Define State.

6.5 PROCESS OF STATE FORMATION:

In the pre-historic period, people lived in stateless societies. The first states arose about 5,500 years ago with rapid growth of cities, invention of writing and codification of new forms of religion. Gradually numerous states developed giving a variety of justifications for their existence such as theory of divine right, the theory of the social contract, etc.

The genesis of a state begins from tribal society as a basic unit. From there it progresses to a segmentary state. There is a transition to a republic, then to a monarchy and later to empires.

This transition is characterized by growth in surplus, brought about by agrarian expansion, military expansion and in India……by co-option of local population and cultures.

Historians have tried to understand how the state system evolved. Even Anthropologists have tried to understand the same phenomenon as have Archaeologists. There are several reasons for the emergence of early states. State formation has seen a continuous evolution. This evolution has been from bands to tribe and from chiefdom to states. There are various reasons for this process. To Morton H. Fried, it was an evolution of political society 'from egalitarianism to state through the rank and stratified society'. But E.R. Service identified the process as the transition of band society to tribe and from tribe to state through the chiefdom." Warfare' has been viewed as an important cause that had a decisive role in the making of a state.

R.L. Cameiro viewed warfare as the 'mechanism' that sped the process of political evolution 'from autonomous village to the state'. He argued that state formation goes through certain stages in certain conditions. State arises where the availability of agricultural land was restricted and struggle to acquire agricultural land caused the war among the autonomous villages. Collection of villages by a chief had transformed the villages into a greater political identity and formed the chiefdom. Conquest of chiefdom by another had increased the size of the political units while the number of chiefdoms was decreased and eventually unified under the banner of a strong chief. This strong chief centralized the political power, and this led to the formation of a state. The individual war heroes then occupied newly formed political offices to make and enforce laws, collect taxes, organize labour, and draft men for war. The second step was the concentration of resource where availability of food was restricted. Exploitable area became occupied, and competition over cultivable land was increased. So, warfare became the means of resource concentration. It further sped up the political integration beyond the village level. Finally, Cameiro argues that population pressure in the central area of the territory led to the crystallization of larger political units and formation of states.

In case of the secondary states also 'war and state making goes together'. In the European context, Charles Tilly argued that 'internal warfare' made the local chiefs as a dominant figure with substantial territory. Collection of the means of war such as —men, arms, food, lodging, transportation etc., had a significant role in the formation of states. Successful collection activities led to the making ofa state. As a byproduct, it created organization in the form of tax collection agencies, police forces, courts, account keepers; then it in turn led to state making. Again, expansion of military organizations as standing army, war industries, supporting bureaucracies, grew up as state making processes. In the state making process, the managers of states formed alliances with specific social classes. The members of those classes loaned resources and provided technical service or helped to ensure the compliance of the rest of population.

Check your progress:
1] Discuss the process of State Formation in India.

6.6 GENESIS OF STATE FORMATION IN INDIA:

In India, state formation is linked to the growth and development of agriculture. Later it led to the growth of trade, industry, and urbanization. In ancient India, this process began with the spread of agriculture along river valleys. The surplus generated through agriculture led to trade, commerce, and urbanization. State could come about only through creation and appropriation of surplus. The first states (Janapadas) came about in these river valleys. This pattern was also observed in the South and east. The process of co-option was brought about by Sanskritisation, land grants and granting of legitimacy.

There are different views regarding the history of state in ancient India. Different schools of thought have interpreted it differently. The first historians to write the political and social history of ancient India were imperialist administrators like James Mill and V.A. Smith. They wrote the history of India to serve the interest of British imperialism. James Mill divided Indian history into three periods— The Hindu Period, Muslim Period and British Period. Mill stated that ancient India was barbarous and anti-rational. Indian civilization according to him showed no concern for political values and India had been ruled by a series of despots. They said that India was stagnant since and was opposed to progress. Mill's *History of India* was one of the prescribed texts at the institutions like Haileybury College where English officers received their training before coming to India. Smith believed that India had a long tradition of oppressive

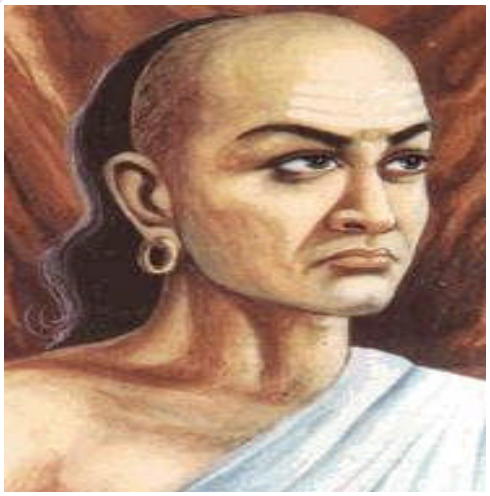
despots— a tradition which ended only with the advent of the British. They wanted to show that Indians were not fit to rule themselves.

In response Indian scholars regarded the Indo-Aryans as the originators of human civilisation with India as its cradle. Tilak argued that the *Rig Veda* was composed as early as 4000 B.C.E. K.P. Jayasawal stated that long before Europeans built up democratic and self-governing institutions, India had known them and had practised them. India's struggle against Britain for self-rule was justified. Thus 'extremist' historians provided an ideological weapon to the freedom movement.

The Marxist School started with D.D. Kosambi. In Kosambi's view the history of society, economy and culture are closely interrelated. Later this tradition was enriched by historians like Romila Thapar, Ram Sharan Sharma, D.N. Jha and others.

There are many sources with regard to the study of state and political system in ancient India. They speak about *Dandaniti* which deals with the administration of force and *Rajniti* which deals with the conduct of kings. These texts give detailed advice on the organisation of the state and the conduct of governmental affairs. The important sources are the great epics, the *Rāmāyana* and the *Mahābhārata.* One of the earliest and most important textbooks on statecraft is the *Arthashāstra,* written by Kautilya or Chanakya, the famous minister of Chandragupta Maurya. *Arthashāstra* gives a very detailed instruction on various issues like the management of the state, the organisation of the national economy and the conduct of war. It is an incredibly significant source for many aspects of ancient Indian life.. The *smriti* literature also contributes to this area.

An important source during the Gupta period is the *Nītisāra* (Essence of Politics) of Kamandaka. There is also *Nītivākyāmrta* of Somadeva Suri, a Jaina writer of tenth century, and the *Nītisāra* (Treatise on Politics) of ancient sage Shukra. We also get an incredible amount of Brahmin, Jaina and Buddhist literature which deals politics.



Chanakya [An Artistic Depiction]
Author of Arthashastra

Check your progress:
1] Examine the genesis of State Formation in India.

6.7 STATE IN EARLY INDIA

In ancient India thinkers like Bhisma, Narada, Brihaspati, Kautilya, Kamandaka have looked at various reasons for the evolution of State. Based on the writings of these thinkers there are four formulated important theories regarding the origin of the state in ancient India, namely—

a) Evolutionary Theory
b) Force Theory
c) Mystical Theory
d) Contract Theory

a] Theory of Evolutionary Origin

This is the oldest theory of origin of the state in India and has been mentioned in the *Atharva Veda.* According to this theory the state is the result of evolutionary progress. The tenth hymn of the eighth chapter of the *Atharva Veda* gives a picture of the evolutionary origin of the state. Based on *Atharva Veda* several stages of the evolution of the state can be traced.

The hymns of the *Atharva Veda* state that the earliest phase of human life was the stage of *vairājya*or stateless state. It was a state of complete lawlessness. But subsequently, with the emergence of agriculture, life became stable. To fulfil the needs of agricultural society the family emerged as a basic unit. The head of the family became an authoritative figure. The requirement of cooperation in the different areas of society led to the emergence of *sabhā*and *samiti. Sabhā* was the organisation of elderly people and *samiti* was the general assembly of common people. With the emergence of *sabhā*and *samiti* organised political life began which finally culminated in the emergence of the state.

A.S. Altekar, H.C. Raychaudhurifavour the theory of evolutionary origin. Altekar is of the opinion that the state also evolved in India in pre-historic times out of the institution of the joint family. R. Shamasastry also favours the evolutionary theory. According to him, the earliest form of family in ancient India was matriarchal which after the invasion of Aryans became patriarchal.

R S Sharma focuses on the role of family, varna and property in the evolution of the state, citing examples from *Ayodhyā Kānda of Rāmāyana, Shānti Parva,* and *Dīgha Nikāya.* According to Sharma, there was an important connection between the existence of these institutions and the rise of the state. The state was particularly important to protect these institutions. If the state did not exist, these institutions would have collapsed. In the *Ayodhyā Kānda, the Shānti Parva,* and the *Vishnu Dharmottara Purāna*, concerns are raised about the condition of *arājaka* (kingless) state. The implication or indication is that the family and property would not be safe in such a state. Therefore, a king is especially important to protect the family and property especially those of the weaker sections.

One of the main duties of the king was the protection of private property by punishing the thief. The king had to restore to a subject the stolen wealth at any cost. Preservation of the varna (caste system) was another great responsibility of the king. Failure to do so meant the violation of *dharma* that could threaten the entire social order.

B]. Force Theory

Force was considered to be an important factor in the evolution of the state in India. Earliest Aryan clans fought among themselves for pet animals, pastureland, settlements, and sources of drinking water. Only a strong and able warrior could lead the clan in such wars. So, he was given special status and the members of clan started obeying him. This tendency continued in the days of peace also and subsequently the leader became the king. John Spellman opines that the king in ancient India was primarily a military leader.

C] Theory of Mystical Origin

This was the most popular theory of origin of the state in ancient India. Kingship was given divine sanction and the king was considered not to be the representative of God but was considered a manifestation of God. According to A.L. Basham the doctrine of royal divinity was explicitly proclaimed. It appears first in the epics and the law books of Manu. In the *books* of Manu, the King was made an equivalent of God (*Devaraja)*.

The *Rājasūya*yajnya was supposed to equip the king with divine powers. It bestowed the title '*Chakravarti* 'or Emperor in this world a place in Indira's court in afterlife to the performer. The *Vājapeya* and the *Asvamedha*yajnya continued the same notion and also ensured the prosperity and fertility of the kingdom. Kings referred to their divine status in their titles and they were regularly addressed by their courtiers as *deva*, or God. Many legends have been created to stress the divine status of the king, and his divine appointment to the kingly office. With the exception of a few Rajput families who claimed descent from the fire-God

Agni, nearly all medieval Indian kings traced their genealogies back to Vaisvata Manu.

In the *Arthashāstra,* Chanakya states that the people should be told that, the king fulfils the functions of the God upon earth. All who disregard him will be punished not only by the secular arm, but also by heaven. Ashoka and other Mauryan kings took the title "Beloved of the Gods" *(devānāmpiya).*

John Spellman also favours the view that the theory of divine origin was the dominant and popularly accepted theory regarding the origin of the state in ancient India. Spellman put forward two arguments in favour of his dictum. Firstly, in case of a Hindu ruler ruling arbitrarily and tyrannically there was no provision for secular punishment. The king would be punished only by divine powers. Secondly, the king was supposed to follow the divine laws and not man-made laws. So, Spellman concludes that in ancient India, the basic notion of the origin of the state was based on divine creation.

D] Contract Theory

Contract theory is the most extensively discussed theory of the origin of the state in ancient India. The reference to contract theory can be seen in the Buddhist texts like *Dīgha Nikāya* and *Mahāvastu* and brahmanical texts like *Shānti Parva* and *Arthashāstra* of Kautilya. This theory is found in the Buddhist canonical text *Dīgha Nikāya* where the story of creation reminds us of the ideal state of Rousseau followed by the state of nature as depicted by Hobbes. There are main stages in this story, told by the Buddha to counter the Brahmins claim for superiority. There was a time when people were perfect, and lived in a state of happiness. This perfect state lasted for ages, but afterwards a decayed state emerged. There were gender differences and distinctions of colour. Food and shelter were required, and people entered into agreements among themselves and set up the institutions of the family and private property.

Subsequently there appeared theft and other forms of unsocial conduct. Therefore, people agreed to choose as chief a person who was the most capable. In return they agreed to give him a portion of their paddy. The individual held three titles:

a] Mahāsammata
b) *Khattiya*and
c) *Rājā*

The first title means one chosen by the whole people, the second title means the lord of the fields, the third title means one who charms the people by means of *dharma*. *Dīgha Nikāya* can help us to infer that there was an advanced stage of social development when tribal society had broken up. This led to a clash of interests between man and woman, between people of different races, and between people of unequal wealth.

It was observed in the middle Ganga plains, where paddy was the basis of the economy of the people.

The king has been assigned the task to punish the wicked people. The *khattiya* which means the lord of fields, suggests that the primary duty of the king is to protect the plots of one against being encroached upon by the other. The interpretation of the title *rājā* is that the king should please the people. The people have to pay a part of their paddy as contribution to the king. The law-book of Baudhayana lays down that the king should protect the people in return for one sixth of the produce.

Originally the agreement takes place between a single kshatriya on the one hand and the people on the other, but at later stage it was extended to the kshatriya as a class.

The Brahmanical description of the contract theory of the origin of the state occurs in the *Arthashāstra* of Kautilya. It states that due to a condition of anarchy the people elected Manu Vaivasvata as their king and agreed to pay 1/6th of their grain, 1/10th of their articles of merchandise, and a portion of their gold. In return for these taxes the king guaranteed social welfare to the people by undertaking to suppress acts of mischief, afflicting the guilty with taxes and coercion. Even the inhabitants of the forest were required to give him 1/6th of the forest produce.

It shows that there was an advanced economy, when different kinds of grain were produced. The king got paddy and other kinds of grain produce. Similarly, trade had been established as a regular source of income to the state. Both Megasthenes and Kautilya refer to officers regulating trade in this period. Besides, mining was a thriving industry in the Mauryan age. This explains payment of a part of *hiranya,* which covers not only gold but also includes similar other precious metals. Finally, the fact that even the inhabitants of the forest are not exempted from taxes is an indication of the comprehensive character of the Kautilyan state. Thus, taken as a whole the first three taxes, namely, those in grain, commodities and metals, reflect the developed economy of the Mauryan period. The four taxes mentioned in terms of contract made between the mythical Manu and the people shows the elaborate taxation system of the Mauryan state.

Check your progress:
1] Examine the Contract Theory regarding the origin of State.

6.8 POLITICAL ORGANISATION IN INDIA DURING VEDIC PERIOD

The polity of the Early Vedic period was basically a tribal polity with the tribal chief in the center which was transformed towards Monarchy in later Vedic period. Rig Vedic society was semi-nomadic tribal society with pastoral economy.

A brief account on the Political Organisation in India during Vedic Period[Courtesy Jagran Josh.com)

The main source of the information for the study of early Vedic people is the Rigveda. Rig Vedic society was semi-nomadic tribal society with pastoral economy. The first change observed in the political process was the transformation of the Rig Vedic Jana (meaning, people or tribe) into the Janapada (meaning, the area where the tribe settled). The nature of kingship was transformed and rituals like Rajasuya (Royal coronation) assumed significance in the later Vedic period.

Polity of Early and Later Vedic Period

a. Early Vedic Period

The polity of the Early Vedic period was basically a tribal polity with the tribal chief in the center. The tribe was called Jana and the tribal chief was called Rajana**.** Rajana looked after the affairs of the tribe with the help of other tribal members and two tribal assemblies i.e., Sabha and Samiti**.** Sabha consisted of elder members of the tribe, whereas the Samiti mainly dealt with policy decisions and political business.Women were allowed to participate in the proceedings of Sabha and Vidhata**.** In day to day administration the king was assisted by the two types of Purohita i.e**.** Vasishtha and Vishwamitra**.** The King did not maintain any regular army. In fact, Rig Vedic King did not rule over the kingdom, but over tribe.

b. Later Vedic Period

The Political system of the later Vedic period was shifted towards Monarchy. During this phase, the King ruled over an area of land

called Janapada. The King started maintaining an army and the Bureaucracy also got developed. The Kingship was being given the status of the divine character and this period witnessed the emergence of the concept of King of Kings**.**

The Rig Vedic popular assemblies lost their importance and royal power increased at their cost. The Vidhata completely disappeared. The Sabha and Samiti continued to hold the ground, but their character changed. The Sabha became more important than the Samiti**.** They came to be dominated by the chiefs and the rich nobles. Women were not allowed to attend the Sabha which was then dominated by the nobles and the Brahmana's.

c. Transformation of political character from Early to later Vedic Period

The term "Rashtra", which means territory, first appeared in later Vedic period.

The Rajanyas of the Rig Vedic age later became the Kshatriyas, who held power over the territories. The very reason of the wars (earlier, cattle) also underwent a change, with the acquisition of land now becoming an important element.

Consecratory rituals assumed special significance in later Vedic period for the ruling elite, which now became crucial to assert their authority. Sacrifices were especially significant and were perceived to lend religious legitimacy to the power of the rulers in the later Vedic period.

It was the beginning of administrative machinery. The king had to maintain a council of advisors known as the Ratnis.

A rudimentary taxation system began with Sangrihitri, as treasurer of taxes and Bhagadugha as the tax collector**.** Bali and Bhaga now became regular tributes and taxes.

6. The formation of bigger kingdoms made the chief or the king more powerful. Princes or chiefs ruled tribes, but the dominant tribe gave their names to territories, which might be inhabited by tribes other than their own. In the beginning, each area was named after the tribe which settled there first. At first, Panchala was the name of the people and then, it became the name of a region.

Check your progress:
1] Discuss the political organisation during the Vedic period.

6.9 MONARCHY

The over-riding theme in the texts is of a unified expansive state. The Ideal is Chakravarti which is found in the epics and treatises like Arthashastra. Magadha kings used administrative and military abilities as basis of their legitimacy. They got sanctions through rituals. They were supported by sacrifices such as rajasuya (enthronement ceremony), raja-abhisekha (coronation), asvamedha (horse-sacrifice). They were endorsed by Buddhist tradition too. During Asoka's time there are a number ofinscriptions which show inclination towards divinity. Asoka was known as devanampiyapiyadassi (beloved of the Gods). Military prowess was the mainstay of the monarchical state.

Check your progress:

1] Discuss Monarchy in Ancient India.

6.10 ELEMENTS OF THE STATE

In ancient India, kingdom (*rajya*) is constituted of seven elements (*sapta-prakrtayah*) or seven limbs (*sapta-anga*). According to Manu-Smriti (2-3rd century C.E.), these were:

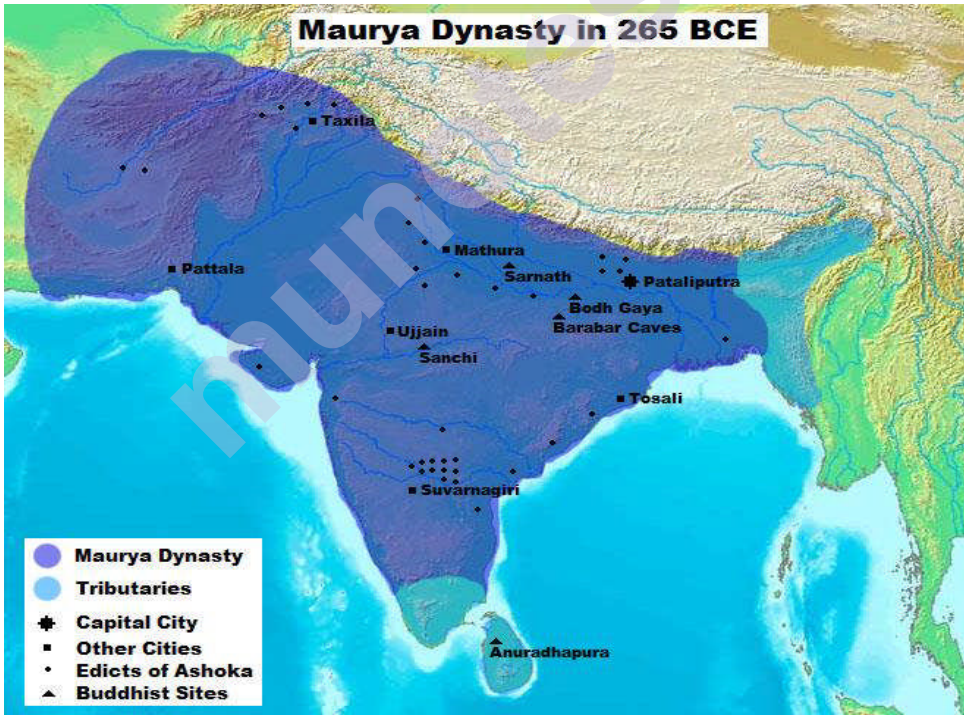
- King (*swamin*)
- Minister (*amatya*)
- City (*pura*)
- Domain/ territory (*rastra*)
- Treasury (*kosa*)
- Army (*danda*)
- Ally (s*uhrd/ mitra*)

In a monarchy, the King is considered as the cornerstone and an integral element of *rajya*. He determines a State's destiny. *Kautilya*emphasizes this by writing "the king is (the basis of) the kingdom" (*raja rajyam*). Besides *raja*, *amatya*refers to bureaucratic government, *pura*to cities and citizens, *rastra*to territory and populations, *kosa*to financial matters, *danda*to military power and *mitra*to international relations. Arthasastra refers to *janapada*(slight variant of *rastra*) and *durga*(a fortified city).

Check your progress:
1] Examine the elements of State in Ancient India.

6.11GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION

At the zenith of the tier were *Amatyas*or *Mahamatras.* They wereinfluential ministers who became members of king's council (*parisad*). The military was organized into four elements (*caturanga*) – elephants, chariots, cavalry and infantry – led by *senapati.* The State was sustained by taxes. There were propertied men called *grhapatis*. Urban traders were organized into *srenis* or guilds. The rise of Magadha State is also seen as response to expansion of guilds and desire to expand activities. So, it reveals commercial underpinnings. The Period also is co-terminus with bringing lower Ganges valley under plough and settlements. It leads to territorial expansion.



Check your progress:
1] Examine the Government organisation in early India.

6.12 STAGES OF STATE FORMATION IN ANCIENT INDIA

There are six stages in the history of ancient Indian polity. The earliest stage was a tribal democracy which had tribal assemblies. *Rig Vedic* period was chiefly a stage of assemblies. The second stage saw the break-up of the tribal polity due to constant conflicts between the Kings and the ordinary businessman. The chiefs were helped by the priesthood called the brahmins. This stage saw the beginning of taxes and classes or varnas. The third stage witnessed the development of the matured state. There arose large territorial monarchies of Kosala and Magadha and tribal oligarchies in North-Western India and at the foot of the Himalayas. There were vast armies and controlled apparatus for the collection of land revenue.

The fourth or the Maurya phase saw the functioning of the bureaucracy. The state with the help of its bureaucracy controlled various aspects of the life of its subjects. The fifth stage was marked by the process of decentralized administration. The last stage may be called the period of proto-feudal polity. Land grants now played an important part in the formation of the political structure.

Check your progress:
1] Discuss the stages of State formation in Ancient India.

6.13 EARLY INDIAN STATES.

It is important to understand the origin of state in the Indian subcontinent. Romila Thapar has explained the process of early state formation in the first millennium B.C. in the mid-Ganges valley. She explained that it was a change from a lineage society into a stratified society. There was concentration of wealth into a center. There were differences in society due to peasant-economy, rise of towns and commercial growth. There was a reciprocal relationship between the ruler and ruled. The *kshatriya* caste was ruling. It was the conventional ruling-caste and wielder of military power.

The Vedic society was pastoral and less stratified. Differentiation began in such society only in the Later Vedic period. By the 6th Century B.C.E., social differentiation had been established with the extensive use of iron. Iron was important in the production system and contributed to fortification and urbanization. This led to the formation of state in the

region. From the time of Buddha, the state-system in India began to develop. It became overly complex as caste became an indicator of social differentiation. Beside the monarchical form of government, republican system is also known in India in the 6th century B.C.E.

The first historical empire-state originated in India in the 4th century B.C.E. with large territory and detailed state apparatus under the Mauryan rulers. Decline of the Mauryan Empire led to the rise of smaller states in India throughout the country, Satavahanas, Kushanas were some of the examples. Cholas, Pandyas, Kerala and Sathyaputras in Tamilnadu were already independent monarchical states which Ashoka mentions in his Girnarrock edict. Kalinga in Eastern India and a number of powers in Northern India emerged as independent states after the fall of Mauryas. However, empire state was revived in India with the rise of the Gupta Empire in the 4th century C.E. But its decline led to the formation of smaller states throughout the country. Regional development led to the formation of small states in Eastern and Northeast India too. Sasanka of Gauda (Bengal) and Baskarvarman of Kamarupa (Brahmaputra valley) emerged as independent rulers in the 7th century A.D.

Check your progress:
1] Examine the early Indian States.

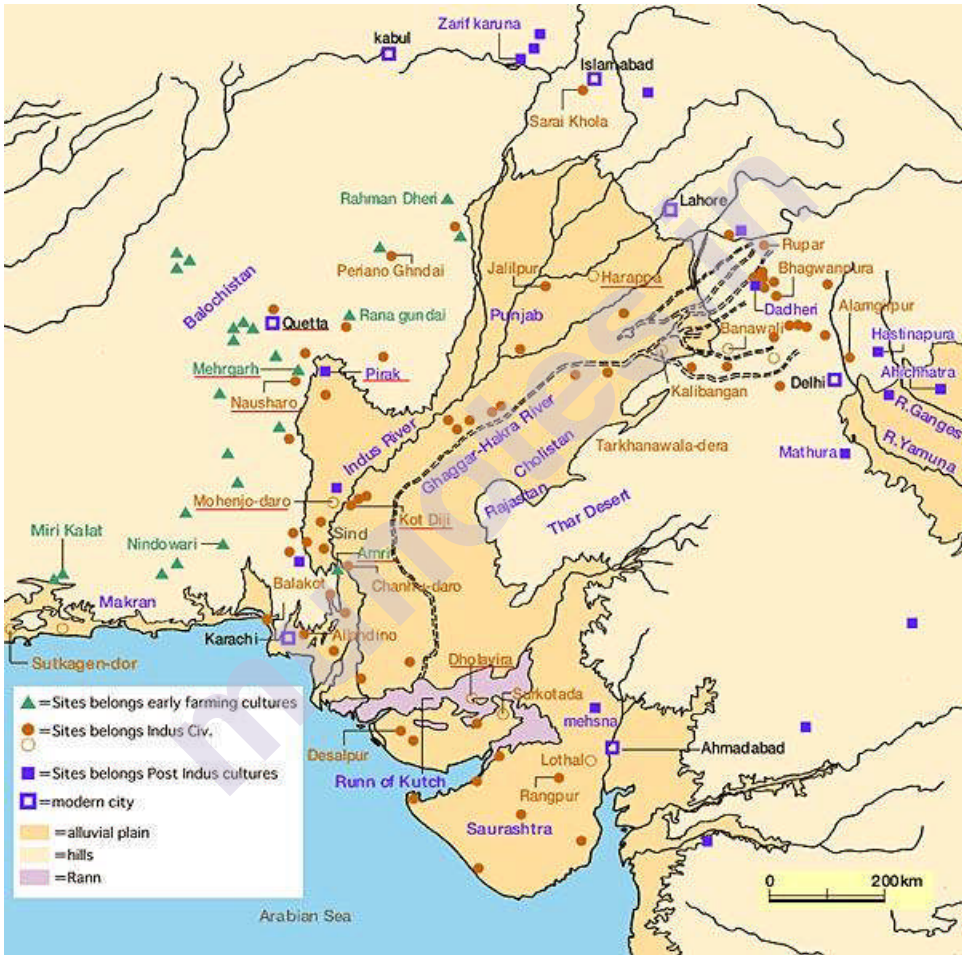
6.14. SUMMARY

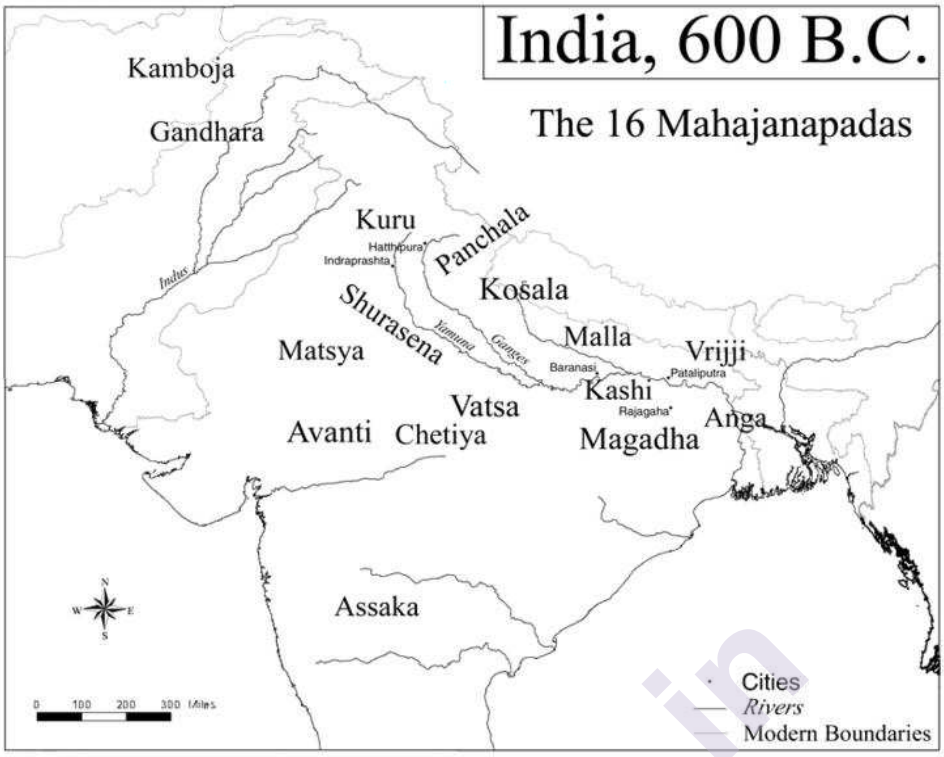
There are different approaches and interpretations with regard to the early Indian states. The Romanticists like Mounstuart Elphinstone, Grant Duff, and James Tod had taken favourable view on Indian History and showed a more sympathetic understanding to the problems of India. Utilitarians viewed the Indian states as 'monarchical institutions with a hierarchical bureaucracy. Everyone exercised absolute authority in their own way due to which ancient Indian government was barbaric. James Mill and his followers had developed the utilitarian view on Indian history. They identified with the view that the Indian socio- political and economic system was dominated by caste and religious ideology.

The Nationalists on the other hand, have attempted to interpret the Indian states as unitary and strong state with a centralized bureaucracy, headed by a strong monarch. On the contrary. Imperialist School had developed the concept of *Oriental despotism* having similarity with Marxian model of the 'Asiatic mode of production'. The Imperialist School had the sole purpose to glorify British rule in India. W.W. Hunter, V.A. Smith and others have represented the concept of Indian despotism.

Marx stated that the Indian states had a strong central coercive power for external warfare and internally they exploited the village communities.

But despite these divergent views, there is one commonality. There is no denying the fact that there was a system of state in ancient India. There was a central power, and a bureaucracy having capability of surplus extractions. There was a defence system for protection of the state from the external attacks and for preserving other essential characteristics of a state. Interesting contributions have been made by several scholars in recent years to conceptualize the process of the early Indian state formation. They viewed the state as the transition of lineage or tribal society through the social growth of caste system.





6.14 QUESTIONS

1) Examine the theories of origin of state formation.
2) Assess the state formation in North India for the period under study.

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Unit - 7

EVOLUTION OF THE STATE IN PENINSULAR INDIA

Unit Structure

7.0 OBJECTIVES

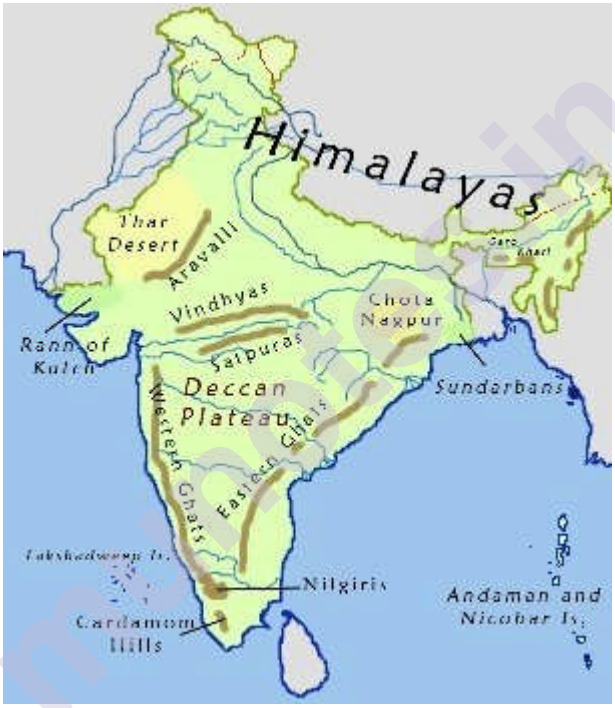
1. To study the evolution of State in Peninsular India
2. To get an understanding of the history of Peninsular India.
3. To understand the emergence of States in South India

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Peninsular India is an old and relatively stable geological formation, its landscape marked by Plateaus, plains, and the fertile valleys of rivers such as the Mahanadi, Godavari, Krishna, Kaveri, Pennar, Vaigai and Tamraparani.The peninsular land is formed by the Deccan plateau, Eastern ghats, Western ghats, Vindhya and Satpura ranges.The Deccan plateau, formed by the lava flows from very ancient volcanoes, constitutes the dominant part of the peninsula. It is bordered by the Eastern and Western Ghats, beyond which are the narrow Coromandel coast and Malabar–Konkan coastal plains. It is formed by the states of West Bengal, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra and Gujarat.

The Nilgiri mountains is where the Eastern and Western Ghats converge, Annamalai hills lay south of this with Anaimudi the highest peak outside the Himalayas, and Cardamom hills lay further south. The Palghat gap which is between Nilgiris and the Anamalai ranges forms a natural corridor between Tamilnadu and Kerala. The ghats continue till Kanyakumari.

The eastern side has an unbroken coastline and is much more arid than the west. The Eastern ghats enter Tamil nadu at the point of Tirupati or the Venkata hills. The comparatively low lying and broken hill ranges immediately turn west, called the Sathyamangalam ranges, become a natural border between Tamil nadu and Karnataka. They turn South West and meet the Western Ghats at Ooty from where till the end they run as one ranges. The low-lying coral islands of Lakshadweep are situated off the southwestern coast of India. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands lie far off the eastern coast of India. The Palk Strait and the chain of low sandbars and islands known as Rama's Bridge separate the region from Sri Lanka, which lies off the southeastern coast. The southernmost tip of mainland India is at Kanyakumari where the Indian Ocean meets the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea. Tamil nadu is separated from the island of Sri Lanka by the Mannar strait.



Peninsular India.
Image. Courtesy: Google

South India, also known as Peninsular India, has been known by several other names. The term "Deccan", refers to the area covered by the Deccan Plateau. It covers most of peninsular India excluding the coastal areas. It is an anglicised form of the Prakrit word *dakkhin* derived from the Sanskrit word *dakshina*. *Carnatic*, derived from *"Karnād"* or *"Karunād"* meaning *high country*,is associated with Karnataka.

The region has a tropical climate and depends on monsoons for rainfall. According to the Köppen climate classification, it has a non-arid climate with minimum mean temperatures of 18 °C (64 °F). The most humid is the tropical monsoon climate characterized by moderate to high

year-round temperatures and seasonal heavy rainfall above 2,000 mm (79 in) per year. The tropical climate is experienced in a strip of south-western lowlands. The Malabar Coast, the Western Ghats and the islands of Lakshadweep and Andaman and Nicobar are also subject to this climate.

The southwest monsoon from June to September accounts for most of the rainfall in the western region. Southwest monsoon hits the Western Ghats along the coastal state of Kerala and moves northwards along the Konkan coast with rainfall on coastal areas, west of the Western Ghats. The lofty Western Ghats prevent the winds from reaching the Deccan Plateau; hence, that region receives scanty rainfall. The entire east coast receives Northeast monsoon from October to December. But this monsoon season sometimes causes depression which turns into storms or hurricane. In such seasons the east coast gets good rain. It also causes Tsunamis frequently. Sangam literature not only notes the Tsunami of the contemporary period but also of the bygone era. Sea moves inward and outward after each such natural calamity and because of which there has been loss of landmass in both the coasts. Otherwise, Tamil Nadu is a rain shadow region barring the tip of the peninsula which gets both the Northeast and the Southwest monsoons.

Check your progress:
1] Give a brief introduction of Peninsular India.

7.2 HISTORY

Acheulian Hand axe assemblages belonging to Cretaceous age found in Attirampakkam near Chennai takes back hominoid occupation of this region to Paleolithic age. It is inferred that Acheulian tools were periodically used at the site and left lying there until they were buried by overwash. Overwash was generated by laminar flow overtopping the paleo-Kortallayaralluvial levees at a time when the river bed was 10–15 m higher than today, Acheulian hominins occupying the site during the period of deposition of laminated clays exploited the area primarily for tasks associated with large cutting tools, and no manufacturing activity was carried out. (Shanti Pappu). The recent research at this and the adjoining sites on the Levallois technology used in Attirampakkam suggests that the hominins must have occupied this area towards the close of the Lower Palaeolithic Age and the beginning of the Middle Palaeolithic Age.

Carbon dating on ash mounds associated with Neolithic cultures in South India date back to 8000 BCE. Odisha was the first state which adopted South Indian culture. Artifacts such as ground stone axes, and minor copper objects have been found in the region. Towards the beginning of 1000 BCE, iron technology spread through the region. The region was in the middle of a trade route linking the Mediterranean and East Asia. Trade with Phoenicians, Romans, Greeks, Arabs, Syrians, Jews and Chinese beg an from the Sangam period (c. 3rd century BCE to c. 4th century CE). The region was part of the ancient Silk Road connecting the Asian continent in the East and the West.

Several dynasties such as the Sangamas, Pandyas of Madurai, Cheras of Karur, the Cholas of Uraiyur, and Satyaputra of Dharmapuri were the contemporaries of the Mauryas though tradition and sangam literature assign them earlier dates. While the Adigamans declined, the other three continued through the downfall of the Mauryas and the rise of the Satavahanas. Around the 4th century C.E. the Cholas and the Cheras declined though they continued to rule. The Pandyas retained their power and this period saw the rise of the Pallavas in Northern Tamil Nadu whose rise is pegged at 2nd Century C.E. Samudragupta mentions Vishnugopa of Kanchi in his Allahabad Pillar Inscription which is dated around 340-350 C.E.The two smaller dynasties which had a long reign in the north and south Karnataka respectively were the Kadambas of Banavasi (345-525 C.E.) and the Gangas of Talakkad (354-1006 C.E.)Similarly, the Vishnukundins of Andhra ruled from the early 5th to the middle of the 7th century with Amravati as their capital were succeeded by the Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi whose rule began with KubjaVishnuvardhana in the middle of the 7th Century and extended till the beginning of the 12th Century C.E. Their rule was in alliance with any of the major dynasties of that time.Another smaller dynasty, the eastern Gangas ruled parts of Odisha from the 6th century C.E. and their rule extended till the early 15th century C.E. Yet another was the Kaktiyas of Warrangal who began their rule in the middle of the 12th Century C.E. with parts of Telengana, Andhra and Southern Orissa. Their rule ended in the early 14th Century when Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq's forces repeatedly invaded their territory.

The Chalukyasof Badami came to power in the early 6th Century C.E. and Pulekesin II, the greatest ruler of the dynasty was the contemporary of Mahendra Varma and Narasimha Varma Pallava in south and Harshavardhana in north. Their rule ended in the middle of the 8th Century and they immediately were succeeded by the Rashtrakutas of Manyakheta who ruled from the middle of the 8th Century to the close of the 10th Century C.E. They were defeated by their feudatories the Western Chalukyas of Kalyana who annexed Manyakheta and their rule began towards the end of the 10th Century and ended at the beginning of the thirteenth Century. The imperial of Cholas of Thanjavur began their reign at 850 C.E. and went on a conquest spree in South which included their raids across the eastern and the western seas and a brief conquest of whole

of Sri Lanka during the reign of Rajendra Chola I. Their rule ended in 1279 C.E. The second Pandya empire continued till about 1327 C.E. when the forces of Muhammad-bin-Tughlak defeated it and it came to end though another branch reestablished itself and ruled till the 16th Century C.E. The decline of the Western Chalukyas in north and the imperial Cholas in south gave rise to the expansion of the Hoysalas whose origin goes back to the 10th century as chieftains of the Western Chalukyas. Their expansion into south in what was then the territory of the declining Cholas in the late 13th and the early 14th Centuries made it convenient for the Malik Kafur's forces to defeat Hoysala Ballala III. Harihara and Bukka of the rising Vijayanagara dynasty moved south and occupied the region through war and matrimonial alliances with the chieftains of the Hoysala ruler and dislodged from power the last Hoysala ruler Ballala IV between 1343 -1346 C.E. With this the kingdoms of south entered the medieval period.

After the battle of Talikota where the combined armies of the Deccan Sultanate defeated the Vijayanagara ruler Ramaraya in 1565, the Nayak feudatories of the Vijayanagara emperors became powerful in Tamil Nadu and they more or less ruled independently the principalities of Jinji, Thanjavur and Madurai. This attracted the attention of the Deccan sultanates who were eyeing these principalities. In the 17th Century both Jinji and Thanjavur came under the Bijapur and later under the Marathas. Finally, Ekoji, brother of Emperor Shivaji, displaced prince Chengamala Das from the Nayak throne and captured Thanjavur in 1674 C.E.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW

The Satavahana kingdom

The Satavahanas were the first large kingdom of central India. It probably came to power at the end of the third or beginning of the second century BCE, as one of the major successor states to the great Mauryan Empire. It was based in the great plateau of the Deccan. Thirty kings are mentioned in the *Puranas*, the main textual source for the kingdom. Many of these kings also figure in the inscriptions and coins of the period. The kings were Brahmins and were the followers of the Vedic religion but some patronized Buddhism and Jainism as well. At times, the kingdom covered a huge area of the subcontinent, from the east to the west coasts and up into the northwest. Sometimes they had internal conflicts. There were also external threats mostly from the Sakas (Scythians), who established themselves in northwest India in the first century BCE. This led to the decline of the Satavahana's empire.

This important kingdom of ancient India came to an end sometime in the third century CE. Like many Indian kingdoms, the Satavahana kings had always exercised only a loose control over their provinces. The end of the kingdom came when the central authority dwindled to the point where the provincial feudatories were able to set themselves up as independent kings.

The Vakatakas

By the end of the third century a new dynasty had established itself over much of the Deccan. This was the Vakataka dynasty. Like the Satavahanas before them, the Vakatakas were Brahmins. Rudrasena II who reigned from c. 380–385 married the daughter of the great Gupta King Chandragupta II. At that time, the Gupta Empire was by far the most powerful state in the subcontinent. Rudrasena died a few years later, leaving Prabhavatigupta to rule as regent for her two sons for 30 years. She seemed to have aligned her government's interests with those of the Gupta Empire, to the benefit of both kingdoms.

Another famous Vakataka king was Harishena who reigned from c. 475 – 500. He was a great patron of Buddhist religion and culture. He inaugurated the great series of temple caves at Ajanta. These are some of the greatest centers of Indian art and architecture. The Vakataka kingdom did not survive long after Harishena, and Deccan once again got divided amongst several smaller states.

The Chalukyas

One of the important dynasties to have ruled Deccan were the Chalukyas. This kingdom expanded its borders in the second half of the 6th century and first half of the 7th century to form a large empire covering much of central India. Its most famous king was Pulakeshin II, who repulsed the attacks of the great conqueror of northern India, Harsha. He expanded his borders on all sides to bring the Chalukya Empire to the zenith of its glory. Soon after Pulakeshin's death a prince of the royal house took off a large chunk of territory into a major kingdom under the Eastern Chalukya dynasty.

The Rashtrakutas

The Chalukya dynasty survived until 753, when one of its feudatories seized power and installed a new dynasty on the throne. This was the Rashtrakuta dynasty.The Rashtrakutas were more expansionist than the Chalukyas had ever been. They became involved in the great power struggles in both northern and southern India. In the north they competed with the powerful Gurjara-Pratihara and Pala kingdoms for dominance. In south India, they challenged the power of the Pallava kingdom and later the imperial Cholas. Periodically they succeeded in dominating both regions, though not at the same time.

The Western Chalukyas and others:

The Rashtrakutas fell from power in 973 when a surviving member of the old Chalukya ruling family seized the throne. Once again, a powerful Chalukya kingdom covered much of the Deccan. It was not as powerful as either the early Chalukya Empire or the Rashtakuta Empire had been. Its territories were confined to the western Deccan and therefore it got its name, the Western Chalukya Empire. Over the next two centuries the Deccan again became divided into numerous small kingdoms. Apart from the Western Chalukyas, the Eastern Chalukyas, the Hoysalas, the

Yadavas and the Kalachuri kingdoms also became prominent though they were for substantial part of their rule subservient to the Western Chalukyas. A new chapter would open when the armies of the Delhi Sultanate overran the Deccan in the 14th century, installing Muslim rule in the region.

Government

It is hard to piece together from the available evidence how these empires of the Deccan were organized. However, like many ancient and medieval Indian kingdoms, these states seem to have had a federated structure. Generally different areas were under hereditary feudatories of the king. The monarchs therefore exercised onlya loose control over the provinces, and it was the feudatories who exercised full powers over their localities.

These feudatories had varying titles and different ranksand reconstructing their exact relationship to the central government or to each other is difficult. Some were more powerful and ruled over larger territories than others. Some feudatories were relatives of the royal family, whilst others seem to have been ex-officials who had established control of a particular territory. Most were connected to the ruling sovereign through matrimonial alliances. Some others still, had descended from local kings and chiefs who had been defeated by one or other of the imperial rulers of the time.

This dispersion of power was a source of weakness for the empires of the Deccan. Weak emperors found it hard to keep their more powerful feudatories under tight control, and as observed above, the kingdoms tended eventually to fragment into smaller parts. Nevertheless, the states of the Decca sound political structures. The Satavahana kingdom lasted over four centuries, the Vakataka empire had remained in power for about 150 years, as did the Chalukya empire in its pomp and the Rashtrakuta empire lasted for just over two centuries.

Check your progress:

1] Give a brief overview of the Government in Peninsular India.

7.4 EMERGING STATES IN PENINSULAR INDIA

Dr Upinder Singh has written about the emerging regional configurations from c. 600–1200 CE. She describes the term early medieval. The term ‘early medieval’ denotes an intermediate period between the ‘ancient’ and the ‘medieval’. Historians have been long

debating the nature of the society, polity, and economy of early medieval India. This period has often been labelled one of crisis, decline, decay, and decadence. Subsequently, the feudalism school described the period as an age marked by political fragmentation, the transformation of peasants into serfs, and a decline of urban centers and the money economy. The feudalism hypothesis has been applied to both north as well as South India. Dr Singh says that for South India, there is another interpretative framework—the segmentary state model, which presents the kings of this age as ritual figures, devoid of the two important props of royal power—a revenue infrastructure and a standing army.

A third major interpretative framework for early medieval India suggests that in many parts of the subcontinent, these centuries were marked by the formation and proliferation of states at the regional level. Inscriptions continue to form a major source of historical information for *c.* 600–1200 CE. The interpretation of the epigraphic data is in fact central to the major debates concerning this period. Royal land grant inscriptions, mostly recording grants to Brahmanas and temple and village administration details alongwith Kings's equilogical details, are especially important. Equally important are epigraphs recording non-royal and royal gifts made to religious establishments.

Check your progress:
1] Examine the emerging States in Peninsular India .

7.5 POLITICAL NARRATIVE AND POLITICAL STRUCTURE

Dr Upinder Singh has described the political narrative and political structure in Peninsular India. She writes that the political narrative of these centuries reveals some large, relatively long-lived kingdoms such as those of the Cholas, Rashtrakutas, Palas, and Pratiharas. There were also the more numerous short-lived kingdoms which had a limited range of territorial control. The interaction between lineages took the form of war and conflict as well as of military and matrimonial alliances. The state society saw extraordinary levels of military build-up. The nonstop warfare during the period indicates the importance of coercive power and military might in the politics of the time. Apart from a centrally hired core, the armies of kings included mercenaries, who were hired when the need arose. For instance, many Pala inscriptions from Bengal and Bihar address military contingents recruited from among the Gaudas, Malavas, Khashas, Kulikas, Hunas, Karnatas and Latas. Similarly, the *Rajatarangini* mentions that king of Kashmir recruited mercenaries from other areas. The

core and mercenary troops were supplemented, when the need arose, by the military might of allied and subordinate rulers.

While it is largely correct, this assumption cannot be uniformly applied to the empires. For example, the imperial Cholas were a maritime power and had a designated standing army which was divided into Right hand and Left hand class armies. Apart from this they also had elite guard. These Right hand and Left hand class armies even long after end of the Chola power continued to serve as private army to the merchant groups. When British took over Madras, these groups had morphed into caste groups and the early diary and consultations of Fort. St. George is replete with mediation efforts by the British amongst these caste groups and confirming their privileges.

In many instances, the expansion of state society involved the displacement or integration of tribal communities. The interactions between tribal and Brahmanical cultures are reflected indirectly in inscriptions. Some of these kings were in fact successful tribal chiefs who had enhanced their political power and had also got sanskritised.

The *prashasti*s of royal inscriptions reveal prevailing political hierarchies and imperial might. Inscriptions of subordinate kings frequently refer to their overlord, while those of more powerful rulers sometimes mention their subordinates. Although there are various problems with the feudalism hypothesis as a whole, the term 'feudatory' or 'vassal' can be applied to subordinate rulers who were obliged to offer allegiance and military service to their suzerains. The emergence and development of such chains of command generally had nothing to do with land grants. There are some instances of early medieval kings granting land in return for military service, but this was by no means the general trend.

From 10th Century onwards this trend changed . In case of the Cholas though initially they had Generals and officers on transfer, from the time of Rajadhiraja I, they granted land tenure to their generals. This enabled these generals to live in once place and over time it became their fiefdom. They were called *Nād Alvar*. The Hoysalas, likewise gave land tenure to their chief in return for military service rendered. Such generals were called *Dandanayakas*who were both civil and military officers.

Claims to political paramountcy were reflected in the use of three titles that usually occur together in inscriptions—*maharajadhiraja*, *parameshvara*, and *parama-bhattaraka*.

Dr Singh describes that "*Paramount kings were sometimes described as commanding the obeisance of the samantas or of the circle of kings. Titles of subordinate rulers included maharaja, samanta, mahasamanta, ranaka, and mahasamantadhipati. Such a ruler was often also described as 'one who has obtained the five great sounds' (samadhigatapancha-*

*mahashabda), apparently referring to the privilege of hearing the sound of five musical instruments. Subordinate status was also indicated through the use of the overlord's dynastic era and by the lesser king being described as meditating at the feet of his overlord. The royal prashasti contains poetic embellishment, conventional rhetoric, and downright flattery."*While it may be so, with the early South Indian kings, Rajaraja I of the Chola dynasty changed this trend. His Prasastis clearly start with his achievements and do not even talk about his ancestors. Every year the Prasasti was embellished with his own conquest which is particularly useful to historians on dating events of his reign. His successors since then followed a similar trend. When Hoysalas came to power, after a few inscriptions they switched over to a different style. Many of their inscriptions talk about their current military achievements and do not give a list of all the achievements.

Along with the seals and invocations, it allows us to identify certain elements that comprised both the ideal and practice of kingship. The sectarian epithets of kings reflect more than mere religious affiliations or eclecticism and can be viewed from the perspective of royal policy. The titles and designations in land grant inscriptions suggest the different tiers, ranks, and functionaries in the administrative infrastructure of kingdoms, although it is not always possible to identify their precise meaning. During the early medieval period, the horizontal and vertical linkages of political power are more visible than ever before and the emergent political elites can relate to alliances with landed groups, some of them created and buttressed by royal grants.

In spite of the patriarchal nature of society, the political history of early medieval India gives several instances of queens succeeding to the throne. Three women rulers—Didda, Yashovati, and Sugandha—are known from Kashmir. Among the Eastern Chalukyas, Vijayamahadevi became ruler after the death of her husband Chandraditya. She is known to have issued a land grant to Brahmanas in the fifth year of her reign. A Kadamba queen named Divabbarasi is known to have ruled till her minor son attained majority. She too made land grants. In Orissa, there are instances of several queens of the Bhauma-Kara dynasty ascending the throne. Prithivimahadevi, also known as Tribhuvanamahadevi, is described as having ascended the throne at the behest of feudatories. Dandimahadevi, Dharmamahadevi, and Valkulamahadevi were other Bhauma-Kara queens. Amongst the Cholas, the chief queen had her royal seal and the authority to make land grants in her name. The Alupas in west coast were matrilineal and J.D. M. Derrett says the princesses practiced polyandry right into the medieval ages.

While these women ascended the throne due to the absence of a male heir, the accession of Prithivimahadevi seems, in addition, to have had something to do with the influence and intervention of her Somavamshi father. Imperial titles were feminized for the Bhauma-Kara queens into *parama-bhattarika*, *maharajadhiraja* and *parameshvari*. Rudramadevi

was a 13th century Kakatiya queen of Andhra who succeeded to the throne on being nominated by her father. Such instances indicate that although political power in early medieval India was generally wielded by men, it could devolve on women in certain circumstances.

A problem in reconstructing the complex tangle of the political history of early medieval India is that the grandiose claims of political success made by kings of one dynasty may be exaggerated and are, in fact, sometimes contradicted by counter-claims made by rivals. Nevertheless, a basic narrative can be constructed. As it is not possible to give a detailed account, the discussion below gives only a brief outline, focusing on some of the major dynasties that came to the fore during the period *c.* 600–1200.

Check your progress:
1] Discuss the political structure of states in Peninsular India.

7.6. THE DECCAN

The political history of peninsular India during *c.* 600–900 CE was marked by constant warfare between the Chalukyas of Badami (known as the Western Chalukyas), Pallavas of Kanchi, and Pandyas of Madurai. All three rose to power in the 6th century, but in the mid-8th century, the Chalukyas made way for the Rashtrakutas of Manyakheta. Apart from the Chalukyas of Badami, there were two other branches of the lineage who ruled independently—the Chalukyas of Lata and the Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi. From time to time, the Eastern Gangas of Mysore and the Eastern Chalukyas got embroiled in events by taking sides in the conflicts between the Western Chalukyas of Badami, Pallavas, and Pandyas.

The Western Chalukyas of Badami claimed Brahmana origin as Haritiputras of the Manavya*gotra*. The king who established the independent power of this dynasty was Pulakeshin I (535–66). He built a strong fortress at Vatapi (Badami) and is described as having performed a number of *shrauta* sacrifices including the *ashvamedha*. The kingdom was further enlarged by Pulakeshin's son Kirtivarman I (566/67–597/98), who fought successful wars against the Kadambas of Banavasi, Mauryas of the Konkan, and Nalas of the Bastar area. The end of Kirtivarman's reign was marked by a war of succession between his brother Mangalesha and nephew Pulakeshin II, the most powerful king of the line.

Pulakeshin II (610/11–642) emerged triumphant and went on to achieve many brilliant military successes, which are described in an inscription at Aihole. These included victories against the Kadambas of

Banavasi, Alupas, and Gangas of Mysore. He dispatched expeditions into the eastern Deccan, south Kosala, and Kalinga. One of his most important victories was against Harshavardhana on the banks of the Narmada River. Pulakeshin successfully attacked the Pallava kingdom, and defeated MahendraPallava who died soon after. But was killed nine years later in a revenge attack by Narasimha Pallava. His army attacked and captured Badamiand killed Pulekeshin II and burnt the capital. Pallava control over Badami and the southern areas of the Chalukya Empire continued for several years. In the mid-8th century, the Chalukyas of Badami were overwhelmed by the Rashtrakutas.

The Eastern Chalukyas established themselves in Vengi in the Andhra region in the second half of the 8th century. Early rulers included Vishnuvardhana I. Vijayaditya II was one of the most important rulers of this dynasty. During his reign, initial reverses at the hands of the Rashtrakutas were followed by successful military expeditions against them and the Gangas, and campaigns into Gujarat. Rashtrakuta inscriptions acknowledge the change in the balance of power, when they admit that the glory of their kingdom was 'drowned in the ocean of the Chalukyas'. But the Rashtrakutas soon reestablished themselves and the Eastern Chalukyas were forced to acknowledge their paramountcy. A matrimonial alliance was also forged between the two powers.

The Eastern Chalukya king Vijayaditya III (848–92) claimed to have won victories over the Pallavas and Pandyas and to have given shelter to a Chola king. He also claimed to have beenvictorious over the Gangas, Rashtrakutas, Kalachuris, and a king of south Kosala. Conflict with the Rashtrakutas continued during the reign of the Chalukya king Bhima I (892–922). Bhima was captured by the enemy, but ultimately released. From the reign of Vijayaditya IV, numerous succession disputes erupted and the Rashtrakutas backed contenders in some of these. Some of the rulers of this period had very short reigns—e.g., Vijayaditya IV ruled for six months, Tala for one month, and Vijayaditya V for a mere fortnight. Some amount of political stability was restored during the reigns of Bhima II and Amma II, but the kingdom started crumbling thereafter. In 999 CE, Rajaraja Chola conquered Vengi.But the dynasty survived as he gave his daughter in marriage to Vimaladitya. The matrimonial alliances continued between the imperial Cholas and the Eastern Chalukyas. Later Rajaraja Narendra, the eastern Chalukya ruler was married to Chola Rajendra I's daughter Ammanga Devi. It was their son Kulothunga (Rajendra II) , who became the ruler of the Chola dynasty in 1070 C.E. From this time onwards, the Cholas were also called as Telugu-Cholas.

The political history of the Deccan between *c.* 753–975 CE was marked by the ascendancy of the Rashtrakutas. In certain copper plate grants, the Rashtrakutas claim descent from the lineage (*vamsha*) of Yadu. (In the epics, Yadu was the son of Yayati and the brother of Puru and Turvasu; Krishna was supposed to be a descendent of Yadu). Various inscriptions elaborate on this mythical story of origin, stating that the

Rashtrakutas belonged to the Satyaki branch of the Yaduvamsha, mentioning an eponymous ancestor.

'Rashtrakuta' means the chief of a *rashtra*(division or kingdom, depending on the context). The word occurs in inscriptions of several dynasties from about the 4th century, in the sense of a class of provincial officials. It is possible that the Rashtrakutas originally belonged to a group of such officials. The attempts made by some historians to connect the Rashtrakutas with the Rathikas of Ashokan inscriptions or with the Kannada–Telugu Reddi caste are not acceptable. The origins of the dynasty can be traced to the Kannada-speaking area. One of the titles used by kings of the main and subordinate lines was*Lattalura-puraveshvara*(lord of the great city of Lattalura); Lattalura has been identified with Latur on the Maharashtra–Karnataka border. The Rashtrakutas achieved spectacular military successes in the north and south. At some point or other, they defeated the great powers of the time such as the Pratiharas, Palas, Eastern Chalukyas, and Cholas. However, they did not manage to hold on to their northern nor their southern conquests for long.

The Rashtrakutas appear to have migrated from the Latur area to Ellichpur (near the source of theTapi, in modern MP) in *c.* 625 CE. Here, they carved out a principality and ruled for several generations as feudatories of the Chalukyas. They assumed an independent status under Dantidurga (he whose elephant is his fortress), who ascended the throne in 733 CE. Dantidurga won many military victories and assumed imperial titles. The Rashtrakuta Empire expanded during the reigns of Dantidurga's successors, especially under Krishna I, Govind III, and Amoghavarsha. There were incursions into the north as well as against rulers of peninsular India. But the Rashtrakutas could not press home their victories against the Western Chalukyas, Eastern Chalukyas, Eastern Gangas, and Pallavas. The magnificent Kailashanatha temple at Ellora was built during the reign of the Rashtrakuta king Krishna I. Amoghavarsha (814– 878) built a new capital city of Manyakheta (identified with modern Malkhed). He was a patron of literature and a scholar himself. He wrote the *Kavirajamarga*, the earliest Kannada work on poetics.

Later Rashtrakuta kings achieved some successes—for instance, Kanauj was captured during the time of Indra III, and there were victories against the Cholas—but there were several reverses as well. Towards the end of the 10th century, the Paramaras sacked Manyakheta and this event signaled the decline of the Rashtrakuta dynasty.

Check your progress:
1] Give a brief overview of the political history in the Deccan.

7.7 THE FAR SOUTH

Dr Upinder Singh writes about the history of the far south thus. "*The political history of the far south during this period was dominated by the Pallavas, Pandyas, Cheras, and Cholas. The Pallavas were associated with Tondaimandalam, the land between the north Penner and north Vellar rivers. Inscriptions refer to early kings of this line such as Shivaskandavarman, who ruled in the early 4th century CE. However, the ruler who played a crucial rule in the Pallavas' rise to power in the last quarter of the 6th century was Simhavishnu. Putting an end to the political disturbances caused by the Kalabhras, he conquered the land upto the Kaveri, coming into conflict with the Pandyas and the ruler of Sri Lanka".*

Simhavishnu's successor was Mahendravarman I (590–630), renowned as a great patron of the arts, and apparently a poet and musician in his own right. His reign saw the beginning of a conflict between the Pallavas and Chalukyasof Badami. The army of PulakeshinII reached perilously close to the Pallava capital Kanchipuram and in the battle of Manimangalam defeated the Pallava ruler and annexed the northern part of that kingdom. Subsequently, during the reign of Narasimhavarman I Mahamalla (630–68), the Pallavas managed to settle scores bywinning several victories over the Chalukyas with the aid of their ally Manavarma, a Sri Lankan prince, who later became ruler of the island kingdom. The climax of these victories was Narasimhavarman's invasion of the Chalukya kingdom and his capturing Badami. This Pallava king claims to have defeated the Cholas, Cheras, and Kalabhras. Two naval expeditions dispatched to help Manavarma were successful, but this Sri Lankan ruler subsequently lost his kingdom and reached the Pallava court as a political refugee. Narasimhavarman was an enthusiastic patron of architecture. The port of Mamallapuram, along with its five temples known as the rathas, were carved during his fathers and his reign.

The Pallava–Chalukya conflict continued during the subsequent decades, interspersed with some peaceful interludes. The Pallavas also came into conflict with the Pandyas to the south and the Rashtrakutas to the north. In the 8th century King Rajasimha, send emissaries to Emperor Xuangsong of the Tang dynasty asking him the permission to form an alliance to fight against Arab and Tibetan intrusion in South Asia. The Emperor pleased with this bestowed on Rajashimha the title *Huaide Jun* (Army that cherishes virtue).In the early 9th century, the Rashtrakuta Govinda III invaded Kanchi during the reign of the Pallava Dantivarman. Dantivarman's son Nandivarman III managed to defeat the Pandyas. The last known imperial Pallava king was Aparajita. Aided by Western Ganga and Chola allies, he defeated the Pandyas at a battle at Shripurambiyam in 879 C.E. But this battle, instead of help asserting the power of the Pallavas led to the rise of Cholas. The Pallavas were ultimately overthrown in c. 893 by the Chola king Aditya I, and thereafter, control over Tondaimandalam passed into the hands of the Imperial Cholas.

Kings of the Pandya dynasty are known in the early historical period, but their connection, if any, with the Pandyas of early medieval times, is unclear. The first two rulers of the early medieval line were Kadungon (560–90) and his son Maravarman Avanichulamani (590–620). The latter is credited with ending Kalabhra rule in the area and reviving Pandya power. The Pandyas were involved in internecine wars with the Pallavas and other contemporary powers. King Rajasimha I (735–65) had the epithet *Pallava-bhanjana*(breaker of the Pallavas). The empire expanded during his reign and during that of his successors Jatila Parantaka Nedunjadaiyan (756–815) and Shrimara Shrivallabha (815–862). The Pandyas were completely overpowered by the Cholas in the 10th century.

On the Kerala coast, the Chera Perumals continued to hold sway, although several Pallava, Pandya, Chalukya, and Rashtrakuta rulers claimed military successes in the area. Few details of Chera history are available. One of the last kings of the line was Cheraman Perumal, regarding whom there are many legends. Different sources describe him variously as a Jaina, Christian, Shaiva, or Muslim, and it is possible that he renounced the world, dividing his kingdom among his kinsmen or vassals. His reign ended in the early 9th century.

Cholas were one of the three major ruling dynasties in Tamilnadu in the Sangam age. From 4th Century onwards their power declined and the Uraiyur branch seemed to have continued to rule in a subordinate position. During the heydays of Pallavas, they remained as Pallava feudatories. Narasimha I Pallava gave his daughter in marriage to Vikrama Chola. They continued to lie low, and it was only during the middle of the 9th Century the founder of the early medieval Chola dynasty of Thanjavur was Vijayalaya established his power in the area around Uraiyur, captured Thanjavur from the Muttaraiyar chieftains, and extended his kingdom along the lower Kaveri. Vijayalaya accepted the over lordship of the Pallavas.

Aditya I (871–907), the successor of Vijayalaya, achieved significant military successes and expanded the Chola kingdom. He confederated with the Pallavas to defeat the Pandyas in the battle at Sripurambiyam and obtained some territories in the Thanjavur area as recompense. He then went on to defeat and kill his Pallava overlord Aparajita in 893. This victory gave him control over Tondaimandalam. Thereafter, he went on to conquer Kongudesha (corresponding roughly to Coimbatore and Salem districts) from the Pandyas, perhaps with the help of the Cheras. He briefly captured Talakad, capital of the Western Gangas. Aditya I entered into a matrimonial alliance with the Pallavas by marrying a Pallava princess.

Parantaka I (907–953), who succeeded Aditya I, won several victories with the help of his allies such as the Western Gangas, the Kodumbalur chiefs, and the ruler of Kerala. He succeeded in conquering

Madurai, after which he took the title of *Madurantaka* (destroyer of Madura) and *Maduraikonda* (capturer of Madurai). He defeated the combined armies of the Pandyas and the king of Sri Lanka at the battle of Vellur, and the Pandya territories fell into Chola hands. These victories were, however, followed by a resounding defeat at the hands of the Rashtrakutas in 949. The army of Krishna III defeated the Chola army at the battle of Takkolam. The Rashtrakutas over-ran Tondaimandalam and Krishna III assumed the title of 'Conqueror of Kachchi (Kanchi) and Tanjai (Thanjavur)'. The Cholas gradually recovered their power during the reigns of kings such as Sundara Chola Parantaka II (957–73), who defeated a combined Pandya–Sri Lankan army and launched an invasion of the island kingdom. By the time Uttama Chola came to the throne (973), most of Tondaimandalam had been retrieved from the Rashtrakutas.

The peak of Chola power was reached during the reign of Arumolivarman, who assumed the title of Rajaraja on his accession. From Rajaraja's reign (985–1014) right up to the 13th century, the Cholas remained the major political power in South India. Through a series of successful military campaigns, Rajaraja broke the confederation of the Pandyas, the rulers of Kerala and of Sri Lanka. A successful naval expedition to Sri Lanka led to the destruction of Anuradhapura, and a Chola province was established in the northern part of the island. Rajaraja also achieved victories against the Western Chalukyas and Southern Maharashtra which they called as the Ratta Country as distinct from the Western Chalukyas of Kalyana. Maldives was conquered towards the end of his reign.

The process of Chola territorial expansion continued under Rajaraja's son and successor Rajendra I.He was a contemporary of Mahmmud of Gazni. His reign was marked by military victories against Mahindira Pala of Bengal, Mahinda V, the king of Sri Lanka, and against the armies of the Pandyas, the ruler of Kerala, and the Western Chalukyas and of Southern Maharashtra. He built a new capital at Gangaikondacholapuram. A successful naval expedition was dispatched in 1025 CE to the kingdoms of Southern coast of Burma, Western coast of Thailand,Keda, Chaiya, Langkasuka, Papphalama in Malay Peninsula, Takuapa in the isthmus of Kra, Sri Vijaya in Indonesia, and Nicobar islands, which had great strategic importance in Indian Ocean trade.

Military conflicts marked the reigns of subsequent Chola kings as well, but the Cholas held their own till the time of Kulottunga I (1070–1122). His long reign saw the dispatch of an embassy of merchants to China and flourishing trade with the kingdom of Sri Vijaya. Kulottunga has the title *Shungamtavirtta* (abolisher of tolls) in inscriptions, he made his ports toll free and by which the Cholas could attract international trade in their ports, and it kept the empire wealthy. Although his long reign was comparatively peaceful, during the second half, the kingdom faced hostility from the Chalukyas and Hoysalas, and seems to have diminished. He lost Southern Karnataka to the rising power of Hoysala Vishnu

Vardhana. There was some recovery during the rule of Vikrama Chola, who succeeded in reestablishing Chola control over Vengi. Later rulers Kulottunga II, Rajaraja II, and Kulottunga III continued to make inroad in Southern Karnataka and recaptured both Kolar and Bangalore districts. The power of the imperial Cholas declined thereafter, and the dynasty came to an end in the 13th century.

Chola inscriptions generally refer to the king as *ko* (king), *perumal*, or *perumanadigal*(the great one)or *Udaiyar*, the Lord. He was also given more grandiose titles signaling paramountcy e.g., *raja-rajadhiraja* and *kokonmai-kondan*, both of which mean king of kings. Inscriptions present the king as endowed with an attractive physical appearance, a great warrior and conqueror, a protector of *varnashrama dharma*, a destroyer of the evils of the Kali age, a generous giver of gifts, and a great patron of the arts. Kings were often compared with the gods, sometimes directly, at other times through the use of double entendre. For example, Rajaraja is referred to as *Ulagalanda Perumal*, (the great one who measured the earth). This could apply to the king, who is known to have ordered a great land survey for revenue purposes. It could equally apply to the god Vishnu who, according to a famous ancient myth, encompassed the universe with his three strides.

The dynasties of early medieval South India, even those that may have been connected in some way with their namesakes of the early historical period, crafted new origin myths for themselves. These were rooted in the epic–Puranic traditions of the Suryavamsha (solar lineage) and Chandravamsha (lunar lineage) The origin myths sometimes combined a Brahmana and Kshatriya ancestry (this is known as a *brahma-kshatra* ancestry), with an emphasis on the latter. Claims to Kshatriya status were reflected in epithets, e.g., Rajaraja's title of *Kshatriya-shikhamani*(crest jewel of the Kshatriyas). Many kings had names ending in 'varman', the name suffix that texts such as the *Manu Smriti* prescribed for Kshatriyas. The Pandyas linked themselves to the lunar dynasty and the Cholas to the solar dynasty. The Pallavas claimed to be Brahmanas of the Bharadvaja*gotra*, and traced their line back to the god Brahma, going on to list Angiras, Brihaspati, Shamyu, Bharadvaja, Drona, Ashvatthama, and the eponymous Pallava.

Apart from connecting themselves with the epic–Puranic tradition, South Indian kings also legitimized their power through the performance of sacrifice. The inscriptions also mention rituals such as the *hiranyagarbha*and *tulapurusha*. The gifting of land to Brahmanas and making gifts of various kinds to temples were other important activities linked to the legitimation of royal power. The circuit of power in the Chera, Pallava, and Chola states included several local chieftains. One view is that these chieftains were governors appointed by kings to rule over divisions of their kingdom. However, they actually seem to have been subordinates or feudatories, similar to chieftains who are known from the early historical period. The chiefs provided military back-up

when required and they paid tribute to their overlord and attended his court. They were connected to the kings and to each other through matrimonial alliances.

In the Chola Empire, from the time of Rajaraja I,they divided the regions under their control into various Mandalams (Provinces). Each mandalam would be under the control of a Mahadandanayaka who would either a prince or their trusted officers. The Cholas exercised direct control over Cholamandalam, which corresponded roughly to modern Thanjavur and parts of Tiruchirapalli districts.During the time of Rajaraja I, crown prince Rajendra was the Mahadandanayaka of Vengi and Ganga Mandala i.e., Viceroy of Southern Karnataka and Southern Andhra. When he became the emperor, he continued to hold this position and governed this region under his direct supervision.Under the Mandalams were the administrative units of Valanadu and Nadu. Chiefs such as the Paluvettaraiyar, Vel of Kodumbalur, Miladudaiyar, Banas, and any number of feudatories held sway under Mahadandanayakas as Nad Alvars. In Southern Karnataka There is an inverse correlation between the power of kings and the inscriptional references to chieftains. In the early 11th century, at the midpoint of Rajaraja Chola's reign, an increase in centralization led to a corresponding decline in inscriptional references to chiefs.While during the reigns of Rajaraja I, and Rajendra I, the latter's inscriptions are more as he had this region under his direct control. In the late 11th century, especially after the reign of Kulottunga I (1070–1122), there was a rise in the number of feudatories inscription, indicating an increase in their power as the Cholap ower declined there.

Check your progress:
1] Examine some of the kingdoms of the Far South.

7. 8 QUESTIONS

1) Examine stages of state formation in Peninsular India.
2) Briefly examine the political structure in South India for the period of your study.

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Unit - 8

INDIAN FEUDALISM

Unit Structure

8.0 OBJECTIVES

1. To orient the students about the concept and origin of Feudalism
2. To highlight the Indian thoughts on Feudalism
3. To trace the trajectory of Feudalism in India.
4.To study the Features of Feudalism in India.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Historians ascribe three structural models for the early medieval Indian kingdoms:

1) Conventional Model of a unitary Centrally organized kingdom with a strong central bureaucracy
2) Indian Marxist school of thought of Indian feudalism model
3) Burton Stein influenced "Segmentary State."

These models depict Indian kingdoms as i) strong centralized state ii) which earlier had a strong centralized character but became weak and decentralized due to weak successors iii) having some characteristics of a strong centralized state at the core.

The early works of British historians on India showed post-Gupta age to be a dark age characterized by constant wars and transition happening through military prowess. 1950s produced a change in this kind of writing where a more analytical exposition of Ancient India state formation was carried out. Around the same time Daniel Thorner in his comparative study on *Feudalism in History* made a remark that there is no single work solely devoted to feudalism in India, nor even a single article. In the same year 1956 D.D. Kosambi published two articles on the development of feudalism in India. In 1958 R.S. Sharma produced a series of articles on feudalism. This was followed by other Historians, notable being B.N.S. Yadava who did a comprehensive study on the "*Society and Culture in Northern India in the Twelfth Century"*. In 1979 D.N. Jha observed that the areas where the land grant economy first made its appearance were on the periphery of the region with firmly entrenched Brahmanical order and had thus nothing to do with the social crisis and decadence which R.S. Sharma had explained as the reason for the growth of feudalism in Ancient India. Thus, the thesis formulated in its full-fledged form has had a great deal of influence on subsequent history writing on the period in India. Other scholars supported the thesis with some more details on one point or another, although practically no one explored any other aspect of the theme of feudalism, such as social or cultural aspect for long afterwards. B.N.S. Yadava and D.N.Jha stood firmly by the feudalism thesis. The theme found echoes in south Indian historiography too, with highly acclaimed historians like M.G.S Narayanan and Noboru Karashima abiding by it partly where Karashima concedes that feudal society model was practiced in South India from the 13th century onwards till a crisis hit in the 15th century.

D.D. Kosambi has conceptualized the Indian feudalism in his well-known work, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History.* After Kosambi, a series of articles and monographs have been contributed to the studies on Indian Feudalism. R.S. Sharma has written extensively on Origins of Feudalism in India (c AD 400-650) and Land Grants to Vassals and Officials in Northern India (A.D. 1000-1200). R.S.Sharma has also written *Indian Feudalism: C300-1200*. The book analyses the practice of land grants, which became considerable in the Gupta period and widespread in the post-Gupta period. It shows how this led to the emergence of a class of landlords, endowed with fiscal and administrative rights superimposed upon a class of peasantry which was deprived of communal agrarian rights.

Professor Sharma studies in detail the basic relationships in early medieval society down to the eve of the Ghorian conquests. He argues in favour of a "feudalism largely realising the surplus from peasants mainly in kind through superior rights in their land and through forced labour, which is not found on any considerable scale... after the Turkish conquest of India."

R.Sharma also wrote "Methods and Problems of the Study of Feudalism in Early Medieval India', Early *Medieval Indian Society: A Study in Feudalisation,* Material *Culture and Social Formation in Ancient India.* Other scholars have also written on the discourse contributing to Indian Feudalism. D.N. Jha has propounded on Early *Indian Feudalism: A Historiographical Critique.* B.N.S. Yadav has written *Society and Culture in North India in the I2th Century.*

There was a fairly clear ideological divide which characterized history writing in India in the 1960s and 70s: D.D.Kosambi, R.S.Sharma, B.N.S Yadava and D.N.Jha were firmly committed Marxists; D.C Sircar stood on the other side of the Marxist fence.

Check your progress:
1] Discuss the different views on Indian feudalism.

8.2 DEFINITION AND TERMINOLOGY

Indian feudalism refers to the feudal society that made up India's social structure until The Mughal Dynasty in the 1500s. The Kushanas, and the Guptas played a major role in the introduction and practice of feudalism in India.

Use of the term feudalism to describe India applies a concept of medieval European origin, according to which the landed nobility held lands from the Crown in exchange for military service, and vassals were in turn tenants of the nobles, while the peasants (villeins or serfs) were obliged to live on their lord's land and give him homage, labor, and a share of the produce, notionally in exchange for military protection. Feudalism is most likely introduced to India when the Kushan Dynasty from Central Asia invaded India and introduced new policies of their own. The term Indian feudalism is used to describe taluqdar, zamindar, jagirdar, ghatwals, mulraiyats, sardar, mankari, deshmukh, chaudhary and samanta. Most of these systems were abolished after the independence of India and the rest of the subcontinent. D. D. Kosambi and R. S. Sharma, together with Daniel Thorner, brought peasants into the study of Indian history for the first time.

Starting from the Gupta period the term *samanta* (neighbour) came to be applied to those granted land or to subjugated feudatory rulers. Weak enforcement of power over the conquered regions led to the resumption of independence and some high administrative positions became hereditary. There is debate among historians whether the feudatory system

in India qualifies as true feudalism, as apparently there was a lack of an economic contract between king, vassal and serf. Other historians however argue that the similarities are significant enough to describe it as feudalism. The essential characteristic was the decentralization of power. *Samantas* were officials granted lands instead of a salary and proceeded to seize ownership of the area while continuing to refer to themselves as vassals of their ruler. They were required to pay a small fraction of revenue and provide troops for the overlord. These lords often aped their royal suzerains, for instance, by constructing miniature royal palaces. This encouraged the fragmentation of authority and growing parochialism which has been suggested as a cause for the weak resistance against Muslim conquest.

Check your progress:
1] Define Indian Feudalism.

8.3 CONCEPT AND ORIGIN OF FEUDALISM

The idea of feudalism has its origin in Europe. Initially, European feudalism was seen as a system of the lord having a subordinate vassal. The view was expanded to equate feudalism with a system of government where power was in the hands of feudal lords even as a nominal ruler was publicly acknowledged as a sovereign. But this view gradually began to change. Other aspects of study began to evolve. Marxism, in particular, brought to attention the question of production, i.e, the relationship between land and labour. The standpoint shifted to the lord-peasant relationship. Economy also brought into focus questions of technology, trade, money etc.

There has been a long debate whether feudalism is a phenomenon unique to European history or a more general characteristic of societies throughout world history. Marxist scholars have explained feudalism to be a system in which landlords subordinate a class of dependent peasants. Marxists see it as being ever present throughout human history. Marx emphasized that European feudalism was quite distinct from what he called the "Asiatic mode of production."

The classic study of feudalism is, of course, Marc Bloch's. Bloch saw feudalism as having five basic characteristics:

1. A peasantry subjected to the control of a landlord class;
2. The fief rather than a salary as a mode of payment of landlords' officials.

3. The political supremacy of a class of specialized warriors with landlordship and military leadership fused.
4. Vassalage or the close personal ties between a vassal and his overlord signified by the vassal's swearing of an oath of fealty.
5. The fragmentation of political authority.

Bloch's analysis of feudalism was based on its medieval French version which has often been said to be the classical form of feudalism. However, Bloch also mentioned medieval Japan as having a form of feudalism. He also believed that feudalism may have been a widespread attribute of world history. Another scholar who studied feudalism was Ruston Coulbom. He defined feudalism as a method of government rather than a type of economic or social system. Feudalism's essential characteristic was the lord-vassal relationship. Coulbom and his associates found that this pattern is visible China, ancient Mesopotamia, Russia, western European and Japan.

John Critchley has stated the military angle of feudalism. This is the granting of land in return for military service and protection. Anderson's analysis of feudalism stresses that it is neither strictly an economic system nor political. Instead, it involves the inextricable fusion of the economic and the political. Another scholar Anderson says that Feudalism combines landlordship with military service, and as such leads to a political arrangement in which authority is fragmented among a variety of lords. Therefore, it is highly decentralized. According to Anderson, this 'parcellizationof sovereignty' created towns that were characterized by a striking autonomy.

Thus, the essential characteristics of feudalism are a weak king, powerful nobility, serfdom, manor, knighthood, land, and peasantry. It implies a means of holding land. One strong man and many weak ones join together to hold and work on a large tract of land in order to protect their lives and property from the barbarian raids. The social classification becomes the main theme in the history of feudalism. M.M L. Postan states that feudalism is merely a name for the legal principles of military organization. J.W. Thomson states that "feudalism was primarily a system of government, the typical medieval system of government whose chief characteristic was the rights exercised by large landowners formerly exercised by the monarch, the inseparable association, in other words, of landownership with powers of government. H. Mitter suggests that the term feudalism is a general term which describes a form of social organization found in different parts of the world.

Bhupendranath provided us with his own conception of the main features of Feudal system, in the light of which he attempted to investigate the nature, origin, growth and development of Indian Feudal system. He had noted the main features of a Feudal system are:

(1) Vassalage which expressed the relation of personal dependence and loyalty between the lord and his vassals.

(2) Benefice or fief which meant grant of lands to dependents for their subsistence; this land grant entailed obligations on the part of the grantees to offer loyalty and services to the grantors.

(3) Immunities which meant grant of exemption from royal dues or obligations or grant of financial and legal rights. European churches of the middle ages used to enjoy such immunities. The lords used to grant such immunities through issue of sanads. By this all such recipients of immunities could become lords within their own estates and when they became hereditary feudal lords, they themselves could grant such immunities to their vassals.

(4) Subinfeudation of lands "which meant that the king used to grant lands to his vassals who in turn could grant lands to their vassals and this descended to the bottom with the peasants."

Another important feature of feudal socio-economic conditions was, as Bhupendranath would argue, the manorial system. Under this system, the landlord granted lands to persons who would render different services including labour on the lands of the lords in exchange of the lands he got from the lords for his own living. Bhupendranath regarded the manorial system as the central feature of feudal socio-economic system. So, he thought that an understanding of the nature of European manors was essential to appreciate the nature of its Indian counterpart. A manorial system "was a village association of the peasants in the joint enterprise of working certain lands for a living."

Check your progress:
1] Examine the origin of Feudalism.

8.4 INDIAN THOUGHTS ON FEUDALISM

The person who tried to understand 'feudalism' in the Indian context was Col. James Tod, the celebrated compiler of the annals of Rajasthan's history. Tod also thought similarly like most European historians of his time in Europe. Like the European historians, he also agreed that lord-vassal relationship constituted the core of feudalism. The lord in medieval Europe looked after the security and subsistence of his vassals and they in turn rendered military and other services to the lord. A sense of loyalty also united the vassal to the lord. Tod found this institution and the pattern in the Rajasthan of his times.

Few Indian scholars had explored prevalence of feudal socioeconomic formation. D. Mukherji suggests that feudalism generally involves a kind of military service. But R.S. Sharma is of the opinion that the military obligation is not an essential condition of feudalism. According to him, the essence of feudalism is the dependence of the tillers of land on the king or the state in respect of land. He pointed out that self-sufficiency in a country's economy is an essential condition of feudalism. He referred to the village economy of ancient India and suggested that the peasantry in that condition had something to do with feudalism.

Niharanjan Ray thinks that by the term feudalism one should not understand military obligations only. There are various obligations, such as military, political, and economic. Hence, in his opinion, the obligations differ from country to country, e.g., the French from the Dutch, the German from the British, the British from the Russian, but the basis, in all the cases is land. Thus, in Indian context the term "feudalism" denotes a socio-political system based upon the rural economy. It is characterized by dispersal of power among semi-independent powers. The feudal chiefs hold their land and position on condition of the performance of service. The fundamental features of feudalism in early India were namely king, landed aristocracy, slavery, forced labour, ties of obedience, and fragmentation of the royal authority, etc.

The term feudalism continued to figure in works of history in India. It was with the growing Marxist influence on Indian history writing between the mid1950s and the mid-60s that the term acquired an economic meaning. It acquired meaning in the context of the evolution of Indian class structure. Karl Marx had placed pre-colonial Indian history is in the category of the Asiatic Mode of production. Marx had perceived the Asiatic Mode of production as an exception to the general dynamic of history through the medium of class struggle. In Asia, he assumed there were no classes because all property belonged either to the king or to the community; hence there was no class struggle and no change over time. Other eminent thinkers as Montisquieu, James Mill, and Friedrich Engel had the same theory. They pointed out that the Asiatic Mode of production was a mode based on domestic union of agriculture and industry. The village had a self-sufficient system. It was led by an oriental dictator who supplied irrigational water. It was a mode involving both communal ownership and communal tillage of land. Marx states that India was gifted with the negative capacity of not being able to make history. He mentions that "Indian society had no history at all, at least no known history". He left no room for feudalism in India. He made Asiatic Mode of production stretch-out from times immemorial to the times when Marx was writing about India. Thus, real dynamism, according to him, came only with the establishment of colonial regimes which brought concepts and ideas of change from Europe to the Orient.

Indian Marxist historians of the 1950s and 60s were unwilling to accept that such a large chunk of humanity as India, should remain

changeless over such large segments of time. They expressed their dissatisfaction with the notion of the Asiatic Mode of production. In its, place some of them adopted the concept of feudalism and applied it to India. Irfan Habib, the leading Marxist historian of the period, however, put on record his distance from 'Indian feudalism' even as he criticized the Asiatic Mode of production.

The best representative of the Marxist historiography in India is D.D. Kosambi. He has written many books in this regard. His work, entitled An Introduction to the study of Indian History, surveys the course of Indian history from the earliest time till the British conquest. His other work Culture and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical outline, deals with topics ranging from the prehistory to the long process of emergence of feudalism. D.D. Kosambi gave feudalism a significant place in the context of socio-economic history. According to him the existence of a feudal land tenure was responsible for the exploitation of peasants.

In various periods of Indian History, Kosambi noticed the increasing importance of intermediaries between the king and the subject. The barons oppressed the peasants by imposing higher land rents, taxes and forced labour. He also refers to the Brahman intermediaries who controlled the land that belonged to religious institutions like temples and monasteries. He says that the upper-class Kshatriya courtiers were together with the Brahmans. The Brahmins monopoly over language and literature separated them from the common people. Both these groups dominated the common people who produced food and luxuries for them.

He conceptualized the growth of feudalism in Indian history as a two-way process: from above and from below in his landmark book, An Introduction to the Study of Indian History. According to him feudalism from above means a state wherein an emperor or powerful king levied tributes on subordinates who still ruled and did what they liked within their own territory, as long as they paid tribute to the paramount power. Further, taxes were collected by small intermediaries. They gave a fraction of this collection to the feudal hierarchy, in contrast to direct collection by royal officials. In other words, feudalism from above means that the feudal structure was created by the state granting land and rights to officials and Brahmins. Many individuals and small groups rose from the village levels of power to become landlords and vassals of the King.

Kosambi argues that the kings began to transfer their administrative rights to their subordinate chiefs. The subordinate chiefs thus came into direct relation with peasantry. He termed this process as "feudalism from above". It reached an advanced stage of development during the Gupta and post-Gupta periods. Feudalism from below means a class of landowners developed within the village who existed between the state and the peasantry. Gradually this class assumed armed powers over the local population. It was obliged to render military service to the king. Hence, it claimed direct share in the exercise of state power. He

propounded the theory that at a later stage "a class of landlords developed within the village between the state and the peasantry gradually to yield armed power on the local population" - a process he calls "feudalism from below".

But it might have been an even earlier phenomenon. We come to know from the Yajnavalkyasmrithi, that land was assigned to the cultivator by the landowner and not by the King. Thus, the law giver makes it clear that the swami (the landowner) formed an intermediate stage between the raja (King) and the actual tiller of the land. Kosambi formulated the notion of feudalism in the shape of a formula rather than in a detailed empirical study. This major task was taken up by R.S. Sharma in his Indian Feudalism. However, R.S. Sharma did not follow the Kosambian formula of feudalism from below and from above; instead, he envisioned the rise of feudalism in Indian History entirely as the consequence of state action, i.e., from above. It is only lately that he has turned his attention to the other phenomenon.

He visualized the decline of India's long-distance trade with various parts of the world after the fall of the Guptas; urbanization also suffered in consequence, resulting in the economy's ruralisation. A scenario thus arose in which economic resources were not scarce, but currency was. Since coins were not available, the state started handing out land in payment to its employees and grantees like the Brahmins. Along with land, the state also gave away more and more rights over the cultivating peasants to the new class of 'intermediaries'. The increasing subjection of the peasants to the intermediaries reduced them to the level of serfs in medieval Europe. But what Kosambi failed to consider is that at the time when the Guptas fell, the kingdoms of Deccan and far south prospered and they had a flourishing maritime trade with both South East Asia and West Asia.

The rise of the class of intermediaries through the state action of giving grants to them is the crucial element in R.S.Sharma's construction of Indian feudalism. In other words, land grants to the brahmanas were the most striking development in this direction. Another factor was the custom of giving land grants to the military officers for their administrative and military services. R.S. Sharma considers the Agrahara as something similar to the manor of European feudalism. The existence of forced labour and serfdom indicates the existence of feudal structure in ancient India. He has documented the fact that the donees enjoyed judicial and administrative authority within their jurisdiction. He also highlights the growth of the class of scribes, who were included into the caste of Kayasthas, because state grants needed to be recorded. The crucial process of land grants to intermediaries lasted until about the 11th century when the revival of trade reopened the process of urbanization. The decline of feudalism is suggested in this revival..

B.N.S. Yadav is yet another scholar who has concentrated his attention on the feudal structure in India. He has drawn evidence from astrological works of ancient India like Brihat Samhita, Brihat Jataka, Yavana Jataka and VriddhaYavana Jataka. Based on an examination of these works, he has concluded that there was feudal relation in the political and economic organizations of early India. He believes that the peasants were subjected to a kind of non-economic coercion by the landlords. There was exploitative relationship of domination and subordination which was the hallmark of feudal relations. According to Yadava, in the ancient Indian context the framework of this relationship may have included considerable variations in the level of peasant subjection. It would have been influenced by local circumstances. The highest level was of the state approaching serfdom to render labour service and to stick to locality. One also has to take into account the caste division of society. The feudal mode of production was not so strong in India as in medieval Europe. In the Indian context, it is found to have been interlocked and to have co-existed with the non-feudal elements. But the basis of such assumption is not clear.

Based on astrological evidence, he goes to prove that there was a feudal element in the relationship between the two groups. Further, Yadav has clearly shown us how the astrological works provide additional clues to the understanding of feudal nature of the political structure in ancient India. It resembled the western European Feudalism. He says that this political structure was characterized by the parcelization of political authority which tended to develop downwards up to the level of village lords. There was a combination of economic exploitation with political authority. There was the emergence of sizable section of landed intermediaries because of religious and secular land grants. It involved allegiance to the overlord, and it was hierarchically organized ruling landed aristocracy.

Check your progress:
1] Examine some of the Indian thoughts on Feudalism.

8.5 ORIGIN OF FEUDALISM IN INDIA

R.S. Sharma has investigated the nature of feudalism in the Indian context. He states that there is no fixed theoretical model which can be applied to this country. The early concept of feudalism based on Western European experience, especially that of France and England, no longer enjoys universal validity. Some emphasize the military aspect of feudalism stating that the knight's service is the key to the feudal institution; others

emphasize its legal aspect - the contract between the lord and the vassal; and still others its manorial aspect in which the peasants worked as serfs in the manor of the lord. Sharma considers the existence of landed intermediaries to be the essence of feudal order. They operate in an agrarian economy in which there is decline of trade and shortage of money. He has undertaken a rigorous study to bring out specific traits of Indian feudalism.

He further observed that the European experience suggests that the political essence of feudalism lay in the organization of the whole administrative structure based on land; its economic essence lay in the institution of serfdom in which peasants were attached to the soil held by landed intermediaries placed between the king and the actual tillers; They had to pay rent in kind and labour to them. Generally, it is believed that Feudal institutions develop in a state where there is no efficient system of centralized government, transport, and communication. Under such circumstances the life and property of the people can only be ensured if the civil and criminal justice is administered by local influential persons. These influential persons will have their own army, own machinery to collect taxes and customary dues, pay tributes and go to the rescue of their overlord with military forces when called for.

D.N. Jha, strongly suggests that feudalism in India, unlike in Europe, began with the land grants made to brahmanas, temples and monasteries for which the epigraphic evidence begins from the first century BCE. The practice of land grants increased to a great extent by Gupta times when villages together with their fields and inhabitants were given to Brahmins. with fiscal, administrative, and judicial rights (with the right to enjoy fines received) and with exemption from the interference of royal officials were given to religious beneficiaries. What was abandoned step by step to the priestly class was later given to the warrior class. Religious as well as secular (service) grants became increasingly popular with the emergence of local and self-sufficient economies marked by lack of commercial intercourse, decline of urban life and scarcity of coins.

The growth of feudal property in India came to be linked with the undermining of the communal rights in land, as is evident from the later grants which refer to the transfer of the communal resources such as pastures, forests, water reservoirs, fisheries, and so on to the beneficiaries. The economic essence of Indian feudalism, like that of European, it has been argued, lay in the rise of landed intermediaries leading to the serfdom of peasantry through restrictions on peasant mobility and freedom, increasing obligation to perform forced labour (vishti), mounting tax burdens and the evils of sub-infeudation. The crucial element in this chain of arguments is the premise that there took place around the middle of the first millennium CE a decline in urban commodity production and foreign trade resulting in the growth of a self-sufficient economy in which metallic currency became relatively scarce and hence payments, whether

to the priests or to the government officials had to be made through assignments of land or state revenues. This led to the growth of feudalism.

Check your progress:
1] Trace the origin of feudalism in India.

8.6 FEATURES OF FEUDALISM IN INDIA

Feudalism can be defined as a contractual system of military and political relationship which existed among members of the nobility in Western Europe during the High Middle Ages. Feudalism is derived from the term "feudal", which means land.

Feudalism as an activity, institution and ideology revolved around the idea of 'land'. It emerged as an act of redistribution of land in Europe, with the main intention of protecting themselves (the members of the nobility) from invaders like Vikings and Huns. These redistributed lands were owned by feudal lords and were cultivated by farmers called 'serfs'. Serfs used to work in accordance with the conditions laid down for them by these feudal lords. Also, feudalism as an Three age theory of Thomsen institution was neither uniform, nor universal across the European Continent.

Later, feudalism as an institution transformed itself into an ideology. Feudalism primarily was personal (feudal lord was always considered as a protector of the serf), territorial (bound by territory) and governmental in nature. It was a complex and hierarchical arrangement with vassals holding top-most positions and lords, knights and squires working under them. Serfs occupied the lowest rung of the hierarchy. Nobody could be promoted from one class to another as primogeniture was an important feature of feudalism.

The work of feudal lords were largely dictated by the political, economic and military setup. Primarily, feudal lords were allotted the role of managing the military. Serfs were the standing arms of these feudal lords who ensured a complete protection of the land. These serfs were made to work in no particular fixed shifts, for more than the prescribed hours and were never paid accordingly. This exploitative nature of feudalism gradually led to its decline.

Around 5th century CE, Europe became totally disintegrated and centralized. The entire power structure was under the control of Rome, wherein all appointments were done only from Rome and Latin was the

official language. However, soon after the victory in civil war, Augustus Caesar divided Rome into two parts—West Rome and East Rome. This division was one of the major reasons of the fall of the Roman Empire. Other reasons were the ever-increasing power of the church and difficulty in ruling a vast empire like Rome. The fall of the Roman Empire in 5th century CE led to political, economic, and cultural vacuum. The only possible solution they came up with, to do this was the redistribution of land. This concept of redistribution of land was called 'feudalism'. Feudalism spread from France to Spain. It later spread to countries like Italy, Germany, and the Eastern Europe. Interestingly, it continued to exist in all parts of Europe till the end of the 14th century.

According to the Europeans, feudalism meant a set of reciprocal military and legal obligations among the nobility, which revolved around the three key features of the lords and the vassals. However, in India, the framework gradually shifted towards the formulation of the land grants. The act of providing land grants to the Brahmans was purely driven by the directives laid down in the Dharmashashtras, the Epics and the Puranas. The Land Grants and Administrative Rights, the early Pali writings of the pre-Mauryan period allude to the towns conceded to the Brahmans by the leaders of Kosala and Magadha."Brahamdeyya" was the term used for such benefits levied upon them.

The earliest land grants of the first century BCE were given to the Buddhist priests, Brahmans and other religious establishments. However, in the post-Gupta period, even administrative officials were granted land. The beneficiaries who were given the land were also given powers of taxation and coercion, leading to a complete disintegration of the central authority. The secular recipients of the grants and the autonomous holders of the land were generally termed as 'fief holders' and 'free holders'.

It was at this point that the benefactors deserted their incomes and the privilege to oversee the occupants of the towns. This training turned out to be common in the Gupta period. There were numerous instances of gifts being offered to the Brahmans in the Gupta period. One of the vital aspects of the king being in power was that he used to hold the privileges of the rebuffing the guilty parties. In the post-Gupta era, the ruler rendered the Brahmans this right and even his entitlement to rebuff all offenses against family, property, individual, etc.

Therefore, the major implication of feudal polity in North India was the creation of powerful intermediaries which had great shares of economic and political power. The Brahman landowners gradually started shifting their focus from the orthodox religious functions to the secular ones, giving more importance to the management of the land. The major implications of feudalism in India can be seen in the political decentralization of semi- autonomous rulers like Samantas and Mahasamantas. The practice of land grants also paved the way for the

emergence of new landed intermediaries and the landholding social groups which was absent in the initial historical period.

Check your progress:
1] Examine the features of feudalism in India.

8.7 LAND GRANTS: IMPLICATIONS FOR AGRICULTURE AND POLITICAL STABILITY

a. Meaning and Origin of the grant system:

The institution of land grants had a very ancient origin but its adverse impact on agriculture and political structure began to be felt during the closing years of the ancient period i.e., during C.E. 800 onwards. Land grant implied giving away land to certain sections of society in lieu of their services performed to the ruler or the state.

Three factors initiated this practice. The ancient sacred books and religious sentiments considered charity as one of the benevolent and sacred acts. By such acts, a person acquired religious merit, and for a king it was almost a religious duty. As such charity took the form of cash grants or land grants. Another factor was the need to provide patronage to the monks and priests for maintaining the monasteries and religious institutions and to perform religious rites. For this purpose, land grants became inevitable as a permanent source of income.

Some other factors also encouraged the offering of land grants. In the third-fourth centuries C.E., a deep social crisis developed. There was a great increase in the castes and sub-castes as a revolt of discarding the functions prescribed for each caste. Due to excessive caste bondages and barriers, imposition of heavy taxes, poverty and the desire to be free from caste restriction and to choose one's occupation that could be profitable, a critical situation arose. The peasants and labourers refused to provide labour for production and the Vaishyas refused to pay taxes. The Shudras too neglected their duty. Manu, the law giver ordained that such people, who deviate from their prescribed duties should be severely punished. But it did not set things right.

To meet the situation, land was granted to brahmanas and priests. Officials were also granted land so that they themselves could collect the taxes and maintain law and order in lands donated to them and then pass on a certain percentage of the taxes collected to the King. This gave the king's authority to the intermediaries, the landlords who dealt with the

situations with a heavy hand and collected taxes from those who had earlier protested to pay to the king.

b. Advantages of land grants:

It had two clear advantages. It reduced the burden of the king. It also helped in bringing new land under cultivation, as the landlord was bent upon making the maximum profit by making the maximum use of the available land.

c. Adverse effects of land grants:

It established landlordism, gave free hand to the landlords to oppress the weak and helpless sections of the society in collecting taxes, transferred the economic machinery to the intermediaries, decentralized power and diluted or eroded the royal control. The rise of the power of the landlords eroded the royal control over his kingdom. The Brahmanas also began to play an important role in decision making of the rulers.

Upto the 5th century the king retained the power to punish the thieves and the wrong doers. But afterwards, the beneficiaries were given the rights even to punish the criminal offenders in addition to the right already given to collect taxes and maintain law and order. The situation was quite satisfactory during the Mauryan period when the officers of the King were responsible to collect taxes and maintain law and order and in return were paid in cash. The practice continued upto the Gupta period when gold coins were meant for the payment of the army and high functionaries. But from the 6th century onward, the position started changing. Even the law books recommended that the services of the officers should be rewarded in land. Accordingly, from the time of Harshavardhana, public officials were paid in land revenues. The governors, ministers and officials were given portions of land for their personal upkeep. Land grant system led to feudalism also.

Gradually a situation arose when a king having an empire had a number of vassal kingdoms or vassal chiefs subordinate to the king but having varying degree of control. The vassals or nobles or Jagirdars had their own armies which they supplied to the king as and when need arose. Thus, the loyalty of such armies was with the Chiefs and not the King. This resulted in weakening the power of the King.

d. Changes in the agrarian economy:

Since time immemorial, Indian economy has been agrarian. The farmer has been the master of the land he tilled. So, he looked after his fields and worked hard to get the maximum produce from his land paid the land revenue direct to the state. But with the land grants, the landlords became the owner of the land and the ownership of the tiller became extinct. The landed beneficiaries, whether Brahmanas or officers, could not cultivate the lands by themselves. So actual cultivation was entrusted to peasants, labourers, shudras, or sharecroppers who did not own the land. Since everything depended on these labourers, they were not allowed

to leave the work on their villages. They were in a way, bonded to the wishes of the landlord.

Check your progress:
1] Discuss the Land Grant system.

8.8. LANDGRANTS AND GROWTH OF FEUDALISM

This was one of the important changes of this period. The feudals or those who held land received as a gift or subletting or on a hereditary capacity constantly contended against each other and tried to enhance their power, territory, and privileges by any means. They could be defeated by rajas, government officials, local chiefs, tribal leaders or even village chiefs. They not only collected land revenue but usurped the right of awarding punishment, exacting fines, and extra money. These were earlier the royal privileges.

Feudalism had become the dominating feature of the Indian society. The literary works of the period provide evidence that ministers, officials, feudal chiefs and those who accumulated wealth lived in great luxury and splendor. Costly imported clothes, They lived in imposing houses of many storeys competing with the grandeur of palaces. A train of numerous servants attended to their needs and comforts and a large number of women in their household glorified their super status. But this does not give the true picture of the common people. The ordinary people had to remain contented with rice and wild vegetables that they could procure.

Check your progress:
1] How did land grants lead to the growth of feudalism.

8. 9 IMPACT OF FEUDALISM

There were the disadvantages of a feudal society where the feudal chiefs or landowners dominated the society and drew their sustenance from the land without doing any work. It weakened the position of the

kings who became more dependent on the feudal chiefs. The village self-government was uprooted and foreign trade discouraged because the largely self-sufficient village or group of villages would make the chiefs free from depending on outside help.

But the kings and rulers or the chiefs of the innumerable states into which this vast country was divided and sub-divided were so much inflated with self-glory and pampered egos, too ready to crush their neighbouring rulers or too quick to defend themselves from such an onslaught that they could not foresee the swift marching steps of foreign soldiers, the galloping horses, and the blaze of the shining shields and swords of future events that were going to wipe them out for ever in the words of J.C Aggarwal.

The 'Jagirdari' system among the Rajputs helped in enhancing the regional loyalties and thereby formation of regional kingdoms. Therefore, when the Arabs and Turks invaded India, they found it divided into many states which were constantly fighting against each other. They failed to unite themselves against a common enemy and consequently were defeated one by one.

The feudal organization, the division of the society into several castes and sub-castes, the deteriorating conditions of women, the increased gap between the rich and the poor and different codes of conduct and morality for different sections of the society, ultimately resulted in the loss of social responsibility and political instability. The Indian society had become corrupt, divided, ignorant and weak which resulted in its subordination to the invaders. Indian rulers lost their independence.

Check your progress:
1] Examine the impact of feudalism.

8.10 FEUDALISM AND COUNTER NARRATIVES

Antagonists of Indian Feudalism contributed to its study either to criticize the concept or to synthesize it. Like D.C Sircar's work on Landlordism Confused with Feudalism, in D.C. Sirkar (ed): *Land System and Feudalism in Ancient India in which* here marked that feudalism was a misnomer in the early Indian context as there are scarcity of inscriptions to prove the point. He insisted that the majority of the charters record land grants to religious institutions and Brahmanas without stipulating any obligation of the donees to the donors.

B.D. Chattopadhyaya has written on Trade and Urban Center in Early Medieval India. Harbans Mukhia has also contributed on the Feudalism *Debate* through his work, "*Was there feudalism in Indian History"?*

Scholars such as Irfan Habib and Herbans Mukhia, have questioned the use of the feudal model in connection with the study of the political and economic history of medieval India. Harbans Mukhia argues that agrarian surplus was available in the form of land revenue and other taxes to the state in medieval period. The state formed the chief instrument of exploitation. The peasants were kept at subsistence level. There were peasant rebellions in the Mughal period. In short, in medieval society a kind of equilibrium existed which facilitated the state appropriation of peasant surplus in condition of relative security. Hence in the analysis of medieval society, he argues that feudalism of Europe cannot be a good tool of analysis in the Indian context.

Mukhia's criticism of the absence of feudal mode of production is based on the following arguments. He says that in India, unlike in Europe, there appears to have been no prolonged and acute scarcity either of labour or of production. The routine increase in demand could perhaps have been met by the routine extension of agriculture. Thus, Hurbans Mukhia argues against the notion of Indian Feudalism. He also rejects the Marxist concept of Asiatic production on the evidence that there was private property in land. His conclusion is that the concept of feudalism cannot help very much in the study of a wide range of social formations in India. He substitutes feudalism with a term called free peasant production.

Irfan Habib has produced an excellent work entitled the Agrarian System of Mughal India and Economic History of Delhi Sultanate. Like Harbans Mukhia he criticizes the concept of Indian feudalism as developed by Kosambi, R.S. Sharma and B.N.S. Yadava. He also rejects the Marxist concept of the Asiatic mode of production. He has suggested a term for India, namely the "Indian Medieval Economy."

Indian Feudalism concept was later challenged by a group of American historians who came up with the theory of segment state while explaining the formation of state in South India. The leading historian in this case being Burton Stein (Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India,1980) the idea which he derived from A.W. Southall who had conceptualized the theory while studying the Alur Society in Africa.

Segment State Theory: As mentioned before this was first propounded by Aidan Southall while analysing Alur Society in Africa. Burton Stein in his *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India* refuted the earlier work of K.A. Nilakanta Sastry on Cholas wherein the latter had described Chola State as the Byzantine monarchy with a large network of bureaucrats. Stein's work traces state formation from the Pallava period in the 3rd Century C.E. to the Vijayanagara Empire in the 16th Century C.E.

According to Stein the political structure of South Indian macro region was distinctive by the almost total absence of kshatriya institution. Kshatriya institutions of Northern India represented a warrior elite who possessed a monopoly of coercive competence beyond that of the individual ethnic units (caste or tribe) and other corporate entities such as village communities or guilds. It is only with the later Pallavas and the Cholas the medieval institution of kingship was established.

The Chola state as well as medieval South Indian states have been conceived to be great unitary states under powerful kings whose will was worked through elaborate bureaucratic apparatus. There is no direct evidence of a central bureaucratic organization with competence over the Chola macro region. And like the rule of the Cholas, Vijayanagara power was often quite remote after an initial intrusion of its forces into territories ruled by Hindu chiefs. Many parts of the deep southern peninsula continued to be ruled by members of the same families whom the Vijayanagara armies had conquered. This is particularly true of the Pandyan territory through most of the fifteenth century. In most parts of the Tamil country, the ancient territorial terminology remained. The telugu Nayakas and Brahmanas placed in positions of supralocal agents for Vijayanagara authority. Hence, to overstate the ideological element and to speak of a newly constituted basis of state power and legitimacy in the Vijayanagara period would be to distort the historical evidence which are of the period.

The characteristics of the segmentary state in South India are the following:

Territorial sovereignty is recognized but limited and essentially relative, forming a series of zones in which authority is most absolute near the Centre and increasingly restricted towards the periphery, often shading off into a ritual hegemony.

There is centralized government, yet there were also numerous peripheral focuses of administration over which the Centre exercises only a limited control.

There is a specialized administrative staff at the Centre, but it is repeated on a reduced scale at all the peripheral focuses of administration. Monopoly of the use of force is successfully claimed to a limited extent and within a limited range by a central authority, but legitimate force on a more restricted order inheres at all peripheral focuses.

Several levels of subordinate focuses may be distinguishable, organized pyramidally in relation to the central authority. The central and peripheral authorities reflect the same model, the latter being reduced images of the former. Similar powers are repeated at each level with decreasing range; every authority has certain recognized powers over the subordinate authorities articulated to it, and formally similar offences

differ in significance according to the order to authorities involved in them.

The more peripheral a subordinate authority is the more chance it has to change its allegiance from one power to another. Segmentary states are thus flexible and fluctuating, even comprising peripheral units which have political standing in several adjacent power pyramids which thus become interlocked.

There were many opponents to Segment State Theory. But the major deficiency in the work is the lack of empirical study. Burton Stein had not covered the voluminous numbers of Chola inscriptions (around ten thousand) available. He relied on secondary records everywhere. It is very obvious that he had no proficiency in the languages of Tamil and Telugu. While talking about the Chola right-hand and left-hand classes he had quoted the Diary and Consultation Reports of the British of the 17th Century.

Scholars like Champakalakshmi opposed the Segment state theory citing the reason that there was no empirical study. Similarly, P. Shanmugham in "*The Revenue System of the Cholas (850-1279 A.D)*", comments on Burton Stein's unfamiliarity with the epigraphical material available for research.

An examination of South Indian sources reveals that the period under study underwent transition from kin-labour to non-kin labour, from millet to growing paddy as the main crop and moving towards settled agriculture. Resultantly, ruling clans transitioned to becoming chiefdoms and became kingdoms and later to establishing imperium. The war and redistributive economy in the Sangam period, transitioned to establishing stability within the empire, and conducting war outside and redistribution within to maintain prosperity.

Political fragmentation of North India in the Post-Gupta period happened in the period that followed the Gupta Empire, and this fragmentation was not due to land donations to secular and religious donees but due to the intensive process of state formation on the local, subregional, and regional level in some parts of North India, in many parts of Central India and most parts of South India. It was during this period that a process of indigenous state formation took place in many parts of India.

Check your progress:
1] Examine the various counter narratives to feudalism.

8.11 QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the Marxist views on Indian Feudalism?
2. What is Segment State Theory? Is it applicable to describing state formation in South India?

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Module - III

Unit - 9

RELIGION

A] RELIGIOUS WORLDVIEW OF RIG VEDA
B] RELIGIOUS FERMENTATION AND WORLDIEWS OF UPANISHADS, BUDDHISM AND JAINISM
C] TANTRIC CULTS – RISE, NATURE AND DOCTRINE

Unit Structure

9.0 OBJECTIVES

- To orient students about the Religious Worldview of Rig Veda
- To understand the religious fermentation and worldview of Upanishads
- To examine the teachings of Buddhism
- To study the philosophy of Jainism
- To understand the emergence and practices of Tantric cults

9.1 INTRODUCTION

India has been a land of diverse religions each of them co-existing with each other. It has given us the theme of 'Unity in Diversity' as one of the overarching principles of Indian society. It is very enlightening to learn about the religious world view of the Rig Vedic times. Likewise there is an equally rich process of religious fermentation which brings us to the worldview of the Upanishads. Then we have the emergence of the major religions Buddhism and Jainism with their focus on non violence. Finally we also need to understand the emergence and various practices of the Tantric cults.

Check your progress:
1] Give a brief overview of the varios religious worldviews.

9.2 RELIGIOUS WORLDVIEW OF RIG VEDA

VEDIC GODS

The Rigvedic religion was very simple. Right from the beginning the Aryans developed a polytheistic form of worship in which the natural forces were personified as divinity and were worshipped Thus, they personified these forces of nature and considered them as living beings to whom they assigned human or animal characteristics. The Rig Veda refers to a number of such divinities. It contains several hymns composed by the rishis in the honour of these deities.

There is a belief that the different parts of Rig Veda were composed at different periods. In the early Rig Vedic hymns, the natural forces were personified and gradually the personified natural phenomena were deified as in case of Ushas or Surya. In the advanced stage, the defied phenomena were made anthropomorphic wherein they lost their original attributes.

Though the rank of divinities increased over time the Aryans did not give any hierarchy to their gods. No God was given a dominant position. Too many functions and powers were held by two or more deities. Vedic Aryans worshipped one God while not rejecting the existence of the others. Fredrich Welcker described this phenomenon as Henotheism and which Maxmuller called as Kat henotheism.

The Rig Vedic Gods are stated to be thirty-three in number and can be broadly classified as terrestrial, aerial, and celestial.

Terrestrial (Prithivithsana):
Prithvi, Agni, Soma Brihaspati, and the rivers belong to this classification.

Aerial (Antarikshasthana):
Indira, Apamnapat, Rudra, Vayu-Vata, Parjanya, Apah, and Matarisvan belong to this classification.

Celestial (Dyusthana):
Dyaus, Varuna, Mitra, Surya, Savitri, Pushan, Vishnu, the Adityas, Ushas and the Asvins belong to this classification.

The Gods in general subdue the forces of evil and regulate the order of nature which not only they enforced on the mortals but are duty

bound to follow themselves. They punish the iniquitous and shower grace on the virtuous.

Indra seemed to have been a favourite God as he was invoked several times. About one-fourth of the total hymns of the Rig Veda have been addressed to him in the form of prayers and worship. He was assigned a lot of power in his physicality. He was called 'Purandara' or breaker of forts. He played the role of a warlord. His weapon was the thunderbolt called *vajra* and he led the Devas to victory against their enemies. He was known as the rain god. He was supposed to be responsible for creating the much-needed rainfall. He was also considered as the Lord of the eastern direction.

There were several minor gods who were associated with Indra. They symbolized the other atmospheric phenomena or occurrences like storms and winds. There were the storm gods who were known as the *Maruts*. The wind god was called *Vayu.* There was a minor rain god called *Parjanya* and there was *Rudra,* the howler. He was the lord and father of the world. Sometimes he was regarded as nasty, but he had healing and benevolent powers as well. One more god who was particularly important was *Agni* or the Fire-god. Apart from *Indra, Agni* was the other Vedic deity often invoked by the Aryans. Two hundred hymns in the *Rig Veda* are addressed to him. Fire played an important part in the life of the ancients as it burnt forests and was used for cooking. *Agni* played the part of a mediator between the gods and the human beings. It was believed that the offerings of human beings were carried by *Agni* in the form of soma to various gods to whom they were offered.

The oldest among the gods of heaven was *Dyasu*. Even the earth was very divine. It was known as *Prithvi.* Heaven and earth were known as the worldwide parents or *Dyâvâprithvi*. They are usually considered as pairs in the *Rig Veda.* An extremely important god was *Varuna.* V.M. Apte mentions him as 'the All-Encompasser', *Varuna* was the most awe-inspiring deity. Rig Veda calls him an Asura. He was like *Ahuramazda* of the *Zend Avesta*. As a moral god of the Vedas, 'he watches over the world, punishes the evil doers and forgives the sins of those who beg for his forgiveness. The Sun is his eye, the sky is his garment, and the storm is his breath. Rivers flow by his command; the Sun shines, the stars and moon are in their place because they fear him. He is the supreme god, the god of gods, ruthless to the guilty and merciful to the repentant in heart'. Varuna was considered as the custodian of *rita,* who regulated the cosmic order in its regular course by which the day follows the night, and one season properly succeeds another season. Varuna was also considered as the overlord of the waters.

Along with Varuna, the Vedic Aryans also linked *Mitra*. He was the embodiment of the Sun's energy. The Sun was especially an important deity. He was *Surya,* the all-seeing god. He was called the eye of *Varuna.* Another solar deity was *Savitri*, who was invoked in the famous *Gayatri* stanza. The swift moving Sun was *Vishnu*, who covered the earth in three

paces. The inseparable twins corresponding to the *Ushas* (dawn) and *Sandhya* (dusk),were worshipped as *Ashwins*. Gradually they were assigned the role of physicians of gods and humans, protectors of marital love and life.

The popular drink of the Aryans, *Soma* was also assigned a place among the gods. The *Soma* sacrifice was the center of the ritual of Vedic religion. The *Soma* was the juice of a plant growing upon the mountainsides and from it an intoxicating drink was prepared and accompanied by elaborate ritual. It was offered to gods and consumed in a ritualistic manner during sacrifices. *Saraswati* was the river deity who came to be regarded later as the goddess of learning. Abstract deities such as *Sraddha* [faith] and *Manyu* [wrath] were also worshipped. Female divinities mentioned in the *Rig Veda* include *Gayatri*, who is considered as the *Vedamata* and *Aditi, Ushas and Sandhya*. However, the latter three were not assigned any prominent place in the Aryan pantheon of gods during the Rigvedic period.

During the later Vedic age, the deities of the *Rig Veda* reappear. Atharva Veda seems to preserve an aspect of primitive religious ideas which are not to be found in the other Vedic texts. However, there was a change in their emphasis. The two gods who share universal veneration during the later Vedic period were *Rudra* and *Vishnu*, who are still prominent and dominant in modern Hinduism. In the *Rig Veda*, *Vishnu* is a mere form of the Sun-god. His worship did not occupy any predominant position. That was so in the case of *Rudra.* During the later Vedic period *Rudra* occupies an important position as the 'great god' [*Mahadeva*] and was called *Siva* [propitious]. *Vishnu* came to be regarded as the preserver and protector of the people, replacing the predominant Rigvedic god *Varuna.* The other god, *Prajapati,* the creator, also came to occupy an important position in the later Vedic pantheon, who was identified with *Brahma.*

The idea of a supreme God, Prajapti, as the creator and preserver of the Universe, an impersonal creative principle are mentioned in Atharva veda. The concept of Rudra-Siva too emerges in the Atharva Veda. Concepts such as *Kala,* the time, *Prana*, the breath and *Kama,* love have been mentioned at various places as the first cause of all existence.

Yajur and Sama Veda emphasize the ritual aspect of the Vedic religion. The hearth in each home was where offerings to the Agni or the fire were offered. Even to the major sacrifices the Agni or the sacrificial fire was taken from the hearth. Even as grand sacrifices find mention in the Rig Veda, it was during the Yajur and Sama period that they become commonplace. These two texts were compiled for as framework and as guidebooks for these rituals.

PRAYERS AND SACRIFICES:

The Rigvedic religion consisted of worshipping gods with the recitation of prayers and offering of sacrifices. Prayers played an

important role in Rigvedic times. Prayers were offered individually and collectively. It seems that prayers were offered by the entire tribe in chorus. Sacrifices were also offered individually and collectively. Sacrifices included offerings of vegetables, grains, milk products and flesh of animals. *Agni* and *Indra* were invited to participate in the sacrifices made by the whole tribe. During the Rigvedic period, the sacrificial process was not accompanied by any elaborate rituals or sacrificial formulae. Elaborate ritual was prescribed only to the *Soma* sacrifice in the *Rig Veda.* The early Vedic people offered prayers and performed sacrifices to thank the gods for bestowing on them blessings such as cattle, food, wealth, and health.

During the later Vedic period as the Aryans began to lead a settled life. They began to worship certain objects as symbols of divinity. Thus, signs of image worship appeared during the later Vedic period. The Science and art of conducting sacrifices were evolved and three sacred fires were required for grand sacrifices. The altars of these sacrificial pits were made to dimension becoming the precursor to the religious architecture. Organizer of the sacrifice was called the *Yajamana,* whose role was to initiate the sacrifice and give a generous fee to the priests. The grand sacrifices were called Srauta. The domestic sacrifices were called *Smarta.* There were four groups of priests during this period: The Hotri or invoker, the *Udgatri* or the chanter, the *Adhvaryu* or performer and the Brahman or the high priest. Cows, horses, gold and cloth were given as *dakshina* or gift to the officiating priests during the sacrifices. There is a reference to a *dakshina* of 240,000 cows given to the officiating priest in the *rajasuya* sacrifice. Sometimes the priests claimed portions of territory as *dakshina.* While private sacrifices were offered by individuals in their houses, public sacrifices involved the king and the whole of the community. Sacrifices involved killing of animals on a large scale. There were major sacrifices like *Rajasuya, Vajapeya, Ashvamedha, Vrityastoma* and *Purushamedha*, which were performed by the kings and nobles.

In this period, Rudra is regarded as Mahadeva, and he is more mentioned as Siva, the auspicious one. Vishnu gains prominence and identified with certain sacrifices. This age also sees Narayana and Vishnu being regarded as one. Gandharvas, Apsaras and Nagas were raised to the semi-divine rank. Monotheism is advocated more. After life is referred to and the burial rituals are mentioned. Though Rig Veda talks about Karma it is more elaborated during this period.Creation myths appear in Brahmana literature. It also indicates resistance to excessive ritualism leading to the next phase where knowledge and wisdom were regarded high and inner purity was insisted upon.

SAMSKARAS

Another important feature of the later Vedic religion was the performance of different *Samskaras* by an individual during his lifetime. Forty *Samskaras* are mentioned in the Vedic texts to be performed right from one's *conception* in the mother's womb up till his death. Every *Samskara* was associated with a *yajna* followed by a family feast.

TAPAS

The lengthy and costly sacrifices with elaborate rituals created a reaction among certain people during the later Vedic age. As an alternative to this method of pleasing gods through *yajnas,* the philosophy of *tapas* was emphasized, especially by the *Aranyakas.* 'They are devoted to an exposition of mysticism and symbolism of sacrifice and priestly philosophy'. Thus, *Tapas* or penance accompanied by physical torture came to occupy an important place in the Vedic religion. Men renounced the world and retired to forests to practice meditation and various external and internal austerities. These exercises were meant to attain *moksha* or final deliverance.

Check your progress:
1] Examine the Rig Vedi Gods.

9.3 RELIGIOUS FERMENTATION AND WORLDIEWS OF UPANISHADS, BUDDHISM AND JAINISM

III. RELIGIOUS FERMENTATION AND WORLDVIEWS OF UPANISHADS

An important feature of the religion during the later Vedic period was the development of philosophic speculation. This was also a reaction of a section of the Vedic population to the complicated and ritualistic religious ceremonies. The Rig Vedic hymns ponder on the philosophy of life and dwells deep into esoteric philosophical debates. The Upanishads are considered the end of the Vedas where the philosophy is expounded through narrative dialogue. The trend continued and grew in the later Vedic period. These were the non-priestly intellectuals who came from varied backgrounds from kings, warriors, to Brahmanas, to people of Shudra Varna to women who debated on the way of knowledge or the gyanmarga, who tried to find the correlation between Universal soul, the Brahman and the individual soul, the Atman. The *gyanmarga* was based on the doctrine that he who realises God becomes one with God that he is God (*Aham Brahmasmi*). The *Upanishads* attached little importance to ceremonies and external austerities and promoted principles like *Brahman* or Universal soul and *Atma* or individual soul, *Maya* or illusion, *Punarjanma* i.e transmigration of the soul or rebirth, *Karma* or action and *Moksha* which is salvation or final deliverance.

'Upanishad' (literally, 'to sit near someone') is usually understood as referring to pupils sitting near or around their teacher. Alternatively, it

could mean connection or equivalence; the Upanishads were constantly suggesting connections and equivalences between things. The knowledge that was to be imparted and absorbed was no ordinary knowledge. It was all-encompassing, the key to liberation from the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, something that could only be taught to select, deserving pupils. It was difficult to explain and even more difficult to comprehend. It was revealed through discussion, debate, and contest among seekers, using a variety of devices—stories, images, analogies, and paradoxes.

The oldest Upanishads are in prose, the later ones in meter. The *Brihadaranyaka* and *Chhandogya* are among the earliest. The Upanishads and Aranyakas deal with similar things, and the distinction between the two categories of texts is not always clear. For instance, the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* is considered both an Aranyaka and Upanishad. While the early Upanishads are considered to belong to the Pre-Buddhist period, many others are of a later period. These texts explain certain key ideas and practices that are associated with Hindu and some other Indian philosophical and religious traditions. These include the concepts of *karma*, rebirth, and the idea that there is a single, unseen, eternal reality above everything. The Upanishads also deal with the practices of meditation and *yoga*.

The Upanishads were the work of many different people living in various parts of north India over many centuries. That's why they do not contain a single, unified, consistent system of ideas. They deal with many issues but are especially concerned with the two fundamental concepts of *atman* and *brahman*. A major concern of Upanishadic thought is to explore and explain their meaning and mutual relationship. The word *brahman* comes from the root *brih*, which means to be strong or firm. It means something that grants prosperity, a vital force that strengthens and animates. In the Upanishads, there are many efforts to describe *brahman*.

The *Kena Upanishad* asserts that the gods themselves were unable to understand *brahman*, and even those who think they have understood it do not. The *Taittiriya Upanishad* states that *brahman* is that from which all beings are born, that by which they are sustained, and that into which they enter on death. *Brahman* is the eternal, imperishable reality in the universe. In the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, the sage Yajnavalkya tells Gargi that the imperishable *Brahman* sees but can't be seen, thinks but can't be thought of, perceives but can't be perceived. The *Mundaka Upanishad* explains that just as a spider spins and gathers its web, just as plants grow upon this earth, and just as head and body hair grow from a living person, so does everything in this world arise from the imperishable *brahman*. *Kathopanishad* expounds Karma theory wherein the Principal character *Yama* explains to *Nachiketa* that he (*Yama)* attained his exalted status due to his good deed *(sat karma*) and when it gets over, he would go back to earth and explains the ways to transcend the cycles of birth and death and become one with *Brahman*.

Upanishads speak of *brahman* as god. If *brahman* is the ultimate reality pervading the universe, the *atman* is the ultimate reality within the self of an individual. There are many explanations of the *atman* in the Upanishads. The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* describes it as the knowing subject within us, which sees but is not seen, hears but is not heard, understands but is not understood, knows but is not known. In the *Chhandogya Upanishad*, the *atman* is described as lying deep within the heart, smaller than a grain of rice, barley, or mustard seed, smaller even than a millet grain or millet kernel. Strangely enough, it is also described as larger than the earth, the in-between region, and the sky, larger than even all the worlds put together.

The word *maya* occurs in the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad*. *Maya*, often translated as 'illusion', can be interpreted in other, different ways. It can mean ignorance (*avidya*), the inability to realize oneness with *brahman*, or the creative power of *ishvara* (god) from the human point of view. The idea of a cycle of death and rebirth is present in the Brahmanas and Upanishads. The *Shatapatha Brahmana* states that those who do not perform the sacrificial rites correctly will be born again and suffer death again. It also talks of a world where material pleasures are enjoyed by those who perform the sacrifices, and of a hell where evil doers are punished. The same text refers to the dead as having to face two fires. The good people pass through the fire unharmed, while wicked people perish in the flames. A person is born again after death and is punished or rewarded for his or her deeds.

Some of the Upanishads explain the doctrine of transmigration of soul. Death and rebirth are connected to ignorance and desire, and deliverance can be attained through knowledge. The Upanishads refer to three worlds—the worlds of humans, ancestors (*pitri*s), and gods. Those who will be reborn go after death to the world of the fathers, while those who are destined for immortality go to the world of the gods. The goal of Upanishadic thought is the realization of *brahman*. Liberation (*moksha, mukti*) from the cycle of *samsara* could only be achieved through such knowledge. This knowledge (*jnana*) could not be obtained through mere intellectual exertion. This was knowledge of an inner, intuitive, experiential kind, which could only come upon the seeker as a sort of revelation that would transform him instantaneously.

Upanishads such as the *Shvetashvatara* point towards yogic meditation as a means of realizing *brahman*. Performing of sacrifices and following an ethical code of conduct were of no use. In the *Chhandogya Upanishad*, Yajnavalkya tells Gargi that even if a man were to make offerings, perform sacrifices, and perform penance for thousands of years, it would not amount to anything. The same text states that people who performed sacrifices, recited the Veda, and gave gifts (*dana*), those who devoted themselves to the performance of austerities (*tapa*), and those who led a celibate life of student hood in their teacher's house studying the Veda—all these gain worlds earned by merit.

A person steadfast in the knowledge of *brahman*, on the other hand, attains immortality.

There were many different interpretations of Vedas; the most important being the Mimamsa. Of which the part that interprets the Karmakanda is called the Purva Mimasa and the part that interprets the Upanishadic thought was known as Uttara Mimamsa. Upanishadic thought reflects different ideas about *atman*, *brahman*, and the world, and statements such as *tat tvamasi* (Thou art that), *aham Brahm-asmi* (I am *brahman*), and *brahma-atma-aikyam* (unity of *brahman* and *atman*) can be interpreted in different ways. The *Bhagavad Gita* combined certain aspects of Upanishadic philosophy with a doctrine advocating righteous action. One of the most influential interpretations of the Upanishads was that of the 7th century thinker Shankara. According to Shankara'snon-dualistic Advaita Vedanta the Upanishads tell us that there is only one single, unified reality—*brahman*—and everything else exists with ambiguous reality. However, there is also a pantheistic strand in Upanishadic thought which identifies the universe with *brahman*. There is also a theistic strand of thought, which visualizes *brahman* as god who controls the world. Given the diversity and complexity of Upanishadic ideas, it is not surprising that later thinkers interpreted them inmany different ways.

The *Upanishads* lifted the religion from the folds of rituals and provided an intellectual conception of God. According to the *Upanishads,* 'The Universe is *Brahman,* but the *Brahman*is *Atman.* The *Brahman* is power which manifests itself in all things existing, it creates, sustains, preserves, and subsumes all worlds. This infinite divine power is identified with *Atman*, that which after stripping off everything external we discern in ourselves as our real and most essential being, our individual self, the soul.'

The *Upanishads* describe the material world as *Maya* or illusion, and one should not attach too much importance to it. The *Punarjanma* theory emphasizes that the body perishes and not the soul. The soul migrates or passes from one body to another. Thus, the cycle of births and deaths continues. The theory of *Karma* or action is intricately connected with the theory of transmigration of transmigration of the soul. According to the theory of *Karma,* the action of a man determines the nature of his life in the next birth. This cycle of birth and death can be brought to an end only by the realization of the nature of *Brahman* and the merger of the *Atman* into the *Brahman.* This is known as the *Moksha*. After the attainment of the *Moksha* there will be no rebirths and the man could be rid of the cycle of life and death.

Check your progress:
1] Examine the religious worldview of the Upanishads.

9.4 BUDDHISM

The sixth century B.C.E., constitutes an important landmark in the religious history of India. It was a period of great social change and intense religious activity leading to the rise of Buddhism which in course of time spread practically to the most of Asia. During this period many were no longer content with external formalities of Brahmanic rituals. The complex sacrifices involving the slaughter of animals and the predominance of the Brahmin priests in society and religion were disliked by many. Besides, the Shudras who were placed beyond the reach of Aryan culture felt neglected in the society.

In north-western India there were ascetics who tried to go beyond the Vedas. In the literature that grew out of this movement, the *Upanishads*, a new emphasis on renunciation and transcendental knowledge can be found. But north-eastern India, which was less influenced by the Aryans, became the breeding ground of many heterodox sects. Society in this area was troubled by the breakdown of tribal unity and the expansion of several petty kingdoms. Religiously, this was a time of doubt, turmoil, and experimentation. Among the most important movements to arise at and before the time of Buddha were the *Ajivikas,* who emphasized the rule of fate [*niyati*], and the Jainas, an ascetic movement stressing the need to free the soul from matter. Like Mahavira, Buddha also took up the cause of the socially backward, economically poor, and religiously ignored people. Out of the teachings of the Buddha, a new faith, Buddhism came into existence.

Life of Gautama Buddha:

Buddhism, like many of the sects that developed in north-eastern India at the time, was constituted by the presence of a charismatic teacher, Gautama Buddha. The term *Buddha,* literally meaning 'awakened one' or 'enlightened one', is not a proper name but rather a title. According to virtually all Buddhist traditions, the Buddha lived many lives before his birth as Gautama. These previous lives are described in stories called *Jatakas* that play an important role in Buddhist art and education.

Dr Upinder Singh states that in the Pali canon, the Buddha is presented as a man, but an extraordinary one, whose body bore the 32 signs of great man (*mahapurushalakshanas)*. He is the Tathagata, one who has come thus (*tatha*) and gone (*gata*) thus and has liberated himself from the cycle of rebirth. The dates of the Buddha's life are a subject of

debate. Some elements of his sacred biography are contained in the *Sutta* and *Vinaya Pitaka*s, but more detailed accounts are given in later texts such as the *Lalitavistara*, *Mahavastu*, *Buddhacharita*, and *Nidanakatha*. It is difficult to extract a historical life story out of the sacred biographies because they have moulded the Buddha's life into a narrative aimed at conveying a series of significant meanings to his followers.

While some of the episodes may have had a historical basis, some are of a semi-historical and semi-legendary in nature. Buddha was born as Siddhartha, son of Suddhodana, chief of the Sakya clan, who ruled from Kapilavastu. His mother Maya gave birth to him in a grove at Lumbini, while travelling towards her parents' home, and died within a few days. The story goes that soon after he was born, certain Brahmanas saw the 32 marks of a great man on his body. According to Buddhist tradition, a *mahapurusha*can be of two kinds—a world conqueror or world renouncer. Suddhodana did not want his son to turn his back on the world and hence took great pains to shield him from its sorrows, bringing him up in a highly artificial atmosphere, surrounded by luxury and pleasant things.

Siddhartha married a young woman named Yashodhara and they had a son named Rahula. The hagiography tells us that when he was 29 years old, Siddhartha saw four things that completely shattered his composure—an old man, a sick man, a corpse, and a renunciant. The first three scenes brought home to him the harsh realities of old age, sickness, and death, while the fourth pointed to the way of dealing with them. Siddhartha left his home and family and wandered around for six years, seeking the truth. He attached himself to teachers but was not satisfied by their instructions. Accompanied by five wandering ascetics, he practiced severe austerities until his body was emaciated. He then realized that he must nourish his body and try to attain peace of mind. His companions abandoned him, thinking he had compromised his ascetism. A young woman named Sujata offered him a bowl of milk-rice. Nourished with food, he once again sat under the *pipal* tree, resolving not to get up until he had attained enlightenment. Some texts describe his rising to progressively higher and higher states of knowledge through meditation. Others describe how a wicked being, Mara, tried to tempt and taunt him out of his meditative state, all in vain.

Siddhartha ultimately attained enlightenment and became known as the Buddha, the enlightened one. He sat for seven weeks near this spot, tempted to keep his extraordinary experience to himself. According to Buddhist tradition, god Brahma had to implore him three times to go forth and spread his insight. Buddha gave his first sermon on deliverance from suffering to his five former companions in a deer park near Benaras. This event is known as *dhammachakka-pavattana* (turning the wheel of *dhamma*). His first five disciples soon themselves realized the truth and became *arhat*s. The Buddha wandered about teaching his doctrine for over four decades. He established an order of monks and nuns known as the *sangha*. He died at the age of 80 at Kusinara (identified with modern Kasia).

Teachings of Buddhism:

1. Four Noble Truths: The *Dharmachakrapravartana Sutra* contains the fundamentals of the Buddha's teachings, the Four Noble Truths, and the Noble Eightfold Path, which are accepted as basic principles by all Buddhist sects. Buddha's repeated instruction to his disciples was to follow practical methods in order to arrive at the Truth. He emphasized on the need to remove ignorance, thirst, attachment etc., by a proper understanding of the four Noble Truths [*Aryasatyas*]. These four Noble truths are:

[1] that theworldly existence is full of misery [duhkha]
[2] that thirst, attachment, etc., are the causes ofworldly existence [*thrishna*]
[3] that worldly existence can be ended [*nirodha*] by the destruction of thirst etc. and
[4] that there is a path [*marga*] for the destruction of thirst etc.

2. Eightfold Path:

The exposition of the Eightfold Path [*Ashtangikamarga*] forms the theme of the *Dharmachakrapravartana Sutra* which is said to be the Buddha's first discourse. It is also known as the Middle Path [*madhamapratipat*] as it keeps clear of the two extreme ways of life. One being that of ease and luxury and the other of rigorous asceticism. This path allowed a monk to live a life of moderate comfort, with the bare requirements of food, clothing and residence. The eight principles advocated by Buddha are: right speech, right action, right means of livelihood, right efforts, right mindedness, right meditation, right views, and right resolution.

3. Karma and Rebirth:

The philosophy of Buddhism is intensely rationalistic. It believes in the laws of *karma* and rebirth. The present is determined by the past. The belief in rebirth or *samsara*, as a potentially endless series is associated with the doctrine of karma. According to the doctrine of karma, good conduct brings a good result and bad conduct brings bad results. Some *karmas* bear fruit in the same life, some in the succeeding life and others in future lives. Buddhism popularized the idea of rebirth with the *Jataka* stories, relating to the previous birth of Buddha and his final victory over evil.

4. Nirvana:

The ultimate aim and object of Buddhism is *Nirvana*, extinction of the desire for rebirth. It is free from grief and impurityand is the highest desired goal. In order to achieve Nirvana, Buddha asked his followers to be pure in thought, word and deed.He laid down ten precepts (*dasasila*) to be observed by his followers.

1. Not to covet others' property.
2. Not to kill

3. Not to use intoxicants.
4. Not to tell lies
5. Not to commit adultery
6. Not to take part in singing and dancing
7. Not to use ointments, flowers or perfumes.
8. Not to eat at odd hours
9. Not to sleep on comfortable beds
10. Not to accept or keep money.

The first five precepts (*panchasila*) were to be observed by the lay followers also along with the monks. Buddha prescribed a practical code of conduct for his disciples and discouraged philosophical speculations to attain Nirvana.

5. Emphasis on Character:

Buddhism is essentially a moral code. Buddha laid great emphasis on moral life rather than worship. The rules of morality insisted on speaking truth, love, obedience to parents and respect to elders, living a life of chastity, charity, kindness, and mercy to the sick and to all living beings.

6. Belief in Non-violence [Ahimsa]:

Non-violence was another chief feature of the teachings of the Buddha. According to him the spirit of love is more important than good deeds. He considered non –violence towards life as an integral part of practical morality.

7. Agnostic Approach towards God:

In his religious teachings, the Buddha may be called agnostic. He neither accepted nor rejected the existence of God. He refused to be drawn into any theoretical discussion about God or nature of the soul. Whenever he was asked about God or gods, he either maintained silence or pointed out that gods also were governed by the eternal law of Karma.

8. Rejection of the Caste System:

The Buddha refused to recognize the religious significance of the caste system that was a long established and respected institution in India. Thus, Buddhism was a welcome relief to the masses from caste-ridden Brahmanism. By abolishing caste distinctions, the Buddha raised the status of the people who belonged to the lower castes.

Check your progress:

1] Examine some of the teachings of Buddhism.

9.5 JAINISM, Early Jainism

THE JAINA TIRTHANKARAS, VARDHAMANA MAHAVIRA

Dr Upinder Singh mentions that the Jaina doctrine is much older than the Buddhist one, but it is difficult to say precisely how old it is. Buddha and Mahavira were contemporaries and there are some similarities between their teachings, for instance in their rejection of the authority of the Veda, their non-theistic doctrine, emphasis on renunciation and human effort as means to attaining salvation, and establishment of monastic orders for men and women. However, there are also many differences in their philosophical ideas.

The word Jaina means follower of a *jina*, which means victor, a person who has attained infinite knowledge and teaches others how to attain *moksha*, i.e., liberation from the cycle of rebirth. *Tirthankara* is another word for *jina* and means 'ford builder,' i.e., one who builds fords that help people across the ocean of suffering. The Jaina conception of time consists of an endless sequence of half-cycles called *utsarpini*s and *avasarpini*s, lasting vast spans of time, and further divided into six stages known as *kala*s. There are supposed to be 24 *tirthankara*s in each half-cycle of time. In our current half-cycle, which is an *avasarpini*, i.e., a period of regressive happiness, the first *tirthankara* was Rishabhadeva. According to Dr. Upinder Singh, the historicity of all the *tirthankara*s is not easy to ascertain. Neminatha, the 22nd one, may have belonged to the Saurashtra region of Gujarat. The 23rd *tirthankara* was Parshvanatha, who lived in Benaras. Vardhamana was the 24th *tirthankara* and came to be known as Mahavira (great hero). All the *jina*s were supposed to have taught the same doctrine.

The *jina*is considered a human being endowed with superhuman insight and knowledge. According to Jaina tradition, he is born with certain unusual characteristics that mark him out for his future destiny. For example, he has a tough body, one that is extremely hard and brilliant, like a diamond. He possesses *avadhijnana*—superhuman cognition or psychic power, through which he can see far-away things and foresee future events.

At some point in its early history, perhaps by *c.* 300 CE, the Jaina*sangha* came to be divided into two sects—the Digambara (sky-clad) and the Shvetambara (white-clad). There are two different hagiographies of Vardhamana Mahavira—a Digambara and a Shvetambara versions, which agree on some points, but disagree on some others. Extracting a historical biography of Mahavira out of the hagiographical material is as difficult as in the case of the Buddha according to Dr. Upinder Singh.

Vardhamana, the future Mahavira, was born in *c.* 599 BCE at Kundagrama, a city near Vaishali, capital of Videha. Like the Buddha, Mahavira had a noble Kshatriya background. His father Siddhartha was chief of the Jnatri clan, his mother Trishala was the Videha king's sister.

According to Shvetambara tradition, Vardhamana was conceived by a Brahmana named Rishabhadatta in the womb of his wife Devananda, but Shakra (Indra) transferred the embryo to the womb of Trishala because a Brahmana woman or one from a low family was not worthy of giving birth to the future *tirthankara*.

Vardhamana is described as displaying extraordinary concern for *ahimsa* (non-injury) even before birth. He lay still in Trishala's womb so as not to cause her discomfort and moved slightly to reassure her when he realized through his superhuman powers the made her suspect that he was dead in her womb. According to Shvetambara tradition, having realized how easy it was to cause parents pain and anxiety, Vardhamana vowed there and then not to renounce the world as long as his parents were alive.

The *Acharanga Sutra* describes Vardhamana's parents as followers of the *jina* Parshvanatha. Shvetambara tradition states that Vardhamana entered the householder stage by marrying Yashoda and had a daughter named Priyadarshana. According to Digambara tradition, he never got married. Vardhamana is supposed to have renounced the world when he was 30 years old. The Shvetambara account asserts that he did so after his parents' death. Digambara tradition tells us that he did so while his parents were alive, after taking their permission.

Digambara and Shvetambara traditions both describe Vardhamana as wandering about for about 12 years, practicing severe austerities, including meditation, and fasting. He attained *kevalajnana*(infinite knowledge, omniscience) outside the town of Jrimbhikagrama, on the banks of the Rijupalika river, in the field of a householder named Samaga. According to Digambara tradition, on attaining enlightenment, Mahavira was freed from the defects of ordinary human existence such as hunger, thirst, sleep, fear, and disease. He no longer engaged in mundane activities and sat fixed and omniscient in the lotus posture in an assembly hall created by the gods. A divine sound (*divyadhvani*) emanated from his body, and the gods, demi-gods, humans, and animals listened carefully to it.

The task of disseminating the teaching was that of the *ganadhara*s (chief disciples). The first one was the Brahmana Indrabhuti Gautama and his two brothers, who also became the first members of the *sangha*. The number of *ganadhara*s soon expanded to 11, all of them Brahmanas. Thus, the *tirthankara* created the order of monks, nuns, and laity indirectly. Shvetambara tradition, on the other hand, describes Mahavira as travelling widely and teaching his doctrine himself. Both traditions agree that he died at Papa, i.e., Pava (identified with modern Pavapuri near Patna) at the age of 72 and became a *siddha*—fully liberated and forever free of embodiment. The traditional date of his passing away is 527 BCE, which marks the beginning of the Vira-nirvana.

Worldview of Jainism

The Jaina criticism of other philosophical systems is that their statements about reality are a single (*ekanta*), partial, and extreme view of things i.e., they accept only one of the seven standpoints. The views of other schools are considered as partially true statements (*naya*s), which cannot lay claim to absolute validity. Jaina doctrine insists that reality is multiple (*anekanta*). Everything that exists (*sat*, i.e., being) has three aspects—substance (*dravya*), quality (*guna*), and mode (*paryaya*). The Jaina doctrine of *anekantavada* states that reality is very complex and has multiple aspects. According to A. M. Ghatage, It is called the theory of *Syadvada* or the theory of may be. To a question 'Is there a soul?', Jainism would provide seven answers; is, is not, is and is not, is unpredictable, is and is unpredictable, is not and is unpredictable and is, is not and is unpredictable.

The doctrines of *anekantavada* and *syadavada* emphasize the relativity of all knowledge. According to *syadavada*, every judgement we make is relative to the aspect of the object we are judging and the point of view from which we judge it. No judgement is true without qualification. The essential point behind *syadavada* and *anekantavada*is that reality cannot be grasped in its entirety and complexity. All that is possible are a number of partially true statements about it. Every statement about reality should be prefixed with the word *syat*('maybe', or more appropriately in this context, 'in some respect'). Another word that is added to all such statements is *eva* (in fact). Together, the words *syat* and *eva*, added to all statements, emphasize that such statements refer only to a particular aspect of reality from a particular perspective. So, with the addition of '*syateva*', the statement that the *jiva* (soul) is eternal would be accepted as partially true from a certain point of view. But the statement that the *jiva*is not eternal, preceded with the words *syateva*, would also be accepted as partially true from another point of view.

Dr Upinder Singh mentions in her book that every statement about any aspect of reality is conditional on four factors—the specific being (*sva-dravya*), specific location (*sva-kshetra*), specific time (*sva-kala*), and the specific state (*sva-bhava*) of the thing that is being spoken of. These ideas are further developed to construct the theory of *sapta-bhangi-naya*(the seven-fold *naya*s). Existent reality consists of three basic categories—sentient (i.e., that which has consciousness), material, and neither sentient nor material. The sentient category is represented by the *jiva*(translated as sentient essence, life, or soul). Matter is the second category and is made of aggregates of atoms (*pudgala*), which have form, colour, taste, and smell, and can be touched and felt. The third category is known as *arupi-ajiva*. It includes four substances (*dravya*)—space (*akasha*), the principle of motion (*dharma*), the principle of rest (*adharma*), and time (*kala*).

Jaina philosophy conceives of an infinite number of *jiva*s. The *jiva*does not have a form of its own. In the way in which light from a lamp fills up a room, it acquires the size and form of the body it inhabits and

becomes co-extensive with it. The *jiva*has three main qualities—consciousness (*chaitanya*), bliss (*sukha*), and energy (*virya*). Jaina doctrine holds that *jiva*s transmigrate due to *karma*, but its ideas of transmigration and *karma* are unique. *Karma* is understood as consisting of material particles floating about in space. Karmic matter is of different kinds; some have a directly negative effect on the *jiva*, others do not. The major culprits are the *mohaniya* (delusion-causing) *karma*s. The *karma* particles obscure and obstruct the consciousness, bliss, and energy of the *jiva*, in the way in which dust mars the reflective power of a mirror. The *karma* particles are attracted towards the *jiva* due to its association with the passions, desire, and hatred. The state when the *karma* particles begin to flow towards the *jiva* to bind it is known as *asrava* (flow). A *jiva* associated with *karma* particles is a *jiva*in bondage (*bandha*).

Some *jiva*s have an important quality known as *bhavyatva* which is the capability of becoming free. It does not get affected or overwhelmed by the *karma* particles. By hard work and right knowledge, the influx of fresh *karma* can be stopped (*samvara*). The next stage is that of *nirjara* (wearing out). In successive stages, through a change of consciousness and behaviour, the *jiva*can move from bondage to freedom. When the last *karma* particle has moved away from the *jiva*, ignorance disappears, and it is restored to its omniscient, ideal state. The cycle of *samsara* is broken, and *moksha* is attained. The ladder leading from ignorance to omniscience is visualized as having 14 rungs or stages of purification called *gunasthana*s. One who has entered the 13th stage of *kevalajnana* is known as an *arhat*. An *arhat* who has also already acquired the capability of teaching the doctrine is known as a *tirthankara*. The 14th stage is achieved by an *arhat* immediately before his death, when he is liberated from all activity and from the last few remaining *karma* particles. The final abode of liberated souls is a world called *siddha-loka*.

THE JAINA DISCIPLINE

The *triratna* (three gems) of Jainism consists of right faith (*samyag-darshana*), right knowledge, (*samyag-jnana*), and right conduct (*samyag-charitra*). There are five great vows (*panchamahavrata*) for monks and nuns i.e.

1. not to injure any living being (*ahimsa*);
2. not to utter any falsehood (*satya/sunrita*);
3. not to take what is not given, i.e., not to steal (*asteya*);
4. to lead a celibate life (*brahmacharya*); and
5. non-possession, to call nothing one's own (*aparigraha*). The aim of these vows is to bring about inner purification.

Ahimsa is central to Jainism, and it is the first vow for monks as well as the common people. The extent to which Jainas carry this principle is connected to their idea of different forms of life. Jaina doctrine recognizes four main forms of existence—of gods (*deva*), humans (*manushya*), hell beings (*naraki*), and animals and plants (*tiryancha*). The

animal and plant category is further sub-divided into smaller sub-categories on the basis of their sense faculties. The lowest category comprises the single-sense bodies (*ekendriya*). The lowest of these are the *nigoda*s, tiny organisms that only have one sense, that of touch. These are born together in clusters and their life lasts a fraction of a second. The *nigoda*s are supposed to be all over the place, and they also inhabit the bodies of plants, animals, and people. Above the *nigoda*s, slightly higher in the scale, are single-sense organisms that inhabit the various elements (*sthavara*). They are known as the earth bodies, water bodies, fire bodies, and air bodies.

Plant beings are higher in the scale—although they only have one sense, that of touch, they have a more complex structure and a longer life. Animals are still higher, as they have two to five senses. Those that have all five senses are classified into ones that are totally dependent on instinct and ones that have powers of reasoning. Injuring living beings is seen as detrimental from two points of view—it causes the victim to suffer and it harms the person who causes the injury. It is not only actions but the emotions and intentions behind actions that count. As injuring others draws on negative emotions and passions, it is detrimental to the achievement of salvation. Strict vegetarianism is thus the most important dietary rule for Jainas. Because it is believed that *nigoda*s are especially found in sweet and fermented substances, figs, honey, and alcohol are also forbidden. Even if an animal has not been killed for food but has died a natural death, its meat is not to be eaten, because dead flesh is considered a breeding ground for the *nigoda*s. The Shvetambaras made some exceptions—for instance, meat could be eaten if there was a famine or to cure an illness.

The monk is supposed to take the observation of *ahimsa* to a higher level in his daily living. Laypersons are supposed to avoid harming beings with two or more senses, but the renunciant is supposed to refrain from harming even single-sense beings (*ekendriya*) and element bodies (*sthavara*). Monks and nuns must not dig the earth, lest they kill earth bodies. They must avoid bathing, swimming, or walking in the rain, lest they kill water bodies. They must not light or extinguish flames, to avoid harming fire bodies. They must not fan themselves, to avoid harming air bodies. They must try not to walk on greenery nor touch living plants, to avoid harming plant bodies.

Of the differences in daily practices between Digambara and Shvetambara monks, the most important relates to clothing. Both traditions agree that Mahavira and his early disciples had moved around naked. The Digambaras follow that tradition strictly. According to them, a monk must renounce all possessions, including clothes. The only things a monk can carry are a small broom (*rajoharana*) for brushing insects away before sitting down and a water gourd (*kamandalu*) for toilet hygiene. The Shvetambaras, on the other hand, wear white robes; they view nudity as a practice that had fallen into abeyance and was now unnecessary. For the laity, the basic discipline consists of the *anuvrata*s, which are a modified

form of the *mahavrata*s of monks and nuns. The first three vows are the same as those enjoined on members of the *sangha*, but the last two are replaced by chastity and limiting one's needs. Theoretically, the lay path cannot lead to salvation. But Jainism managed to negotiate the tightrope between monasticism and the householder's life quite well. There was close integration of the monastic and lay community, right from the earliest times.

Although Jaina doctrine distinguishes between acceptable and unacceptable injury to living beings, certain occupations that necessarily involve killing—such as hunting and animal husbandry—are ruled out. The texts list six occupations—governing (*asi*), writing (*mashi*), farming (*krishi*), the arts (*vidya*), trade (*vanijya*), and the practice of various crafts (*shilpa*). Of these, governing and agriculture potentially involve injuring life (insects are destroyed while tilling the soil, while governing can involve warfare) and therefore tend to get ruled out. Trade is likely to cause less injury and it remains a preferred occupation for Jainas even today. The teaching for the laity also emphasized *dana*—giving alms to renunciants and other worthy recipients. The highest form of death for a person, whether renunciant or layperson, involved entering death by fasting and meditating.

Check your progress:
1] Discuss the religious worldview of Jainism.

9.6 TANTRIC CULTS–RISE, NATURE AND DOCTRINE

Tantra comes from the root 'tan' which implies to spread out or to extend. It may refer to a system of thought, a body of practices or a methodological device. Tantra deals with the practical aspects and methodological issues. Tantrism is worshipping image of God with rituals, and word symbols (mantras).

The early history of Tantrism, its chronology, and initial locality are difficult to reconstruct. It is also difficult to identify a nucleus of Tantric thoughts and practices, because of their diversity and the mystery that has always bordered them. Some general features of Tantra include the importance attached to energy, rituals, fierce deities, yogic practices, and physical rites. During this and later periods, the impact of Tantra was felt not only in Shaiva and Shakta sects, but also within the Buddhist fold, although to a much less extent in Jainism. Hindu and Buddhist Tantra share some broad similarities but have many philosophical differences.

Dr Singh states that the Tantric path was supposed to be a secret one, divulged by preceptors to select initiates. It involved the cultivation of beliefs and practices that were believed to lead to the attainment of supernatural powers and a state of liberation. The Tantra of early medieval India drew on diverse sources of inspiration including the Veda, Mimamsa, Sankhya, Yoga, and Vedanta, but it developed its own unique characteristics. Evidence for the worship of Tantric deities goes back to the 5th century, and some of the texts may also have been composed in this period. The early medieval period saw a further development of Tantric cults and practices.

Tantra considers Godhead as involving the union of a masculine and feminine aspect. Energy (*shakti*) is conceived of as feminine and is central to the Tantric view of the universe and liberation. Tantric practice is usually called *sadhana*. Initiation (*diksha*) into a sect involves ritual initiation, an important part of which is the imparting of a secret *mantra* by the guru to the initiate. *Mantra*s (prayers and formulae) and *bija*s (syllables associated with various deities, believed to have a mystic potency) have an important role. Mystic diagrams known as *yantra*s, *mandala*s, or *chakra*s, and symbolic gestures known as *mudra*s play an important role in rituals. Hathayoga postures and meditation (*dhyana*) are also important. All these are supposed to be harnessed towards awakening the *kundalini* energy that lies coiled like a serpent in the body, drawing it upwards towards union with the supreme.

Toward the end of the 5th century, the cult of the mother goddess assumed a significant place in Indian religious life. Shaktism, the worship of Shakti, the active power of the godhead conceived in feminine terms, should be distinguished from Tantrism, the search for spiritual power and ultimate release by means of the repetition of sacred syllables and phrases (mantras), symbolic drawings (*mandala*s), and other secret rites elaborated in the texts known as Tantras ("Looms").

In many respects the Tantras are similarto the Puranas. Theoretically, the Tantras deal with (1) knowledge, or philosophy, (2) Yoga, or concentration techniques, (3) ritual, which includes the construction of icons and temples, and (4) conduct in religious worship and social practice. In general, the last two subjects are the most numerous, while yoga tends to center on the mystique of certain sound-symbols (mantras) that sum up esoteric doctrines. The philosophy tends to be a syncretistic mixture of Sankhya and Vedanta thought, with special emphasis on the god's power, or *shakti*.

The Tantric texts can be divided into three classes: (1) Shaiva Agamas (traditions of the followers of Shiva), (2) Vaishnava Samhitas ("Collections of the Vaishnavas,"), and (3) Shakta Tantras ("Looms of the Followers of the Goddess Shakti"). However, they all have the common bond of venerating the Goddess. The surviving Hindu Tantras were written much later than many of those of Tantric Buddhism, which may have heavily influenced the Hindu texts. Although there is early evidence

of Tantrism and Shaktism in other parts of India, the chief centers of both were in Bengal, Bihar, and Assam.

1] Shaiva Agamas

Like much other Hindu sacred literature, this literature is vast and spans several centuries. It is possible here to summarize only classes of texts within the various traditions. The sects of Agamic Shaivasencompass the Sanskritic Shaiva-Siddhanta in the north, the Lingayats or Virashaivas in Deccan and Karnataka and the Shaiva-Siddhanta of the Tamil tradition. The Shaiva-Siddhanta traditionally has 28 Agamas and 150 sub-Agamas. Their doctrine states that Shiva is the conscious principle of the universe, while matter is unconscious. Shiva's power, or *shakti*, personified as a goddess, causes bondage and release. She is also the magic Word, and thus her nature can be sought out and meditated upon in mantras.

Kashmiri Shaivism begins with the *Shiva-sutra*, or "Lines of Doctrine Concerning Shiva" (*c.* 850), as a new revelation of Shiva. The system embraces the *Shivadristi* ("A Vision of Shiva") of Somananda (950), in which emphasis is placed on the continuous recognition of Shiva; the world is a manifestation of Shiva brought about by his *shakti*. The system is called *trika* ("triad"), because it recognizes the three principles of Shiva, Shakti, and the individual soul. Virashaiva texts begin at about 1150 with the *Vachana* ("Sayings") of Basava. The sect worships Shiva exclusively, rejects the caste system in favour of its own social organization, and is highly structured, with monasteries and gurus.

2. Vaishnava Samhitas

The Vaikhanasas are a small community of temple priests belonging to the Taittiriya division of Krishna Yajur Veda. It has heavy ritualistic orientation and is entirely Vedic in affiliation. Its viewpoint is that the pathway to final emancipation is not devotion alone, but iconic worship (*Samurtarcana*) done with devotion (*bhakti*). Their rituals are conducted as ordained by the *Tait-triya-brahmana* texts. These consist of two groups of texts, Vaikhanasa Samhitas and Pancharatra Samhitas, which together include more than 200 titles, though the official number is 108. Vaikhanasa Samhitas are collections of the Vaishnava school of Vaikhanasas, who were originally ascetics. They seem to have been the original temple manuals for the Bhagavatas (devotees of Vishnu), which by the 11th or 12th century had become supplanted by the Pancharatra Samhitas.

Pancharatra Samhitas:

The precise origin of Pancharatra Samhita is difficult to discern. But it is believed to have been crystallized within the framework of Bhagavata cult two centuries prior to Christian era. It centers around Narayana as the supreme Godhead. This was popularized in south by Ramanujacharya who lived between 1017-1137 C.E. Pancharatra Samihitawere collections of the Vaishnava school of Pancharatra—"System of the Five Nights". The philosophy of the latter is largely a matter of cosmogony. They claim to have originated from the Sruti

literature and have been greatly inspired by Yoga teachings. The Lakshmi Tantra declares that surrender to the goddess Lakshmi as well as to Vishnu is necessary for salvation. The emotional and spiritual surrender is marked with a ritual in which the devotee transfers the burden of his salvation to Lakshmi and Vishnu, is given a new name, and is branded with the marks of Vishnu on his upper arms.

Apart from their theology, in which for the first time the notion of *shakti* is introduced into Vaishnavism, the Vaishnava Samhitas are important because they give an exposition of Vaishnava temple and home rituals. The texts also maintain that the supreme god Krishna Vasudeva manifests himself in four coequal "divisions" (*vyuha*s), representing levels of creation. God has the primary creation started by his *shakti*. In the primary creation, Shakti manifests herself as a female creative force. Stress is laid on manifestation of God in the consecrated image —"iconic incarnation"—in which the divine being is actually manifestin the consecrated stone statue, which thus becomes an icon; therefore, the icon can be worshipped as God himself.

3. Shakta Tantras

Shaktism in one form or another has been known since Bana (*c.* 650) wrote his *Hundred Couplets to Chandi* (*Chandi-shataka*) and Bhavabhuti his play *Malati Madhava* (early 8th century), about the adventures of the hero Madhava and his beloved Malati; both of these works refer to Tantric practices. There is no traditional authoritative list of Tantric texts, but many are extant.

Shaktism is an amalgam of Shaivism and mother goddess traditions. The Shaiva notion that Shiva's *shakti*, not Shiva himself, is active is taken to the extreme. Without Shakti, Shiva is a corpse, and Shakti is the creator as well as creation. Another important notion (partly derived from Yoga philosophy) is that throughout the body there are subtle canals that carry esoteric powers connected with the spinal cord, at the bottom of which the Goddess is coiled around the lingam as *kundalini* ("coil"); she can be made to rise through the body to the top, whereupon release from samsara takes place.

Physical symbolism and magic are other fringe aspects of Tantra. They are condemned by the Sankara and other Acharyas. The notion of *puja* (worship) in Tantra involves transforming the worshipper into the deity. It is often associated with five elements (*panchatattva*)—namely *mada* (alcohol), *mamsa* (meat), *matsya* (fish), *mudra* (generally parched grain), and *maithuna* (physical relations). Tantrism was divided into a number of sects, the principal ones associated with the worship of Vishnu, Shiva, and Shakti. The various sects had their own texts, most of the important ones being in Sanskrit. There was a close relationship between the Shaiva and Shakti cults as the deities Shiva and Shakti were considered closely related. The most important early Tantric sect among the Vaishnavas was the Pancharatra. The Sahajiyas of Bengal were a later sect belonging to the Tantric variety of Vaishnavism. The Shaiva Tantric

sects such as the Kapalikas, Kalamukhas, and Nathas came to the fore in the early medieval period. Apart from the existence of probably small groups of Tantric practitioners, there was the larger phenomenon of a widespread impact of Tantrism on non-Tantric cults and traditions.

One among the Shakta Tantras are the *Kularnava-tantra* ("Ocean of Tantrism") It gives details on the "left-handed" cult forms of ritual copulation (i.e., those that are not part of traditional Hindu practice); the *Kulachudamani* ("Crown Jewel of Tantrism"), which discusses ritual; and the *Sharadatilaka* ("Beauty Mark of the Goddess Sharada") of Lakshmanadeshika (11th century), which focuses almost exclusively on magic. The goddess cults eventually centered around Durga, the consort of Shiva, in her fiercer aspect.

Check your progress:
1] Examine some of the Tantic texts.

9.7 QUESTIONS

1. Examine the evolution of religious belief in the Vedic period.
2. Evaluate the nature of relationship between Atman and Brahmanas discussed in the Upanishads.
3. Asses the philosophy of Jainism
4. Review the philosophy of Buddhism.

9.8 ADDITIONAL READINGS

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Module - IV
Economic Transformations

Unit - 10

IRON TECHNOLOGY, SETTLED AGRICULTURE AND RISE OF URBANIZATION.

Unit Structure :

10.0 OBJECTIVES

1. To study Early Iron Age Cultures in the Subcontinent.
2. To analyse the impact of Iron Technology
3. To orient students about settled agriculture in Early India
4. To study the rise of Urbanisation in Ancient India.

10.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit looks at the economic transformations that took place over a period of time in ancient India. Iron technology played a crucial role in the development of settled agriculture and the rise of urbanisation in ancient India. Discovery of the metal revolutionized life in a major way. Iron is an important metal which has influenced the march of civilization for over 5000 years. The ancient scriptures and legends have extensive references about the use of iron. The archaeological evidence show that iron was being made all over India and there were no written records of the process of manufacturing iron. The technology had been handed over from generation to generation within a limited group.

10.2 EARLY IRON AGE CULTURES OF THE SUBCONTINENT

Dr Upinder Singh has examined the transition to the Iron Age. All over the world, the iron age comes after the copper-bronze age. The transition from copper to iron raises several questions: Was iron smelting an accidental by-product of copper smelting? Were the smelting and working of iron well within the range of the technical expertise of coppersmiths, or did they involve a gigantic technological leap? After using metals such as copper and bronze for so many centuries, why did some communities start making and using iron tools?

There are certain important technological aspects to the issue. Iron is a dense metal. Copper melts at 1083°C, while iron melts at the much higher temperature of 1534°C. Therefore, the smelting of iron requires furnaces that can maintain very high temperatures. Iron ore has more impurities than copper ores and requires the maintenance of a number of conditions for successful smelting. A temperature of 1250°C has to be maintained in the furnace for the separation of unwanted gangue materials from smelted material. A good blast of air has to be supplied to the furnace, along with constant supplies of fuel. Another important prerequisite is the efficient use of fluxes. A flux is a smelting aid, a substance added to molten ore, which combines with impurities to form slag that can be extracted. The technology of carburization—heating the iron in association with carbon to make steel—was another important step that had to be mastered before iron came into widespread use.As at 1150 to 1250 degree one would get lumps known as bloom (pure iron with some slag), they had to further heat the blooms in high temperature and hammer them to remove impurities. Bowl furnaces were constructed by digging a small hole in the ground and arranging for air from a bellows to be introduced through a pipe or tuyere. Stone-built shaft furnaces, on the other hand, relied on natural draft, although they too sometimes used tuyeres. Both the methods must have been used in Ancient India. In Kodumanal, a megalithic site in western Tamil Nadu, bowl furnaces have been found in excavations.

The evidence of iron lumps, pieces, or artefacts from chalcolithic levels at sites such as Lothal, Mohenjodaro, Pirak, Allahdino, Ahar, and Gufkral indicates that certain Chalcolithic communities were familiar with iron and were able to smelt it from the ores. Iron may have initially been extracted accidentally in the copper-smelting furnace when sufficiently high temperatures were attained, if there was iron oxide in the copper ore, or if a hematite flux was used to smelt these ores. But this represented an initial, experimental stage. The large-scale use of iron and the achievement of technical finesse in iron working was something that happened gradually and at a later stage.

Copper ores are not as widely available as iron ores, and it is possible that a shrinking of trade networks may have given an impetus

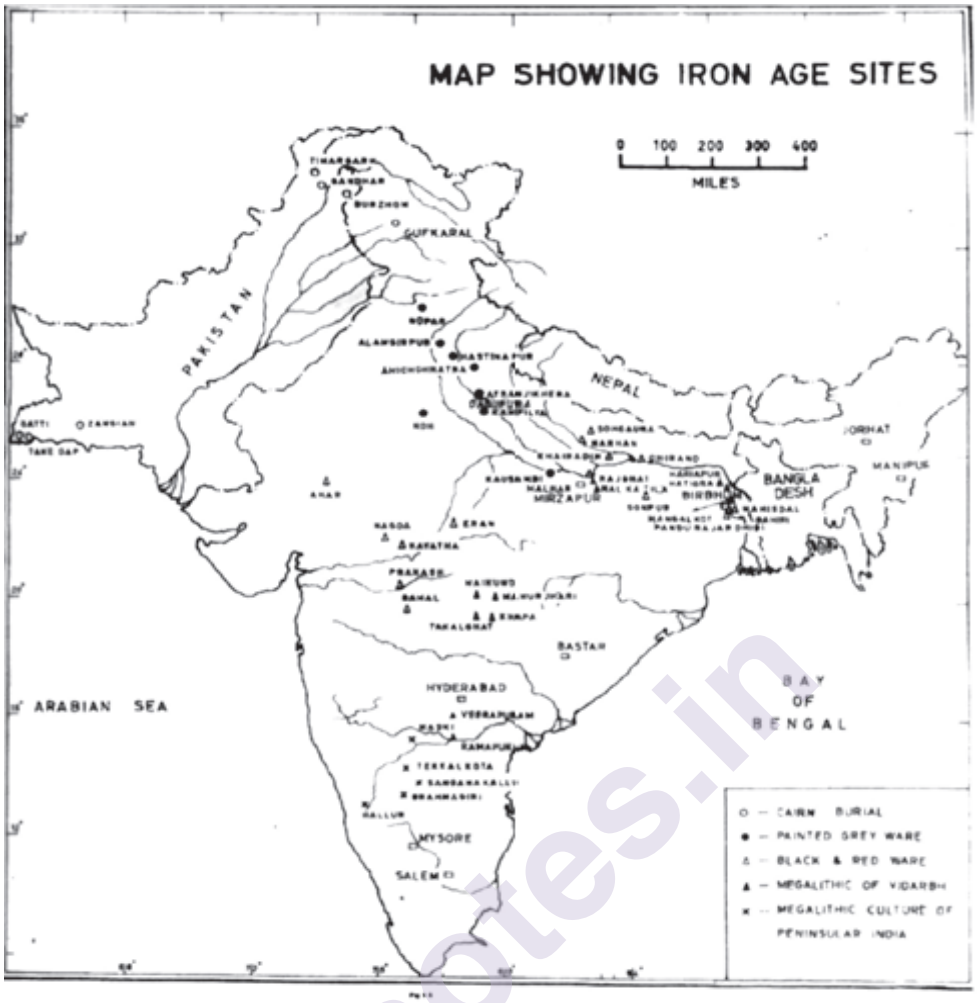
towards replacement of copper with iron. This was especially so once the requisite technological knowledge of iron smelting and working had been achieved, and people realized the superiority of iron over copper and bronze in terms of hardness and durability.

The beginning of iron technology is not the same thing as the beginning of the Iron Age. A distinction must be made between the presence of a few iron objects at a site and a significant use of iron. But how is 'significant use' to be assessed? This has to be done on the basis of the total volume of iron artefacts found and in relation to those of other metals and materials, and by their nature and purpose. It is necessary to try to identify when people started using iron for everyday activities, especially for production purposes. In the case of the agricultural societies, it is necessary to try to identify when iron implements were used in agricultural operations for making tools such as ploughs, hoes, and sickles. This marks the beginning of the Iron Age.

Iron ores are found in all parts of the subcontinent, except the alluvial river valleys. Evidence from later Vedic texts suggests familiarity with iron. Iron was used in agriculture in the Indo-Gangetic divide and upper Ganga valley in *c.* 1000–500 BCE. The evidence from archaeology gives more detailed and specific evidence for the beginning of iron technology and the beginning of the Iron Age in various parts of the subcontinent.

At least six early iron-using centers can be identified in the subcontinent. They are Baluchistan and the north-west; the Indo-Gangetic divide and the upper Ganga valley; Rajasthan;

Eastern India; Malwa and Central India; Vidarbha and the Deccan; and South India. All these centers are in or near iron ore resources and all of them have given evidence of pre-industrial smelting. There is a widely prevalent belief that iron technology was introduced into the subcontinent by the Indo- Aryans. Chakrabarti's analysis indicates that there is no evidence that iron technology diffused into the Indian subcontinent from West Asia or anywhere else. Since, iron ore is widely found in South India, the smelting technology might have started there. The use of iron in central and South India seems to have started earlier than in the north-west or the Ganga valley. Though the earlier estimate was that the metal seems to have entered the productive system in most parts of the subcontinent by800 BCE, the recent excavations in Adichanallur, Mangadu, Thelunganur, Porunthal and Kodumanal and the carbon dating here suggests a date of 3750 BC and the production of steel to around 1500 BCE. In Assam, Orissa, and Gujarat, there is no evidence of iron before the historical period. The picture in the Punjab plains and Sindh is unclear.



Source: Indian Journal of History of Science, 46.3 (2011) 381-410[Ancient Indian Iron and Steel: An Archaeometallurgical Study by B Prakash]

Check your progress:
1] Examine the early iron age cultures of the subcontinent.

10.3 INTRODUCTION OF IRON TECHNOLOGY IN ANCIENT INDIA

The middle Gangetic basin has had an average annual rainfall between 114 and 140 cm. We come to know about this from references to the four great forests (Mahaaranyas). Some modern place names also indicate that they are derived from forests. For example, Arrah is derived from ancient aranya or forest, Saran from Naimisharanya and Champaran from Champaranya.

The large-scale spread of agriculture in an area under thick forest cover was possible due to the greater use of iron tools and implements for clearing the land. Iron tools were also used for various agricultural operations. The use of bellows, hammers, anvils etc. made possible the manufacture of iron tools and implements on a large scale. Textual references to iron plough shares are many, and archaeological evidence, is comparatively weak.

Iron ploughshares are found at Ropar, Jakhera, Kaushambi, Raghuasoi (near Vaishali, Rajghat (Banaras) etc. The mention of the Kuddala (hoe/spade) and Kuddalika in a brahmanical text suggests that the use of iron ploughshare was supplemented by that of hoe. All this indicates the diffusion of iron technology. More importantly, iron tools and implements were used, for purposes other than war.

Check your progress:
1] Discuss the introduction of iron technology in ancient India.

10.4 THE IMPACT OF IRON TECHNOLOGY

Upinder Singh has comprehensively looked at the impact of iron technology. She states that there is often a time lag between the beginnings of a technology, its maturation, and its significant impact. Small quantities of iron are found at a few sites in early 2nd millennium BCE. The metal became more widespread in *c.* 1000–800 BCE. During *c.* 800–500 BCE, the use of iron was known in all regions of the subcontinent. At this time most regions including the Ganga valley seem to have entered the Iron Age. However, in certain areas, this change took place much later.

There has been a decades-long debate over the impact of iron technology on the history of ancient India. This debate was due to the question of the role of technology in history. There was also a question of assessing the literary and archaeological evidence of iron. The debate has especially focused on the Ganga valley in the 1st millennium BCE. According to Dr. Upinder Singh, some of the older hypotheses are not supported by evidence and need to be discarded. For example, many decades ago, D. D. Kosambi suggested that the eastern movement of the Indo-Aryans was to reach the iron ores of south Bihar. A near-monopoly over these ores was responsible for the political dominance attained by the state of Magadha in south Bihar in early historical times. These hypotheses are on shaky ground, given the very wide distribution of iron ores in the subcontinent. Chemical analysis of early iron artefacts at

Atranjikhera points to the hills between Agra and Gwalior, not Bihar, as the probable source of ores.

R. S. Sharma highlighted the role of iron axes in clearing the forests of the Ganga valley and iron ploughs in agricultural expansion in this area. He argued that the use of these implements was responsible for generating an agricultural surplus, which paved the way for the second phase of urbanization. Religions such as Buddhism were a response to the new socio-economic milieu generated by iron technology. Many aspects of this hypothesis were questioned. A. Ghosh and Niharranjan Ray argued that the forests of the Ganga valley could have been cleared through burning.

It was pointed out that Sharma's argument was not supported by archaeological data. The impact of iron technology was gradual. It manifested itself in the mid-NBPW [Northern Black Polished Ware] phase when urbanization was well underway. Socio-political factors had an important role to play in the historical transformations of the Ganga valley in the 1st millennium BCE. Makkhan Lal described the idea of large-scale forest clearance using the iron axe and the generation of an agricultural surplus through the use of the iron plough as a myth. He argued that there was no significant increase in the use of iron from PGW [Painted Grey Ware] to NBPW levels. Iron technology was not an essential prerequisite for an agricultural surplus or urbanization. He stated that the Bihar iron ores were not tapped during this period and the Ganga plains remained heavily forested till as late as the 16th and 17th centuries CE.

Technology is certainly an extremely important factor in history, but it must be considered along with other variables. Archaeological data indicates that the beginning of iron technology in parts of the Ganga valley can be traced to the 2nd millennium BCE. The earliest iron artefacts occur in BRW[Black and Red Ware] or PGW contexts. The use of iron and its impact increased gradually over the centuries and is reflected in the increase in the number and range of iron objects in the NBPW phase. While the expansion of agriculture must certainly have involved some amount of land clearance, large tracts of land continued to be forested. Massive deforestation in the Ganga valley and in the subcontinent in general is a feature of the colonial period, when the extension of the railways, increase in population, and the commercialization of agriculture led to a dramatic, unprecedented reduction in forest cover, as mentioned in Upinder Singh's book.

In Eastern India around 1000 B.C.E., the locals were initiated into the iron technology. Many sites including Pandu, Rajar Dhibi, Barudih, Chirand, mongolkot, Bahiri, Hatikra, GolbaiSasan and Badmal were notable iron age sites. The easy availability of iron ore in the region led to the new craft of solid-to-solid transfer of iron ore into spongy mass a viable occupation. People also practiced the technique of tempering and quenching in steel making. Scholars believe that iron technology was initiated independently of the progress made in the Ganga valley.

In far south it was during the iron age there was an extensive horizontal mobility of the society. Micro-settlements emerged all over Tamilnadu during this phase. The megalithic culture was the end phase of the iron age before it ushered in the Sangam age. The Sangam literature talks about the megalithic practices of the previous phase. There is a belief that communities using metal in everyday life entered Tamilnadu from Karnataka and Andhra though the recent excavations in many megalithic sites of Tamilnadu question that assumption. The North west and north eastern Tamilnadu became the nucleus of the iron age culture. The migration could have been due to abundance of iron ore availability in the Salem region. Excavations in sites such as Guntur (Andhra), Mullikkadu, Dharmapuri, Paiyampalli, Appukkallu, and in Coimbatore suggests the presence of a community specialized in agropastoral economy. The profuse occurrence of iron artefacts. The iron age population diffusion into interior Tamilnadu happened through the valleys of major rivers or through their tributaries. The community migration in iron age to areas where trade and commerce flourished leading to establishment of large towns led to the transition from pre-historic to early historic culture in the region.

Check your progress:
1] Examine the impact of iron technology.

10.5 CONCLUSION

Literature and archaeology reveal the varied cultural mosaic of the subcontinent between *c.* 2000 and 500 BCE. During these centuries, many parts of the subcontinent made the transition from the Chalcolithic to the Iron Age. Historians have used the Vedic texts to identify broad patterns of historical change in the north-west and the upper Ganga valley. Archaeology outlines the features of the everyday life of people living in these and other parts of the subcontinent. The evidence indicates many settlements relying on a well-established and stable agricultural base with a two-crops-a-year cycle, supplemented by animal domestication and hunting. In some areas, there was a two-tiered hierarchy of settlements, with a small number of fairly large settlements, sometimes fortified, supporting substantial populations. Traditions of specialized crafts and metallurgical techniques for iron crafting become visible in most areas. There is also evidence of inter-regional and long-distance trade in raw materials and finished products. All this suggests increasing levels of socio-economic complexity. Archaeological evidence from Inamgaon in Deccan reflects a chiefdom stage of society and polity, while later Vedic texts reflect the process of transition from tribe to territorial state in the Ganga valley.

10.6 SETTLED AGRICULTURE

1. THE EARLIEST VILLAGE SETTLEMENTS IN THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT, C. 7000–3000 BCE

a. THE NORTH-WEST

Several sites in Baluchistan illustrate the change from a semi-nomadic pastoral life towards settled agriculture. The oldest and best documented evidence comes from Mehrgarh. This site is located in the Bolan valley which was an important link between the Indus plains and the mountainous valleys of north Baluchistan, and people and animals must have moved along this route from very early times. Excavations at Mehrgarh revealed the remains of ancient settlements scattered over an area of about 200 hectares on a low mound and the surrounding plain. Seven occupational levels were identified, giving striking evidence of continuous occupation and of cultural continuity and change over many millennia. The first six levels, i.e., Periods, are relevant for us here.

Periods I and II at Mehrgarh are considered Neolithic, even though there is a small amount of Copper present. The remains of Period I (sub-divided into Periods IA and IB) were located in an 11 m thick deposit at the northern end of the site, on the high bank of the Bolan river. The majority of the dates fall between 6000 and 5500 BP (*c.* 5000 BCE, calibrated). The people of Period I lived in houses made of handmade mudbricks with small, rectangular rooms. One of the rooms at the lowest levels of Period I, measuring 2 × 1.8 m, had reed impressions on the floor and a grinding stone. The bricks used for house walls were of a standardized size, with rounded ends and finger impressions on their upper surface. Some of the structures divided into small units may have been granaries.

The stone tools of Period I included thousands of microliths, most of them based on blades. A few ground Neolithic handaxes (celts) were also found. Some of the blades were set into wooden handles with a thick layer of bitumen and may have been used as sickles to harvest grain. Grinding stones indicate food processing. There were a few stone vessels and objects such as perforated discs and spatulae incised with a crisscross design. Bone tools, including needles and awls, were also found, as was a handmade clay female figurine. Mehrgarh I was basically a-ceramic, i.e., it had no pottery; the first few pieces of pottery appeared in Period IB.

Mehrgarh has the location with the oldest known cotton in the Indian subcontinent. It suggests that while some agricultural practices may have spread east to the Indus valley, others, like rice and perhaps cotton and crops that could rotate with other crops may have spread westwards from the Indus region. The many river eco-systems would have allowed ample time for experimentation and the perfection of different crop strains.

In a Neolithic burial (6th millennium) at Mehrgarh, several threads preserved by mineralization in a copper bead were subject to rigorous metallurgical analysis and the fibres were identified as cotton. The exceptional preservation of cotton fibers represent a unique find. The preservation results exclusively from the corrosion process of copper in which metallic salts are liberated and can thus impregnate the organic material. This type of conservation is rare, especially for periods before the ‘‘true’’ metal ages.

Cotton, either in the form of fibers or seeds, has been identified at several other sites in South Asia. Remains of a cotton string, conserved inside a carnelian bead, was found in a 4th millennium grave at Shahi Tump in the Makran division of southern Balochistan. The situation is somewhat different at Dhuweila in eastern Jordan, where fibers and impressions of a woven cotton fabric were also found in a 4th millennium context. For ecological reasons, the Dhuweila cotton was most likely imported from elsewhere, perhaps from the Indian subcontinent. By the beginning of the 2nd millennium the evidence for both cotton fibres and seeds becomes more frequent, especially in the Indus Valley and Peninsular India. Fragments of a cotton fabric and a piece of cotton string were preserved in contact with a silver vessel at Mohenjo-daro.

The people of Period I buried their dead in the open spaces between their houses. Grave goods included bitumen-lined baskets and food offerings. The nearest source of marine shells is the Makran coast, about 500 km away. The presence of such items in the graves indicates that the people of Mehrgarh were engaged in some amount of long-distance exchange.

In Period IB, a graveyard consisting of 150 burials covering over 220 sq m was unearthed. The burials were more elaborate than before. A small niche was cut into one side of a pit, and the body and grave goods were placed inside. The niche was then sealed with a wall made of mud-brick, after which the pit was filled up. A few copper beads were found in the burials. There are some instances of double burials and also of secondary burials, where the bones of one or more people were collected and buried after exposing the body to the elements. The significance of these changes in burial practices is unclear.

Period II at Mehrgarh, dated *c.* 6000–4500 BCE, is divided into three sub-phases—A, B, and C.

The size of the settlement increased during this period and there were several mud-brick structures divided into small cell-like compartments. Some of these may have been houses, but others may have been used for storage. For instance, double rows of small rooms with a passage in between, with barley seeds on the floors, may have been used to store grain. The stone and bone tool types of Period I continued. There were two sickles made of microliths hafted onto a bitumen matrix. P. Vaughan’s microwear study of stone tools found in an area of Period IIA

indicates that most of them were connected with the working of animal products—activities such as butchery, cooking, hide processing, and the making of bone artefacts. Small amounts of handmade pottery occurred in the early part of Period II and wheel-made pottery appeared in Period IIC. In Period IIB, a copper ring and bead and a small ingot of copper were found.

Mehrgarh III belongs to the second half of the 5th millennium BCE and is chalcolithic. There is evidence of a significant increase in craft activities, including large-scale production of wheel-made pottery with painted decorations, marked by innovations and refinement in pottery-making techniques. A pottery-manufacturing area was found, where the bases of three ovens were exposed on top of an accumulation of 6 m of pottery debris.

Period III had storage complexes divided into compartments, similar to those of earlier phases. A large cemetery containing the burials of about 99 people shows changes in burial practices. The most remarkable aspect of Periods I–III is that they provide the earliest and most comprehensive evidence of subsistence activities in the region. It reveals the transition from hunting and food gathering to a heavy reliance on animal domestication and agriculture. Thousands of plant specimens were collected in the course of the Mehrgarh excavations. These included charred grains and seeds as well as impressions of grain on mud-brick. Barley seems to have been the most important crop.

In Period I, the predominant type of barley was six-row naked barley (has a covering, or hull, that is so loose that it usually falls off during harvesting). There were also other varieties - hulled six-row barley and wild and domesticated hulled two-row barley. The fact that wild, transitional, and domesticated varieties of barley were found at the site proves that north Baluchistan fell within the natural habitat zone of wild barley and that Mehrgarh was part of a large nuclear area of barley domestication. Wheat was another important crop. Grains of domesticated hulled einkorn wheat, emmer wheat, and naked wheat were found in Period I.

Whether Mehrgarh fell within the natural habitat zone of wild wheat is a matter of debate, as no clear evidence of wild wheat has so far been found in the area. But there is no doubt that the people of Mehrgarh were domesticating this cereal. Seeds of and dates were also found in Periods I and II. In Period II, in addition to barley and wheat, there were numerous seeds of cotton found in a hearth. Period III showed continuity with the earlier period, but also a diversification of agriculture. Two new varieties of wheat, and one of barley and a newcereal oats were identified. Wheat had become more important than barley. Not much is known about the methods of cultivation practised by the Neolithic and early Chalcolithic people of Mehrgarh. Farmers must have relied on winter rains and may have channelized water into their fields by building mud or stone embankments similar to the *gabarband*s made in the region today. Stone

sickles made by hafting tiny microliths onto wooden handles with bitumen must have been used for harvesting grain.

Neolithic Mehrgarh gives clear evidence of the transition from hunting to animal domestication.

The lower levels of Period I were dominated by the bones of wild animals—deer (mostly gazelle, but also some blackbuck, *sambar,* and *chital*), *nilgai*, goat, onager (wild ass), water buffalo, cattle, pig, and perhaps elephant. There is also evidence of domesticated goats, and the decreasing size of sheep and cattle suggests that their domestication too was underway. By the end of Period I, the frequency of bones of gazelles and other wild animals had drastically decreased, while those of domesticated cattle, goats, and sheep had greatly increased. Cattle were now the most important domesticated animal. In Period III, cattle still dominated, but there was an increase in the proportion of sheep and goat bones. Interestingly, Period III also showed an increase in the number of bones of wild animals, suggesting resurgence in hunting activity.

J. R. Lukacs' study of the human dental remains shows a low rate of dental caries (cavities) in the early levels. This may have been due to the high fluoride levels in the drinking water available in the area. Other features of the teeth suggest that people had a coarse diet. There is evidence of tooth probing (people poking their teeth either to sooth pain or prise out food). Dental health declined in Period III, and this may have been due to changes in food habits, for instance, the consumption of more refined foods.

The evidence from Period IV onwards shows a further expansion of the settlement, diversification of agriculture and crafts, and more and better decorated pottery. In Period IV, there were larger structures, with rooms separated from each other by wide walls and doors with wooden lintels. One door, only 1.10 m high led into a room crammed with many objects such as stone flakes, blades, grinding stones, pestles, and many bones. Other items found in this room included a storage jar, a crushed basin with ridges and snake designs painted on the inner side, fine goblets, and beautifully painted vessels. The pottery of Period IV included polychrome wares. A new style of terracotta female figurines with a tubular body, pinched nose, and joined legs made its appearance. There are continuities in pottery designs between Periods IV and V.

In Period VI, there were some changes—the appearance of a red ware decorated with *pipal* leaves, and a well-fired grey ware. This is also the time when similar styles of pottery began appearing in various parts of Baluchistan, suggesting an increase in interaction. A large pottery kiln was found in Period VI. Several large mounds in the Kachi plain may represent unexplored sites contemporary to the later periods of Mehrgarh. The Bolan pass leads from Mehrgarh into the Quetta valley, where there are a number of sites. Today, farmers of this valley compensate for meagre

rainfall by using water drawn from wells and streams to irrigate their fields.

The Harappans grew lentils and other pulses (peas, chickpeas, green gram, black gram). Their main staples were wheat and barley, which were presumably made into bread and perhaps also cooked with water as a gruel or porridge. In some places, particularly Gujarat, they also cultivated some native millets; possibly broomcorn millet, which may have been introduced from southern Central Asia; and by 2000 BCE, if not before, African millets. They fed local wild rice to their animals and probably began to cultivate it, though rice does not become an important crop until Post-Harappan times. The Harappans must have eaten a range of fruit, vegetables, and spices: these included a variety of brassica, brown mustard greens, coriander, dates, jujube, walnuts, grapes, figs; many others, such as mango, okra, caper, sugarcane, garlic, turmeric, ginger, cumin, and cinnamon, were locally available and probably grown or gathered by the Harappans, but the evidence is lacking. Sesame was grown for oil, and linseed oil may also have been used.

Meat came mainly from cattle, but the Harappans also kept chickens, buffaloes and some sheep and goats, and hunted a wide range of wildfowl and wild animals such as deer, antelopes, and wild boar. They ate fish and shellfish from the rivers, lakes and the sea; as well as being eaten fresh, many fish were dried or salted – many bones from marine fish such as jack and catfish were found at Harappa, far inland.

Harappan houses had a kitchen opening from the courtyard, with a hearth or brick-built fireplace. Pottery vessels in a range of sizes were used for cooking; in wealthy households, metal vessels were used. Copper and bronze plates were used perhaps by wealthy people.

Few certain agricultural tools have been found. Flint blades were probably used for harvesting. A ploughed field at Early Harappan Kalibangan shows that the plough was in use by the early 3rd millennium BCE; its criss-cross furrows allowed two crops to be raised in the same field, a practice that has continued into modern times.

b. THEVINDHYAN PERIPHERY AND OTHER AREAS

Another early center of agricultural–pastoral communities lay in the Vindhyan fringes in southern Uttar Pradesh. Here over 40 Neolithic sites have been identified in the explorations in the Belan, Adwa, Son, Rihand, Ganga, Lapari, and Paisuni rivers. Neolithic levels have been identified at several excavated sites such as Koldihwa, Mahagara, Pachoh, and Indari. Rice remains have been found at several sites. The Neolithic culture in this area emerged out of a well-established mesolithic phase. Some of the Mesolithic features such as microlith blades and the range of heavier stone tools continued, but there are also important new features such as the domestication of cattle and the cultivation of rice. Wild rice has been discovered at Mesolithic levels at Chopani Mando in the Belan

valley. Recently, domesticated rice has been reported from Mesolithic levels at Damdama as well. The fact that wild rice is found in the area even today shows that it fell within the natural habitat zone of this cereal, and this explains the early dates for the domestication of rice.

Koldihwa and Mahagara both in Allahabad district, UP are two important excavated sites, located on the northern border of the Vindhyas on the banks of the Belan river. Koldihwa showed cultural continuity from the Neolithic to the Iron Age. Remains of rice and impressions of rice husk embedded in pieces of burnt clay were found here at Neolithic levels. The examination of rice imprints on pottery suggests that the people were familiar both with wild rice and cultivated rice. Other discoveries included stone blades, polished stone celts, microliths, querns and mullers used for grinding, and bone tools. The pottery was handmade and consisted of three varieties - net-marked or cord-marked pottery; a plain red pottery; and a black-and-red ware. Deep bowls and storage jars were the dominant shapes. Some of the red ware showed soot marks, suggesting that these pots may have been used for cooking.

Mahagara on the right bank of the Belan River is another important Neolithic site. Floors and post-holes associated with 20 huts were identified here. Reed or bamboo impressions on clumps of mud suggest that hut walls were made of wattle and daub. There were neolithic stone blades, microliths, celts, querns, mullers, and sling balls on floors. Pottery, bone arrowheads, terracotta beads, and animal bones were also found at the site. An interesting discovery was a cattle pen (about 12.5 × 7.5 m) located in the middle of the settlement. This was irregular in plan, with a fence marked by 20 post-holes and spaces left for at least three openings. Inside the fenced area were clusters of hoof marks left by cattle of different ages. The number of such marks suggests that about 40–60 animals may have been penned here.

Rows of hoof marks of sheep or goats were also found outside the pen, near the huts, suggesting the frequent movement of animals between the huts and the enclosure. Animal bones included those of cattle, sheep, goat, horse, deer, and wild boar, out of which the first three seem to have been domesticated. The botanical remains included rice husk embedded in pottery. The bone and plant remains suggest that people hunted wild animals, collected wild plant food, and domesticated plants and animals. The site of Kunjhun is in the Son valley in Sidhi district of Madhya Pradesh, not far from Koldihwa. The Neolithic settlement here, which goes back to the 4th millennium BCE, yielded wild and domesticated rice.

Kunjhun seems to have been a factory site specializing in the making of stone artefacts. Archaeologists identified several areas where stone was heated to improve its colour and workability and then made into blades. Taken together, the evidence from Koldihwa and other sites in its vicinity suggests that the northern fringes of the Vindhyas constituted an early, independent center of rice domestication. Early agricultural settlements also spread into the central Ganga plain. This is indicated by

recent excavations at Lahuradeva in Sant Kabir Nagar district in eastern Uttar Pradesh. The 220 × 140 m mound here stands about 4 m above the surrounding plain, surrounded by a lake on three sides. The site revealed a five-fold cultural sequence from the Neolithic to the early centuries of common era.

The plant remains included rice and a few wild grasses. Husk marks of rice were found embedded in the core of several potsherds. The rice appears to be a domesticated variety. There is a possibility that there were other zones in the Indian subcontinent which saw an early transition from hunting-gathering to agriculture and pastoralism. In Ladakh, the Neolithic site of Giak has given a radiocarbon date belonging to the 6th millennium BCE. Pollen studies of the salt lakes of Didwana, Lunkaransar, and Sambhar in Rajasthan indicate a marked increase in cereal-type pollen in this area in *c.* 7000 BCE. This, along with the discovery of tiny charcoal pieces, may indirectly suggest the clearance of forests and the beginning of agriculture.

1. NEOLITHIC, NEOLITHIC–CHALCOLITHIC, AND CHALCOLITHIC COMMUNITIES, C. 3000–2000 BCE

During *c.* 3000–2000 BCE, village settlements spread to new areas. It can be noted that these settlements were roughly contemporaneous with the urban Harappan civilization,

a. THE NORTH AND NORTH-WEST

In the Kashmir valley, there are several Neolithic sites near Srinagar and between Baramulla and Anantnag. These include Burzahom, Gufkral, Hariparigom, Jayadeviudar, Olchibag, Pampur, Panzgom, Sombur, Thajiwor, Begagund, Waztal, Gurhoma Sangri, and Damodara. During the Pleistocene era, the Kashmir valley was a gigantic lake, and the Neolithic sites are located on the remnants of the ancient lake beds known as *karewa*s. Burzahom, one of the important excavated sites in this region, is located on a terrace of *karewa* clay above the flood plain of the Jhelum river, 16 km north-east of Srinagar. The site offers a beautiful view of green fields and the Dal lake, which is only about 2 km away. Burzahom is a Kashmiri word meaning ‘place of birch’, and the discovery of burnt birch in the excavations indicates that birch trees grew in the area in Neolithic times as well. The site must have been surrounded by forests, with water close by, and the Neolithic people must have cut down some of the trees in order to establish their settlement.

The site was discovered in 1935 by de Terra and Paterson, who thought it belonged to the Harappan civilization. Its real significance was understood much later, when excavations were carried out by the Archaeological Survey of India in 1960–71 under T. N. Khazanchi. There are four periods of occupation at Burzahom. The first two are Neolithic, the third megalithic, and the fourth early historical. Period I was dated by the radiocarbon method to before *c.* 2920 BCE.

A distinguishing feature of Period I at Burzahom is the presence of mud-plastered pit dwellings.

Most of the pits were round or oval, narrower at the top and widening out towards the base. The largest is 3.96 m deep, with a diameter of 2.74 m at the top and 4.57 m at the bottom. Charcoal, ash, potsherds, and hearths made of stone or clay were found inside the pits. There were some square and rectangular pit chambers too, about 1 m deep. One of them measured 6.4 × 7 m. Some of the pit chambers had stone or clay hearths. It is interesting to note that the square/rectangular pit chambers were found in the centre of the settlement, while the round/oval ones were at the periphery. Close to the living pits were smaller storage pits with a 60–91 cm diameter, containing stone and bone tools and animal bones. Stone hearths near the mouths of some of the dwelling pits suggest that people also lived in the open at ground level, probably during the warm summers.

b. RAJASTHAN

In the areas of Rajasthan, Malwa, and the northern Deccan, the beginnings of settled life are associated with a chalcolithic rather than a Neolithic phase. Reference was made in the previous chapter to Bagor in eastern Rajasthan; this site shows a transition from the hunting-gathering Mesolithic phase to a chalcolithic and then an iron age phase. Much more substantial evidence of early sedentary chalcolithic sites comes from areas rich in copper ores. Copper ores occur in many parts of India—Rajasthan, Gujarat, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Andhra Pradesh, but the richest mines are in Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Bihar. There is evidence of the use of copper in certain parts of the subcontinent from about 3000 BCE onwards.

Check your progress:
1] Discuss the pattern of settled agriculture.

10.7 RISE OF URBANISATION

a. Civilization and Urbanization: Definitions and Implications

The word 'urbanization' means the emergence of cities. 'Civilization' has more abstract and grander connotations, but refers to a specific cultural stage generally associated with cities and writing. In some cases, archaeologists have described Neolithic settlements as urban on the basis of size and architecture, even in the absence of writing. This is the case with 8th millennium BCE Jericho in the Jordan valley and the 7th millennium BCE settlement at Çatal Hüyük in Turkey. It has also been pointed out that the Mayan civilization of Mesoamerica and the

Mycenaean civilization of Greece did not have true cities, while the Inca civilization of Peru did not have a system of true writing. However, apart from a few such exceptions, cities and writing tend to go together, and 'urbanization' and 'civilization' are more or less synonymous.

One of the earliest attempts to define a city was made by V. Gordon Childe (1950). Childe described the city as the result and symbol of a revolution that marked a new economic stage in the evolution of society. Like the earlier 'Neolithic revolution', the 'urban revolution' was neither sudden nor violent; it was the culmination of centuries of gradual social and economic changes. Childe identified 10 abstract criteria which distinguished the first cities from the older and contemporary villages.

The 10 characteristics of cities, according to Childe

1. The world's first cities were larger and more densely populated than villages.
2. While the city population may have included some farmers and herdsmen, it also comprised full-time crafts persons, merchants, transporters, officials, and priests. These groups were supported by the surplus food produced by farmers.
3. Farmers had to hand over their surplus produce as tax or tribute to ruling elite.
4. Monumental public buildings were hallmarks of cities and reflected the concentration of social surplus (i.e., surplus produce and wealth generated in a society) in the hands of the elite.
5. There was a trade-off between the ruling class and the rest of society. Rulers lived off the surplus produced by farmers and in return provided them with peace, security, planning, and organization.
6. The invention of systems of recording—writing and numeral notation— helped meet the needs of administration.
7. The invention of writing led to the development of exact but practically useful sciences such as arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy, and the creation of a calendar.
8. Conceptualized and sophisticated styles of artistic expression made their appearance.
9. Cities implied a significant amount of long-distance trade.
10. They also implied a state organization based on residence in a territory rather than on kinship. The state provided security and materials to specialist crafts persons, enabling them to live a settled rather than an itinerant life.

Childe's observations proved to be the starting point of an important debate on the diagnostic features of urban societies. Some scholars did not agree with his use of the word 'revolution' to describe urbanization, as it suggests sudden, deliberate change. Further, his 10 criteria seem to be a loose assemblage of overlapping features, and are not

arranged in any sequence of relative importance. For instance, were sophisticated artistic styles as important as an agricultural surplus or a state structure? Further, all ten features are not directly deducible from the archaeological data. Another objection is that some features, such as monumental architecture, specialized crafts, and long-distance trade are occasionally found in non-urban contexts as well. However, if we consider the ten characteristics collectively instead of individually, it has to be conceded that Childe did succeed in identifying the most significant features and implications of city life.

Over the years, there have been three different sorts of trends in defining a city. One is to narrow down the diagnostic features, focusing, for instance, on writing, monumental structures, and a large population. A second trend is to identify more specific criteria such as settlement size, architectural features (e.g., fortifications and the use of stone and brick), and a uniform system of weights and measures. A third trend is towards a more abstract definition, highlighting features such as cultural complexity, homogeneity, and far-reaching political control.

The various hypotheses that have been put forward to explain the rise of the world's first cities are reflective of how different scholars view and understand the unfolding of historical processes. Childe emphasized the importance of technological and subsistence factors such as increasing food surpluses, copper-bronze technology, and the use of wheeled transport, sailboats, and ploughs.

Scholars such as Robert M. Adams emphasized social factors, while Gideon Sjoberg asserted that political factors played the pivotal role in the emergence of cities. An important aspect of R.M. Adams' contribution to our understanding of city life is his highlighting the relationship between cities and their hinterlands. City and village are not two opposite poles, but interdependent and interacting parts of a larger cultural and ecological system.Villages were the feeder cultures to the cities or the civilizations. While cities were no doubt ultimately sustained by agricultural surpluses produced in villages, the generation, appropriation, and deployment of agricultural surpluses were neither automatic nor purely economic phenomena and were governed by social and political factors. They were nodes for the appropriation and redistribution of agricultural surpluses. They provided a permanent base for new social and political institutions. They were centers for the safe storage of surpluses, concentration of wealth, and for expenditure on public building programmes by elite groups. They were centers of learning, artistic creativity, philosophical debate, and the development of religious ideas.

b. KEY CONCEPTS

Gideon Sjoberg (1964) emphasized the close connection between the history of cities and the rise and fall of empires. He argued that political control was crucial in maintaining the social organization of empires and providing the stability necessary for the development of trade

and commerce. He also elaborated on the many facets of the city's functions and features. The concentration of population in a relatively small space in a city allowed a greater level of protection and security than possible in a village. It also facilitated communication and the exchange of goods and services among specialists. Elite groups tended to be concentrated in the city and usually lived near its Centre. The city was hence the place where political decisions were taken, and military strategies planned. Apart from being centers of intellectual and commercial activity, since elite groups were usually also patrons of the arts, cities also became centers of cultural and artistic activity.

Over the years, various factors such as population growth, long-distance trade, irrigation, and class conflict have been suggested as having played an important role in the emergence of cities. As is the case with all complex cultural phenomena, a variety of factors—social, political, economic, technological, and ideological—must have been involved, in *conjunction* with each other, and the details of their interplay could have varied from culture to culture. Since archaeology forms the primary source for reconstructing the emergence of the world's first cities, there is more direct information on the technological aspect rather than other factors, which can be understood only in very general terms. The emergence of cities must be viewed as part of a longer history of human settlements, both rural and urban. The story of urbanization is one of increasing cultural complexity, a widening food resource base, greater technological sophistication, expanding craft production, social stratification, and the emergence of a level of political organization that can be described as a state.

c. RECENT DISCOVERIES AND CHANGING PERSPECTIVES

Over the thirteen decades or so since the momentous discoveries at Mohenjodaro and Harappa, information about the Harappan civilization has increased enormously. New sites have been discovered, old sites re-excavated, and there are several new interpretations based on the old and new discoveries. The amount of data and information has been steadily growing and continues to grow. Yet, many aspects of the civilization remain mysterious and subjects of vigorous debate.

In the initial years after its discovery, the Mesopotamian links were crucial for dating the Harappan civilization, and some archaeologists tended to compare the two (Shaffer, 1982a). This led to many questionable theories about Harappan origins and the nature of the Harappan economy and polity. In recent decades, scholars have become very conscious of the earlier bias and acknowledge the need to view the Harappan civilization independently rather than through a Mesopotamian lens.

Another feature of the early decades of Harappan studies was an emphasis on urban settlements, especially Mohenjodaro and Harappa. Apart from being the first sites of the culture to be excavated, these two cities seemed to stand out by virtue of their size and architectural features. However, several other sites are now known to be as large as or even

larger than them, e.g., Lurewala and Ganweriwala in Cholistan, Rakhigarhi in Haryana, and Dholavira in Gujarat. Scholars have increasingly directed attention to the smaller, less imposing sites, including towns and villages. These include the site of Allahdino near Karachi, a village settlement that measures only about 5 ha, but which reveals all the main features of the Harappan civilization. The other recently excavated site is Balu in Haryana, a small fortified rural settlement that has yielded a rich variety of plant remains. Profiles of different kinds of Harappan settlements are now available, and the understanding of the networks that connected cities, towns, and villages is slowly growing.

Although Harappan sites share certain common features, there are also significant regional and inter-site differences. These are visible, for instance, in the layout of settlements and in the crops that people grew and consumed. There are also differences in the types, range, and frequency of artefacts. For instance, at Allahdino, the typical black-on-red Harappan pottery formed only 1 per cent of the total pottery finds. The mud-brick platforms in the southern part of the citadel complex at Kalibangan, which have been interpreted as 'fire altars', do not occur at most other sites. There are also differences in the frequency of various funerary practices across sites. For instance, post-cremation burials were much more numerous at Harappa than at Mohenjodaro. All these suggest a variety of subsistence strategies, food habits, craft traditions, religious beliefs, cultic practices, and social customs.

The nature and function of certain structures have also been re-considered in recent years. For instance, there is good reason to question whether the 'great granaries' at Mohenjodaro and Harappa were granaries at all (Fentress, 1984). Less acceptable is Leshnik's suggestion (1968) that the dockyard at Lothal was not a dockyard but an irrigation reservoir. The re-interpretation of structures has important implications for the understanding of the Harappan social and political systems. For instance, the so-called 'granaries' used to be cited to support the theory of a strong, centralized state. Recent excavations at Harappan sites reflect the changes in approaches, goals, and techniques within the discipline of archaeology. Good examples are the recent excavations at Harappa, conducted by a joint American and Pakistani team. Compared to earlier excavations at the site, these have been marked by much more careful analysis of the cultural sequence and details of various parts of the residential areas.

There has also been greater use of scientific techniques, including the analysis of bone and teeth remains, which provide very specific information about the diet and health of the Harappans.

The debates about various aspects of the Harappan civilization reflect both the potential of archaeology as a window into the ancient past and the important role of interpretation in this discipline. There are many different theories about almost every aspect of the Harappan civilization. Not all are equally acceptable; each has to be carefully examined.

Conclusions can be reached on certain issues, while in other cases, it is necessary to acknowledge the current limits of our knowledge.

The first sites of this civilization were discovered in the valley of the Indus and its tributaries. Hence it was given the name ‘Indus valley civilization’ or ‘Indus civilization’. Today, the count of Harappan sites has risen to about 1,022, of which 406 are in Pakistan and 616 in India. Of these, only 97 have so far been excavated. The area covered by the Harappan culture zone is huge, ranging between 680,000 to 800,000 sq km. Sites have been found in Afghanistan; in the Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan, and North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan; in Jammu, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and western Uttar Pradesh in India. The northernmost site is Manda in Jammu district of Jammu and Kashmir, the southernmost is Malvan in Surat district in southern Gujarat. The western-most site is Sutkagen-dor on the Makran coast of Pakistan, and the easternmost is Alamgirpur in the Saharanpur district of Uttar Pradesh. There is an isolated site at Shortughai in Afghanistan.

The vast geographical extent of the civilization should make the objection to the terms ‘Indus’ or‘Indus valley’ civilization obvious. The terms ‘Indus–Sarasvati’ or ‘Sindhu–Sarasvati’ civilization are also used by some scholars. This is because a large number of sites are located on the banks of the Ghaggar-Hakra river, which is identified by some scholars with the ancient Sarasvati mentioned in the *Rig Veda*. However, the sort of objection to the terms ‘Indus’ or ‘Indus valley’ civilization can also be applied to the terms ‘Indus–Saraswati’ or ‘Sindhu–Saraswati’ civilization. Since the civilization was not confined to the valleys of the Indus or Ghaggar-Hakra, the best option is to use the term ‘Harappan’ civilization. This is based on the archaeological convention of naming a culture after the site where it is first identified. The use of the term Harappan civilization does not imply that all other sites are identical to Harappa or that the culture developed first in this place. In fact, Possehl asserts that it is necessary to break the Harappan monolith into sub-regions, which he calls ‘Domains’.

Newspapers and magazines sometimes announce the discovery of new sites of the Harappan Civilization. This is done on the basis of a checklist of archaeological features. Pottery is an important marker. The typical Harappan pottery is red, with designs painted on in black, and has a certain range of forms and motifs. Other material traits associated with the civilization include terracotta cakes (pieces of terracotta, usually triangular, sometime round, whose precise function is unclear), a standardized brick size in the 1:2:4 ratio, and certain types of stone and copper artefacts. When the basic set of Harappan material traits are found associated with each other at a site, it is described as a Harappan site. The Harappan culture was actually a long and complex cultural process consisting of at least three phases—the early Harappan, mature Harappan, and late Harappan.

The early Harappan phase was the formative, proto-urban phase of the culture. The mature Harappan phase was the urban phase, the full-fledged stage of civilization. The late Harappan phase was the post-urban phase, when the cities declined. Other terminology is also used. For instance, Jim Shaffer uses the term 'Indus valley tradition' for the long series of human adaptations starting from the Neolithic–chalcolithic stage to the decline of the Harappan civilization. Within this larger sequence, he uses the term 'regionalization era' for the early Harappan phase, 'integration era' for the mature Harappan phase, and 'localization era' for the late Harappan phase. The early Harappan–mature Harappan transition and the mature Harappan–late Harappan transition are also treated as separate, distinct phases. When the unqualified term Harappan culture/civilization is mentioned, the reference is to the *urban* phase.

Before the advent of radiocarbon dating, this civilization was dated by cross-referencing with the Mesopotamian civilization, with which the Harappans were in contact and whose dates were known. Accordingly, John Marshall suggested that the Harappan civilization flourished between *c.* 3250 and 2750 BCE. When the Mesopotamian chronology was revised, the dates of the Harappan civilization were revised to *c.* 2350– 2000/1900 BCE. The advent of radiocarbon dating in the 1950s offered the prospect of a more scientific way of dating the civilization, and the number of sites for which radiocarbon dates are available have gradually increased. The 1986–1996 Harappa excavations have given over 70 new radiocarbon dates, but none from the earliest levels, which are submerged in water. D. P. Agrawal suggested *c.* 2300–2000 BCE for the nuclear regions and *c.* 2000–1700 BCE for the peripheral zones, but this is based on uncalibrated radiocarbon dates.

Recent calibrated C-14 dates give a time frame of about 2600–1900 BCE for the urban phase in the core regions of the Indus valley, the Ghaggar-Hakra valley, and Gujarat. This is quite close to the dates arrived at through cross-dating with Mesopotamia. The dates of individual sites vary. Collating the calibrated radiocarbon dates from various sites gives the following broad chronology for the three phases of the Harappan culture: early Harappan, *c.* 3200–2600 BCE; mature Harappan, *c.* 2600–1900 BCE; and late Harappan, *c.* 1900–1300 BCE.

Check your progress:
1] Examine the emergence of urbanization.

10.8 HISTORY OF URBANIZATION

The history of urbanization is also the history of civilization. From Mesopotamia to the Indus Valley and China, from Egypt to Greece and

Meso-America, urbanization has always been a part of ancient culture. But it has not been uniform all over the world. Different ages have witnessed localized growth. Although it is an age-old process, the ways in which it takes place and the rate with which it happens have been changing over time. There are many disagreements among scholars about exactly where, when, how, and why the first cities began. It is probable that they began independently in various parts of the world over a range of time and for somewhat different reasons.

Beginning with the Indus Valley civilization until the end of the Mughal era and the coming of the British, the Indian subcontinent experienced several stages of its urbanization process. Nevertheless, the story of urbanization in India in historical times is a story of spatial and temporal discontinuities. The earliest urban developments were confined to the Indus Valley and the adjoining parts of Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana and to some extent western Uttar Pradesh. Other parts of the country remained outside the realm of urbanization. This spatial discontinuity in urbanization is visible again when we study the early historical phase which represented a long period of urban growth stretching from the sixth century B.C.E to the third century C.E. During this period urbanization took place in the middle Ganga plains and in the southern part of Indian peninsula, while the areas in between had no known cities.

Thus urbanization in ancient India had two distinct phases. The first phase characterized by the emergence of Harappan cities which collapsed after about 600 years without leaving any surviving urban centers. It was only after another thousand years or so that we find towns emerging in ancient India for the second time. The second phase of urbanization emerged and flourished in an altogether new socio-economic milieu generated by the widespread use of iron technology.

In South India, however, this early historical phase of urbanization is represented by its end phases as the evidence of its extent appeared at slightly different chronological points in the Deccan, the Andhra region and the Tamil country. Hence strictly speaking, this phase represented only the early phase of urbanization in South India . As the space of Peninsular India was utilized to a large extent for maritime trade, the internal growth process of second urbanization was contributed by this enormous, expanded trade networks when India's early contact with Central Asia and the Roman world was at its zenith.

Prof. Brajadulal Chattopadhyaya marks the urbanization in the early medieval period as the beginning of the third phase of the phenomenon in India. According to him the only kind of material the historian have to depend on for information on early medieval urban centres is the epigraphic sources. Prof. Champakalakshmi locates the period of early medieval urbanization in South India within a broad time span of six centuries i.e., seventh to thirteenth centuries. She discusses the changing character of two royal cities, Kancheepuram and Madurai of Pallava- Pandya period, as a result of the new institutional forces of

integration (*brahmadeya* villages and temples), which brought them into a much closer relationship with their hinterlands in the northern and southern parts of the Tamil country as well as with their ports located on the coast.

The development of urbanisation in India has been through a prolonged and slow process of the progress of civilization and therefore, it may be called a **'**Cultural process'**.** Later on, when various dynasties and kingdoms were going through the process of establishment and downfall, development of cities was an outcome of all these factors. Urbanisation during such a period may be called a **'**Political process'**.** Lastly, in modern times Urbanisation was mostly associated with industrialization and economic development and accordingly it may be called an **'**Economic process'

Check your progress:
1] Give a brief overview of the history of urbanization.

10.9 URBANISATION IN ANCIENT INDIA - A CULTURAL PROCESS:

The remains of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa clearly indicate that the Indian sub-continent was one of the earliest cradles of civilization. Mohenjo daro was a busy seaport and trading centre that was connected to other cities by land and water routes. As long ago as 2500 B.C, and half a dozen other cities of the Indus Valley had already put to use the criss-cross grid system of street layout – an urban convention long thought to have been invented by Greeks of later era. Mohenjo-daro was planned with a broad boulevard 30 feet wide running North and South and crossed at right angles every 200 yards or so by somewhat smaller East - West streets .The grid layout is only one indication of the perfection and care that had gone into the planning of the city. Of all the amenities provided by Mohenjo-daro and other well-laid out cities of the Indus Valley, none was more sophisticated than those that were devoted to public hygiene. Never before and never again until Greek and Roman times was so much attention paid by human beings to sanitation. Running along the sides of the streets were neat, brick-lined open sewers, much like those old Asian cities today, and in intervals there were catch basins dug below sewer level to trap debris that might otherwise have clogged the drainage flow.

The imperial Gazetteer of India says that, in the sixth and seventh, centuries B.C.E., "cities and towns were numerous, and well equipped

with the necessities and luxuries of life. Some of the places mentioned m the ancient stories, such as Benares and Broach (Bharoch) are important cities to this day. Others, famous in the olden times, are now ruinous heaps, and of some the very name and site have been forgotten. Taxila, for instance, which was celebrated as one of the greatest cities of the East at the time of Alexander, was not only the capital of Kingdom two centuries earlier, but a seat of learning to which scholars of all classes flocked for instruction in every branch of knowledge, then, within the reach of a student. The site is now marked by lines of shapeless mounds, scattered among the villages near Rawalpindi, Sravasti, the splendid city where Buddha lived and taught for many years, lies buried in a jungle on the borders of Nepal.

Schroder writes about the cities and travelers. "The *observations of Persians, who entered the sub-continent in the sixth century B.C, and of the Greek invaders a couple of centuries later, indicate that some Hindu cities flourished therein. Texila (Teksha'sila), for one, reportedly had a university that attracted scholars from diverse regions. From these dates, combined with later Indian and Ceylonese writings, we conjecture that, at least by the sixth century B.C, city life had been revived on the Indian sub-continent. Besides Texila, cities by the fourth century B.C, include Sravasti, Kasi (Benares), ChampaSeketa (Ayodhya), Kapila, Kausambi, Ujjain, Rajagraha and Patahputra (Patna). At this time, the last named Pataliputra, controlled much of the Northern Indian region".*

From the 5th century A.D. onwards, i.e., from the time of the Gupta period there was a decline in the process of urbansiation. M.S.Thacker observed, *"The Urban tradition continued through centuries, and during the ancient period of our history, there were many well - planned and beautiful cities in different parts of the country. Pataliputra of Chandragupta Maurya, Ujjain of the Guptas, Kanauj, Beneras, Mathura were some of these great cities. In the South, great cities were built in the medieval period by the Chalukyas, the Rashtrakutas, the Cholas, the Hoyasalas and others. Indeed the Southern tradition can be seen to continue through Vijayanagar, which flourished during the 15th and 16lh centuries, to modern Mysore and Bangalore".*

Check your progress:
1] Examine the cultural process of urbanization.

10.10 QUESTIONS

1) Evaluate the development of iron technology in Ancient India
2) Discuss the transition from pastoral to agricultural economy in Ancient India.
3) Analyse the stages of urbanization in Ancient India.

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Unit - 11

GUILD SYSTEM

Unit Structure :

11.0 OBJECTIVES

- To learn about Artisans and Guilds
- To study the important functions of Guilds
- To learn about the Regional Concentration of Guilds.
- To study the contribution of Guilds in Ancient India.

11.1 INTRODUCTION

The Guild system was an important feature of the economic life of ancient India. Early Buddhist texts mentions a wide range of occupations. The word mentioned for occupation is *Sippa* and *Kamma.* The occupations were those of farmers, cattle owners, and traders. There were washermen, cooks, tailors, painters who provided their services. Many service people were working for the King. There were different soldiers who were specializing in various areas such as cavalry, archery, and foot soldiers. There were ministers known as mahamachas, governors known as ratthikas and policemen known as Rajabhatas. Overtime, these

occupations became hereditary in nature. They began to organize themselves into corporate groups known as guilds.

There were many other urban jobs such as doctors, surgeons, accountants, and writers. There were entertainers such as actors, dancers, magicians and drummers. There were accomplished dancers and courtesans who were in the service of the King. The Pali texts mention many types of artisans. They were working in the cities. They were making vehicles, some of them were ivory workers, and there were goldsmiths, carpenters, needle makers, garland makers and potters among others. Many of them lived in their community areas. Jatakas talk about special villages which have definite artisan groups. Crafts were also passed on from one generation to the other making it hereditary. Dr. Upinder Singh opines that the time frame would have been around600–300 BCE.

There were occupations of agriculture, cattle rearing, money lending on interest and trade. These were the occupations of the Vaishyas. The texts mention that the traders and artisans used to set rules, regulations and guidelines for their professions. So, there was a properly defined organization. These could be called as the guilds. The words which are used for guilds are shreni, nigama and sangha. Buddhist text Vinaya Pitaka gives information about the guild or puga of Shravasti which used to provide food for monks and nuns. The Jatakas have mentioned eighteen guilds.

When cities grew, there was a surge in the crafts and guilds. Currency was used as a medium of exchange. Indians borrowed and lent money on interest. Business transactions were recorded in writing. One settlement has been found of the Mauryan period in the upper Ganga valley at Bhita. In this settlement there was a house, which was named 'House of the Guild' because a seal was discovered with the word *nigama*. This house has twelve rooms. Other houses of this kind have also been found. Many seals are found here. So Bhita was an important trade center.

Kautilya spoke of strict control over markets and trade. There was an officer called the *panyadhyaksha.* He had to manage trade, fixing of prices and sale of goods produced by state-run industrialized units. The *sansthadhyaksha* was the superintendent of markets. The *Arthashastra* described the strict state control over artisans' guilds. Salaries were fixed for various types of artisans. There were strict punishments for the artisans if they did not do their work properly. The State also had its own workshops. Textile workshops were under the control of an officer called the *sutradhayaksha.* There were also chariot workshops under a *rathadhyaksha*.

Even non monarchical cities make a mention of guilds. There were many copper and bronze coins of this time. They give information about the political and economic institutions. The states which issued these coins were the states of Arjunayanas, Uddehikas, Malavas, and

Yaudheyas. There were cities such as Tripuri, Ujjayini, and Taxila. There were nigama coins which showed the authority and supremacy of the merchant guilds. There are also a number of Tamil–Brahmi inscriptions found at various areas in South India. In one of these inscriptions, there is mention of an officer called *kalatika*. This person was a superintendent of pearls or an officer who supervised pearl fisheries. This officer was also a member of a merchant guild.

In a place called Kodumanal in Tamil Nadu, there are over 150 burials. The burials revealed a large number of bowls. About 100 pieces of pottery with inscriptions were found in the Tamil language and Tamil–Brahmi script. A few inscriptions are in the Prakrit language and Brahmi script. The range of this period is from c. 300 BCE to 200 CE. One of the words in the inscriptions was *nikama*or *nigama*, which means guild. There is good proof of the change to early historical phase in South India at Kodumanal. There are indications of areas of craft production.

Check your progress:
1] Give a brief overview of the guild system in India.

11.2 ARTISANS AND GUILDS IN ANCIENT INDIA

Detailed information, both the archaeological as well as literary evidence are available on crafts and guilds. Very specific information on craft activity in the various regions of the subcontinent are also available in the historical period. Buddhist texts such as the *Angavijja*, *Lalitavistara*, *Milindapanha*, and *Mahavastu* mention guilds. These texts refer to many professions, crafts, and guilds of crafts persons and traders. The *Baveru Jataka* tells the story of merchants who set out to trade with Babylon through sea and how they carried with them the land birds which fascinated the locals. The *Milindapanha* has given information about 60 types of crafts. We also have information about villages that got their name from the profession of their natives. So, villages are named after potters and metal workers. In urban areas certain roads and quarters were meant for artisans and craftsmen. The Jatakas refer to 18 guilds like wood workers known as *vaddhaki*s, smiths known as *kammara*s, leather workers known as c*hammakara*s, and painters who were known as *chittakara*s.

One more text is there of the 5th century B.CE. The *Gautama Dharmasutra (c.* 5th century BC) states that 'cultivators, traders, herdsmen, moneylenders, and artisans have authority to lay down rules for their respective classes'. This indicates that the guild had a certain degree of autonomy. The king was to confer with their council while dealing with

matters concerning them. The Jataka tales refer to eighteen guilds, to their heads, to localization of industry and to the hereditary nature of professions. But the state was not oblivious to the existence of guilds. The state exercised some power over guilds by appointing an official known as *bhanddgdrika.* He was a kind of judge or supervisor monitoring over all guilds. In the Jataka tales, besides internal trade, there are also references to trade with Tamraparni (Tirunelveli, Tamil nadu, at that time may have been under the control of a kingdom in northern Sri Lanka), Suvarnabhumi (Sumatra), Baveru (Babylonia), etc.

Check your progress:

1] Discuss about the artisans and guilds in ancient India.

11.3 HEREDITARY NATURE OF PROFESSIONS

Like today, even those days generally, the sons used to follow the profession of their fathers. We come to know this from the Jataka stories. Generally, they fix the term *kula* or *putta* to the crafts. Kula means family and putta means son. So it has always been the tendency of sons to follow their father's occupation. There are references to a *satthavahakula* which means belonging to the family of caravan traders, and *kammarakula* which means belonging to metal smiths' family. There are also words ending in *putta*like *satthavahaputta* which means son of a caravan trader and *vaddhakiputta* which means son of a carpenter. This ensured regular trained man-power and created more specialization. The hereditary nature of profession in Indian guilds makes them different from the European guilds of the Middle Ages whose membership was invariably based on the choice of an individual. It may, however, be pointed out that adopting a family profession was more common with members of craftsmen's guilds than with members of traders' guilds.

Dr Singh opines that although there was the tradition of hereditary principle functioning in the occupations, there must also have been a certain amount of elasticity and social mobility. Actually there were a number of occupations which have been discovered throughout the country which indicates that India was very abundant in this regard. No doubt it would have been a very thriving and prosperous economy. One can imagine a very vivid and colourful picture of ancient India throbbing and bursting with a vibrant spectacle of activity. Not only India, but that would have been the story of the entire subcontinent. Tamil–Brahmi inscriptions talk about varied occupations like mason, carpenter, weavers, sculptors and goldsmith. Manimegalai, the Sangam literature of 2nd

Century C.E., mentions that king Karikala was seated in a hall with his queen, which was built with the craftsmanship of the Maghada jewelers who excelled in setting precious stones, Maratha metal workers along with Yavana (Roman) carpenters and Avanti blacksmiths working together with Tamil craftsmen in Puhar the capital of the ancient Cholas. Pazhani, a pilgrimage town now used to specialize in stone jewelry during the Sangam days. Many artisans donated gifts to earn piety either for themselves or for their families. Such sites are found at Sanchi and Mathura.

In the western Deccan region there is a mention of working groups such as jewelry workers known as *manikara*, iron worker known as *loha-vanij* and stone masons known as *selavadhaki*. As mentioned earlier, all these show that it was a very prosperous scenario and these craftsmen were very well placed in society. They were also major contributors and were patrons to religious establishments. Eminent historians have revealed that throughout the period from *c.* 200 BCE–300 CE, there was a momentous swell in the number of guilds. They were performing a number of activities.

Another text *Mahavastu* also has revealed the existence of many guilds in Kapilavastu. There were gold smiths, ivory workers, stone masons and fruit sellers among many others. Several inscriptions mention guilds. Archaeological findings have revealed a wealth of information about the Guilds across various parts of the country in Western India. We come across such information from the inscriptions of the region around western Deccan. There were guilds of weavers, oil workers, bamboo workers, potters and flour makers. One guild of corn merchants donated a cave at Junnar. An inscription form Nashik talks about various craft and trade guilds in the town. One more inscription reveals two guilds of weavers at Govardhana which is modern Nashik.

The 3rd Century BCE inscription of Mangulam near Madurai talks about one Antai Asutan, who was a pearl merchant who was the head merchant of the merchant guild of Vellarai donated a Jain bed to the senior Jain monk Kani Nanta Sikuvan. In the nearby Alagarkulam around twelve inscriptions have been inscribed by the same merchant group who have made donations to the Jain hermits. One of the guild members was the supervisor of pearls in the Pandya administration. The excavations reveal an industrial complex that existed around fourth century BCE. Prof. K. Rajan who excavated the site says that this was entirely an industrial complex with a minimum of agricultural activity. The industries in the complex made iron and steel, textiles, bangles out of conch-shells and thousands of exquisite beads from semi-precious stones such as sapphire, beryl, quartz, lapis-lazuli, agate, onyx, carnelian, and black-cat eye. It had a water-channel in it. Water was used for wetting quartz, agate, lapis-lazuli, sapphire and beryl before they were cut and made into tiny beads with holes. Out of the semi-precious stones, carnelian and agate came from Maharashtra, lapis-lazuli came from Afghanistan. Kodumanal lies on the ancient trade route that connects the Chera capital of Karur in the east

with the famous Chera port of Muciri in the west. Roman coins in hoards and singles have been found in several sites in this region. Ivory, terracotta spindle whorls for spinning cotton and a thin gold wire were found in the complex, which has also thrown up 130 potsherds with Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions, including 30 with Tamil-Brahmi words. The inscriptions found in the potsherds give many personal names and it is believed that the industrial complex could have belonged to Samban Sumanan family which is inscribed boldly in a well preserved potsherd.

There are other references and tits of the guild authorities. The Jatakas give the title of the guild supremo as as *jetthaka*or *pamukkha*. There are examples of the leaders of guilds of garland workers such as *malakara-jetthaka*, and carpenters such as *vaddhaki-jetthaka*. There are many references to *sarthavaha*s—heads of caravan merchants.The chief of a mercantile guild was also referred to as a *setthi*.

Other works are also there which give an elaborate description of the nature and functions of guilds. We have references from the Manusmriti and the Yajnavalkya Smriti. Late smriti literature talk about two types of economic organization namely guild and partnerships. While explaining they talk about non-performance of agreements which relate to groups (Samuhas or Vargas). In this are included the *Sreni,* the *Puga* and the *Naigama.* Sreni is described as the guild of artisans and traders from the period of early Buddhist literature. Puga is group of merchants and naigama is a merchant. The seals of the Gupta period have the legends *Sreni-Kulika-nigama* or *Sreni-Sarthavadha-kulika-nigama* joined with the name of individuals. They show us that there was an intricate and complicated association of guilds and the individual merchants displayed their affiliation to the groups they belonged to through such titles. They highlight the credentials and strength of the guild officers. It elaborates on the regulations concerning apprenticeship. Guilds even settled disputes in several cases. They also were like banks lending to their members.

Guilds were also associated with the royalty. They used to be around the King and accompany him as well. Several supremos of guilds were connected with the support staff of the King. Some of them were even the personal favourites of the King. There were noble officers who used to supervise the guilds. Many leaders of guilds were even appointed as ministers. But Kautilya was very categorical that guilds have to be monitored. He writes in his *Arthashastra* that the officers should ensure accountability of the Guilds. They should maintain record of the dealings and accounts of the guilds. Guilds shouId be given their demarcarted regions so that they can concentrate on their respective expertise and vocation.

Dr Singh also throws light on the information provided by Dharmashastra texts with regard to this guild. She mentions that the King had the right to interfere in the affairs of guilds in particular scenarios. All the texts talk about the established conventions of the guilds. If an unscrupulous guild member broke an agreement out of greed, the King

had to expel him. When guild members fought among themselves the King used to arbitrate in the dispute. There were severe strictures for the guild members in case they duped the King of his pound of the earnings. The fine for swindling the King was to pay eight times of the stipulated amount which had to be paid to the King. Sometimes the guilds were penalized for migrating. But in subsequent periods they did move to other locations.

The inscriptions of Chalukyas of Kalyana mention trader groups and merchant guilds. In 1062, in Mulgund, the purchase of land and its gift to a matha was witnessed by three hundred *Adipattanas Mulugunda* headed by four *settis* along with 120 *Mahajanas*, 50 *Saligas* (weavers), 120 *teligas* (oil mongers), and 58 *Malagaras* (florists). Similarly, the inscription in Uchchangidurg dated 1064 states that a *Kalmukhasthana*, a Saiva religious centre, was under the protection of the *nakara* (merchant guild) of the locality.

During the Chola period different merchant guilds flourished. The *Manigramam* guild of Kodumbalur, The *Valanjiyars* of Tiruppurmbiyam who excelled in the 12th century, (they were also called *Vira Valanjiyars*in the 12thand 13th centuries as they maintained their own army),Teliki of Bezwada, were some of the names. There were also the *Satyavacakas* (truth tellers) who were also called *Dhanmavaniyar* (just merchants), these merchants maintained a matha called after themselves. There were also *Valanjiyar of Tennilankai* (Valanjiyars of Southern Sri Lanka). The Anbil copper plates talk about *Chitrameli Periyanattar*. The most famous amongst these were the *Nanadesa–Tisaiyayirattu-Ainnurruvar* which could be variedly interpreted as the five hundred of the thousand directions or one thousand and five hundred from all directions. Even in the 9th century it was well established in Tamilnadu. An inscription from Loboe Toewa in Sumatra talk about these merchants. They were a powerful autonomous corporation of merchants whose activities transcended political borders.

According to Meera Abraham the earliest inscription of the *Manigramam* guild was issued in the 9th century in Quilon as they must have operated in the port and must have had a brisk trade in the Persian-gulf region. They also had a base in Thailand especially in the isthmus of Kra, a narrow neck of land linking Thailand with Malaysia. Similarly, the earliest inscription of the *Five hundred Swamis* of *Ayyavole* Association was found in Hunugund taluk of Bijapur district. This guild operated in the area where the Rashtrakutas, the Chalukyas of Badami and later the Chalukyas of Kalyana ruled. They were active between 8th and the 12th Century C.E. and from here they moved south and set up bases in Southern Karnataka and Tamilnadu. In the time of the Hoysalas, the Mysore was a major cosmopolitan city where Five Hundred Swamis of Ayyavole, Nanadesis, Settis, and Valanjiyars functioned.

Both Nanadesis and the Five Hundred Swamis of Ayyavole frequently mention in their records that they were the inhabitants of the

eighteen vishyas or countries. Karmandala Satakam, an early 13th Century work says that the merchants were from the regions of Heheyas, Kadambas, Nolambas, Vaidhumbas, Andhra, Dhandaka, Sathavahana, Kalachuri, Pallava, Kunthala, Yadavas, Hoysala, Rashtrakuta, Chalukya, Dhyana, Mabalivana, Mouriyas and the Thondaiyars.

Check your progress:
1] Examine the hereditary nature of professions in ancient India.

11.3 IMPORTANT FUNCTION OF THE GUILDS

Dr Singh opines that Guilds were performing an important function as bankers. Interestingly, people invested their currency with guilds to earn piety as well. The interest that accrued from such investment was given to religious persons like seers, Brahmins, monks and ascetics. One donor wanted to use the interest to feed a certain number of Brahmins as well as the poor. Secular transactions were conducted as well. A guild of flour workers invested their sum of money with a guild according to an inscription belonging to the period of the Kushana King Huvishka. Other workers also invested their money with guilds. One person invested the income from his fields with a guild because he wanted to plant some specific trees.

An inscription from Junnar records the investment of some money with guilds of bamboo workers. A Nashik inscription belonging to the reign of the Kshatrapa ruler Nahapana records a permanent investment of 3,000 *karshapana*s made by the king's son-in-law, Ushavadata. Two thousand *karshapana*s were invested by him with a weaver's guild of Govardhana (Nashik) at 1 per cent rate of interest, and 1000 *karshapana*s were invested with another weaver's guild of the place at the interest rate of ¾ per cent per month. The interest of the first investment was to be used to provide cloth worth 12 *karshapana*s for each of the 20 monks who lived in the monastery, while that from the second was to provide them with light meals. These investments were proclaimed in the guild assembly (*nigama-sabha*) and inscribed on stone as a permanent record. Thaplyal points out that this is the only ancient inscription from North India that clearly specifies the rates of interest on monetary investments, and that the monthly and annual interest rates work out to 12 and 9 per cent respectively. He also notes that these rates of interest are lower than the standard 1¼ per cent per month mentioned in the *Arthashastra* and the Smritis. Further, it is interesting to note that two weavers' guilds of the same town were offering different interest rates.

Check your progress:
1] Examine the important functions of the guilds.

11.4 GUILDS IN ANCIENT INDIA - SCHOLARLY VIEWS

Kiran Kumar Thapylal has undertaken a detailed study of Guilds in Ancient India. In his work on Guilds in Ancient India, Thapylal has studied guilds from antiquity and the various stages in the development of guilds about C.E. 300.He mentions that people following the same occupations and crafts stayed at one place. They cooperated with each other and formed guilds. He has stated that we don't have much knowledge of guilds at the time of the Harappan civilization. Ofcourse, it is well known that the Harappan civilization had good crafts, trade and commerce.

Thapylal has studied the views of various scholars and he states that they are divided on the issue of whether the guild system was in existence in the early Vedic period. Some scholars consider Vedic society to be so well advanced that they would have had guild like organizations. They are convinced that terms like *sreni, puga,* and *gana,* in Vedic literature indicate a guild organization *sreshthi* was considered to be the president of a guild. Some other scholars are of a different opinion. They believe that early Vedic society was a rural society. They were still nomads and always busy in warfare. So, it was not possible for them to produce surplus foodgrains. When surplus food grains are produced, craftsmen get time and leisure to develop their crafts. The scholars are not convinced that the words *sreni* and *puga* in Vedic text signify guild. Naturally for them, *sreshthi* also would not mean the supremo of the guild.

Kiran Kumar Thapylal states that "*However, division of labour under the varna system was conducive to the emergence of guild organization. Agriculture, cattle farming and trade, the three occupations of the Vaisyas, in course of time, developed as separate groups. The Sudras, besides serving other varnas, took up such menial crafts as were looked down upon by the higher varnas, while some non-Aryans, mostly incorporated into the Sudra varna of the Brahmanical society, too, came to form separate economic groups.*

Thapylal has cited the religious texts of *Brihaddranyaka Upanishad* and *Gautama Dharmasutra* as evidence of guilds. He mentions a commentary on a passage of the *Brihaddranyaka Upanishad* which says that Brahma, on the analogy of the *varna* system of men, created gods variously of Brahmana, Kshatriya and Vaisya *varnas* and that the last-

mentioned ones were known as *ganasah* as they acquired wealth by cooperation. So, Brahmins had their specific gods, Kshatriyas had their own gods and Vaisyas gods were known as Ganasah. G*anasah* may have been the foundation for the survival of trade and industry guilds in the time of the composition of the Upanishad as there are several pieces of evidence regarding the existence of guilds in that period.

The emergence of sizable kingdoms, from c. 6th century BC, led to the interlinking of far-flung areas and must have facilitated procurement of raw materials from, and sale of finished goods in distant regions. The pooling of resources and managerial skills could be achieved better by traders and craftsmen organized into guilds. The growth of towns and cities provided better prospects to artisans and made a number of village artisans migrate to cities. The use of iron became widespread. Iron tools and implements would have been more effective in clearing jungles for agricultural land and ploughing fields. This would have helped in the production of grain in surplus, enabling more artisans to act as whole-time craftsmen, receiving food in lieu of artifacts manufactured by them. The introduction of writing helped in the codification of laws and in keeping accounts while the emergence of money-economy in about the same age gave a fillip to the growth of trade and industry, making it more mobile. These factors were all conducive to the development of guilds."

Thapylal has analyzed how Buddhism and Jainism, which emerged in the 6th century BCE, were more favourable for the emergence of guilds. These religions were more democratic than Brahmanism and provided a superior atmosphere for the expansion of guilds. Elaborate sacrifices were an integral aspect of Brahmanical religion. Material possessions and animals were sacrificed in the Brahmanical *yajnas.* The Buddhists and Jainas did not perform such sacrifices. It was a huge source of relief for many people, and it attracted several to these religions. Consequently, material possessions and flora and fauna were saved which in turn was offered for business and commerce. He further adds that the Buddhists and Jainas would not have been inhibited by fear of pollution in mixing and taking food with people of lower *varnas.* Therefore, they would have ventured out far and wide to carry out long distance trade. Another conducive factor for the development of guilds was the inherited nature of professions and the arrangement of apprenticeship.

Thapylal further traces the trajectory of the guild thus, "*The Mauryan empire (c. 320 to c. 200 BC) witnessed better maintained highways and increased mobility of men and merchandise. The state participated in agricultural and industrial production. The government kept a record of trades and crafts and related transactions and conventions of the guilds, indicating state intervention in guild affairs. The state allotted guilds separate areas in a town for running their trade and crafts. The members of the tribal republics that lost political power due to their incorporation in the extensive Mauryan Empire took to crafts and trades and formed economic organization. Kautilya, considers the possibility of guilds as agencies capable of becoming centres of power.*

The next phase of guilds may be bracketed between c. 200 BC and c. AD 300. The decline of the Mauryan Empire (c. 200 BC) led to political disintegration and laxity in state control over guilds, allowing them better chances to grow. Epigraphs from Sanchi, Bharhut, Bodhgaya, Mathura and sites of western Deccan refer to donations made by different craftsmen and traders. Guilds of flour-makers, weavers, oil-millers, potters, manufacturers of hydraulic engines, corn-dealers, bamboo-workers, etc., find mention in epigraphs. The period witnessed the elucidation of the seasonality and seasonal changes in wind direction of the south-west monsoon (c. AD 46), leading to closer commercial intercourse with the Roman Empire in which Indian merchants earned huge profits. The find of a large number of coins of the period indicates progress in money-economy, so vital for the development of trade and industry. The evidence in the Manusmriti and the Yajnavalkyasmriti shows an increase in the authority of guilds in comparison to earlier periods. Epigraphic evidence of the period refers to acts of charity and piety of the guilds (below) as also their bank-like functions (below). There is evidence to show that large merchant guilds had some control over small craft guilds."

Check your progress:
1] Examine the scholarly views of guilds in ancient India.

11.5 REGIONAL CONCENTRATION OF GUILDS

Thapylal has explained how some towns were specially known for excellence in certain crafts, e.g., Mathura and Kasi for textiles. Certain villages were named after particular craft or occupations. Within the city, there are references to separate streets or localities for ivory-workers, perfumers, florists, cooks, washermen, weavers, lotus-sellers, etc. Chanakya prescribes allocation of special accommodation and streets to the supporters of diverse crafts, and even to merchants dealing with different merchandise. Localization helped customers to purchase goods easily. It was easy for the state to administer laws relating to craftsmen and in tax-collection, and guilds in evolving their conventions and usages and in administering their affairs.

Children of people following the same craft staying together learnt their family craft from their elders. The segregation of people practicing a craft from another created insularity and isolation and contributed to greater bonds among members and to the formation of castes and sub-castes. However, guilds could migrate. The Samuddavanija jataka refers to migration of the carpenters of a village *en masse* as, even after receiving advances, they failed to fulfil their commitment of manufacturing articles.

Check your progress:
1] Discuss the regional concentration of guilds.

11.7 GUILD LAWS

Thaplyal has elaborated on the laws of the Guilds. Guilds had their laws, based on customs and usage, regarding organization, production, fixation of prices of commodities, etc. These rules were generally recognized by the state. The laws were a safeguard against state oppression and interference in guild affairs. The *Gautama Dharmasutra* enjoins upon the king to consult guild representatives while dealing with matters concerning guilds.

According to Yajnavalkya, profits and losses were to be shared by members in proportion to their shares. This practice assumes significance as it contrasted with the rights and privileges enjoyed by people based on their birth in a particular *varna.* For breach of guild laws, there was no expiation. Yajnavalkya prescribes severe punishment for one who embezzles guild property. According to him, one who does not deposit in the joint fund money obtained for the corporation was to pay eleven times the sum by way of penalty. The guild rules helped in smooth functioning of the guilds and in creating greater bonds of unity among guild members. In course of time, the status of the guild laws underwent change; in the *Gautama Dharmasutra* and *Manusmriti* guild laws appear as moral codes, but in the *Yajnavalkyasmriti* they are treated almost inviolable.

Young trainees were attached to master-craftsmen in various guilds. Yajnavalkya was the first to refer to industrial apprenticeship, which subject has been treated later elaborately by Narada. The parents or guardians of the pupil entered into an agreement as regards the duration of apprenticeship beforehand, and this was adhered to.

Epigraphic evidence shows that both Gomitaka, the sculptor of the Parkham Yaksha, and Naka, who manufactured the statue of YakshiniLavaya, were disciples of Kunika. Though it was natural for the pupil to follow the style of his preceptor, yet one with an innovative mind could introduce new trends. In ancient India, the credit of successful training of craftsmen, so vital for the development of arts and crafts, goes largely to guilds.

According to Kautilya, Superintendent of Accounts was to keep a record of the customs and transactions of corporations. In cooperative ventures, profits should be divided among members, either equally or

according to pre-agreement. Manu enjoins that a guild member who breaks an agreement must be banished from the realm by the king.

Check your progress:
1] Discuss the laws of the guilds in early India.

11. 8 GUILD STRUCTURE

The guild was a compact organization. It had three components—the General Assembly, the Executive Officers, and the Alderman, each with its well-defined sphere of jurisdiction and so placed as not to dominate or create hurdles in the functioning of the other.

(a) The General Assembly

No information is available in the texts of the period under review about such formalities as undergoing an ordeal or securing a guarantee of good character or written agreement, which find mention in the *Brihaspatismriti* for admission in the guild. *Jataka* stories give round figures of 100, 500, 1000 as members of different guilds. There is a reference to 1000 carpenters of a locality (Varanasi) under two heads. This could be because the number was considered large enough to make the guild unwieldy, though it may be pointed out that a few references to 1000 members of a guild, without division, do occur. However, it is also possible that the two chiefs, though heading 500 members each, still remained part of the same guild. The Nasik Inscription of the time of Nahapana refers to two weavers' guilds at Govardhana (Nasik). Either one guild branched off into two because of feuds, or the creation of two guilds was deemed necessary because of the large number of weavers there, or one of the guilds had migrated to that place from outside.

(b) The Guild Head

The head of a guild is often referred to as the *jetthaka* or *pamukkha* in early Buddhist literature. Often, he is referred to after the occupation followed by the guild of which he was the head, e.g., 'head of garland makers' *{mdlakdrajetthaka),* 'head of carpenters 'guild' *(vaddhakijetthaka),* etc. Caravan merchants were guided by their leader, *sdrthavdha,* who instructed them regarding halting, watering, etc. and precautions against robbers, etc. *Setthis* were merchants-cum-bankers and often headed merchant guilds. They were big businessmen in cities and also held landed property in villages, and played an important role in both rural and urban economy. Often the chief *setthi* of the city was named after that city, e.g., *Rajagahasetthi.* Normally the head *setthi* of a city would be from among

the *setthis* of that city. But curiously, there is an instance of appointment to that office of one not only from outside the town but also outside the kingdom.

At the request of Prasenajit, king of Kosala, Bimbisara, king of Magadha, sent one Dhananjaya Bhaddiya to hold the office of *nagara-sreshthi* of Saketa, the Kosalan capital. *Setthis* are often referred to as being present in the king's court, mainly for protecting interest of their guilds. The mention of *setthi-thdna,* (office of *setthi)* may indicate that he also held an office in king's court. In Jataka stories he is referred to as taking leave of the king before journeying or as seeking permission for resigning the office, or for turning an ascetic, or for distributing his wealth in charity. One of the Jatakas mention a *setthi*as king's favourite *(rajavallabha).* There are frequent references to the great wealth (often referred to as eighty crores) of the *setthis.* They were present in all important royal ceremonies and events of state and were consulted by kings. The guild head could punish a guilty member even to the extent of excommunication, and the king approved it if he found that the punishment had been justly meted out.

Ancient texts do not specify whether the office of the head of a guild was elective or hereditary. There are references to a mariner and a *setthi being* succeeded by his sons. A head-smith was succeeded by his son-in-law, also a *setthi.* It appears that normally headship of a guild went to the eldest son, and in the absence of a son to some close relative, provided that the person to succeed was himself an expert in the trade or craft; and the guild assembly, as a routine, would confirm such successions. Succession is mentioned only after the death of the head and not in his lifetime, which implies that the head remained in office lifelong. This is also supported by the evidence of two Damodarpur Copper-plate inscriptions of the 5th century CE taken together; it shows that one Ribhupala held the office of *nagarasreshthi* for half a century.

(c)Executive Officers

Thaplyal has mentioned about the Executive Officers of the Guild. To assist the guild head and to look after the day-to-day business of the guild, Executive Officers were appointed. Their number varied according to need and circumstances. Yajnavalkya says that they should be pure, free from avarice and knowers of the Vedas; the last-mentioned qualification suggests the presence of Brahmanas in the Executive Council. It is not specially stated whether the Executive Officers were elected by the Assembly or were nominated by the guild head.

Check your progress:
1] Examine the structure of the guilds.

11. 9 GUILD OFFICES

The guilds had their own offices. Structures depicted on some *nigama* sealings from Rajghat perhaps-represent guild-office buildings. The house in which a *nigama* sealing was found at Bhita has been identified as 'House of the Guild'. The 'subterranean chamber' at Vaisali in which 273 of *ireshthi-sarthavahakulikanigama* seals of the Gupta period have been found was perhaps a refuge room of a guild office. The *Harivamsa Purana* refers to separate pavilions earmarked for the members of different guilds to witness wrestling bouts, each marked by banners bearing the insignia of the guild. There were checks and balances in the functioning of the guilds. The members had the right to speak in the guild assembly. But a speech that was not sensible or that created hurdles in the functioning of a guild was punishable. The heads had considerable power over guild members, but they had to work within the framework of the usage and customs of the guild; transgression of guild rules made them liable to punishment by the General Assembly. The reference in a Jataka story to a guild head offering the hand of his daughter to the bridegroom before the guild Assembly indicates his regard for that body. A member harassed by a headman could seek redressal from king.

Check your progress:
1] Examine the guild offices of early India.

11.10 SOURCES OF INCOME AND ITEMS OF EXPENDITURE

Considerable amount of money in guilds came from the subscription of their members. Profits earned in executing orders formed an important source of income. Fines recovered from erring members were added to guild funds. Gifts bestowed by kings on guild heads and Executive Officers became the property of the guilds. Besides, at times, the guilds might also receive subsidies from the government.

Expanding guild activities, procuring raw material in the case of craft guilds, and commodities and finished goods in that of trade guilds, travelling and transport, octroi duties, wages of labour, would involve sizable expenditure. Some money was spent on maintenance of guards for protection of men, merchandise and treasury, and arranging for forest guards for safety while travelling through forests. Rewarding members whose acts brought profits to the guild and providing legal protection to members were also items of expenditure. Besides, the guilds spent a good

deal of money on works of charity and religious piety and in providing help to the poor and destitute.

Check your progress:
1] Examine the sources of income of the guilds.

11.11CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE GUILDS

(a) General Economic Functions

The-guilds trained workers and provided a congenial atmosphere for work. They procured raw materials for manufacturing, controlled quality of manufactured goods and their price, and located markets for their sale. They provided a modicum of safety to the members and merchandise and accorded social status to the former.

(b)Functions Related to Religious Piety and Charity

Guilds made compacts to alleviate distress and undertake works of piety and charity as a matter of duty. They were expected to use part of their profits for preservation and maintenance of assembly halls, watersheds, shrines, tanks, and gardens, as also for helping widows, the poor and destitute in performing religious rites or alleviating their economic hardships. Epigraphic evidences refers variously to the gifts of gateways, caves and cisterns, pillars or seats made by guilds or individual members of the guilds.

(c) Bank-like Functions

According to Thaplyal, the reference in the *Arthasdstra* to the king's spies borrowing from guilds, gold, bar-gold, and coin-gold on the pretext of procuring various types of merchandize, shows that guilds loaned money to artisans and merchants. It does not contain any reference to guilds loaning money to the general public. Guilds established their efficiency and integrity, and epigraphic evidence shows that not only the general public but even royalty deposited money with them as trust funds on the terms that the principal sum would remain intact on a permanent basis and the interest alone would be used for performing some pious act of donor's choice. No deposit was made solely for safety purpose or for earning simple or compound interest in cash. Thus, the guilds had limited scope in banking in comparison to modern banks. A few epigraphs may be referred to here. A Mathura Inscription of 2nd century CE refers to the two permanent endowments of 550 silver coins each with two guilds to feed Brahmanas and poor from out of the interest money.

Of the two Nasik Inscriptions (2nd century CE), one records the endowment of 2000 *karshapanas* at the rate of one percent (per month) with a weavers' guild for providing cloth to *bhikshus* and 1000 *karshapanas* at the rate of 0.75 percent (per month) with another weavers' guild for serving light meals to them. Another inscription from Nasik of the time of the Abhira King Isvarasena refers to depositing variously 1000, 2000, an unknown amount and 500 *karshapanas* with the guild of potters, workers fabricating hydraulic engines, oil-millers, and another guild respectively. The deposits with four different guilds, instead of a single guild, were perhaps made with a view to distributing the risk, as guilds could suffer a set-back or even go bankrupt.

The providing of cloth by a weavers' guild and oil by an oil-men's guild were a simple affair, being related to the occupation of the guild. But providing of light meals by the weavers' guild, or medicine by an oil-millers guild, involved extra professional work, and in such cases guilds might have entered into contract with parties dealing with those items, paying them a major part of the interest accruing from the deposits.

(d) Judicial Functions

Thaplyal states that guilds could try their members for offence in accordance with their own customs and usages, which came to acquire almost the status of law. A guild member had to abide by both guild and state laws. Guilds could arbitrate even between members and their wives. Some guild representatives acted as members of the court presided over by the king and advised him, particularly in matters relating to traders and craftsmen. Significantly, guilds also functioned as courts of justice for the general public. There were four courts in descending order as (i) courts presided over by the officers appointed by the king, (ii) the *piiga,* (iii) the *sreni,* and (iv) the *kula.*

Guilds could settle boundary disputes. Manu prescribes that, for artisans and merchants forming guilds, other artisans or merchants of the same or other guild could act as witnesses. The jurisdiction of guild courts was confined to civil cases; those involving heinous crimes were dealt by the king alone. Though, according to later commentators, Vijnanesvara and Visvarupa, disputes could be taken to the king's court only through the channel of *kula, sreni* and *puga* courts, and not direct, yet, in practice, this was not always followed. Democratic institutions like guild courts flourish in peaceful conditions, and the view that their presence in the pre-colonial era is because anarchical conditions prevented state courts to function is not true. King's courts would have been difficult to approach by people, particularly by those living far away from the capital, and it was sharing judicial and administrative work at lower levels by local bodies like guilds and village assemblies that made it possible for the state to successfully administer large kingdoms, even though rapid means of communication were not available.

All guilds acted as courts for their members but either only important ones, or representatives of various guilds authorized by the state, would have acted as courts for the general public. Guilds, being organizations of people of different castes following the same profession, would also have had some Brahmana members, some of whom would have been Executive Officers, and probably they, with the help of members or Executive Officers of other *varnas,* would have formed the courts of justice.

(e) Administrative Functions

Thaplyal has analysed that the guilds had a good deal of administrative control over their members. It was necessary for the wife of a member of a guild intending to join the Buddhist *sangha* to obtain the permission of the guild. Some guild heads are known to have acted as *mahamatras.* As stated above, the guild heads were present in royal courts, perhaps in some official capacity. The epigraphic evidence of the Gupta period shows that heads of different guilds acted as member of the advisory boards of the district administration.

Check your progress:
1] Give a brief overview of the contribution of guilds.

11.12 GUILDS AND CASTES

According to Thaplyal, guilds and castes, though similar in some respects, are basically different. Guilds were economic institutions castes were social groups. Caste is necessarily hereditary, but not guild membership. One could be a member of only one caste, but one could be a member of more than one guild. However, in areas populated by people of the same caste, membership of guild and caste coincided, and the head of the guild presided over the meetings of both guild and caste. But elsewhere, especially in cities, the population being cosmopolitan, guild membership and caste membership were not identical. Till the early centuries of the Christian era, guild-caste equations were not rigid and literary evidence shows that some people did follow professions other than that of their parents. It was only by the early medieval period that guilds became considerably fossilized into occupational sub-castes.

Check your progress:
1] Discuss the connection between guilds and castes.

11.13 GUILDS AND THE STATE

Thaplyal states that Guilds enjoyed considerable autonomy, which came not as a favour by the state but by their inherent right. The guilds safeguarded the interests of traders and craftsmen against oppression by the king as well as the legal discrimination they were normally subjected to. Manu enjoins upon a king, to acquire knowledge of laws of the *state* and other institutions while dealing with them. Yajnavalkya lays down that such rules of corporations as are not against sacred laws should be observed. Even Kautilya, a champion of state control over all spheres of activity, lays down rules for the protection of artisans. In his scheme, guilds, in contrast to individual artisans, were granted seven days' grace for completion of deals. To protect the interest of village guilds, entry of an outsider guild therein was banned. Manu lays down that a king should employ guards and spies near artisans' shops as a protection against robbers.

Perhaps the punch-marked coins in earlier stages were issued by rich merchants and guilds, may be with the permission of the state. Since the state earned a sizable income from taxation through guilds, it naturally provided facilities to them by maintaining roads for transport of merchandise and perhaps also granted subsidies and loans to them. Some prosperous merchants, as members of the guilds, or otherwise, must have extended financial support to kings in times of emergency.

Kings honoured guild heads by offering them gifts. Guild heads were present at important state ceremonies. The heads of guilds along with others, waited for the coronation ceremony of Bharata, and accompanied Bharata to visit Rama at Chitrakuta. They accompanied Suddhodana in welcoming the Buddha, and also Bimbisara in paying a visit to the Buddha. They,

The *naigamas* participated in Rama's coronation ceremony. *Ramayana* refers to kings consulting *nigamamukhyas "* (guild heads) and *nigamavriddhas* (Elders of the Guilds) on important matters. In the *Mahabharata,* Duryodhana, feeling humiliated on his defeat at the hands of the *Gandhawas,* was afraid facing guild heads and other notable members of the society. Kautilya advises the king to see that heads of different guilds do not unite against him, and win the support of the guilds 'by means of reconciliation and gifts', and to weaken such ones as are inimical to him. He also advises the king to grant land which is under

attack from enemy to the guild of warriors *(srenibala).* He prefers state waste land to be inhabited by unorganized people rather than by guilds, as the latter could create trouble for the king. In his scheme, a king in an emergency could rob guilds by unscrupulous means.

Thaplyal states that there is no evidence of a guild or a combination of guilds attempting to capture political power. The guilds of the period were local in character, with no central organization. Interests of different guilds were of different kinds, sometimes even conflicting and so they could hardly form a joint front against the state. However, in case of contests for succession to the royal throne, they might have helped the claimants of their choice in acquiring it. Guild quarrels, both internal and external, provided the king with appropriate opportunities to interfere in guild affairs. Yajnavalkya enjoins that a king should settle quarrels among guilds according to their usages and make them follow the established path. The interference of the state in guild affairs would have varied according to such considerations as the distance of their location from state headquarters, the nature and temperament of kings and officials, and the prosperity and occupation of the guild.

Check your progress:
1] Examine the relation between guilds and the state.

11.14 QUESTIONS

1) Examine the growth of guild system in North India
2) Assess the growth of guild system in South India
3) Discuss in detail the guild structure

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Unit - 12

ROMAN TRADE

Unit Structure :

12.0 OBJECTIVES

1. To study about Indo-Roman Trade Relations.
2. To study the Roman Coins and other finds.
3. To anlayse the Trade Routes in the Indo-Roman Trade.

12.1 INTRODUCTION

Ancient India had a thriving trade network with various parts of the world. There was trade between Egypt, East Africa, Southern Arabia, and India. A variety of goods were bought and sold. One of the important trade networks was with the Roman Empire. India had a strong international trade network. Sangam literature mention prolifically about the maritime trade between Tamilagam and countries in South East Asia, Arabia, East Coast of Africa and Rome. Though the term Yavana may mean either Greek or Roman, in the South Indian context it meant only the Romans. They were purchasing the prized wootz steel which were made in and near Kodumanal and sold through the Musiris port in the western coast through the Arabs. Around 4th or 3rd Century BCE they decided to directly buy from peninsular India. From that time onwards the direct trade between Rome and South India commenced. Ferrum-Indicum was one of the articles that was taxed in Alexandria. *Silapadigaram*'s hero Kovalan, to continue the family tradition, decides to go to Rome for trade. *Manimekalai* another Sangam work talks about Roman trade. Puhar the capital of the Sangam Cholas had two cities: one a costal-city and the second an inland city. The coastal city had colonies where Romans lived with other nationalities. Similarly, the Pandyan kings employed Romans as their personal bodyguards. They were also skilled engineers who built various traps in the fort walls. Romans traded with South India in their

various ports including Musiris, Korkai, Puhar, Arikamedu, Mahabalipuram and Masulipattinam. They came in huge ships sailing on the Periyar river and brought with them loads of merchandise. They sold gold and wine and bought black pepper, Cinnamon, Iron, wootz steel, pearls etc. They brought along with them perfumes and wine. Labourers loaded and unloaded merchandise that came from the foreign ships at midnight.

Erythraean Sea was the name given to the Indian Ocean, Red Sea, and the Persian Gulf. The *Periplus* was a logbook, written in Greek. Periplus of the Erythraean Sea would mean a voyage around Erythraean Sea, written in Greek by an Egyptian trader who has described the voyage from Egypt to coast of East Africa till Tanzania and from there to Arab peninsula, to Persian Gulf to western coast of India from Makaran to Malabar at that time called the Chera country. In the East coast from Korkai in south to Arournoi (possibly Azhagan Kulam), Puhar, Arikamedu, Mahabalipuram and Masulipattinam in Andhra where the goods were load into ships and were taken to both South East Asia and West Asia. He talks about the pearl fishery in Korkai port in Pandian Kingdom. He mentions three market towns and harbours in which pearls were kept in heaps and was sold. He also talks about emporiums in south and East Tamilnadu, Kavirpattinam or Puhar being one such. It was especially useful for traders in ancient times. It is a rich source for history of trade in the Indian Ocean. The book gives information about trade routes, ports, goods sold and bought. The author mentions about trade routes to India as well. Though there are many aspects about the book that are debatable, nonetheless it gives a wealth of information about the ancient times.

The west coast of present-day India is mentioned frequently in the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea for its strong tidal currents, turbulent waves and rocky seabed being dangerous for shipping experience. The anchors of ships would be caught by the waves and quickly detach to capsize the vessel or cause a shipwreck. Offshore explorations in 2000 and 2001 have yielded seven differently sized amphoras, two lead anchors, forty-two stone anchors of different types, a supply of potsherds, and a circular lead ingot. Archeologists have concluded that most of these were wine amphoras, since olive oil was in less demand in the subcontinent.

Similarly, Ptolemy talks about Uriyur, the inland capital of the Cholas, and Masulipatnam in Andhra which he describes as having the best anchorage. According to him it was from Masulipatnam that goods were taken to Bengal, Pegu, Arakan in Myanmar, Sumatra, Thailand, Vietnam, Manila, Hormus, and Madagascar.

Keezhadi must have been a coastal trading city (Pattinam), which connected the Pandya capital Madurai and Azhagankulam. It was a prime centre of maritime trade in the east. Excavations in this site yielded storage jars, black and red ware pottery, pearl micro-beads, ivory dices, ivory game men, copper rod for painting eyelashes etc.

Dr Upinder Singh has mentioned that "The period between the 2nd century BCE and 2nd century CE saw flourishing trade between India and the Roman Empire. Apart from the export of Indian goods to the Mediterranean, India also played an important role in the Chinese silk trade. From the time of the Roman emperor Augustus (27 BCE–14 CE), there was a tendency for traders to avoid the section of the Silk Route that passed through Parthia in central Asia, due to the turbulent conditions there. A part of the trade was diverted overland to India and onwards from the Indian ports to the Roman Empire via the sea route. This trade declined after the time of Marcus Aurelius in the late 2nd century BCE, partly as a result of the internal vicissitudes of the Roman Empire; however, it did not come to an end."

We get a lot of information from the *Periplu*s about the goods that were sold to the Roman Empire. The trade was carried from Indian ports on the Indus delta and the Gujarat coast.

Check your progress:
1] Give a brief overview of the Roman trade in India.

12.2 ROMAN COINS

There are about 170 Roman coins found from 130 sites in India. Many of the coins belong to the rule of Emperors Augustus (31BCE–14 CE) and Tiberius (14–37 CE).The silver coins are called *denarii* and gold coins are called *aurei*. There are silver coins that are found in India and Rome. Generally, more coins found in Coimbatore region of Tamil Nadu and the Krishna valley in Andhra Pradesh. In Azhagankulam site three copper coins of Emperor Valentine II (375 CE) were found, According to Rajan Gurukkal on the whole, many hoards of Mediterranean coins mixed with Roman coins were found in the ancient trade route suggests that it was mainly used by long distance traders. As many as eighty hoards of gold and silver coins of the Roman Emperors from 1st Century BCE to 4TH CE have been found in south western and the south-eastern coasts of Peninsular India. Collections by W. Elliot and Scott are the major pool of Roman coins found in India. Many more must have been lost to the Archaeologists as locals unearth and sell it to visitors in Arikamedu and such other sites. Hoards were also found in places such as Eyyal, Pollachi, Karur, Vellalur, Kalayamuttur, Madurai, Valluvalli, Kanchipuram, Uraiyur,Panamkadu, Kottayathnadu, and Puthenchira.Few coins were found in some regions of Western India. Very few Roman coins have been found in North India. They have been discovered in places like Taxila, Manikyala, and Mathura. One hoard has been found at the eastern part of India at Singhbhum. Many of the coins have some marks on them like dots

and curves. Perhaps they were the marks of owners. Some of the early Chera coins dated to 1st century CE, have imitated Roman coins with the human image obviously the king wearing a Roman like bristled crown.

Roman trade in the subcontinent according to the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* 1st century CE [Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indo-Roman_trade_relations]

Dr Singh opines that, "*In areas where well-established systems of currency already existed—for instance in the Kushana and Satavahana kingdoms—Roman coins may have been melted down for bullion, whereas in the eastern Deccan, where indigenous currency systems were weaker, they may have been used as currency. Recently, it has been shown that Roman coins made their way to India well after the reigns of the kings in whose reigns they were issued. P. Berghaus also points to the finds of Roman copper coins in Gujarat from the 2nd half of the 3rd century CE. Roman bronze coins are found at several places in India, mostly in Tamil Nadu, in contexts dating from the latter half of the 4th century CE. Thousands of them have also been found in Sri Lanka. This clearly shows the southward shift of maritime networks*."

Roman gold coins excavated in Pudukottai, Tamil Nadu, India. One coin of Caligula (37–41 CE), and two coins of Nero (54–68). British Museum. [Source: By Uploadalt - Own work, photographed at British Museum, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=12221985]

Coins are not the only source of information. We also get information from other archaeological sources like pots and potsherds. Roman pots have some typical characteristics. There are jars with a big elliptical body, thin cylindrical neck, and two handles. One more type is Arretine ware which, is a red glazed pottery with glossy surface slips having ornamental designs. This pottery was produced at an important Centre called Arezzo, Tuscany. This began appearing from 1st Century BCE and was in circulation till 5th Century CE in many sites in Tamilnadu.

Courtesy:
L: https://educalingo.com/en/dic-en/arretine-ware
R: https://www.worldhistory.org/uploads/images/5531.jpg?v=1619640903

There are some other regions in South India where Roman artefacts are found. These areas are Kanchipuram and Uraiyur. Other areas in India include places in Gujarat and western India. They are found in Dwarka and Ajabpura among many others. Some other Roman objects have been found such as glass works and metal objects. Many imitations of Roman coins also have been found across many places. Some kinds of clay beads are also found which may perhaps have been a clay necklace. Some bronze objects have been found at Kolhapur. One statue has been found of the Roman sea god. This shows that not only South India, but even Western India had a thriving trade with the Roman Empire.

Check your progress:
1] Examine the Roman coins found in India.

12.3 TRADE DURING THE POST MAURYAN PERIOD

India has always had a thriving contact with the Western world. One could say that it has been so since the beginning of lndus Valley civilization. It increased by leaps and bounds after the establishment of Satavahana power in the Deccan in first century B.C. and the Kushana Empire in north India in first century A.D. This gave a big boost to India's

economic and cultural contacts with West Asia. A major chunk of West Asia was under the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire had a huge demand for luxury goods from India. This led to a lot of trade between India and the Roman Empire.

The Romans particularly liked Indian goods. They had a voracious demand for Indian products. Therefore, efforts were made to increase trade with India. The Romans' demand of Asian luxuries was extraordinary. Chinese silks, Indian pearls, jewels, fine muslin, drugs, spices, condiments, incense, ghee, ivory, dyes, cosmetics, oils, and perfumes all fetched high prices.

In return western merchants carried tin and lead to India. They also brought wine, coral, coloured glass, gold and silver coins. They brought special gifts for the kings like maidens for their harems. However, the principal means of exchange between India and Rome was gold.

Trade between India and Rome continued to thrive steadily during the second and third century A.D. But with the rise of great Gupta Empire, the focus shifted to central India. As a result there was a setback in the trade between India and Rome. Sassanian Empire also emerged in 227. Nevertheless, the contact sustained through Alexandria to which Indians flocked in escalating figures until the fall of Roman Empire in the fifth century. Subsequently India's trade sidetracked towards Southeast Asia. Rome wanted lots of luxurious goods and India was not able to supply such a large quantity of luxurious goods. As a result, the Indian traders began probing eastwards for new suppliers of stones, ivory and spices which had begun to run out. They imported the goods from South-East Asia to cater to the increasing demands of Roman people. This contact of Indians with Southeast Asian people blossomed further. As the Roman Empire receded, its trade with India got relegated.

The presence of the Kushan Empire in the geo-political setting of early India brought an alteration in the Indo-Roman trade. The Kushan kings were in close with the West Asian and Roman emperors. The Romans wanted to expand into India. So they came closer to Kushan frontiers. The Kushanas brought a large number of Greek sculptors from Asia Minor who settled in Punjab. They were associated with the Gandhara School of art. The cultural contacts between India and Rome were furthermore felt on the area of astronomy, mathematics, art, architecture and sculpture, coin system and others. Ambassadors visited each other. It strengthened the political contacts, which accordingly helped the enlargement of trade. The effect of Rome on the lifestyle, language and culture of Indian people is visibly noticeable.

Check your progress:
1] Examine the Roman trade in th post Mauryan period.

12.4 INDO-ROMAN TRADE RELATIONS

The Seleucid dynasty dominated a developed system of trade with the Indian Subcontinent which had earlier existed beneath the authority of the Achaemenid Empire. The Greek-Ptolemaic dynasty, controlling the western and northern end of further business routes to Southern Arabia and the Indian Subcontinent, had begun to take advantage of trading opportunities in the region prior to the Roman involvement but, according to the historian Strabo, the amount of business between Indians and the Greeks was not similar to that of later Indo-Roman trade.

Prior to Roman expansion, the various peoples of the subcontinent had established strong maritime trade with other countries. The spectacular boost in the importance of Indian ports, however, did not take place until the opening of the Red Sea by the Greeks and the Romans' realization as to the region's seasonal monsoons. The first two centuries of the Common Era indicate a marked increase in trade between western India and the Roman east by sea. The expansion of trade was made possible by the stability brought to the region by the Roman Empire from the time of Augustus (r. 27 BCE–14 CE) which allowed for new explorations and the creation of a sound silver and gold coinage. .

Since the discoveries at Bet Dwarka are significant for the maritime history of the region, archeologists have researched the resources in India. Despite the unfavorable conditions the island is situated in, the following items have made Bet Dwarka as well as the rest of western India an important place for trade. From Latin literature, Rome imported Indian tigers, rhinoceros, elephants, and serpents to use for circus shows – a method employed as entertainment to prevent riots in Rome. It has been noted in the Periplus that Roman women also wore Indian Ocean pearls and used a supply of herbs, spices, pepper, lyceum, cost us, sesame oil and sugar for food. Indigo was used as a color while cotton cloth was used as articles of clothing. Furthermore, the subcontinent exported ebony for fashioned furniture in Rome. The Roman Empire also imported Indian lime, peach, and various other fruits for medicine. Western India, as a result, was the recipient of large amounts of Roman gold during this time.
Since one had to sail against the narrow gulfs of western India, special large boats were used. There was a demand for good ships and advanced technology. At the entrance of the gulf, large ships called trappaga and cotymba helped guide foreign vessels safely to the harbor. These ships were capable of relatively long coastal cruises, and several seals have

depicted this type of ship. In each seal, parallel bands were suggested to represent the beams of the ship. In the center of the vessel is a single mast with a tripod base.

Apart from the recent explorations, close trade relations, as well as the development of ship building, were supported by the discovery of several Roman coins. On these coins were depictions of two strongly constructed masted ships. Thus, these depictions of Indian ships, originating from both coins and literature of Pliny and Pluriplus, indicate Indian development in seafaring due to the increase in Indo-Roman commerce. In addition, the silver Roman coins discovered in western India primarily come from the 1st, 2nd, and 5th centuries. These Roman coins also suggest that the Indian peninsula possessed a stable seaborne trade with Rome during 1st and 2nd century AD. Land routes, during the time of Augustus, were also used for Indian embassies to reach Rome.

The discoveries found on Bet Dwarka and on other areas on the western coast of India strongly indicate that there were strong Indo-Roman trade relations during the first two centuries of the Common Era. The 3rd century, however, was the termination of the Indo-Roman trade. The sea-route between Rome and India was shut down, and as a result, the trading reverted to the time prior to Roman expansion and exploration.

a. FOUNDATION OF THE TRADE

The replacement of Greek kingdoms by the Roman Empire as the administrator of the eastern Mediterranean basin led to the strengthening of direct maritime trade with the east and the elimination of the taxes extracted previously by the middlemen of various land based trading routes. Strabo's mention of the vast increase in trade following the Roman annexation of Egypt indicates that monsoon was known from his time. The trade started by Eudoxus of Cyzicus in 130 BCE kept increasing according to Strabo. He says,*"At any rate, when Gallus was prefect of Egypt, I accompanied him and ascended the Nile as far as Syene and the frontiers of Kingdom of Aksum (Ethiopia), and I learned that as many as one hundred and twenty vessels were sailing from Myos Hormos to the subcontinent, whereas formerly, under the Ptolemies, only a very few ventured to undertake the voyage and to carry on traffic in Indian merchandise."*

By the time of Augustus up to 120 ships were setting sail every year from Myos Hormos to India. So much gold was used for this trade, and apparently recycled by the Kushan Empire (Kushans) for their own coinage, that Pliny the Elder complained about the drain of specie to India. He said, *"India, China and the Arabian Peninsula take one hundred million sesterces from our empire per annum at a conservative estimate: that is what our luxuries and women cost us. For what fraction of these imports is intended for sacrifices to the gods or the spirits of the dead?"*

a. Graeco-Roman writing on Indo-Roman Trade:

From Strabo, the Greek Geographer of the 1st Century BCE that the traffic of goods to Alexandria through the Egyptian ports Berenike and Myos Hormos was well prevalent in the days of Ptolemy.

"I was with Gallus at the time he was prefect of Egypt and accompanied him as far as Syene and the frontiers of Ethiopia, and I found that about one hundred and twenty ships sail from Myos-Hormos to India"' Strabo

Greek historians mention embassies to Emperor Augustus and Trajan.

"…Every so many embassies came to him from various barbarians, including the Indi (Indians)…"

According to Rajan Gurukkal, an embassy in those days meant just a couple of persons representing their lands or head of tribes visting the emperor with some gifts to gratify him and secure agreement on mutual collaboration.

Another quote from Strabo states that

"Eight naked servants presented the gifts that were brought. They had girdles encircling their waists and were fragrant with ointment. The gifts consisted of a Hermes born wanting arms from the shoulders, whom I have myself seen, large snakes and a serpent ten cubits long and a partridge larger than a vulture. They were accompanied by a man who burned himself at Athens…Numerous embassies came to him (Augustus) and the Indians having first proclaimed a league of amity with him, obtained ratification and presented him with gifts, with tigers also-animals seen then for the first time by the Romans, and if I mistake not, even by the Greeks.

According to Florus, a contemporary of Trajan (98-17 CE), the presents included jewels, precious stones, and elephants.

Strabo also mentions the ignorance of Roman travellers to India in the following words.

"I must now begin with India, for it is the first and largest country that lies out towards the east, for not only is it farthest away from us, but not many of our people have seen it. And even those who have seen it, have seen only parts of it, and the greater part of what they say is hearsay."

According to Gaius Plinius Secundus known as Pliny Elder,

'*Voyage from Sigerus, a cape in Arabia reckoned at 1335 miles, can be performed by the aid of a west wind called Hippalus. If Hippalus be blowing, Muziris, the earliest mart of India, can be reached in forty days. It is not a desirable place of call. Pirates being in the neighborhood*

who occupy a place called Nitrias and besides, it is not well supplied with wares for traffic. Ships, besides anchor at a great distance from the shore. The cargoes have to be landed and shipped by boats. At the time I am writing this Caelobotras was the sovereign of the country. Another more convenient harbour is Neacyndon which is called Becare. There Pondion (Pandyan) used to reign. Dwelling at a great distance from the mart, in a town in the interior of the country called Modura. The district from which the pepper is carried to Becare is called Cottanara. Travelers sail back from India with a south-east wind, and on entering the Redy Sea catch the south-west or south'.

According to Rajan Gurukkal, merchants taking the passage to Muzirs obtained better gains that had been impossible if they sailed to other ports of India. As Muziris provided goods of greater demand in Rome and of extensive distributive prospects all over Europe, which meant acquisition of huge profits. Muziris was the most important centre of maritime contact during the peak phase of Roman empire.

Again, according to Pliny Elder;

'*Coral is highly valued among the Indians as Indian pearls. The most prized one is found in the Sicilian gulf around the Aeolian islands and Drepanum. Coral berries are no less valued by Indian men then specimen Indian pearls by the Roman ladies. Indian soothsayers and seers believe that coral is potent as a charm for warding off dangers. They delight in its beauty and religious power. Before this became known, the Gauls used to decorate their swords, shields, and helmet with coral. Now it is very scarce because of the price it commands and is rarely seen in its natural habitat'.*

Pliny Elder was critical of the craze of contemporary Roman aristocracy for the expensive goods from the east for it had been draining a lot of gold and silver out of the empire. He estimated the annual value of Graeco-Roman trade with the east, especially, India, as 100 million sesterces.

' India, China and the Arabian Peninsula take one hundred million sesferces from our empire per annum at a conservative estimate; that is what our luxuries and women cost us. For what percentage of these imports is intended for sacrifices to the Gods or the spirits of the dead'.

V.A. Smith, the 19th century writer says that:

'*Tamil land had the good fortune to possess three precious commodities not procurable elsewhere, pepper, pearls and beryl. Pepper fetched an enormous price in the markets of Europe. .. The pear-fishery of southern -sea, had been worked for untold ages , and always attracted a crowd of foreign merchants, The mines of Padiyur in the Coimbatore district were almost the only source known to the ancient world from which good beryl could be obtained, and few gems were most esteemed by both Indians and Romans. The Tamil states maintained powerful navies*

and were visited freely by ships from both east and west, which brought merchants of various places eager to buy the pearls, pepper, beryl, and other choice commodities of India and to pay for them with gold, silver and art ware of Europe'.

b. Production and exchange Sites:

The recent excavations at various megalithic sites in South India reveals commendable data on production and exchange sites. According to Rajan Gurukkal, Pot making was the most widespread activity. It was a major industry of specialization as its variety in terms of quality, fineness, colour, shapes, and sizes indicate. Ceramic varieties such as red slipware , black and red ware (BRW), russet-coated ware, and rouletted ware involved rare skill and show extensive geographical distribution of manufacture.

Iron smelting and iron working were equally extensive all over peninsular India. Every settlement had its own iron-smelting and iron-working households. Iron slag ingots have been found in collected from various sites.

Bead making was another major industry. Kodumanal in Periyar district was a production site for both iron making and bead making. Paditrupattu, a Sangam work praises Cera ruler for his gifts of jewels from Kodumanam (Kodumanal). The area is rich in beryl and rock crystals.

Archaeologists excavated in Kodumanal a circular base of a bowl furnace, which was surrounded by 12 small furnaces. The site has also yielded several potsherds with Brahmi letters and a few Tamil Brahmi words. The wootz steel was produced by carburizing iron. After that the ancient artisans gave it a coat of plant, or ochre or seaweed with high magnesium content. The ductile iron was coated with graphite along with ghee to make it rust free. The metallographic analysis carried out in 2013 on the sword collected from Thelunganur in Mettur taluk of Salem district throw a fresh light on the origin of high carbon steel in south India. The AMS date obtained for the sword is 3089±40year BP, which, when calibrated, places the calendar date between 1438 and 1261 BCE.

c. DEAL OF EXOTIC ANIMALS

There is evidence of animal trade between Indian Ocean harbours and the Mediterranean. This can be seen in the mosaics and frescoes of the remains of Roman villas in Italy. For example, the Villa del Casale has mosaics depicting the capture of animals in India, Indonesia and Africa. The intercontinental trade of animals was one of the sources of wealth for the owners of the villa. In the Ambulacrodella Grande Caccia, the hunting and capture of animals is represented in such detail that it is possible to identify the species. There is a scene that shows a technique to distract a tiger with a shimmering ball of glass or mirror in order to take her cubs. Tiger hunting with red ribbons serving as a distraction is also shown. In the assortment there are also numerous other animals such as rhinoceros,

an Indian elephant with his Indian conductor, and the Indian peafowl, and other exotic birds. The animals were transported in cages by ship.

d. PORTS

Roman ports

The three main Roman ports involved with eastern trade were Arsinoe, Berenice and Myos Hormos. Arsinoe was one of the early trading centers but was soon overshadowed by the more easily accessible Myos Hormos and Berenice.

Arsinoe

The Ptolemaic dynasty exploited the strategic position of Alexandria to secure trade with the subcontinent. The course of trade with the east then seems to have been first through the harbor of Arsinoe, the present day Suez. The goods from the East African trade was landed at one of the three main Roman ports, Arsinoe, Berenice or Myos Hormos. The Romans repaired and cleared out the silted up canal from the Nile to harbor center of Arsinoe on the Red Sea. This was one of the many efforts the Roman administration had to undertake to divert as much of the trade to the maritime routes as possible. Arsinoe was eventually overshadowed by the rising prominence of Myos Hormos. The navigation to the northern ports, such as Arsinoe-Clysma, became difficult in comparison to Myos Hormos due to the northern winds in the Gulf of Suez. Venturing to these northern ports presented additional difficulties such as shoals, reefs and treacherous currents.

MyosHormos and Berenice

Myos Hormos and Berenice appear to have been important ancient trading ports, possibly used by the Pharaonic traders of ancient Egypt and the Ptolemaic dynasty before falling into Roman control. The site of Berenice, since its discovery by Belzoni in 1818, has been equated with the ruins near Ras Banas in Southern Egypt. However, the precise location of Myos Hormos is disputed with the latitude and longitude given in Ptolemy's *Geography* favoring Abu Sha'ar and the accounts given in classical literature and satellite images indicating a probable identification with Quseir el-Quadim at the end of a fortified road from Koptos on the Nile. The Quseir el-Quadim site has further been associated with Myos Hormos following the excavations at el-Zerqa, halfway along the route, which have revealed ostraca leading to the conclusion that the port at the end of this road may have been Myos Hormos.

e. Major regional ports

The regional ports of Barbaricum (modern Karachi), Sounagoura (central Bangladesh), Barygaza (Bharuch in Gujarat), Muziris (present day Kodungallur), Pattanam,Korkai, Kaveripattinam and Arikamedu (Tamil Nadu) on the southern tip of present-day India were the main centers of this trade, along with Kodumanal, an inland city. The Periplus Maris Erythraei describes Greco-Roman merchants selling in Barbaricum "thin clothing, figured linens, topaz, coral, storax, frankincense, vessels

of glass, silver and gold plate, and a little wine" in exchange for costus, bdellium, lycium, nard, turquoise, lapis lazuli, Seric skins, cotton cloth, silk yarn, and indigo". In Barygaza, they would buy wheat, rice, sesame oil, cotton and cloth.

Barygaza

Periplus of the Erythraen sea describes the ports of Barygaza and Sopara as the gateway to the ports of west coast of India. Trade with Barygaza, under the control of the Indo-Scythian Western Satrap Nahapana ("Nambanus"), was especially flourishing:

"There are imported into this market-town (Barygaza), wine, Italian preferred, also Laodicean and Arabian; copper, tin, and lead; coral and topaz; thin clothing and inferior sorts of all kinds; bright-colored girdles a cubit wide; storax, sweet clover, flint glass, realgar, antimony, gold and silver coin, on which there is a profit when exchanged for the money of the country; and ointment, but not very costly and not much. And for the King there are brought into those places very costly vessels of silver, singing boys, beautiful maidens for the harem, fine wines, thin clothing of the finest weaves, and the choicest ointments. These are exported from these places spikenard, costus, bdellium, ivory, agate and carnelian, lycium, cotton cloth of all kinds, silk cloth, mallow cloth, yarn, long pepper and such other things as are brought here from the various market-towns. Those bound for this market-town from Egypt make the voyage favorably about the month of July, that is Epiphi."
— *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea (paragraph 49).*

Muziris

Muziris is a lost port city on the south-western coast of India which was a major center of trade in the ancient Tamil land between the Chera kingdom and the Roman Empire. Its location is generally identified with modern-day Cranganore in central Kerala. Large hoards of coins and immeasurable shards of amphorae found at the town of Pattanam near Cranganore have aroused recent archeological interest in finding a probable location of this port city.

According to the Periplus, abundant Greek seamen engaged in a passionate trade with Muziris:

"Then come Naura and Tyndis, the first markets of Damirica (Limyrike), and then Muziris and Nelcynda, which are now of leading importance. Tyndis is of the Kingdom of Cerobothra; it is a village in plain sight by the sea. Muziris, of the same Kingdom, abounds in ships sent there with cargoes from Arabia, and by the Greeks; it is located on a river, distant from Tyndis by river and sea five hundred stadia, and up the river from the shore twenty stadia"

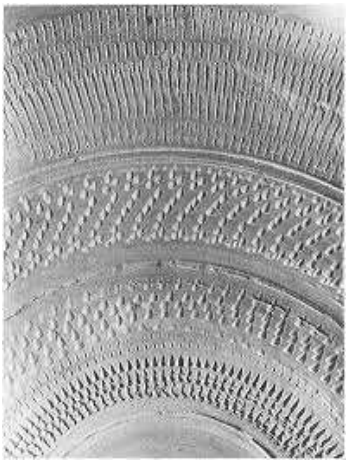
—The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea (53–54)

Pattanam:

https://in.pinterest.com/pin/70650287891162028/

It was a twin city along with Muziris as mentioned by Pliny. Extensive excavations have unearthed artefacts which included precious and semi-precious stones, iron and copper nails and scrolls, glass ware, amphoras etc. Beryl stones (Europe or Pakistan, Afghanistan origin), Chalcedony (Greece or Asia Minor), Amethyst (Greece or Sri Lanka), Agate (Greece), clearly suggest they were imported. Iron and coppernails led scrolls were the other items found in large numbers. Glass fragments, pillared glass bowls, varieties of Roman pottery, black and white moulded gaming counters used for board games, flat bottomed Gaul amphoras were found in the site and must have been imported from Rome or through Rome from various places. Turquoise glazed pottery of Rome was another item imported. The torpedo jar sherds indicate Persian or Sassanianconnection with Pattanam. Pepper was the main export. It is believed that there was a temple for Emperor Augustus at Muziris. Roman Emperor Claudius 41-54 C.E., talks about Rome losing gold for pepper from India

Arikamedu



Rouletted ware: Arikamedu, Courtesy: https://www.google.com/imges

Periplus of the Erythraen Seamentions a marketplace named Poduke, which G.W.B. Huntingford identified as possibly being Arikamedu in Tamil Nadu, a centre of early Chola trade (now part of Ariyankuppam), about 3 kilometres (1.9 mi) from the modern Pondicherry. It was the only port site that is right on the seacoast and not on the riverbank. Three different groups at various times excavated the site. The last being Vimala Begley in collaboration with ASI IN 1980s. She has questioned Mortimer Wheeler's assessment of equating Arikamedu with Poduke, a Yavana emporium. Her another paper published posthumously by I. Mahadevan, takes Roman trade in Arikamedubetween early 1st century BCE to 1st century CE. Her findings were:

Arikamedu was occupied far longer than had been thought and must be considered a South Indian city rather than principally Roman. The lowest levels could go back to the second century BCE., long before the Romans'contact. It was occupied down to the seventeenth century.The chief product of Arikamedu must have been beads. It is the first place known to have made small, drawn, cut from a tube, glass beads, the types found almost universally for two millennia. Its stone bead industry was impressive, and its lapidaries made several important innovations in the field.Workers in the glass beadindustry migrated to other places: Mantai, Sri Lanka; Khlong Thom, Thailand; Ocea, Vietnam; Srivijaya-Palembang, Sumatra; Sungai Mas, Malaysia; Kuala Selinsing, Malaysia; and Takua Pa, Thailand have now been identified as housing such work. This constituted the largest and longest-lived glass bead industry ever. Instrumental in these moves must have been a power with more influence than the beadmakers themselves. As rich as India is in precious stones, glass has always been considered an inferior substitute and the status of glass beadmakers has always been low. A guild no doubt made the link between the beadmakers and the powers-that-be who would have had to give permission for these moves. Of them, the Manikgrammam is the most likely. The stone beadmakers were in part Pandukal (Megalithic) peoples, who were probably responsible for obtaining the raw materials and making about half of the stone beads. Among the lapidary innovations were the making of black onyx and citrine. In the sixteenth century when Arikamedu was abandoned, the population split into three groups. The fishermen and farmers merely moved a half-kilometer away to the village of Virampatinam.The glass beadmakers went to Papanaidupet, Andhra Pradesh. The attraction may have been Guddimalam (Gudar), an old guild center, blessed with good glass sand. The stone beadmakers went to Vellur, Thanjavur and/or Tiruchchirappalli to continue their craft.The fishermen are still at Virampatinam. The glass beadmakers are still at

Papanaidupet. Stone beadmaking survived down through the end of the last century, but no trace is now left.

f. CULTURAL EXCHANGES

The Rome-subcontinental trade also saw several cultural exchanges which had a lasting effect on both the civilizations and others involved in the trade. The Ethiopian kingdom of Aksum was involved in the Indian Ocean trade network and was influenced by Roman culture and Indian architecture. Traces of Indian influences are visible in Roman works of silver and ivory, or in Egyptian fabrics of cotton and silk used for sale in Europe. The Indian presence in Alexandria may have influenced the culture but little is known about the manner of this influence. Clement of Alexandria mentions the Buddha in his writings and other Indian religions find mentions in other texts of the period.

Check your progress:

1] Examine the Indo-Roman trade relations.

12.5 TRADE ROUTES IN SOUTH INDIA

One must consider the trade routes that were operating between India and the Roman trade. Jean Deloche has written on the Roman trade routes in South India. He has highlighted the geographical and technical factors during the period from c. 1st cent. BC - 5th century. CE. He mentions that since the commencement of history, the Palghat Gap in South India channeled traffic from the Arabian sea to the east coast. It was as a chief communication course for coastal maritime activities. This natural trans-peninsular highway played a particularly important role in commerce during Roman times, from the first to the fourth century CE. It was considered the best alternative to the long coastal route between the Malabar and Coromandel ports. The maritime route through the Mannar Strait was used for Mediterranean trade from the fourth century onwards only.

Jean Deloche mentions that the trade connections between the Mediterranean basin and the Indian Ocean region are very ancient. Especially its reach grew immensely with the arrival of Rome into the eastern Mediterranean. He states that one is under the impression that there was a direct and relatively easy communication between the Mediterranean world and the Indian seaports. It is believed that Roman ships were regularly and freely plying the Red Sea and the two sides of the Indian Ocean.

What were the ways through which the Roman trade could be channeled? Merchants had two options: either to take the maritime route, around Sri Lanka or through the Mannar Strait, between the Indian peninsula and Sri Lanka or to follow the direct land route across the easy Palghat gap towards the Kaveri valley.

A. The Sea route: There were several channels but, during the Roman period, the main passage used by the ancient sailors was the Mannar channel. This passageway was neither a deep nor a wide expanse of water. Because of shallow depths, the vessels were obliged to transfer their cargoes to smaller craft at the mouth and then to take them on board again at the other side. The Greek and Roman authors had heard of these difficulties. Pliny the Elder, in his description of Sri Lanka, says that "the sea between Taprobane and India is full of shallows and more than six paces in depth, but some channels were so deep that no anchors can find the bottom; for this reason, vessels are built with prows at each end to obviate the necessity of their turning about in channels of extreme narrowness."

The Mannar channel between Sri Lanka and India was thus a big hindrance to Roman navigation. Ifthe shallow water-depth of the Palk Straitis added, exposed to the winds of the north-east monsoon and concealing dangerous shoals, and also the dangers of pirates and storms at sea, it is obvious that all these conditions could deprive merchants of their valuable cargoes and their lives.. However, inspite of these difficulties, this channel was from time immemorial used by local sailors.

B. The Land route: The Palghat Gap, was Key to South Indian east-west trade. On the West coast of India, the reliefs of the Ghats, offer almost no ways of communication, thus isolating the seaboard from the remainder of the peninsula.

Moreover, on both sides of the gap, though the conditions were not fully adequate, natural water routes could be plied: on the one hand, the Ponnani river, burdened by sand banks at its mouth, was however navigable during the rains over 100 km up to Palghat.

On the other hand, the Kaveri, unable to accommodate any watercraft in Karnataka, goods were commonly taken by coracles over its rocky channel, during the high-water period. These transports could have been of a relatively significant volume. There is the added fact that the topography of the west coast is benefited by the existence of vast longitudinal lagoons. They have harbours able to accommodate seafaring vessels. And inland, the Coimbatore plateau is a very prosperous country. Therefore, this corridor has since the beginning of history channeled traffic from the Arabian Sea to the eastern coast, thus asserting itself as a major communication route, beckoning coastal maritime activities. It too had a very important role in Roman trade.

Periplus of Erythraen Sea mentions Paralia as the southernmost port in the western coast and says that beyond that is the port of Comari, the cape, known as a cult spot and site of ritual importance. Obviously referring to the Kanyakumari tradition.

"*Beyond Bacare, there is the dark red mountain, and another (district) stretching along the coast toward the south, called Paralia. The first place is called Balita; it has a fine harbour and a village by the shore. Beyond this there is another place called Comari, at which are the cape of Comari and a harbour, hither come those men who wish to consecrate themselves for the rest of their lives, and bathe and dwell in celibacy; and women also do the same, for it is told that a goddess once dwelt there and bathed".*

The harbour in Kanyakumari, which is not there now, explains the north-south trade highway which connected Pandyan Madurai, pazhani and moved north towards Ariyalur and beyond.

Check your progress:
1] Examine the trade routes in South India.

12.6 ROMAN TRADE ROUTES

Muziris was the Gate to the Chera and Chola kingdoms. Muziris, in the Chera kingdom, corresponding to Muyirikkodu noted on an inscription, was the Primum Emporium Indiae of the ancient authors. It has been identified with modern Kodungalur or Cranganor. It was probably the capital of the Chera Kingdom, and one of the best harbours on the coast, behind the offshore bar where the lagoon opens, formed by the estuary of the Periyar River, and it appears also to have been one of Kerala's largest commercial centers, down to the 16th century. Barygaza (modern Broach) was the international port for most of upper western India in the days of the Periplus, providing with raw glass, unloaded at its harbour. Muziris, with Tyndis nearby, was highly likely the best anchorage for ships from the West. It was the international port in the same role in the southern part of the peninsula.

As the passage through the Mannar Straits was very difficult, it is evident that, because of its strategic significance, Mantai, situated at the northwest tip of Sri Lanka, at the southern extremity of Adam's Bridge, must have been a major settlement. In fact, from literary sources we know that Mantai, today a village on a silted lagoon, has been, under the name of Mahattittha or Matottam, one of the most important ports of Sri Lanka for transhipment of merchandise between the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Strait until about the 11th century. Limited or exploratory excavations have been conducted at that place, but it is certainly "one of the most

significant sites for potential evidence of Roman trade". Classical accounts such as The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea and Ptolemy's Geography give us the impression of brisk trading activities along this part of India.

But geographical and technical factors must have played a very big part in this process. This is why Roman traders, or their agents, being aware of the serious hindrance to navigation and transport in the Gulf of Mannar, probably relied more on the convenient land route and did not take the risk of transfer of cargoes to smaller craft in the breaches in Adam's Bridge. When, at a later period, their trade was controlled by local middlemen, who had technical expertise in transshipment of merchandize, the maritime route was adopted. Still, it is almost certain that the Palghat route remained the main axis of traffic from the West to the East coast. Considering the hard conditions of sea transport at the beginning of the Christian era, it is evident that commodities unloaded at the Kerala ports and intended for Arikamedu, would be transported via the shortest, the easiest and the safest route, the Palghat axis.

These basic elements are not taken into acccount. As a result the role of the great Palghat still has not been given enough prominence and the part played by the Mannar Straits has remained unrecognised. But Jean Deloche considers the role of these two of utmost importance in the Roman trade.

DECLINE:

Roman decline

Trade declined from the mid-3rd century during a crisis in the Roman Empire. It recovered in the 4th century until the early 7th century, when Khosrow II, Shah of the Sasanian Empire, occupied the Roman parts of the Fertile Crescent and Egypt. He was defeated by the Eastern Roman emperor Heraclius at the end of 627, after which the lost territories were returned to the Eastern Romans. Cosmas Indicopleustes ('Cosmas who sailed to India') was a Greek-Egyptian trader, and later monk, who wrote about his trade trips to India and Sri Lanka in the 6th century.

Tsunamis in the eastern and western coasts of Peninsular India

Manimekalai, the 2nd Century CE work talks about deluge caused by Tsunami towards the end Karikala, the Chola ruler's reign and how the capital Puhar submerged in the sea. Similarly, the deluge in Periyar river destroyed Muziris and Pattanam around 5th century CE. These natural phenomenon which are unique to the Peninsular India became one of the causes for the diminished prosperity in the Sangam Tamilakam and may have aided the decline of the Indo-Roman trade.

Attacks on the Gupta Empire by the Huns

In India, the Alchon Huns' invasions (496–534 CE) are said to have seriously damaged India's trade with Europe and Central Asia. The Gupta Empire had been benefiting greatly from Indo-Roman trade. They had been exporting numerous luxury products such as silk, leather

goods, fur, iron products, ivory, pearl or pepper from centers such as Nashik, Prathisthana, Pataliputra and Varanasi. The Huna invasions probably disrupted these trade relations and the tax revenues that came with it. Soon after the invasions, the Gupta Empire, already weakened by these invasions and the rise of local rulers, endedand with that began the decline of the Roman trade contact.

Check your progress:
1] Discuss the decline of the Roman trade.

12.7 QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the nature of Indo-Roman Trade in Ancient North India?
2. Discuss the features of Indo-Roman Trade in Ancient South India?
3. Examine the sources of Indo-Roman Trade in Ancient South India?

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